

Transcription Note for James Archer Sermon 4 and 11

Sermons 4 and 11 comprise a related pair. Sermon 11 appears to be a revised and corrected copy of Sermon 4, apparently written in Archer's own hand at some later date. Sermon 11 is a near duplicate of Sermon 4, bearing the identical title and with only minor revisions, most notably, the omission of the opening Latin inscription. Textual alterations were minimal, primarily consisting of the conversion of "you" to "thou," the addition of the suffix "-est" to form the second person singular indicative of the accompanying verb (e.g.; "thou mayest"), and synonymic changes in selected words and phrases. Stylistic modifications involved changes in abbreviation, punctuation, capitalization, and underlining. Sermon 11 has been transcribed in its entirety to include all revisions. Please refer to Sermon 4 for the original draft transcription and annotations.

JAMES ARCHER SERMONS [11]

Luke 23:27–28

A Discourse on the Passion of our L.J.C.

And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women: who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. Words taken out of the 23^C. of S^t Luke & 27th and 28th Vs.

Is not then the Passion of J. C. of which we this day celebrate the august but sorrowful Mystery, the most affecting object, which ought to occupy our minds and excite our grief? Can our tears be possibly more holily and more profitably employed, than in bewailing the death of a Man-God, and that a more urgent and more necessary duty, should, suspend, as I may say, the obligation which gratitude otherwise so justly imposes on us, of compassionating [“compassionating,” i.e.; pitying], with overflowing sentiments of Piety, the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer? Yes my Friends, Jesus Christ, as a proof of

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the most generous and disinterested Charity that ever was, going to Mount Calvary to die for us, admonisheth us not to bewail his death but to bewail a very different object: *Nolite flere super me[,] sed super vos [ipsas] flete*. S^t Ambrose pronouncing the funeral oration of the Emperor Valentinian the younger thought he had duly acquitted himself of his Ministry, and to the full satisfaction of his Auditors, when he had exhorted them to testify by the tribute of their tears, what the [they] owed to this incomparable Prince who had exposed his life and had as it were immolated himself for them. *Solvamus bono Principi stipendiarias lacrymas, qui pro nobis etiam vitæ stipendium solvit*. But I who am about to entertain you on the bitter Death and sufferings of a God, Saviour of mankind, instead of borrowing the words of S^t Ambrose so applicable apposite to my subject, find myself compelled, on the contrary, to say to you: No. My Friends, give not your tears to your dying God, he does not require them, your tears are precious,

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be careful in the employment of them, a subject of greater importance calls for them: Jesus Christ does not only permit you not to bewail his death, but he even expressly forbids you, if this should be an obstacle to your bewailing an evil which more strictly concerns you and which effectually is more deplorable than even the death of the Son of God. I am aware that all creatures became or appeared sensible thereat. The Sun was eclipsed; the earth trembled, the Veil of the Temple was rent, the rocks split assunder, the graves opened and the dead rose again, all nature was troubled: man alone, I repeat it, is dispensed from this duty, provided that he acquit

himself of another which is indeed less tender in appearance but more solid in reality. Let us then leave to the luminary bodies and to the elements, or if you choose to associate with them intellectual creatures, let us leave to the Blessed Angels the care of honouring the funeral obsequies

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of Jesus Christ by the tokens of their mourning [mourning]; the Angels of peace says Isaias, shall weep bitterly. But as for us, let us weep with J.C. let us weep for what Jesus Christ wept: thus we shall sanctify our tears and render them salutary to us.

An evil which in the idea of God is greater than the death of a Man-God, an evil which is more deserving of our tears than all that the Son of God endured in his Passion, you are too enlightened, my D^r [Dear] friends, not to have immediately understood to be that of sin. Nothing among all possible beings beside sin could claim our tears in preference to the sufferings of Jesus Christ and justify the words of God our Saviour, when he said to us with equal truth and Charity: Weep not over me but weep for yourselves: *Nolite flere super me sed super vos*. To obey this command of our Divine Master and to profit of so important advice, let our motive in considering the Mystery

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of his holy passion be, to bewail the disorder of our sins as the cause of it. For if Jesus Christ had suffered independently of our sins, his Passion, however rigorous to him, would not be so dreadful to us; and if our sins had no connexion with his sufferings, they would be less odious to us. It is therefore by sin that we are to measure the inestimable benefit of the Passion of the Son of God, and by the inestimable benefit of his Passion to measure the grievousness of sin. Behold the subject of our tears and of your pious attention.

If what our holy Faith this day represents to us be a thing most wonderful ~~to us~~ in the order of nature, viz: a suffering God; I may confidently affirm that this prodigy, astonishing as it is, is surpassed by that which the same faith discovers to us in the order of grace, when it places before our eyes a penitent God. Such is (O the depths of the Counsels of God)

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such is [phrase duplicated] the quality which the Saviour of the World has been pleased to take upon himself, and which he constantly bore during the whole course of his passion. Such is the Mystery which we celebrate; and since according to the Holy Scripture, true penitence consists in two things, contrition by which we detest sin, and satisfaction by which it is atoned for, when I say a penitent God, I mean a God affected with the most lively contrition for the sins of mankind, I mean a God satisfying at his own cost and in the strict rigour of justice for the sins of men. Two obligations which the Man-God J.C. took upon himself from the first moment of his life, and

which we are going to see if he exactly fulfilled in the day of his Passion. For this purpose I mean to represent him to you in the garden of Olives and on Mount Calvary. In the Garden as a contrite God, feeling all the bitterness of sin. On Calvary where he expired, that you may

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there contemplate in his person a God offering himself a Victim in satisfaction for sin. Renew your attention, and let us begin by the interior pains of J. C. to learn what ought ever to be the subject of our grief.

No sooner had he entered into the garden and applied himself to prayer, than he was so overwhelmed with grief, that he declared to his Disciples that his soul was sorrowful even unto death: *tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem*. He was seized with fear[,] *cœpit pavere*; he was oppressed with heaviness, *cœpit tædere*; so great was the conflict in his interior, that he already suffered a kind of agony, *factus in agonia*, which forced from his sacred body a sweat of blood. What is the meaning of all this asks S^t Chrysostom in a God who is fortitude itself and whose apparent weaknesses are so many Miracles of his all powerful Charity? What doth he fear? Why is he troubled? Why this discouragement? in a soul, which in other

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respects enjoying the clear vision of God, doth not cease to be filled with the pure joys of beatitude? Why this internal war and this revolt of the passions in a mind incapable of being moved by any other springs than those of sovereign reason? Ah! My D^r Friends, this is what we ought well to meditate on for our edification. For to say that the Saviour of the World thus grieved only at the sight of death, that the ignominy alone of the Cross, or the rigour of the torments which they were preparing for him, caused in him these agitations, these disgusts, these mortal fears, would not be to have a sufficient idea of the Passion of a God. No my Brethren, eloquently replies S^t Chrys. this is not what this great Soul was the most afflicted at. The Cross which J.C. had chosen as the instrument of our redemption, did not appear unto him so terrific an object. This Cross which was to be the cause of his

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glory, did not become to him a subject of shame. The Chalice which his Father had given to him, and for which reason was most precious to him, was not that bitter Chalice for which he testified so great an horror: and which forced from all the members of his sacred body a sweat of Blood; it was not precisely the approach of the Mysterious Baptism of his Death. For however bloody was to be this Baptism, he had most earnestly desired it, he had sought it with holy eagerness, he had said to his Apostles: I have a Baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished! S^t Luke 12.50. There was then another cause besides the presence of his death that rendered the soul of our Saviour thus sad and disconsolate. It was sin

as I have already observed; amongst all Beings sin alone was capable of causing this poignant grief in the Man-God, and render the Lord of Glory a suffering and penitent God. Raise your

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minds again My D^r Friends, above all human conceptions, and by the light of Faith attentively consider this great Truth.

Whilst the Chief Priests and Pharisees were holding Council at the House of Caiaphas against Jesus Christ and were preparing to oppress him by false accusations and fictitious Crimes, Jesus Christ in the Garden, humbling and prostrating himself before his Eternal Father, considered himself, without however and [any] prejudice to his innocence, loaded with real crimes and according to the Prophecy of Isaias, which was literally verified in him: Posuit [Dominus] in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaias C. 53 & 6th V. Now in consequence of God having transferred our iniquities upon his adorable Son, this just one who was incapable of sin, found himself loaded with the sins of all states and conditions, yes with all the sacrileges that ever would be committed, and of which

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he had a distinct knowledge; with all the blasphemies that would be uttered against Heaven, with all the scandals and abominations that would be spread over the whole universe. All these iniquities rushed in like a torrent upon him and were to him as so many executioners: Circumdederunt me dolores mortis, saith he, et torrentes iniquitatis conturbaverunt me. The sorrows of death surrounded me: and the torrents of iniquity troubled me. These words of the Psalmist I say are those of J. C. for according to the interpretation of S^t Augustin, they ought to be personally understood of him. It was then at this happy moment for us, but most dolorous to Jesus Christ that the Prophet Jeremy justly said to him; *magna est [enim] velut mare contritio tua.* Ah! Lord, your sorrow is like unto a vast ocean for its fathom less depth and its immeasurable immensity. It was to increase and swell this sea that all the sins of mankind, as the holy Scripture mentions, entered as so many rivers into the soul of the Son of God: for if it is also of his passion and of the excess of his sorrow,

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that this passage is to be understood: Salvum me fac Deus quoniam intraverunt aquæ usque ad animam meam. With this difference however, that the Rivers which flow into the sea, become so blended and intermixed therewith, that the one cannot be distinguished from the other, whereas in this Abyss of sins, in this sea of Dolours, in which the Soul of our Saviour was immersed, he clearly discerned and distinguished every species of sin and those of every individual person. Can it then be surprising that this immense multitude of Crimes, which according to the Metaphor of the Holy Ghost, having formed a deluge of waters in this Blessed Soul, it should be as it were swallowed up thereby? Or in the excess of sadness and grief proceeding from his zeal

for his Father's Glory and his Charity for us, that this deluge of waters should be followed by a sweat of blood? *Factus est sudor ejus sicut guttæ Sanguinis.*

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Behold what I call the contrition of a God, and the first act of his penance. We will at present pass over the perfidy of Judas, and innumerable other outrages, indignities and sufferings of Jesus Christ and proceed to Mount Calvary where he expired: there contemplating in spirit this crucified God, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who according to the expression of the Apostle Heb: 12 having joy proposed to him underwent the Cross, suffering the most cruel and ignominious death. Why was the most innocent of men treated as the most criminal and delivered up to unmerciful executioners? Ah! My Friends, this death was the punishment due to our sins, and whatsoever horror we may conceive for what passed on Mount Calvary, we must acknowledge was justly ordained

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and holily and divinely executed. For we are not this day to consider the Saviour of the World as to what he is in himself, but as to what he voluntarily chose to be, for the love of us: We are not to regard his passion with respect to the Jews, who were only the instruments of it, but with respect to God who was there in the principle Agent and sovereign Disposer. Jesus Christ in himself was the Holy of Holies, he was the well beloved of his Father, the Object of his complacency the Head of the Elect, the Source of all Blessings and incarnate Sanctity: But on Mount Calvary, these qualities were, as I may say eclipsed, he made himself a curse for our sakes, *Factus pro nobis maledictum* and became the propitiation for our sins: *propitiatio pro peccatis* 1st John C. 2. Now having charged himself with our sins, there were no punishments that were not due to Jesus

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Christ; humiliations, affronts, whips, scourges, nails, thorns, and the Cross; for all these were merited by our sins. Considering him in this point of view, did he suffer too much? No, his Charity, says S^t Bernard, was full and abundant but it was not lavished: if he is called the man of sorrows, it is a name, says Tertullian, most applicable to him, since he is the man of sin; we behold him bruised and torn with blows and scourges, but between the number of strokes and the multitude of crimes which he atones for, there is but too great proportion: he is abandoned to a wicked, cruel and barbarous rabble, who add to the sentence of death, all that their fury can suggest; but although they add to the sentence of Pilate, they add nothing to that of God. Whilst then this Divine Lamb is immolated, My D^r Friends, instead of your minds being prepossessed with

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his merit, his sanctity and his virtues, consider him as the victim for your sins. If you represent him to yourselves in this view, charged with all our debts, that flagilation [flagellation] to which he was condemned will no longer appear so offensive to you; those thorns that tear him will no longer wound the delicacy of your piety; those nails that pierced his hands and feet will no longer excite your indignation. My sins, you will say, accusing yourselves thereof, have deserved all these pains; and since Jesus Christ has taken them all upon himself, he must suffer all the punishment due to them. Moreover, on this consideration, the Eternal Father, by a conduct as adorable as it is rigorous, forgetting (if I may be allowed these expressions) forgetting [word duplicated] that he is his Son

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and regarding him as his Enemy, declares himself his persecutor or rather the chief of his persecutors. The Jews made their hatred for him serve as zeal for Religion, to inflict upon his sacred Body all that cruelty could invent; but the cruelty of the Jews did not suffice to punish a man like unto this; a man loaded with all the crimes of the human Race. It was necessary, says S^t Ambrose, that God should have a share therein. Yes My Friends, it was God rather than the Counsel of the Jews that delivered up Jesus Christ. It was by a Decree of the Divine Wisdom that the just one, as though guilty, was delivered into their hands as S^t Peter told them: Definito consilio et præscientia Dei traditum. Act. C.2. It is a true the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law persecuted Jesus Christ unto death;

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but it was not as holy David, divinely inspired said till after the Lord had struck him: They have persecuted him; whom thou hast smitten: Domine quem tu percussisti, persecuti sunt. Until then, they had respected him; until then, however much they were incensed against him, they had not dared to offer any violence to his sacred person. But no sooner hadst thou O God vented thy just wrath against him, than thou gavest them a replevy and they fall upon the innocent prey, reserved for their fury. But by whom was he reserved if not by thee O Lord, who, in their sacrilegious vengeance, didst effect thy own, which was most holy? Long didst thou wait for this victim; it was necessary that thy glory should be repaired, and thy Justice satisfied: this

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thou hadst in view, but seeing in the world no other than weak men and criminal subjects whose sufferings could be of no merit in thy sight, thou didst found thyself in a sort of inability of avenging thyself. This day thou canst do it, for behold a Victim capable of atoning for the sins of a Thousand Worlds, such a Victim as thou desiredst [desirest] and as thou deservedst [deservest]. This Saviour fastened to the Cross, is the Subject, whom thy rigorous Justice had itself prepared. Strike then O Lord, strike, he is ready to receive the strokes of thy just wrath, regard him not as

thy anointed, but cast thine eyes upon him only to remind thee that he is our Host or victim, and that in immolating him, thou mayest satisfy that Divine hatred which thou hast for Sin. But God is not

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satisfied with striking him, but he abandons him, in the midst of his sufferings, to so great interior desolation that he crieth *Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?* My God. My God, why hast thou forsaken me? S^t Matt. 27. He does not however use these words that he may be delivered from his sufferings, but he thereby shews us the rigour of the Divine Justice, which required that he should suffer such excessive torments. Now in all this procedure of God, there can be nothing but what is perfectly consonant with the Rules of Equity. No, saith S^t Augustine, there never was a death more just and at the same time more unjust, that that of our Redeemer: more unjust with respect to men who were the executioners, and more just with respect to God who passed the sentence.

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Behold, My D^r Friends what sin has cost our Blessed Lord. Reflect how great is the difference between his sorrow and satisfaction for it and ours; that he was innocent and we are the guilty, and you will see with how great reason he says to us: weep not over me but weep but over yourselves. Let us then, in consideration of the sufferings of our Dear Redeemer, conceive the greatest horror and sovereign hatred and detestation for sin which was the cause of them. Let us willingly accept of whatever Crosses and afflictions God may require of us in satisfaction for them. If he were to exact of each of us what he did of his beloved Son, we should have no cause to complain.

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But, O infinite Mercy and Bounty of our God! Almost all the punishment is inflicted on his adorable Son, and favours are heaped upon us. His blood is shed; ours is not required: we have only to offer up his and apply it to us by means of the Holy Sacraments which he has established, unite ourselves to him, be diligent in the holy exercise of prayer, resignedly receive the light afflictions which the Divine Providence may please to send us, and the penances which the Church & Religion enjoin us, in union with the sufferings of our Blessed Redeemer; and through his merits, we shall come to the possession of that Glory which he

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purchased for us at such an immense price. A happiness which I sincerely wish. In the Name of the Father &c [etc.]