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In Memoriam

William McKinley

September 14, 1901



Sermons by
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New York City



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trembling solicitude, not only of a nation, but of the civilized world. What a volume of supplication has gone up to the Throne of Grace! Old age, mature years, childhood's lisping tongue have blended in one sweet cloud of incense for his recovery; around family altars, in Sanctuaries and 'neath the vaulted roof of Cathedrals, wherever there has been a temple of worship, in city or village or prairie settlement, he, our loved and suffering one, has been remembered; Protestant, Romanist, Jew, have all become as one under this heavy burden, a burden which only the God and Father of us all could lift from our hearts.

How much has been crowded into these less than nine days! We have hoped; we have feared; we have awaked in sunshine, to lie down in clouds, which again vanished in the morning; and through all this painful suspense, this watching and praying, our President has been growing dearer to us as a nation, coming so close to us as individuals and families, that our love for him has been, as if he were a part of each home circle, as if he were a brother of us all. And we have not watched and prayed alone, for beyond the seas, from Kings and Queens, from the peoples of every nation has come a sympathy as rich as it has been unusual; and so the world has reached their hands under the ocean's waves, and grasped our hands in the heavenly sympathy of sorrow. But the end has come, the end we feared and against which we prayed: and in our bereavement we bend, as a nation, around that silent body, in a grief which struggles for utterance, but cannot be expressed. We have stopped praying, we have walked with soft tread out from the chamber, where millions have, in thought, passed these weary days, carrying with us the broken crystals of such high hopes.

It is not my purpose, this morning, to dwell upon the history of that life, so suddenly cut off in the very prime of its strength and influence, for I shall have an opportunity to do this at another time, but I would remind you, at this hour, of some causes for thanksgiving, which illumine the black clouds of our grief. And one is, that William McKinley was a Christian, and a consistent manly Christian. From his earliest childhood through

all his political life, in his own State, in our Congress as Representative, and as the head of this nation, he has everywhere lived the pure gentle Christlike life, which has been known and read of all men. The testimony of that aged mother, whom he was not ashamed to stoop down and kiss, in the presence of tens of thousands, as he took the oath of the most exalted office earthly honor could bestow, "William is a good man," has been the testimony of all who have known him in private and public life, the testimony of political friends and enemies, and this tribute is richer than the fading wreaths, which will be laid upon his casket.

When you think, how few of our public men go through the flames of social temptations and political corruption unscorched, how few are able to keep the lamp of a consistent piety burning clear and bright 'midst the fogs of American partisanship, and the moral perils of public success, we may well thank God for this good man, who never lost the fragrance of his early Christian home, nor the manly gentleness and simplicity which a mother's love and prayers wrought out in his developing character. Slander was powerless to harm him, and her poisoned arrows fell from him as from an armor of steel. Success signal and rapid could not spoil him, and the President of the grandest nation of the earth was still the dutiful son, the thoughtful devoted husband, the sincere Christian, the man of prayer. And because he was good, he was a *great* man. We know now, what many doubted four years ago, that he was intellectually great, great in wisdom, in a mental grasp of momentous issues, in overcoming obstacles by patient, rugged, tireless work, a man who was always equal to the task laid upon him, and was always surprising even his admirers by new displays of his vast resources. And to his patriotism, his wisdom, his courage, his superb rounded purity and massive thought, we owe to a large degree the National blessings of to-day, our united country from whose bosom the scars of strife have disappeared, the fame and the power of this Republic throughout the world and our unprecedented financial prosperity.

We learn, therefore, from his life most clearly the value of

character as the condition of a noble and permanent success. One may be a genius and yet not be a great man. He may make his mark upon his generation by his learning, his scientific discoveries, his administrative ability or his eloquence and yet in the highest sense he may not be great, not one of earth's immortals, who live more after than before physical death, for the best, the sublimest part of every man is his moral nature, and in *its* development only can be realized the highest ideal of greatness. When mind and heart grow together, when thought has for its foundation solid principles of righteousness, when love of knowledge and love of truth are married by indissoluble bonds, and intellectual power is embedded in the soil of moral integrity, purity, gentleness, there you have a great man, though he may not be exceptional in genius. It is a rounded manhood which makes one a blessing to humanity, and this was true in a peculiar sense of our three martyred Presidents, whose names will always be written in letters of gold on the page of American history, Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley.

How brilliantly did the nobility of this Christian man shine forth, in the very hour of the murderous shot of the assassin! Not a thought for himself, not even of his pain, but the first word, one of care for the wife in her weakness, then, like the dear Lord on Calvary, a plea of mercy for his murderer, and then a regret that through his affliction the joy of the country would be clouded. What a picture of the beauty and strength of his faith was witnessed, when he lay on the operating table and was about to take the ether, conscious that he might never awake from sleep. As the surgeons paused knife in hand, the white lips prayed, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done." "For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power, and the Glory." Did Christian faith ever have a grander victory? Was our President ever greater, than in that hour of a sudden and awful calamity, but which could not cause a tremor of fear? And who will ever forget his brave farewell words, "Good-bye, all. Good-bye. It is God's way. His will be done," and so he passed into unconsciousness, whispering to the God he so ardently loved, "Nearer,

my God, to Thee. Nearer to Thee. E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me." With this prayer he dropped the cross, seized the crown of glory and took his seat on the throne with his risen Saviour, a higher position than to be President of a nation of seventy millions.

There is another truth which I want to leave with you to-day, and it is, that God reigns and God rules, and because you and I can see no possible blessing within the black curtain of this event, our nearsightedness is no argument, that God will not bring out of this calamity and this furnace a blessing to America. No man, though ever so great and good is a necessity to a nation, when God is at the helm. France quivered from circumference to centre when Henry the Fourth died. Holland seemed like a dismantled ship without captain or crew, when the idolized William the Silent fell by the hand of an assassin, but God was behind the darkness, and He made the wrath of man to praise Him. 'There never was a cloud so black, as to put out the shining of God's love, and His truth marches steadily on, though sin seeks to block the way with broken hopes and tears and graves.

Do you say, "But God promises to answer prayer." Well, He *did* answer—answered before the final issue of the sickness, answered in the marvellous patience of our beloved sufferer, in that peace which pain could not disturb, in that courage that feared no evil, in that glorious victory over death. Why, the prayers of this nation helped to fill that sick chamber with celestial benedictions, and to keep One like unto the Son of God at the bedside. Do you say, "But a whole nation prayed for his life." Yes, but this crying of a great people for the life of our President, was not as mighty a power to move the Father, as was that cry of His beloved Son in Gethsemane, but the cup was not taken away, and we can now see a glimpse of the love, that refused to remove it. The very words, with which we close each petition, "Thy will be done," compel us to bow submissively to that will, and to believe that God knew better than we, and that his way though so dark, is the best way.

O, my friends, as we stand together in the thick darkness of

this calamity, knowing positively that our loving Father had no connection with this awful crime, but was separated from it as far as heaven is distant from hell; (but hell is not omnipotent and our God is,) we take the cup of sorrow from His hand, confident that out of it will come a joy, out of the darkness will break a bright morning, and some day we shall see clearly His wisdom and love in not raising our beloved one up to health again. Surely he has not lived in vain, if he had done no more than to give to the young men of our Country this sublime picture of a character rounded, massive and God-fearing, and of the power of such a character over the destinies of a nation and over the hearts of a people, for William McKinley was the most splendid type of American manhood of all the Presidents of our Republic. And he has not died in vain, if the shock of this affliction shall awaken the citizenship of our Country to the perils of our shameful indifference, to the presence in our midst of the open foes to all government and order and law.

It needs no argument to prove, that the wretched assassin of our President was only the legitimate product of a so-called liberty of speech and of the press, which is only license and cannot fail to undermine the beautiful fabric of our Republic. It is not enough to demand a quick execution of the murderer, the majesty of the law will be vindicated in his punishment, and the passion for vengeance by any other course, than by the law, may be natural in a time of almost frenzied excitement, but it is not Christian, and it is rebuked by the noble words of our now sainted President. It is not enough that Congress shall make any act of violence against the person of our Chief Magistrate, to be treason and punishable with death. This should have been done long ago, and I have no doubt will be done, when Congress shall assemble. But we must drive the anarchist from our borders, we must make it treason to write or proclaim in speech these pernicious and hellish sentiments, just as by law we guard our country against the scourge of disease, and by law forbid the use of dynamite in or near our homes. A paper in our City only a few months ago advocated assassination as being often a necessary act for the

people's good, and intimated that the time might come, when Mr. McKinley should be removed. Such a paper ought to be driven from this City, and no reputable merchant has any moral right to advertise in its columns. For only when this lawless irresponsible anarchism is crushed and destroyed, root and branch, is the life of any official safe for an hour; only then is our Republic safe and strong, for the grand work God has for her in the future.

Let me ask you, as I close, to give your confidence with your prayers, to him who is called so unexpectedly to the duties of his high and solemn office, at the head of this great nation. Never has he been tried and found wanting, and I firmly believe that in this sudden emergency, he will rise to meet it bravely, wisely, and in dependence upon almighty help.

This week the silent form of a nation's loved one will be laid away in the grave midst tolling bells and the tears of millions, but that is only the dismantled tent, from which our President has departed to be with Christ, which is far better. And so we bow in worship before Him, who is greater than earth's greatest, more beautiful than earth's loveliest. We exalt Him to-day who hath brought life and immortality to light, Him whose grace fashioned, so symmetrically, the character of our departed friend, who was his guide and shield and joy, in whose strength he lived, in whose peace he suffered, and in whose victory he too was a conqueror over death. We exalt Him, not the servant in this hour; for all that William McKinley was, he owed to the Son of God. If those cold lips could open to-day to speak but one word to this weeping nation, that word, I believe, would be Christ—Christ.



Memorial Service, September 19, 1901.

GENESIS 12: 2.

"And I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."

We have gathered in God's House, this morning, called hither by the proclamations of our President and Governor, as well as by the promptings of our own hearts, that we may seek the divine blessing upon the stricken household who to-day will bear to the tomb their precious dead, in another State, and that in this hour of a nation's anguish we may bow before Him, who doeth all things well, in confession of our sins, and listen for His voice, as in the darkness and through the tears we cry, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Never was there a day like this in all history, never such a vast company of mourners, for we may truly say, that the world stand in sympathy and sorrow around one open tomb.

I have thought that it would be profitable this morning, to call up to our minds the portraiture of our late President, as it is seen in the more striking events of his life.

He was born in Niles, Ohio, January 29, 1843, and on his father's side was of Scotch-Irish ancestry. His early home was not one of wealth, and like Abraham Lincoln he knew in childhood the discipline of poverty; but it was a home of earnest piety, whose riches of prayer and religious instruction were the priceless heritage of his earliest years. He was, as a boy, educated in the public schools, and it was the hope of his parents that he would become a preacher of the Gospel, in connection with the Methodist Church, but his tastes led him to choose the

law as a profession. We find him a teacher in a village school near Poland, then a clerk in the post office in that town, and this was his employment at the outbreak of the Civil War. He enlisted, as a private, in Company E of the twenty-third regiment, Ohio Volunteers, a company that was one of the most famous in the American army, having fought in nineteen battles and having lost 276 men from wounds and disease. After fourteen months of service in the ranks, young McKinley was promoted to be Commissary Sergeant, then Lieutenant, and one month before the assassination of the President he received the commission of Brevet Major, the commission being signed "A. Lincoln" and reading, "For gallant and meritorious services at the battles of Opequan, Cedar Creek and Fisher's Hill." In the battle of Kernstown, near Winchester, he was ordered to go back into the thickest of the fight and bring out a regiment that was so hard pressed by the enemy, that it was a question whether anyone could survive; but he obeyed orders, though the mission seemed a forlorn hope, and extricated the small remnant of the regiment, who had not fallen. Again, in the battle of Antietam, when the issue was still uncertain, he filled two wagons with necessary supplies, and through a literal storm of shells and bullets drove them to the relief of the hungry and thirsty soldiers. The mules of one wagon were killed, but he drove the other wagon safely through, and from Sergeant McKinley every soldier was served with hot coffee and a warm meal, in the midst of an unbroken rain of death's missiles; a thing never known before in the annals of any army. It is a striking coincidence, that the Colonel of his regiment was Rutherford B. Hayes, who wrote of him in his account of the war, "We soon found that in business and executive ability he was of rare capacity, of an unusual and surpassing capacity for a boy of his age. When battles were fought or a service was to be performed in warlike things, he always took his place. When I became the commander of the regiment, he soon came to be on my staff, and he remained on my staff for one or two years, so that I did, literally and in fact, know him like a book, and loved him like a brother."

At the close of the war, he was admitted to the bar of his native State, March 7, 1867, and on January 25, 1871, he was married to Miss Ida Saxton of Canton. Two daughters were born in this union, whose true and tender love is to-day the object of the admiring gaze of a bereaved nation; but the children were, in their infancy, called to their heavenly home. In 1876 Mr. McKinley was elected to Congress by a majority in his district of 3,000, and was twice re-elected. It is a peculiar fact, that when he became a member of the House, his old Colonel, Rutherford B. Hayes, was President. Those six years in Congress brought out to a nation's gaze his remarkable traits of executive ability, tireless industry, and a sincerity that was never questioned. He was a strong partisan, and believed firmly in protection as a condition of his country's prosperity, but at the same time, his dignified manner, his invariable courteousness and his charm as an orator, won the attention and applause even of those who differed broadly from him in political views. The confidence in him by his neighbors was seen plainly in his second election to Congress, when, after the limits of his district had been so changed as to ensure a distinct Democratic majority of 1800, he was elected by a majority of 1,300, though his strong Republican convictions were well known. It was the *man* they voted for, not the politician. Then followed his election as Governor of his State, and then his re-election by a majority of over 80,000, which at that time was the largest majority, save one, in the history of Ohio.

In 1896 he was elected President of the country, by a popular vote of 7,104,799, a plurality of 601,854 over his opponent, and in 1900 he was re-elected by a greater popular majority than any President has ever received, and the electoral vote for him was 292 against 155 cast for the Democratic nominee. I do not need to call to your minds the history of his first term as the Chief Magistrate of this nation, for it is well known to you all. Those four years were not smooth sailing, for following close upon his inaugural was the war with Spain, into which he reluctantly entered. In a conversation which I had with him just before war was declared, he said with great emphasis, "There

will be no war if I can prevent it," but when the pressure by Congress became so strong, that he was obliged, as the servant of the people, to accept the issue of intervention in behalf of the oppressed in the island, at our very doors, he faced calmly and bravely the heavy responsibilities, put forth every energy for the strengthening of our army and navy, and when the signal victories came on sea and land, he as bravely and quietly assumed the new and untried responsibilities which followed, undeterred by the loud charges of Imperialism, and undismayed by the seemingly hopeless task of bringing peace and confidence to those in our newly acquired and far distant possessions, who were so ignorant of the beneficent purposes of their new masters.

He had many difficult problems to solve, many unexpected crises to meet, a new chapter in American history was being written and to a large degree written by his hand, but he was always loyal to the people, wise in counsel, and so he guided the ship of State through the storm to a peaceful haven. Under his administration, our country has passed to a world-power, the horizon of its destiny has broadened, our civilization has reached its blessing hands far off into the Orient, and while men looked on with wonder, while many viewed this expansion with alarm, this prudent, wise, calm captain, having caught the spirit of the hour, kept a firm hand on the helm and feared no evil though the ship was sailing in new seas, for God was with him. The financial prosperity that followed his second election, was simply the expression of the universal confidence of the people in his untamptible integrity and his rare ability, which made him a safe leader of the Republic. As this morning we look back over this life of exceptional success, a success reaching, as it does, from the village school to the highest official seat in the greatest earthly nation, it is not difficult to discern the secret of William McKinley's steady advancement and of the power of his unique personality.

In the first place, his greatness was no recent or sudden development. It was not the creation of circumstances, or the reaction upon his nature of political elevation and responsibilities,

but on the contrary, his life was a beautiful whole, and the virtues which in him have awakened the admiration of the world, characterized him as a young man. No wasted years. No moral scars to be borne through life. No word or act to bring the blush of shame to the cheek of friends, but as the nation has known him for the past few years, so he was always, truth loving, humble, firm in principle, a friend of the common people, and with high ideals, up to which he was ever striving.

More specifically let me say, that he was always a man of unsullied purity of character, for no suspicion even of immorality or of political corruption has ever been whispered against him. Then he was always actuated by a strong sense of duty, so that he filled nobly every position, whether it was as teacher in a district school, or as a private and officer in the army, or as a representative in congress, or as governor, or as President; his one purpose was to do well the task given him, and so at every stage of his career he earned the "well done" of those for whom he labored. He was a man of high honor, such as must characterize the real gentleman. Let me give you this illustration. The scene was the National Republican Convention in 1888, when the purpose to make Mr. Blaine the candidate had failed, and the convention was on the point of being stampeded for Mr. McKinley. Any equivocal refusal on his part would have been like a feather before a rising tempest; but he never did anything except with his whole soul. Springing to his feet, and advancing to the platform, he faced the multitude, who were awed at once, by his intense excitement, to a stillness like the grave, and said, "I am here as one of the chosen representatives of my State. I am here by resolution of the Republican State Convention, passed without a dissenting voice, commanding me to cast my vote for John Sherman for President, and to use every worthy endeavor for his nomination. I cannot consistently with the wish of the State, whose credentials I bear and which has trusted me; I cannot with honorable fidelity to John Sherman; I cannot consistently with my own views of personal integrity consent or seem to consent to permit my name to be used as a candidate before this Convention. I would not respect myself if I

should find it in my heart to do so, or permit to be done that which would ever be ground for any one to suspect, that I wavered in my loyalty to Ohio, or my devotion to the chief of her choice and the chief of mine. I do not request, I demand that no delegate, who would not cast reflection upon me, shall cast a ballot for me." When his friends gathered around him, praising him for his loyalty, he answered them, "Is it such an honorable thing not to do a dishonorable act?"

We see therefore, that he was always true to his ideal of a lofty manhood, true to duty, and true to his country, and above all and at the foundation of all he was true to his God, a man of childlike trust in the guidance of infinite wisdom, a man to whom prayer was the means through which he was fitted for every responsibility. It was a few months after his first election as President, that I called upon him in Chicago, and in a conversation I asked, "Do you not feel an anxiety, as you look forward to heavy responsibilities, and to difficult questions that you may have to solve?" And he answered quickly, "I have no anxiety whatever, for I believe in a Providential God, and he has promised to guide me in every step I take." And thus this nation has known this great man, has known and trusted in his purity, his devotion to duty, his courage and mental clear-sightedness, and his transparent piety, and besides all this they have had a glimpse into his heart life as they have witnessed his almost sleepless loving care for the invalid wife, a care never forgotten by him under the heaviest public duties, and a love which in that typical American home has shed a perfume throughout this wide land.

So he lived, a man *of* the people and *for* the people, than whom no grander personality ever occupied the chair of President, and it was this pure, noble, brave life which made possible that splendid closing, when suddenly, in the hour of his sublimest achievements, the summons came from a higher than earthly court, and he met death like a conqueror, and in the heroism of Christian faith passed up to receive the reward of faithful service. The Roman Centurion gazing on the dying Nazarene exclaimed, "Truly, this is the Son of God," and as seventy millions watched,

through tears of a personal grief, our beloved President die, the language of every heart has been, truly this is a Christian hero, great in life, greatest of all the illustrious of earth, in the dying hour. Well may the flags be half-masted round the globe. Well may kings and emperors stand with heads bowed, around the casket of this superb ruler and Christian. Well may the civilized world pause, and a hush come over business and social activities, one throb of loving sympathy binding together humanity everywhere, as the silent form of William McKinley is borne to the grave, in his native village. Let us go from this temple of prayer, thanking God for his life, thanking God for our glorious Republic whose structure rests upon no one human life, but upon the eternal principles of justice, truth and law; and let us resolve to do our part nobly as citizens, to guard our country from all enemies to its integrity and power, and so to labor for her purity and stability and for the highest welfare of our fellow men, that we can say when for us this life shall close, as our President has said before the throne, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

"Go to the grave! in all thy glorious prime,
In full activity of zeal and power;
A Christian cannot die before his time;
The Lord's appointment is the servant's hour.

Go to the grave! At noon from labor cease,
Rest on thy sheaves, thy harvest task is done.
Come from the heat of battle, and in peace
Soldier, go home—with thee the fight is won.

Go to the grave, which, faithful to its trust
The germ of immortality shall keep;
While, safe as watched by cherubim, thy dust
Shall to the judgment day in Jesus sleep.

Go to the grave! For there thy Saviour lay
In death's embraces, ere He rose on high;
And all the ransomed, by that narrow way,
Pass to eternal life, beyond the sky."



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