A Sermon in Memory of Joseph and Dandridge B.P. Mott, Two Brothers Who Died in the Service of Their Country, in the War of the Great Rebellion:

Delivered in the Presbyterian Church of Freeport, Long Island, April 2d, 1865

This document was transcribed from the original by a Reference Librarian in 2013.

This memorial for the two brothers who died in 1864 originally stood in the Freeport Cemetery. After the cemetery closed, the American Legion moved this memorial to Station Park and then moved to Village Hall Park. Years later, it was moved across the street to the corner of Ocean Avenue and Brooklyn Avenue. In the 1990s, this memorial was moved to the grounds of the Freeport Historical Society. The names and war records of Dandridge and Joseph Mott appear on opposite sides of the gravestone-like monument.
A SERMON

IN MEMORY OF

JOSEPH AND DANDRIDGE B. P. MOTT,

TWO BROTHERS,

WHO DIED IN THE SERVICES OF THEIR COUNTRY, IN THE

WAR OF THE GREAT REBELLION

DELIVERED IN THE

Presbyterian Church of Freeport, Long Island,

APRIL 2d, 1865,

BY THE

REV. J. J. A. MORGAN,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HEMPSTEAD

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

HEMPSTEAD:
PRINTED BY LOTT VANDE WATER,
QUEENS COUNTY SENTINEL OFFICE.

1865.


**SERMON.**

“For the Lord will not cast off forever:

“But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

“For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” – *Lamentations*, iii., 31-33.


“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” – 1 *Thess.*, iv., 18.

WHENEVER an occurrence transpires so frequently as to become a matter of common experience and observation, it is but little thought of, and it ceases to exert any material influence upon us. The sun rises daily in the east, and ascends higher and higher in his majestic career until he reaches meridian splendor, and then passes down the western horizon until he disappears entirely from our view. And yet, though the rising and the setting of the sun are among the grandest spectacles to be witnessed anywhere in nature, because they are so common they are little thought of – they are passing in unequalled splendor before our eyes, almost unnoticed.

The same remarks will apply to the seasons – winter and spring, summer and autumn – which succeed each other so admirably, and with so much regularity and precision. The beautiful creations of winter in their frost-work, her fitful winds, her fairy formations of icicle and snow, do not attract out attention, as they would the inhabitant
of some sunny southern clime who should behold them for the first time in his life, because these things are common to us.

The same thing is true of the balmy air – the brilliant beauties of opening spring – the matured glories of summer and autumn – we do not estimate them as we should, because we have become accustomed to them – they are regarded as matters of course.

And the principle which, as has been indicated, we find so influential in the formation of our habits of thought and action in regard to so much that is grand and sublime in nature, will be found also to be operative in regard to almost all the interests involved in the life we now enjoy, as well as the life that is to come hereafter.

And all this is especially true of death. It is a matter of so frequent occurrence that it makes almost no impression upon us. If you will go out to our village graveyards, you may read there the moss-grown records of the multitudes who have lived, and died, and gone down to the grave, in this parish, during the past two hundred years. Look over the crowded habitations of the dead, and back over the history of the past, and remember how often, even within the recollection of many who hear me to-day, the death-telling knell has broken upon quiet and happy homes here – how often the solemn funeral procession has moved along these streets -- how often, and in how many forms, death has made his mark in testimony that all of man that is mortal must yield to his power! And yet, though death has come so often, and has given us so many tokens of the frailty of man and the uncertainty of life – though we may ourselves have bowed down in agony over the dead who have fallen from our own firesides -- yet we will meet each other to-morrow, and the next day, and the next week, and give no sign
of thought or anxiety about death, either as it regards ourselves or others. It seems to be so much a matter of every-day occurrence for men to be carried to their long homes—now this one, and now that one—and for the mourners to go about the streets for a few months because they are dead, that but little, if any, account is made of it.

But to-day, God comes to us by his providence in a way but seldom witnessed in this community. Two young men with the dew of their youth still upon their brows, and in all the freshness and promise of their young lives, hear the call which was addressed by the President of the United States to the men of this country to come forth in her defence [sic] against the enemies which have so cruelly and wickedly assailed her. Their hearts yearn to obey that call; they think with patriotic indignation of the wrongs sought to be inflicted upon us by insensate and infatuated rebels; and while thinking of these things, the love of country burns more and more ardently in their bosoms, day by day, until the irrepressible desire springs up in their souls to dare and to do what they could to stay the bloody purposes of those who are seeking our destruction, and to strike down the traitorous foe.

In obedience to one of the noblest instincts that ever thrilled the heart of man, these noble youth took their places in the ranks of their country’s defenders, and hurried away to the field of conflict and bloodshed. Breaking up the ten thousand associations and ties of affection which bound them to a mother’s heart, to a father beloved, to a sister’s unselfish and undying love, and to brothers younger than they—to all that was precious to them in home and friends—they went to fight, to suffer, and as the sad event has proved, to die for their country.

And what a sacrifice these gallant young men made even in leaving home, in
being separated from loved ones here, we cannot tell – no human tongue can tell.

Perhaps that noble boy, the younger of the two whose memory we honor in these funeral services to-day, could have conveyed to our minds some idea of the sacrifice he had made, if we had been with him when he laid himself down to rest after the long, long agony of the battles of Gettysburg and the Wilderness. Methinks I see him now, almost a child, so young he was, as he lays him down in the trenches, or upon the cold ground, after the last great struggle in these memorable battles was over. He thinks of home, as he passes in review the terrible dangers through which he has passed. He tries to sleep, but he cannot quiet the dreadful commotions which have been excited by the bloody scenes of the day – it is a troubled sleep, and the noble boy talks in his dreams of his mother and home. No, no; we cannot tell what they suffered even in the matter of leaving home to fight the battles of their country. But he could tell better than we. And so could that other poor boy, who, by the fortunes of war and the cruelties of an infamous and barbarous enemy, was appointed to a doom a thousand-fold more awful than death upon the battle-field. Could we have seen him, with forty-two others of his company, marching as prisoners from Ream’s Station to Belle Isle, and from Belle Isle again to Salisbury; could we have seen and known what he suffered – the hope deferred, the heart made sick, the body pining and wasting away from want of the necessaries of life, and at last the agony of death in that hell upon earth; then we could know something of the cost at which the soldiers of the republic are securing for us, an our children after us, the goodly heritage purchased for us by the blood of our fathers.

I cannot, must not lift the curtain, on an occasion like this, to expose to your view the awful atrocities to which our noble men were subjected in Southern prisons, and as
related by eye-witnesses.

We can form some faint imaginings of the thoughts, the memories, the desires, the prayers and the hopes of Joseph Mott, the anguish of body and mind underwent by him in the Salisbury prison. We must not dwell upon these things; it is a painful, revolting subject. He sleeps quietly now – not in a dishonored grave. His name will be recorded full high among the noblest martyrs that have ever died for human rights and the liberty of man. And when in after years the story of this war is told to generations yet unborn, and the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, of the Wilderness and Spottsylvania [sic], of Chatanooga [sic] and Lookout Mountain, are referred to in the spirit of enthusiastic inquiry, this father and mother will experience a chastened but patriotic pride in answering, “I had a boy in each of those dreadful fights.” These brothers and sisters will be proud, fifty years it may be hence, to have the memory of their soldier brothers associated with names and places rendered immortal in history. And then you will gather up whatever relics of these noble boys you have, and tell how the one died in the trenches, with his face to the foe, at the battle of Pine Mountain, Georgia, and how the other was reserved for a worse fate in the charnel house of Salisbury. You will shed tears – you will never cease to shed bitter tears over the dead; but you have the comforting assurance that they were actuated by a noble spirit in doing and suffering what they did. They acted well their part in this great and terrible struggle. No dishonor – no, not even the shadow of dis-honor – rests upon their names. Respected and loved by their officers and comrades – making the last, greatest sacrifice that man can make for his country – they are an honor and a glory to her, and
they are an honor and a glory to you.

This is an unusual occasion – this is an unusual providence. Let us receive, and cherish, and improve the impressions which it is designed to make. God seldom speaks to us so loudly as he does to-day. Let us hear his voice.

Whatever inquiry we may institute in regard to the nature of our afflictions, the doctrine that God does not afflict his people willingly, as taught in the text, is a subject full of interest and comfort. The bereaving providences of God are sent upon us not in wrath – not because he delights in human suffering – but that they may serve as checks and restraints – they are designed to be disciplinary.

And this doctrine, this view of God’s purposes in affliction, will apply to nations as well as individuals. It is as true of the one as of the other, afflictions are always designed to do good; and they will do good in proportion as they are improved. A proper view of this great and bloody conflict in which we are now engaged, is, that under the direction of God we are fighting our way towards a higher and better style of national life than we have ever enjoyed before. There has been, and is yet, much of corruption, much of rottenness everywhere in our government; much that is purely and only dross – so much, that whatever of gold there be, it is almost, if not altogether, hidden from view. But however this may be, I believe there is some gold in this nation, and that it is worth purifying from the mountains of worthless and corrupting dross which envelop it. It is worth all the cost in blood and treasure to which we have been subjected in this heating of the furnace seven times hotter than it has ever been heated before, and into the fierce burning flames of which the hand of Providence has plunged us. Let the dross and the sources of it be effectually purged away and utterly consumed.
by the wrath of Almighty God; all that is worth preserving, the gold, will still remain. The hand of God is unmistakably in these troubles of our; let us have faith and hope that they will result not only in our own improvement, but for the blessing of the world.

In almost any view we may take of it, war is a great calamity; but under God I believe that this unhappy war which has desolated and still continues to desolate this fair and beautiful heritage of ours will be overruled for the greatest good of the country. There were evils among us – evils organic and incidental – which we knew not how to manage, and which have hitherto baffled the skill and the wisdom of the profoundest statesman; and now God interposes for our deliverance in his own way. Seeds of sorrow had been sown which were destined sooner or later to yield their bitter fruit; and now that fruit has matured and ripened, and we are gathering in the harvest to-day. And God only knows how much of the reaping time remains. We have not, as a nation – to our shame be it said – dealt with those deep-seated evils which existed among us, as we ought to have done. We have been content to be dishonored by them in the eyes of the world, and to be placed in a position of antagonism against God. In the wisdom of the great sovereign of nations, then, the calamities under which we are now suffering so sorely are doing for us what we could not, or would not, do for ourselves. They were necessary to place us in a new and improved position in reference to those evils, social and national. To act now for their extermination becomes not only a matter of expediency, but of necessity; and we are driven by the force of circumstances to do, in a few months, more for the removal of some of these evils than we would have done ordinarily, by mere legislation, in a century. It is a process, then, of correction, and not of destruction – a change from the worse to the better. Let us then place our hope and
trust in God, and never despair of the republic.

But it is a consideration of interest, as it is also a source of comfort, that ameliorating circumstances are always to be found in all our afflictions. In no instance since the world was founded has the condition of any man been as bad as it might have been. It has been dark, in the experience of individuals, and in the history of nations, but not all dark: The silver lining has always appeared upon the cloud which has obscured the light.

We see all this in the affliction which has almost desolated one of your homes in this pariah. If either of these young men had noted in a manner unbecoming their character as the soldiers of the republic; if they had wavered in the hour of conflict or fled from the foe on the day of battle; if they had deserted to their homes, or deserted to the enemy – then there would have been cause for the deepest and bitterest anguish. But there was nothing of all this. Indeed, there was just the reverse of all this. They acquitted themselves like men; they died like patriots; and in them you have made a noble, most costly offering upon the altar of your country.

In our deepest afflictions, God does not take our all; there are many blessings which we still retain. In any event, personal or national, what a multitude of mercies are left for us to enjoy! What a country we have for the sustenance, the health, the culture and universal progress of man! What blessings we have enjoyed before, and even since the outbreak of this unhappy war! What grand and striking tokens of God’s favor have been shown to us as a nation, in the nature of our climate and soil, in our civil and religious institutions, and by special providence in all our history since the foundations of this government were laid!
And then, if you will read history in view of our present troubles, you will find that there never have been a people who have made progress without great national afflictions. What scenes of bloody strife and war does the history of Great Britain, for example, present! What horrors of carnage and human slaughter in casting off the bonds of Romanism! What violence of rebellion and revolution she underwent in passing from monarchy to the commonwealth under Cromwell, and from the commonwealth back again to monarchy! In the light of passing events read the history of France, and Spain, and Italy, and Germany, and the less civilized empires of Russia and Turkey, and the lot which has fallen upon us in those days will not appear so hard. In comparison with any of these just mentioned, so far as regards the ravages and havoc of war, we are now, as we have ever been, among the most favored of the nations of the earth.

Let us not, then, as true patriots, grow faint-hearted or discouraged under our afflictions. Indeed, we will not, if we are careful to bear in mind that this war, though so distressing and calamitous in most respects, is working for our deliverance from many evils from which there would seem to be no other way of escape. God blesses us by afflicting us; he secures our stability in the future by shaking and settling our foundations now. Let us be thankful that the nation has been called to pass through this fiery trial in our day, instead of its being left as the heritage of our children. Let a firm trust and hope in God be to us the anchor of our ship of state in this sea of affliction. Clearly as we may look at all that is alarming in our country, and much as there is that might naturally fill us with alarm, we still see great things to hope for as the fruit of this trial. The chastening, the discipline is grievous; but as it ever has been, so will it be now – the
peaceable fruits of righteousness will be proportionally great. If this great sorrow endureth for more than the night, and joy does not come again in the morning, it will be an exception among all the cases in the experience of those who have trusted in the Lord.

Let us, then, be calm, let us retain our self-possession, amid all our national perils, remembering that God is our helper and friend. While our country is shaken to its centre by the strife of arms, and by the plottings of treason, and when a sorrowful wail is heard going up all over the land from ten thousand hearthstones, and men’s hearts so often fail them through fear, how cheering, how inspiring it is, to know that the Lord reigns, that there is a covert and a refuge from the storm to which we may betake ourselves, and a God whose power and goodness never can fail.

M E M O R I A L.

DANDRIDGE B. P. Mott, the younger of the two brothers whose funeral services we observe to-day, was a member of Co. H, 119th Regiment New York Volunteers. He was in the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, and then following up Lee’s retreating army as far as Warren, Va., when the 20th Army Corps, to which his regiment was attached, was ordered to Tennessee. There, under the command of the brave Hooker, fighting his way toward Atlanta, Georgia, nobly doing his duty, and beloved by his officers and his companions in arms, on the 16th of June, 1864, he was killed at Pine Mountain, near Marietta, in Georgia, having served his country in the army for nearly two years, and having never been previously wounded or sick.

At the time of his death he was seventeen years and three months old. He had
been engaged in some twenty-three battles, including the battles already mentioned, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, and the famous battles of Lookout Mountain and Lookout Valley.

The circumstances under which he met his death were, as near as we can learn, as follows: -- The regiment of which he was a member, together with the troops under Sherman, had fought the rebels under Johnson at Pine Mountain all of the day previous, and a good part of the day upon which he was killed, when Johnson gave way. Dandridge then lay down in the trenches, with others, to rest. After sleeping about an hour, he was awakened, and while in the act of arising and reaching for his knapsack, he was struck by a ball from the rifle of a sharpshooter, and died instantly, and without uttering a word.

Orderly Sergeant Cooper, of Hempstead, was with him when he was killed, and assisted in laying him down in his soldier’s grave. He writes about him that “he was loved by all;” “always ready for duty;” and that “there never was a better or a braver soldier.” Kind and dutiful as a son, affectionate as a brother and friend, faithful and true as a soldier, he has fought his last battle, he sleeps in an honored grave.

“Life’s parting beams were in his eye,
   Life’s closing accents on his tongue,
When ‘round him, pealing to the sky,
   The shout of victory rung.

“His was a death whose raptures high
   Transcended all that life could yield.
His warmest prayer was so to die,
   On the red battle-field.

“And they may feel, who loved him most,
   A pride so holy and so pure –
Fate hath no power o’er those who boast
JOSEPH MOTT, the elder of the two brothers, was a member of Co. H, 4th Regiment Heavy Artillery, New York Volunteers. Having served some nineteen months in the fortification around Washington, his regiment joined the army under Gen. Grant in March, 1864, fighting their way to the James River and Petersburg. On the 18th of June he was in the memorable charge on the works of Petersburg, where many of his companions fell. On the 19th of August following, he was taken prisoner at the battle of Ream’s Station, with some forty others who were members of the same company. He was kept awhile at Belle Isle, and afterwards transferred to the rebel prison at Salisbury, North Carolina, where he died in October, 1864, of starvation and exposure, aged nineteen years and six months. Out of the forty-two others who were captured at the same time that he was, only thirteen lived to return to the Union lines.

Joseph was of an amiable disposition. He was a regular attendant of the Sabbath school and the church, when he was at home, and it is believed by those who met with him some time after he entered the army, that he had experienced a change of heart, and that therefore he died in hope.

After being thrown into the Salisbury prison, the rebels starved him for two weeks, with the view of compelling him to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederate government. For two weeks they gave him scarcely anything to eat. But he told them, in the spirit of a true patriot and hero, that he would die before he would take their oath. And when they found he could not be forced to yield to their wicked purposes, they desisted. But then it was too late: he was so far wasted away, that he could not be restored. And so he died.
From the testimony of one of Joseph’s comrades, who was with him in his last illness, and who assisted in burying him after his death, he was prepared to die. He uttered no murmuring word, he was patient under all the indignities and wrongs heaped upon him, and forgave his enemies their cruel treatment of him.

“With proud, fond tears,
By tinge of shame untainted,
Bear him and lay him
Gently in his grave;
Above the here write,
(The young half-sainted),
‘His country asked his life
His life he gave.’ ”