

A SERMON:

Giving Thanks for Union Victories,

PREACHED IN

BRIDGE STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

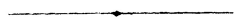
GEORGETOWN, D. C.

AUGUST 6TH, 1863,

BY THE PASTOR,

FREDERICK T. BROWN.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF (AND BY) THE CONGREGATION.



WASHINGTON:

H. POLKINHORN, PRINTER, D STREET. BETWEEN 6TH AND 7TH.
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SERMON.

LET THE PEOPLE PRAISE THEE, O GOD; LET ALL THE
PEOPLE PRAISE THEE.—*Psalm* 67: 3.

We are come together to-day in obedience to the proclamation of His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, as follows, viz:

PROCLAMATION OF THE PRESIDENT.

A DAY OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER.

WASHINGTON, July 15.—By the President of the United States of America:

A PROCLAMATION.

It has pleased Almighty God to hearken to the supplications and prayers of an afflicted people, and to vouchsafe to the Army and Navy of the United States victories on land and on the sea so signal and so effective as to furnish reasonable grounds for augmented confidence that the union of these States will be sustained, the Constitution preserved, and peace and prosperity permanently restored.

But these victories have been achieved not without sacrifices of life, limb, health and liberty incurred by brave, loyal and patriotic citizens. Domestic afflictions in every part of the country follow in the train of these fearful bereavements. It is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father, and the power of His hand equally in these triumphs and these sorrows.

Now, therefore, be it known, that I do set apart Thursday, the Sixth day of August next, to be observed as a day for National Thanksgiving, Praise and Prayer, and I invite the people of the United States to assemble on that occasion in their customary places of worship, and in the forms approved by their own conscience, and render the homage due to the Divine Majesty for the wonderful things he has done in the nation's behalf, and invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit to subdue the anger which has produced and so long maintained a needless and cruel rebellion; to change the hearts of the insurgents; to guide the counsels of the Government with wisdom adequate to so great a national emergency, and to visit with tender care and consolation throughout the length and breadth of our land, all those who through the vicissitudes of marches, voyages, battles and sieges, have been brought to suffer in mind, body, or estate; and finally to lead the whole nation, through the paths of repentance and submission to the Divine will, back to the perfect enjoyment of union and fraternal peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this the 15th day of July, in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

[L. s.]

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

WM. H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

The devout reverential sincerity of this proclamation commends it for admiration to all who fear God and love their country, and especially as it is entirely free from all vain-glorious boasting and derisive triumphing over the enemies of the Republic, from whom victories have been won.

Preliminary to our thanksgivings are two things, of which I must say something in order to justify the giving of thanks, viz; the *victories* alluded to, and the *blessings* attending them. Have our Army and Navy won victories such as to justify national thanksgiving for them? And if they have are the blessings attending them such as to justify national thanksgiving for them? These are important preliminary questions, for, as you know, there are those who would answer No to both these questions. Some of the rebels, and some of the domestic and foreign sympathizers with them say: "The victories claimed amount to nothing in damaging the cause of the rebellion, or in prospering the cause of the Union; and even if they did amount to much, to much more than is claimed for them by the most sanguine, not blessings, but curses would attend them." Let us see how this is.

FIRST. The victories claimed; and of these, first, the victory claimed for General Meade over General Lee at Gettysburg, resulting in his expulsion from Pennsylvania and Maryland, and in driving him beyond the line of the Rappahannock in Virginia. The plans of General Lee, and his expectations, (as we gather them from the declarations of the rebel journals, the rebel generals, and the rebel sympathizers in France and England,) were first, on the soil of Pennsylvania, to annihilate the Army of the Potomac, ("a half-day's job," as General Ewell said in his address to his corps at Chambersburg,) and this done, second, to capture Pittsburg, Harrisburg, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, and then dictate terms to the Federal Government. This was a magnificent plan, but what of its success? The Army of the Potomac was not annihilated, but barely escaped

annihilating the Army of Virginia, defeating it signally after a three days pitched battle, taking many battle flags, many thousands of prisoners, and driving it out of Pennsylvania, out of Maryland, across the Potomac, out of the valley of Virginia, and across the Rappahannock to where it started from, demoralized, dispirited, and with a loss of 30,000 men, killed, wounded, and missing. And Pittsburg, Harrisburg, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, at no time since the war began, have been so safe from rebel interference as now.

SECOND. The victories claimed for Generals Grant and Banks, and Admirals Porter and Farragut at Vicksburg and Port Hudson. These were the two strong-holds of the rebels in the southwest, commanding the Mississippi, controlling the trade of the Mississippi, and riveting together the rebel States east and west of the Mississippi. And so important was their retention in the judgment of the President of the so-called Confederacy, that his commands to the garrisons in them, and his entreaties to the rebels round them, were to make all sacrifices to hold them, and to hold them at all hazards. But both have fallen; the Mississippi is open, the trade of the Mississippi is free, and the iron rivets binding the territory of the rebels together east and west of the Mississippi are broken; and the number of prisoners taken is 40,000.

THIRD. The victory claimed for General Sherman over General Johnson. General Johnson gathered together an army of 30,000 men to raise the siege of Vicksburg. But he did not raise it. On the contrary he was himself attacked and defeated at Big Black River, losing many prisoners, and again attacked and defeated at Jackson, losing prisoners, losing the capitol of the State, losing the State of Mississippi itself, and being driven pell-mell, and with demoralized and deserting troops before the pursuing army of the Union.

FOURTH. The victory claimed for General Rosecrans over General Bragg. General Bragg advanced into Tennessee, threatening Nashville, threatening Memphis, and over-awing Knoxville. General Rosecrans went to meet him; met him at Shelbyville and drove him, met him at Tullahoma and drove him, met him at Winchester and drove him, and finally drove him from the State, (making Tennessee again free,) with the exception of a rebel garrison at Chattanooga, in the extreme southeast corner of the State.

FIFTH. The defeat of the rebel General Cooper in Arkansas, with heavy loss, by General Blunt.

SIXTH. The capture of General Morgan and his whole command, 4,000 strong, by Gen. Shackleford, in Ohio, while making a raid into that State.

SEVENTH. The defeat and dispersion of General Pegram and his command of guerillas, 2,500 men while making a raid in Kentucky.

EIGHTH. The recapture of Brasher City, and driving the rebels out of Louisiana, by General Weitzel.

NINTH. The capture of two-thirds of Morris Island, and the progress made in the reduction of Forts Wagner and Sumter, by General Gilmore and Admiral Dahlgren.

TENTH. The hundreds of blockade runners captured by the Navy, with their valuable cargoes.

AND ELEVENTH. The riots in New York, Troy, Boston and elsewhere, (got up and sustained by sympathizers with the rebellion,) that were put down by the loyal arms of the soldiers and citizens of the Union.

Are these victories? or are they not?

Summed up, the results are: 1. A loss to the rebel cause of more than 100,000 soldiers, who died in camp, or were killed in battle, or were taken prisoners, or deserted from their commands: and the dispiriting and demoralizing of all the remainder, who continue in the service. 2. The loss of the control of the Mississippi, and of the Valley of

the Mississippi. 3. The loss of the rebel States Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. 4. The complete severance of one half of the territory of the seceded States from the other and vital part—leaving it like an amputated limb, to its own destruction. 5. The compression of the rebellion within the other half of the rebel territory. 6. The cutting off from it of its chief supplies of cattle and grain, heretofore received from Western Louisiana and Texas. 7. The liberation of hundreds of thousands of slaves, and the enlisting of 50,000 of the able-bodied males in the military service of the Union. 8. The deliverance of the loyal States from all further fears of rebel invasions. 9. The crushing out of the copperhead or peace party in the loyal States. 10. An indefinite postponement of the recognition of the confederacy by foreign governments.

These are the simple facts concerning these engagements and their results. Are they, or are they not victories?

“But,” (it is replied by the rebels and their friends,) “admitting them to be victories, they amount to nothing; and blessings do not attend them. For the rebellion is no nearer conquered than it was before. The rebels themselves can never be subdued, and even if overcome and vanquished, would never, no never, be united with their conquerors.”

In answer to this, it is sufficient to say, that facts speak louder than words. The rebellion is nearer conquered than ever before. The rebels still unsubdued can be subdued as their brethren have been in Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. And when overcome and vanquished they will unite with their conquerors; just as they have done and are doing in the rebel States already conquered. And the fact is, that *even now, Northern and Southern people respect each other more, and love each other better, than they did before the war began.* Would Major General D. H. Hill now write and publish a Southern Algebra, in which were equations concerning the cowardice of

Indiana soldiers at Buena Vista, and the meanness and want of spirit of New England citizens at home? Would Southern newspapers and stump orators now say that in a fair stand up fight, one Southern soldier could whip five Northern Yankees? and that a Southern army of 50,000 men could march at its leisure, without fear of molestation, through and through the North? Do they not now know that Northern men are not cowards? and that in a fair fight one Northern soldier is fully equal to one Southern soldier? And do they not now know that an army of twice 50,000 cannot successfully invade even one Northern State? These things were written and said, and General Hill's algebra was published before the war by men who were ignorant of those of whom they wrote and spoke and published: and whom they hated and despised, and wished to separate themselves from, because they knew them not. But now they know them, or are getting to know them: and (though the knowledge is mortifying enough, and is acquired in very mortifying ways,) an involuntary respect accompanies it. And this respect will steadily increase; and in the end will deepen into genuine admiration and love. Just such family quarrels there have been again and again in England, in Great Britain, in France, in Germany. But they were healed: and Lancastrians and Yorkists, Roundheads and Cavaliers, Englishmen and Scotchmen, Normans and Gascons, Guelphs and Ghibellines, respected and loved each other better than ever before. In fact, such family quarrels among nations commonly grow out of a want of true respect and love: and as commonly, a result of such family quarrels is true love and respect. The disappointed and embittered leaders of this rebellion probably will nurse their wrath and keep it warm through the term of their natural lives; but it will not be so with the people. The fight has been a sharp and a heroic one on the part of the rebels, constraining us who are loyal, and who are measuring swords with them, to ad-

mire their skill, their bravery, their fortitude. The mistake they made was in an overweening self-confidence, in an undervaluing of their enemy, in not considering whether they were able with ten thousand to meet them who were coming against them with twenty thousand. But this mistake they are fast correcting. And as there is no disgrace in ten thousand being defeated by twice ten thousand, (their equals in all manly respects,) it will be impossible that sectional alienations should long continue when the war is once honorably and entirely over. And especially so when it shall be seen, as it will be, that we who were fighting to maintain the Union, were fighting for the best interests of those who were rebelling against the Union. These are the facts that speak louder than words. The resources of the rebels, in territory, materials, and men, are greatly diminished; while our resources in all these respects, are continually and grandly increasing. Hence the legitimate conclusion of the President in his proclamation, that "it has pleased Almighty God to vouchsafe to the Army and Navy of the United States victories on the land and on the sea, so signal and so effective, as to furnish reasonable grounds for augmented confidence that the Union of these States will be sustained, their Constitution preserved, and peace and prosperity permanently restored." And hence my own answers to the two questions I have been discussing, viz: Our Army and Navy have won victories such as to justify National thanksgiving for them: and the blessings attending them (in the weakening of the rebellion, and the preparation made for peace, union and mutual respect and love,) are such as to justify National thanksgiving for them.

Having settled these two preliminary things, we are now prepared to take a broader view of the whole subject, and to say, in the language of the Psalmist: Let the people praise thee, O God: let all the people praise thee. Assuming, as I rightfully may, that the victories of the last month,

presage the overthrow of the rebellion, and the restoration of the Union, I will look at the restored Union, the Republic of these re-United States, and offer some reasons wherefore for it the people, all the people, should praise God.

FIRST—*the territory* of the Republic. Was ever before, an empire so magnificent given to any people? Lying in the very highway of the nations. Lying in the North temperate zone. Lying between the two great oceans, and between the great lakes and the great gulf; twenty-five hundred miles in length, fifteen hundred miles in breadth. Having every variety of climate, between severe polar cold and intense tropical heat. Producing on its soil, and spontaneously, all kinds of grains and fruits useful and delightful to man, from Northern rye to Southern rice; from Northern apples to Southern pomgranates; from Northern wheat and corn to Southern cotton and cane. A land of mountains and valleys; of hills and plains; of savannahs and prairies. A land of great rivers; of great lakes; of great prairies; of great chains of mountains. A land of the richest coal mines; the richest iron mines; the richest copper mines; the richest silver mines; the richest gold mines on the face of the earth. A land of boundless capabilities, and resources, and extent—fitted to be the uncrowded home of a hundred millions of happy people. A land singularly adapted for commerce; for agriculture; for the mechanic arts; for trades; for professions; for discoveries in science; for developing a great nation. A land bound fast together, North and South, as if with adamant chains, by the continuous sea coasts on the east and west borders, and in the interior by great chains of mountains and great rivers. A land fitly described as a Land of Promise; a land flowing with milk and honey; a land wanting for nothing for man or beast; *a very heritage of God*. This, as to its territory, is the Republic of the United States. It is *one* territory; and

one *magnificent* territory; and held *in common* by all the people of all the States.

SECOND. *The people* of the Republic. Who are they? Who are they not? They are not Saxons, nor Celts, nor Normans, nor Danes. They are not Englishmen, nor Scotchmen, nor Irishmen, nor Frenchmen, nor Germans. They are not Europeans, nor Asiatics, nor Africans, nor aboriginal Americans. Who are they? Who are they not? There is here the widest and most intimate mixing of nationalities and races in the population of the Republic to be found anywhere on the face of the earth. To say of a man, "he is an Englishman, or a Scotchman, or an Irishman, or a Frenchman, or a German, or an Italian," is to describe him, and tell his story. But to say of a man, "he is an *American*," describes nothing; tells nothing. An American may be, often is, both Saxon and Celt, both English and Scotch, both French and German, or a combination of any other two nations or races, or of the common blood of many of them. For example, (pardon the illustration,) I am an American, of native-born American parents, but I am both Celt and Saxon; and in my veins runs Irish, Scotch, German, and French blood. Americans are of all nations, of all races, widely and thoroughly mixed and fused. And this I count both a blessing and a glory. Because of this very thing I say: It is good to be an Englishman, it is good to be a Scotchman, it is good to be an Irishman, it is good to be a Frenchman, it is good to be a German, but it is better to be an American. It is a physiological law, that nations and races are greatly improved by intermarriages, and a wide mixing up with other races and nations. Why this is so, it does not concern me to explain; but of the fact there can be no question. And to this fact I attribute much of the superiority of American citizens over the citizens of any other country in many things. And the high and perfect fullness of this superiority is only beginning to show itself; the future will have much to declare and to disclose touching this thing.

Such is the population of the Republic now. But let us go back a century or so, and see how carefully God selected the seed he would sow in these new and fertile fields. He would take it from English, Scotch, Irish, French, German, Holland, Swiss, Swedish, and other fields; but it should not be any seed that grew in them, but good, choice, select seed. The first seed sown here was of the very choicest from all these fields. That was an age of despotism, and superstition, and persecution, in church and State, in the Old World.— But there were those who protested against these things, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and many other pains and penalties, rather than submit to despotic Prince or despotic Priest. And these were the men and women, (Puritans and Non-conformists from England, Covenanters from Scotland, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from Ireland, Huguenots from France, Dutch Reformed from Holland, Calvinists from Switzerland, Lutherans from Germany and Sweden,) these were the men and women of enlarged intelligence and of religious and political principle, God selected from among the people of those nations to be the first citizens and primogenitors of the Great Republic he would make in Middle North America. Here, for a noble end, he would that there should be a wide mixing up of nations and races; and he would, also, that it should be of the best of the citizens of all these nations and races.

I have said nothing of the Cavaliers and Gentry of England and France, now popularly supposed to have been the progenitors of all the "First Families" of Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, etc., and for the reason, that the whole thing is a popular delusion. With the exception of a Catholic element in Maryland, and a small, dissipated, shiftless Cavalier element (of men who "left their country for their country's good,") in Virginia, the first citizens of all the States were in common of the general classes of which I have spoken. The foundation stones of this Republic, North and

South, in the Free and in the Slave States, were taken from the same European quarries, and were scattered promiscuously up and down the land. And by migrations and inter-marriages since, the same common character has been maintained. There are now living in the Southern States many thousands who had their birth in the Northern States; and there are now living in the Northern States hundreds of thousands who had their birth in the Southern States. *e. g.* according to the census of 1850 there were 82,000 native-born Virginians living in the State of Ohio. Essentially, North and South, East and West, we are the same heterogeneous people, of all races, of all nationalities, of all classes and conditions of life; whatever differences there are between the inhabitants of the different sections being due to a general diffusion of the blessings of education, or the want of it; and to a connection, direct or incidental, with the institution of slavery, or deliverance from it. Aside from these disturbing influences, (which do not touch the blood,) we are alike, and are one people. This, as to population, is the Republic of the United States. It is a Republic of one new blood, of one peculiar character, of one common language, of one singularly vigorous constitution.

THIRD. *The institutions* of the Republic. And where, under the sun, in any other part of the world, shall we find such institutions? There is the Family. This is not a peculiar American institution, but it has, in America, a peculiar character. It has here all the sacredness it has in England and Scotland, but without their sternness; all the sentiment of Germany, but without her hampering restrictions; all the cheerfulness of France, but without her lightness.—Home, the Family, are words very dear to the true American; in them, while yet a child, are garnered all his most precious things; from them, as he grows up to manhood, flow the choicest blessings of his life; and round them, as he passes into the sere and yellow leaf, cluster his tenderest,

sweetest, holiest associations. It is from the families of the people of the Republic, (the pure, fresh fountains springing up in every nook and corner of the land,) that flow the streams that cheer and bless both Church and State.

And there is the *School*,—(the Common School, the High School, the Academy, the College, the University.) This is not an institution peculiar to America, but it has a peculiar American character. No where else in the world is there such provision made, and made in such a way, for the education of all the children, and young men and women. What other people voluntarily tax themselves to provide schools for the education of all the children of the nation? or give large grants of money and lands to establish colleges and universities? or throw open the doors of the most aristocratic institutions to rich and poor alike on terms of perfect freedom and equality? These are features more or less peculiar to the institution of the school in America. And the results are, such an education of the children of the masses, such a broad and quick intelligence among the people, and such fine culture in those from whom something else might be expected, as is to be found only in this Republic.

And there is the institution of *the Church*: an institution that is the marvel and astonishment of the rest of the Christian world. No connection of the Church with the State. No support of the Church by the State. The Church (*imperium in imperio*,) wholly independent of the State. But where elsewhere is the Church so well sustained, so flourishing, so large, so pure? Here Church members become members on a profession of their faith, uniting with that Church in particular (Methodist, Episcopalian, Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian) that pleases them best. No man commanding this denomination. No man forbidding that. And churches are built, and ministers are supported by voluntary contributions. But where are there so many churches in proportion to the population as here? Where are there

so many costly churches as here? Where are there so many true disciples of Jesus Christ as here? Where are there so many children gathered into Sunday Schools as here? Where are there so many Mission Schools and Churches as here? Where is so much money given to send the Gospel to the heathen and destitute as here? Where is the influence of the Church so strong for good on the world as here? Many such questions might be asked. No where in the world is the Church so large, so strong, so pure, so influential for good, as here in this Republic, where, as no where else, she is untrammelled and free.

And there is the institution of *the State*: hated, maligned, persecuted, by almost every monarchial and aristocratic government of the Old World; but envied also and feared: and the hope, joy and pride of the humble and the good everywhere. Man's greatest and grandest experiment in six thousand years of self-government. A government springing from the people, living in the people, returning to the people. A government having for its corner-stone the law of love laid down by Jesus: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." A government whose sceptre is strong, but light, and seldom seen: a terror to evil-doers only, a praise always to them who do well. A government of law and order, and of equal common rights to all. A government every one of whose privileges and honors, even the highest, is open to the competition and hope of all born under its flag—one class and color alone excepted. A government that honors labor, and gives its munificent rewards to industry and skill.

Here are these four institutions of the Republic: The Family, the School, the Church, the State: and the like of them, for all good and noble qualities, are to be found no where else in all the world.

There is another institution of the Republic, of which I wish I might not speak,—the black, hateful stain, upon her other-

wise stainless escutcheon, *slavery*. But this (the cause of this bloody war, the bane of Church and State for the past thirty years, the curse to all who have given it the kiss of peace and love,) this institution the God of this nation, even Jesus, has taken in hand to afflict and destroy. In its pride of place and power it spake its great swelling words of vanity, and dared to lift up itself against the Republic for its overthrow. But, in the day it did this, this handwriting appeared over against it on the wall of its palace, written by the visible hand of the Invisible: *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*. And who is there who shall put on sackcloth and make lamentation, in that near-coming day in which it shall give up the ghost?

In view of the restoration of the Union, and as incentives to us to give thanks for victories which seem to both ensure and hasten it, I have spoken of the magnificent territory of the Republic, of the singular people of the Republic, and of the unrivalled institutions of the Republic,—the Family, the School, the State.) There are also other things of which I should wish to speak,—of the past glorious history, and of the glorious flag of the Republic,—but I cannot now.

And now let me say, that these things, of which I have spoken, are, under God, the glory and strength of the Republic,—for which she is both feared and admired throughout the world. Divided, made two, we are ruined, and will be the scorn and contempt of the world. But, one, undivided, and united, we may fearlessly face the world, and go on in that career of progress in which we have started, till villages, cities, and cultivated fields stud the land, and a hundred millions of happy people dwell on our soil between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans,—till our commerce has no rival on any sea,—till our institutions command the homage of the civilized world,—till that one word American shall make the bad tremble and the good rejoice wherever spoken the world over. If I shall not, my chil-

dren, I trust, shall see the day when these things shall be. Some things I hope to see myself: I hope to see the restoration of the Union; I hope to see a union of the States, every one of which shall be free; I hope to see the slaves of the slave States, and the colored people of the free States, the free, paid, respected and self-respecting laborers in the shops and fields of the South, having their own schools and churches, and advancing and rising in everything that gives dignity and worth to our common humanity; I hope to see the day when the productions of the cotton and sugar growing States, from paid, free labor, shall be many fold greater than they ever were from unpaid slave labor; I hope to see the day when the rebel slavery-loving, labour-hating aristocrats of the South shall earn their own bread by the sweat of their own brows; I hope to see the day when that sub-negro class of "poor white trash" in the South shall attain to the dignity of free and intelligent white men; I hope to see the day when all sectional strifes and prejudices of States shall cease to exist in the Republic; I hope to see the day when, (as long since in England and France,) State pride shall give way to National pride, and the proud name American override the names of the proudest States; and I hope to see the day when the Christians of the Republic, North and South, shall again see eye to eye, and, hand in hand, shall again work together, in truest union, for the glory of their common Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are some of the things I hope to see following swiftly after the restoration of the Union. And as these are blessings for *all* this people; as they are blessings following from *victories* won by the Army and Navy putting down the rebellion; and as all the victories and all the blessings are from *the good hand of our covenant-keeping God*, let us, as with one heart and voice, say: *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee!*