

# Parables of Jesus

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To understand a parable we first must listen to the story. We need to appreciate how its various details support the focus of the whole. For instance; the words describing the fate of each of the seeds that did not bear fruit (devoured, scorched, choked) have terrifying overtones. This is a story about the reception of seed in various soils. The three examples of multiplied fruitfulness balance the former three examples of fruitlessness. By their concluding position the multiplied fruitfulness of the good soil offers hope in contrast to the devastation where the Word does not take root. The interpretation in each of the Synoptic fits the story perfectly: a person's destiny depends on his or her response to the Word. It both offers hope and warns of devastation to those who will not accept the message. Such a combination of cursing and blessing seems to have been typical of Jesus' contrast parables: eschatological blessing for those who respond properly to God's invitation, but cursing for those who do not. (Red are the Words of Jesus, Blue are Comments)

## The Two Buildings (May 27 A.D.)

**"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."** (Matt 7:24-27)

**"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."** (Luke 6:46-49)

By the similitude of two builders our Lord warns his followers that to have heard his words will have been useless unless they put them into practice. Observe that although the word "hear" in these verses cannot indicate that full "hearing" which it sometimes connotes (Matt 10:14), yet it seems to mean more than merely listening, and to imply both a grasp of what is intended by the statements made and at least some acquiescence in their truth (Acts 2:22; Rev 1:3; John 5:24). According to the above explanation, it will be seen that in the imagery the rock represents practice; the sand, mere sentiment. There is thus a partial correspondence with the works insisted on by St. James in contrast to a bare orthodox faith (James 2:24). Assent is insufficient; there must be action. Not uncommonly, indeed, the rock is considered to refer to the Lord himself, and the sand to human effort.

## Children in the Marketplace (June 27 A.D.)

**"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' But wisdom is proved right by her actions."** (Matt 11:16-19)

**"To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, He has a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." But wisdom is proved right by all her children."** (Luke 7:31-35)

It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. There are two ways of understanding the illustration which our Lord here uses. Many modern commentators insist on the grammar and on the historical order in which the complaints are made, and believe that the Jews correspond to the pipers and the mourners, while it is John that refuses to rejoice, and our Lord that will not be sad. But the more usual interpretation is preferable. For in an illustrative saying one has chiefly to regard its general sense; in verses 18, 19 the action of John and of our Lord in "coming" corresponds to the activity of the children; this interpretation seems much more in accordance with the context. The verses are therefore to be understood as meaning- John mourned in urging repentance, our Lord rejoiced in gospel liberty and preaching, but both alike were only ridiculed by the Jews.

### **The Two Insolvent Debtors (June 27 A.D.)**

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is-that she is a sinner." Jesus answered him, **"Simon, I have something to tell you."** "Tell me, teacher," he said. **"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"** Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." **"You have judged correctly,"** Jesus said. (Luke 7:36-43)

This lending and borrowing was ever a prominent feature in the common life of the Jews. Pointed warnings against greed and covetousness, and the habit of usury, and the love of perpetual trafficking, we find in all the Old Testament books, notably in Deuteronomy, and then centuries later in the Proverbs, besides repeated instances in the prophetic writings and historical books. The character of the Jews in this respect has never changed from the days of their nomad life - from the times of their slavery under the Pharaohs to our own day. In this particular instance the two debtors were of the common folk, the sums in question being comparatively small; but in both cases the debtors could never hope to pay their creditors. They were alike hopelessly insolvent, both helplessly bankrupt. The larger sum, considering the relative value of money, has been computed only to have represented about £50 of our currency. And the two received from their creditor a free, generous acquaintance of the debt which would have hopelessly ruined them. In the mind of Jesus the larger debt pictured the terrible catalogue of sins which the penitent woman acknowledged she had committed; the smaller, the few transgressions which even the Pharisee confessed to having been guilty of.

### **The Unclean Spirit (Oct 27 A.D.)**

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." He answered, **"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."** (Matt 12:38-45)

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The Pharisees try to trick Jesus by complimenting Him with the title of Teacher, pretending respect for him, when they intended to abuse him; all are not indeed Christ's servants, who call him Teacher. Their request is, we would see a sign from thee. It was highly reasonable that they should see a sign, that he should by miracles prove his divine mission: see Ex 4:8-9. He came to take down a model of religion that was set up by miracles, and therefore it was requisite he should produce the same credentials; but it was highly unreasonable to demand a sign now, when he had given so many signs already, that did abundantly prove him sent of God. Note, it is natural to proud men to prescribe to God, and then to make that an excuse for not subscribing to him; but a man's offence will never be his defense. He condemns the demand, as the language of an evil and adulterous generation, He fastens the charge, not only on the scribes and Pharisees, but the whole nation of the Jews; they were all like their leaders, a seed and succession of evil-doers: they were an evil generation indeed, that not only hardened themselves against the conviction of Christ's miracles, but set themselves to abuse him, and put contempt on his miracles. He refuses to give them any other sign than he has already given them, but that of the prophet Jonas. Note, Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and humors. Those who ask amiss, ask, and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them for the confirmation of their faith, as to Abraham and Gideon; but were denied to those who demanded them for the excuse of their unbelief. They shall have one sign of a different kind from all these, and that is, the resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power, called here the sign of the prophet Jonas this was yet reserved for their conviction, and was intended to be the great proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for by that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom 1:4. That was such a sign as surpassed all the rest, completed and crowned them. "If they will not believe the former signs, they will believe this (Ex 4:9), and if this will not convince them, nothing will." And yet the unbelief of the Jews found out an evasion to shift off that too, by saying, His disciples came and stole him away; for none are so incurably blind as those who are resolved they will not see. As Jonah on the third day was discharged from his prison, and came to the land of the living again, from the congregation of the dead (for dead things are said to be formed from under the waters, Job 26:5), so Christ on the third day should return to life, and rise out of his grave to send abroad the gospel to the Gentiles.

### **The Rich Mans Meditation (Oct 27 A.D.)**

And he told them this parable: **"The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops. 'Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' 'But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 'This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.'" (Luke 12:16-21)**

He had a whole country to himself, a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for the king himself is served by the field, Eccl 5:9. He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, the fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully to wicked men, to whom it is a snare, that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us. Here are the workings of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for it. He is both a discerner and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are hid and thoughts are free.

### **The Barren Fig Tree (Oct 27 A.D.)**

**"A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'" (Luke 13:6-9)**

And then, without any further prelude, Jesus spoke this parable of the barren fig tree, which contained, in language scarcely veiled at all, warnings to Israel as a nation - the most somber and threatening he had yet given utterance to. "Hear, O people," said the Master. "In the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is a fig tree, long planted there, but utterly unfruitful. It is now on its last trial; indeed, were it not for the intercession of the Gardener, the Lord of the vineyard had already pronounced its final doom." "The very intercession, though, is ominous; the Vinedresser shows his mercifulness by deprecating immediate cutting down, but the careful specification of conditions, and the limitation of the period within which experiments are to be made, intimate that peril is imminent... The restriction of the intercession of the Vinedresser for a single year's grace indicates Christ's own sympathy with this Divine rigor. The Vinedresser knows that, though God is long-suffering, yet his patience as exhibited in the history of his dealings with men is exhaustible, and that in Israel's case it is now all but worn out. And he sympathizes with the Divine impatience with chronic and incurable sterility". A fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. It is not an uncommon practice to plant fig trees at the corners of vineyards, thus utilizing every available spot of ground. Still the Lord's choice of a fig tree as the symbol of Israel, the chosen people, is at first sight strange. This image was no doubt selected to show those Pharisees and other Jews, proud of what they considered their unassailable position as the elect of the Eternal, that, after all, the position they occupied was but that of a fig tree in the corner of the vineyard of the world - planted there and watched over so long as it promised to serve the Lord of the vineyard's purpose; if it ceased to do that, if it gave no further promise of fruit, then it would be ruthlessly cut down.

### **The Sower and the Seed – A Parable Explained by Jesus (Oct 27 A.D.)**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: **"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop-a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear."** The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" He replied, **"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke**

**it, making it unfruitful. But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."**  
(Matt 13:1-23)

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**"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."** (Luke 8:5-8)

This parable is explained but it is important to also look at why it was explained. The disciples were a little surprised at it, for hitherto, in his preaching, he had not much used them, and therefore they ask, Why speakest thou to them in parables? Because they were truly desirous that the people might hear with understanding. They do not say, Why speakest thou to us? (they knew how to get the parables explained) but to them. Note, we ought to be concerned for the edification of others, as well as for our own, by the word preached; and if ourselves be strong, yet to bear the infirmities of the weak. To this question Christ answers largely, where he tells them, that therefore he preached by parables, because thereby the things of God were made more plain and easy to them who were willingly ignorant; and thus the gospel would be a savour of life to some, and of death to others. A parable, like the pillar of cloud and fire, turns a dark side towards Egyptians, which confounds them, but a light side towards Israelites, which comforts them, and so answers a double intention. The same light directs the eyes of some, but dazzles the eyes of others. It is mans quest to always search for answer, but parables drive the believers to search for the answers in God's Word will non believers will be lost in its meaning.

### **The Tares (Oct 27 A.D.)**

Jesus told them another parable: **"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"** (Matt 13:24-30)

[See Weeds of the Field Explained by Jesus](#)

### **Weeds in the Field Explained by Jesus (Oct 27 A.D.)**

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He answered, **"The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.** (Matt 13:36-43)



All these things he spoke in parables, because the time was not yet come for the more clear and plain discoveries of the mysteries of the kingdom. Christ, to keep the people attending and expecting, preached in parables, and without a parable spoke he not unto them; namely, at this time and in this sermon. Note, Christ tries all ways and methods to do good to the souls of men, and to make impressions upon them; if men will not be instructed and influenced by plain preaching, he will try them with parables; and the reason here given is, that the scripture might be fulfilled. The matter of Christ's preaching; he preached things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. The mystery of the gospel had been hid in God, in his councils and decrees, from the beginning of the world. Eph 3:9. Compare Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7; Col 1:26. If we delight in the records of ancient things, and in the revelation of secret things, how welcome should the gospel be to us, which has in it such antiquity and such mystery! It was from the foundation of the world wrapped up in types and shadows, which are now done away; and those secret things are now become such things revealed as belong to us and to our children, Deut 29:29.

The manner of Christ's preaching; he preached by parables; wise sayings, but figurative, and which help to engage attention and a diligent search. Solomon's sententious dictates, which are full of similitudes, are called proverbs, or parables; it is the same word; but in this, as in other things, Behold a greater than Solomon is here, in whom are hid treasures of wisdom.

### **The Seed (Oct 27 A.D.)**

He also said, **"This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."** Again he said, **"What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."** (Mark 4:26-32)

The good seed of the gospel sown in the world, and sown in the heart, doth by degrees produce wonderful effects, but without noise; So is the kingdom of God; so is the gospel, when it is sown, and received, as seed in good ground. It will come up; though it seems lost and buried under the clods, it will find or make its way through them. The seed cast into the ground will spring. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will show itself, as the wisdom from above doth in a good conversation. After a field is sown with corn, how soon is the surface of it altered! How gay and pleasant doth it look, when it is covered with green!

### **The Mustard Seed (Oct 27 A.D.)**

He told them another parable: **"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."** (Matt 13:31-32)

Again he said, **"What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."** (Mark 4:30-32)

Then Jesus asked, **"What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches."** (Luke 13:18-19)

The scope of this parable is to show, that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but that its latter end would greatly increase. In this way the gospel church, the kingdom of God among us, would be set up in the world; in this way the work of grace in the heart, the kingdom of God within us, would be carried on in particular persons. Now concerning the work of the gospel, observe that it is commonly very weak and small at first, like a grain of mustard-seed, which is one of the least of all seeds. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was now in the setting up,

made but a small figure; Christ and the apostles, compared with the grandees of the world, appeared like a grain of mustard-seed, the weak things of the world. In particular places, the first breaking out of the gospel light is but as the dawning of the day; and in particular souls, it is at first the day of small things, like a bruised reed. A grain of mustard-seed is small, but however it is seed, and has in it a disposition to grow. Gracious habits confirmed and knowledge more clear, faith more confirmed, love more inflamed; here is the seed growing.

### **The Leaven (Yeast) (Oct 27 A.D.)**

He told them still another parable: **"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."** (Matt 13:33)

Again he asked, **"What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."** (Luke 13:20-21)

The scope of this is much the same with that of the foregoing parable, to show that the gospel should prevail and be successful by degrees, but silently and insensibly; the preaching of the gospel is like leaven, and works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it. 1. A woman took this leaven; it was her work. Ministers are employed in leavening places, in leavening souls, with the gospel. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we have this treasure in such vessels. The leaven was hid in three measures of meal. The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the tender heart that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn ungrounded does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumiliated and unbroken for sin: the law grinds the heart, and then the gospel leavens it. It is three measures of meal, a great quantity, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The meal must be kneaded, before it receive the leaven; our hearts, as they must be broken, so they must be moistened, and pains taken with them to prepare them for the word, that they may receive the impressions of it. The leaven must be hid in the heart (Ps 119:11), not so much for secrecy (for it will show itself) as for safety; our inward thought must be upon it, we must lay it up, as Mary laid up the sayings of Christ, Luke 2:51. When the woman hides the leaven in the meal, it is with an intention that it should communicate its taste and relish to it; so we must treasure up the word in our souls, that we may be sanctified by it, John 17:17.

### **The Candle - Light of Christ (Oct 27 A.D.)**

**"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.** (Matt 5:14-16)

He said to them, **"Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."** (Mark 4:21-23)

**"No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."** (Luke 8:16-18)

**"No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."** (Luke 11:33-36)

After speaking of the moral tone that the disciples were to give to the world, in contrast to sin in its corrupting power, Christ refers to them as enlightening, in contrast to sin as darkness and ignorance. Our Lord further

naturally exchanges the term "the earth" (which from its strong materialism had suited the figure of the salt) for "the world" - a phrase which must, indeed, as regards the disciples, be limited to this earth, but as regards the light, need not be limited to less than the solar system. In other words, the simple reason why he exchanges "earth" for "world" is that they are respectively the best suited to the figure employed. Notice that Christ never applies the former figure, of salt, to himself; but the latter, of light, once or twice, especially John 8:12, where, since he is speaking of himself, and not of others, he adds the thought of life being connected with light, a city, etc.; literally, a city cannot be hid when set on a mountain.

### **The Hidden Treasures (Oct 27 A.D.)**

**"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. (Matt 13:44)**

Jesus Christ is the true Treasure; in him there is an abundance of all that which is rich and useful, and will be a portion for us: all fullness (Col 1:19; John 1:16): treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3), of righteousness, grace, and peace; these are laid up for us in Christ; and, if we have an interest in him, it is all our own. The gospel is the field in which this treasure is hid: it is hid in the word of the gospel, both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament gospel.

### **The Pearl of great Price (Oct 27 A.D.)**

**"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. (Matt 13:45-46)**

All the children of men are busy, seeking goodly pearls: one would be rich, another would be honorable, another would be learned; but the most are imposed upon, and take up with counterfeits for pearls. Jesus Christ is a Pearl of great price, a Jewel of inestimable value, which will make those who have it rich, truly rich, rich toward God; in having him, we have enough to make us happy here and for ever. A true Christian is a spiritual merchant, that seeks and finds this pearl of price; that does not take up with any thing short of an interest in Christ, and, as one that is resolved to be spiritually rich, trades high: He went and bought that pearl; did not only bid for it, but purchased it. What will it avail us to know Christ, if we do not know him as ours, made to us wisdom? 1 Cor 1:30. Those who would have a saving interest in Christ must be willing to part with all for him, leave all to follow him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though ever so dear to us.

### **The Net (Oct 27 A.D.)**

**"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. (Matt 13:47-48)**

The world is a vast sea, and the children of men are things creeping innumerable, both small and great, in that sea, Ps 104:25. Men in their natural state are like the fishes of the sea that have no ruler over them, Hab 1:14. The preaching of the gospel is the casting of a net into this sea, to catch something out of it, for his glory who has the sovereignty of the sea. Ministers are fishers of men, employed in casting and drawing this net; and then they speed, when at Christ's word they let down the net; otherwise, they toil and catch nothing. This net gathers of every kind, as large dragnets do. In the visible church there is a deal of trash and rubbish, dirt and weeds and vermin, as well as fish.

### **The Householder (Oct 27 A.D.)**

**"This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." (Matt 13:49-52)**



The occasion of it was the good proficiency which the disciples had made in learning, and their profiting by this sermon in particular. He asked them, "Have ye understood all these things?" Intimating, that if they had not, he was ready to explain what they did not understand. It is therefore good for us, when we have read or heard the word, to examine ourselves, or to be examined, whether we have understood it or not. They answered him, Yea, Lord: and we have reason to believe they said true, because, when they did not understand, they asked for an explication. And the exposition of that parable was a key to the rest. The scope of the parable itself was to give his approbation and commendation of their proficiency. Note, Christ is ready to encourage willing learners in his school, though they are but weak; and to say, well done, well said.

### **The Marriage (Nov 27 A.D.)**

Jesus answered, **"How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.** (Matt 9:15)

Jesus answered, **"How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.** (Mark 2:19-20)

Jesus answered, **"Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."** (Luke 5:34-35)

Observe that of the three accounts St. Matthew's points out the most clearly that the objection originated with the disciples of John the Baptist. Perhaps St. Matthew found these possessing special influence in the part for which his Gospel was primarily intended. So also St. John thought it desirable to recall the teaching of the Master, that while he himself was the Bridegroom, the Baptist was only subordinate (John 3:29). On the survival of the teaching of John the Baptist, and the greater importance of its professed adherents during the apostolic age than is usually supposed. The disciples of Christ were the children of the bride-chamber, invited to the wedding-feast, and welcome there; the disciples of the Pharisees were not so, but children of the bond-woman (Gal 4:25,31), continuing under a dispensation of darkness and terror. The Disciples of Christ had the bridegroom with them, which the disciples of John had not; their master was now cast into prison, and lay there in continual danger of his life, and therefore it was seasonable for them to fast often. Such a day would come upon the Disciples of Christ, when the bridegroom should be taken from them, when they should be deprived of his bodily presence, and then should they fast. The thoughts of parting grieved them when he was going, John 16:6. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of his Church, and his disciples are the children of the bride-chamber. Christ speaks of himself to John's disciples under this similitude, because that John had used it, when he called himself a friend of the bridegroom, John 3:29. And if they would by this hint call to mind what their master then said, they would answer themselves. The condition of those who are the children of the bride-chamber is liable to many changes and alterations in this world; they sing of mercy and judgment.

### **The Patched Garment (Nov 27 A.D.)**

**"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse.** (Matt 9:16)

**"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."** (Mark 2:21-22)

He told them this parable: **"No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins**

**will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"** (Luke 5:36-39)

This is set forth in two similitudes, one of putting new cloth into an old garment, which does but pull the old to pieces; the other of putting new wine into old bottles, which does but burst the bottles. Some duties of religion are harder and more difficult than others, like new cloth and new wine, which require most intenseness of mind, and are most displeasing to flesh and blood; such are religious fasting and the duties that attend it. The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy; all the trees in Christ's garden are not of a growth, nor all his scholars in the same form; there are babes in Christ and grown men.

### **The Wine Bottles (Nov 27 A.D.)**

**Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."** (Matt 9:17)

**And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."** (Mark 2:22)

**And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"** (Luke 5:37-39)

See The Patched Garment

### **The Harvest (Jan 28 A.D.)**

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, **"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."** (Matt 9:35-38)

**He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road."** (Luke 10:2-4)

All that love Christ and souls, should show it by their earnest prayers to God, especially when the harvest is plenteous, that he would send forth more skillful, faithful, wise, and industrious laborers into his harvest; that he would raise up such as he will own in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; would give them a spirit for the work, call them to it, and succeed them in it; that he would give them wisdom to win souls; that he would thrust forth laborers, so some; intimating unwillingness to go forth, because of their own weakness and the people's badness, and opposition from men, that endeavor to thrust them out of the harvest; but we should pray that all contradiction from within and from without, may be conquered and got over. Christ puts his friends upon praying this, just before he sends apostles forth to labor in the harvest.

### **The Adversary (May 28 A.D.)**

**"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."** (Matt 5:25-26)

**"Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you**

**over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny." (Luke 12:57-59)**

If the offence we have done to our brother, in his body, goods, or reputation, be such as will bear action, in which he may recover considerable damages, it is our wisdom, and it is our duty to our family, to prevent that by a humble submission and a just and peaceable satisfaction; lest otherwise he recover it by law, and put us to the extremity of a prison. In such a case it is better to compound and make the best terms we can, than to stand it out; for it is in vain to contend with the law, and there is danger of our being crushed by it. Many ruin their estates by an obstinate persisting in the offences they have given, which would soon have been pacified by a little yielding at first. Solomon's advice in case of surety ship is, Go, humble thyself, and so secure and deliver thyself, Prov 6:1-5. It is good to agree, for the law is costly. Though we must be merciful to those we have advantage against, yet we must be just to those that have advantage against us, as far as we are able. "Agree, and compound with thine adversary quickly, lest he be exasperated by thy stubbornness, and provoked to insist upon the utmost demand, and will not make thee the abatement which at first he would have made." A prison is an uncomfortable place to those who are brought to it by their own pride and prodigality, their own willfulness and folly. Upon a spiritual account, "Go, and be reconciled to thy brother, be just to him, be friendly with him, because while the quarrel continues, as thou art unfit to bring thy gift to the altar, unfit to come to the table of the Lord, so thou art unfit to die: if thou persist in this sin, there is danger lest thou be suddenly snatched away by the wrath of God, whose judgment thou canst not escape nor except against; and if that iniquity be laid to thy charge, thou art undone for ever." Hell is a prison for all that live and die in malice and uncharitable ness, for all that are contentious (Rom 2:8), and out of that prison there is no rescue, no redemption, no escape, to eternity.

### **The Two Debtors (Sep 28 A.D.)**

**"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (Matt 18:23-35)**

The master's wonderful clemency to his servant who was indebted to him; he forgave him ten thousand talents, out of pure compassion to him. Every sin we commit is a debt to God; not like a debt to an equal, contracted by buying or borrowing, but to a superior; like a debt to a prince when a recognizance is forfeited, or a penalty incurred by a breach of the law or a breach of the peace; like the debt of a servant to his master, by withholding his service, wasting his lord's goods, breaking his indentures, and incurring the penalty. We are all debtors; we owe satisfaction, and are liable to the process of the law. There is an account kept of these debts, and we must shortly be reckoned with for them. This king would take account of his servants. God now reckons with us by our own consciences; conscience is an auditor for God in the soul, to call us to account, and to account with us. One of the first questions that an awakened Christian asks, is, How much owest thou unto my Lord? And unless it be bribed, it will tell the truth, and not write fifty for a hundred. There is another day of reckoning coming, when these accounts will be called over, and either passed or disallowed, and nothing but the blood of Christ will balance the account. The debt of sin is a very great debt; and some are more in debt, by reason of sin, than others. When he began to reckon, one of the first defaulters appeared to owe ten thousand talents. There is no evading the enquiries of divine justice; your sin will be sure to find you out. The debt was ten thousand talents, a vast sum, amounting by

computation to one million eight hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds sterling; a king's ransom or a kingdom's subsidy, more likely than a servant's debt.

### **The Good Samaritan (Oct 28 A.D.)**

In reply Jesus said: **"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have. "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"** The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, **"Go and do likewise."** (Luke 10:30-37)

The honest man was traveling peaceably upon his lawful business in the road, and it was a great road that led from Jerusalem to Jericho. The mentioning of those places intimates that it was matter of fact, and not a parable; probably it happened lately, just as it is here related. The occurrences of Providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them, and would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and be more affecting. This poor man fell among thieves. Whether they were Arabians, plunderers, that lived by spoil, or some profligate wretches of his own nation, or some of the Roman soldiers, who, notwithstanding the strict discipline of their army, did this villainy, does not appear; but they were very barbarous; they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and, that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition (for otherwise what profit was there in his blood?) they wounded him, and left him half dead, ready to die of his wounds. We may here conceive a just indignation at highwaymen, that have divested themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute beasts, beasts of prey, made to be taken and destroyed; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on those that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready, when it is in our power, to help them. What reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers! How he was slighted by those who should have been his friends, who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest and the other a Levite, men of a public character and station; nay, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion (Heb 5:2), who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case as this, which was to deliver them that were drawn unto death; yet they would not themselves do it. They came this way, and saw the poor wounded man. It is probable that they heard his groans, and could not but perceive that if he were not helped he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but came and looked on him. But they passed by on the other side; when they saw his case, they got as far off him as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, Behold, we knew it not. It is sad when those who should be examples of charity are prodigies of cruelty, and when those who should by displaying the mercies of God, open the bowels of compassion in others, shut up their own.

See how friendly this Good Samaritan was. First, He went to the poor man, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from; he enquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and condoled with him. Secondly, He did the surgeon's part, for want of a better. He bound up his wounds, making use of his own linen, it is likely, for that purpose; and poured in oil and wine, which perhaps he had with him; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up. He did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril, of his wounds, as one whose heart bled with him. Thirdly, He set him on his own beast, and went on foot himself, and brought him to an inn. A great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all the conveniences for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hindrance, would have got that night to his journey's end; but, in compassion to that poor man, he takes up short at an inn. Some think that the priest and Levite pretended they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose the Samaritan went upon business; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this. Fourthly, He took care of him

in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and, it may be, prayed with him. Nay, Fifthly, As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to be laid out for his use, and passed his word for what he should spend more.

### **The Three Loaves (Nov 28 A.D.)**

Then he said to them, **"Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. 'Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.** (Luke 11:5-8)

Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a loaf or two of bread of a neighbor, at an unseasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him. His neighbor will be loath to accommodate him, for he has wakened him with his knocking, and put him out of humor, and he has a great deal to say in his excuse. The door is shut and locked, his children are asleep in bed, in the same room with him, and, if he makes a noise, he shall disturb them. His servants are asleep, and he cannot make them hear; and, for his own part, he shall catch cold if he rises to give him. But his neighbor will have no nay, and therefore he continues knocking still, and tells him he will do so till he has what he comes for; so that he must give it to him, to be rid of him: He will rise, and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity. He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that in Luke 18:1: That men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity; we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels. We prevail with men by importunity because they are displeased with it, but with God because he is pleased with it

- We must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbor or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him.

- We must come for bread, for that which is needful, and which we cannot be without.

- We must come to him by prayer for others as well as for ourselves. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord accepted Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42:10. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do good, to feed many with our lips, to entertain and edify those that come to us.

- We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait that we have not brought ourselves into by our own folly and carelessness, but Providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread if his friend had not come in unexpectedly. The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence.

- We ought to continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

### **The True Sheperd (Nov 28 A.D.)**

**"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."** Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. Therefore Jesus said again, **"I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. "I am the good sheperd. The good**



**shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:1-16)**

Here is the parable or similitude propose; it is borrowed from the custom of that country, in the management of their sheep. Similitudes, used for the illustration of divine truths, should be taken from those things that are most familiar and common, that the things of God be not clouded by that which should clear them. The preface to this discourse is solemn: Verily, verily, I say unto you,-Amen, amen. This vehement asseveration intimates the certainty and weight of what he said; we find amen doubled in the church's praises and prayers, Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52. If we would have our amens accepted in heaven, let Christ's amens be prevailing on earth; his repeated amens.

In the parable we have,

- The evidence of a thief and robber that comes to do mischief to the flock, and damage to the owner, v. 1. He enters not by the door, as having no lawful cause of entry, but climbs up some other way, at a window, or some breach in the wall. How industrious are wicked people to do mischief! What plots will they lay, what pains will they take, what hazards will they run, in their wicked pursuits! This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of God.

- The character that distinguishes the rightful owner, who has a property in the sheep, and a care for them: He enters in by the door, as one having authority (v. 2), and he comes to do them some good office or other, to bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick, Ezek 34:16. Sheep need man's care, and, in return for it, are serviceable to man (1 Cor 9:7); they clothe and feed those by whom they are coted and fed.

- The ready entrance that the shepherd finds: To him the porter openeth, v. 3. Anciently they had their sheepfolds within the outer gates of their houses, for the greater safety of their flocks, so that none could come to them the right way, but such as the porter opened to or the master of the house gave the keys to.

- The care he takes and the provision he makes for his sheep. The sheep hear his voice, when he speaks familiarly to them, when they come into the fold, as men now do to their dogs and horses; and, which is more, he calls his own sheep by name, so exact is the notice he takes of them, the account he keeps of them; and he leads them out from the fold to the green pastures; and (v. 4-5) when he turns them out to graze he does not drive them, but (such was the custom in those times) he goes before them, to prevent any mischief or danger that might meet them, and they, being used to it, follow him, and are safe.

- The strange attendance of the sheep upon the shepherd: They know his voice, so as to discern his mind by it, and to distinguish it from that of a stranger (for the ox knows his owner, Isa 1:3), and a stranger will they not follow, but, as suspecting some ill design, will flee from him, not knowing his voice, but that it is not the voice of their own shepherd. This is the parable; we have the key to it, Ezek 34:31: You my flock are men, and I am your God.

Let us observe from this parable,

- That good men are fitly compared to sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called the sheep of his pasture. Good men, as new creatures, have the good qualities of sheep, harmless and inoffensive as sheep; meek and quiet, without noise; patient as sheep under the hand both of the shearer and of the butcher; useful and profitable, tame and tractable, to the shepherd, and sociable one with another, and much used in sacrifices.

- The church of God in the world is a sheepfold, into which the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered together (John 11:52), and in which they are united and incorporated; it is a good fold, Ezek 34:14. See Mic 2:12. This fold is well fortified, for God himself is as a wall of fire about it, Zech 2:5.

- This sheepfold lies much exposed to thieves and robbers; crafty seducers that debauch and deceive, and cruel persecutors that destroy and devour; grievous wolves (Acts 20:29); thieves that would steal Christ's sheep from him, to sacrifice them to devils, or steal their food from them, that they might perish for lack of it; wolves in sheep's clothing, Matt 7:15.

- The great Shepherd of the sheep takes wonderful care of the flock and of all that belong to it. God is the great Shepherd, Ps 23:1. He knows those that are his calls them by name, marks them for himself, leads them out to fat pastures, makes them both feed and rest there, speaks comfortably to them, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, to set them in the way of his steps.

- The under-shepherds, who are entrusted to feed the flock of God, ought to be careful and faithful in the discharge of that trust; magistrates must defend them, and protect and advance all their secular interests; ministers must serve them in their spiritual interests, must feed their souls with the word of God faithfully opened and applied, and with gospel ordinances duly administered, taking the oversight of them. They must enter by the door of a regular ordination, and to such the porter will open; the Spirit of Christ will set before them an open door, give them authority in the church, and assurance in their own bosoms. They must know the members of their flocks by name, and watch over them; must lead them into the pastures of public ordinances, preside among them, be their mouth to God and God's to them; and in their conversation must be examples to the believers.

### **The Strait Gate (Feb 29 A.D.)**

**"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.** (Matt 7:13-14)

He said to them, **"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us. 'But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.** (Luke 13:23-25)

We must make Christianity our business, and be intent upon it; we must be strict and circumspect in our conversation, which is here represented to us as entering in at a strait gate, and walking on in a narrow way. The account that is given of the bad way of sin, and the good way of holiness. There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking: no middle place hereafter, no middle way now: the distinction of the children of men into saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, will swallow up all to eternity. That which allures multitudes into it, and keeps them in it; the gate is wide, and the way broad, and there are many travelers in that way. First, "You will have abundance of liberty in that way; the gate is wide, and stands wide open to tempt those that go right on their way. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you; it gives no check to your appetites, to your passions: you may walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; that gives room enough." It is a broad way, for there is nothing to hedge in those that walk in it, but they wander endlessly; a broad way, for there are many paths in it; there is choice of sinful ways, contrary to each other, but all paths in this broad way. Secondly, "You will have abundance of company in that way: many there be that go in at this gate, and walk in this way." If we follow the multitude, it will be to do evil: if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to go down the stream, and do as the most do; but it is too great a compliment, to be willing to be damned for company, and to go to hell with them, because they will not go to heaven with us: if many perish, we should be the more cautious. That which should affright us all from it is, that it leads to destruction. Death, eternal death, is at the end of it (and the way of sin tends to it),-everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Whether it be the high way of open profaneness, or the back way of close hypocrisy, if it be a way of sin, it will be our ruin, if we repent not.

First, that the gate is strait. Conversion and regeneration are the gate, by which we enter into this way, in which we begin a life of faith and serious godliness; out of a state of sin into a state of grace we must pass, by the new birth, John 3:3,5. This is a strait gate, hard to find, and hard to get through; like a passage between two rocks, 1 Sam 14:4. There must be a new heart, and a new spirit, and old things must pass away. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; what we have been doing all our days must be undone again. We must swim against the stream; much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. It is a strait gate, for we must stoop, or we cannot go in at it; we must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down; nay, we must strip, must deny ourselves, put off the world, put off the old man; we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ. The gate is strait to all, but to some straiter than others; as to the rich, to some that have been long prejudiced against religion. The gate is strait; blessed be God, it is not shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, Matt 25:10.

Secondly, that the way is narrow. We are not in heaven as soon as we have got through the strait gate, nor in Canaan as soon as we have got through the Red Sea; no, we must go through a wilderness, must travel a narrow way, hedged in by the divine law, which is exceedingly broad, and that makes the way narrow; self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a right eye and a right hand; daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our inclination. We must endure hardness, must wrestle and be in an agony, must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection. We must go through much tribulation. It is hodos tethlimmene - an afflicted way, a way hedged about with thorns; blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but, as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it will open and enlarge, and grow more and more pleasant.

Thirdly, the gate being so strait and the way so narrow, it is not strange that there are but few that find it, and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they will not be at the pains to find it; they are well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others look upon it, but shun it; they like not to be so limited and restrained. Those that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage; as the eight that were saved in the ark, 1 Peter 3:20.

### **The Guest (Mar 29 A.D.)**

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: **"When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."** (Luke 14:7-11)

Our Lord Jesus here sets us an example of profitable edifying discourse at our tables, when we are in company with our friends. We find that when he had none but his disciples, who were his own family, with him at his table, his discourse with them was good, and to the use of edifying; and not only so, but when he was in company with strangers, nay, with enemies that watched him, he took occasion to reprove what he saw amiss in them, and to instruct them. Though the wicked were before him, he did not keep silence from good (as David did, Ps 39:1-2), for, notwithstanding the provocation given him, he had not his heart hot within him, nor was his spirit stirred. We must not only not allow any corrupt communication at our tables, such as that of the hypocritical mockers at feasts, but we must go beyond common harmless talk, and should take occasion from God's goodness to us at our tables to speak well of him, and learn to spiritualize common things. The lips of the righteous should then feed many. Our Lord Jesus was among persons of quality, yet, as one that had not respect of persons He takes occasion to reprove the guests for striving to sit uppermost, and thence gives us a lesson of humility.

## **The Marriage Supper (Mar 29 A.D.)**

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: **"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' "But they paid no attention and went off-one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 10 So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. (Matt 22:1-10)**

Jesus replied: **"A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready. "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me. "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me. "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come. "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room. "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" (Luke 14:16-24)**

We have here the parable of the guests invited to the wedding-feast. In this it is said (v. 1), Jesus answered, not to what his opposers said (for they were put to silence), but to what they thought, when they were wishing for an opportunity to lay hands on him, Matt 21:46. Note, Christ knows how to answer men's thoughts, for he is a Discerner of them. Or, He answered, that is, he continued his discourse to the same purport; for this parable represents the gospel offer, and the entertainment it meets with, as the former, but under another similitude. The parable of the vineyard represents the sin of the rulers that persecuted the prophets; it shows also the sin of the people, who generally neglected the message, while their great ones were persecuting the messengers. Gospel preparations are here represented by a feast which a king made at the marriage of his son; such is the kingdom of heaven, such the provision made for precious souls, in and by the new covenant. The King is God, a great King, King of kings. Now, here is a marriage made for his son, Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride; the gospel-day is the day of his espousals, Song 3:11. Behold by faith the church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, and were given to Christ by him whose they were; and in them you see the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev 21:9. The gospel covenant is a marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers, and it is a marriage of God's making. This branch of the similitude is only mentioned, and not prosecuted here. Here is a dinner prepared for this marriage. All the privileges of church-membership, and all the blessings of the new covenant, pardon of sin, the favor of God, peace of conscience, the promises of the gospel, and all the riches contained in them, access to the throne of grace, the comforts of the Spirit, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. These are the preparations for this feast, a heaven upon earth now, and a heaven in heaven shortly. God has prepared it in his counsel, in his covenant. It is a dinner, denoting present privileges in the midst of our day, beside the supper at night in glory.

It is a feast. Gospel preparations were prophesied of as a feast (Isa 25:6), a feast of fat things, and were typified by the many festivals of the ceremonial law (1 Cor 5:8); Let us keep the feast. A feast is a good day (Esth. 7:17 ); so is the gospel; it is a continual feast. Oxen and fatlings are killed for this feast; no niceties, but substantial food; enough, and enough of the best. The day of a feast is a day of slaughter, or sacrifice, James 5:5. Gospel preparations are all founded in the death of Christ, his sacrifice of himself. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's goodwill toward men. It was made for laughter (Eccl 10:19), it is a rejoicing feast. It was made for fullness; the design of the gospel was to fill every hungry soul with good things. It was made for fellowship, to maintain an intercourse between heaven and earth. We are sent for to the banquet of wine, that we may tell what is our petition, and what is our request.

It is a wedding feast. Wedding feasts are usually rich, free, and joyful. The first miracle Christ wrought, was, to make plentiful provision for a wedding feast (John 2:7); and surely then he will not be wanting in provision for his own wedding feast, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready, a victorious triumphant feast, Rev 19:7,17-18.

It is a royal wedding feast; it is the feast of a king (1 Sam 25:36), at the marriage, not of a servant, but of a son; and then, if ever, he will, like Ahasuerus, show the riches of his glorious kingdom, Est 1:4. The provision made for believers in the covenant of grace, is not such as worthless worms, like us, had any reason to expect, but such as it becomes the King of glory to give. He gives like himself; for he gives himself to be to them El shaddai-a God that is enough, a feast indeed for a soul.

### **The Wedding Garment (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. 'Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 'For many are invited, but few are chosen.'" (Matt 22:11-14)**

The king came in to see the guests, to bid those welcome who came prepared, and to turn those out who came otherwise. Note, The God of heaven takes particular notice of those who profess religion, and have a place and name in the visible church. Our Lord Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks and therefore knows their works. Let this be a warning to us against hypocrisy that disguises will shortly be stripped off, and every man will appear in his own colors; and an encouragement to us in our sincerity, that God is a witness to it. This hypocrite was never discovered to be without a wedding garment, till the king himself came in to see the guests. Note, it is God's prerogative to know who are sound at heart in their profession, and who are not. We may be deceived in men, either one way or other; but He cannot. The day of judgment will be the great discovering day, when all the guests will be presented to the King: then he will separate between the precious and the vile (Matt 25:32), the secrets of all hearts will then be made manifest, and we shall infallibly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which now it is not easy to do. It concerns all the guests, to prepare for the scrutiny, and to consider how they will pass the piercing eye of the heart-searching God. As soon as he came in, he presently espied the hypocrite; He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; though but one, he soon had his eye upon him; there is no hope of being hid in a crowd from the arrests of divine justice; he had not on a wedding garment; he was not dressed as became a nuptial solemnity; he had not his best clothes on. Note, many come to the wedding feast without a wedding garment. If the gospel be the wedding feast, then the wedding garment is a frame of heart, and a course of life agreeable to the gospel and our profession of it, worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called (Eph 4:1), as becomes the gospel of Christ, Phil 1:27. The righteousness of saints, their real holiness and sanctification, and Christ, made Righteousness to them, is the clean linen, Rev 19:8. This man was not naked, or in rags; some raiment he had, but not a wedding garment. Those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, that have a Christian temper of mind, and are adorned with Christian graces, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding garment.

### **The Tower (Mar 29 A.D.)**

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: **"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish. (Luke 14:25-30)**

See how Christ in his doctrine suited himself to those to whom he spoke, and gave every one his portion of meat. To Pharisees he preached humility and charity. He is in these verses directing his discourse to the multitudes that crowded after him, and seemed zealous in following him; and his exhortation to them is to understand the terms of discipleship, before they undertook the profession of it, and to consider what they did. How zealous people were



in their attendance on Christ. There went great multitudes with him, many for love and more for company, for where there are many there will be more. Here was a mixed multitude, like that which went with Israel out of Egypt; such we must expect there will always be in the church, and it will therefore be necessary that ministers should carefully separate between the precious and the vile. How considerate he would have them to be in their zeal. Those that undertake to follow Christ must count upon the worst, and prepare accordingly. He tells them what the worst is that they must count upon, much the same with what he had gone through before them and for them. He takes it for granted that they had a mind to be his disciples, that they might be qualified for preferment in his kingdom. They expected that he should say, "If any man come to me, and be my disciple, he shall have wealth and honor in abundance; let me alone to make him a great man." But he tells them quite the contrary.

- They must be willing to quit that which was very dear, and therefore must come to him thoroughly weaned from all their creature-comforts, and dead to them, so as cheerfully to part with them rather than quit their interest in Christ, v. 26. A man cannot be Christ's disciple but he must hate father, and mother, and his own life. He is not sincere, he will be constant and persevering, unless he love Christ better than any thing in this world, and be willing to part with that which he may and must leave, either as a sacrifice, when Christ may be glorified by our parting with it (so the martyrs, who loved not their lives to death), or as a temptation, when by our parting with it we are put into a better capacity of serving Christ. Thus Abraham parted with his own country, and Moses with Pharaoh's court. Mention is not made here of houses and lands; philosophy will teach a man to look upon these with contempt; but Christianity carries it higher.

- Every good man loves his relations; and yet, if he be a disciple of Christ, he must comparatively hate them, must love them less than Christ, as Leah is said to be hated when Rachel was better loved. Not that their persons must be in any degree hated, but our comfort and satisfaction in them must be lost and swallowed up in our love to Christ, as Levi's was, when he said to his father, I have not seen him, Deut 33:9. When our duty to our parents comes in competition with our evident duty to Christ, we must give Christ the preference. If we must either deny Christ or be banished from our families and relations (as many of the primitive Christians were), we must rather lose their society than his favor.

- Every man loves his own life, no man ever yet hated it; and we cannot be Christ's disciples if we do not love him better than our own lives, so as rather to have our lives embittered by cruel bondage, nay, and taken away by cruel deaths, than to dishonor Christ, or depart from any of his truths and ways. The experience of the pleasures of the spiritual life, and the believing hopes and prospects of eternal life, will make this hard saying easy. When tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, then chiefly the trial is, whether we love better, Christ or our relations and lives; yet even in the days of peace this matter is sometimes brought to the trial. Those that decline the service of Christ, and opportunities of converse with him, and are ashamed to confess him, for fear of disobliging a relation or friend, or losing a customer, give cause to suspect that they love him better than Christ.

- That they must be willing to bear that which was very heavy (v. 27): Whosoever doth not bear his cross, as those did that were condemned to be crucified, in submission to the sentence and in expectation of the execution of it, and so come after me whithersoever I shall lead him, he cannot be my disciple; that is (says Dr. Hammond), he is not for my turn; and my service, being so sure to bring persecution along with it, will not be for his. Though the Disciples of Christ are not all crucified, yet they all bear their cross, as if they counted upon being crucified. They must be content to be put into an ill name, and to be loaded with infamy and disgrace; for no name is more ignominious than Furcifer-the bearer of the gibbet. He must bear his cross, and come after Christ; that is, he must bear it in the way of his duty, whenever it lies in that way. He must bear it when Christ calls him to it, and in bearing it he must have an eye to Christ, and fetch encouragements from him, and live in hope of a recompense with him.

He bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. Since he has been so just to us as to tell us plainly what difficulties we shall meet with in following him, let us be so just to ourselves as to weigh the matter seriously before we take upon us a profession of religion. Joshua obliged the people to consider what they did when they promised to serve the Lord, Josh 24:19. It is better never to begin than not to proceed; and therefore before we begin we must consider what it is to proceed. This is to act rationally, and as becomes men, and as we do in other

cases. The cause of Christ will bear a scrutiny. Satan shows the best, but hides the worst, because his best will not counter-vail his worst; but Christ's will abundantly. This considering of the case is necessary to perseverance, especially in suffering times. Our Savior here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes, the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion, the latter that we must consider the perils of it.

### **The King going to War (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:31-33)**

When we undertake to be Christ's disciples we are like a man that goes to war, and therefore must consider the hazard of it, and the difficulties that are to be encountered. A king that declares war against a neighboring prince considers whether he has strength wherewith to make his part good, and, if not, he will lay aside his thoughts of war. The state of a Christian in this world is a military state. Is not the Christian life of warfare? We have many passes in our way, that must be disputed with dint of sword; nay, we must fight every step we go, so restless are our spiritual enemies in their opposition. We ought to consider whether we can endure the hardness which a good soldier of Jesus Christ must expect and count upon, before we enlist ourselves under Christ's banner; whether we are able to encounter the forces of hell and earth, which come against us twenty thousand strong. Of the two it is better to make the best terms we can with the world than pretend to renounce it and afterwards, when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, to return to it. That young man that could not find in his heart to part with his possessions for Christ did better to go away from Christ sorrowing than to have staid with him dissembling.

This parable is another way applicable, and may be taken as designed to teach us to begin speedily to be religious, rather than to begin cautiously; and may mean the same with Matt 5:25, Agree with thine adversary quickly. Note, First, Those that persist in sin make war against God, the most unnatural, unjustifiable war; they rebel against their lawful sovereign, whose government is perfectly just and good. Secondly, the proudest and most daring sinner is no equal match for God; the disproportion of strength is much greater than that here supposed between ten thousand and twenty thousand. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? No, surely; who knows the power of his anger? In consideration of this, it is our interest to make peace with him. We need not send to desire conditions of peace; they are offered to us, and are unexceptionable, and highly to our advantage. Let us acquaint ourselves with them, and be at peace; do this in time, while the other is yet a great way off; for delays in such a case are highly dangerous, and make after-applications difficult. But the application of this parable here is to the consideration that ought to be exercised when we take upon us a profession of religion. Solomon saith, With good advice make war (Prov 20:18); for he that draws the sword throws away the scabbard; so with good advice enter upon a profession of religion, as those that know that except you forsake all you have you cannot be Christ's disciples; that is, except you count upon forsaking all and consent to it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, and yet continue to live godly.

### **The Lost Sheep (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. (Matt 18:12-14)**

Then Jesus told them this parable: **"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:3-7)**

Something like it we had in Matt 18:12. There it was designed to show the care God takes for the preservation of saints, as a reason why we should not offend them; here it is designed to show the pleasure God takes in the conversion of sinners, as a reason why we should rejoice in it. In the case of a sinner that goes on in sinful ways, he is like a lost sheep, a sheep gone astray; he is lost to God, who has not the honor and service he should have from him; lost to the flock, which has not communion with him; lost to himself: he knows not where he is, wanders endlessly, is continually exposed to the beasts of prey, subject to frights and terrors, from under the shepherd's care, and wanting the green pastures; and he cannot of himself find the way back to the fold. The care the God of heaven takes of poor wandering sinners. He continues his care of the sheep that did not go astray; they are safe in the wilderness. But there is a particular care to be taken of this lost sheep; and though he has a hundred sheep, a considerable flock, yet he will not lose that one, but he goes after it, and shows abundance of care, in finding it out. He follows it, enquiring after it, and looking about for it, until he finds it. God follows backsliding sinners with the calls of his word and the strivings of his Spirit, until at length they are wrought upon to think of returning. Though he finds it weary, and perhaps worried and worn away with its wanderings, and not able to bear being driven home, yet he does not leave it to perish, and say, It is not worth carrying home; but lays it on his shoulders, and, with a great deal of tenderness and labor, brings it to the fold. This is very applicable to the great work of our redemption. Mankind were gone astray, Isa 53:6. The value of the whole race to God was not so much as that of one sheep to him that had a hundred; what loss would it have been to God if they had all been left to perish? There is a world of holy angels that are as the ninety-nine sheep, a noble flock; yet God sends his Son to seek and save that which was lost, Luke 19:10. Christ is said to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, denoting his pity and tenderness towards poor sinners; here he is said to bear them upon his shoulders, denoting the power wherewith he supports and bears them up; those can never perish whom he carries upon his shoulders.

The pleasure that God takes in repenting returning sinners - He lays it on his shoulders rejoicing that he has not lost his labor in seeking; and the joy is the greater because he began to be out of hope of finding it; and he calls his friends and neighbors, the shepherds that keep their flocks about him, saying, Rejoice with me. Perhaps among the pastoral songs which the shepherds used to sing there was one for such an occasion as this, of which these words might be the burden, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost; whereas they never sung, Rejoice with me, for I have lost none. Observe, he calls it his sheep, though a stray, a wandering sheep. He has a right to it (all souls are mine), and he will claim his own, and recover his right; therefore he looks after it himself: I have found it; he did not send a servant, but his own Son, the great and good Shepherd, who will find what he seeks, and will be found of those that seek him not.

### **The Lost piece of Money (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."** (Luke 15:8-10)

The loser is here supposed to be a woman, who will more passionately grieve for her loss, and rejoice in finding what she had lost, than perhaps a man would do, and therefore it the better serves the purpose of the parable. She has ten pieces of silver, and out of them loses only one. Let this keep up in us high thoughts of the divine goodness, notwithstanding the sinfulness and misery of the world of mankind, that there are nine to one, nay, in the foregoing parable there are ninety-nine to one, of God's creation, that retain their integrity, in whom God is praised, and never was dishonored. O the numberless beings, for aught we know numberless worlds of beings, that never were lost, nor stepped aside from the laws and ends of their creation! That which is lost is a piece of silver, drachmen - the fourth part of a shekel. The soul is silver, of intrinsic worth and value; not base metal, as iron or lead, but silver, the mines of which are royal mines. The Hebrew word for silver is taken from the desirableness of it. It is silver coin, for so the drachma was; it is stamped with God's image and superscription, and therefore must be rendered to him. Yet it is comparatively but of small value; it was but seven pence half-penny; intimating that if sinful men be left to perish God would be no loser. This silver was lost in the dirt; a soul plunged in the world, and overwhelmed with the love of it and care about it, is like a piece of money in the dirt; any one would say, It is a thousand pities that it should lie there. Here is a great deal of care and pains taken in quest of it. The woman lights

a candle, to look behind the door, under the table, and in every corner of the house, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she finds it. This represents the various means and methods God makes use of to bring lost souls home to himself: he has lighted the candle of the gospel, not to show himself the way to us, but to show us the way to him, to discover us to ourselves; he has swept the house by the convictions of the word; he seeks diligently, his heart is upon it, to bring lost souls to himself. Here is a great deal of joy for the finding of it: Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Those that rejoice desire that others should rejoice with them; those that are merry would have others merry with them. She was glad that she had found the piece of money, though she should spend it in entertaining those whom she called to make merry with her. The pleasing surprise of finding it put her, for the present, into a kind of transport, heureka, heureka - I have found, I have found, is the language of joy.

### **The Prodigal Son (Mar A.D.)**

Jesus continued: **"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 'Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 'When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. 'But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 'The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 'But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. 'Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 'The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"** (Luke 15:11-32)

We have here the parable of the prodigal son, the scope of which is the same with those before, to show how pleasing to God the conversion of sinners is, of great sinners, and how ready he is to receive and entertain such, upon their repentance; but the circumstances of the parable do much more largely and fully set forth the riches of gospel grace than those did, and it has been, and will be while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, both to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God. The parable represents God as a common Father to all mankind, to the whole family of Adam. We are all his offspring, have all one Father, and one God created us, Mal 2:10. From him we had our being, in him we still have it, and from him we receive our maintenance. He is our Father, for he has the educating and portioning of us, and will put us in his testament, or leave us out, according as we are, or are not, dutiful children to him. Our Savior hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees that these publicans and sinners, whom they thus despised, were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shown them. God is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles, (Rom 3:29): the same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. It represents the children of men as of different characters, though all related to God as their common Father. He had two sons, one of them a solid grave youth, reserved and austere, sober himself, but not at all good-humored to those about him; such a one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other volatile and mercurial, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is

endeavoring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to be sent forth to preach repentance. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavoring to reconcile to that grace of God which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.

The younger son is the prodigal, whose character and case are here designed to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state, but especially of some. Now we are to observe concerning him,

- His riot and ramble when he was a prodigal, and the extravagances and miseries he fell into. We are told,

- What his request to his father was: He said to his father, proudly and pertly enough, "Father, give me" - he might have put a little more in his mouth, and have said, Pray give me, or, Sir, if you please, give me, but he makes an imperious demand - "give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; not so much as you think fit to allot to me, but that which falls to me as my due." Note, it is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as debts. "Give me the portion, all my child's part, that falls to me;" not, "Try me with a little, and see how I can manage that, and accordingly trust me with more;" but, "Give it me all at present in possession, and I will never expect any thing in reversion, any thing hereafter." Note, The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them, is being content to have their portion in hand, now in this lifetime to receive their good things. They look only at the things that are seen, that are temporal, and covet only a present gratification, but have no care for a future felicity, when that is spent and gone. And why did he desire to have his portion in his own hands? Was it that he might apply himself to business, and trade with it, and so make it more? No, he had no thought of that. But,

-He was weary of his father's government, of the good order and discipline of his father's family, and was fond of liberty falsely so called, but indeed the greatest slavery, for such a liberty to sin is. See the folly of many young men, who are religiously educated, but are impatient of the confinement of their education, and never think themselves their own masters, their own men, till they have broken all God's bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from them, and, instead of them, bound themselves with the cords of their own lust. Here is the original of the apostasy of sinners from God; they will not be tied up to the rules of God's government; they will themselves be as gods, knowing no other good and evil than what themselves please.

- He was willing to get from under his father's eye, for that was always a check upon him, and often gave a check to him. A shyness of God, and a willingness to disbelieve his omniscience, are at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked.

- He was distrustful of his father's management. He would have his portion of goods himself, for he thought that his father would be laying up for hereafter for him, and, in order to that, would limit him in his present expenses, and that he did not like.

- He was proud of himself, and had a great conceit of his own sufficiency. He thought that if he had but his portion in his own hands he could manage it better than his father did, and make a better figure with it. There are more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. Our first parents ruined themselves and all theirs by a foolish ambition to be independent, and not to be beholden even to God himself; and this is at the bottom of sinners' persisting in their sin-they will be for themselves.

How kind his father was to him: He divided unto them his living. He computed what he had to dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger son his share, and offered the elder his, which ought to be a double portion; but, it should seem, he desired his father to keep it in his own hands still, and we may see what he got by it (v. 31): All that I have is thine. He got all by staying for something in reserve. He gave the younger son what he asked, and the son had no reason to complain that he did him any wrong in the dividend; he had as much as he expected, and perhaps more. Thus he might now see his father's kindness, how willing he was to please him and make him easy, and that he was not such an unkind father as he was willing to represent him when he wanted an excuse to be gone. Thus he would in a little time be made to see his own folly, and that he was not such a wise manager for himself as he would be thought to be. Note, God is a kind Father to all his children, and gives to them all life, and breath, and all things, even to the evil and unthankful, dieilen autois ton bion - He divided to them life. God's giving us life is



putting us in a capacity to serve and glorify him. How he managed himself when he had got his portion in his own hands. He set himself to spend it as fast as he could, and, as prodigals generally do, in a little time he made himself a beggar: not many days after, v. 13. Note, if God leave us ever so little to ourselves, it will not be long ere we depart from him. When the bridle of restraining grace is taken off we are soon gone. That which the younger son determined was to be gone presently, and, in order to that, he gathered all together. Sinners, that go astray from God, venture their all.

### **The Unjust Stewart (Mar 29 A.D.)**

Jesus told his disciples: **"There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer. "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg- I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' "'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' "'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. (Luke 16:1-9)**

We mistake if we imagine that the design of Christ's doctrine and holy religion was either to amuse us with notions of divine mysteries or to entertain us with notions of divine mercies. No, the divine revelation of both these in the gospel is intended to engage and quicken us to the practice of Christian duties, and, as much as any one thing, to the duty of beneficence and doing good to those who stand in need of any thing that either we have or can do for them. This our Savior is here pressing us to, by reminding us that we are but stewards of the manifold grace of God; and since we have in divers instances been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favor of our Lord, it is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we have in the world turn to a good account. Parables must not be forced beyond their primary intention, and therefore we must not hence infer that any one can befriend us if we lie under the displeasure of our Lord, but that, in the general, we must so lay out what we have in works of piety and charity as that we may meet it again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. If we would act wisely, we must be diligent and industrious to employ our riches in the acts of piety and charity, in order to promote our future and eternal welfare, as worldly men are in laying them out to the greatest temporal profit, in making to themselves friends with them, and securing other secular interests.

### **The Rich man and Lazarus (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire. "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them. "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent. "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31)**

As the parable of the prodigal son set before us the grace of the gospel, which is encouraging to us all, so this sets before us the wrath to come, and is designed for our awakening; and very fast asleep those are in sin that will not be awakened by it. The Pharisees made a jest of Christ's sermon against worldliness; now this parable was intended to make those mockers serious. The tendency of the gospel of Christ is both to reconcile us to poverty and affliction and to arm us against temptations to worldliness and sensuality. Now this parable, by drawing the curtain, and letting us see what will be the end of both in the other world, goes very far in prosecuting those two great intentions. This parable is not like Christ's other parables, in which spiritual things are represented by similitudes borrowed from worldly things, as those of the sower and the seed (except that of the sheep and goats), the prodigal son, and indeed all the rest but this. But here the spiritual things themselves are represented in a narrative or description of the different state of good and bad in this world and the other. Yet we need not call it a history of a particular occurrence, but it is matter of fact that is true every day, that poor godly people, whom men neglect and trample upon, die away out of their miseries, and go to heavenly bliss and joy, which is made the more pleasant to them by their preceding sorrows; and that rich epicures, who live in luxury, and are unmerciful to the poor, die, and go into a state of insupportable torment, which is the more grievous and terrible to them because of the sensual lives they lived: and that there is no gaining any relief from their torments. Is this a parable? What similitude is there in this? The discourse indeed between Abraham and the rich man is only an illustration of the description, to make it the more affecting, like that between God and Satan in the story of Job. Our Savior came to bring us acquainted with another world, and to show us the reference which this world has to that; and here is does it. In this description (for so I shall choose to call it) we may observe, the different condition of a wicked rich man, and a godly poor man, in this world. We know that as some of late, so the Jews of old, were ready to make prosperity one of the marks of a true church, of a good man and a favorite of heaven, so that they could hardly have any favorable thoughts of a poor man. This mistake Christ, upon all occasions, set himself to correct, and here very fully, where we have, a wicked man, and one that will be for ever miserable, in the height of prosperity (v. 19): There was a certain rich man. From the Latin we commonly call him Dives-a rich man; but, as Bishop Tillotson observes, he has no name given him, as the poor man has, because it had been invidious to have named any particular rich man in such a description as this, and apt to provoke and gain ill-will. But others observe that Christ would not do the rich man so much honor as to name him, though when perhaps he called his lands by his own name he thought it should long survive that of the beggar at his gate, which yet is here preserved, when that of the rich man is buried in oblivion.

### **The Watching Servant (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."** (Luke 12:35-40)

Here Jesus is preparing the disciples for when He comes again, when all those who have laid up their treasure in heaven shall enter upon the enjoyment of it. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants, not only working servants, but waiting servants, servants that are to do him honor, in waiting on him, and attending his motions: If any man serve me, let him follow me. Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. But that is not all: they must do him honor in waiting for him, and expecting his return. We must be as men that wait for their Lord, that sit up late while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him. Christ our Master, though now gone from us, will return again, return from the wedding, from solemnizing the nuptials abroad, to complete them at home. Christ's servants are now in a state of expectation, looking for their Master's glorious appearing, and doing every thing with an eye to that, and in order to that. He will come to take cognizance of his servants, and, that being a critical day, they shall either stay with him or be turned out of doors, according as they are found in that day. The time of our Master's return is uncertain; it will be in the night, it will be far in the night, when he has long deferred his coming, and when many have done looking for him; in the second watch, just before midnight, or in the third watch, next after

midnight. His coming to us, at our death, is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprise; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour that ye think not, without giving notice beforehand. This bespeaks not only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, who are unthinking, and altogether regardless of the notices given them, so that, whenever he comes, it is in an hour that they think not. That which He expects and requires from his servants is that they be ready to open to him immediately, whenever he comes, that is, that they be in a frame fit to receive him, or rather to be received by him; that they be found as his servants, in the posture that becomes them, with their loins girded about, alluding to the servants that are ready to go whither their master sends them, and do what their master bids them, having their long garments tucked up (which otherwise would hang about them, and hinder them), and their lights burning, with which to light their master into the house, and up to his chamber. Those servants will be happy who shall be found ready, and in a good frame, when their Lord shall come: Blessed are those servants who, after having waited long, continue in a waiting frame, until the hour that their Lord comes, and are then found awake and aware of his first approach, of his first knock; and again: Blessed are those servants, for then will be the time of their preferment. Here is such an instance of honor done them as is scarcely to be found among men: He will make them sit down to meat, and will serve them. For the bridegroom to wait upon his bride at table is not uncommon, but to wait upon his servants is not the manner of men; yet Jesus Christ was among his disciples as one that served, and did once, to show his condescension, gird himself, and serve them, when he washed their feet (John 13:4-5); it signified the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before, to prepare for them, and has told them that his Father will honor them, John 12:26.

We are therefore kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of his coming that we may be always ready; for it is no thanks to a man to be ready for an attack, if he know beforehand just the time when it will be made: The good man of the house, if he had known what hour the thief would have come, though he were ever so careless a man, would yet have watched, and have frightened away the thieves. But we do not know at what hour the alarm will be given us, and therefore are concerned to watch at all times, and never to be off our guard. Or this may intimate the miserable case of those who are careless and unbelieving in this great matter. If the good man of the house had had notice of his danger of being robbed such a night, he would have sat up, and saved his house; but we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming, as a thief in the night, to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus watch. If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls: Be ye therefore ready also, as ready as the good man of the house would be if he knew what hour the thief would come.

### **The Vine and the Branches (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:1-8)**

Jesus Christ is the vine, the true vine. It is an instance of the humility of Christ that he is pleased to speak of himself under low and humble comparisons. He that is the Sun of righteousness, and the bright and morning Star, compares himself to a vine. The church, which is Christ mystical, is a vine (Ps 80:8), so is Christ, who is the church seminal. Christ and his church are thus set forth. He is the vine, planted in the vineyard, and not a spontaneous product; planted in the earth, for his is the Word made flesh. The vine has an unsightly unpromising outside; and Christ had no form nor comeliness, Isa 53:2. The vine is a spreading plant, and Christ will be known as salvation to the ends of the earth. The fruit of the vine honors God and cheers man (Judg 9:13), so does the fruit of Christ's mediation; it is better than gold, Prov 8:19. He is the true vine, as truth is opposed to pretence and counterfeit; he is really a fruitful plant, a plant of renown. He is not like that wild vine which deceived those who gathered of it (2 Kings 4:39), but a true vine. Unfruitful trees are said to lie (Hab 3:17. marg.), but Christ is a vine that will not deceive. Whatever excellency there is in any creature, serviceable to man, it is but a shadow of that

grace which is in Christ for his people's good. He is that true vine typified by Judah's vine, which enriched him with the blood of the grape (Gen 49:11), by Joseph's vine, the branches of which ran over the wall (Gen 49:22), by Israel's vine, under which he dwelt safely, 1 Kings 4:25. Believers are branches of this vine, which supposes that Christ is the root of the vine. The root is unseen, and our life is hid with Christ; the root bears the tree (Rom 11:18), diffuses sap to it, and is all in all to its flourishing and fruitfulness; and in Christ are all supports and supplies. The branches of the vine are many, some on one side of the house or wall, others on the other side; yet, meeting in the root, are all but one vine; thus all good Christians, though in place and opinion distant from each other, yet meet in Christ, the centre of their unity. Believers, like the branches of the vine, are weak, and insufficient to stand of themselves, but as they are borne up. See Ezek 15:2.

We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes (Isa 5:2), and from a Christian we look for Christianity; this is the fruit, a Christian temper and disposition, a Christian life and conversation, Christian devotions and Christian designs. We must honor God, and do good, and exemplify the purity and power of the religion we profess; and this is bearing fruit. The disciples here must be fruitful, as Christians, in all the fruits of righteousness, and as apostles, in diffusing the savor of the knowledge of Christ.

### **The Widow (Mar 29 A.D.)**

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: **"In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary. 'For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"** (Luke 18:1-5)

This parable has its key hanging at the door; the drift and design of it are prefixed. Christ spoke it with this intent, to teach us that men ought always to pray and not to faint, v. 1. It supposes that all God's people are praying people; all God's children keep up both a constant and an occasional correspondence with him, send to him statedly, and upon every emergency. It is our privilege and honor that we may pray. It is our duty; we ought to pray, we sin if we neglect it. It is to be our constant work; we ought always to pray, it is that which the duty of every day requires. We must pray, and never grow weary of praying, nor think of leaving it off till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. But that which seems particularly designed here is to teach us constancy and perseverance in our requests for some spiritual mercies that we are in pursuit of, relating either to ourselves or to the church of God. When we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies, we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and not faint, for we shall not seek God's face in vain. So we must likewise in our prayers for the deliverance of the people of God out of the hands of their persecutors and oppressors.

I. Christ shows, by a parable, the power of importunity among men, who will be swayed by that, when nothing else will influence, to do what is just and right. He gives you an instance of an honest cause that succeeded before an unjust judge, not by the equity or compassionableness of it, but purely by dint of importunity. Observe here,

- The bad character of the judge that was in a certain city. He neither feared God nor regarded man; he had no manner of concern either for his conscience or for his reputation; he stood in no awe either of the wrath of God against him or of the censures of men concerning him: or, he took no care to do his duty either to God or man; he was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honor, and had no notion of either. It is not strange if those that have cast off the fear of their Creator be altogether regardless of their fellow-creatures; where no fear of God is no good is to be expected. Such a prevalency of irreligion and inhumanity is bad in any, but very bad in a judge, who has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and, if he be not, instead of doing good with his power he will be in danger of doing hurt. Wickedness in the place of judgment was one of the sorest evils Solomon saw under the sun, Eccl 3:16.

- The distressed case of a poor widow that was necessitated to make her appeal to him, being wronged by some one that thought to bear her down with power and terror. She had manifestly right on her side; but, it should

seem, in soliciting to have right done her, she tied not herself to the formalities of the law, but made personal application to the judge from day to day at his own house, still crying, Avenge me of mine adversary; that is, Do me justice against mine adversary; not that she desired to be revenged on him for any thing he had done against her, but that he might be obliged to restore what effects he had of hers in his hands, and might be disabled any more to oppress her. Note, Poor widows have often many adversaries, who barbarously take advantage of their weak and helpless state to invade their rights, and defraud them of what little they have; and magistrates are particularly charged, not only not to do violence to the widow (Jer 21:3), but to judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow (Isa 1:17), to be their patrons and protectors; then they are as gods, for God is so, Ps 68:5.

- The difficulty and discouragement she met with in her cause: He would not for awhile. According to his usual practice, he frowned upon her, took no notice of her cause, but connived at all the wrong her adversary did her; for she had no bribe to give him, no great man whom he stood in any awe of to speak for her, so that he did not at all incline to redress her grievances; and he himself was conscience of the reason of his dilatoriness, and could not but own within himself that he neither feared God nor regarded man. It is sad that a man should know so much amiss of himself, and be in no care to amend it.

- The gaining of her point by continually dunning this unjust judge: "Because this widow troubleth me, gives me a continual toil, I will hear her cause, and do her justice; not so much lest by her clamor against me she bring me into an ill name, as lest by her clamor to me she weary me; for she is resolved that she will give me no rest till it is done, and therefore I will do it, to save myself further trouble; as good at first as at last." Thus she got justice done her by continual craving; she begged it at his door, followed him in the streets, solicited him in open court, and still her cry was, Avenge me of mine adversary, which he was forced to do, to get rid of her; for his conscience, bad as he was, would not suffer him to send her to prison for an affront upon the court.

### **The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Mar 29 A.D.)**

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: **"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. 'But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner. 'I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"** (Luke 18:9-14)

The scope of this parable likewise is prefixed to it, and we are told who they were whom it was leveled at, and for whom it was calculated. He designed it for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. They were such as had, a great conceit of themselves, and of their own goodness; they thought themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbors, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all; they had a confidence in themselves before God, and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed God, as their plea: They trusted in themselves as being righteous; they thought they had made God their debtor, and might demand any thing from him; and, they despised others, and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them. Now Christ by this parable would show such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a parable, though there be nothing of similitude in it; but it is rather a description of the different temper and language of those that proudly justify themselves, and those that humbly condemn themselves; and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day.

I. Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer at the same place and time (v. 10): Two men went up into the temple (for the temple stood upon a hill) to pray. It was not the hour of public prayer, but they went thither to offer up their personal devotions, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the place, but the medium of worship, and God had promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that, whatever prayer was made in a right manner in or towards that house, it should therefore the rather be accepted. Christ is our temple, and to him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God. The Pharisees and the publican both went to the temple to pray. Note, Among the worshippers of God, in the visible church, there is a mixture of good and bad, of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel



brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, proud as he was, could not think himself above prayer; nor could the publican, humble as he was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think that these went with different views.

The Pharisee went to the temple to pray because it was a public place, more public than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion, which perhaps was more than was expected. The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that all their works they did to be seen of men, gives us occasion for this suspicion. Note, Hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion only to save or gain credit. There are many whom we see every day at the temple, whom, it is to be feared, we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

The publican went to the temple because it was appointed to be a house of prayer for all people, Isa 56:7. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a compliment, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

Here is the Pharisee's address to God (for a prayer I cannot call it): He stood and prayed thus with himself (v. 11-12): standing by himself, he prayed thus, so some read it; he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but self, his own praise, and not God's glory; or, standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or, setting himself with a great deal of state and formality, he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to say is that which shows, that he trusted to himself that he was righteous. A great many good things he said of himself, which we will suppose to be true. He was free from gross and scandalous sins; he was not an extortioner, not a usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him. He was not unjust in any of his dealings; he did no man any wrong; he could say, as Samuel, Whose ox or whose ass have I taken? He was no adulterer, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honor. Yet this was not all; he fasted twice in the week, as an act partly of temperance, partly of devotion. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday. Thus he glorified God with his body: yet that was not all; he gave tithes of all that he possessed, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate. Now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee: yet he was not accepted; and why was he not?

- His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a mere formality. He does not say, By the grace of God I am what I am, as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, God, I thank thee, which is intended but for a plausible introduction to a proud vainglorious ostentation of himself.

-He makes his boast of this, and dwells with delight upon this subject, as if all his business to the temple was to tell God Almighty how very good he was; and he is ready to say, with those hypocrites that we read of (Isa 58:3), Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?

-He trusted to it as a righteousness, and not only mentioned it, but pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God, and made him his debtor.

-Here is not one word of prayer in all he saith. He went up to the temple to pray, but forgot his errand, was so full of himself and his own goodness that he thought he had need of nothing, no, not of the favor and grace of God, which, it would seem, he did not think worth asking.

That he despised others.

-He thought meanly of all mankind but himself: I thank thee that I am not as other men are. He speaks indefinitely, as if he were better than any. We may have reason to thank God that we are not as some men are, that are notoriously wicked and vile; but to speak at random thus, as if we only were good, and all besides us were reprobates, is to judge by wholesale.

-He thought meanly in a particular manner of this publican, whom he had left behind, it is probable, in the court of the Gentiles, and whose company he had fallen into as he came to the temple. He knew that he was a publican, and therefore very uncharitably concluded that he was an extortioner, unjust, and all that is naught. Suppose it had been so, and he had known it, what business had he to take notice of it? Could not he say his prayers (and that was all that the Pharisees did) without reproaching his neighbors? Or was this a part of his God, I thank thee? And was he as much pleased with the publican's badness as with his own goodness? There could not be a plainer evidence, not only of the want of humility and charity, but of reigning pride and malice, than this was.

Here is the publican's address to God, which was the reverse of the Pharisee's, as full of humility and humiliation as his was of pride and ostentation; as full of repentance for sin, and desire towards God, as his was of confidence in himself and his own righteousness and sufficiency. He expressed his repentance and humility in what he did; and his gesture, when he addressed himself to his devotions, was expressive of great seriousness and humility, and the proper clothing of a broken, penitent, and obedient heart.

- He stood afar off. The Pharisee stood, but crowded up as high as he could, to the upper end of the court; the publican kept at a distance under a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, and perhaps for fear of offending the Pharisee, whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Hereby he owned that God might justly behold him afar off, and send him into a state of eternal distance from him, and that it was a great favor that God was pleased to admit him thus nigh.

-He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He did lift up his heart to God in the heavens, in holy desires, but, through prevailing shame and humiliation, he did not lift up his eyes in holy confidence and courage. His iniquities are gone over his head, as a heavy burden, so that he is not able to look up, Ps 40:12. The dejection of his looks is an indication of the dejection of his mind at the thought of sin.

-He smote upon his breast, in a holy indignation at himself for sin: "Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain out of which flow all the streams of sin, if I could come at it." The sinner's heart first smites him in a penitent rebuke, 2 Sam 24:10. David's heart smote him. Sinner, what hast thou done? And then he smites his heart with penitent remorse: O wretched man that I am? Ephraim is said to smite upon his thigh, Jer 31:19. Great mourners are represented taboring upon their breasts, Nah 2:7.

He expressed it in what he said. His prayer was short. Fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words; but what he said was to the purpose: God, be merciful to me a sinner. And blessed be God that we have this prayer upon record as an answered prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it went to his house justified; and so shall we, if we pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ: "God, be merciful to me a sinner; the God of infinite mercy be merciful to me, for, if he be not, I am for ever undone, for ever miserable. God be merciful to me, for I have been cruel to myself."

-He owns himself a sinner by nature, by practice, guilty before God. Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? The Pharisee denies himself to be a sinner; none of his neighbors can charge him, and he sees no reason to charge himself, with any thing amiss; he is clean, he is pure from sin. But the publican gives himself no other character than that of a sinner, a convicted criminal at God's bar.

-He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God, that, and that only, he relies upon. The Pharisee had insisted upon the merit of his fastings and tithes; but the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and flies to mercy as his city of refuge, and takes hold of the horn of that altar. "Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy, mercy."

-He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy: "O God, be merciful, be propitious, to me; forgive my sins; be reconciled to me; take me into thy favor; receive me graciously; love me freely." He comes as a beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for hunger. Probably he repeated this prayer with renewed affections, and perhaps said more to the same purport, made a particular confession of his sins, and mentioned the particular

mercies he wanted, and waited upon God for; but still this was the burden of the song: God, be merciful to me a sinner.

Here is the publican's acceptance with God. We have seen how differently these two addressed themselves to God; it is now worth while to enquire how they sped. There were those who would cry up the Pharisee, by whom he would go to his house applauded, and who would look with contempt upon this sneaking whining publican. But our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, who is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the court of heaven, assures us that this poor, penitent, broken-hearted publican went to his house justified, rather than the other. The Pharisee thought that if one of them must be justified, and not the other, certainly it must be he rather than the publican. "No," saith Christ, "I tell you, I affirm it with the utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the utmost concern, I tell you, it is the publican rather than the Pharisee." The proud Pharisee goes away, rejected of God; his thanksgivings are so far from being accepted that they are an abomination; he is not justified, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he delivered from condemnation: he is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because he is so righteous in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble address to Heaven, obtains the remission of his sins, and he whom the Pharisee would not set with the dogs of his flock God sets with the children of his family. The reason given for this is because God's glory is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble. Proud men, who exalt themselves, are rivals with God, and therefore they shall certainly be abased. God, in his discourse with Job, appeals to this proof that he is God, that he looks upon every one that is proud, and brings him low, Job 40:12. Humble men, who abase themselves, are subject to God, and they shall be exalted. God has preferment in store for those that will take it as a favor, not for those that demand it as a debt. He shall be exalted into the love of God, and communion with him, shall be exalted into a satisfaction in himself, and exalted at last as high as heaven. See how the punishment answers the sin: He that exalteth himself shall be abased. See how the recompense answers the duty: He that humbles himself shall be exalted. See also the power of God's grace in bringing good out of evil; the publican had been a great sinner, and out of the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness of his repentance; out of the eater came forth meat. See, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in bringing evil out of good. It was good that the Pharisee was no extortioner, nor unjust; but the devil made him proud of this, to his ruin.

### **The Servants (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" (Luke 17:7-10)**

We are here taught, that the giving of offences is a great sin, and that which we should every one of us avoid and carefully watch against. We can expect no other than that offences will come, considering the perverseness and forwardness that are in the nature of man, and the wise purpose and counsel of God, who will carry on his work even by those offences, and bring good out of evil. It is almost impossible but that offences will come, and therefore we are concerned to provide accordingly; but woe to him through whom they come, his doom will be heavy, more terrible than that of the worst of the malefactors who are condemned to be thrown into the sea, for they perish under a load of guilt more ponderous than that of millstones. This includes a woe,

-To persecutors, who offer any injury to the least of Christ's little ones, in word or deed, by which they are discouraged in serving Christ, and doing their duty, or in danger of being driven off from it.

-To seducers, who corrupt the truths of Christ and his ordinances, and so trouble the minds of the disciples; for they are those by whom offences come.

-To those who, under the profession of the Christian name, live scandalously, and thereby weaken the bands and sadden the hearts of God's people; for by them the offence comes, and it is no abatement of their guilt, nor will be any of their punishment, that it is impossible but offences will come.

That the forgiving of offences is a great duty, and that which we should every one of us make conscience of: Take heed to yourselves. This may refer either to what goes before, or to what follows: Take heed that you offend not one of these little ones. Ministers must be very careful not to say or do any thing that may be a discouragement to weak Christians; there is need of great caution, and they ought to speak and act very considerately, for fear of this: or, "When your brother trespasses against you, does you any injury, puts any slight or affront upon you, if he be accessory to any damage done you in your property or reputation, take heed to yourselves at such a time, lest you be put into a passion; lest, when your spirits are provoked, you speak unadvisedly, and rashly vow to revenge (Prov 24:29): I will do so to him as he hath done to me. Take heed what you say at such a time, lest you say amiss."

-If you are permitted to rebuke him, you are advised to do so. Smother not the resentment, but give it vent. Tell him his faults; show him wherein he has not done well nor fairly by you, and, it may be, you will perceive (and you must be very willing to perceive it) that you mistook him, that it was not a trespass against you, or not designed, but an oversight, and then you will beg his pardon for misunderstanding him; as Josh 22:30-31.

-You are commanded, upon his repentance, to forgive him, and to be perfectly reconciled to him: If he repent, forgive him; forget the injury, never think of it again, much less upbraid him with it. Though he do not repent, you must not therefore bear malice to him, nor meditate revenge; but, if he do not at least say that he repents, you are not bound to be so free and familiar with him as you have been. If he be guilty of gross sin, to the offence of the Christian community he is a member of, let him be gravely and mildly reproved for his sin, and, upon his repentance, received into friendship and communion again. This the apostle calls forgiveness, 2 Cor 2:7.

-You are to repeat this every time he repeats his trespass, v. 4. "If he could be supposed to be either so negligent, or so impudent, as to trespass against thee seven times in a day, and as often profess himself sorry for his fault, and promise not again to offend in like manner, continue to forgive him." Humanum est errare-To ere is human. Note, Christians should be of a forgiving spirit, willing to make the best of every body, and to make all about them easy; forward to extenuate faults, and not to aggravate them; and they should contrive as much to show that they have forgiven an injury as others to show that they resent it.

That we have all need to get our faith strengthened, because, as that grace grows, all other graces grow. The more firmly we believe the doctrine of Christ, and the more confidently we rely upon the grace of Christ, the better it will be with us every way. Now observe here,

-The address which the disciples made to Christ, for the strengthening of their faith. The apostles themselves, so they are here called, though they were prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, yet acknowledged the weakness and deficiency of their faith, and saw their need of Christ's grace for the improvement of it; they said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith, and perfect what is lacking in it." Let the discoveries of faith be more clear, the desires of faith more strong, the dependences of faith more firm and fixed, the dedications of faith more entire and resolute, and the delights of faith more pleasing. Note, the increase of our faith is what we should earnestly desire, and we should offer up that desire to God in prayer. Some think that they put up this prayer to Christ upon occasion of his pressing upon them the duty of forgiving injuries: "Lord, increase our faith, or we shall never be able to practice such a difficult duty as this." Faith in God's pardoning mercy will enable us to get over the greatest difficulties that lie in the way of our forgiving our brother. Others think that it was upon some other occasion, when the apostles were run aground in working some miracle, and were reproved by Christ for the weakness of their faith, as Matt 17:16, etc. To him that blamed them they must apply themselves for grace to mend them; to him they cry, Lord, increase our faith.

-The assurance Christ gave them of the wonderful efficacy of true faith: "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, so small as mustard-seed, but yours is yet less than the least; or so sharp as mustard-seed, so pungent, so exciting to all other graces, as mustard to the animal spirits," and therefore used in palsies, "you might do wonders much beyond what you now do; nothing would be too hard for you, that was fit to be done for the glory of God, and the confirmation of the doctrine you preach, yea, though it were the transplanting of a tree from

the earth to the sea." See Matt 17:20. As with God nothing is impossible, so are all things possible to him that can believe.

That, whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favor at his hand, or claim it as a debt; even the apostles themselves, who did so much more for Christ than others, must not think that they had thereby made him their debtor.

-We are all God's servants (his apostles and ministers are in a special manner so), and, as servants, are bound to do all we can for his honor. Our whole strength and our whole time are to be employed for him; for we are not our own, nor at our own disposal, but at our Master's.

-As God's servants, it becomes us to fill up our time with duty, and we have a variety of work appointed us to do; we ought to make the end of one service the beginning of another. The servant that has been ploughing, or feeding cattle, in the field, when he comes home at night has work to do still; he must wait at table. When we have been employed in the duties of a religious conversation, that will not excuse us from the exercises of devotion; when we have been working for God, still we must be waiting on God, waiting on him continually.

-Our principal care here must be to do the duty of our relation, and leave it to our Master to give us the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit. No servant expects that his master should say to him, Go and sit down to meat; it is time enough to do that when we have done our day's work. Let us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well, and then the reward will come in due time.

-It is fit that Christ should be served before us: Make ready wherewith I may sup, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink. Doubting Christians say that they cannot give to Christ the glory of his love as they should, because they have not yet obtained the comfort of it; but this is wrong. First let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with our praises, and then we shall eat and drink in the comfort of that love, and in this there is a feast.

-Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must gird themselves, must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and encumbering, and fit themselves with a close application of mind to go on, and go through, with their work; they must gird up the loins of their mind. When we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have made ready wherewith he may sup, we must then gird ourselves, to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he does not insist upon it. He was among his disciples as one that served, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and to be ministered unto, but to minister; witness his washing his disciples' feet.

-Christ's servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him: "Does he thank that servant? Does he reckon himself indebted to him for it? No, by no means." No good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God's favor, not because we have by our services made him a debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a debtor to his own honor, and this we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a quantum meruit-according to merit.

-Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more perhaps than some others do, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should do all things that are commanded us, and alas! in many things we come short of this, yet there is no work of supererogation; it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment of loving God with all our heart and soul, which includes the utmost.

-The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are unprofitable servants; though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into utter darkness, yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are unprofitable; our goodness extendeth not unto God, nor if we are righteous is he the better, Ps 16:2; Job 22:2; 35:7. God cannot be a gainer by our services, and therefore cannot be made a debtor by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections. It becomes us therefore to call ourselves unprofitable servants, but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.



## **The Laborers in the Vineyard (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. "About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. "He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' "Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matt 20:1-16)**

This parable of the laborers in the vineyard is intended, to represent to us the kingdom of heaven (v. 1), that is, the way and method of the gospel dispensation. The laws of that kingdom are not wrapped up in parables, but plainly set down, as in the sermon upon the mount; but the mysteries of that kingdom are delivered in parables, in sacraments, as here and the duties of Christianity are more necessary to be known than the notions of it; and yet the notions of it are more necessary to be illustrated than the duties of it; which is that which parables are designed for. In particular, to represent to us that concerning the kingdom of heaven, which he had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, that many that are first shall be last, and the last, first; with which this parable is connected; that truth, having in it a seeming contradiction, needed further explication. Nothing was more a mystery in the gospel dispensation than the rejection of the Jews and the calling in of the Gentiles; so the apostle speaks of it (Eph 3:3-6); that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs: nor was any thing more provoking to the Jews than the intimation of it. Now this seems to be the principal scope of this parable, to show that the Jews should be first called into the vineyard, and many of them should come at the call; but, at length, the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should receive it, and be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews; should be fellow-citizens with the saints, which the Jews, even those of them that believed, would be very much disgusted at, but without reason.

## **The Talents (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you**

**should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt 25:14-30)**

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: **"A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. Put this money to work," he said, "until I come back. "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them-bring them here and kill them in front of me.'" (Luke 19:11-27)**

Following on the lesson of watchfulness and inward personal preparation just given, this parable enforces the necessity of external work and man's accountability to God for the due use of the special endowments which he has received. The former was concerned chiefly with the contemplative life, the waiting virgins; this chiefly with the active, the working servant; though, in fact, both states combine more or less in the good Christian, and the perfect disciple will unite in himself the characteristics of John and Peter, Mary and Martha. St. Luke (Luke 19:11-27) has recorded a somewhat analogous parable spoken by Christ on leaving the house of Zacchaeus, known as the parable of the pounds; and some critics have deemed that the two accounts relate to the same saying altered in some details, which are to be accounted for on the hypothesis that St. Luke has combined with our parable another on the rebellious citizens. That there are great resemblances between the two cannot be disputed, but the discrepancies are too marked to allow us to assume the unity of the two utterances. Christ often repeats himself, using the same figure, or illustration, or expression to enforce different truths or different phases of the same truth, as here he may have desired more emphatically to impress on the disciples their special responsibilities. The variations in the two parables are briefly these: The scene and occasion are different; this was spoken to the disciples, that to the multitude; in one the lord is a noble who was to receive a kingdom, in the other he is simply a landowner; here his absence is a matter of local space, there it is a matter of time; the servants are ten in the one case, and three in the other; in one we have pounds spoken of, in the other talents; in St. Luke each servant has the same sum delivered to him, in St. Matthew the amount is divided into talents, five, two, and one; in the "pounds" the servants show differing faithfulness with the same gifts, in the "talents" two of them display the same faithfulness with differing gifts; here the idle servant hides his money in a napkin, there he buries it in the earth; the conclusions also of the parables vary. Their object is not identical: the parable in our text illustrates the truth that we shall be judged according to that which we have received; the parable in St. Luke shows, to use Trench's words, that "as men differ in fidelity, in zeal, in labor, so will they differ in the amount of their spiritual gain." The latter treats of the use of gifts common to all, whether bodily, mental, or spiritual, such as one faith, one baptism, reason, conscience, sacraments, the Word of God; the former is concerned with the exercise of endowments which have been bestowed according to the recipient's capacity and his ability to make use of them, - the question being, how he has employed his powers, opportunities, and circumstances, the particular advantages, examples, and means of grace given to him.

### **The Two Sons (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things. "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. (Matt 21:27-32)**

A formula connecting what follows with what has preceded, and making the hearers themselves the judges. By this and the succeeding parables, Jesus shows his interlocutors their true guilty position and the punishment that awaited them. He himself explains the present parable in reference to his hearers, though, of course, it has, and is meant to have, a much wider application. A certain man had two sons. The man represents God; the two sons symbolize two classes of Jews - the Pharisees, with their followers and imitators; and the lawless and sinful, who made no pretence of religion. The former are those who profess to keep the Law strictly, to the very letter, though they care nothing for its spirit, and virtually divorce religion from morality. The latter are careless and profane persons, whom the Lord calls "publicans and harlots". "The first son "here typifies the evil and immoral among the Jewish people. Go, work today. Two emphatic imperatives. Immediate obedience is required. "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps 95:7,8). God called his sons to serve in his vineyard - the Church. He called them by the prophets, and more especially by John the Baptist, to turn from evil ways, and to do works meet for repentance (Matt 3:8).

### **The Murderous Husbandmen 29 A.D.)**

**"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." (Matt 21:33-44)**

He then began to speak to them in parables: **"A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.' "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. (Mark 12:1-10)**

He went on to tell the people this parable: **"A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."** (Luke 20:9-16)

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; they and their leaders are the husbandmen here; and what is spoken for conviction to them, is spoken for caution to all that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, not to be high-minded, but fear. We have here the privileges of the Jewish church, represented by the letting out of a vineyard to the husbandmen; they were as tenants holding by, from, and under, God the great Householder. Observe, how God established a church for himself in the world. The kingdom of God upon earth is here compared to a vineyard, furnished with all things requisite to an advantageous management and improvement of it. He planted this vineyard. The church is the planting of the Lord, Isa 61:3. The forming of a church is a work by itself, like the planting of a vineyard, which requires a great deal of cost and care. It is the vineyard which his right hand has planted (Ps 80:15), planted with the choicest vine (Isa 5:2), a noble vine, Jer 2:21. The earth of itself produces thorns and briars; but vines must be planted. The being of a church is owing to God's distinguishing favor, and his manifesting himself to some, and not to others. He hedged it round about. Note, God's church in the world is taken under his special protection. It is a hedge round about, like that about Job on every side (Job 1:10), a wall of fire, Zech 2:5. Wherever God has a church, it is, and will always be, his peculiar care. The covenant of circumcision and the ceremonial law were a hedge or a wall of partition about the Jewish church, which is taken down by Christ; who yet has appointed a gospel order and discipline to be the hedge of his church. He will not have his vineyard to lie in common, that those who are without, may thrust in at pleasure; not to lie at large, that those who are within, may lash out at pleasure; but care is taken to set bounds about this holy mountain. He dug a wine-press and built a tower. The altar of burnt-offerings was the wine-press, to which all the offerings were brought. God instituted ordinances in his church, for the due oversight of it, and for the promoting of its fruitfulness. What could have been done more to make it every way convenient? How he entrusted these visible church-privileges with the nation and people of the Jews, especially their chief priests and elders; he let it out to them as husbandmen, not because he had need of them as landlords have of their tenants, but because he would try them, and be honored by them. When in Judah God was known, and his name was great, when they were taken to be to God for a people, and for a name, and for a praise (Jer 13:11), when he revealed his word unto Jacob (Ps 147:19), when the covenant of life and peace was made with Levi (Mal 2:4-5), then this vineyard was let out. See an abstract of the lease, Song 8:11-12. The Lord of the vineyard was to have a thousand pieces of silver (compare Isa 7:13); the main profit was to be his, but the keepers were to have two hundred, a competent and comfortable encouragement. And then he went into a far country. When God had in a visible appearance settled the Jewish church at mount Sinai, he did in a manner withdraw; they had no more such open vision, but were left to the written word. Or, they imagined that he was gone into a far country, as Israel, when they made the calf, fancied that Moses was gone. They put far from them the evil day.

God's expectation of rent from these husbandmen. It was a reasonable expectation; for who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? Note, From those that enjoy church-privileges, both ministers and people, God looks for fruit accordingly. His expectations were not hasty; he did not demand a fore-rent, though he had been at such expense upon it; but staid till the time of the fruit drew near, as it did now that John preached the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God waits to be gracious, that he may give us time. They were not high; he did not require them to come at their peril, upon penalty of forfeiting their lease if they ran behind-hand; but he sent his servants to them, to remind them of their duty, and of the rent-day, and to help them in gathering in the fruit, and making return of it. These servants were the prophets of the Old Testament, who were sent, and sometimes directly, to the people of the Jews, to reprove and instruct them. They were not hard; it was only to receive the fruits. He did not demand more than they could make of it, but some fruit of that which he himself planted-an observance of the laws

and statutes he gave them. What could have been done more reasonable? Israel was an empty vine, nay it was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, and brought forth wild grapes.

### **The Watching Householder (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matt 24:42-44)**

**"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Luke 12:35-40)**

We may apply it to the success of the gospel, especially at the first preaching of it; it divided the world; some believed the things which were spoken, and were taken to Christ; others believed not, and were left to perish in their unbelief. Those of the same age, place, capacity, employment, and condition, in the world, grinding in the same mill, those of the same family, nay, those that were joined in the same bond of marriage, were, one effectually called, the other passed by, and left in the gall of bitterness. This is that division, that separating fire, which Christ came to send, Luke 12:49,51. This renders free grace the more obliging, that it is distinguishing; to us, and not to the world (John 14:22), nay to us, and not to those in the same field, the same mill, the same house. When ruin came upon Jerusalem, a distinction was made by Divine Providence, according to that which had been before made by divine grace; for all the Christians among them were saved from perishing in that calamity, by the special care of Heaven. If two were at work in the field together, and one of them was a Christian, he was taken into a place of shelter, and had his life given him for a prey, while the other was left to the sword of the enemy. Nay, if but two women were grinding at the mill, if one of them belonged to Christ, though but a woman, a poor woman, a servant, she was taken to a place of safety, and the other abandoned. Thus the meek of the earth are hid in the day of the Lord's anger (Zeph 2:3), either in heaven, or under heaven. Note, Distinguishing preservations, in times of general destruction, are special tokens of God's favor, and ought so to be acknowledged. If we are safe when thousands fall on our right hand and our left, are not consumed when others are consumed round about us, so that we are as brands plucked out of the fire, we have reason to say, It is of the Lord's mercies, and it is a great mercy.

We may apply it to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the separation which will be made in that day. He had said before (v. 31), that the elect will be gathered together. Here he tells us, that, in order to that, they will be distinguished from those who were nearest to them in this world; the choice and chosen ones taken to glory, the other left to perish eternally. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth, two in the same grave, their ashes mixed, shall yet arise, one to be taken to everlasting life, the other left to shame and everlasting contempt, Dan 12:2. Here it is applied to them who shall be found alive. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy at their usual occupations, in the field, at the mill; and then, according as they are vessels of mercy prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath prepared for ruin, accordingly it will be with them; the one taken to meet the Lord and his angels in the air, to be for ever with him and them; the other left to the devil and his angels, who, when Christ has gathered out his own, will sweep up the residue. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. And it speaks abundance of comfort to the Lord's people.

### **The Characters of two Servants (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds**



**him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt 24:45-51)**

The Lord answered, **"Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. (Luke 12:42-46)**

Christ utters this parabolic discourse in reply to Peter's question, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" He now turns his exhortation to those in authority over the house, specially to the ministers and stewards of his mysteries, proposing it in an interrogative form, not only because the man he wants is difficult to find, but in order that each may put the question to himself, and see if he reaches the high standard suggested. The idea is that some good and true slave is raised to the stewardship of his master's household, like Eliezer whom Abram advanced to this position (Gen 15:2). It is the Lord who selects and appoints the steward; he is neither self-constituted nor appointed by those over whom he rules. It was the duty of such an officer to dispense the regular allowance of daily food to the members of the household. So the stewards of the mysteries of Christ have to feed his flock with spiritual food, with the Word and sacraments, and to do this wisely and discreetly, according to the capacity, advancement, and circumstances of each recipient. The exhortation holds good for others as well as the clergy, civil rulers, the rich, all men. All our endowments, mental, spiritual, physical, material, are the gift of God, and are to be used in his service and to the good of others.

### **The Ten Virgins (Mar 29 A.D.)**

**"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. (Matt 25:1-13)**

This parable, as a continuation of the teaching of the last chapter, sets forth the necessity of having and retaining grace unto the end, in order to be able to welcome the advent of Christ. The duty of watchfulness and preparation for the great day is, of course, implied and set forth; but the point is that the oil of God's grace alone enables the soul to meet the bridegroom joyfully, without dismay. The usual marriage customs of the Jews are well known. On the appointed day, the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, proceeded to the bride's house, and thence escorted her, with her attendant maidens and friends, to his own or his parents' home. In the parable, however, the proceedings are somewhat different. Here the bridegroom is not in the town, but somewhere at a distance, so that, though the day is settled, the exact hour of his arrival is uncertain. He will come in the course of the night, and the virgins who are to meet him have assembled in the house where the wedding is to take place. They wait for the summons to go forth and meet the bridegroom and conduct him to the bridal place; and when the signal is given that he is approaching, they set forth on the road, each bearing her lamp.

### The Man on a far Journey (Mar 29 A.D.)

**Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"** (Mark 13:33-37)

These exhortations, which gather up in a succinct form the practical bearing of the parallel passages and parables in St. Matthew, must not be understood as implying that our Lord's coming in judgment would be during the lifetime of his disciples. The preceding words would teach them plainly enough that the actual time of this coming was hidden from them. But the intention was that, while by the certainty of the event their faith and hope would be quickened, by the uncertainty of the time they might be left in a continual state of watchfulness and prayer.

### Lesson of the Fig Tree (Mar 29 A.D.)

**"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.** (Matt 24:32-35)

**"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.** (Mark 13:28-31)

He told them this parable: **"Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.** (Luke 21:29-31)

The fruit of the fig tree appears before the leaves, as we learned in the story of the withered fig tree (Matt 21:19), which the Lord may have had in mind when he gave this illustration. Did he intend to symbolize the revival of the life of the withered Jewish race in the time of the end? As surely as buds and leaves prove the coming of summer, so you, who have been taught, may gather from the fulfillment of the signs mentioned the approach of the end. Know that it is near. The subject is not expressed, but it must be the Son of man, so that the rendering ought to be, he is near. Many, however, take the understood nominative to be the judgment, or the kingdom of God, or the occurrences last spoken of. Christ adds a solemn assurance that his words have in them a vitality and endurance which the mightiest works of nature do not possess. The facts and truths embodied in his words are sure and steadfast, and what he has promised or predicted shall inevitably be fulfilled.

### Grace of Jesus for the Sinners and Unworthy (Nov 27 A.D.)

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."** (Matt 9:10-13)

These are the emphatic words in the sentence. Christ takes the Pharisees at their own estimate of themselves, and, without entering into the question of whether this was right or wrong, shows them that on their own showing he would be useless to them. "I wish you to show this mercy, and therefore I practice it myself." It is, however, possible that our Lord disregards the original context of the words, and uses them only as a summary of an important truth, that God prefers to show mercy rather than to insist on sacrifice. This would make excellent sense

here. "Learn the true principle by which God acts, free grace, for it is on this that I have acted in coming to call sinners."

### **Salt of the Earth**

**"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. (Matt 5:13)**

The salt of the earth. It has been disputed whether allusion is here made to the preservative properties of salt or to the flavor it imparts; i.e. whether Christ is thinking of his disciples as preserving the world from decay, or as giving it a good flavor to the Divine taste. Surely a useless question; forgetful of the fact that spiritual realities are being dealt with, and that it is therefore impossible for the one effect to be really separated from the other. Our Lord is thinking of the moral tone which his disciples are to give to humanity. Persecution must be borne unless you are to lose your moral tone, which is to be to the earth what salt is to its surroundings, preserving from corruption and fitting for appreciation.

### **Bread Of Life**

**"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:32-40)**

Jesus therefore said to them, with the tones of special emphasis, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses, of whom you are reasonably thinking with due reverence, who gave you the bread out of heaven. There are two assertions here. There is also an implication, which the hearers of Jesus were called on to make. It was not Moses who gave to your fathers the bread out of heaven, such as the historians, psalmists, and expositors speak of; for such as it was, - a needed food for the body rained on you out of heaven, - it was the gift of God, not of Moses. Moreover, the manna was not the veritable "bread of heaven." There is a richer and more nourishing food than that, which alone deserves to be called Bread from heaven.

### **Miracles/Spiritual Opposition**

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, **"Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house. "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matt 12:24-37)**

The healing of a man, blind and dumb, and the consequent blasphemy of the Pharisees. The miracle leads them to the extreme of spiritual opposition. Unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb. "The devil had shut up each entrance by which he might come to faith, his sight and his hearing, yet Christ opened each". And he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spoke and saw. The case was worse than even that of Matt 9:32, where the man was not blind.

All the Praise and Glory to the Father and the Son

Pastor Scott

# List of the Parables of Jesus

The Two Buildings (May 27 A.D.)	Matt 7:24-27, Luke 6:47-49
Children in the Marketplace (June 27 A.D.)	Matt 11:16-19, Luke 7:31-35
The Two Insolvent Debtors (June 27 A.D.)	Luke 7:36-43
The Unclean Spirit (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 12:38-45, Luke 11:24-26
The Rich Mans Meditation (Oct 27 A.D.)	Luke 12:16-21
The Barren Fig Tree (Oct 27 A.D.)	Luke 13:6-9
The Sower and the Seed (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:1-23, Mark 4:2-8, Luke 8:5-8
The Tares (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:24-30
Weeds in the Field (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:36-43
The Seed (Oct 27 A.D.)	Mark 4:26-32
The Mustard Seed (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19
The Leaven (Yeast) (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:33, Luke 13:20-21
The Candle (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 5:14-16, Mark 4:21-23, Luke 8:16-18
The Hidden Treasures (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:44
The Pearl of great Price (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:45-46
The Net (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:47-48
The Householder (Oct 27 A.D.)	Matt 13:49-52
The Marriage (Nov 27 A.D.)	Matt 9:15, Mark 2:19-20
The Patched Garment (Nov 27 A.D.)	Matt 9:16, Mark 2:21-22, Luke 5:36-39
The Wine Bottles (Nov 27 A.D.)	Matt 9:17, Mark 2:22, Luke 5:37-39
The Harvest (Jan 28 A.D.)	Matt 9:37-38, Luke 10:2-4
The Adversary (May 28 A.D.)	Matt 5:25-26, Luke 12:57-59
The Two Debtors (Sep 28 A.D.)	Matt 18:23-35
The Good Samaritan (Oct 28 A.D.)	Luke 10:30-37
The Three Loaves (Nov 28 A.D.)	Luke 11:5-8
The True Sheperd (Nov 28 A.D.)	John 10:1-16
The Strait Gate (Feb 29 A.D.)	Matt 7:13-14, Luke 13:24-25
The Guest (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 14:7-11
The Marriage Supper (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 22:1-10, Luke 14:16-24
The Wedding Garment (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 22:11-14
The Tower (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 14:25-30
The King going to War (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 14:31-33
The Lost Sheep (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 18:12-14, Luke 15:3-7
The Lost piece of Money (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 15:8-10
The Prodigal Son (Mar A.D.)	Luke 15:11-32
The Unjust Stewart (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 16:1-9
The Rich man and Lazarus (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 16:19-31
The Watching Servant (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 12:35-40
The Vine and the Branches (Mar 29 A.D.)	John 15:1-8
The Widow (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 18:1-5
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 18:9-14
The Servants (Mar 29 A.D.)	Luke 17:7-10



The Laborers in the Vineyard (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 20:1-16
The Talents (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 25:14-30, Luke 19:11-27
The Two Sons (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 21:27-32
The Murderous Husbandmen 29 A.D.)	Matt 21:33-44, Mark 12:1-10, Luke 20:9-16
The Watching Householder (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 24:42-43, Luke 12:35-40
The Characters of two Servants (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 24:45-51, Luke 12:42-46
The Ten Virgins (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 25:1-13
The Man on a far Journey (Mar 29 A.D.)	Mark 13:33-37
Lesson of the Fig Tree (Mar 29 A.D.)	Matt 24:32-35, Mark 13:28-31, Luke 21:29-31
Grace of Jesus for the Sinners (Nov 27 A.D.)	Matt 9:10-13
Salt of the Earth	Matt 5:13
Bread Of Life	John 6:32-40
Miracles/Spiritual Opposition	Matt 12:24-37