

C H Spurgeon - Exposition of Matthew

Spurgeon's Notes Gospel of MATTHEW

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Chapter 2

Verses 1-12

Matthew 2:1-2. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Observe here that when the Son of God was born into the world, it was in a very lowly village, the village of Bethlehem. Very naturally, the wise men supposed that "the King of the Jews" would be born in the palace, in the metropolis of the country, at Jerusalem; but it pleased the Lord that everything about Christ's birth should have the stamp of lowliness, that the poorest and humblest of men might understand. that Christ took not upon him the nature of princes, but the nature of men, not of the great ones of the earth, but of our common humanity. Hence Jesus was born of a lowly virgin, and was but roughly cradled in a manger, and the village chosen as the place of his birth was Bethlehem, well-named the "house of bread", for it is there that the Bread of our souls is found. The holy child Jesus was born "in the days of Herod the king." The last spark of sovereignty was just dying out. Herod, an alien, held the kingdom under the Roman Empire. Did not old Jacob's prophecy say, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come"? Therefore is it expressly mentioned that Jesus was born "in the days of Herod the king." We must also remember that, although our Lord's birth is full of every circumstance of humiliation, it has a wondrous glory

about it. The Magi, probably from Persia, "wise men", philosophers and theologians, heard in far-off lands of his fame; and a star led them to his feet: "There came wise men from the east." They supposed that the birth of Christ would be well known among the Jews, and be a common theme of conversation; so, when they reached Jerusalem, they inquired, "Where is he who is born King of the Jews?" Ah, when the heart is awakened to the love of Christ, it often dreams that everybody else feels an equal interest in him; but it is not so!

The world is dead and cold to Christ; and men look astonished when we ask the question, "Where is he? We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." These wise men were not Unitarians, who disbelieved the deity of Christ. It has been said by some that they only meant that they were come to pay him the homage of a king. Then, why did they not worship Herod, and why did Herod say that he wished to worship him? It will not do, the thought is not to be endured for a single moment. The magi believed that he who was born King of the Jews was more than a human being, and they had come to worship him.

Matthew 2:3. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

The wise men brought the best news that ever was told, and yet it troubled people. Does the gospel trouble you, my friend? Then I am afraid you must be of Herod's kith and kin. It is an ill sign of a man's heart when that which is for the good of all men becomes a trouble to him. It is an ill stomach that turns good meat to poison. I suppose "all Jerusalem" was troubled with Herod because they knew that, whenever this gloomy tyrant had a fit upon him, he was sure to draw blood somewhere; therefore they were troubled with him.

Matthew 2:4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

Think of this vile wretch taking to studying his Bible. Yet there are some who do the like still. Reckoning that gain is godliness and therefore turning godliness into gain for sinister motives, they would be religious, and wish to be instructed in the truths of the Bible. Such was Herod; so he gathered all the chief priests and scribes together, and demanded of them where Christ should be born.

Matthew 2:5-6. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Now, you see, what Herod did with an ill design was overruled for good, for thus we know on the highest authority that Christ was born at Bethlehem; the chief priests and scribes, great students of the law, when they were assembled in the presence of Herod, declared that, according to prophecy, Christ was to be born in Bethlehem.

Matthew 2:7-8. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Covering his bloody design with the pretense of reverence. There is never a worse sin in the world than that which a man covers over with the cloak of religion; let us ever beware of falling into this evil.

Matthew 2:9-10. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

You see, the light of the star was taken from them for a time, just as sometimes the delightful presence of God is withdrawn from his people. Then, beloved, you walk by faith alone, and not by sight, as these men did; but oh! when the light comes back again, when, after hearing all the chatter of false priests and scribes, and all the talk of Herod the great one, they see the star again, how glad they are! When God sends to his people clear shinings after rain, the brightness of his presence after a time of gloom, then is it with them as it was with the wise men, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Matthew 2:11. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him:

The old Reformers used to say, "Here is a bone that sticks in the throat of the Romanists, and they can neither get it up nor down, for it does not say, They saw Mary and the young child, the young child is put first, they came to see him; and it does not say that 'they fell down and worshiped them.'" If ever there was an opportunity for Mariolatry, surely this was the one, when the child was as yet newly-born, and depended so much upon his mother. Why did not the magi say, "We Maria!" and commence at once their Mariolatry? Ay, but these were wise men; they were not priests from Rome, else might they have done it.

Matthew 2:11. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

The best they had, presents fit for a King; offered as the tribute of the country from which they came, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh being found in the east. It is well to bring to Christ the best we have, and the boat of the best: "gold, and frankincense, and

myrrh."

Matthew 2:12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Verses 1-23

Matthew 2:1. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, —

Probably from that Assyria which is joined with Israel and Egypt in the remarkable prophecy in Isaiah 19:24-25 : "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. "Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem," —

Matthew 2:2-3. Saying, Where is he who is, born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

He was troubled about the kingship which he had no right to possess, for he thought that, if the "King of the Jews" was really coming, he would be dethroned. And all Jerusalem was troubled with him, for the people over whom he reigned never knew what mischief he might do when once his suspicions were excited, for he was a cruel, blood-thirsty tyrant.

Matthew 2:4-6. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the prince of Judah: for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

It was something to get a distinct declaration from the Jewish rulers that the Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, for Jesus was born there. Afterwards, they called him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Nazareth was the place where he was brought up, but Bethlehem was the place of his birth, in fulfillment of the prophecy given hundreds of years before the event.

Matthew 2:7-8. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Pretty "worship" was that which he would render to the infant King! He intended to murder him, and, in like manner, how often, under the pretense of worshiping Christ, has the very truth of Christ been murdered. Men invent new sacraments, new doctrines, new forms and Romanies, all avowedly for the edification of the Church and for the glory of Jesus; but really that they may stab at the very heart of God's gospel, and put to death the living truth.

Matthew 2:9. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was.

Yet it was not a wandering star, nor a shooting star; but a traveling star such as they had never seen before.

Matthew 2:10-12. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Very providentially, the magi had brought the gold with which Joseph would be able to pay the expenses incurred in journeying to the land of Egypt, and in supporting his family there until he could return to his home and his business. God always takes care of his own children; and specially did he provide for his firstborn and only-begotten Son.

Matthew 2:13-14. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be you there until I bring you word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

How obedient Joseph was! He was a man of a docile spirit, who willingly did as God bade him. He has, perhaps, never had his character sufficiently well set forth in the Church of God, for he was eminently honored by being the guardian of the young child and his mother; and he discharged his duty with singular humility and gentleness.

Matthew 2:15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Which was true first of Israel, the nation, as God's ion, and now again true of Jesus, the great Son of God. It is true also of all sons of God; we have to be called out of Egypt. By the blood of the Paschal Lamb we too are saved, and we are brought out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, in the day when God delivers us from our sin.

Matthew 2:16. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

That was the light he put upon it: "that he was mocked of the wise men." He was exceeding wroth, and when he was wroth, his anger was terrible. Augustus said of him that it would be better to be Herod's sow than Herod's son, which was true, for he would not kill a sow, as he held to the Jewish faith. He did not kill swine, but he would not mind killing anybody in his passion: "He was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." He took a wide range in order, so he thought, to make quite sure that he should kill the Child King whom he especially hated.

Matthew 2:17-18. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, slaying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

It must have been a very sorrowful day in Bethlehem; you can imagine the grief that filled the hearts of the mothers there. There is Herod, who acts the hypocrite, and tries to slay Christ at the first, and there is Judas at the end, acts the hypocrite, too, and betrays his Lord. Thus is the life of Christ begun and ended in sorrow.

Matthew 2:19-22. But when Herod was dead behold, an angel of the Lord appears in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither:

Archelaus was another chip off the old block, and a chip of very hard wood, too, equally cruel, and without his father's greatness of mind. He had all Herod's vices without his mental vigor.

Matthew 2:22. Notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

He did not follow his own judgment. This man, thoroughly a servant of God, waits for orders; he has his fears, but he will not even act upon them, but he waits until he is warned of God in a dream, and then he turns aside into the parts of Galilee.

Matthew 2:23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth:

Galilee was despised, but Nazareth was thought to be the worst part of Galilee. Netzar is a word in the Hebrew signifying a sprout or branch, and Nazareth apparently comes from the same root.

Matthew 2:23. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

This is the name commonly given to our Lord in the Old Testament. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesus was the sprout, or the shoot out of the withered stem of Jesse. When the dynasty of David was like the tree cut down, and only the stem of it left there sprang up out of it the Netzar, the Nazarene; so he is found dwelling in a city that is called by that name, and he also is called a Nazarene. And the name clings to him to this day, there are those who will call him by no name but "the Nazarene." There was one who threatened to crush the Nazarene, but when he was dying he had to cry, "O Nazarene, you have triumphed;" and the Nazarene will always do so. He shall be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, and he shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!

Chapter 3

Verses 1-12

We are going to read three passages relating to John the Baptist's testimony concerning Christ.

Matthew 3:1-4. In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the kingdom

of Heaven is at hand. For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his clothing of camel's hair, and a leathern belt about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Everything connected with John the Baptist was in harmony with his message. He was the preacher of repentance, so the place where he preached was most suitable; it was in the wilderness, where there was nothing to distract his hearers' attention, as there would have been in crowded cities. His dress was striking, and everything about him, even down to the food that he ate, went to show that he was the rough pioneer preacher preparing the way for his master. John did not teach the fullness of joy and peace; that was left for our Lord Jesus to proclaim; but John came to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance.

Matthew 3:5. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,

There seems to have been, about that time, a widespread anticipation of the coming of the Messiah; so, no sooner did the news come that a prophet was preaching in the desert, than great multitudes went out to hear him.

Matthew 3:6-8. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Did he not speak after the style of the prophet Elijah? Yet those bold speeches of his were not at all stronger than the evils of the age required. When the self-righteous Pharisees and the skeptical Sadducees the Ritualists and the "modern thought" men of that day came to him to be baptized, he welcomed them not, but bade them "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," evidences of a change of heart and life.

Matthew 3:9. And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones —

In the bed of Jordan, where he was baptizing, —

Matthew 3:9. To raise up children unto Abraham.

John bade them boast not of their descent from Abraham; yet that was the great thing in which they did glory. They despised the Gentiles as so many do outside the true fold. Note how John the Baptist really preaches the gospel to us indirectly while he is denouncing these people's confidence in their carnal descent. Regeneration is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Matthew 3:10. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Other teachers came, as it were, only to lop and prune the trees, but the time had come for the felling of those that were fruitless. John did this, and so did our Lord Jesus Christ, for his preaching dug up the very roots of sin, superstition, and evil of every kind.

Matthew 3:11-12. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Now let us turn to the Gospel according to John, where we have another account of the ministry of John the Baptist.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 3:1-12; John 1:15-37; John 3:22-36.

Verses 1-17

Matthew 3:1-2. In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

There is no entering the kingdom of Heaven without leaving the kingdom of darkness. We must repent of sin, or we cannot receive the blessings of salvation. Of every man, whoever he may be, whether outwardly moral or openly wicked, repentance is required. It is the door of hope; there is no other way into the kingdom: "Repent you: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Matthew 3:3-4. For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his clothing of camel's hair, and a belt about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

His clothing and his food were like his doctrine, rough and simple. There was no mincing of words, no making of pretty phrases with John the Baptist; his message was simply, "Repent you: repent you: for the kingdom of Heaven is coming." We want more of this John the Baptist teaching nowadays, that men may be plainly told their faults, and warned to put away those faults that they may receive Christ Jesus as their Savior.

Matthew 3:5-7. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and at Judea, and out the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come

These were the influential people of the times; the Pharisees were the Ritualists of that age, and the Sadducees were the Rationalists of the period. Why, John, you ought to have smoothed your tongue a bit, and have said some very pleasant words to these great men; for, by so doing, perhaps you might have won some of these Pharisees, or coaxed some of these Sadducees into the kingdom! Ah, no; that is not John's method! He is plainspoken, and he deals truthfully with his hearers, for he knows that converts made by flattery are but flattering converts that are of no real value.

Matthew 3:8-9. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within ourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham

Pointing to the stones in the River Jordan, and all along the banks, he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "There is nothing, after all, in your natural descent from Abraham. God has promised that Abraham shall have a seed, but think not that he is dependent upon you for that seed. - He can fulfill his promise without you. He can turn the very pebbles of the stream into children for Abraham. God is not short of men to save. If some of you will not have him, do not think that he shall have to come a-begging to you. There are others who will have him, and his rich sovereign grace will find them out. Beware, you that are proud and think much of yourselves, for God will not humble himself to you. He has regard to the humble and the lowly, but the proud he knows afar off."

Matthew 3:10-12. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the holy Spirit, and with fire:-whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The Christ is the minister of mercy, but there is about his doctrine a-searching and a trying power. Only the sincere in heart can endure Christ's winnowing fan. As for the insincere, they are blown away like the chaff on the threshing-floor, and their end is destruction. God gave us to be numbered among the wheat that Christ shall gather into his heavenly garner!

Matthew 3:13-14. Then comes Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of you, and come you to me?

It seemed very strange that John, the servant, should be required to baptize Jesus, the Master.

Matthew 3:15. And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

That is to say the Teacher must himself obey the laws, which he is about to lay down; and inasmuch as he is going to bid others to be baptized, he will set the example, and be himself baptized. I think also that the baptism of Christ was the picture, the type, the symbol of the work, which he afterwards accomplished. He was immersed in suffering; he died, and was buried in the tomb; he rose again from the grave; and all that is set forth in the outward symbol of his baptism in the River Jordan.

Matthew 3:16-17. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up immediately out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and to a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

And we are well pleased with him.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 2, and Matthew 3.

Verses 13-17

Matthew 3:13-14. Then comes Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of you, and come you to me?

Who among us would not have felt as John did? Shall the servant baptize the Master, and such a Master, even his Lord and Savior?

But merely the condescension of our blessed Lord. He would do everything that he wished his people afterwards to do; and therefore he would be baptized, and set the example that he would have them all follow.

Matthew 3:15. And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

We are never to be so modest as to become disobedient to Christ's commands. We have known some who have allowed their humility to grow alone in the garden of their heart without the other sweet flowers that should have sprung up side by side with it, and thus their very humility has developed into a kind of pride. John was easily persuaded to do what his feelings at first seemed to forbid: "Then he suffered him."

Matthew 3:16-17. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up immediately out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

It has also happened unto the servants of Christ, as well as to their Master, that in keeping the commandments of God there has been a sweet attestation borne by the Holy Spirit. I trust that we, too, according to our measure of sonship, have heard in our hearts the voice from Heaven, saying, "This is my beloved son," and that we have experienced the descending of the dove-like Spirit, bringing us peace of mind and gentleness of nature.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 3:13-17; and Matthew 4:1-11.

Chapter 4

Verses 1-11

Matthew 4:1. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

He had just been baptized, the Spirit of God had descended upon him, and the Father had borne witness to him, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," yet, immediately after all that, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. So, after your times of sweetest fellowship with God, after the happiest enjoyment of gospel ordinances. After the sealing of the Spirit within your hearts, you must expect to be tempted of the devil. You must not suppose that, in your Christian life, all will be sweetness, — that all will be spiritual witness-bearing. You have to fight the good fight of faith, and your great adversary will not be slow to begin the encounter. You are a pilgrim in a strange land, so you must expect to find rough places on the road to Heaven. Yet, since you are so much weaker than your Master was, you will do well to pray the prayer that he taught to his disciples, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Matthew 4:2-3. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungry. And when the tempter came to him,

See how Satan seizes opportunities. When he finds us weak, as the Savior was through long fasting; — when he finds us in trying circumstances, as the Savior was when hungry in the desert; — then it is that he comes to tempt us. This dastardly foe of ours takes every possible advantage of us, that he may, by any means, overthrow us.

Matthew 4:3. He said, If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made into bread.

He begins with an "if." He tries to cast a doubt upon the Savior's Sonship, and this is the way that he often attacks a child of God now. He says to him, "If you be a son of God, do so-and-so." He challenged Christ to work a miracle for himself, — to use his divine power on his own behalf, but this the Savior never did. He challenged Christ to distrust the providence of God, and to be his own Provider; and this is still a very common temptation to God's people.

Matthew 4:4. But he answered and said, It is written, —

That is the only sword that Christ used against Satan, — "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." There is nothing like it; and the old dragon himself knows what sharp edges this sword has. Christ said, "It is written," —

Matthew 4:4. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

God can sustain human life without the use of bread, although it is the staff of life; for bread does not sustain life unless God puts power into it to do so, and he can, if it pleases him, use that power without the outward means. Our Lord thus showed that God could provide for him in a desert without his interference with the plans of divine providence by selfishly catering for himself. So the first victory was won,

Matthew 4:5-6 Then the devil takes him up into the holy city, and sets him on a pinnacle of the temple. And says unto him, If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down: for it is written,—

Here he plays with the Word of God, for the devil can quote Scripture when it suits his purpose to do so: "It is written," —

Matthew 4:6. He shall give his angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone.

The devil did not quote correctly from Psalms 91:11-12; he left out the most important words: "He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways," but it was not Christ's way to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus therefore answered Satan's misquotation with a true quotation.

Matthew 4:7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.

I know some people, who earn their living in employments which are very hazardous to their immortal souls. They are in the midst of evil, yet they tell me that God can keep them in safety there. I know that he can, but I also know that we have no right to go, voluntarily, where we are surrounded by temptation. If your calling is the wrong one, and you are continually tempted in it, you may not presume upon the goodness of God to keep you, for it is your business to get as far as you can from that which will lead you into sin. God does not put his servants on the pinnacle of the temple; it is the devil who puts them there; and if they ever are there, the best thing they can do is to get down as quickly and as safely as they can; but they must not cast themselves down, they must look to him who alone can bring them down safely. With some professors, presumption is a very common sin. They will go into worldly amusements and all sorts of frivolities, and say, "Oh, we can be Christians, and yet go there!" Can you? It may be that you can be hypocrites, and go there; that is far easier than going there as Christians.

Matthew 4:8-10. Again, the devil takes him up into an exceeding high mountain, and shows him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and says unto him, All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me. Then says Jesus unto him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.

Christ will not endure any more of this talk. When it comes to a bribe the promise that the devil will give him earth's glory if he will but fall down and worship him, Christ ends the whole matter once for all. Thrice assaulted, thrice victorious, blessed Master, enable us also to be more than conquerors through your grace!

Matthew 4:11. Then the devil leaves him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Regarding it as their highest honor to be the servants of their Lord.

Verses 12-24

4:12. Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

Notice that there were at that time only two great ministers of God, John the Baptist, he must go to prison and to death; — Jesus, the Son of God, he must go to the desert to be tempted of the devil. If any Christians escape temptation, they will not be the leaders of the hosts of God. Those who stand in the van must bear the brunt of the battle. Oh, that all who are called to such responsible positions might be as prepared to occupy them as John was, and as Jesus was!

Matthew 4:13-16. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Oh, the tender mercy of our God! Where the darkness is the deepest, there the light shines the brightest. Christ selects such dark regions as Nephthalim and Zabulon that he may dwell there, and shine in all his glory.

Matthew 4:17. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

He was not afraid to give an earnest exhortation to sinners, and to bid men repent. He knew better than we do the inability of men concerning all that is good, yet he bade them repent.

Matthew 4:18-23. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they immediately left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his

brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

I like those words "all manner"—that is, every kind and every sort of sickness and disease Christ met. Perhaps you, dear friend, are afflicted in your soul after a very peculiar fashion. Ay, but this great Physician heals all manner of diseases. None are excluded from the list of patients whom he can cure; twice the words "all manner" are used: "Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

Matthew 4:24. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Our Lord Jesus lived as in a hospital while he was on earth; wherever he went, the sins and sorrows of men were all open before his sympathetic gaze. But oh, what joy it must have been to him to be able to deal so well with them all! Am I addressing any who are sick in soul? Our Master is used to cases just like yours; your malady is not new to him. He has healed many like you; of all that were brought to him, it is written, "he healed them." Lie before him now, in all your sin and misery, and breathe the prayer, "You Son of David, have mercy on me," and he will surely hear you, and heal you, for he delights to bless and save all who trust him.

This exposition consisted of readings from John 1:19-51; and Matthew 4:12-24.

Chapter 5

Verses 1-12

Matthew 5:1. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

You notice that the Preacher sat down, and that his disciples stood around him. If you find it somewhat warm and trying tonight, remember that you have the best of it, for you sit while the speaker stands. Concerning our Lord, we read: "When he was set, his disciples came unto him:" —

Matthew 5:2. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, —

Perhaps someone says, "He could not have taught them without opening his mouth" I have found that a great many try to teach without opening their mouths; but the earnest preacher speaks with all his might. So did Jesus in the open air on the mountain side: "He opened his mouth, and taught them." Such grand things as he had to say ought to come from open portals, so he mumbled not, but "opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,"—

Matthew 5:3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of Heaven.

"Blessed." See how Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount, he begins with blessings. He is a cloud that is full of rain, and that empties itself upon the earth. The moment you begin to know Christ, you begin to have blessings; and the more you know of him, the more blessed you will be. "Blessed are the poor in spirit:" not those who boast themselves of spiritual riches and personal goodness, but the lowly, the meek, the trembling, the humble, the poor in spirit, "for their's is the kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 5:4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Let them be comforted now in the prospect of future comfort. There are no mourning hearts that mourn over sin, and mourn after God, that shall be deserted by their God: "they shall be comforted."

Matthew 5:5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

They do in the truest sense enjoy even this life; their contented spirit makes them monarchs. The great man, with all his wealth, is often uneasy with a craving ambition for more; but the quiet spirits of God's people find a kingdom everywhere. The mountains and the valleys belong really to him who can, with happy eye, look upon them, and then lift his face to Heaven, and feel, "My Father made them all."

Matthew 5:6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:

They want to be better; they are hungry and thirsty after more holiness. They boast not of personal perfection, they are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but they have not attained to it yet.

Matthew 5:6. For they shall be filled.

God will fill them; and when he fills men with his fullness, they are full indeed.

Matthew 5:7. Blessed are the merciful:

The forgiving, the generous, the kind: "Blessed are the merciful:" —

Matthew 5:7-8. For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

There is such a connection between purity of heart and purity of understanding that the man whose eye is clarified by holiness shall see God.

Matthew 5:9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

They shall not only be the children of God, but people shall call them by that name. There is something so Godlike in trying to put away discord, and to remove anger, and to promote love, that it makes men feel that peacemakers must be the children of God.

Matthew 5:10-11. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

It is not when men truthfully speak evil concerning you, but when they say it falsely; not when they say evil against you because of your ill tempers which provoke them, but when they do it falsely, for Christ's sake, then, "blessed are you."

Matthew 5:12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

And you are treading in their steps, so you are entering into their heritage. You have your beginning with them, and you shall have your end with them. If persecuted with them, you shall also reign with them.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 149.; and Matthew 5:1-12.

Verses 1-30

Matthew 5:1-2. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,-

Our Savior soon gathered a congregation. The multitudes perceived in him a love to them, and a willingness to impart blessing to them, and therefore they gathered about him. He chose the mountain and the open air for the delivery of this great discourse, and we should be glad to find such a place for our assemblies; but in this variable climate we cannot often do so. "And when he was set." The Preacher sat, and the people stood. We might make a helpful change if we were sometimes to adopt a similar plan now. I am afraid that ease of posture may contribute to the creation of slumber of heart in the hearers. There Christ sat, and "his disciples came unto him." They formed the inner circle that was ever nearest to him, and to them he imparted his choicest secrets, but he also spoke to the multitude, and therefore it is said that "he opened his mouth," as well he might when there were such great truths to proceed from it, and so vast a crowd to hear them: "He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying," —

Matthew 5:3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

This is a gracious beginning to our Savior's discourse, "Blessed are the poor." None ever considered the poor as Jesus did, but here he is speaking of a poverty of spirit, a lowliness of heart, an absence of self-esteem. Where that kind of spirit is found, it is sweet poverty: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 5:4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

There is a blessing which often goes with mourning itself; but when the sorrow is of a spiritual sort,-mourning for sin,-then is it blessed indeed.

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,

And after none but you;

And then I would-oh, that I might-

A constant mourner be!"

Matthew 5:5. Blessed are the meek:

The quiet-spirited, the gentle, the self-sacrificing,-

Matthew 5:5. For they shall inherit the earth.

It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, "for they shall inherit the earth." The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves, and the sheep, continue to multiply, and to feed in green pastures.

Matthew 5:6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:

Pining to be holy, longing to serve God, anxious to spread every righteous principle--blessed are they.

Matthew 5:6-7. For they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: Those who are kind, generous, sympathetic, ready to forgive those who have wronged them,-blessed are they.

Matthew 5:7-8. For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart:-

It is a most blessed attainment to have such a longing for purity as to love everything that is chaste and holy, and to abhor everything that is questionable and unhallowed: blessed are the pure in heart:

Matthew 5:8. For they shall see God.

There is a wonderful connection between hearts and eyes. A man who has the stains of filth on his soul cannot see God, but they who are purified in heart are purified in vision too: "they shall see God."

Matthew 5:9. Blessed are the peacemakers:

Those who always end a quarrel if they can, those who lay themselves out to prevent discord,-

Matthew 5:9-10. For they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. They share the kingdom of Heaven with the poor in spirit. They are often evil spoken of, they have sometimes to suffer the spoiling of their goods, many of them have laid down their lives for Christ's sake, but they are truly blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 5:11. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Mind, it must be said falsely, and it must be for Christ's sake, if you are to be blessed; but there is no blessing in having evil spoken of you truthfully, or in having it spoken of you falsely because of some bitterness in your own spirit.

Matthew 5:12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

You are in the true prophetic succession, if you cheerfully bear reproach of this kind for Christ's sake, you prove that you have the stamp and seal of those who are in the service of God.

Matthew 5:13. You are the salt of the earth:

Followers of Christ, "you are the salt of the earth." You help to preserve it, and to subdue the corruption that is in it.

Matthew 5:13. But if the salt have lost his savor, with which shall it be salted?

A professing Christian with no grace in him, a religious man whose very religion is dead, what is the good of him? And he is himself in a hopeless condition. You can salt meat, but you cannot salt salt.

Matthew 5:13. It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

There are people who believe that you can be children of God today, and children of the devil tomorrow; then again children of God the next day and children of the devil again the day after; but, believe me, it is not so. If the work of grace be really wrought of God in your soul, it will last through your whole life, and if it does not so last, that proves that it is not the work of God. God does not put his hand to this work a second time. There is no regeneration twice over, you can be born again, but you cannot be born again, and

again, and again, as some teach there is no note in Scripture of that kind. Hence I do rejoice that regeneration once truly wrought of the Spirit of God, is an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. But beware, professor, lest you should be like salt that has lost its savor, and that therefore is good for nothing.

Matthew 5:14. You are the light of the world.

Christ never contemplated the production of secret Christians, Christians whose virtues would never be displayed, pilgrims who would travel to Heaven by night, and never be seen by their fellow-pilgrims or anyone else.

Matthew 5:14-15. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.

Christians ought to be seen, and they ought to let their light be seen. They should never even attempt to conceal it. If you are a lamp, you have no right to be under a bushel, or under a bed; your place is on the lampstand where your light can be seen.

Matthew 5:16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

Not that they may glorify you, but that they may glorify your Father who is in Heaven.

Matthew 5:17-18. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For truly I say unto you, Until Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled.

No cross of a "t" and no dot of an "i" shall be taken from God's law. Its requirements will always be the same; immutably fixed, and never to be abated by so little as "one jot or one tittle."

Matthew 5:19-20. Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,-

Who seemed to have reached the very highest degree of it; indeed, they themselves thought they went rather over the mark than under it, but Christ says to his disciples, "Unless your righteousness goes beyond that,-

Matthew 5:20. You shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

These are solemn words of warning. God grant that we may have a righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, a righteousness inwrought by the Spirit of God, a righteousness of the heart and of the life!

Matthew 5:21. You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Antiquity is often pleaded as an authority; but our King makes short work of "them of old time." He begins with one of their alterations of his Father's law. They added to the saved oracles. The first part of the saying which our Lord quoted was divine; but it was dragged down to a low level by the addition about the human court, and the murderer's liability to appear there. It thus became rather a proverb among men than an inspired utterance from the mouth of God. Its meaning, as God spoke it, had a far wider range than when the offence was restrained to actual killing, such as could be brought before a human judgment-seat. To narrow a command is measurably to annul it. We may not do this even with antiquity for our warrant. Better the whole truth newly stated than an old falsehood in ancient language.

Matthew 5:22. But I say unto you, That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.

Murder lies within anger, for we wish harm to the object of our wrath, or even wish that he did not exist, and this is to kill him in desire. Anger "without a cause" is forbidden by the command which says "You shall not kill;" for unjust anger is killing in intent. Such anger without cause brings us under higher judgment than that of Jewish police-courts. God takes cognizance of the emotions from which acts of hate may spring, and calls us to account as much for the angry feeling as for the murderous deed. Words also come under the same condemnation: a man shall be judged for what he "shall say to his brother." To call a man Raca, or a worthless fellow, is to kill him in his reputation, and to say to him, "You fool," is to kill him as to the noblest characteristics of a man. Hence all this comes under such censure as men distribute in their councils; yes, under what is far worse, the punishment awarded by the highest court of the universe, which dooms men to "Hell fire." Thus our Lord and King restores the law of God to its true force, and warns us that it denounces not only the overt act of killing, but every thought, feeling, and word which would tend to injure a brother, or annihilate him by contempt.

Matthew 5:23-24. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you; Leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

The Pharisee would urge as a cover for his malice that he brought a sacrifice to make atonement, but our Lord will have forgiveness rendered to our brother first, and then the offering presented. We ought to worship God thoughtfully, and if in the course of that thought we remember that our brother has ought against us, we must stop. If we have wronged another, we are to pause, cease from the worship, and hasten to seek reconciliation. We easily remember if we have ought against our brother, but now the memory is to be turned the other way. Only when we have remembered our wrong doing, and made reconciliation can we hope for acceptance with the Lord. The rule is-first peace with man, and then acceptance with God. The holy must be traversed to reach the Holiest of all. Peace being made with our brother, then let us conclude our service towards our Father, and we shall do so with lighter heart and truer zeal. I would anxiously desire to be at peace with all men before I attempt to worship God, lest I present to God the sacrifice of fools.

Matthew 5:25-26. Agree with your adversary quickly, whiles you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Truly I say unto you, You shall by no means come out thence, until you have paid the uttermost farthing.

In all disagreements be eager for peace. Leave off strife before you begin. In law-suits, seek speedy and peaceful settlements. Often in our Lord's days, this was the most gainful way, and usually it is so now. Better lose your rights than get into the hands of those who with will only fleece you in the name of justice, and hold you fast so long as a semblance of a demand can stand against you, or another penny can be extracted from you. In a country where "just fee" meant robbery, it was wisdom to be robbed, and to make no complaint. Even in our own country, a lean settlement is better than a fat law-suit. Many go into the court to get wool, but come out closely shorn. Carry on no angry suits in courts, but make peace with the utmost promptitude.

Matthew 5:27-28 You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

In this case our King again sets aside the glosses of men upon the commands of God, and makes the law to be seen in its vast spiritual breadth. Whereas tradition had confined the prohibition to an overt act of unchastity, the King shows that it forbade the unclean desires of the heart. Here the divine law is shown to refer, not only to the act of criminal conversation, but even to the desire, imagination, or passion which would suggest such an infamy. What a King is ours, who stretches his scepter over the realm of our inward lusts! How sovereignly he puts it: "But, I say unto you"! Who but a divine being has authority to speak in this fashion? His word is law. So it ought to be, seeing he touches vice at the fountain-head, and forbids immorality in the heart. If sin were not allowed in the mind, it would never be made manifest in the body this, therefore, is a very effectual way of dealing with the evil. But how searching? how condemning! Irregular looks, unchaste desires and strong passions are of the very essence of adultery; and who can claim a life-long freedom from them? Yet these are the things which defile a man. Lord, purge them out of my nature, and make me pure within!

Matthew 5:29. And if your right eye offend you, pluck it out, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell.

That which is the cause of sin is to be given up as well as the sin itself. It is not sinful to have an eye, or to cultivate keen perception; but if the eye of speculative knowledge leads us to offend by intellectual sin, it becomes the cause of evil, and must be mortified. Anything, however harmless, which leads me to do, or think, or feel wrongly, I am to get rid of as much as if it were in itself an evil. Though to have done with it would involve deprivation, yet must it be dispensed with, since even a serious loss in one direction is far better than the losing of the whole man. Better a blind saint than a quick-sighted sinner. If abstaining from alcohol caused weakness of body, it would be better to be weak, than to be strong and fall into drunkenness. Since vain speculations and reasonings land men in unbelief, we will have none of them. To "be cast into Hell" is too great a risk to run, merely to indulge the evil eye of lust or curiosity.

Matthew 5:30. And if your right hand offend you, cut it off, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell.

The cause of offence may be rather active as the hand than intellectual as the eye, but we had better be hindered in our work than drawn aside into temptation. The most dexterous hand must not be spared if it encourages us in doing evil. It is not because a certain thing may make us clever and successful that therefore we are to allow it, if it should prove to be the frequent cause of our falling into sin, we must have done with it, and place ourselves at a disadvantage for our life-work, rather than ruin our whole being by sin. Holiness is to be our first object; everything else must take a very secondary place. Right eyes and right hands are no longer right if they lead us wrong. Even hands and eyes must go that we may not offend our God by them. Yet, let no man read this literally, and therefore mutilate his body, as some foolish fanatics have done. The real meaning is clear enough.

Verses 13-26

Matthew 5:13. You are the salt of the earth:

The earth would go putrid if there were no salt of grace to preserve it. So, dear friends, if God's grace is in you, there is a pungent savor about you which tends to preserve others from going as far into sin as otherwise they would have done; "You are the salt of the earth:"

Matthew 5:13. But if the salt have lost his savor, with which shall it be salted?

If the God-given grace could be taken from you altogether, if you had no sanctifying power about you at all, what could be done with you? You would be like salt that has lost its savor.

Matthew 5:13. It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Mark this, then, either the saints must persevere to the end, or else the grace of God has done nothing for them effectually. If they do not continue to be saints, and to exercise a saintly influence, there is no hope for them. There cannot be two new births for the same person; if the divine work has failed once, it will never be begun again. If they really have been saved, if they have been made the children of God, and if it be possible for them to lose the grace which they have received, they can never have it again. The Word of God is very emphatic upon that point: "If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" Falling may be retrieved, but falling away never can be happy. There are countries where there is found salt from which the pungency has completely gone. It is an altogether useless article; and if there are men, who ever did possess the grace of God, and who were truly God's people, if the divine life could go out of them, they would be in an utterly hopeless case. Perhaps there are no powers of evil in the world greater than apostate churches; who can calculate the influence for evil that the Church of Rome exercises in the world today?

Matthew 5:14. You are the light of the world.

The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church; but the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians; "You are the light of the world."

Matthew 5:14. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

You Christians are like a city built upon a hilltop, you must be seen. As you will be seen, mind that you are worth seeing.

Matthew 5:15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.

God's intent is, first, to light you; and, secondly, to put you in a conspicuous position, where men can see you.

Matthew 5:16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

Let the light of your purity and your good works be as bright as possible, yet let not the light be to your own praise and glory; but let it be clearly seen that your good works are the result of sovereign grace, for which all the glory must be given to "your Father which is in Heaven."

Matthew 5:17-18. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For truly I say unto you, Until Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled.

See how the great Lord of the New Testament confirms the Old Testament. He has not come to set up a destructive criticism that will tear in pieces the Book of Deuteronomy, or cut out the very heart of the Psalms, or grind Ezekiel to powder between his own wheels; but Christ has come to establish yet more firmly than before all that was written aforetime, and to make it stand fast as the everlasting hills.

Matthew 5:19. Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.

A true man may make mistakes, and so he may teach men to violate some one or other of the divine commandments. If he does so, he shall not perish, for he was honest in his blunder; but he shall be among the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But he, who earnestly, perseveringly, and conscientiously teaches all that he knows of the divine will, "the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven"

Matthew 5:20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Christ does not teach a lower kind of morality than the Pharisees taught. They were very particular about little things, jots and tittles; but we must go further than they went; we must have more righteousness of life than they had, although they seemed to their fellow-men to be excessively precise. Christ aims at perfect purity in his people, and we must aim at it too, and we must really attain to more holiness than the best outward morals can produce.

Matthew 5:21. You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

God had said, "You shall not kill;" but the remainder of the verse was the gloss of the Rabbis, a true one, yet one that very much diminishes the force of the divine command.

Matthew 5:22. But I say unto you, That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment;

And a far higher judgment than that of men;

Matthew 5:22. And whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, —

A word of very uncertain meaning, a kind of snubbing word, a word of contempt which men used to one another, meaning that there was nothing in them: "Whoever shall say to his brother, Raca," —

Matthew 5:22. Shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

Christ will not have us treat men with anger, or with contempt, which is a very evil form of hate, akin to murder, because we as good as say, "That man is nobody;" that is, we make nothing of him, which is morally to kill him. We must not treat our fellow-men with contempt and derision, nor indulge any angry temper against them, for anger is of the devil, but "love is of God."

Matthew 5:23-24. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Note that this injunction is addressed to the man who has offended against his brother; why is this? Because he is the least likely to try to make up the quarrel. It is the man who has been offended who usually exhibits the nobler spirit; but the offender is almost always the last to seek a reconciliation, and therefore the Savior says to him, "If your brother has ought against you, it is but right that you should be the first to seek reconciliation with him. Leave your gift, go away from the prayer-meeting, turn back from the Lord's table, and go and first be reconciled to your brother."

Matthew 5:25. Agree with your adversary quickly,

Always be ready to make peace, — not peace at any price; but, still, peace at any price except the sacrifice of righteousness.

Matthew 5:25-26. Whiles you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Truly I say unto you, You shall by no means come out thence, until you have paid the uttermost farthing.

And there are some debts of which we cannot pay the uttermost farthing; and there is a prison out of which no man shall come, for the uttermost farthing demanded there shall never be paid. God grant that we may none of us ever know what it is to be shut up in that dreadful dungeon!

Verses 17-48

Matthew 5:17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

The life, work, and words of Christ are not an emendation of the Old Testament, or an abrogation of it. It stands fast and firm, fulfilled, carried to perfection, filled to the full in Christ.

Matthew 5:18-19. For truly I say unto you, Until Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled. Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.

It is vain to teach the commandments without first doing them. The doing must always precede the teaching. If a man's example

cannot be safely followed, it will be unsafe to trust his words.

Matthew 5:20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

The scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be righteous beyond all others. "Nay," says Christ; "you must go beyond them." They were, after all, superficial, flimsy, pretentious, unreal in their righteousness; and we must have a far nobler character than they ever attained, or we "shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 5:21. You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.

This is a proof that Christ did not come to abolish the law, or to abate its demands in any degree whatever.

Matthew 5:22. But I say unto you, —

Oh, what divine dignity there is in this majestic Person. He claims authority to speak, even though he should contradict all the Rabbis and all the learned men that went before him: "I say unto you," —

Matthew 5:22. That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.

Christ here shows us that the commandment, "You shall not kill," deals with anger, with angry words, with words of cursing, with words of derision, for all these are killing things, hurting and wounding things, and the passion of anger is forbidden under the command, "You shall not kill." Men have not thought so, but it really is so, for he who is angry with his brother is a murderer; there is the spirit, the essence of that which leads to murder in the passion which breeds malice and revenge. The law is spiritual; it touches the emotions, the thoughts, the desires, as well as the words and actions of men. If I desire ill for a man, I have within me that which would desire his death; and what is that, after all, but murder in the heart? How strict is this law, and yet how just and right!

Matthew 5:23-24. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

It is said that, in Hindustan, there is a complete divorce of religion from morality, so that a man may be supposed to be eminently religious even while living in the utmost filthiness and vice; but it must never be so among us. We must never imagine that God can accept an offering from us while we harbor any enmity in our hearts. Perhaps, after reading this passage, you say, "If I had anything against my brother, I would go to him at once, and seek to be reconciled to him." That would be quite right; but you must go further than that, for Christ says, "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has ought against you." It is much more easy to go to the man who has wronged you than to the one whom you have wronged. Yet the second is evidently the clearer duty, and should be attended to at once: neither can we expect the Lord to attend to us unless we attend to this duty.

Matthew 5:25-26. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Truly I say unto you, You shall by no means come out thence, until you have paid the uttermost farthing.

There is nothing like ending disputes at once, before the rancor grows, and your adversary becomes determined to push you to extremes. Oh, for more of that spirit of yielding! You know how people say, "If you tread on a worm: it will turn;" but, brethren, a worm is not an example for a Christian, even if the poor wounded creature does turn toward you in its agony. If you turn, turn to kiss the hand that smites you, and to do good to them that evil entreat you.

Matthew 5:27-28. You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

So that the unholy desire, the lascivious glance, everything that approximates towards licentiousness, is here condemned; and Christ is proved to be not the Abrogator of the law, but the Confirmer of it. See how he shows that the commandment is exceedingly broad, wide as the canopy of Heaven, all-embracing. How sternly it condemns us all, and how well it becomes us to fall down at the feet of the God of infinite mercy, and seek his forgiveness.

"'Tis mercy — mercy we implore,
We would your pity move;
Your grace is an exhaustless store,
And you yourself are Love."

Matthew 5:29-30. And if your right eye offend you, pluck it out, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your

members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell. And if your right hand offend you, cut it off, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell.

Give up the dearest, choicest, and apparently most needful thing, if it leads you into sin. The same rule that bids you avoid sin, bids you also avoid all that leads to sin. If adultery be forbidden, so also is that glance with which the sin usually begins. We are to turn away our eyes from beholding that which leads towards sin, and we are not to touch or taste that which would readily lead us into iniquity. Oh, that we had sufficient decision of character to make short work of everything which tends towards evil! Many persons, when their right eye offends them, put a green shade over it; and when their right hand offends them, they tie it up in a sling. But that is not obeying the command of Christ. He charges you to get rid of everything that would lead you wrong; make a clean sweep of it. You are wrong enough at your best, so do not permit anything to appertain to you, which would lead you still further astray,

Matthew 5:31-32. It has been said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, —

Which is a sufficient and justifiable reason for divorce, —

Matthew 5:32. Causes her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced —

That is to say, who is divorced without sufficient cause, —

Matthew 5:32. Commits adultery.

Among the Jews, divorce was the easiest thing in the world. A man might, in a fit, utter words which would divorce his wife. The Savior abolished that evil once for all, and made divorce a crime, as it always is "saving for the cause of fornication."

Matthew 5:33-34. Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all:-

Christ thus abolishes the whole system of swearing, as it ought to be abolished in every place; and he goes on to show that he did not mean merely unclean, false oaths, or oaths taken as some men take them blasphemously, but every form and kind of oath, for he says, "Swear not at all"—

Matthew 5:34-37. Neither by Heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you can not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes; Nay, nay: for whatever is more than these comes of evil.

If words mean anything, this command of Christ is an utter abolishment of oaths taken before magistrates as well as everywhere else. I can make nothing else out of it; indeed, it must mean that, because Christ contrasts his teaching with that of former ages: "It has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all.' A man who cannot be believed upon his word certainly cannot be believed upon his oath; and, usually, when a man tells a lie, the next thing he does is to swear to it. When Peter denied his Master, the next thing he did was to curse and to swear, because he thought it likely that they would not imagine that he was a follower of Christ if he did curse and swear; so he gave that as a pretty clear proof that he had not been with Christ, and was not one of his disciples. Alas, that we should need anything beside "Yes, yes," and "Nay, nay!"

Matthew 5:38-43. You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away. You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. There are many who do the second of those two things, but not the first.

Matthew 5:44-45. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

God constantly does that which many people regard almost as a crime, namely, doing good to the undeserving. It is the very genius of Christianity to help those who are utterly unworthy, — to be kind and generous even to those who are pretty certain to repay us with ingratitude and malice.

Matthew 5:46-48. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Stretch towards the highest conceivable standard, and be not satisfied until you reach it.

Verses 31-42

Matthew 5:31-32. It has been said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.

This time our King quotes and condemns a permissive enactment of the Jewish state. Men were accustomed to bid their wives "begone," and a hasty word was thought sufficient as an act of divorce. Moses insisted upon "a writing of divorcement," that angry passions might have time to cool and that the separation, if it must come, might be performed with deliberation and legal formality. The requirement of a writing was to a certain degree a check upon an evil habit, which was so ingrained in the people that to refuse it altogether would have been useless, and would only have created another crime. The law of Moses went as far as it could practically be enforced; it was because of the hardness of their hearts that divorce was tolerated; it was never approved. But our Lord is more heroic in his legislation. He forbids divorce except for the one crime of infidelity to the marriage-vow. She who commits adultery does by that act and deed in effect sunder the marriage-bond, and it ought then to be formally recognized by the State as being sundered; but for nothing else should a man be divorced from his wife. Marriage is for life, and cannot be loosed, except by the one great crime which severs its bond, whichever of the two is guilty of it. Our Lord would never have tolerated the wicked laws of certain of the American States, which allow married men and women to separate on the merest pretext. A woman divorced for any cause but adultery, and marrying again, is committing adultery before God, whatever the laws of man may call it. This is very plain and positive; and thus a sanctity is given to marriage which human legislation ought not to violate. Let us not be among those who take up novel ideas of wedlock, and seek to deform the marriage laws under the pretense of reforming them. Our Lord knows better than our modern social reformers. We had better let the laws of God alone, for we shall never discover any better.

Matthew 5:33-37. Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither of Heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you can not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes; Nay, nay: for whatever is more than these comes of evil.

False swearing was forbidden of old, but every kind of swearing is forbidden now by the word of our Lord Jesus. He mentions several forms of oath, and forbids them all, and then prescribes simple forms of affirmation or denial, as all that his followers should employ. Notwithstanding much that may be advanced to the contrary, there is no evading the plain sense of this passage, that every sort of oath, however solemn or true, is forbidden to a follower of Jesus. Whether in court of law, or out of it the rule is, "Swear not at all." Yet, in this Christian country we have swearing everywhere, and especially among law-makers. Our legislators begin their official existence by swearing. By those who obey the law of the Savior's kingdom, all swearing is set aside, that the simple word of affirmation or denial, calmly repeated, may remain as a sufficient bond of truth. A bad man cannot be believed on his oath, and a good man speaks the truth without an oath; to what purpose is the superfluous custom of legal swearing preserved? Christians should not yield to an evil custom, however great the pressure put upon them; but they should abide by the plain and unmistakable command of their Lord and King.

Matthew 5:38. You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

The law of an eye for an eye, as administered in the proper courts of law was founded in justice, and worked far more equitably than the more modern system of fines; for that method allows rich men to offend with comparative impunity, but when the lex talionis came to be the rule of daily life, it fostered revenge, and our Savior would not tolerate it as a principle carried out by individuals. Good law in court may be very bad custom in common society. He spoke against what had become a proverb and was heard and said among the people, "You have heard that it has been said." Our loving King would have private dealings ruled by the spirit of love and not by the rule of law.

Matthew 5:39. But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Non-resistance and forbearance are to be the rule among Christians. They are to endure personal ill-usage without coming to blows. They are to be as the anvil when bad men are the hammers, and thus they are to overcome by patient forgiveness. The rule of the judgment seat is not for common life; but the rule of the cross and the all-enduring Sufferer is for us all. Yet how many regard all this as fanatical, utopian, and even cowardly! The Lord, our King, would have us bear and forbear, and conquer by mighty patience. Can we do it? How are we the servants of Christ if we have not his spirit?

Matthew 5:40. And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also.

Let him have all he asks, and more. Better lose a suit of cloth than be drawn into a suit in law. The courts of our Lord's day were wicked, and his disciples were advised to suffer wrong sooner than appeal to them. Our own courts often furnish the surest method of solving a difficulty by authority, and we have known them resorted to with the view of preventing strife. Yet even in a country where justice can be had, We are not to resort to law for every personal wrong. We should rather endure to be put upon than be forever crying out, "I'll bring an action." At times this very rule of self-sacrifice may require us to take steps in the way of legal appeal, to stop injuries which would fall heavily upon others; but we ought often to forego our own advantage, yes, always when the main motive would be a proud desire for self-vindication. Lord, give me a patient spirit, so that I may not seek to avenge myself, even when I might righteously do so!

Matthew 5:41. And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him twain.

Governments in those days demanded forced service through their petty officers. Christians were to be of a yielding temper, and bear a double exaction rather than provoke ill words and anger. We ought not to evade taxation, but stand ready to render to Caesar his due. "Yield" is our watchword. To stand up against force is not exactly our part; we may leave that to others. How few believe the long-suffering, non-resistant doctrines of our King!

Matthew 5:42. Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away.

Be generous. A miser is no follower of Jesus. Discretion is to be used in our giving, lest we encourage idleness and beggary; but the general rule is, "Give to him that asks you." Sometimes a loan may be more useful than a gift, do not refuse it to those who will make right use of it. These precepts are not meant for fools, they are set before us as our general rule; but each rule is balanced by other Scriptural commands, and there is the teaching of a philanthropic common-sense to guide us. Our spirit is to be one of readiness to help the needy by gift or loan, and we are not exceedingly likely to err by excess in this direction; hence the boldness of the command.

Verses 41-48

Matthew 5:41. And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him twain.

If you can do him any service, do it cheerfully, do it readily. Do what he wants of you.

Matthew 5:42. Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away.

This is the spirit of the Christian — to live with the view of doing service.

Matthew 5:43-46. You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you?

You have done what anybody would do.

Matthew 5:46-48. Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Rise out of ordinary manhood. Get beyond what others might expect of you. Have a high standard. "Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 5:41-48; Matthew 6:1-8

Verses 43-48

Matthew 5:43. You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

In this case a command of Scripture had a human antithesis fitted on to it by depraved minds and this human addition was mischievous. This is a common method, to append to the teaching of Scripture a something which seems to grow out of it, or to be a natural inference from it, which something may be false and wicked. This is a sad crime against the Word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit will only father his own words. He owns the precept, "You shall love your neighbor," but he hates the parasitical growth of "hate your enemy." This last sentence is destructive of that out of which it appears legitimately to grow, since those who are here styled enemies are, in fact, neighbors. Love is now the universal law; and our King, who has commanded it, is himself the pattern of it. He

will not see it narrowed down, and placed in a setting of hate. May grace prevent any of us from falling into this error!

Matthew 5:44-45. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Ours it is to persist in loving, even if men persist in enmity. We are to render blessing for cursing, prayers for persecutions. Even in the cases of cruel enemies, we are to "do good to them, and pray for them." We are no longer enemies to any, but friends to all. We do not merely cease to hate, and then abide in a cold neutrality, but we love where hatred seemed inevitable. We bless where our old nature bids us curse, and we are active in doing good to those who deserve to receive evil from us. Where this is practically carried out, men wonder, respect, and admire the followers of Jesus. The theory may be ridiculed, but the practice is revered, and is counted so surprising that men attribute it to some Godlike quality in Christians, and own that they are the children of the Father who is in Heaven. Indeed, he is a child of God who can bless the unthankful and the evil; for in daily providence the Lord is doing this on a great scale, and none but his children will imitate him. To do good for the sake of the good done, and not because of the character of the person benefitted, is a noble imitation of God. If the Lord only sent the fertilizing shower upon the land of the saintly, drought would deprive whole leagues of land of all hope of a harvest. We also must do good to the evil, or we shall have a narrow sphere, our hearts will grow contracted, and our sonship towards the good God will be rendered doubtful.

Matthew 5:46. For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same?

Any common sort of man will love those who love him; even tax gatherers and the scum of the earth can rise to this poor, starveling virtue. Saints cannot be content with such a groveling style of things. "Love for love is manlike," but "love for hate" is Christlike. Shall we not desire to act up to our high calling?

Matthew 5:47. And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans so?

On a journey, or in the streets, or in the house, we are not to confine our friendly greetings to those who are near and dear to us. Courtesy should be wide, and none the less sincere because general. We should speak kindly to all, and treat every man as a brother. Anyone will shake hands with an old friend, but we are to be cordially courteous towards every being in the form of man. If not, we shall reach no higher level than mere outcasts. Even a dog will salute a dog.

Matthew 5:48. Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Or, "You shall be perfect." We should reach after completeness in love, fullness of love to all around us. Love is the bond of perfectness; and if we have perfect love, it will form in us a perfect character. Here is that which we aim at, perfection like that of God; here is the manner of obtaining it, namely, by abounding in love; and this suggests the question of how far we have proceeded in this heavenly direction, and also the reason why we should persevere in it even to the end, because as children we ought to resemble our Father. Scriptural perfection is attainable, it dies rather in proportion than in degree. A man's character may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing; and yet such a man will be the very first to admit that the grace which is in him is at best in its infancy, and though perfect as a child in all its parts, it has not yet attained to the perfection of full-grown manhood. What a mark is set before us by our Perfect King, who, speaking from his mountain-throne, says, "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"! Lord, give what you do command; then both the grace and the glory will be your alone.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 5:43-48; and Matthew 6:1-4.

Chapter 6

Verses 1-4

Matthew 6:1. Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

"You cannot expect to be paid twice, if therefore you take your reward in the applause of men, who give you a high character for generosity, you cannot expect to have any reward from God." We ought to have a single eye to God's accepting what we give, and to have little or no thought of what man may say concerning our charitable gifts.

Matthew 6:2. Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward.

And they will have no more; there is, in their case, no laying up of any store of good works before God. Whatever they may have

done, they have taken full credit for it in the praise of men.

Matthew 6:3. But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does:

"Do it so by stealth as scarcely to know it yourself; think so little of it with regard to yourself that you shall scarcely know that you have done it. Do it unto God; let him know it."

Matthew 6:4. That your alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret himself shall reward you openly.

There is a blessed emphasis upon that word "himself" for, if God shall reward us, what a reward it will be! Any praise from his lips, any reward from his hands, will be of priceless value. Oh, to live with an eye to that alone!

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 5:43-48; and Matthew 6:1-4.

Verses 1-8

Matthew 6:1. Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

Our blessed Lord does not tell his disciples to give alms, but he takes it for granted that they do that. How could they be his disciples if they did not so? But he tells them to take care that they do not do this in order to get honor and credit from it. Oh! how much is done in this world that would be very good, but it is spoilt in the doing through the motive done to be seen of men. "You have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven."

Matthew 6:2. Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Truly I say unto you. They have their reward.

So that they will never have another. They have been paid once for it by the approbation of their fellow-men. They will never have any further reward.

Matthew 6:3-5. But when you do alms let not your left hand know what your right hand does: That your alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret himself shall reward you openly. And when you pray,

He does not tell his disciples to pray, but again takes it for granted that they do so, and he cannot be a Christian who does not pray. "A prayerless soul is a Christless soul." "When you pray."

Matthew 6:5. You shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward.

All they will ever get. People say, "What a wonderfully pious man he is to pray up at the street corner." Ay, but that is the reward. The prayer will die where it was offered.

Matthew 6:6. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet,

Get into some quiet nook — some secret place, no matter where.

Matthew 6:6. And when you have shut your door,

So that nobody can hear you — not wishing anybody to know even that you are at prayer. "When you have shut your door."

Matthew 6:6-8. Pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not you therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask him.

Prayers are never measured by the yard in Heaven. They are estimated by their weight. If there is earnestness in them, truth, sincerity, God accepts them, however brief they are. Indeed, brevity is often an excellence in prayer. Let us never, therefore, use vain repetitions.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 5:41-48; Matthew 6:1-8

Verses 1-24

Matthew 6:1. Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

The motive which leads a man to give, will form the true estimate of what he does. If he gives to be seen of men then when he is seen of men he has the reward he sought for, and he will never have any other. Let us never do our alms before men, to be seen of them.

Matthew 6:2-5. Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may have glory of men. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward. But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does: That your alms may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret himself shall reward you openly. And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward.

I have heard very great commendation give to certain Easterns, because at the hour of the rising of the sun, or the hour when the sound is heard from the summit of the mosque, wherever they may be, they put themselves in the posture of prayer. God forbid I should rob them of any credit they deserve, but far be it from us ever to imitate them. We are not to be ashamed of our prayers, but they are not things for the public street. They are intended for God's eye, and God's ear.

Matthew 6:6-7. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.

It is not very easy to repeat the same words often without it becoming a vain repetition. A repetition, however, is not forbidden, but a "vain" repetition. And how greatly do they err who measure prayers by the yard. They think they have prayed so much because they have prayed so long, whereas it is the work of the heart — the true pouring out of the desire before God — that is the thing to be looked at. Quality not quantity: truth, not length. Oftentimes the shortest prayers have the most prayer in them.

Matthew 6:8-9. Be not you therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what thing you have need of, before you ask him. After this manner therefore pray you:

And then he gives us a model of prayer, which never can be excelled, containing all the parts of devotion. They do well who model their prayers upon this.

Matthew 6:9-13 Our Father which are in Heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For your is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Our Savior now makes a remark upon this prayer, and on one particular part of it which has stumbled a great many.

Matthew 6:14-15. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

There are some who have altered this, and pray in this fashion, "Forgive us our debts as we desire to forgive our debtors." It will not do. You will have to desire God to forgive you, and desire in vain, if you pray in that fashion. It must come to this point of literal immediate, completed forgiveness of every offence committed against you if you expect God to forgive you. There is no wriggling out of it. The man who refuses to forgive, refuses to be forgiven. God grant that we may, none of us, tolerate malice in our hearts. Anger glances in the bosom of wise men: it only burns in the heart of the foolish. May we quench it, and feel that we do freely, and fully, and heartily forgive, knowing that we are forgiven.

Matthew 6:16. Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward.

Simpletons praise them — think much of them, and they plume themselves thereon, and think themselves the very best of men. They have their reward.

Matthew 6:17-18. But you, when you fastest, anoint your head, and wash your face: That you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.

Yet have I heard persons speak of certain emaciated ecclesiastics as being such wonderfully holy men. "How they must have fasted! They look like it. You can see it in their faces." Probably produced by a fault in their digestion much more likely, than by anything else and if not — if we are to suppose that the spareness of a person is to be the token of his holiness — then the living skeleton was a saint to perfection. But we are not beguiled by such follies as these. The Christian man fasts but he takes care that

no one shall know it. He wears no ring or token even when his heart is heavy. Full often he puts on a cheerful air, lest by any means he should communicate unnecessary sorrow to others, and he will be cheerful and happy, apparently, in the midst of company, to prevent their being sad, for it is enough for him to be sad himself, and sad before his Father's face.

Matthew 6:19-21. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

There is many a way of sending your treasure before you to Heaven. God's poor are his money boxes — his treasury. You can pass your treasure over to Heaven by their means. And the work of evangelizing the world by the labors of God's servants in the ministry of the gospel — you can help this also. Thus also you can pass your treasure over into the King's treasury, and your heart will follow it. I have heard of one who said his religion did not cost him a shilling a year, and it was remarked that very probably it would have been expensive at the price. You will find people form a pretty accurate estimate of the value of their own religion by the proportion which they are prepared to sacrifice for it.

Matthew 6:22. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single,

If your motive be single — if you have only one motive, and that a right one — the master one of glorifying God — if your eye be single.

Matthew 6:22-23. Your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

When a man's highest motive is himself, what a dark and selfish nature he has; but when his highest motive is his God, what brightness of light will shine upon all.

Matthew 6:24. No man can serve two masters:

He can serve two persons very readily. For the matter of that, he can serve twenty, but not two masters. There cannot be two master principles in a man's heart, or master passions in a man's soul. "No man can serve two masters."

Matthew 6:24. For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Though some men's lives are a long experiment of how far they can serve the two.

This exposition consisted of readings of readings from Matthew 6:1-24. 1 Corinthians 3:1-16.

Verses 5-34

Matthew 6:5. And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

We ought to pray in the synagogue, and we may pray at the corners of the streets; but the wrong is to do it to "be seen of men," that is, to be looking for some present reward in the praises that fall from human lips.

Matthew 6:5-7. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

They seem to attribute a sort of power to a certain form of words, as if it were a charm, and they repeat it over and over again. Not only do the poor Mohammedans and heathens "use vain repetitions," but the members of the Romish and other churches that I might name do the same thing; words to which they attach but very slight meaning, and into which they put little or no heart, are repeated by them again and again, as if there could be some virtue in the words themselves. Let it not be so with you beloved. Pray as long as you like in secret, but do not pray long with the idea that God will hear you simply because you are a long while at your devotions.

Matthew 6:8. Be not you therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask him.

He does not need to be informed, nor even to be persuaded. Mere words are of no value in his ears. If you must needs use many words, ask them to lend you their ears, for they may have little else to do with them; but God cares not for words alone, it is the thought, the desire of the heart to which he ever has regard.

Matthew 6:9. After this manner therefore pray you:

Here is a model prayer for you to copy as far as it is suited to your case: —

Matthew 6:9-13. After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father which are in Heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For your is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

And then, as it there was one part of the prayer that would be sure to arrest the attention of his hearers, namely, that concerning forgiving our debtors, the Savior makes the following remarks: —

Matthew 6:14-15. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Therefore, in order to succeed in prayer, we must have a heart purged from a spirit of revenge and from all unkindness; we must ourselves be loving and forgiving, or we cannot expect that God will hear our supplications when we come to crave his forgiveness.

Matthew 6:16. Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.

They seemed to say to everyone who looked at them, "We have been so engrossed with our devotions that we have not found time even to wash our faces." But the Savior says to his followers, "Do not imitate those hypocrites; do not make public our private religious exercises, perform them unto God, and not unto men. As for those hypocrites,"

Matthew 6:16. Truly I say unto you, They have their reward.

And a poor reward it is.

Matthew 6:17-18. But you, when you fastest, anoint your head, and wash your face; That you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.

May God give us that modest, unselfish spirit which lives unto him, and does not want to walk in the sham light of men's esteem! What matters it, after all, what men think of us? The hypocrite proudly boasts if he wins a little praise from his fellows but what is it except so much wind? If all men should speak well of us, all that we should gain would be this, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

Matthew 6:19-20. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Christ here first teaches us how to pray, and then teaches us how really to live. He turns our thoughts from the object in life which allures and injures so many, but which is, after all, an object unworthy of our search; and he bids us seek something higher and better: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven," —

Matthew 6:21. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

It is sure to be so: your heart will follow your treasure. Send it away therefore up to the everlasting hills, lay up treasure in that blessed land before you go there yourself.

Matthew 6:22-23. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

If your eye be brooked up with gold dust, or if you are living for self and this world, your whole life will be a dark life, and the whole of your being will dwell in darkness. "But," says someone, "may I not live for this world and the next too?" listen: —

Matthew 6:24. No man can serve two masters:

He may serve two individuals, who have conflicting interests but they cannot both be his masters.

Matthew 6:24. For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Either the one or the other will be master, they are so opposed to each other that they will never agree to a divided service. "You cannot serve God and mammon." It is the Lord Jesus Christ who says this, so do not attempt to do what he declares is impossible.

Matthew 6:25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, —

It should be, "Take no distracting thought for your life," —

Matthew 6:25. What you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than clothing?

You are obliged to leave your life with God, why not leave with him all care about your food and your clothing?

Matthew 6:26. Behold the birds of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?

Do you believe that, after all your earnest labor and your industry, God will permit you to starve, when these creatures, that labor not, yet are fed?

Matthew 6:27-29. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take you thought for clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these.

Christ asks then whether, by taking thought, they can add a single cubit to their lives, for I take his question to mean, whether they could, by any means, make the standard of existence any longer than it was. They could not do so, they could shorten it, and very often, carking care has brought men to their graves. Then Christ bade them note how the lilies grow, so that even Solomon could not excel them for beauty.

Matthew 6:30-33. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

If you want string and brown paper, you need not go into a shop to buy them, but if you buy certain articles, you get string and brown paper in the bargain. So, when you go to God, seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness, these other things, which are but the packing, as it were, the string and the brown paper, are given to you in the bargain. He who gives you the golden treasures of Heaven will not allow you to want for the copper treasures of earth.

Matthew 6:34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

You cannot live in tomorrow, so do not fret about tomorrow. You live in today, so think of today, spend today to God's glory, and leave the care about tomorrow until tomorrow comes.

Chapter 7

Verses 1-8

Matthew 7:1-2. Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Use your judgment, of course: the verse implies that you will judge in a right sense. But do not indulge the criticizing faculty upon others in censorious manner, or as if you were set in authority, and had a right to dispense judgment among your fellows. If you impute motives, and pretend to read hearts, others will do the same towards you. A hard and censorious behavior is sure to provoke reprisals. Those around you will pick up the peck measure you have been using, and measure your corn with it. You do not object to men forming a fair opinion of your character, neither are you forbidden to do the same towards them, but as you would object to their sitting in judgment upon you, do not sit in judgment upon them. This is not the day of judgment, neither are we his Majesty's judges, and therefore we may not anticipate the time appointed for the final assize, nor usurp the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth. Surely, if I know myself aright, I need not send my judgment upon circuit to try other men, for I can give it full occupation in my own Court of Conscience to try the traitors within my own bosom.

Matthew 7:3-5. And why behold you the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull out the mote out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite,

first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cut out the mote out of your brother's eye.

The judging faculty is best employed at home. Our tendency is to spy out splinters in other men's eyes, and not to see the beam in our own. Instead of beholding, with gratified gaze, the small fault of another, we should act reasonably if we penitently considered the greater fault of ourselves. It is the beam in our own eye which blinds us to our own wrong doing; but such blindness does not suffice to excuse us, since it evidently does not shut our eyes to the little error of our brother. Officiousness pretends to play the oculist; but in very truth it plays the fool. Fancy a man with a beam in his eye pretending to deal with so tender a part as the eye of another, and attempting to remove so tiny a thing as a mote or splinter! Is he not a hypocrite to pretend to be so concerned about other men's eyes, and yet he never attends to his own? Jesus is gentle, but he calls that man a "hypocrite" who fusses about small things in others and pays no attention to great matters at home in his own person. Our reformations must begin with ourselves, or they are not true, and do not spring from a right motive. Sin we may rebuke, but not if we indulge it. We may protest against evil, but not if we willfully practice it. The Pharisees were great at censuring, but slow at amending. Our Lord will not have his kingdom made up of hypocritical theorists, he calls for practical obedience to the rules of holiness. After we are ourselves sanctified, we are bound to be eyes to the blind, and correctors of unholy living; but not until then. Until we have personal piety, our preaching of godliness is sheer hypocrisy. May none of us provoke the Lord to say to us, "You hypocrite"!

Matthew 7:6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

When men are evidently unable to perceive the purity of a great truth, do not set it before them. They are like mere dogs, and if you set holy things before them they will be provoked to "turn again and rend you": holy things are not for the profane. "Without are dogs": they must not be allowed to enter the holy place. When you are in the midst of the wicked, who are like "swine," do not bring forth the precious mysteries of the faith, for they will despise them, and "trample them under their feet" in the mire.

You are not needlessly to provoke attack upon yourself, or upon the higher truths of the gospel. You are not to judge, but you are not to act without judgment. Count not men to be dogs or swine; but when they avow themselves to be such, or by their conduct act as if they were such, do not put occasions in their way for displaying their evil character. Saints are not to be simpletons; they are not to be judges, but, also, they are not to be fools. Great King, how much wisdom your precepts require! I need you, not only to open my mouth, but also at times to keep it shut.

Matthew 7:7-8. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

To men you may not always speak of heavenly things, but to God you may. "Ask, seek, knock"; let your prayer be adapted to the case; let it increase in intensity, let it advance in the largeness of its object. To receive a gift is simple, to find a treasure is more enriching, to enter into a palace is best of all. Each form of prayer is prescribed, accepted, and rewarded in a manner suitable to its character. The promise is universal to all who obey the precept. The commands are in opposition to the methods of carking care which have been denounced in the former chapter; and they are encouragements to the precepts of giving and non-recessional set forth previously, since he who can have of God for the asking may well give to men who ask, and even yield to those who unjustly demand. With such boundless stores at command, we should not be either niggardly or litigious. Lord, help me to have done with fretting, and to abound in asking, seeking, knocking; so shall I soon overflow with thanksgiving.

Verses 1-29

Matthew 7:1-2. Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again.

Some people are of a censorious disposition; they see nothing in others to praise, but everything to blame, and such people generally find that they are condemned according to their own wicked rule. Other people begin to judge those who are so fond of judging. If they are so wise, and so discriminating, others expect more from them; and not finding it, they are not slow to condemn them. It is an old proverb that chickens come home to roost, and so they do. If you judge ill of others, that judgment will, sooner or later, come home to yourself.

Matthew 7:3-5. And why behold you the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye! Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull out the mote out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the mote out of your brother's eye.

At the bottom of all censoriousness lies hypocrisy. An honest man would apply to himself the judgment which he exercises upon others, but it usually happens that those who are so busy spying out other people's faults have no time to see their own; and what is this, at the bottom, but insincerity and hypocrisy?

Matthew 7:6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Zeal should always be tempered by prudence. There are times when it would be treason to truth to introduce it as a topic of conversation,-when men are in such a frame of mind that they will be sure rather to cavil at it than to believe it. Not only speak you well, but speak you at the right time, for silence is sometimes golden. See that you have your measure of golden silence as well as of silver speech.

Matthew 7:7. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Here is a three-fold encouragement to us to pray. When we cannot use one style of prayer, let us use another, for each shall be successful at the right time. O child of God, let nothing keep you from prayer! It has been well said that a Christian may be hedged in, but he cannot be roofed in; there is always a passage way upwards to the throne of the great Father; and asking, knocking, seeking, he shall be sure to be successful with his suit.

Matthew 7:8. For every one that asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

Ask the people of God whether it is not so. Go among them, and question them upon this matter. They know the power of prayer, so let them tell you whether they have been deceived or not. Well, then, as it has been so with them, let this encourage you to expect that it shall be the same with you also.

Matthew 7:9-12. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him.? Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them for this is the law and the prophets.

Is there a connection between this conduct on our part and answers to our prayer? Undoubtedly it is so from the position of the text. If we will never grant the requests of those who need our help, in cases where we should expect to be ourselves helped, how can we go to God with any confidence, and ask him to help us? I doubt not that many a man has received no answer to his prayer because that prayer has come out of a heart hard and untender, which would not permit him to grant the requests of others. O child of God, do you to others as you would that they should do to you, then can you go to your God in prayer with the confidence that he will hear and answer you!

Matthew 7:13. Enter in at the strait gate:

Do not be ashamed of being called Puritanical, precise, and particular: Enter in at the narrow gate.

Matthew 7:13. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction,

Do not choose that way.

Matthew 7:13-21. And many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father, which is in Heaven.

That still remains as the great test of the true heir of Heaven, the doing of the divine will. All the talking, thinking, posturing in the world will not save a man. There must be in him such a faith as produces holiness.

Matthew 7:22-25. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity. Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house:-

Whoever you are, and whatever you build, it will be tried. No matter how firm is the rock beneath you, the winds will blow, and the rains will pour down upon your building. Whether you are in a palace or in a hovel, trial and testing must and will come to you: "The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house,-

Matthew 7:25. And it fell not:

There is the mercy "it fell not."

Matthew 7:25-27. For it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house,

Even if you live to the world, or live unto Satan, you will not live without trial. The ungodly, who have their portion in this life, have to eat some bitter herbs with it, and have to dip their morsel in vinegar quite as much as believers do. "The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house;

Matthew 7:27. And it fell:

Just when the tenant most needed shelter, it fell. He did not need it so much until the floods came, and the winds blew; but now, when he would gladly have crouched down beneath his roof-tree, and have been at peace from the howling hurricane, then "it fell."

Matthew 7:27. And great was the fall of it.

The fall was so great because he could never build again.

Matthew 7:28-29. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Not quoting Rabbi so-and-so, to show how well he was acquainted with his writings, but speaking as one who knew what he had to say, and who spoke, out of the fullness of his heart, truth that was evidently inspired; and his hearers felt the force of the solemn message which he thus delivered.

Verses 7-29

Matthew 7:7. Ask, and it shall be given you;

He who will not ask for it deserves to go without it. Have you ever asked for it? If not, whose fault is it that you have it not?

Matthew 7:7. Seek, and you shall find;

How can you hope to find if you do not seek? Have you never found it? Have you never sought it? And if you have never sought it, how do you excuse yourselves for your neglect?

Matthew 7:7. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Is that all-knock? Is the gate of Heaven not opened to you? Have you never knocked? Do you wonder, therefore, that the door is shut? Take care; for the time may come when you will knock, and the door will not be opened to you; for, "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door," then knocking shall be in vain. But at present this verse is still God's gracious word of command and promise; let me read it to you again: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Matthew 7:8. For every one that asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

When you are dealing with men, this is not always true. You may ask, and not receive; you may seek, and not find; you may knock, and not have the door opened to you. But when you deal with God, there are no failures or refusals. Every true asker receives; every true seeker finds; and every true knocker has the door opened to him. Will you not try it, and prove for yourself that it is even so?

Matthew 7:9-11. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?

You not only give, but you know how to give so as not to disappoint the asker. It is most blessedly so with the great Father in Heaven. He will not give you that which will mock and disappoint you: he will give you bread, not a stone; fish, not a serpent; nay, more, he will give you the bread of life, and the water of life, that you may live forever.

Matthew 7:12. Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

This is rightly called "the golden rule." Christ says of it that it is "the law and the prophets." It is the essence of them, it is the sum and substance of the highest morality. What you would that others should do to you, do that to them. Do not let that golden rule remain merely as a record in this Book, but take it out with you into your daily life. If we did all act to others as we would that others should act to us, how different would the lives of many men become! Ours would be a happy world if this law of Christ were the law of England, and the law of all nations. God send us the Spirit by whom alone we shall be able to obey so high a rule!

Matthew 7:13. Enter you in at the strait gate

The narrow gate

Matthew 7:13-14. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

Do not try to go with the majority; truth is usually with the minority. Do not count heads, and say, "I am for that which has the most on its side;" but prefer that which is least liked among men, choose that which is most difficult, most trying to flesh and blood, that which gives you least license, because "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." You will not hit upon it, then, in a "happy-go-lucky" sort of style. Heaven's gate is not found open by accident; there never was anybody yet who was saved by accident. No: "few there be that find it," is still true. God grant that we may be among the few! And why should we not be?

Matthew 7:15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

There are always plenty of them about; there is nothing of the sheep about them but the skin, and there is no connection between that skin and those that wear it.

Matthew 7:16-20. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.

You may judge men as well as trees that way; and you may judge doctrines that way. That which gives a license to sin cannot be true; but that which makes for holiness is true; for, somehow, truth of doctrine and holiness of life run together. We cannot expect holiness to grow out of falsehood, but we may expect all manner of evil to come out of false teaching.

Matthew 7:21. Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father, which is in Heaven.

Practice is the true test, not words. Not he who says, "Lord, Lord," but "he that does the will of God;" not he who merely has good words on his tongue, but he who has the will of God laid up in his heart, and wrought out in his life, that is the man who "shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Matthew 7:22-23. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.

If our lives are evil, it does not matter to what denomination we belong; we may be clever preachers, or mighty teachers, we may fancy that we have had dreams and visions, we may set ourselves up to be some great ones; but if we have not done the will of God, we shall at the last hear Christ say to us, "Depart from me, you that work iniquity."

Matthew 7:24-25. Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

He was a good man, and a practical man; yet he was also a tried man. His house was built on the rock, but that did not prevent the rain descending, and the floods coming, and the winds blowing. The highest type of godliness will not save you from troubles and trials; it will, in some measure, even necessitate them. But, blessed be God, here lies the gem of the parable or narrative: "It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." It could stand the strain and endure the test, for it had a good foundation.

Matthew 7:26-27. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

He was a great hearer, but he was a bad doer; yet he thought that he was a good doer, for he built a house. Alas, the house was on

the sand! There was no real obedience to Christ, no true trusting in him; and so, when the time of trouble came, and trouble will come even to the hypocrite and to the false professor, we read of his house, "It fell: and great was the fall of it," because it could never be built up again. It fell hopelessly; it fell forever; therefore, "Great was the fall of it."

Matthew 7:28-29. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

There was a force and power about what Jesus said, he spoke from the heart, he spoke with the accent of conviction; whereas the scribes and Pharisees only spoke magisterially and officially, with no heart in their utterance, and there was therefore no power about it. God give to all of us the grace to know the power of the words of Christ! Amen.

Verses 13-23

Matthew 7:13-14. Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

Be up and on your journey. Enter in at the gate at the head of the way, and do not stand hesitating. If it be the right road, you will find the entrance somewhat difficult, and exceedingly narrow; for it demands self-denial, add calls for strictness of obedience, and watchfulness of spirit. Nevertheless, "enter you in at the strait gate." Whatever its drawbacks of fewness of pilgrims, or straitness of entrance, yet choose it and use it. True, there is another road, broad and much frequented; but it leads to destruction. Men go to ruin along the turnpike road, but the way to Heaven is a bridle-path. There may come other days, when the many will crowd the narrow way; but, at this time, to be popular, the road must be broad — broad in doctrine, in morals, and in spirituals. But those on the strait road shall go straight to glory, and those on the broad road are all abroad. All is well that ends well: we can afford to be straitened in the right way rather than enlarged in the wrong way; because the first ends in endless life, and the second hastens down to everlasting death. Lord, deliver me from the temptation to be "broad," and keep me in the narrow way, though few find it!

Matthew 7:15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

We have need of our judgments, and we must try the Spirits of those who profess to be sent of God. There are men of great gifts who are "false prophets." These affect the look, language and spirit of God's people, while really they long to devour souls, even as wolves thirst for the blood of sheep. "Sheep's clothing" is all very fine, but we must look beneath it and spy out the wolves. A man is what he is inwardly. We had need beware. This precept is timely at this hour. We must be careful, not only about our way, but about our leaders. They come to us; they come as prophets; they come with every outward commendation; but they are very Balaam's, and will surely curse those they pretend to bless.

Matthew 7:16. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Their teaching, their living, and their effect upon our minds will be a sure test to us. Every doctrine and doctrinaire may thus be tried. If we gather grapes of them, they are not thorns; if they produce nothing but thistle-down, they are not fig-trees. Some object to this practical method of test; but wise Christians will carry it with them as the ultimate touchstone. What is the effect of modern theology upon the spirituality, the prayerfulness, the holiness of the people? Has it any good, effect?

Matthew 7:17-18. Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every man produces according to his nature; he cannot do otherwise. Good tree, good fruit; corrupt tree, evil fruit. There is no possibility of the effect being higher and better than the cause. The truly good does not bring forth evil; it would be contrary to its nature. The radically bad never rises to produce good, though it may seem to do so. Therefore, the one and the other may be known by the special fruit of each. Our King is a great teacher of prudence. We are not to judge; but we are to know, and the rule for this knowledge is as simple as it is safe. Such knowledge of men may save us from great mischief which would come to us through associating with bad and deceitful persons.

Matthew 7:19. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Here is the end to which evil things are tending, The ax and the fire await the ungodly, however fine they may look with the leafage of profession.

Only let time enough be given, and every man on earth who bears no good fruit will meet his doom. It is not merely the wicked, the bearer of poison berries, that will be cut down but the neutral, the man who bears no fruit of positive virtue must also be cast into the fire.

Matthew 7:20. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.

It is not ours to hew or to burn, but it is ours to know. This knowledge is to save us from coming under the shadow or influence of false teachers. Who wants to build his nest upon a tree which is soon to be cut down? Who would choose a barren tree for the center of his orchard? Lord, let me remember that I am to judge myself by this rule. Make me a true fruit-bearing tree.

Matthew 7:21. Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he who does the will of my Father which is in Heaven.

No verbal homage will suffice: "Not every one that says." We may believe in our Lord's Deity, and we may take great pains to affirm it over and over again with our "Lord, Lord"; but unless we carry out the commands of the Father, we pay no true homage to the Son. We may own our obligations to Jesus, and so call him "Lord, Lord"; but if we never practically carry out those obligations, what is the value of our admissions? Our King receives not into his kingdom those whose religion lies in words and ceremonies, but only those whose lives display the obedience of true discipleship.

Matthew 7:22-23. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.

An orthodox creed will not save if it stands alone, neither will it be sure to do so if accompanied by official position and service. These people said, "Lord, Lord," and, in addition, pleaded their prophesying or preaching in his name. All the preaching in the world will not save the preacher if he does not practice. Yes, and he may have been successful — successful to a very high degree — "and in your name have cast out devils," and yet, without personal holiness, the caster-out of devils will be cast out himself. The success boasted of may have had about it surprising circumstances of varied interest — "and in your name done many wonderful works"; and yet the man may be unknown to Christ. Three times over the person is described as doing all "in your name"; and yet the Lord, whose name he used so freely, so boldly, knew nothing of him, and would not suffer him to remain in his company. The Lord cannot endure the presence of those who call him "Lord, Lord," and then work iniquity. They professed to him that they knew him, but he will "profess unto them, I never knew you." How solemn is this reminder to me and to others! Nothing will prove us to be true Christians but a sincere doing of the Father's will! We may be known by all to have great spiritual power over devils, and men, and yet our Lord may not own us in that great day, but may drive us out as impostors whom he cannot tolerate in his presences.

Verses 13-29

Matthew 7:13. Enter you in at the strait gate.

It is very unpopular. The great ones will recommend to you great liberality and breadth; but enter yet in at the strait gate.

Matthew 7:13. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat .'

That is a rule that is very unfashionable in these times; but depend upon it, the Lord, who gave it to us, meant it for all times. That which seems narrow, which costs you self-denial — that which is contrary to the will of the flesh — that which does not seem to charm the eye and fascinate the senses — go after that "Enter you in at the strait gate." You will not be likely to err much, or too much on that side. Let this be a gauge to you. That kind of preaching which allows you to indulge in sin — that sort of teaching which lowers the standard of God's Word for you, and makes you think more of your own judgment than of the teachings of Christ — away with it. Let others have it if they like. "Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

Matthew 7:14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that of it.

It is still so. Indeed, none find it. unless grace finds them. He who made that gate must go after the wandering' sheep, and bring them through that gate. They will never choose it of themselves.

Matthew 7:15. Beware of false prophets.

Some honor and esteem all prophets. "Is not it a very high office? Is not a prophet a man sent from God?" Yes, and for that very reason there are counterfeits whom God has never sent. Beware of false prophets.

Matthew 7:15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

They look just like sheep. They look just like shepherds, but it is only their clothing. The mere hypocrite is the goat in sheep's clothing. But a false prophet is a wolf in sheep's clothing, because he can do so much more harm, and will do, so much more damage to the church of God.

Matthew 7:16. You shall know them by their fruits.

They are sure to come out in their actions. If you have not got the knowledge of theology, and the like, to be able to judge their teaching, yet the simplest persons can judge their actions.. "You shall know them 'by their fruits," which are sure to come out sooner or later.

Matthew 7:16. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Did you ever find a cluster of grapes growing upon a thorn-bush? Grapes and figs are pleasant fruit, and holy living, true devotion, communion with God — these are the things that are sweet to God and to good men. But they come not of false doctrine. They are not seen in false prophets. Such prophets despise such things as these. They are for worldly ways, and places of worldly gaiety they can frequent. Not so the servants of God.

Matthew 7:17-19. Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

That is what comes of it in the end. It may spread itself abroad, and may gather much admiration, to itself for its verdure, but there is an axe being sharpened, and a fire being kindled

Matthew 7:20. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them.

You cannot judge them by their bark, or by the spread of their branches, or by the verdure of their leaves, or even by the beauty of their blossoms in spring time. "By their fruits you shall know them." The Savior here gives us a very earnest and very necessary warning, lest we should be deceived, for there are such who are not only deceived by their own sins, but deceived by false prophets, who are among Satan's best agents.

Matthew 7:21. Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven;

They were very sound in doctrine. They called Jesus "Lord." They believed in his Deity. Apparently, they were very devout. They said, "Lord." They worshiped him. They were very importunate and earnest. They said, "Lord, Lord," to him again and again. But "not everyone that says unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." External utterances, however orthodox; professions, however sound, are not enough.

Matthew 7:21. But he who does the will of my Father which is in Heaven.

Oh! dear friends, there must be holiness in us, for without holiness no man can see the Lord. It is not knowing the will of the heavenly Father, but doing it which is the mark of divine election. If God's grace has really entered into us, we, like the prophets, shall be known by our fruits; and if we are not doing the will of our Father who is in Heaven, we shall not come to the Heaven where he is.

Matthew 7:22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name?

Yes, so did Balaam. Was not Saul also among the prophets, and yet neither Balaam nor Saul was accepted of God, but they were castaways, "Have we not prophesied in your name?" A man may be a preacher, and an eloquent preacher, and he may even have some blessing upon his preaching, and yet be cast away forever.

Matthew 7:22. And in your name have cast out devils;

Yes, and there was one that cast out devils, and he was a devil himself, namely, Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him. He went out and wrought miracles in the name of Christ, and then sold Christ for pieces of silver.

Matthew 7:22. And in your name done many wonderful works?

Yes, and we may do many wonderful works, and yet be wonderfully deceived. It is not wonderful works: it is holy works; not works that amaze men, but works that please God, which are the proof of grace in the soul. Well, there will be some who will be able to say that they prophesied —that they cast out devils — that they did wonders.

Matthew 7:23. And then, will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.

Verses 1-13

Matthew 8:1. When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

There was a charm about his preaching, not that he modified his doctrine, or that he cut down his precepts; he spoke very plainly, very searchingly, and yet the people came to hear him. There is a something in the conscience of man that makes him turn away from that which flatters him, and makes him hear, almost against his liking, that which searches him.

Matthew 8:2. And, behold,

Never mind about the crowd; fix your eye on the one man; behold, etc. —here is a mark of attention.

Matthew 8:2. There came a leper and worshiped him, saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

He could not live in the city, but he might be found on the mount, in the outskirts of the crowd, where he would hear that gracious voice; and he came and "worshiped him, saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean," in which I detect no unbelief, but rather a very strong faith. "If you do but will, I can be made clean." And Jesus, seeing the man was willing to dispense with any outward form used one.

Matthew 8:3. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him,

Not making himself unclean, as any other man would have done, but making him clean whom he touched.

Matthew 8:3. Saying, I will;

A word of encouragement.

Matthew 8:3. Be clean.

A word of power.

Matthew 8:3. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Christ's grace, which usually wrought at once, in an instant, wrought for ever — the man was cleansed, never to be sick again; cured perfectly; the leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 8:4. And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man;

Do not spread the news, the crowd is inconvenient already. It was not only Christ's modesty, but Christ's wisdom to keep down the throng a little, for they were too many which gathered about him.

Matthew 8:4. But go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

While the ceremonial law stood, Christ was very careful to pay it honor. He came not to destroy, but he came to build up and to fulfill. He would have this man go and get a certificate from the priest that he was cleansed. Perhaps if he did not go at once, when it was found out that Christ healed him, the certificate might have been denied, and the man might not have been able to mingle with the company, so he sent him away quickly, to go to the priest with his offering to get the assurance that he was really cleansed. When Christ's work is certified by Christ's voice, then is it sure indeed.

Matthew 8:5. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum,

Which I may call his headquarters, he seems to have taken up his abode here for a time, to have gone to and fro to Capernaum.

Matthew 8:5. There came unto him a centurion,

An officer over a hundred men, of some importance in those days; a small band of the Roman army placed in Herod's territory, perhaps to keep watch.

Matthew 8:5-6. Beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

Sir Risdon Bennett tells us that there is a species of palsy which is accompanied with great pain, and we know, even from the apocrypha, there is a case there of a man grievously tormented with palsy — not exactly the same thing, perhaps, that we call palsy nowadays.

Matthew 8:7. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him.

He did not say, "I will come and see him"; that would have been kind — he did not say what you and I would say, "I will come and pray with him"; that is all we can do — but "I will come and heal him." Here is the tenderness of man and the power of God.

Matthew 8:8-9. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority,

Here was a great point — here was a man commissioned, a man authorized, girt with authority; and he looked upon Christ in the same manner, sent of God, under divine authority, girt about with a heavenly commission.

Matthew 8:9. Having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes: and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.

He did not further explain. It is a pity sometimes when we explain things to God in prayer, as I am afraid we often do, God knows what we mean. And so here he did not explain his meaning; we can see it clearly enough. "You too, O Christ, are under the authority of God, and sent by him, and you have the powers of nature under your control. You have but to say the word, and they go; do this, and they do it."

Matthew 8:10. When Jesus heard it, he marveled,

He had marveled at men's unbelief; now he marvels at their faith, so that the thing which touches the wonder of God is man's unbelief and man's faith.

Matthew 8:10. And said to them that followed, Truly, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,

This man is not an Israelite; he is a Roman soldier; but I have never found so much faith in those to the manner born as I find in this stranger.

Matthew 8:11. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west,

From differing lands and extreme distances.

Matthew 8:11. And shall sit down

Or recline in ease and rest.

Matthew 8:11-12. With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom,

Those born in Israel, who belong to the promised seed.

Matthew 8:12-13. Shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way, and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.

It is greatly important not only that we believe, but that we believe as much as ever we can, that we believe all that Christ has spoken. Some people, when they are converted, believe that they may fall from grace, and they do; according to their faith, so is it unto them. If they could believe for eternal life and lay hold on everlasting life, they would find it so, for generally it is according to their faith that it is unto them.

Verses 1-27

Matthew 8:1-2. When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper —

You see that particular mention is made of this one special case, and, in any congregation, while it may be recorded that so many people came together, the special case that will be noted by the recording angel will be that of anyone who comes to Christ with his own personal distresses, and who thereby obtains relief from them: "Behold, there came a leper" —

Matthew 8:2-3. And worshiped him, saying, Lord if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

His faith was not as strong as it might have been. There was an "if" in it; but, still, it was genuine faith, and our loving Lord fixed his eye upon the faith rather than upon the flaw that was in it, and if he sees in you, dear friend, even a trembling faith, he will rejoice in it, and bless you because of it. He will not withhold his blessing because you are not as strong in faith as you should be. Probably, you will have a greater blessing if you have greater faith; but even little faith gets great blessings from Christ. The leper said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean;" so Christ answered to the faith that he did possess, and touched him, saying, I will; be you

clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

Matthew 8:4-7. And Jesus says unto him, See you tell no man; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus says unto him, I will come and heal him.

He had not asked Christ to "come and heal him." He wished his servant to be healed, but he considered that it was too great an honor for Christ to come to him. I am not sure, but I think that this man's judgment is correct, — that, for Christ to come to a man is better than for healing to come to him. Indeed, brethren and sisters, all the gifts of Christ fall far short of himself. If he will but come, and abide with us, that means more than all else that he can bestow upon us.

Matthew 8:8-9. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof: but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.

From his own power over his soldiers and servants, he argued that Christ must have at least equal power over all the forces of nature; and, as a centurion did not need to go and do everything himself, but gave his orders to his servant, and he did it, so, surely, there could be no need for the great Commander, to whom he was speaking to honor the sick man with his own personal presence. He had simply to utter the command and it would be obeyed, and the centurion's servant would be healed. Do you think this is an ingenious argument? It is so, certainly, but it is also a very plain and very forcible one. I have read or heard many ingenious arguments for unbelief, and I have often wished that half the ingenuity thus vainly spent could be exercised in discovering reasons for believing so, I am pleased to notice that this commander of a hundred Roman soldiers did but argue from his own position, and so wrought in his mind still greater confidence in Christ's power to heal his sick servant. Is there not something about yourself, from which, if you would look at it in the right light, you might gather arguments concerning the power of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Matthew 8:10. When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Truly I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.

"Not in Israel," — where the light and the knowledge were, there was not such faith as this centurion possessed. This Roman soldier, rough by training and experience, who was more familiar with stern fighting men than with those who could instruct him concerning Christ, had more faith than Jesus had so far found "in Israel."

Matthew 8:11-12. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is a strange thing, yet it is continually happening still, despite its strangeness, that the persons, who are placed in such positions of privilege, that you naturally expect that they would become believers, remain unbelievers, while others, who are placed at a terrible disadvantage, nevertheless often come right out from sin, and right away from ignorance, and become believers in Christ. Oh, that none of us, who sit under the sound of the gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath, might be sad illustrations of this truth, while others, unaccustomed to listen to the Word, may be happy instances of the way in which the Lord still takes strangers, and adopts them into his family.

Matthew 8:13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.

Jesus will treat all alike according to this rule: "As you have believed, so be it done unto you." If you can believe great things of him, you shall receive great things from him. If you do think him good, and great, and mighty, you shall find him to be so. If you can conceive greater things of him than anyone else has ever done, you shall find him equal to all your conceptions, and your greatest faith shall be surpassed. It is a law of his kingdom, from which Christ never swerves: "According to your faith, be it unto you."

Matthew 8:14-15. And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever, And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them.

That was, perhaps, the most remarkable thing of all; for, when a fever is cured, it usually leaves great weakness behind it. Persons recovered of fever cannot immediately leave their bed, and begin at once to attend to household matters, but Peter's wife's mother did this. Learn, hence, that the Lord Jesus can not only take away from us the disease of sin, but all the effects of it as well. He can make the man, who has been worn out in the service of Satan, to become young again in the service of the Lord; and when it seems as if we never, even if converted, could be of any use to him, he can take away the consequences of evil habits, and make us into bright and sanctified believers. What is there that is impossible to him? In the olden time, kings claimed to have the power of

healing with a touch. That was a superstition; but this King can do it, all glory to his blessed name! May he lay his gracious hand upon many of you; for, if it could heal before it was pierced, much more can it now heal every sin-stricken soul it touches.

Matthew 8:16-18. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

For he neither loved nor courted popularity, but did his utmost to shun it. It followed him like his shadow but he always went before it, he never followed it, or sought after it: "When Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side."

Matthew 8:19. And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow you wherever you go.

How bold he is with his boasting! But Jesus knows that the fastest professors are often just as fast deserters, so he tests him before he takes him into the band of his followers.

Matthew 8:20. And Jesus says unto him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head.

Christ means, — "Can you follow the Son of man when there is no reward except himself, — not even a place for your head to rest upon, or a home wherein you may find comfort? Can you cleave to him when the lone mountain side shall be the place where he spends whole nights in prayer while the dews falls heavily upon him? Can you follow him then? "This is a test of love which makes many to be "found wanting."

Matthew 8:21-22. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

It must be Christ first, and father afterwards. We pay no disrespect to our dearest relatives and friends when we put them after Christ, that is their proper place. To put them before Christ, to prefer the creature to the Creator, is to be traitors to the King of kings. Whoever may come next, Christ must be first.

Matthew 8:23-26. And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he says unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds; and the sea; and there was a great calm.

Probably no calm is so profound as that which follows the tempest of the soul which Jesus stills by his peace-speaking word. The calm of nature, the calm of long-continued prosperity, the calm of an easy temper, — these are all deceitful, and are apt to be broken by sudden and furious tempests. But, after the soul has been rent to its foundations, — after the awful ground-swell, and the Atlantic billows of deep temptation, — when Jesus gives peace, there is "a great calm."

Matthew 8:27. But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

We have often marveled in the same way, but we know that it is not any "manner of man" alone, but that he, who was truly man, who was also "very God of very God," the God-man, the man Christ Jesus, the mediator between God and men.

Verse 16

Matthew 8:16. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits, with his word, and healed all that were sick:

It was the evening after the Sabbath. They did not venture even to bring out their sick until the day of rest was ended; and the Savior, saying nothing about their lingering superstition, began to work mightily among them. "He cast out the spirits with his word." What a power there is in the word of Jesus! There is nothing like it for the casting out of devils All our philosophies will not do what it does, the enemy will say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" "He cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick."

Matthew 8:17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

It does not look like a fulfillment, except upon the wondrous principle of the power of substitution. Jesus takes the sickness, and

therefore he removes it from us. He heals our infirmities because he took them upon Himself. Is it so, do you think, that every miracle of healing that Christ wrought took something out of him? We remember that, when the woman with the issue of blood was cured by touching his garment, Jesus said, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Was it so that he suffered while he was thus relieving the suffering? It was the joy of his heart to bless mankind; but every blessing that he gave was very costly to him. I think that truth lies embedded in the Evangelist's declaration.

Matthew 8:18. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

This again looks like a non sequitur. You and I would have said, "If there are great multitudes about us, let us speak to them while we are here." But then, again, you see, we may not always judge by the apparent usefulness of the present moment, we have to consider the rest of our career. Our Savior knew that the governors of the country were very jealous, and that if people came together in large numbers, they might suspect insurrections and revolutions, and they would be there with their troops, and many innocent folk might be slain, and, speaking after the manner of men, his work of usefulness might be quickly brought to an end. Therefore, when he saw the great multitudes, he judged it wise to go elsewhere. Besides, he was no lover of popularity; he looked upon it as a shadow which necessarily followed him, rather than as a thing to be sought after. This he showed in the intense humility of his spirit, and in that love of solitude which was so natural to one who walked in continual fellowship with God. Sometimes we shall really do more by apparently for the moment doing less.

Matthew 8:19-20. And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus says unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

We hear no more of this man. Our Savior's faithfulness probably dismissed him.

Matthew 8:21. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Now this man was a disciple, mark you, and, according to Luke, the Lord had said to him, "Follow me," yet he urged this plea, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father."

Matthew 8:22. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Nothing, not even the duties of filial love, must be allowed to come in conflict with the command of Christ, "Follow me." I take it that this is not so much a word to the common disciple as to a disciple called out to a special ministry: "Your ministry is to be your first, your main, your only occupation: 'follow me: and let the dead bury their dead.' Let the politicians attend to the politics; let the reformers see to the reforms; but, as for you, keep to your own work, and follow me." When God's ministers come to this point, that they have to win souls, and that this is their only business, then souls will be won. There are plenty of dead people to bury the dead, there are plenty of moral people to see after the ordinary affairs of morality. As for us, let us follow Christ, and keep to our one business.

Matthew 8:23. And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

He went first, and they followed afterwards. If the ship be the type of the Church, then Christ is the first on board, he is the Captain, and the disciples make up the crew: "His disciples followed him."

Matthew 8:24. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

What! a tempest where Christ is? Yes, it is generally so. If all seems very calm, you may question whether Christ is there, but when he goes into the ship, and his disciples follow him, it is not remarkable that the devil comes after him. "The ship was covered with the waves." That sea of Galilee lies very deep indeed, and it is surrounded by lofty crags and yawning chasms that act like funnels to the wind, so that to this day it is very dangerous for those who are on it in a boat. "The ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep." Here is the weakness of humanity; and here is also the strength of faith. Jesus went to sleep because that boat was in his Father's hands, and he would take care of it. "He was asleep." Sometimes, the best thing that we can do is to go to bed. You are worrying and troubling yourself, and you can do nothing; go to sleep, brother. It is the climax of faith to be able to shake off all care, and to feel, "If the Lord cares for me, why should I not sleep?" Remember what Alexander the Great said of his friend Parmenio: "Alexander may sleep, for Parmenio watches, "and surely we, who have a far greater friend than Parmenio, can say at any time, "We may sleep, for God watches." "He was asleep." To sleep was the best thing that Jesus could do to recruit his bodily energies and to prepare himself for the time when his efforts would be needed for the deliverance of his disciples from danger.

Matthew 8:25-26 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he says unto them: Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?

The disciples might have answered, "Lord, how can you ask us why we are fearful? The ship is covered with waves, the sea

threatens to swallow it and all of us up." Still, they might have thought, "If Christ be on board the ship, will he allow it to sink? Can he be drowned? We carry Christ and all his fortunes, is not our vessel thus insured beyond all risk? He may well say to us, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?'"

Matthew 8:26. Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

"A great calm." No ordinary stillness of the sea; but it was a great calm, as the tempest had been great which had preceded it. What! and all on a sudden too? Storms sob themselves to sleep through lengthened intervals of fretfulness, but when Jesus gives the word of command, the storm is gone at once. "There was a great calm."

Matthew 8:27. But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

They did not know their Lord yet; nor do we. Perhaps we have to go to sea to learn more of him, I mean that troubles and trials of a greater sort than we have known before may yet have to come to be our schoolmasters to teach us what Jesus is. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." You landsmen are thankful for your quiet, but you do not see so much of Jesus as others of his disciples do, you must go to sea to be able to cry, "What manner of man is this?"

Matthew 8:28-29. And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Son of God? are you come hither to torment us before the time?

They know that there is a time when he will judge them, and when their torment will begin. Say what you please, sin in men or devils will be followed with torment, with sorrow indescribable, unutterable; and these devils knew it, and they were obliged to confess the truth. They were afraid lest Jesus had come to inflict upon them the penalty of their evil deeds before that last great day.

Matthew 8:30. And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

The owners of these animals had no business to have any swine there; swine were forbidden in that holy country, and they should not have been kept there.

Matthew 8:31. So the devils besought him, saying, If you cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

What a wonderful creature a man is, as compared with an animal! A legion of devils could be packed away into these two men, but they needed a whole herd of swine to contain them all. How much greater is a man than a beast; that is to say, how much more capable of spiritual influence for evil as well as for good!

Matthew 8:32. And he said unto them, Go.

Jesus never wastes words upon devils; he is always short and sharp with them: "Go."

Matthew 8:32. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

The proverb has it, "They run fast whom the devil drives," they run to destruction, even as these swine perished in the waters.

Matthew 8:33-34. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus:

You feel that they are going to worship him, or at least to ask him to come, and teach them the way of salvation; nothing of the sort.

Matthew 8:34. And when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. And there are many still who try all they can to get Christ to go away from them. Woe be to them if he grants their desire!

Matthew 9:1. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

I think I see the departing sail, — love, hope, and peace melting away upon the distant horizon, and the Gergesenes left to perish. O God, do not so with any of us! Say not, "Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone."

Verses 23-34

Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and of the King. Here you see the King amid the storms of nature.

Matthew 8:23-24. And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the

sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

In the quiet confidence of faith, resting upon his God.

Matthew 8:25-26. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he says unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

As great a calm as there had been tempest. After great trouble, expect deep, delightful rest and peace, if you are a child of God.

Matthew 8:27. But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Now see the King in conflict with the powers of darkness.

Matthew 8:28-31. And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Son of God? are you come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him,

How the demons crouched at his feet! The dogs of bell knew the power of his tongue; that was a whip whose lash they had felt before.

Matthew 8:31-32. Saying, If you, cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go.

He never wastes words on demons.

Matthew 8:32-34. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

A sad prayer; yet Jesus granted their request. Men may once too often ask the Holy Spirit to depart from them. They may grieve him once more, and then he will have done with them forever. Now we shall see the King in conflict with the diseases of mankind, and with human sin.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 8:23-34; Matthew 9:1-13.

Chapter 9

Verses 1-13

Matthew 9:1-2. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith —

The faith of the bearers, and the faith of the palsied man himself, —

Matthew 9:2. Said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins be forgiven you.

It was remarked, by a mediaeval writer, that we do not find Christ calling any of the apostles, not even the very chief of them, by the name that he gave to this palsied man, "Son." This is the title that he gives to a sin-sick sinner, lying on a bed before him, waiting to be healed. Oh, the tenderness of Christ to sin and misery! He puts a kind of sonship upon this man which he had not possessed before.

Matthew 9:3. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

"He arrogates to himself the prerogative of God. Who can forgive sins but God only?"

Matthew 9:4-8. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think you evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then says he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

They rightly saw in this miracle, wrought by Christ, power given to man for, as you observe, Christ said, "The Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins;" and these people magnified God that one Man should have such power granted to him. There is an

elevation to the whole of manhood in the alliance of Christ with it; through him the Lord has given great power unto men.

Matthew 9:9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence,

The King is now going to show his power over the human will.

Matthew 9:9. He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he says unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Everything bows before him. Is he not King of kings, and Lord of lords? Have we ever comprehended the true measure of his divine and human nature? Even when he was on earth, and known as the Son of man, what gleams of his divine glory shone forth in these truly royal acts of his! Yet bow condescending was our King! Where is his court? Who are his attendants? Listen, —

Matthew 9:10. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Lord of the sea, Conqueror of demons, Healer of the sick, Forgiver of sin, and now he has for his company publicans and sinners! When the Pharisees saw it, they did not see condescension in it, but they saw wickedness in it.

Matthew 9:11. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eats your Master with publicans and sinners?

Ah! why, indeed? You and I know; that is a secret that has made us love him better than almost anything beside.

Matthew 9:12. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

He has come here on purpose that he might heal our sicknesses. Oh, you who feel tonight sick with sin, and sick of sin, come and sit down with him! He add, "Him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out," and he will not cast you out, notwithstanding your sinnership, if you come unto him by faith.

Matthew 9:13. But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Let us never forget that Jesus is the sinner's Savior. He does not come to save saints; he comes to save sinners, and the saints who are saved are kept from becoming sinners by his almighty love.

May God bless this reading of the Scriptures to us! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 8:23-34; Matthew 9:1-13.

Verses 1-17

Matthew 9:1-2. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins be forgiven you.

Our Lord dealt first with the greater evil, for sin is worse than even such a dreadful disease as the palsy. Forgiveness of sin is an even greater mercy than the healing of sickness.

Matthew 9:3-7. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, wherefore think you evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then says he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. And he arose, and departed to his house.

Jesus first proved his divinity by reading the secret thoughts of the caviling scribes, and then gave a further evidence of it by working this very notable miracle.

Matthew 9:8-9. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he says unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

This was another notable miracle, and equally set forth the power of divine grace.

Matthew 9:10-11. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down

with him and his disciple. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eats your Master with publicans and sinners?

He was more at home with publicans and sinners than with scribes and Pharisees, and they were more likely to welcome him as their Lord and Savior.

Matthew 9:12-13. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

If he had come to call the righteous, where would he have found them? His call was not likely to be heeded by the self-righteous, but sinners heard it with joy, and so were made righteous by him.

Matthew 9:14. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but your disciples fast not?

We must not suppose that, because a thing is proper for ourselves, it must therefore be binding upon everybody else. It might be fit and right that the disciples of John should fast often, their circumstances might require it; but it might be quite wrong for the disciples of Christ to fast, as they might be in very different circumstances.

Matthew 9:15. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?

Could Christ's disciples fast while Christ fed them with heavenly foods? While his presence was to them like Heaven begun below, it would have been inconsistent for them to be mourning and fasting.

Matthew 9:15. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

And nobody would say that they were turncoats if, when their circumstances had so greatly altered, they acted in harmony with their changed circumstances. The disciples could not mourn while Christ was with them; can you, believer, fast while Christ is with you? It cannot be; but when he has gone from you, then you will sorrow fast enough. So we must neither judge others by ourselves, nor judge ourselves at one time by what we were at some other time.

Matthew 9:16. No man puts a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, —

When it shrinks,

Matthew 9:16. And the rent is made worse.

There must be a fitness about things; do not impose fasting upon a joyful heart, or the singing of joyful hymns upon a sad spirit.

Matthew 9:17. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Do not expect from a young beginner that which would be unsuitable to him, even though it should be most lovely and seemly in an aged Christian; and do not expect to see in an aged Christian all the vigor and alertness of spirit that you look for in ardent souls in all the fervor of their first love to Christ. Let us mind the relations of things.

Verses 1-38

Matthew 9:1. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

Our Lord had given these Gergesenes an opportunity of becoming his disciples, the kingdom of God had come very near to them, but as they accounted themselves unworthy of it, and besought him to depart out of their coasts, he did not force himself upon them. Take heed, dear friends, if you do but hear the gospel once, that you do not reject it, for you may never have the opportunity of hearing it again.

Matthew 9:2. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins be forgiven you.

He saw the faith of the one man who was brought to him, and also the faith of the four bearers who had let him down through the roof.

Matthew 9:3-4. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think you evil in your hearts?

His knowledge of the thoughts of their hearts ought to have convinced them that he was divine, and that therefore he had the right to

forgive sins. They were not, however, in a condition to learn anything, for they thought that they already knew everything.

Matthew 9:5. For whether is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk?

Each of these actions needed divine power; but divinity being present, there was no difference as to the manifestation of this power between the forgiveness of sins and the healing of sickness.

Matthew 9:6-7. But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then says he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house. And he arose, and departed to his house.

Carrying the mattress whereon he had lain. Would he keep that bed stored, think you, for a memorial? Or if he used it in future to sleep upon would he not by night upon his bed wake up, and praise the Lord for what he had done for him? I think that we should treasure up in our memory the deeds of Christ on our behalf, if indeed we know his great salvation. I should not wonder if there is a mattress that you have somewhere at home, a bed, or a book, or something with which there is connected the remembrance of some deed of infinite love and almighty grace.

Matthew 9:8. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

They did not think deeply enough, and go really to the bottom of the matter, but they concluded that it was a wonderful thing that any man — that any men, as they put it, — should have such power given unto them.

Matthew 9:9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom:

Notice how Matthew describes himself: "As Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom."

Matthew 9:9. And he says unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

See how everything is obedient to Christ. Paralysis leaves the palsied man, and hardness of heart departs from the tax-gatherer.

Matthew 9:10. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Note the modesty of these early recorders; Matthew does not say that it was his own house where this gathering took place, nor that he was the giver of the feast. Mark and Luke supply this information.

Matthew 9:11-13. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eats your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:

God prefers the doing of good to all outward ritual and ordinances, even the best of them: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

Matthew 9:13-22. For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but your disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man puts a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. While he spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshiped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay your hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

See how he scatters mercy all around. He is charged to the full with the divine electricity of health, and whoever comes in his way gets a blessing. Oh, for the presence of that full and overflowing Christ in the midst of every worshiping assembly, for there are still many sick folk who need a Savior as much as these people did in the days of Jesus!

Matthew 9:23. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

They were gathered together for the funeral of this young girl.

Matthew 9:24. He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed him to scorn.

They did not understand his expression; yet, apparently, sleep only differs from death in this respect, that the sleeper wakes again,

and returns to consciousness. The Lord Jesus Christ did not mean that the maiden was not dead; but he meant that, as she was soon coming to life again, it was, as it were, only like the image of death. To her, death was not a cul-de-sac, a dark cave without an opening at the further end; it was rather a tunnel through which she was passing back again into life.

Matthew 9:25-26. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

And well it might; this was the marvel of marvels that he should even raise the dead.

Matthew 9:27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, You son of David, have mercy on us.

See, my brethren, how miracle follows upon miracle, how the way of Christ is, as it were, paved with mercy upon mercy.

Matthew 9:28. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus says unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this?

It is a great thing to have faith about the particular point that most concerns us: "Believe you that I am able to do this?" Some can believe everything except the one thing for which faith is most needed,

Matthew 9:28. They said unto him, Yes, Lord.

Can you, dear friend, say, "Yes, Lord," about yourself?

Matthew 9:29-31. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

This was very wrong of them, for they ought to have obeyed Christ's orders. They were doing much mischief, although, no doubt, they thought they were doing good. The Savior, first of all, was modest, and did not wish his cures reported. In the next place, he wanted to have an opportunity of doing more good, and the reporting of this cure brought him immense crowds who encumbered him, and also excited the animosity of the Pharisees, who would the more persecute him. Moreover, our Lord did not wish the Pharisees to think that he cured people that they might simply advertise him. I do think that we often err in imagining that making known every little thing that happens, and even every great thing, is the best course to pursue. There is a way of walking in wisdom toward them that are without, and Christ knew that way; and these blind men whose eyes he had opened should not have disobeyed him.

Matthew 9:32. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

"As they went out." Do notice what a succession of mercies Christ dispersed; it was a sort of tempest of blessing, peal upon peal, following almost without intermission.

Matthew 9:33-34. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils.

How does Christ answer this wicked taunt?

Matthew 9:35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

That is the best answer to give to cavilers, do more good than ever. There is no stopping the barking of dogs; so go you on your way, as the moon shines, let the hounds bay as they may. Oh, the glory of the Master! Like a cloud that dispenses showers of blessing wherever it moves, so did he continue to do his life-work.

Matthew 9:36-38. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then says he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

Or, "that he will thrust forth laborers into his harvest." He who does the most is always the one who wants to see more done. This blessed Christ, with his hands so full of holy work, is the one who bows his knee, and cries to the great Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into his harvest. Let us imitate him both in the working and in the praying.

Verses 18-38

Matthew 9:18. While he spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshiped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay your hand upon her, and she shall live.

This was grand faith on the ruler's part, believing that the touch of Christ's hand would raise his dead daughter to life; we do not wonder that the Savior honored such faith as that at once.

Matthew 9:19-20. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:

This was while he was on the way to the ruler's house. Jesus Christ can work many miracles while he is on the way to work other miracles.

Matthew 9:21. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

This also is wonderful faith again; in this chapter we get among the great believers. The man believes that the touch of Jesus can raise the dead the woman believes that the touch of his garment will make her whole

Matthew 9:22. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

Christ never comes short of our faith, but he often goes beyond it.

Matthew 9:23. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

These were hired men and women who were brought in to act as mourners

Matthew 9:24-25. He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, —

There is a good deal that has to be "put forth" before the Lord Jesus Christ will fully reveal his power to bless. He would have you put forth your doubts, your fears, your wandering thoughts, your self-trust, in fact, everything that is contrary to his righteous rule. "When the people were put forth, he went in," —

Matthew 9:25-27. And took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, You son of David, have mercy on us.

See how busy our Lord was, and how ready for every application that was made to him, and note how he adapted his power to every case that came before him. First he heals an issue of blood, then he raises the dead, and now he is ready to open blind eyes. I wish the Lord might have such blessed business among us here, and he may have, for, if you will cry to him for your child, dead in trespasses and sins, he will make her to live; if you will bring your blind eyes to him, he will open them; and if you will come to him with a disease that is sapping your very life, he will heal you.

Give the Lord plenty of this holy work to do. Drawn wells, they say, are sweetest; and a Savior who is constantly used is most enjoyed.

Matthew 9:28. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus says unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this?

That is the question the Lord puts to any who are in soul trouble. "Believe you that I am able to do this?" — to forgive your sins once for all, — to give you a new nature at this very moment, — to make you, a sinner, into a saint, — to save you, not merely for the next few weeks, but to save you eternally so that you shall see my face in glory with exceeding joy; — 'Believe you that I am able to do this?'"

Matthew 9:28-29. They said unto him, Yes, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.

That is what Jesus says to every person here, "According to your faith be it unto you. "If you believe Christ a little, he will bless you a little, but if you believe him up to the hilt, he will bless you to the full. Your faith shall never outrun the manifestations of divine love. Believe you this? Then you shall see it. "According to your faith be it unto you."

Matthew 9:30-32. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

These miracles were wrought so rapidly, and they concerned such different cases that, as we read of them, we rejoice to see how

Christ Was ready for anything, and ready for everything. It did not matter what case was brought to him, he was never taken aback. Here he is just as fully prepared to heal the dumb as just now he was to cure the blind.

Matthew 9:33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: —

There is nothing like going at once to the root of the matter. Christ did not heal the dumb man, and leave the devil in him, but he first cast the devil out, and then " the dumb spoke. "And this is his way of saving men. He renews them by his Spirit, he casts the devil out, and then their despair goes, their prayerlessness disappears, their love of vice is killed. All evil is expelled when once the root of the evil is pulled up. "When the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke:" —

Matthew 9:33. And the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never before seen in Israel.

Christ had wrought such miracles as the multitudes had never before seen, and they might well marvel.

Matthew 9:34-35. But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, —

What the Pharisees said was of such very small consequence that, for the time being, Christ given them no answer but this, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages." In like manner, it will be your best plan not to reply to slander. There are some lies that smell so strongly of the pit from which they came that everybody will recognize their origin, and therefore you need not take the trouble to point out that they are falsehoods. And the best reply to all scandal and slander is to go on with your work just as if you had never heard it. The Pharisees said that Christ cast out devils through the prince of the devils, and the very next sentence is, "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages," —

Matthew 9:35-36. Teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, —

Yet Christ, while upon the earth in the flesh, never saw such multitudes as are gathered in London today, he never saw such multitudes as make up this nation; there never passed before the eyes of the Redeemer such multitudes as are crowded together in China and India today. No; the population of the world has wondrously increased since those days, so what must be the compassion of his heart when he sees the multitudes that are living in the world today! "When he saw the multitudes he was moved" — in the original, this is a very striking word; it signifies that he trembled with emotion, his inmost powers were moved, his heart was stirred "with compassion on them," —

Matthew 9:36-37. Because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then says he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few;

Not the preachers, but the laborers are few; not the talkers, but the laborers, — the patient, plodding, resolute, unselfish, industrious toilers who really go in for winning souls for Christ, — the men and women who do real work for God, and do not play at Christian service as some do, making it a kind of amusement to go and do some little good now and then it is these laborers who are few. You know the difference between a dock laborer, or a farm laborer, and the gentleman who takes a tool in his hand just for a pastime now and then.

Matthew 9:38. Pray you therefore the lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

It is earnest workers that we are to pray God to thrust forth into his harvest, for still the harvest is plenteous, and the laborers are few.

Verses 27-35

Matthew 9:27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us.

No sooner does Jesus move than fresh candidates for his bounty appear: the blind seek sight from him. Two sightless men had become companions in affliction, they may have been father and son. They were in downright earnest, for they "followed him, crying, and saying, Have mercy on us." Persevering, vehement, yet intelligent was their appeal. They were of one mind in reference to Jesus, and therefore they went one way, and used one prayer, to one and the same person. Our Lord is here called by his royal name: "You Son of David." Even the blind could see that he was a king's son. As Son of David, he is entreated to show mercy, and act according to his royal nature. It is mercy which gives us our faculties, and mercy alone can restore them. This prayer suits us when we perceive our own darkness of mind. When we cannot see our way into truth, let us appeal to the Lord for gracious instruction, ever remembering that we have no claim except that which originates in his mercy.

Matthew 9:28. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus says unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yes, Lord.

They were most eager for the blessing. They gave him no leisure: they pressed into the house where he had sought privacy and rest: they came to him, even to Jesus himself. The Lord would have them express their faith, and so he makes inquiry of them as to what they believe about himself. Jesus makes no inquiry about their eyes, but only about their faith this is ever the vital point. They could not see, but they could believe, and they did so.

They had a specific faith as to the matter about which they prayed; for our Lord put it plainly, "Believe you that I am able to do THIS?" "They had also a clear view of the character of him to whom they applied; for they had already styled him "Son of David," and now they called him "Lord."

Matthew 9:29. Then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.

Again he arouses their faith; and this time he throws the whole responsibility upon their confidence in him. "According to your faith be it unto you." He touched them with his hand; but they must also touch him with their faith. The word of power in the last sentence is one upon which he acts so continually, that we may call it, as to many blessings, a rule of the kingdom. We have the measuring of our own mercies; our faith obtains less or more according to its own capacity to receive. Had these men been mere pretenders to faith they would have remained blind. If we will not in very truth trust our Lord, we shall die in our sins.

Matthew 9:30. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.

They both saw the double miracle was wrought at the same moment. Comrades in the dark, they are now companions in the light. Singular that for two souls there should thus be one destiny! It was a singular double fact, and deserved to be made widely known; but our Lord had wise reasons for requiring silence He "straitly charged them." He left them no option: he demanded complete silence. He who opened their eyes closed their mouths. Jesus did not desire fame, he wanted less crowding; he wished to avoid excitement; and therefore he was express and peremptory in his order: "See that no man know it."

Matthew 9:31. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame on all that country.

They most industriously published what they were bidden to conceal until "all that country" rang with the news. In this they erred greatly, and probably caused the Savior so much inconvenience by the pressure of the crowd, that he had to remove from the town. We may not hope that we are doing right if we disobey our Lord. However natural disobedience may appear to be, it is disobedience, and must not be excused. Even if the results turned out to be advantageous, it would not make it right to break the command of our Lord. Silence is more than golden when our King commands it. He does not seek applause, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets that he may be known to be doing a great work. His followers do well to copy his example. We do not wonder that our Lord's name became famous when there were such persons to advertise it. How earnestly and eloquently would the two formerly blind men tell the story of how he opened their eyes! We are not forbidden, but exhorted to make known the wonders of his grace. Let us not fail in this natural, this necessary, this useful duty. More and more let us "spread abroad his fame."

Matthew 9:32. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

As a pair of patients leave the surgery, another poor creature comes in. Note the "behold." The case is striking. He comes not freely, or of his own accord: "they brought" him: thus should we bring men to Jesus. He does not cry for help, for he is "a dumb man." Let us open our mouths for the dumb. He is not himself, but he is "possessed with a devil." Poor creature! Will anything be done for him?

Matthew 9:33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Our Lord does not deal with the symptoms, but with the source of the disorder, even with the evil spirit. "The devil was cast out"; and it is mentioned as if that were a matter of course when Jesus came on the scene. The devil had silenced the man, and so, when the evil one was gone, "the dumb spoke." How we should like to know what he said! Whatever he said it matters not; the wonder was that he could say anything. The people confessed that this was a wonder quite unprecedented; and in this they only said the truth: "It was never so seen in Israel." Jesus is great at surprises: he has novelties of gracious power. The people were quick to express their admiration yet we see very little trace of their believing in our Lord's mission. It is a small thing to marvel, but a great thing to believe. O Lord, give the people around us to see such revivals and conversions, as they have never known before!

Matthew 9:34. But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils.

Of course, they had some bitter sentence ready. Nothing was too bad for them to say of Jesus. They were hard pressed when they took to this statement which our Lord in another place so easily answered. They hinted that such power over demons must have come to him through an unholy compact with "the prince of the devils." Surely this was going very near to the unpardonable sin.

Matthew 9:35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the

kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 9:27-35; and Matthew 20:29-34.

Verses 27-38

Matthew 9:27-28. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, you son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house,

I suppose the house at Capernaum, where he was accustomed to stay.

Matthew 9:28. The blind men came to him;

Forced their way in. They must be attended to. Hunger breaks through stone walls, they say, and an earnest heart will follow after what it seeks.

Matthew 9:28-29. And Jesus says unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yes, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you.

That is, "If you do not believe, you shall not see, but if there be faith in you, behold you shall have sight."

Matthew 9:30-32. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

Here we have had the dead, those that were bleeding to death, the blind, and the dumb, and the possessed of a devil.

Matthew 9:33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel.

No; but Jesus does wonders. Something off the common, and altogether out of the ordinary way, his work of grace must be.

Matthew 9:34. But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils.

There is always somebody or other who has got an ugly word to put in. It matters not how much God may bless the gospel, there is no stopping the sneers and objections; but the mercy is that it does not matter much. Our Lord was not hurt, and the work went on, notwithstanding all the caviling of the Pharisees.

Matthew 9:35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

That was the answer to the Pharisees. Christian activity, fervent devotion to the cause of God, is the best answer that can be given to cavilers of any sort or every sort. In your work hold on, my brother, and those who cavil at you now may come to honor you one of these days.

Matthew 9:36-37. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then says he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.

We are all loiterers, but where are the laborers? Where are they with the sharp sickle that can cut down the wheat, and, with a ready hand, can bind it, and, with a strong shoulder, carry it? Alas! in this great city, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few!

Matthew 9:38. Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will sent forth laborers into his harvest.

Verse 35

9:35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

This was his answer to the blasphemous slanders of the Pharisees. A glorious reply it was. Let us answer calumny by greater zeal in doing good. Small places were not despised by our Lord: he went about the villages as well as the cities. Village piety is of the utmost importance, and has a close relation to city life. Jesus turned old institutions to good account: the "synagogues" became his seminaries. Three-fold was his ministry: expounding the old, proclaiming the new, healing the diseased. Observe the repetition of the word "every" as showing the breadth of his healing power. All this stood in relation to his royalty; for it was "the gospel of the kingdom" which he proclaimed. Our Lord was "the Great Itinerant": Jesus went about preaching, and healing. His was on a Medical

Mission as well as an evangelistic tour. Happy people who have Jesus among them! Oh, that we might now see more of his working among our own people!

Matthew 9:36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

A great crowd is a demand upon compassion, for it suggests so much sin and need. In this case, the great want was instruction: "they fainted" for want of comfort; they "were scattered abroad" for lack of guidance. They were eager to learn, but they had no fit teachers. "Sheep having no shepherd" are in an ill plight. Unfed, unfolded, unguarded, what will become of them? Our Lord was stirred with a feeling which agitated his inmost soul. "He was moved with compassion." What he saw affected not his eye only, but his heart. He was overcome by sympathy. His whole frame was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement. He is even now affected towards our people in the same manner. He is moved with compassion if we are not.

Matthew 9:37-38. Then says he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

His heavy heart sought solace among "his disciples", and he spoke to them. He mourned the scantiness of workers. Pretenders were many, but real "laborers" in the harvest were few. The sheaves were spoiling. The crowds were ready to be taught, even as ripe wheat is ready for the sickle; but there were few to instruct them, and where could more teaching men be found? God only can thrust out, or "send forth laborers." Man-made ministers are useless. Still are the fields encumbered with gentlemen who cannot use the sickle. Still the real ingatherers are few and far between. Where are the instructive, soul-winning ministries? Where are those who travail in birth for their hearers' salvation? Let us plead with the Lord of the harvest to care for his own harvest, and send out his own men. May many a true heart be moved by the question, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" to answer, "Here am I! Send me."

Matthew 10:1. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

See the way of making apostles. They were first disciples, and afterwards teachers of others: they were specially his, and then they were given to be a blessing to men. They were "called unto him"; and thus their higher call came to them. In the presence of their Lord they received their equipment:

"He gave them power." Is that so with us in our own special office? Let us come to him, that we may be clothed with his authority and girded with his strength. Their power was miraculous; but it was an imitation of their Lord's, and the words applied to it are very much the same as we have seen in use about his miracles of healing. The twelve were made to represent their Lord. We, too, may be enabled to do what Jesus did among men. Oh, for such an endowment!

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 9:35-38; Matthew 10:1; Matthew 13:3-8; Matthew , 18-23.

Verses 36-38

Matthew 9:36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

The sight that Christ saw with his eye, deeply affected his heart: "He was moved with compassion on them." The expression is a very strong one indicating that his whole being was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement.

Matthew 9:37-38. Then says he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he well send forth laborers into his harvest.

Pretenders were many, but real "laborers" were few. God only can thrust out or "send forth laborers." Man-made ministers are useless, yet they abound all around us; but where are the instructive soul-winning ministries? Let us plead with the Lord of the harvest to care for his own harvest, and to thrust out his own harvestmen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 80; and Matthew 9:36-38; Matthew , 10.

Chapter 10

Verses 1-27

Matthew 10:1-4. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

The lesson to be learned from these names are, first, that these men are mentioned in couples, and I think that, as a rule, God's servants work best in pairs. In other senses than the matrimonial one, it is not good that man should be alone. Moses needs Aaron; Peter needs Andrew; James needs John. It is well to be of such a temperament and disposition that you can work harmoniously with another of your Lord's servants. If you cannot, pray God to alter you. Notice that expression, in the 3rd verse, "and Bartholomew." I think there is not a single instance in the New Testament where Bartholomew is mentioned without the word "and" before or after his name, — "and Bartholomew," or "Bartholomew and" someone else. Perhaps he was not a man who ever began any work by himself, but he was a grand man to join in and help it on when somebody else had started it. So, dear friend, if you are not qualified to be a leader in the Church of Christ, be willing to be Number Two; but do serve the Master, in some capacity or other, with all your might. Be a brother who carries an "and" with him wherever he goes; be like a horse, that has his harness on, and is ready to be hooked into the team. That is the lesson of the two words "and Bartholomew." The last lesson from the names is at the end of the 4th verse: "and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." He preached of Christ, he worked miracles in the name of Christ, he was ordained as one of the apostles of Christ, yet he was "the son of perdition." Oh! let none of us be content merely with our official position, or trust in the good which we hope we have done, or in any gifts with which the Master has entrusted us. Judas Iscariot had all these marks of distinction, yet he betrayed his Lord. God grant that no one among us may turn out to be a Judas Iscariot!

Matthew 10:5-6. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The gospel is now to be preached to every creature in all the world; but, in those days, it was to be proclaimed first to the Jews, then to the Samaritans, and afterwards to the Gentiles as a whole. The largeness of our commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" need not prevent our following providential directions to make it known in one place rather than in another. It is well for the servants of Christ always to ask their Master where they are to go. You know how it is recorded, in the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul and Silas "essayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not." Ask the Lord, therefore, where you shall work, as well as what your work shall be, for your Master knows how you can best serve him.

Matthew 10:7. And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

That blessed kingdom, which is now set up among men, of which Christ is the King, and I hope many of us are the subjects. That kingdom was then "at hand."

Matthew 10:8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give.

"Exercise your healing arts most freely. They cost you nothing; let them not cost anything to those who receive the benefit of them."

Matthew 10:9-10. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

They were to "quarter on the enemy," as we say. Wherever they went, they would be furnished with food, and clothing, and shelter, if they faithfully executed the commission with which their Master had entrusted them.

Matthew 10:11-13. And into whatever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide until you go thence. And when you come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

How about your houses, dear friends. Are they "worthy" houses, in this New Testament sense? If an apostle came there, could he bring "peace" to it? Or would he have to take the peace away with him to some other house that was more worthy to receive it?

Matthew 10:14-15. And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Truly I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Despised and rejected privileges make the fiercest fuel for the fires of Hell. They who might have heard the gospel, and would not hear it, shall find the hand of God more heavy upon them than it will be even upon the accursed Sodomites. Woe, then, unto such as live in London, yet who will not hear the Word of the Lord, or, when they do hear it, will not accept it!

Matthew 10:16-17. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men:

"Do not trust yourselves with them."

Matthew 10:17-19. For they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak.

"Let it not fret you that you are not orators, that you are not men of culture; speak what God the Holy Spirit shall teach you to say, and leave the result with him."

Matthew 10:20. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.

Oh! that is grand, — when a man has so communed with God that the very Spirit of the Father has entered into him. Then shall there be a wondrous power about his speech; men may not understand whence it came, but they will be obliged to feel the force of it.

Matthew 10:21. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

Read the martyrologies, and see whether it was not exactly as our Lord foretold that it would be. In martyr times, men often burst all the bonds of natural affection, and betrayed even their own fathers or children to death. Yet the saints quaffed not; they were content to let every earthly tie be snapped so that the tie of their heavenly and eternal relationship might be confirmed. So may it be with us also!

Matthew 10:22-27. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he who endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for truly I say unto you, You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, until the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household! Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.

God help us so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Verses 1-42

Matthew 10:1. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

They were first Christ's disciples, and then he sent them forth as his apostles, clothed with power and authority very similar to his own.

Matthew 10:2-4. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

The twelve apostles linked the spiritual Israel with the twelve tribes of the literal Israel which had typified it. They are mentioned in pairs, but this last couple is not a pair, for Simon the Zealot had little in common with the cool, cunning, calculating Judas Iscariot. There were only twelve apostles, yet one of them was a traitor; among the leaders of the nominal Christian Church today, is it possible that there is one traitor in every twelve?

Matthew 10:5-6. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

This was "a mission to the Jews" only, meant for the general arousing of the chosen nation. It was a mission from Israel to Israel; not to the Gentiles, and not even to the people who were most like the Jews: "Into any city of the Samaritans enter you not." After our Lord's resurrection he gave the wider commission, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Matthew 10:7-8. And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give.

They were to be medical missionaries, preaching the gospel, and healing the sick, and it was all to be done "freely."

Matthew 10:9-10. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither

shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.

The people at that time were favorably disposed to our Lord, and thus his apostles might expect treatment of a more generous kind than can be looked for in these times. Certain of these regulations were altered on a subsequent mission, when the people were less favorably disposed.

Matthew 10:11-15. And into whatever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide until you go thence. And when you come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake of the dust of your feet. Truly I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Disclaim all fellowship with those who will not have fellowship with your Lord; let them know that you quit them because they refuse to receive your Master's message. If they continue to reject the Savior, their doom will be even more terrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Matthew 10:16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:

"Behold, I send you forth." What power there is in the word of the King of kings! "'I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' You are like sheep, helpless and defenseless; yet 'I send you forth,' and therefore it is right for you to go even into 'the midst of wolves.'" We might have imagined that the wolves would have devoured the sheep yet, at the present time, there are a great many more sheep in the world than there are wolves. Sheep have always been weak and helpless, yet they have multiplied, wolves have always been strong and savage, yet they have diminished until there is not one of them left in this land, and in many other countries the same thing has happened. So, the weak, the helpless, who come under the care of "our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," shall be preserved from all the wolves that would devour them, and even from the devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour."

Matthew 10:16. Be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

"Be you harmless because you are like sheep, but be you wise as serpents because you have to dwell with wolves." You, too, beloved, ought to be very wise because of the wisdom which has been imparted to you by the Master who has sent you forth, and you ought to use your best wits in his service, yet never use that wisdom with any ill intent, for the Christ who sends you does no harm to men, but only good.

Matthew 10:17-18. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

"Do not try to live on popular applause, 'but beware of men.' Expect ill treatment from them; if they can persecute you with the scourge, they will do so, but if that is out of their power, they will persecute you with their tongues. You will be misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned; expect such treatment for I, your Lord and Master, have had it before you."

Matthew 10:19-20. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.

It is very remarkable what wise answers many of the martyrs often gave. Illiterate men, when confronted by the learned ones of the earth, completely baffled them; and weak women nonplused their assailants and judges. A notable instance of that is recorded in the history of the brave Anne Askew. After they had tortured her upon the rack, and her poor body was full of pain, she sat upon the cold slabs of her prison, and put such questions to the popish bishops and inquisitors as utterly confounded them: and Christ still, by his Holy Spirit, enables his faithful followers to triumph over all the craft and malice of men.

Matthew 10:21-22. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he who endures to the end shall be saved.

When we give ourselves to Christ, we must do it without any reserve and be prepared to follow him even to the bitter end if necessary. If all men should forsake us, if death should be our portion because of our allegiance to Christ, we dare not draw back. To do that, would lead to our destination; but to endure unto the end, this is eternal salvation.

Matthew 10:23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for truly I say unto you, You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, until the Son of man be come.

I suppose Christ here alludes to that wondrous coming of his in the destruction of Jerusalem. They had but a short time in which to

evangelize that land, so they had to be quick in gathering out the Lord's elect before he came in that terrible judgment. This same truth ought to quicken the action of every servant of Christ today. Be quick about your work, for your Master is on the road, and will soon be here. You may almost hear the rattling of his chariot wheels, for long ago he said "Surely I come quickly." The trumpets are beginning to sound, and you will scarcely have gone over all the cities of the world before the Son of man shall come unless you hasten with the great task which he has entrusted to you.

Matthew 10:24-25. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

I do not know what worse names they might give to us than they gave to our master, but, no doubt, they might do so; for, as the servants are worse and less than their master, the world might, if it acted upon the rule of proportion, apply much worse names to us than it has ever done to our blessed Lord and Master. Are we to be esteemed and revered in a world that persecuted and crucified Christ our Lord and Savior? Be not so foolish as to think so; and when you receive scorn and contumely, accept it as being the lot of follower of Christ.

Matthew 10:26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

When men slander you, they cannot take away your good name before God. There will be a resurrection of reputations as well as a resurrection of bodies; and good men, though their good names lie deeply buried, will certainly have a resurrection. There is Wycliffe, how little, comparatively, has ever been said about probably the greatest man since the time of the apostle Paul; but his name and fame will yet arise, and all history will ring with the praise of it. Depend upon it, no man, who has faithfully served his Savior, shall miss the honor which he has truly deserved. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," so be content to wait.

Matthew 10:27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.

There must first be who quiet lonely hearing, - that calm still sitting at the Master's feet to learn the lesson; and then afterwards must come the brave telling of it out, - speaking out though kings should hear, and never being silenced because of sinful shame.

Matthew 10:28-31. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear you not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.

Do you not see the force of this argument? These little creatures, that are of so little account among men, are watched over by your Heavenly Father. They cannot die, nay they cannot even light upon the ground, without your Father noting it; can he then forget you, who are worth so much more than many sparrows? Will he not deal very gently, and tenderly, and considerately with you?

Matthew 10:32-33. Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.

You own Christ here, and Christ will own you there. Dare to bear reproach for him, and you shall be glorified together with him by-and-by, but if the tenor of your life be that you do not own Christ, if you practically live as if there were no Savior, ignoring him, depriving him of the trust which he deserves, and the honor which he has earned, then, when he comes in the glory of the Father, he will say, "You never knew me, and I never knew you. Depart!"

Matthew 10:34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

That is to say, the first consequence of Christ's coming will not be that we shall lead easy and comfortable lives, but, on the contrary, he comes to enlist us in his army, and to make soldiers of us, and soldiers have to endure many hardships.

Matthew 10:35-36. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

Many of the children of God have found this to be true, greatly to their sorrow. No foes can wound us so sorely as those of our own household. They get at our hearts, and cut us to the very quick, while others can only give us flesh wounds. Well, it must be so. Wherever light comes, darkness will be opposed to it. Truth will always find error ready to devour it if it can. Expect this, and half the bitterness of it will be gone when it comes because you did expect it. "To be forewarned" here "is to be forearmed."

Matthew 10:37-42. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me.

He who finds his life shall lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake shall find it. He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him that sent me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. God's great reward for little service are given, not of debt, but of grace, "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 80; and Matthew 9:36-38; Matthew , 10.

Verses 16-23

Matthew 10:16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

It is a strange errand that you are sent upon — not as dogs to fight with the wolves. Yet you are to fight with them, but you are to go as lambs in the midst of wolves. Expect, therefore that they will rend you. Bear much, for ever in that you shall conquer. If they kill you, you shall be honored in your death. As I have often said, the fight looks very unequal between sheep and wolves, yet at the present moment there are vastly more sheep in the world than wolves, the sheep having outlived the wolves. In this country at any rate, the last wolf is gone, and the sheep, with all their weaknesses, continue to multiply. "That is due," you say, "to the shepherd." And to him shall your safety and your victory be due. He will take care of you. "I send you forth as sheep among wolves." But do not, therefore, provoke the wolves. "Be wise as serpents." Have a holy prudence. "Be as harmless as doves," but not as silly as doves

Matthew 10:17-19. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak.

And very remarkable were the answers given by the martyrs to those who persecuted them. In some cases they were altogether unlettered men, feeble women, unused to the quibbles and the catches which ungodly wise men use, and yet with is holy ability they answered all their adversaries and often stopped their mouths. It is wonderful what God can make of the weakest of men when he dwells in them, and speaks through them.

Matthew 10:20-21. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

Strange venom of human nature. It never grows so angry against anything as against God's truth. Why is this? False religions will tolerate one another but they will not tolerate the religion of Christ. Is not this all accounted for by that old dark saying at the gates of Eden, "I will put enmity between you and the woman — between your seed and her seed." That enmity is sure to come up as long as the world stands.

Matthew 10:22-23. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he who endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for truly I say unto you, You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, until the Son of man be come.

They had not been able to get all through Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps we shall scarcely have been able to preach the gospel in every part of the world before our Master's speedy footsteps shall be heard.

Verses 16-33

Matthew 10:16-25. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he who endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for truly I say unto you, You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, until the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor his servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.

It is more than enough, for the disciple might expect to fare more hardly than his Master, and the servant to have less comfort than the lord. So it is in worldly things — that our Lord and Master has such fellowship with his people that he does not put it so, but he says, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."

Matthew 10:25. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

But they cannot call them any more or any worse. They have given our Master the blackest of all the epithet, and any hard and opprobrious titles that can ever be applied to us must fall short of these which were applied to him. Surely we ought not to wince: not for a single moment.

Matthew 10:26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

They may cover your name and character with temporary dishonor, but the covering will break off soon. Like fire hidden under autumn leaves, it will burn up by-and-by, and there will be a resurrection of reputations, as well as of persons; and what a wondrous resurrection that will be for those who are cast out as the off-scouring of all things; when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!

Matthew 10:27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.

There is a secret learning, but there must be a public teaching. Christ takes us aside to reveal himself, that afterwards we may boldly go forth to others, and tell them what we have learned in private. Oh! child of God, if you have a sweet morsel in the chamber by yourself, do not be so selfish as to keep it to yourself. Go and tell your brethren, and your house, and of the same place, the things which you have learned. If any of you have had a very choice experience, and a more than usual manifestation of divine love, be sure to let others be enriched with your riches. Have you found honey? Eat it not all yourself, but, like Samson, when he found it in the carcass of the lion, go to father, and mother, and friends with your hands full of the secret, and let them eat it also.

Matthew 10:28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

Oh! fearful destruction! This is what we may well fear — both body and soul, to undergo everlasting ruin, broken in pieces and destroyed as to all excellency, and happiness, and peace,. This we may fear.

Matthew 10:29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

He over-rules all things, the least as well as the greatest. We see his hand in the tempest, and we look at the black wing of the storm and see that God rides it. But the wing of the tiny sparrows, so insignificant in value, is equally directed by his power and wisdom.

Matthew 10:30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Minute is the providence of God, taking care of you, even as to that part of your person which is not vital, and without which you could still live on. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." The tiniest and most insignificant benefits are all ordered by ,his eternal purpose.

Matthew 10:31-33. Fear you not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows, Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men,

And you see from the connection, that here the denying means not confessing. "Whoever shall deny me before men."

Matthew 10:33. Him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.

The attempt, therefore, to avoid all publicity in religion — to endeavor to slink into Heaven by the back gate — to somehow or other find an underground road to salvation, is a futile attempt. Christ requires that we should own him, seeing that he so graciously owns us. He puts it as a solemn command; and I would press it upon the conscience of any believer here who has never confessed his faith. You miss, at any rate, the promise here: you miss some others besides. You are walking in the path of disobedience. You are to some extent guilty of putting Christ to shame, for if others see that you are ashamed of him, they conclude that there is something to be ashamed of in him. Your cowardice dishonors him.

Wherefore should you hold back? Are you not going to take your place among his people? You tell me that they have many faults. Have they more than you? If you never join a church until you find a perfect one, you will never join one this side of Heaven, and if the church were perfect when you joined it, it would certainly cease to be so then,, for you would bring your shortcomings and imperfections into it. I have lived among the people of God now these many years, and I, as pastor of this church, have had to mourn over many a man for his faults; but still, there is no people like God's people, and of his house I will say: —

"Here my best friends — my kindred — dwell:
Here God my Savior reigns."

Some of the best and noblest spirits that ever lived have not been ashamed to associate with their fellow-Christians, though they ,perceived their errors, but they have rather cast in their lot with. them, poor and despised as they were, and have accounted it even

their honor if they might but be numbered with the redeemed among men.

Matthew 10:34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.

The ultimate result of Christ's mission will be peace. Swords shall be broken into ploughshares, and the spears into pruning hooks; but on the way to peace there will be war. On the way to universal peace there will be a general confusion. When true religion comes into a man's heart, it makes him a warrior at once. He begins to contend against evil — to contend against contention. He fights for peace, though it may seem strange that it should be so.

Matthew 10:35-36. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

They will drive us back when they perceive that our face is set towards Heaven. When you see a fish swimming with the stream, it is almost always a dead one. The living fish goes against the stream; and the true child of God has to go against the current of mankind, and oftentimes the hardest push in life is to go against father, mother, brother, sister, for Christ's sake and the gospel.

Verses 24-42

Our Lord had been sending forth his twelve apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and to work miracles in his name. Having given them their commission, he warned them of the treatment they must expect to receive, and then fortified their minds against the persecutions they would have to endure.

Matthew 10:24-25. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

The name, Beelzebub or Beelzebub, meaning the God of filth, or as some say, the God of flies, was applied by the Jews to the very worst of the evil spirits. They supposed that there were some devils worse than others, and the very head and master of them all they called Beelzebub, and now they supplied this title to our Lord Jesus himself. Well then, if men should give us ill names and evil characters, need we marvel? Shall Christ be spit upon and despised, and shall you and I be honored and exalted? You have heard of Godfrey de Bouillon, the crusader, who entered Jerusalem in triumph, but who refused to have a golden crown put upon his head because he said, he never would be crowned with gold where Christ was crowned with thorns. So do you expect to be honored in the world where your Lord was crucified?

Matthew 10:26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

"They will misrepresent you, slander you, and speak evil of you; but if your good name be covered up now, it shall be revealed one of these days, perhaps in this life; but if not in this life, certainly at the day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known." It really is marvelous how sometimes in this life, misrepresented men suddenly obtain a refutation of their calumniators, and then it seems as if the world would serve them as the Greeks did their successful runners or wrestlers when they lifted them upon their shoulders, and carried them in triumph.

Matthew 10:27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.

This is what we are to preach, what Christ tells us, and this is how we are to get the matter of our discourses, be alone with Christ, let him talk to us in the darkness, in the quietude of the closet where we commune with him in prayer. Then this is where we are to preach, "upon the housetops." "We cannot literally do this here in this land upon our slanting roofs; but, in the East, "the housetops" were the most public places in the city, and all of them flat, so that anyone proclaiming anything from the housetops would be sure of an audience, and especially at certain times of the day. Preach you, then, you servants of God, in the most public places of the land. Where ever there are people to hear, let there not be any lack of tongues to speak for God.

Matthew 10:28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.

A philosopher — Anaxarchus, I think it was, — was accustomed to say when a certain tyrant had threatened to kill him, "You cannot kill me; you may crush this body, but you cannot touch Anaxarchus." So fear not those who cannot kill the soul, if that be safe, you are safe. Even Seneca frequently asserted that it was not in the power of any man to hurt a good philosopher, "for," said he "even death is gain to such a man;" and certainly it is so to the Christian. For him to die is indeed gain. But oh! fear that God who can destroy the soul, for then the body also is destroyed with a terrible and tremendous destruction: "fear him."

Matthew 10:29-30. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

So, then, God takes more care of us than we take of ourselves. You never heard of a man who numbered the hairs of his head. Men number their sheep and their cattle, but the Christian is so precious in God's esteem that he takes care of the meatiest parts of his frame, and numbers even the hairs of his head.

Matthew 10:31-32. Fear you not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven.

What a glorious promise is this! "I will confess him to have been bought with my blood, I will confess him to have been my faithful follower and friend I will confess him to be my brother, and in so doing I will favor him with a share of my glory." Have you confessed Christ before men? If you have trusted him as your Savior, but have not publicly professed your faith in him, however sincere you may be, you are living in the neglect of a known duty, and you cannot expect to have this promise fulfilled to you if you do not keep the condition that is appended to it. Christ's promise is to confess those who confess him. Be you then, avowedly on the Lord's side.

"Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord." Without the camp the Savior suffered, and without the camp must his disciples follow him, bearing his reproach.

Matthew 10:33. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.

Not to confess Christ is practically to deny him, not to follow him is to go away from him; not to be with him is to be against him. Looking at this matter of confessing Christ in that light, there is cause for solemn self-examination by all who regard themselves as his disciples.

Matthew 10:34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Do not misunderstand the Savior's words. Christ's usually spoke in a very plain manner, and plainness is not always compatible with guardedness. Christ did come to make peace, this is the ultimate end of his mission; text for the present, Christ did not come to make peace. Wherever Christianity comes, it causes a quarrel, because the light must always quarrel with the darkness, and sin can never be friendly with righteousness. It is not possible that honesty should live in peace with theft; it cannot be that there should be harmony between God's servants and the servants of the devil. In this sense, then, understand our Savior's words.

Matthew 10:35-36. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

This is always the case, and I suppose will be to the end of the chapter. Whenever true religion comes into a man's heart and life, those who are without the grace of God, however near and dear they may be to him, will be sure to oppose him.

Matthew 10:37-39. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He who finds his life shall lose it: and he who loses his life for my sake shall find it.

In the days of the martyrs, one man was brought before the judges, and through fear of the flames he recanted, and denied the faith. He went home, and before the year was ended his own house caught fire, and he was miserably consumed in it, having had to suffer quite as much pain as he would have had to endure for Christ's sake but having no consolation in it. He found his life, yet he lost it. Now, in a higher degree, all who, to save themselves, shun the cross of Christ, only run into the fire to escape from the sparks. They shall suffer more than they would otherwise have done; but whoever is willing to give up everything for Christ shall learn that no man is ever really a loser by Christ in the long run. Sooner or later, if not in this life, certainly in the next, the Lord will abundantly make up to every man all that he has ever suffered for his sake. Now comes a very delightful passage: —

Matthew 10:40. He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him that sent me.

When, therefore, you are kind to the poor, when you help the people of God in their difficulties and necessities, you are really helping Christ in the person of his poor but faithful followers.

Matthew 10:41. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet —

That is, not as a gentleman, nor merely as a man, nor as a talented individual, but as a prophet of God, —

Matthew 10:41. Shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Just the same reward which God gives to prophets and righteous men, he will give to those who receive them in the name of a prophet or of a righteous man. A prophet's reward must be something great, and such shall be the reward of those who generously

receive the servants of God.

Matthew 10:42. And whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

There have been times, even in our own country when to give "a cup of cold water" has been to run the risk of suffering death. In the dark days of persecution, some who were called heretics were driven out into the fields in the depth of winter to perish by the cold, the king's subjects being forbidden, upon pain of death, to give them anything either to eat or to drink. Now, in such a case as that, giving "a cup of cold water" would mean far more than if you or I simply gave a cup of water to someone who happened to be thirsty, but our Lord Jesus Christ here promises to reward any who, for his servants' sake, will dare to risk any consequences that may fall upon themselves.

Verses 37-40

Matthew 10:37. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

What a wonderful sight, then, the church is as it passes through this world. The head of it is Christ, the cross bearer, and, following in the train, are all his faithful disciples, all carrying crosses still — the very picture of a church. You know how Simon carried the cross after Christ: he is the type of all his disciples.

"Did Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me."

Matthew 10:38-39. And he who takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He who finds his life shall lose it: and he who loses his life for my sake shall find it.

You gain life by dying for Christ, but if you saved life by denying the faith, you would in the worst sense lose all that makes existence to be life. There is an existence which is nothing but eternal death, and this is the doom of those who depart from Christ. But blessed are they who can give up this temporary mortal life for the sake of an eternal one. I have heard of one who used often to boast of what he would do if it came to his being burnt; but just before the day on which he was to be burnt alive for the faith, he recanted. He was suffered to go home. In a few months it happened that he was burnt alive in his house. Unhappy man that could not burn for Christ, but had to burn after all. "He who finds his life shall lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake shall find it."

Matthew 10:40. He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him that sent me.

Think of that, you that have received Christ. You have received God himself, and he has come to dwell and reign with your soul.

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Peter 1:1-16 and Matthew 10:37-40.

Chapter 11

Verses 1-6

Matthew 11:1-5. And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. And said unto him, Are you he who should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

These were Christ's seals and proofs: he needed not to seek others. These were the very works of which prophecy had said they would be the marks of the Messiah. If then, these marks were found in him, he left John and his disciples to draw the inference that he was, indeed, the One that was to come. Christ is always best known by his works, and in his people especially; he is seen in their lives. There are two great precepts for the conquest of the world for Christ: the first is, preach the gospel; but the second is, live the gospel, and if we do not live the gospel we shall not succeed in preaching the gospel. In fact, those members of our churches who do not live the gospel undo through all the week what the preacher of the gospel endeavors to do on the Lord's Day. It is a fine thing to preach with your mouth; but the best thing in the world is to preach with your feet and with your hands — in your walk and in your work; aid if you are enabled to do this, the people will be able to say very little against the preaching of the gospel when they see the

result of it in those who accept it. God grant that we may be all preachers in some way or another.

Matthew 11:6. And blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me.

This exposition consisted of readings from Ephesians 2. Matthew 11:1-6.

Verses 1-30

Matthew 11:1-3. And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Are you he who should come, or do we look for another?

Had John's faith begun to waver? It is possible that it had. Elijah had his times of trembling and depression; then, why might not the second Elijah have the same sort of experience? Possibly, John wished to strengthen the faith of his followers, and therefore he sent two of his leading disciples to Jesus, that they might make the inquiry for themselves as to whether he was the Christ or not.

Matthew 11:4. Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see:

For the works of Christ are the proofs of his Messiahship. His teaching and his action must ever be the seals of his mission.

Matthew 11:5. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

This is the last, but not the least, of the signs of his Messiahship, that Jesus Christ preached so that the poor understood him, and delighted to follow him wherever he went. Many despised his preaching for this reason; but the Savior mentioned this among the signs of his being sent of God: "The poor have the gospel preached to them."

Matthew 11:6-11. And blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out for to see? A man clothed in soft clothing? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went you out for to see? A prophet? yes, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which shall prepare your way before you. Truly I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he who is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

His position was a very high one; he was the evening star of the old dispensation, and the morning star of the new; but the light which shines after the sun has risen is brighter than any that the morning star can bring. He who has the gospel to preach has a greater thing to do than John the Baptist, who did but herald the coming of the Savior.

Matthew 11:12-15. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Let him listen to what the heaven-sent messenger has to say; let him especially pay attention to his accents when he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Matthew 11:16-17. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not lamented.

"You would not join in our game; whichever we chose to do, to imitate a festival or a funeral, you would not take part with us."

Matthew 11:18-19. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

There was no pleasing them anyhow; they were prepared to find fault with any sort of man, whether he lived an ascetic life, or mixed with others as a man among men. "But wisdom is justified of her children." She sends the right sort of men to do her work, and God will take care that those who reject them shall not be without guilt: "wisdom is justified of her children."

Matthew 11:20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

That was the point that Christ aimed at,—their repentance. He did not seek to dazzle them with wonders and marvels, but to break their hearts away from their sins. This is what his mighty works ought to have done, for they proved him to be the Messiah; and those mighty works also warned those who witnessed them that God had come near to them; and that, therefore, it was time for them to turn from their evil ways.

Matthew 11:21-24. Woe unto you, Chorazin! woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you

There is a great depth of mystery here, which we cannot hope to fathom. The gospel was not preached to those who would have repented if they had heard it, and it was preached to those who did not repent when they listened to it even from the lips of Christ himself. Upon this latter class, the sole effect of the gospel preached to them was to plunge them into yet deeper depths of guilt because of their refusal of it. It is not for us to solve the mystery; it will be our wisdom to see that, being ourselves favored with the plain declaration of the gospel, we do not put it from us, lest we perish even more miserably than those who never heard it.

Matthew 11:25. At that time Jesus answered and said,—

So he had been talking with his Father: "Jesus answered." Very often, no doubt, the Savior spoke with God when it is not recorded in the Gospels that he did so; but here a plain hint is given that Christ was in intimate communion and fellowship with God. At such times, great doctrines which, to the shallow minds of those who live at a distance from God, even seem dreadful, become delightful, and are lit up with unusual splendor. At that time, the doctrine of election was specially upon the heart of Christ because he was dwelling near to God himself: "Jesus answered and said,"—

Matthew 11:25-30. I thank you, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Verses 20-30

Matthew 11:20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

They listened; sometimes, they applauded; but they repented not; and there is nothing really accomplished until men have repented. In vain have we preached until men are brought to repent; so the Master said: —

Matthew 11:21-22. Woe unto you, Chorazin! woe unto you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

Listen to that, you gospel-hardened sinners, you who have heard, and heard, and heard, but have not repented. See how great is your sin, for you have rejected what others would have received if it had been presented to them. See how your guilt accumulates, and its punishment also.

Matthew 11:23-24. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.

Sodom! — that is the blackest place of all. Ah, me! will that verse ever fall, like a millstone, upon any one of my hearers, to grind him to powder, because you heard the gospel, and rejected it, intending always to receive it, but never receiving it at all? From such a doom, may God in mercy deliver you!

Matthew 11:25-30. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Just by way of contrast to what I am going to say in my sermon, let us read a few verses in Revelation 7.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 3, and Matthew 11:20-30; and Revelation 7:9-17.

Verses 25-30

Matthew 11:25-26. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight.

"Jesus answered": sovereign grace is the answer to abounding guilt. With rejoicing spirit Jesus sees how sovereign grace meets the unreasonable abounding of human sin, and chooses out its own, according to the good pleasure of the Father's will. Here is the spirit in which to regard the electing grace of God: "I thank you." It is cause for deepest gratitude.

Here is the author of election: "O Father." It is the Father who makes the choice, and reveals the blessings. Here is his right to act as he does: he is "Lord of Heaven and earth." Who shall question the good pleasure of his will? Here we see the objects of election, under both aspects; the chosen and the passed-over. Babes see because sacred truths are revealed to them, and not otherwise. They are weak and inexperienced. They are simple and unsophisticated. They can cling, and trust, and cry, and love; and to such the Lord opens up the treasures of wisdom. The objects of divine choice are such as these. Lord, let me be one among them! The truths of the heavenly kingdom are hid, by a judicial act of God, from men who, in their own esteem, are "the wise and prudent." They cannot see, because they trust their own dim light, and will not accept the light of God.

Here we see, also, the reason of election, the divine will: "So it seemed good in your sight." We can go no further than this. The choice seemed good to Him who never errs, and therefore it is good. This stands to the children of God as the reason, which is above all reason. Deus vult is enough for us. If God wills it, so must it be, and so ought it to be.

Matthew 11:27. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whoever the Son will reveal him.

Here we have the channel through which electing love works towards men: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." All things are put into the Mediator's hands; fit hands both towards God and towards man; for he alone knows both to perfection. Jesus reveals the Father to the babes whom he has chosen. Only the Father can fill the Son with blessing, and only through the Son can that blessing flow to any one of the race of men. Know Christ, and you know the Father, and know that the Father himself loves you. There is no other way of knowing the Father but through the Son. In this our Lord rejoiced; for his office of Mediator is dear to him, and he loves to be the way of communication between the Father whom he loves, and the people whom he loves for the Father's sake. Observe the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son, and how they know each other as none else ever can. Oh, to see all things in Jesus by the Father's appointment, and so to find the Father's love and grace in finding Christ! My soul, there are great mysteries here! Enjoy what you can not explain.

Matthew 11:28. Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Here is the gracious invitation of the gospel in which the Savior's tears and smiles were blended, as in a covenant rainbow of promise. "Come:" he drives none away: he calls them to himself. His favorite word is, "Come." Not-go to Moses; but, "Come unto me." To Jesus himself we must come, by a personal trust. Not to doctrine, ordinance, or ministry are we to come first; but to the personal Savior. All laboring and laden ones may come: he does not limit the call to the spiritually laboring, but every working and wearied one is called. It is well to give the largest sense to all that mercy speaks. Jesus calls me. Jesus promises "rest" as his gift: his immediate, personal, effectual rest he freely gives to all who come to him by faith. To come to him is the first step, and he entreats us to take it. In himself, as the great sacrifice for sin, the conscience, the heart, the understanding obtain complete rest. When we have obtained the rest he gives, we shall be ready to hear of a further rest, which we find.

Matthew 11:29-30. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

"Take my yoke and learn:" this is the second instruction; it brings with it a further rest which we "find." The first rest he gives through his death; the second we find in copying his life. This is no correction of the former statement, but an addition thereto. First, we rest by faith in Jesus, and next we rest through obedience to him. Rest from fear is followed by rest from the turbulence of inward passion, and the drudgery of self. We are not only to bear a yoke, but his yoke; and we are not only to submit to it when it is laid upon us, but we are to take it upon us. We are to be workers, and take his yoke; and at the same time we are to be scholars, and learn from him as our Teacher. We are to learn of Christ and also to learn Christ. He is both Teacher and lesson. His gentleness of heart fits him to teach, to be the illustration of his own teaching, and to work in us his great design. If we can become as he is, we shall rest as he does. We shall not only rest from the guilt of sin, this he gives us; but we shall rest in the peace of holiness, which we find through obedience to him. It is the heart, which makes or mars the rest of the man. Lord, make us "lowly in heart," and we shall be restful of heart. "Take my yoke." The yoke in which we draw with Christ must needs be a happy one, and the burden which we carry for him is a blessed one. We rest in the fullest sense when we serve, if Jesus is the Master. We are unloaded by bearing his burden; we are rested by running on his errands. "Come unto me," is thus a divine prescription, curing our ills by the pardon of sin through our Lord's sacrifice, and causing us the greatest peace by sanctifying us to his service. Oh, for grace to be always coming to

Jesus, and to be constantly inviting others to do the same! Always free, yet always bearing his yoke; always having the rest once given, yet always finding more: this is the experience of those who come to Jesus always, and for everything. Blessed heritage; and it is ours if we are really his!

Chapter 12

Verses 38-42

Matthew 12:38-39. Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from you. But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah:

The Pharisees change their manner, but they are in pursuit of the same object. How hopeless had the religionists of that age become! Nothing would convince them. They manifested their hate of the Lord Jesus, by ignoring all the wonders he had wrought. What further signs could they seek than those he had already given? Pretty enquirers these! They treat all the miracles of our Lord as if they had never occurred. Well might the Lord call them "evil and adulterous," since they were so given to personal lasciviousness, and were spiritually so untrue to God. We have those among us now who are so uncandid as to treat all the achievements of evangelical doctrine as if they were nothing, and talk to us as if no result had followed the preaching of the gospel. There is need of great patience to deal wisely with such.

Matthew 12:40. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The great sign of our Lord's mission is his resurrection, and his preparing a gospel of salvation for the heathen. His life-story is well symbolized by that of Jonah. They cast our Lord overboard, even as the sailors did the man of God. The sacrifice of Jonah calmed the sea for the mariners, our Lord's death made peace for us. Our Lord was a while in the heart of the earth as Jonah was in the depth of the sea, but, he rose again, and his ministry was full of the power of his resurrection. As Jonah's ministry was certified by his restoration from the sea, so is our Lord's ministry attested by his rising from the dead. The man who had come back from death and burial in the sea commanded the attention of all Nineveh, and so does the risen Savior demand and deserve the obedient faith of all to whom his message comes.

Matthew 12:41. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold a greater than Jonah is here.

The heathen of Nineveh were convinced by the sign of a prophet restored from burial in the sea; and moved by that conviction, they repented at his preaching. Without cavil or delay they put the whole city in mourning, and pleaded with God to turn from his anger. Jesus came with a clearer command of repentance, and a brighter promise of deliverance; but he spoke to obdurate hearts. Our Lord reminds the Pharisees of this, and as they were the most Jewish of Jews, they were touched to the quick by the fact that heathens perceived what Israel did not understand, and that Ninevites repented while Jews were hardened. All men will rise at the judgment: "The men of Nineveh shall rise." The lives of penitents will condemn those who did not repent: the Ninevites will condemn the Jews, "because they repented at the preaching of Jonah," and the Jews did not. Those who heard Jonah and repented will be swift witnesses against those who heard Jesus, and refused his testimony. The standing witness to our Lord is his resurrection from the dead. God grant that every one of us, believing that unquestionable fact, may be so assured of his mission, that we may repent and believe the gospel. RESURRECTION is one proof, in fact, it is THE SIGN although, as we shall see, it is supplemented by another. The two will convince us or condemn us.

Matthew 12:42. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

The second sign of our Lord's mission is HIS KINGLY WISDOM. As the fame of Solomon brought the queen of the south from the uttermost parts of the earth, so does the doctrine of our Lord command attention from the utmost isles of the sea. If Israel perceives not his glorious wisdom, Ethiopia and Seba shall hear of it, and come bowing before him. The queen of Sheba will rise again, and will "rise up" as a witness against unbelieving Jews, for she journeyed far to hear Solomon, while they would not hear the Son of God himself who came into their midst. The superlative excellence of his wisdom stands for our Lord as a sign, which can never be effectually disputed. What other teaching meets all the wants of men? Who else has revealed such grace and truth? He is infinitely greater than Solomon, who from a moral point of view exhibited a sorrowful littleness. Who but the Son of God could have made known the Father as he has done?

Verses 38-45

Matthew 12:38-39. Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from you. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah:

The queen of Sheba did not ask for a sign. She did not expect Solomon to work a miracle; but, sitting down in his presence, she proposed her hard questions, and meekly awaited his answers. So should these scribes and Pharisees have done with the Lord Jesus Christ. These were his signs: —

Matthew 12:40-41. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

Jonah was a servant: Jesus was the Master. Jonah preached only one sermon: Jesus preached many. That sermon was a short one: Jesus Christ labored long after souls. Jonah was a man full of infirmities, and with an unloving heart: Jesus was tender and compassionate. Jonah did but hurry through the streets, crying, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," — without a word of mercy: Jesus lived long among the people, giving them directions, and warnings, and invitations to seek and find salvation: "Behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

Matthew 12:42. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

As I have so recently preached upon this verse, I need not say anything about it just now.

Matthew 12:43. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, —

Mark, not when he is turned out of him by superior force, but when he has gone out of his own accord, —

Matthew 12:43. He walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.

The devil was in the Jews of old, but he went out of them at the time of the Babylonian captivity; that heavy punishment cured them of idolatry. But the devil could never find a resting-place, in Gentile hearts, so pleasant to himself as among God's own people.

Matthew 12:44. Then he says, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished.

"I will go back to those Jews," says the devil; and, when he comes back, he finds them without any true love to God: "empty, swept, and garnished." See how correctly the Pharisee is dressed, and note with what sanctimonious unction he repeats his hypocritical prayers. He fasts twice in the week, and pays tithes of his mint, and anise, and cummin. The devil finds the house "empty, swept, garnished ;" and as he does not care whether he lives in a foul heart or a clean one, so long as he can but live in it, he takes up his abode there again.

Matthew 12:45. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

If idolatry did not come back to the Jews, the devil of pride, and self-conceit, and many more came, and fought against the Son of God, so that they became worse than they were before, and the first devil of the Jewish people was nothing compared with the seven devils which afterwards possessed them. We have seen some men of this kind. Under temporary conviction, they have given up certain outward sins, but, afterwards, they have been ten times worse than they were before. We have known a man to be a drunkard, and we have rejoiced to see him leave his cups; but, yet, when he has made a self-righteousness out of his temperance, and set himself up against God and his truth, we have truly believed that he has had within him seven devils worse than the first. A man may reform himself to blacker stains, and wash himself with the waters of his self-righteousness until he becomes more hard to cleanse than he would have been at the first. Oh, for the mighty hand of One, who is stronger than the prince of Hell, to throw the devil out, and then he will never come back again; but if he goes out by mere human persuasion, or by our own wills and wishes, he will most certainly come back to us. If the Holy Spirit turns him out, he will never gain an entrance any more.

Matthew 12:45. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

This exposition consisted of readings from 1 Kings 10:1-13; and Matthew 12:38-45.

Chapter 13

Verses 1-23

Matthew 13:1-2. The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

I think I can see the little ship at a convenient distance from the shore so as to keep off the multitudes of people, in order that the Savior might speak the more freely, there he sits with a boat for a pulpit. There were no conventionalities about the Lord Jesus when he was upon the earth, he was willing to speak to the people anywhere from any pulpit whatever

Matthew 13:3. And he spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

It was probably at that season of the year when the sowers were going forth to sow their seed, so Jesus pointed to them as to a living text. He was always wide-awake to make use of everything that occurred round about him. "A sower went forth to sow." For what else should he go forth? Yet some sowers that I know of do not go forth to sow, but to exhibit themselves, and to show how well they can do their work. This man aimed at sowing and nothing else. Oh, that all preachers did the same!

Matthew 13:4. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side,

He could not help that; he was not sent to pick the soil, that would be too much responsibility for him. If we had to preach only to certain characters, we should be taking up all our time in picking out those characters, and probably we should make many mistakes while trying to do it. Our business is to scatter the good seed broadcast. We are not to dabble in the Word, we are to throw it as far as we can, and to let it fall wherever God pleases. "Some seeds fell by the way side," — on ground trodden hard by the passers-by.

Matthew 13:4. And the birds came and devoured them up:

Those birds are always ready to devour the good seed. Wherever there is a congregation met to hear the Word, there are always plenty of devils ready to do their evil work. "The birds came," they had not far to fly. The birds know a sower by the very look of him, so they hurry up, and come wherever the seed may be cast that they may devour it. O Lord, keep the birds away; or, better still, break up the soil so that the seed may enter, and not lie upon the surface!

Matthew 13:5. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth:

There was a pan of unbroken limestone an inch or two below the soil, but there was no depth of earth where the seeds could grow.

Matthew 13:5. And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

They seemed to be converts, but they proved to be worthless. They were enthusiastic, carried away with excitement, but all was soon over with them "because they had no deepness of earth." Everything was superficial, there was no depth of character, or feeling, or emotion.

Matthew 13:6. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away

They seemed to be alive at the top, but they were really dead below. How many there are of that sort still; they make a bold profession, but it is only for a while, and then they wither away.

Matthew 13:7-8. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, —

Thank God, we do not lose all our efforts. If one in four succeeds, it is great deal for which we ought to praise the Lord. So, brother, sister, —

"Sow in the morn your seed,
At eve hold not your hand;
To doubt and fear give you no heed,
Broadcast it o'er the land."

Matthew 13:8. And brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.

There are degrees even in fruitfulness; Christians are not all alike. Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing everywhere! We do not get it, and can scarcely expect it; let us thank God if we have "some a hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold."

Matthew 13:9-12. Who has ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciple came, and said unto him, Why speak you unto them in

parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has.

It is so even in common things, the man of intelligence, who has a good groundwork of education, picks up something everywhere, but the ignorant man learns nothing anywhere. He only finds out more and more of his own ignorance until there is taken away from him even that which he had.

Oh, that the Lord would give us a good groundwork of saving knowledge, so that we might go on learning more and more under the Holy Spirit's teaching!

Matthew 13:13-16. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

It is an awful thing when God gives men up to spiritual blindness, and dullness, and hardness, but it does happen. If you hear the Word, and refuse to receive it, you do to that extent harden your heart; and if you continue to do so, you will by degrees lose the capacity for understanding the Word. Take heed what you hear. O my dear hearers, I am afraid that many of you are not aware of the solemn responsibility of hearing the gospel, and of the terrible peril of having your ears made dull and your heart made hard! I am responsible for preaching to you faithfully, but you are equally responsible for hearing what is preached. Let us not waste any opportunity that we have of hearing the Word, but use it wisely and well that we may be able to give a good account of it before God in our fruitfulness. Now, if the Savior's main design, in the use of parables, had been that men should not understand him, he could have answered that end better by not speaking at all. But see how mercy blends with justice, and gives them another opportunity of hearing the Word. They might have come to Jesus even as his disciples did, and asked him questions, and he would have explained the truth to them. If any of you today hear anything which you do not understand, go to the Lord about it in private prayer, and he will explain it to you. I tremble lest any of you should hear the Word and not receive it, and yet be contented. That is the worst state of all for anyone to be in may God save you from it! But as for you who know the Lord, "blessed are your eyes, for they see." Those are blessed eyes that can really see, eyes that cannot see are a trial, but "blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." It is nothing but the grace of God that can make our ears spiritually hear. He who made the ear can alone make an open passage from the ear to the heart. If you have received this blessing, be very grateful for it, and bless the God of grace for giving it to you.

Matthew 13:17. For truly I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.

To you Christian people, there is given a very full revelation of the truth of God. You live in the mid-day glory of the gospel, but the "prophets and righteous men" of old lived in the morning twilight. Be the more grateful, and bless the Lord with all your hearts

Matthew 13:18-19. Hear you therefore the parable of the sower. When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

There are many such hearers, your just hear the Word, and that is all. They are very like the countryman, who said that he liked Sunday for it was such an easy day, he had nothing to do but go to church, put up his legs, and think of nothing. There are far too many hearers of that sort who think of nothing, and therefore they get no good out of what they hear.

Matthew 13:20-21. But he who received the seed into stony places, the same is he who hears the word, and anon with joy receives it, yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended.

He soon ceases even to profess to be a Christian, he jumped into religion, and he jumps out again. Revival always produce a large quantity of such people, and yet, if there is one soul truly saved, the revival is a success so far as that one is concerned.

Matthew 13:22-23. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed into the good ground is he who hears the word, and understands it; —

Knows what it means, thinks it over, takes it in as the good ground takes in the seed, and keeps it; —

Matthew 13:23. Which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

I say again, — Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing! Yet let us not forget to give God thanks if we have sixty-fold or even thirty-fold.

Verses 3-23

Matthew 13:3. And he spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

He had much instruction to give, and he chose to convey it in parables. What wonderful pictures they were! What a world of meaning they have for us, as well as for those who heard them! This parable of the sower is a mine of teaching concerning the kingdom; for the seed was "the word of the kingdom." (See verse 19.) "Behold": every word is worthy of attention. May be, the preacher pointed to a farmer on the shore, who was beginning to sow one of the terraces. "A sower", read "The Sower." Jesus, our Lord, has taken up this business of the Sower at his Father's bidding. The sower "went forth." See him leaving the Father's house, with this one design upon his heart — "to sow."

Matthew 13:4. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them up:

When HE sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside: even when the Chief Sower is at work, some seed fails. We know he sows the best of seed, and in the best manner; but some of it falls on the trodden path, and so lies uncovered and unaccepted of the soil. That soil was hard, and beaten down with traffic. There, too, on the wayside, we meet with dust to blind, settlements of mud to foul, and birds to pilfer: it is not a good place for good seed. No wonder, as the seeds lay all exposed, that the birds came and devoured them up. If truth does not enter the heart, evil influences soon remove it.

Matthew 13:5-6. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Among the rocks, or on the shallow soil, with the unbroken rock-pan underneath, the seed fell; for if the sower had altogether avoided such places he might have missed some of the good ground. In these stony places the seed speedily sprang up, because the rock gave it all the heat that fell on it, and so hastened its germination. But, soon up, soon down. When the time came for the sun to put forth his force, the rootless plants instantly pined and died. They had no deepness of earth, and "no root"; what could they do but wither quite away? Everything was hurried with them; the seeds had no time to root themselves, and so in hot haste the speedy growth met with speedy death. No trace remained.

Matthew 13:7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

The ground was originally a thorn-brake, and had been cleared by the thorns being cut down; but speedily the old roots sent out new shoots, and other weeds came up with them; and the tangled beds of thistles, thorns, nettles, and what not, strangled the feeble upshootings of the wheat. The native plants choked the poor stranger. They would not permit the intrusive corn to share the field with them: evil claims a monopoly of our nature. Thus we have seen three sets of seed come to an untimely end.

Matthew 13:8. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.

This would repay all losses, especially at the highest rate of increase here quoted. To the bird, the weather, and the weeds, three sets of seeds have gone; yet, happily, one remains to increase and fill the barn. The sowing of good seed can never be a total failure: "other fell into good ground." The harvest was not equally great on every spot of fertile soil: it varied from an hundredfold to thirty-fold. All good ground is not alike good; and, besides, the situation may differ. Harvests are not all alike in the same farm, in the same season, and under the same farmer; and yet each field may yield a fairly good harvest. Lord, if I cannot reach to a hundredfold, let me at least prove to be good ground by bearing thirty-fold.

Matthew 13:18. Hear you therefore the parable of the sower.

Because you see behind the curtain, and have grace given to discern the inner meaning through the outer metaphor, come and hear the explanation of the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13:19. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and caches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

The gospel is "the word of the kingdom": it has royal authority in it; it proclaims and reveals King Jesus, and it leads men to obedience to his way. To hear but not to understand, is to leave the good seed on the outside of your nature, and not to take it into yourself. Nothing can come of such hearing to anyone. Satan is always on the watch to hinder the Word: "Then comes the wicked one", even at the moment when the seed fell. He is always afraid to leave the truth even in hard and dry contact with a mind, and so he caches it away at once, and it is forgotten, or even disbelieved. It is gone, at any rate; and we have not in our hearer's mind a corn-field, but a highway, hard, and much frequented. The man was not an opposer, he "received seed"; but he received the truth as

he was, without the soil of his nature being changed; and the seed remained as it was, until the foul bird of Hell took it off the place, and there was an end of it. So far as the truth was sown in his heart, it was in his natural, unrenewed heart, and therefore it took no living hold. How many such hearers we have! To these we preach in vain; for what they learn they unlearn, and what they receive they reject almost as soon as it comes to them. Lord, suffer none of us to be impervious to your royal word; but whenever the smallest seed of truth falls on us, may we open our soul to it!

Matthew 13:20-21. But he who received the seed into stony places, the same is he who hears the word, and anon with joy receives it; Yet has he not root in himself, but endures for awhile: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Here the seed was the same and the sower the same, but the result somewhat different. In this case there was earth enough to cover the seed, and heat enough to make it grow quickly. The convert was attentive, and easily persuaded; he seemed glad to accept the gospel at once, he was even eager and enthusiastic, joyful and demonstrative. He hears the word, and anon with joy receives it. Surely this looked very promising! But the soil was essentially evil, hard, barren, superficial. The man had no living entrance into the mystery of the gospel, no root in himself, no principle, no hold of the truth with a renewed heart; and so he flourished hurriedly and showily for a season, and only for a season. It is tersely put, "He endures for a while." That "while" may be longer or shorter according to circumstances. When matters grow hot with Christians, either through affliction from the Lord, or persecution from the world, the temporary believer is so sapless, so rootless, so deficient in moisture of grace, that he dries up, and his profession withers. Thus, again, the sower's hopes are disappointed, and his labor is lost. Until stony hearts are changed it must always be so. We meet with many who are soon hot and as soon cold. They receive the gospel "anon," and leave it "by-and-by" Everything is on the surface, and therefore is hasty and unreal. May we all have broken hearts and prepared minds, that when truth comes to us it may take root in us and abide.

Matthew 13:22. He also that received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

This class of hearers we know by personal acquaintance in this busy age. They hear the word, they are affected by the gospel, they take it as seed into their minds, and it grows well for a season; but the heart cannot belong to two absorbing objects at the same time, and therefore these men cannot long yield themselves up to the world and Christ too. Care to get money, covetousness, trickery, and sins which come from hastening to be rich, or else pride, luxury, oppression, and other sins which come of having obtained wealth, prevent the man from being useful in religious matters, or even sincere to himself: "He becomes unfruitful." He keeps his profession; he occupies his place; but his religion does not grow; in fact, it shows sad signs of being choked and checked by worldliness. The leaf of outward religiousness is there, but there is no dew on it; the ear of promised fruit is there, but there are no kernels in it. The weeds have outgrown the wheat, and smothered it. We cannot grow thorn and corn at the same time: the attempt is fatal to a harvest for Jesus. See how wealth is here associated with care, deceitfulness, and unfruitfulness. It is a thing to be handled with care. Why are men so eager to make their thorn-brake more dense with briars? Would not a good gardener root out the thorns and brambles? Should we not, as much as possible, keep free from the care to get, to preserve, to increase, and to hoard worldly riches? Our heavenly Father will see that we have enough; why do we fret about earthly things? We cannot give our minds to these things and to the kingdom also.

Matthew 13:23. But he who received seed into the good ground is he who hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Here is the story of the Word's success. This fourth piece of land will repay all charges. Of course, no one parable teaches all truth, and therefore we have no mention here of the plowing which always precedes a fruitful harvest. No heart of man is good by nature: the good Lord had made this plot into "good ground." In this case, both thought and heart are engaged about the heavenly message, and the man "hears the word, and understands it." By being understood lovingly, the truth gets into the man, and then it roots, it grows, it fruits, it rewards the sower. We must aim at the inward apprehension and comprehension of the Word of God; for only in this way can we be made fruitful by it. Be it ours to aim to be among those who would bear fruit an hundredfold! Ah, we would give our Lord ten thousandfold if we could. For every sermon we hear we should endeavor to do a hundred gracious, charitable, or self-denying acts. Our divine Sower, with such heavenly seed, deserves to be rewarded with a glorious harvest.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 9:35-38; Matthew 10:1; Matthew 13:3-8; Matthew 18-23.

Verses 10-17

Matthew 13:10-12. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speak you unto them in, parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has.

You can understand this truth if you go into certain museums. I will suppose that you know nothing whatever of comparative

anatomy, and you go into the museum of comparative anatomy at Paris. If you understand a little of the science, you will learn a great deal more: "for whoever has, to him shall be given." If you do not know anything about the subject, you will say, "Well, this is the most uninteresting exhibition I ever saw," and you will come out with the feeling that you do not know anything. What you did know will have vanished in the sight of all that mass of bones arranged in those extraordinary shapes. You will only feel your own lack of knowledge in that department; you will show your ignorance, and nothing else. So it is in the things of God. If you understand the fundamental principles of true godliness, you will soon understand more; but if you do not comprehend as much as that, even the reading of the Scriptures will be but slightly instructive to you.

Matthew 13:13-15. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; Lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Now the Savior turned to his disciples, and spoke specially to them.

Matthew 13:16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

It is no use having eyes that do not see, or ears that do not hear; and yet I fear that there are many eyes of that kind, and many ears of that sort, in this congregation tonight.

Matthew 13:17. For truly I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.

Now let us read one other passage, to show how the Lord heals the blind, and makes them see.

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 6; Matthew 13:10-17; and Luke 18:35-43.

Verses 24-50

Matthew 13:24. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

He knew that it was good. It had been tested: it was unmixed: it was good throughout.

Matthew 13:25. But while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

It was a very malicious action. The thing has been done many times. Bastard wheat was sown in among the true wheat, so as to injure the crop.

Matthew 13:26-27. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? from whence then has it tares?

We often have to ask that question. How comes this about? It was a true gospel that was preached, from whence then come these hypocrites —these that are like the wheat, but are not wheat? For it is not the tare that we call a tare in England that is meant here, but a false wheat — very like to wheat, but not wheat.

Matthew 13:28. He said unto them, An enemy has done this.

The enemy could not do a worse thing than to adulterate the Church of God. Pretenders outside do little hurt. Inside the fold they do much mischief.

Matthew 13:28-30. The servants said unto him, Will you then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The separation will be more in season, move easily and more accurately done when both shall have been fully developed — when the wheat shall have come to its fullness, and the counterfeit wheat shall have ripened.

Matthew 13:31-32. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds:

Commonly known in that country.

Matthew 13:32-35. But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and

lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spoke he unto them; The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

How thoroughly impregnated our Lord was with the very spirit of Scripture. And he ever acted as if the Scriptures were uppermost in his mind. They seemed to be ever in their fullness before his soul.

Matthew 13:36. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him,

Those house-talks, those explanations of the great public sermons and parables — were sweet privileges which he reserved for those who had given their utter confidence to him.

Matthew 13:36-44. Saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He who sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them unto a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found,

Stumbling upon it, perhaps, when he was at the plough — turning up the old crop in which it was concealed.

Matthew 13:44. He hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.

Some persons do stumble upon the gospel when they are not looking for it. "I am found of them that sought me not" is a grand free grace text. Some of those who have been most earnest in the kingdom of Heaven were at one time most indifferent and careless, but God in infinite sovereignty put the treasure in their way — gave them the heart to value it, and they obtained it to their own joy.

Matthew 13:45. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

He does not stumble at it: he is seeking pearls.

Matthew 13:46-47. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

Bad fish and good fish, end creeping things and broken shells, and bite of seaweed, and pieces of old wreck. Did you ever see such an odd assortment as they get upon the deck of a fishing vessel when they empty out the contents of a drag net? Such is the effect of the ministry. It drags together all sorts of people. It is quite as well that we have not eyes enough to see one another's hearts tonight, or else I dare say we should make about as queer a medley as I have already attempted to describe as being in the fisherman's vessel.

Matthew 13:48. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

All a mixture. We cannot sort one from the other now, but when the net comes to shore then will be the picking over the heap. No mistakes will be made. The good will go into vessels, and the bad, and none but the bad, will be cast away.

Matthew 13:49-50. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Not fire, then, which annihilates, but fire which leaves in pain and causes weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Verses 24-58

Matthew 13:24. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Jesus never sowed any other kind of seed. The truth which he taught is pure and unadulterated. It is good seed, — good and only good, the very best of seed.

Matthew 13:25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

Wherever Christ is active the enemy is sure to be active too. If you have a sleeping church, you may have a sleeping devil; but as soon as ever Christ is in the congregation sowing the good seed, the devil wakes up, and by night, when men are off their guard, the bad seed — the mock wheat — here translated "tares" — is sown among the true wheat.

Matthew 13:26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

The false wheat came up with the true. Perhaps the seed in the one case may have looked like the other even as there is "another gospel which is not another" with which come still trouble us. The only true test is, "By their fruits you shall know them;" so, when the seeds had sprung up, there was the blade of true wheat, and "then appeared the tares also."

Matthew 13:27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir did not you sow good seed in your field? from whence then has it tares?

How often we have asked that question! We have seen children trained by the most godly parents, yet they have developed a sad propensity to sin, and we have said, "From whence then have these tares come?" We have seen a ministry which has been sound and faithful, and yet in the congregation there have sprung up divers errors which have done a world of mischief, and we have had sorrowfully to ask, "From whence then have these tares come?"

Matthew 13:28-29. He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Will you then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them.

We are so fallible, we make so many mistakes, that we cannot be trusted to do this uprooting, for we might pull up wheat as well as tares. If there had been briars or thorns growing in that field, those servants might have pulled them up without damage to the corn, just as an open evil liver, who breaks the laws of God openly, may be cut off from the church without damage; but these tares must be left for the present.

Matthew 13:30. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

There will be an end of this mixture in due time; the hypocrite shall not always stand in the congregation of the righteous; the wheat and the tares shall be separated "in the time of harvest."

Matthew 13:31-32. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

The kingdom of Heaven is just like that in this world; wherever it comes, it comes to grow. And it is just like that in our hearts. Oh, how small is the first sign of grace in the soul! Perhaps it is only a single thought. The life divine may begin with but a wish, or with one painful conviction of error;

but if it be the true and living seed of God, it will grow. And there is no telling how great will be its growth until, in that soul where all was darkness, many graces, like sweet song-birds, shall come and sing, and make joy and gladness there. Oh, that you and I might experimentally know the meaning of the parable of the mustard seed !

Matthew 13:33. Another parable spoke he unto them; The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.

And although leaven is usually the symbol of evil, yet it may be here a fair representation of the kingdom of Heaven itself, for it operates mysteriously and secretly, yet powerfully, until it permeates the whole of man's nature; and the gospel will keep on winning its way until the whole world shall yet be leavened by it.

"More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail."

Matthew 13:34-36. All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

I again remind you that, wherever there is anything that you do not understand, the best way is to consult the Master concerning it. If I read a book in which there is an obscure passage, and I can write to the author, and ask him what he means by it, I shall most probably get to understand it. So, the best Expositor of the Word of God is the Spirit of God; therefore appeal to him whenever you are puzzled with anything that is taught in the Scriptures, and say to him, "Blessed Spirit, will you graciously expound to me this

parable, this doctrine, this experience ?" and he will do it, and so you shall become wise unto salvation.

Matthew 13:37-43. He answered and said unto them, He who sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.

May God give us such ears as can hear his voice, and may we take to heart the solemn teachings of our Lord !

Matthew 13:44-46. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

It would be a good bargain for anyone to part with all he has in exchange for the kingdom of Heaven, yet that great "treasure" is to be had for nothing by everyone who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 13:47-50. Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

We are to cast the great seine-net of the gospel into the sea of humanity, but we must not expect that all we catch will prove to be good. There is time of separation coming when "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just."

Matthew 13:51. Jesus says unto them, Have you understood all these things?

This is a question which constantly needs to be put to all hearers and readers of the Word. "Have you understood all these things?" To be hearers only, or readers only, will avail nothing; the Word must be understood, accepted, assimilated, and so shall it make us wise unto salvation.

Matthew 13:51. They say unto him, Yes, Lord.

They answered very glibly, yet probably not one of them fully understood the seven parables in this chapter. If anyone did so, he would be like the instructed scribe described in the next verse: —

Matthew 13:52. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.

He who has learned anything concerning the kingdom of Heaven should teach it to others, bringing forth the truth in pleasing variety, "new and old," to edify all his hearers.

Matthew 13:53-54. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence has this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

They were highly privileged in having Jesus back in their midst, yet they failed to appreciate his teaching; they were astonished at his wisdom, but were unable to perceive the divine source from which it sprang.

Matthew 13:55-58. Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then has this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

This was a notable illustration of John's words concerning Christ, "He came unto his own, but his own received him not." Let us beware of unbelief lest it should tie the hands of Christ as it did there in his own country.

Chapter 14

Matthew 14:13. When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by a ship into a desert place apart:

It is well for us to get alone with God when he takes home the best and most faithful of his servants. Neither the Church nor the world could afford to lose such a man as John the Baptist; so it was well for Christ's disciples to retire with him to a desert place that he might teach them the lesson of that proto-martyr's death.

Matthew 14:13-14. And when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

He needed quiet, but he could not get it; yet he was not "moved" with indignation against the crowd that had sought him out, but he "was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick." Out of the fullness of his heart of love, he condescended to do for the people what they most needed.

Matthew 14:15. And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

Human compassion might have moved the disciples to say something more kind than that heartless request, "Send the multitude away." Perhaps they wished to spare themselves the sight of so much distress; but they evidently did not expect the answer that Christ gave them: —

Matthew 14:16. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give you them to eat.

Christ seemed to say to his disciples, "If you only exercise the power that is within your reach, with Me in your midst, you are equal to this emergency:

'Give you them to eat.' "

Matthew 14:17-18. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me.

"They are little enough in your hands, but they will be ample when they get into mine." When everything that we have is in the hands of Christ, it is wonderful how much he can make of it. Bring your talent to the Lord Jesus, be it never so little; sanctify to him every possibility that lies within your reach; you cannot tell how much he can and will do with it.

Matthew 14:19. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, —

It must have been a beautiful sight to see those thousands of men, women, and children at once obeying his command. There were five loaves and two fishes, — probably five small barley cakes and a couple of sardines; so the people might have said, "What is the use of such a multitude sitting down on the grass to partake of such scanty fare as that?" But they did not say so; there was a divine power about the very simplest command of Christ which compelled instant obedience: "He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass," —

Matthew 14:19. And took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to Heaven, he blessed, —

This was that "blessing of the Lord" of which Solomon says that "it makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." If you get this blessing on your five loaves and two fishes, you may feed five thousand men with them, besides the women and the children.

Matthew 14:19-20. And brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Much more than they began with; for it is a law of the Heavenly Kingdom that he who gives to God shall be no loser; his five loaves and two fishes shall turn to twelve baskets full after thousands have eaten, and been satisfied. The more there is of complete consecration to Christ, and his blessed service, the more reward will there be in the world to come; and possibly, even here.

Matthew 14:21-22. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. And immediately Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

He always takes the heavier task upon himself. They may go off by themselves, but he will remain to send the multitudes away. Besides, no one but Christ could have done it, only he who had made them sit down to the feast could make them go to their homes.

Matthew 14:23. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray:

He had had a long day of preaching, and healing, and distributing the bread and fish, and now he closed the day with prayer to his Father.

Matthew 14:23. And when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Dr. Watts was right in saying to his Lord,
"Cold mountains, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of your prayer."

He is not now on the bare mountain side, but he is engaged in the same holy exercise up yonder before his Father's throne.

Matthew 14:24. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

This is the case with the good ship of the Church of Christ today; it is "tossed with waves," and "the wind" is "contrary." It is very contrary just now; but, then, Christ is still pleading for the ship and all on board; and while he pleads, it can never sink.

Matthew 14:25-29. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I be not afraid. And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be you, bid me come unto you on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

You, who are wanting to get to Jesus, should make a desperate effort to get to him; even walk on the water to get to Jesus. Walking on the water might be an idle and evil exhibition; but to walk on the water to go to Jesus is another matter. Try it, and the Lord enable you to get to him!

Matthew 14:30-32. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

The Greek word implies that the wind was tired, weary, "done up," as we say. It had had its boisterous time, and spent its force; and now it knew its Lord's voice, and, like a tired child, fell asleep.

Matthew 14:33. Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth you are the Son of God.

This seems to have been the first time that the disciples arrived at this conclusion so as to state it so positively; yet, do you not think that, after the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, they might have very fitly said, "Of a truth you are the Son of God"? Sometimes, however, one wonder will strike us more than another; and, possibly, it was because they were in danger when this second miracle was wrought, and therefore they the more appreciated the coming of Christ to them at midnight. They were in no danger when the multitude were fed; perhaps they were not themselves hungry. That strikes us most which comes most home to us, as this miracle did.

Matthew 14:34-36. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

Verses 14-33

Matthew 14:14. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

Different persons take different views of multitudes, according to the state of their minds. Many an officer when he sees a multitude considers how long it would take to march them from a certain place. Another man begins calculating how much food they will all need. Another begins to estimate their wealth, another to calculate how many per cent will die in the year. But the Lord Jesus Christ's heart was full of pity and mercy, that the thing for him to do as he looked upon them was to have compassion upon them. He healed their sick, and helped them in their sorrows.

Matthew 14:15. And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

This really meant "Get us out of the difficulty." There was no hope that so many of them could get victuals in the villages; but the disciples as good as said "We cannot bear to see them starving. Help us to forget it."

Matthew 14:16. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give you them to eat.

"You do not know what you can do, seeing I am with you," the Lord answered. "You can feed them all." O Christian church, never

give up the most difficult problem. It may be worked out. The city may be evangelized, crowded as it is; the nations may be brought to Christ superstitious though they be; for he is with us.

Matthew 14:17-18. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me.

He will not work without us. Whatever little gift or ability we have must be consecrated. Christ could easily have made loaves and fishes without taking their little stock, but that is not his way of working. "Bring what you have hither to me." Whenever we have a church that brings all its store to Christ — (when shall we ever see such a church?) — then he will be pleased to make sufficient for the multitude.

Matthew 14:19-21. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to Heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

A wonderful evening that must have been. Just as the sun's slanting rays would fall upon the mighty mass of people, Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness, was scattering his beams of mercy over them at the same time. To him it is nothing to feed five thousand — nothing to do it with five loaves. Where he is present we may expect wonders, unless indeed our unbelief should hamper him, for sometimes it is too sadly true he could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. O my soul, chide yourself if you have ever thus hampered the hands of Christ.

Matthew 14:22-23. And immediately Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.

It was a very busy day that he had had. If you read the narrative for yourself you will be astonished at the number of miracles which he wrought that day, and all of them in addition to the preaching, so he must have been well worn with weariness, but he sought rather the rest and refreshment of prayer than that of sleep.

Matthew 14:23-24. And when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

It did not matter however. For if his disciples be in a storm, so long as Christ is praying for them all the storms in the world are unable to sink them. They had a good protector. From the outlook of that hill his eyes, which could see through the distance, observed and regulated every breath of wind, and every wave upon the lake.

Matthew 14:25-26. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus' went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit;

"A phantom!" Having all the superstition so natural to sailors, they thought that this was something quite supernatural and boded ill to them.

Matthew 14:26-28. And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be you, bid me come unto you on the water.

Strange impulse! It showed genuine faith mixed with that imperfection and presumption which was so common a feature in Peter's character.

However, his master admired the confidence.

Matthew 14:29-30. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

When he began to be afraid he began to sink. As long as his confidence in his Master lasted he could walk the waves.

Matthew 14:31-33. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, of a truth you are the Son of God.

Well might they worship, for they had seen abundant proof of his deity. They worshiped him, saying, "of a truth you are the Son of God." They could not have meant by this, "You are a superior person, an excellent character." They would not, if they were Jews, have worshiped a mere man; for of all things you ever saw in this life, you never saw a Jew that would worship any form that was visible to the eye. The captivity of Babylon delivered the Hebrew race from idolatry altogether. They may fall into superstition of another sort, but never into idolatry. Mark that. There has not been since that time a man of Jewish race who would have worshiped

Christ if he had not believed him to be God.

Verses 22-33

Matthew 14:22. And immediately Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Immediately is a business word: Jesus loses no time. No sooner is the banquet over than he sends off the guests to their homes. While they are well fed he bids them make the best of their way home. He who made the multitude sit down was able also to send the multitude away, but they needed sending, for they were reluctant to go. The sea must be crossed again, or Jesus cannot find seclusion. How he must run the gauntlet to get a little rest! Before he starts again across the sea, he performs another act of self-denial; for he cannot leave until he sees the crowd happily dispersed. He attends to that business himself giving the disciples the opportunity to depart in peace. As the captain is the last to leave the ship, so is the Lord the last to leave the scene of labor. The disciples would have chosen to stay in his company, and to enjoy the thanks of the people; but he constrained them to get into a ship. He could not get anyone to go away from him at this time without sending and constraining. This loadstone has great attractions. He evidently promised his disciples that he would follow them; for the words are, "to go before him unto the other side." How he was to follow he did not say, but he could always find a way of keeping his appointments. How considerate of him to wait amid the throng while the disciples sailed away in peace He always takes the heavy end of the load himself.

Matthew 14:23. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Now that the crowd is gone, he can take his rest, and he finds it in prayer. He went up into a mountain apart: in a place where he might speak aloud, and not be overheard or disturbed, he communed with the Father alone. This was his refreshment and his delight. He continued therein until the thickest shades of night had gathered, and the day was gone. "Alone," yet not alone, he drank in new strength as he communed with his Father. He must have revealed this private matter to the recording evangelist, and surely it was with the intent that we should learn from his example. We cannot afford to be always in company, since even our blessed Lord felt that he must be alone.

Matthew 14:24. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

While Jesus was alone, they, in the ship, were in the same condition, but not occupied with the same spiritual exercise. When they first left the shore it was fair sailing in the cool of the evening; but a storm gathered hastily as night covered the sky. On the lake of Galilee the wind rushes down from the gullies between the mountains, and causes grievous peril to little boats; sometimes fairly lifting them out of the water, and anon submerging them beneath the waves. That deep lake was peculiarly dangerous for small craft. They were far from land, for they were "in the midst of the sea," equally distant from either shore. The sea was furious and their ship was "tossed with waves." The hurricane was terrible. "The wind was contrary," and would not let them go to any place which they sought. It was a whirlwind, and they were whirled about by it, but could not use it for reaching either shore. How much did their case resemble ours when we are in sore distress! We are tossed about and can do nothing; the blast is too furious for us to bear up against it, or even to live while driven before it. One happy fact remains: Jesus is pleading on the shore though we are struggling on the sea. It is also comfortable to know that we are where he constrained us to go (See verse 22), and he has promised to come to us in due time, and therefore all must be safe, though the tempest rages terribly.

Matthew 14:25. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Jesus is sure to come. The night wears on and the darkness thickens; the fourth watch of the night draws near, but where is he? Faith says, "He must come." Though he should stay away until almost break of day, he must come. Unbelief asks, "How can he come?" Ah, he will answer for himself: he can make his own way. "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." He comes in the teeth of the wind, and on the face of the wave. Never fear that he will fail to reach the storm-tossed barque: his love will find out the way. Where it be to a single disciple, or to the church as a whole, Jesus will appear in his own chosen hour, and his time is sure to be the most timely.

Matthew 14:26. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear.

Yes, the disciples saw him; saw Jesus their Lord, and derived no comfort from the sight. Poor human nature's sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits' end, and the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm: "they cried out for fear." We read not that "they were troubled" before: they were old sailors, and had no dread of natural forces; but a spirit — ah, that was too much of a terror. They were at their worst now, and yet, if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best. It is noteworthy that the

nearer Jesus was to them, the greater was their fear. Want of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near, and let me know you! Let me not have to say with Jacob, "Surely God was in this place; and I knew it not!"

Matthew 14:27. But immediately Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I be not afraid.

He did not keep them in suspense: "Immediately Jesus spoke unto them." How sweetly sounded that loving and majestic voice! Above the roar of waves and howling of winds, they heard the voice of the Lord. This was his old word also, "Be of good cheer." The most conclusive reason for courage was his own presence. "It is I be not afraid." If Jesus be near, if the spirit of the storm be, after all, the Lord of love, all room for fear is gone. Can Jesus come to us through the storm? Then we shall weather it, and come to him. He who rules the tempest is not the devil, not chance, not a malicious enemy; but Jesus. This should end all fear.

Matthew 14:28. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be you, bid me come unto you on the water.

Peter must be the first to speak, he is impulsive, and besides, he was a sort of foreman in the company. The first speaker is not always the wisest man. Peter's fears have gone, all but one "if"; but that "if" was working him no good, for it seemed to challenge his Master: "Lord if it be you." What a test to suggest: "Bid me come unto you on the water!" What did Peter want with walking the waters? His name might have suggested that like a stone he would go to the bottom. It was an imprudent request: it was the swing of the pendulum in Peter from despair to an injudicious venturing. Surely, he knew not what he said. Yet we, too, have put our Lord to tests almost as improper. Have we not said, "If you have ever blessed me, give me this and that"? We, too, have had our water-walking, and have ventured where nothing but special grace could uphold us. Lord, what is man?

Matthew 14:29. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

When good men are unwise and presumptuous, it may be for their lasting good to learn their folly by experience. "He said, Come." Peter's Lord is about to teach him a practical lesson. He asked to be bidden to come. He may come. He does come. He leaves the boat, he treads the wave. He is on the way towards his Lord. We can do anything if we have divine authorization, and courage enough to take the Lord at his word. Now there were two on the sea, two wonders! Which was the greater? The reader may not find it easy to reply. Let him consider.

Matthew 14:30. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

"But": a sorrowful "but" for poor Peter. His eye was off his Lord and on the raging of the wind: "he saw the wind boisterous." His heart failed him, and then his foot failed him. Down he began to go — an awful moment is this "beginning to sink", yet it was only a "beginning," he had time to cry to his Lord, who was not sinking. Peter cried, and was safe. His prayer was as full as it was short. He had brought his eye and his faith back to Jesus, for he cried, "Lord!" He had come into this danger through obedience, and therefore he had an appeal in the word "Lord." Whether in danger or not, Jesus was still his Lord. He is a lost man, and he feels it, unless his Lord will save him — save him altogether, save him now. Blessed prayer: "Lord, save me." Reader, does it not suit you? Peter was nearer his Lord when he was sinking than when he was walking. In our low estate we are often nearer to Jesus than in our more glorious seasons.

Matthew 14:31. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, wherefore did you doubt?

Our Lord delays not when our peril is imminent and our cry is urgent: "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand." He first "caught him" and then taught him. Jesus saves first, and upbraids afterwards, when he must needs do so. When we are saved is the fit time for us to chasten ourselves for our unbelief. Let us learn from our Lord, that we may not reprove others until we have first helped them out of their difficulties. Our doubts are unreasonable: "Wherefore did you doubt?" If there be reason for little faith, there is evidently reason for great confidence. If it be right to trust Jesus at all, why not trust him altogether? Trust was Peter's strength, doubt was his danger. It looked like great faith when Peter walked the water; but a little wind soon proved it to be "little faith." Until our faith is tried, we can form no reliable estimate of it. After his Lord had taken him by the hand, Peter sank no further, but resumed the walk of faith. How easy to have faith when we are close to Jesus! Lord, when our faith fails, come you to us, and we shall walk on the wave.

Matthew 14:32. And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

So that Peter's walk and his rescue had happened in the face of the tempest. He could walk the water well enough when his Lord held his hand and so can we. What a sight! Jesus and Peter, hand in hand, walking upon the sea! The two made for the ship at once: miracles are never spun out to undue length. Was not Peter glad to leave the tumultuous element, and at the same time to perceive that the gale was over? "When they were come into the ship, the wind ceased," it is well to be safe in a storm, but more pleasant to find the calm return and the hurricane end. How gladly did the disciples welcome their Lord, and their brother, Peter, who though wet to the skin, was a wiser man for his adventure!

Matthew 14:33. Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth you are the Son of God.

No wonder that Peter "worshiped him," nor that his comrades did the same. The whole of the disciples, who had been thus rescued by their Lord's coming to them on the stormy sea, were overwhelmingly convinced of his Godhead. Now they were doubly sure of it by unquestionable evidence, and in lowly reverence they expressed to him their adoring faith, saying, "Of a truth you are the Son of God."

Chapter 15

Verses 1-12

Matthew 15:1-2. Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

A very wonderful omission certainly, but it seems to have struck them as a very great crime. "They wash not their hands when they eat bread" — as if the commands of God were not enough, men must overload us with their own commands, and sometimes the very people who would see us break God's commands without being at all distressed are dreadfully shocked if we do not keep theirs, showing clearly that they have a higher estimate of themselves than they have of God.

Matthew 15:3-6. But he answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother: and, He who curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatever you might be profited by me; And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

The cant said, "I cannot give you any help: I have vowed to give it as a subscription to the synagogue, or to the temple; therefore, I cannot give it to you," and if he could plead that he had given it as a gift in the form of a religious offering, he was exempted from assisting his own parents. "Well," said Christ, "you do by this make the commandment of God of none effect." "You hypocrites " — our Savior is the, most gentle of men, but how plainly does he talk, and how honestly does he denounce everything like hypocrisy.

Matthew 15:7-9. You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near unto me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Now, may God save us from these two faults. The first is that of being content with the outside worship of God. Unless our very hearts worship, there is nothing whatever in the outward performance of religious rites or religious worship; indeed, it is hypocrisy to draw near to God with the lip and knee when the heart is not there. The next evil to be dreaded is teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Whatever is not plainly taught in Scripture is of no binding force upon any conscience, and it is evil to invent rites and ceremonies which are not taught in Holy Scripture. We must mind what we are at. If we have not the plain warrant of Christ's command for our teachings and our doings, we shall rather vex the spirit of God than honor him. Whatever our intention may be, we have not any right to worship God, otherwise than according to his own mind. If we do, it will not be worship, and not acceptable with him.

Matthew 15:10-11. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

"And he called the multitude and said unto them: Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man " — not that which he eats and drinks, "but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man " — what he says —there is the point.

Matthew 15:12. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Know you that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

Some very kind friends are very jealous of the preacher, lest he should offend anybody, and they will come in all tenderness of spirit and say, "Know you, that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?"

Verses 1-13

Matthew 15:1. Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, —

They had taken a journey to come and attack him; perhaps they had been sent as a deputation to try to thwart the Savior. What a vexation of spirit it must have been to his pure and holy mind to come into conflict with these triflers, these self-righteous, self-

confident men? Why did they come to Christ? To plead with him for the poor people who were perishing for lack of knowledge, or to ask him how souls could be saved, and how God could be glorified? Oh, no! They came to ask the Savior about a very different subject, —

Matthew 15:2. Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Would you have thought that full-grown men could have made it a matter of business to come from Jerusalem down into the country to talk to Christ about the fact that his disciples did not always wash their hands before they ate their breakfasts? Yet we have men, nowadays, who make a great point of what is to be done with any of the so-called "consecrated" bread that is left, and who are much concerned about what kind of a dress a "priest" ought to wear when he is engaged in the performance of certain duties. How sad is it that such trifles as these should occupy the minds of immortal beings while men are dying, and God is dishonored!

Matthew 15:3. But he answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

He answered their question by asking another, in which he drew the contrast between transgressing the tradition of the elders and transgressing the commandment of God.

Matthew 15:4-6. For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother: and, He who curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatever you might be profited by me; And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Whatever might be said about regarding the tradition of men, God's commandment must be regarded. That stands first, and therefore our Lord demanded of these scribes and Pharisee an answer to his charge that they had overridden and overlaid a commandment of God by a tradition of their own. If a father and mother, in great need, said to their son, "Help us, for we are wanting bread," and he answered, "I cannot give you anything, for all I have is dedicated to God," the Rabbis taught that he might be exempted from relieving his parents, although they also said that, the next day, he might undo the dedication of his property, and employ it exactly as he pleased. He might use the fact that he had said, "That shekel is for God," as a reason for not giving it to his father who was in need; and then, the very next day, he might take that shekel, and spend it exactly as he chose. So God's commandment to honor, and love, and aid our parents, was set aside by their tradition.

Matthew 15:7-9. You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near unto me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Our Lord never flattered anybody; see how honestly, and in what plain terms, he addressed these scribes and Pharisees! Yet these were the great teachers of his day, and thought themselves the bright light of the age, the very leaders of the people in all that was good. But Christ addressed them as, "You hypocrites," and gave them a text of Scripture which clearly applied to them. They had all manner of outward forms of worship, they talked very much about the Bible, they studied every word of it, and even counted the letters in every chapter, but they had no regard to the real meaning of God's Word, and their heart was not right with the Lord. The Savior patiently talked with them, but he also sternly rebuked them, and denounced them as hypocrites.

Matthew 15:10. And he called the multitude,

As much as if he had said to the scribes and Pharisees, "I cannot waste my time arguing with you; I am going to talk to these poor people who are perishing, and I shall have more hope of doing good among the multitude than among you, though you do consider yourselves the aristocracy of the church."

Matthew 15:10-11. And said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

This was not very clear at first, it needed to be thought over and well considered. The Savior dropped it into the popular mind, like a seed, and left it to grow, and develop in due season.

Matthew 15:12. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Know you that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

The wonder was that they were not offended before. It certainly was not a matter of concern to Christ whether they were offended or not; he would not tone down the truth in order to please them.

Matthew 15:13. But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father not planted, shall be rooted up.

Every teacher whom God has not sent will find his teaching contradicted by Christ. The truth is like a spade; it turns up the soil for that life to grow in it which should grow, and it is also the means of killing the weeds: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not

planted, shall be rooted up." May we all be plants of his right-hand planting! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 119:129-144; and Matthew 15:1-13.

Verses 1-39

Matthew 15:1-14. then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, honor your father and mother: and, He who curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatever you might be profited by me And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near unto me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Know you that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly father has not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Teacher and taught, Pharisee and disciple, "both shall fall into the ditch." Great responsibility rests upon the blind leader, but not all of it; for great responsibility also attaches to the blind follower. He should not follow a blind leader, he above all others needs a leader who can see. It is a pity that the man who can see should follow a blind leader; but if a man cannot see at all, then is he doubly unwise if he has a blind leader.

Matthew 15:15-16. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding?

It was not a parable, it was a plain piece of simple language that the Savior had uttered: "not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

Matthew 15:17-18. Do not you yet understand, that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out into the draught . — But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

It is not that which we eat that defiles us. If it is such food as we ought to take, it builds up the body. If it is improper food, it may injure the body, yet it is not in itself capable of being regarded as sin; but a spiritual thing, — a thought, a desire, an imagination, — comes out of the heart, and if that is evil, it does defile the man.

Matthew 15:19. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

What a horrible den the heart itself must be, then! If all these evils come out of it, what a nest of unclean things it must be! A dreadful sight to the all-seeing God must be an uncleansed human heart. Let me read this verse again' "for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." All these evils come out of the heart of man, out of such a heart as yours until it is renewed by grace. Though you sit very attentively in the house of God, unless his grace has changed your heart, all these evil things are there, and they only want an opportunity to come out. and reveal themselves.

Matthew 15:20. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unclean hands defiles not a man.

You should understand that the washing here meant was not such as you and I give our hands when we feel that we have soiled them with our labor; then, it is very proper to cleanse them. But this was a ceremonial washing which the scribes and Pharisees would have everybody give, whether his hands were clean or not, before he sat down to meat, and was a mere piece of absurdity, if not something worse. Yet they magnified it into a most important matter, and our Savior here shows what an idle thing it was.

Matthew 15:29-32. And Jesus departed from thence, and came near unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples unto him and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

Was not that a most gracious utterance? "I will not send them away fasting" What confidence the disciples ought to have had that the people could be fed, and would be fed, when the Master gave that solemn promise, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

Matthew 15:33-34. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus says unto them, How many loaves have you?

That is always a good form of inquiry: "How many loaves have you?" How much grace have you? How much gift have you? How much ability have you? Are you using it all? Have you consecrated it all to the Master's service?

Matthew 15:34-35. And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

It is very wonderful that they did as he told them; they could not see anything to eat, and yet, when he bade them sit down, they obeyed him, and did so. Thus the Lord prepares men's hearts for the reception of the Gospel. I do not doubt that, whenever we go forth faithfully to break the bread of life, the Lord makes the people sit down in readiness to receive it.

Matthew 15:36. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

Notice the order of our Lord's action, thanksgiving first, and then the breaking of the bread. We do not always thank God for what we have already received, but the Lord here sets us the example of giving thanks for what is yet to come. For the multiplied loaves and fishes, he first gives thanks, and then passes them to his disciples to hand to the multitude.

Matthew 15:37-39. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And he send away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

Verses 10-31

Matthew 15:10. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

True religion does not consist in meats and drinks, in feasting or in fasting.

It is not that which goes into us, but that which comes out of us, which is the main matter.

Matthew 15:12. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Know you that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

They thought a very great deal of the opinion of the Pharisees; and they were greatly concerned because their Master had offended them. These Pharisees set themselves up as the judges of everything that was correct and proper in religion; yet Christ offended them by his plain speaking.

Matthew 15:13. But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.

The truth is often intended to be a rooter up. I have no doubt that our Lord said many things which had no other intention than the discovery of these deceitful men to themselves and others, that their baneful influence might be destroyed. Our Savior was a true iconoclast, a great image-smasher; and these men, who were the chief icons or images of the day, had to be broken down. He therefore put the truth in the very form that would offend them.

Matthew 15:14. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Our Lord did not soften or tone down his previous language, but he revealed the true character of the false guides by whom so many were deluded.

Matthew 15:15. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

"We do not understand it; what is its meaning?"

Matthew 15:16-17. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand, that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

And so there is an end of it.

Matthew 15:18. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

The main matter to be considered is the heart, not the mouth, and other parts of the body. Note how our Lord, by this great truth,

puts the axe to much that looks very fair stood good, and cuts it down as worthless. If we serve God with the heart, there is the core of true religion; but if not, we may have as many ceremonial washings as there are hours in the day and days in the year, and we may be careful to avoid this article, of diet and to feed on that, to wear this garment and not to wear that, and to observe this day and not that; but all this outward religion will be of no avail whatever, if our heart is not savingly affected by the grace of God.

Matthew 15:19-21. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

He did not like the Pharisees well enough to stay among them. His own word concerning them was, "Let them alone;" and he did very severely let them alone: "Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." He must not go into Tyre and Sidon, for his commission for the present was confined to Palestine, the chosen land. Do not regret this, dear friends. To have extended our Savior's work over a greater area, would not have been really to increase it; and it was very important that, during the very short active lifetime of our Savior, — a little more than three years, — he should confine his operations to a comparatively small district, so as to produce a permanent result there which would afterwards radiate over the whole world. So our Savior, who knew what was best for men, confined himself within a very narrow sphere; and, my brethren and sisters, I am not sure that we are always wise when we want a great sphere. I have myself sometimes envied the man with about five hundred people to watch over, who could see them all, know them all, and enter into sympathy with them all, and so could do his work well. But, with so large a number as I have under my charge, what can one man do? And you, my brethren may increase the quantity of your acreage, and yet grow no larger crops. You may think that you will succeed better on a wider scale; but if you do not do so well in the greater field, it might have been wiser to narrow your boundaries rather than to widen them. However, if our Lord might not go into Tyre and Sidon, he went as near to them as he could: "Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon." And if you, dear friends, think there is a limit to your sphere of usefulness, always go as near as ever you can to the limit; go up to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

Matthew 15:22. And, behold, —

For it is a great wonder that such a person should have come to Jesus: "And, behold," —

Matthew 15:22-23. A woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, you son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word.

This was another marvel, — a silent Savior, — silent when it would have been so natural for him to speak a kind and gracious word: "He answered her not a word."

Matthew 15:23. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.

"She cries after us," and it is very important that we should not be troubled." We disciples are apt to think so, especially if we get a little lifted up, and come to be apostles: "Send her away; for she cries after us." She knew better than to cry after the disciples, it was the Master whose help she wanted. Some sinners are a great nuisance, they make so much noise in seeking Christ; and what a mercy it is that they do so! Oh, to have such troublesome people about us all day long, and all night long, too! It would be worth while to be vexed in this style. But the disciples said to Jesus, "Send her away; for she cries after us."

Matthew 15:24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

"Therefore, I cannot attend to her."

Matthew 15:25-26. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet-

"It is not lovely, it is not fit," —

Matthew 15:26. To take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

The original means, the little dogs that play with the children; they lie under the table, and pick up the crumbs that their masters (the children) let fall. The woman caught at that expression at once —

Matthew 15:27. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

"I may be only a dog, and these Jews round about you are your children, but I have got in among them, and I am looking for a crumb or two as it falls from their table." This was grand faith on her part, and it was speedily rewarded.

Matthew 15:28-31. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And Jesus departed from thence, and came near unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb,

maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

The Savior appears to have gone this journey on purpose to bless this woman and her daughter; and, having wrought the miracle, he went where great multitudes came to him, bringing their sick folk to be healed, and the result was: "They glorified the God of Israel." There may be some poor soul here in as great distress as this woman was; if so, may that one get a blessing; and then may the blessing spread through all the neighborhood until multitudes are saved!

Verses 13-28

Matthew 15:13. But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.

He had not any peculiar tenderness towards them, they were no plants of his Father's planting: they deserved to be rooted up, and their teaching was so utterly false that, if he had offended against it, he was glad to have done so.

Matthew 15:14. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

The bad teacher and he who is badly taught, for they are both responsible, shall both fall into the ditch. No man can lay the sin of his being misdirected entirely upon his priest or his teacher. He had no business to have submitted to him. At the same time, it is a very serious responsibility for a man who knows not God to attempt to teach the things of God. I know a man who, in a certain place of worship was deeply convinced of sin — the arrows of God stuck in him, and, being in great distress, he went to the minister and told him how he felt the burden of his guilt. The minister said to him, "My dear friend, I really had no intention of making you uneasy — what was it I said? — I will get the sermon — I am very sorry, but really I do not know anything about it." The man said, "You told us we must be born again." "Oh!", said the minister, "that was done for you when a child — your parents did it." "You know sir, we must be converted." "Well, really I do not understand it. I am afraid I have disturbed you unnecessarily." Our friend, however, was not to be put off so; he sought and found a Savior. But how dreadful a thing it is when the blind lead the blind: they shall both fall into the ditch.

Matthew 15:15. Then answered Peter and said unto him Declare unto us this parable.

And Jesus said Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand, that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. There is no defilement about that. Cleanliness is to be observed, but not the mere act of washing just for the sake of it, every time you eat bread, which defiles not a man; but oh! what defilement there is in evil thought, In anger which breeds murder, in lust which leads to adultery and fornication, in covetousness which begets theft, and in a false heart which leads to false witness, and in a profane mind which leads to blasphemy. Oh! that God would cleanse our secret thoughts, the very center of our hearts, for until the fountain is made clean, the stream that comes from it cannot be pure.

Matthew 15:21-22. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me O Lord, you son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

"But he answered her not a word." How painful that silence must have been! In what suspense she was.

Matthew 15:23. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away: for she cries after us.

They were under a mistake. She did not cry after them: she knew better than that: she cried after the Lord, after the great Son of David, not after them, but, however, she disturbed them.

Matthew 15:24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Christ's personal ministry was confined to the Jews. He came as a Savior to redeem all mankind, but as a preacher he was a minister to the circumcision, and he came to speak only to Israel.

Matthew 15:25. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me.

Her prayer got shorter, and she grew more intense, more energetic, more determined to win the blessing. "Lord help me."

Matthew 15:26-28. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto to her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Oh! can you exercise a like faith in Christ? If so you shall get a like blessing. Only believe in him, only make up your mind, and, however great the mercy, it cannot be too great for him to give, and believe that he will give it, rest on him to bestow it, and you shall have it. God grant that many may receive it at this very hour.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 13:1-23; Matthew 15:13-28. 1 Corinthians 3:17-23.

Verses 18-31

Matthew 15:18-21. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

He went right away, not because he was afraid to speak the truth, but because, having done so, he did not care to remain in the company of those who were round about him. He would rather go even to the verge of heathendom than live in the midst of Pharisaic hypocrisy: "Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon."

Matthew 15:22. And, behold, —

There is something here that is worth beholding, so the Holy Spirit draws attention to it, just as we sometimes print N.B., Nota bene; mark well;

"behold," —

Matthew 15:22. A woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts,

Possibly she did not know that Christ had come; but, anyhow, when Christ comes, sinners come. He journeyed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and this woman met him.

Matthew 15:22-23. And cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, you son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.

Perhaps they meant, "Give her the blessing, and let her go. You are seeking quiet here, and she will not let you, nor us either, have any. 'Send her away.'" They made a great mistake when they said, "She cries after us." It was Christ to whom she cried, not his disciples.

Matthew 15:24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

"My ministerial commission is only to the Jews." As a Savior, he comes to save sinners, out of all nations; but as the Messiah, his special mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Matthew 15:25. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me.

"Then came she, and worshiped him." If Jesus Christ was not really and truly God, he was a base imposter to allow this woman to worship him. She had called him "Lord," once before, and he did not rebuke her, and now she not only calls him "Lord," but she worships him. She was doing quite right, for he is none other than very God of very God: "Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me."

Matthew 15:26. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

Or, "to little dogs," for the word is, in that form in the Greek.

Matthew 15:27. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

It was well for her that the Master had used that diminutive form of the word, for the bigger dogs in the East were not permitted in the house, but the little dogs were admitted to play with the children. She seemed to snatch at that idea as she cried, "Truth, Lord: yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," as though the greatest possible blessing to her was, but a crumb to him, and but a crumb compared with the bread which he was putting upon the table of Israel. The greater blessing which he was giving to the children might prompt him to give a crumb to her.

Matthew 15:28. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Oh, the triumph of faith! God grant it to us! Yet this woman may surely shame many of us; we have not half her discouragements, and we have not half her confidence in Christ.

Matthew 15:29. And Jesus departed from thence,

He is always on the move, for he has always something else to do. As soon as his deed of grace is done in one part, he hastens to another: "And Jesus departed from thence," —

Matthew 15:29-31. And came near unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

This was Israel's table indeed; and when you see these many mighty cures that Christ wrought, you can easily justify the speech of the Syrophenician woman, and agree with her that what she sought was only a crumb compared with the bountiful feast of fat things that was prepared for the favored nation.

Verses 21-28

Matthew 15:21. Then Jesus went thence,

He was glad to get away from the scribes and Pharisees, who had been disputing about such trifles as the washing of his disciples' hands; he was tired of the murmuring of these cantankerous, frivolous triflers.

Matthew 15:21. And departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

He felt that he would rather be with "sinners of the Gentiles" than with these Ritualistic and hypocritical Hebrews. He will get as far away from them as he well can he will go even to the heathen, for among them he will be able to do his real business, and not be trifled with.

Matthew 15:22. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts,

When sinners come to Christ, it is because Christ comes to them. Notice the two statements, how they coincide. Jesus "departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon," and this "woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts," and so they met. Oh, that there might be such a meeting here tonight, between someone who has come from a long distance to meet Christ, and Christ who has come on purpose to meet that person!

Matthew 15:22. And cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, you son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

The devil had extraordinary power at that time, so that he possessed the bodies and minds of men. I am not certain that there are not instances of Satan's possession even now among us; there are cases that look very much like it, but in the Savior's day there were evidently singular and remarkable possessions of men and women by Satan. This poor mother says, "My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

Matthew 15:23. But he answered her not a word.

Has the Savior become deaf and dumb? Will he not hear a suppliant cry? He heard her, but he said nothing.

Matthew 15:23. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.

"She is a stranger, and, as far as we can judge, she means to hang on until she gets what she wants. If you will not give it to her, bid her begone, for she cries after us." One thing I notice that they said, which was not true, "She cries after us." Not she! She never cried after them she was crying after Christ, she would have pleaded in vain if she had cried after them, for all they had to say was, "Send her away." A very different result came from her crying unto the Lord.

Matthew 15:24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

As a Preacher and a Teacher, Christ came to administer to the circumcision, the Jews, the seed of Israel. He did not go about among the nations, it was his work to be a witness to the Jews. As a Preacher, he must begin somewhere, and he chose to begin with them. "I am not sent," said he; therefore, how could he go if he was not sent? Our Savior had a greater regard to the sending of the Father than some preachers have, for they run before they are sent, sometimes they run when they are never sent at all; but, as Paul asked, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?"

Matthew 15:25. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me.

She takes a humbler attitude than she had at first assumed. She comes closer, and she is more earnest and personal in her pleading

than she had been: "Lord help me." Her prayer is shorter than it was at first; and I think that, when prayers grow shorter, they grow stronger. There is often more proof of earnestness in a short prayer than there is in a long one; glibness of speech is not prevalence in intercession.

Matthew 15:26-27. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord.

You remember the sermon that we had upon this text not long ago. The woman did not contradict the Savior, she did not enter into any controversy with him, but she said, "Truth, Lord." Whatever he says however black the words may look to her, she accepts them as true, and says, "Truth, Lord."

Matthew 15:27. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

When the children drop the crumbs then the little dogs which have been fondled by the children feed on the crumbs which fall, not from "the" master's table, but from "their masters' table" — that is, from the table of the children.

Matthew 15:28. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith:

He seems quite amazed at the woman's faith, but he admires it, and exclaimed, "O woman, great is your faith."

Matthew 15:28. Be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter made whole from that very hour.

It was as she wished, and she went home to glorify the Christ, and to tell everybody how her prayer to him had sped.

Verses 21-39

Jesus had been in conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees. He never liked such discussions, and though he was always victorious in every controversy, it grieved his spirit.

Matthew 15:21. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

He was glad to get away, and made a journey over the hills to get at as great a distance as possible from these cavilers.

Matthew 15:22. And behold, a woman of Canaan came.

A Syrophenician woman, one of the old, condensed race living in Tyre and Sidon.

Matthew 15:23. But he answered her not a word.

Answers to prayers may be delayed; but delays are not always denials.

Christ's silence must have been a great trial to the poor woman; but our Lord knew with whom he was dealing.

Matthew 15:23. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.

Ah, these disciples made a grand mistake! She did not cry after them; she cried after him; but so they understood it: therefore they said, "Get rid of her; she disturbs us; when we are in the street, we can hear her cry. Send her away; for she cries after us." Ah! Poor disciples, she was not so foolish as to cry after you; she was crying after your Master. If any here have come only to hear the preacher, they have made a great mistake; but if you have come for a word from the Master, I pray that you may be gratified.

Matthew 15:24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Christ did what he was sent to do; he was the Messiah, the sent One. He would not go beyond his mission, so he says, "I am sent." He was sent as a Preacher and a Teacher, not to the Gentiles, but to Israel. He had a larger commission in reserve, and was yet to be a Savior to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; but for the present he was to be a Shepherd to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Matthew 15:25. Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord help me.

A very short prayer; but how much there was in it!

Matthew 15:26-27. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

It is the faculty of faith to see in the dark. This woman spied out light in what seemed to be a very dark saying. Did Christ call her a dog? Well, dogs have their privileges when they lie under the table. Even if their master does not throw them a crumb, yet they may

take that which falls from his hand. If Jesus would but allow any mercy to drop, as it were, accidentally, this woman would be content.

Matthew 15:28-29. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And Jesus departed from thence.

When he had done his business, he was off. Our Lord was a great itinerant; he was always on the move/ He had come all the way to the parts of Tyre and Sidon to help one woman; and when that one woman had been attended to, he goes back again immediately to his old post by the sea of Galilee.

Matthew 15:29-30. And Jesus departed from thence, and came near unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them.

In the prayer-meeting, held by the deacons and elders this morning, before I came in here, one of our friends observed in prayer that there might be many lame, blind, and maimed in the congregation, and he prayed that they might be brought to Jesus. Let us, by faith, bring them to him, and lay them at his feet. Oh, that this word, "He healed them," might be true again today!

Matthew 15:31. Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be made whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

Oh, for glory to God! There is no glory to God which equals that which comes from blind eyes which have been made to see; and from dumb lips which have been made to speak. The glories of nature and providence are eclipsed by the glories of grace. May we see such things today.

Matthew 15:32. Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

Ah, dear friends, they were willing to put up with inconvenience to hear the gospel in those days! Three days of sermon-hearing! People want sermons wonderfully short now, and the sermons must be marvelously interesting, too, or else the people grow dreadfully tired. If dinner-time came around, the dinner-bell, at any time, in these days, would drown all the attraction of the pulpit. But here were people that attended Christ's ministry for three days, and they had nothing to eat. He had compassion upon them, and said to his disciples, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

Matthew 15:33-34. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus says unto them, How many loaves have you?

That is the point. It is idle to inquire about how much you want. "How many loaves have you?"

Matthew 15:34-35. And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

It was a token of Christ's presence and power that they were willing to sit down on the ground. Think of thousands of people taking their places in an orderly way to feed upon seven cakes and a few little fishes! Without any demur, the crowd arranged itself into banquet order at the command of Jesus.

Matthew 15:36-37. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.

They were large baskets, too; not like the small food-baskets mentioned when the five thousand were fed. The word used here is the same word that is employed to describe the basket in which Saul was let down by the wall of Damascus.

Matthew 15:38. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

Now, if the women and children bore the same proportion to the men as they generally do in our congregation, there must have been a very large crowd indeed. Why is the number of the women and children not mentioned? Was it because there were so many? Or was it because their appetites being smaller than the appetites of men, the men are put down as the great eaters, and the women and children, as it were, thrown into the count? What a mercy it is that the Lord adds to the church daily a vast number of men, women, and children! The Lord sends us many more, until we cannot count them!

Matthew 15:39. And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

He had taught the people, and fed them; so now he goes elsewhere to carry similar blessings to others also.

Chapter 16

Verses 21-23

Matthew 16:21. From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

He had previously spoken somewhat darkly concerning his death; but it was so sad and so strange a revelation to his disciples that they could not think he really meant quite what he said. But now he began definitely and plainly to tell them about the future, and even to enter into details concerning his death and resurrection. He knew all that the work of redemption would involve for him; he had counted the cost; but—

"When the Savior knew The price of pardon was his blood,

His pity ne'er withdrew."

It must have been very saddening, but, at the same time, very profitable to the minds of the apostles to be led by their Lord in this direction.

Matthew 16:22. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you.

The margin reads, "Pity yourself, Lord," as though Peter meant to say, "God grant, of his infinite mercy, that this may not be true! How can it be that such an one as you are should die?" He probably thought that Christ's death would be the end of his kingdom, the ruin of all his people's hopes, the quenching of the light of Israel; so, in his zeal for his Master's cause, he cried, "This shall not be unto you."

Matthew 16:23. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get you behind me, Satan: you are an offence unto me: for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Notice the contrast between the 18th verse and the 23rd. In the 18th verse, Christ had said, "You are Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church;" and here he is saying, "Get you behind me, Satan." I do not understand our Lord to have called Peter Satan, but to have looked right through Peter, and to have seen Satan standing behind him, and making use of the apostle to be his spokesman. The best of men may sometimes serve the devil's turn better than a bad man would. He may speak, through those who love the Lord, words which are clean contrary to the mind of Christ. So Christ sees Satan lurking, as in an entrenchment, behind Peter, and he says, "Get you behind me: you are an offence unto me." The idea of pitying himself—the thought of shirking the task upon which he had entered—was offensive to him. There was a savor about it of the things of men,—of self and of self-saving, instead of self-denial, and generous, unselfish, Godlike self-sacrifice. Oh, that we would always speak, as Christ did on this occasion, whenever anything is proposed to us by which we should avoid the cross that he intends us to carry! When anyone wants us to moderate our zeal, or to tone down our opinions, lest we should have to suffer for our faithfulness, let us reply, "Get you behind me, Satan." What has a soldier of the cross to do with avoiding the battle with evil? He should be ever ready for the good fight of faith. What has an heir of Heaven to do with the saving of himself? Let him say, with the apostle Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

This exposition consisted of readings from Isaiah 40.; and Matthew 16:21-23.

Verses 24-28

Matthew 16:24-25. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

This is the law of self-sacrifice, based on the sacrifice of Christ, and leading up to the complete sacrifice of the redeemed. We are not our own; we are bought with a price. To try to keep ourselves to ourselves, would be acting contrary to the whole spirit of the redemption which Christ has wrought for us; and that is the last thing that any Christian should think of doing.

Matthew 16:26-28. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Truly I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

By which, I suppose he meant that they should see him in his majesty; —that, notwithstanding the cross, they should see something of his crown of glory, as they did when they beheld him after his resurrection, and as they did, even better, when he ascended on

high; and as they did, some of them, in vision, when they saw him standing at the right hand of God, even the Father.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 16:24-28; and Matthew 17:1-13.

Chapter 17

Verses 1-5

Matthew 17:1-2. And after six days Jesus takes Peter, James, and John his brother, and brings them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his clothing was white as the light.

Were these "six days" a week's quiet interval, in which our Lord prepared himself for the singular transaction upon the "mountain apart"? Did the little company of three know from one Sabbath to another that such an amazing joy awaited them? The three were elect out of the elect, and favored to see what none else in all the world might behold. Doubt—less our Lord had reasons for his choice, as he has for every choice he makes; but he does not unveil them to us. The same three beheld the agony in the garden; perhaps the first sight was necessary to sustain their faith under the second. The name of the "high mountain" can never be known; for those who knew the locality have left no information. Tabor, if you please; Hermen, if you prefer it. No one can decide. It was a lone and lofty hill. While in prayer, the splendor of the Lord shone out. His face, lit up with its own inner glory, became a sun; and all his dress, like clouds irradiated by that sun, became white as the light itself. "He was transfigured before them;" he alone was the center of what they saw. It was a marvelous unveiling of the hidden nature of the Lord Jesus. Then was, in one way, fulfilled the word of John: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." The transfiguration occurred but once: special views of the glory of Christ are not enjoyed every day. Our highest joy on earth is to see Jesus. There can be no greater bliss in Heaven; but we shall be better able to endure the exceeding bliss when we have laid aside the burden of this flesh.

Matthew 17:3. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

Thus the Law and the Prophets, "Moses and Elijah," communed with our Lord, "talking with him," and entering into familiar conversation with their Lord. Saints long departed still live; live in their personality; are known by their names; and enjoy near access to Christ. It is a great joy to holy ones to be with Jesus: they find it Heaven to be where they can talk with him. The heads of former dispensations conversed with the Lord as to his decease, by which a new economy would be ushered in. After condescending so long to his ignorant followers, it must have been a great relief to the human soul of Jesus to talk with two master-minds like those of Moses and Elijah. What a sight for the apostles, this glorious trio! They "appeared unto them," but they "talked with him;" the object of the two holy ones was not to converse with apostles, but with their Master.

Although saints are seen of men, their fellowship is with Jesus

Matthew 17:4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

The sight spoke to the three beholders, and they felt bound to answer to it. Peter must speak: "Then answered Peter." That which is upper—most comes out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Everybody was of his opinion. Who would not have, been? Because it was so good, he would gladly stay in this beatific state, and get still more good from it. But he has not lost his reverence, and therefore he would have the great ones sheltered suitably. He submits the proposal to Jesus: "If you will." He offers that, with his brethren, he will plan and build shrines for the three holy ones: "Let us make here three tabernacles." He does not propose to build for himself, and James, and John; but he says, "One for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." His talk sounds rather like that of a bewildered child. He wanders a little; yet his expression is a most natural one. Who would not wish to abide in such society as this? Moses, and Elijah, and Jesus: what company! But yet how impractical is Peter! How selfish the one thought, "It is good for us"! What was to be done for the rest of the twelve, and for the other disciples, and for the wide, wide world? A sip of such bliss might be good for the three, but to continue to drink thereof might not have been really good even for them. Peter knew not what he said. The like might be said of many another excited utterance of enthusiastic saints.

Matthew 17:5. While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you him.

"While he yet spoke." Such wild talk might well be interrupted. What a blessed interruption! We may often thank the Lord for stopping our babbling. "A bright cloud overshadowed them." It was bright, and cast a shadow. They felt that they were entering it, and feared as they did so. It was a singular experience; yet we have had it repeated in our own cases. Do we not know what it is to get shadow out of brightness, and "a voice out of the cloud"? This is after the frequent manner of the Lord in dealing with his favored ones. The voice was clear and distinct. First came the divine attestation of the Sonship of our Lord, "This is my beloved Son," and

the Father's declaration of delight in him, "in whom I am well pleased." What happiness for us that Jehovah is well pleased in Christ, and with all who are in him! Then followed the consequent divine requirement, "Hear you him." It is better to hear the Son of God than to see saints, or to build tabernacles. This will please the Father more than all else that love can suggest. The good pleasure of the Father in the Lord Jesus is a conspicuous part of his glory. The voice conveyed to the ear a greater glory than the luster of light could communicate through the eye. The audible part of the transfiguration was as wonderful as the visible.

Verses 1-13

Matthew 17:1. And after six days —

Luke says, "about an eight days after these sayings;" but I suppose he counted the day before and the day after. "After six days," — and the first day was, probably, the first day of the week, so he was now coming to another Lord's day. One of the high Christian festivals of the life of Christ was about to be celebrated. Jesus was not yet dead, therefore it was not the resurrection that was celebrated on that day, but the transfiguration. "After six days," — six days' teaching concerning the cross before he revealed his glory. Dear brethren, there are many in these days who delight to speak almost exclusively about the glory of the second advent. Now, God forbid that we should be silent concerning that great theme! But I think our teaching concerning it must be given after six days' consideration of the sufferings of Christ. Let those who will say, "We preach Christ glorified;" I mean still to say, with Paul, "But we preach Christ crucified." When I have had my six days for that topic, then am I right glad to have another day to speak concerning Christ's glory. We must never forget his death; all our immortal hopes are centered in the death of our great Substitute. "After six days" —

Matthew 17:1-2. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John his brother, and brings them up unto an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his clothing was white as the light.

"White and glistening," says Luke; "exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them," says Mark.

Matthew 17:3. And, behold, —

As if this was a great wonder. The transfiguration of Christ could scarcely be called miraculous, for it is according to the nature of Christ that his face should shine, and his very clothing become glorious.

Matthew 17:3. There appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

Moses, the great representative of the law, and Elijah, the chief of the prophets, — one who had died, and one who had entered Heaven without dying, — thus representing both the quick and the dead.

Matthew 17:4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if you will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

If Peter had known that hymn by Dr. Watts, —

"My willing soul would stay In such a frame as this,

And sit and sing herself away To everlasting bliss;" —

he would have thought it appropriate to sing at that moment; and whenever we get up on the mount, we have no desire to go down again. Our one thought is, "Oh, that this happy experience would last! Oh, that we might keep in this blessed company forever!" Yet our highest religious excitements cannot continue, even as the sea is not always at flood tide. The talk between those three — Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah, — must have been well worth hearing. I would like to have been one of the three untransfigured, unglorified apostles, to listen to the conversation of the three glorified ones. We know what they talked about, for Luke tells us that they "spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" and it is very singular that the Greek word which he used to describe Christ's decease is the word "exodus." They "spoke of his exodus which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses knew all about the exodus out of Egypt; and what a type that was of Christ's departure out of this world; — the death of the lamb, — the sprinkling of the blood, — the slaying of the firstborn among the Egyptians, even as Christ smote sin, death, and Hell; — the triumphant coming out of Israel, with silver and gold, setting forth Christ's ascension to his Father with all his precious treasures captured from the hand of the enemy. How changed must the feelings of Elijah have been since the day when he said, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away;" for now he was seeing the King in his glory, and talking with him about his approaching departure. How did Peter, and James, and John know that these two men were Moses and Elijah? They had never seen them in the flesh, yet they evidently recognized them; so, as they knew people whom they had not known on earth, I am sure that I shall know in Heaven those whom I did know here; I shall have the advantage of them in that respect. I suppose they said to one another, as soon as they saw these men, "That is Moses, and that is Elijah;" yet they had never seen them; and shall not we, when we meet our dear kindred and friends, say at once, "That is So-and-so, with whom I took sweet counsel on earth when we

walked to the house of God in company"? Surely, the mutual recognition of the saints hardly needs a better support than this passage supplies.

Matthew 17:5. While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them:

The Shekinah cloud, which was the type of the divine presence in the wilderness, — bright, yet a cloud, softening the excessive glory of the face of Jesus with its overshadowing, yet casting no dimness upon it: "a bright cloud overshadowed them:"

Matthew 17:5-6. And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

We cannot bear for God to come too near us; for we are such frail earthen vessels that, if he reveals his glory too much within us, we are ready to break.

Matthew 17:7. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

Ay, it was Jesus only who could give them comfort; and I have to say, —

"Until God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred
Three are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy, begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."

The hand of a man touched the apostles, and the voice of a man said to them, "Arise, and be not afraid."

Matthew 17:8. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

And they did not want any other man "save Jesus only." Let Moses, and Elijah, and all others go, so long as Christ remains. There will be the most blessed company for us so long as he abides with us.

Matthew 17:9-10. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?

"May we not tell the story, of what has happened on this mountain? Elijah has come. If we publish this news, it may convince even the scribes that you are the Messiah."

Matthew 17:11-12. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

How he comes back to that point! Evidently the chief thought in our Savior's mind was concerning his suffering. On another occasion, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" As the magnetic needle ever points to the pole, so did the heart of Jesus ever point to the cross.

Matthew 17:13. Then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist.

John had indeed come "in the spirit and power of Elijah," yet Herod had put him to death, as other wicked men would deal with his Lord and Master whose way he so gloriously prepared.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 16:24-28; and Matthew 17:1-13.

Chapter 18

Verses 1-22

Matthew 18:1. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?

The question we have sometimes heard asked in other forms, "Which is the highest office; which form of service shall have the greatest honor?" As if we were courtiers and were to take our positions according to precedent.

Matthew 18:2. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.

They all wondered what he was going to do. The little child was no doubt pleased to find itself in such happy company.

Matthew 18:3. And said, Truly I say unto you,

"And said Truly I say unto you" — to you, men or women, who think no small things of yourselves, and are wanting to know which is greatest, implying that you, each one, think yourself pretty good as it is.

Matthew 18:3. Except you converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Someone said to me this morning, "This is a growing day." "Ah!" I said, "I hope we shall all grow spiritually." "Which way?" said he; "smaller or larger?" Let it be smaller, brethren that will be the surest way of growth certainly. If we can become much less today, we shall be growing. We have grown up, as we call it, let us grow down today, and become as little children, or else we shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 18:4. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.

The lower down, the higher up. In a certain sense the way to Heaven is downward in our own esteem certainly. "He must increase; I must decrease." And when that straight-backed letter "I," which often becomes so prominent, vanishes altogether, until there is not an iota of it left, then we shall become like our Lord.

Matthew 18:5. And whoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me.

The humblest and the least in the family of divine love, if received brings with that reception the same blessing as the reception of Christ.

Matthew 18:6. But whoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me,

It does not mean put him out of temper by his taking his silly offence but shall cause him to sin, shall make him stumble, shall scandalize him — whoever shall do that.

Matthew 18:6. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

If you have the revised version, you will see in the margin that it is an donkey millstone — not a common millstone, which women used to turn, but a bigger stone, which was turned by an donkey, in a mill which thus was of a larger kind altogether. The very heaviest conceivable doom were better than to be a stumbling block in the way of the very least of God's people. Yet I have known some say "Well, the thing is lawful, and if a weak brother does not like it, I cannot help it, he should not be weak." No, my dear brother, but that is not the way Christ would have you talk. You must consider the weakness of your brother; all things may be lawful to you, but all things are not expedient, and if meat make your brother to offend, eat no meat while the world stands. Remember, we must, after all, measure the pace which the flock can travel by the weakest in the flock, or else we shall have to leave behind us many of the sheep of Christ. The pace at which a company must go, must depend upon how fast the weak and the sick can travel — is it not so? — unless we are willing to part company with them, which I trust we are not willing to do. So let us take care that we cause not even the weakest to stumble by anything that we can do without harm to ourselves, but which would bring harm to them. Then I am not sure if it would harm the weakest, whether it would not harm us also, because we are not as strong as we think we are; and, perhaps, if we took a better measure, we might put ourselves among the weakest, too.

Matthew 18:7-8. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence comes! Wherefore if your hand or your foot offend you, cut them off, and cast them from you:

Get rid of that which is most useful to you, most necessary to you, rather than be led astray by it, and made to sin — for

Matthew 18:8. It is better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

Remember that is the word of Jesus — "everlasting fire" — not the word of some of those coarse, cruel theologians that you hear a great deal about now-a-days, but the word of Jesus Christ, the Master himself. You cannot be more tender than he; to pretend to be so, with only prove us to be very foolish.

Matthew 18:9. And if your eye offend you,

So needful to your pleasure, and to your knowledge, and to your guidance yet if it make you sin,

Matthew 18:9. Pluck it out, and cast it from you: it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hellfire.

Better to be but a maimed believer than to be an accomplished unbeliever; better to be an uncultured saint than a cultured modern thinker; better that you lose an eye, or lose a hand, than lose your faith in God and his word, and so lose your soul and be cast into Hell fire.

Matthew 18:10. Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones;

So apt to do so, when a man appears to have no perfect knowledge, no large pretensions, we are so apt to think, "Oh! he is a nobody."

Matthew 18:10. For I say unto you, That in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.

There is an angel to watch over each child of God; the heirs of Heaven have those holy spirits to keep watch and ward over them. These sacred intelligences, who watch over the people of God, do at the same time behold God's face. They do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word, and beholding his face all the while. And if these little ones are thus honorably attended by the angels of God, never despise them. They may be dressed in fustian, they may wear the very poorest of print, but they are attended like princes; therefore, treat them as such.

Matthew 18:11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Another reason why you must not despise them. "How think you?" Put on your considering cap, and think a minute.

Matthew 18:12-14. How think you? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains, and seeks that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, truly I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Nor shall they. Christ has come on purpose that He may send them out, and find them out he will; and having an hundred, whom his Father gave him, he will not be satisfied with ninety-and-nine, but the whole hundred shall be there. Now, as if to show us that we are not to despise the very least in the family, nor even the most erring, he brings it personally home to us.

Matthew 18:15. Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother.

Do not say, "You must come to me." Go to him; he has trespassed against you, it is a personal affair; go and seek him out. It is useless to expect the person who does the injury to try and make peace. It is the injured one who always has to forgive, though he has nothing to be forgiven, it always comes to that, and it is the injured one who should, if he be of the mind of Christ, be the one to commence the reconciliation.

Matthew 18:16-17. But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican.

Quit his company he has despised the last tribunal. Now you must leave him. Be not angry with him. Freely forgive him, but quit him.

Matthew 18:18. Truly I say unto you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

Where the church acts rightly, it has the solemn sanction of God; this lesser tribunal on earth shall have its decrease sanctioned by the great tribunal above. Hence it becomes a very serious matter, this binding and loosing which Christ has given to his Church.

Matthew 18:19-20. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

It is not a large church, therefore, that is girded with the wonderful power of prayer, but even two or three. Christ will not have us despise one, he will not have us despise two or three. Who has despised the day of small things? On the contrary, measure by quality, rather than by quantity, and even if the quality fail measure by love, rather than by some rule of justice that you have set up.

Matthew 18:21. Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven

times?

He thought he had opened his mouth very wide when he said that.

Matthew 18:22. Jesus says unto him, I say not unto you, Until seven times: but, Unto seventy times seven.

I do not wonder that we read in another place that the disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith." For it needs much faith to have so much patience, and to continue still to forgive.

Chapter 19

Verses 13-30

All sorts of persons are invited to come to Christ, whatever their age may be. We begin here with the children.

Matthew 19:13-15. Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of Heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

The principal difficulty of children in coming to Christ frequently lies in their friends. Their parents or their other relatives think they are too young, and discourage them. Oh, that we all had a right idea of the possibility of the conversion of little children; nay, not only of the possibility, but that we looked for it, watched for it, and encouraged young children to come to Christ! You know that, in the parable I am going to read presently, we are told that the householder "went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." What a privilege it is to be Brought to Christ early in the morning,—that is, while we are yet children.

Matthew 19:16. And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

This was not a child, but a young man, who had come to riper years.

Matthew 19:17-20. And he said unto him, Why call you me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the commandments. He says unto him, Which? Jesus said, You shall do no murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother: and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man says unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

Externally, in the letter, very likely this young man had kept these commandments, and so far he was to be commended; yet internally, in their spirit, he had not kept one of them. Our Savior did not tell him that he had failed, but he took him on his own ground. "You say that you love your neighbor as yourself; I will give you a test to prove whether you do."

Matthew 19:21-22. Jesus said unto him, If you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

See, then, that often with men—with young men—the great hindrance in coming to Christ may be the world. They may have riches, or they may have a great craving for riches; and this may stand in the way of their coming to the Savior. If any man loves riches better than he loves Christ, he cannot be saved.

Matthew 19:23-24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Truly I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man go enter into the kingdom of God.

Somehow or other,-

"Gold and the gospel seldom do agree,
Religion always sides with poverty;"

because a man's possessions are so liable to get into his heart. He is apt to turn them into idols, and to make devotion to them the great object of his life; as long as he does so, he cannot be saved.

Matthew 19:25-27. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have therefore?

Always too fast is this impetuous Peter; ever ready to put in a good word for himself if he can.

Matthew 19:28-29. And Jesus said unto them, Truly I say unto you, That you which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

He shall find himself a gainer by his losses for Christ's sake. If he has lost friends, he shall find better and truer friends in the Church of God. If he has lost possessions, he shall get a spiritual wealth that shall be better to him than houses and lands.

Matthew 19:30. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 19:13-30; and Matthew 20:1-16.

Chapter 20

Verses 1-7

Matthew 20:1-2. For the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

The kingdom of Heaven is all of grace, and so is the service connected with it. Let this be remembered in the exposition of this parable. The call to work, the ability, and the reward, are all on the principle of grace, and not upon that of merit. This was no common man that is an householder, and his going out to hire laborers into his vineyard was not after the usual manner of men, for they will have a full day's work for a full day's wage. This householder considered the laborers rather than himself. He was up before the dew was gone from the grass, and found laborers, and sent them into the vineyard. It was a choice privilege to be allowed to begin holy service so early in the morning. They agreed with the householder, and went to work on his terms. They might well be content, since they were promised a full day's hire, and were sure to get it: a penny a day represented the usual and accepted wage. The householder and the laborers agreed upon the amount; and this is the point which has to be noted further on. Young believers have a blessed prospect: they may well be happy to do good work, in a good place, for a good Master, and on good terms.

Matthew 20:3-4. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

Hating indolence, and grieving that he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, he hired more workers about the third hour. They would make only three-quarters of a day; but it was for their good to cease from loafing at the street-corner. These are like persons whose childhood is past, but who are not yet old. They are favored to have a good part of their day of life available for hallowed service. To these the good householder said, "Go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." He pointed to those already in the field, and said, "Go you also;" and he promised them not a definite sum, as he did those whom he first hired, but he said, "Whatever is right I will give you." They went their way to their labor, for they did not wish to remain idlers; and as right-minded men, they could not quarrel with the householder's agreement to give them whatever was right. Oh, that those around us, who are in their rising manhood, would at once take up their tools, and begin to serve the great Lord!

Matthew 20:5. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

Had it been altogether and alone a business transaction, the householder would have waited to begin a new day, and would not have given a whole day's wage for a fraction of a day's work. The entire matter was alone of grace; and, therefore, when half the day was gone, about the sixth hour, he called in laborers. Men of forty and fifty are bidden to enter the vineyard. Yes, and about the ninth hour, men were engaged. At sixty, the Lord calls a number by his grace! It is wrong to assert that men are not saved after forty; we know to the contrary, and could mention instances. God in the greatness of his love calls into his service men from whom the exuberance of useful vigor has departed; he accepts the waning hours of their day. He has work for the weak as well as for the strong. He allows none to labor for him without the reward of grace, even though they have spent their best days in sin. This is no encouragement to procrastination; but it should induce old sinners to seek the Lord at once.

Matthew 20:6-7. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and says unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man has hired us. He says unto them, Go you also into the vineyard and whatever is right, that shall you receive.

The day was nearly over: only a single hour remained; yet about the eleventh hour he went out. The generous householder was

willing to take on more workmen, and give them hire, though the sun was going down. He found a group lingering at the loafers' corner — standing idle. He wished to clear the whole town of sluggards, so he said to them, "Why stand you here all the day idle?" His question to them may be read by making each word in its turn emphatic, and then it yields a fullness of meaning. Why are you idle? What is the good of it? Why stand you here idle where all are busy? Why all the day idle? Will not a shorter space suffice? Why are you idle? You have need to work, you are able to do it, and you should set about it at once. Why is any one of us remaining idle towards God? Has nothing yet had power to engage us in sacred service? Can we dare to say, "No man has hired us"? Nearly seventy years of age, and yet unsaved! Let us bestir ourselves. It is time that we went, without delay, to hill the weeds, and prune the vines, and do something for our Lord in his vineyard. What but rich grace could lead him to take on the eleven o'clock lingerers? Yet he invites them as earnestly as those who came in the morning, and he will as surely give them their reward.

Verses 1-16

Matthew 20:1-2. For the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

That was the usual wage of the time, the daily pay of a Roman soldier.

Matthew 20:3-4. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

You notice that the first laborers made a bargain with the householder, he agreed with them for a penny a day, and then sent them into his vineyard. So our Lord seemed to say to Peter, "If you are going to make a bargain concerning your service, you Will not find it pay. You are saying, 'We have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have therefore?'" That spirit will not do; Christ is not to be served by hirelings. The moment the idea comes in that we deserve to have anything at his hands, we spoil all our service; and those who might be first come to be last if they once get that notion into their heads. This parable shows that it is so.

Matthew 20:5-9. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and says unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man has hired us. He says unto them, Go you also into the vineyard; and whatever is right, that shall you receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard says unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

This was the gift of grace, through the generosity of the employer.

Matthew 20:10-12. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and you have made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

See. They put forth their claim on the ground of deserving, so they had what they had bargained for, but they had no more. They were engaged first, but because they had the hireling spirit they were put last.

Matthew 20:13-15. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do you no wrong: did not you agree with me for a penny? Take that your is, and go your way: I will give unto this last, even as unto you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is your eye evil, because I am good?

God will have us know that, in dealing with us when we are his servants, he is under no obligation to us. If he chooses to give a reward, the reward is not of debt, but of his sovereign grace. We are bound to serve him by the fact that he is our Creator, altogether apart from any reward; and we must not talk of dealing with him on terms of reward; it is too high a style for us, poor worms, to assume in the presence of Almighty God. If we do talk so, he will soon put us clown into our right place.

Matthew 20:16. So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 19:13-30; and Matthew 20:1-16.

Verses 1-28

Matthew 20:1-2. For the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

It was a fair wage. It was for fair and healthful work which they were to do in the vineyard. They were happy men to be hired so early in the morning. Never do those that serve Christ reject him; and though in this parable some are represented as finding fault with their wages, yet Christ's true servants do not so. Their only request is, "Dismiss me not your service, Lord." They feel it to be reward enough to be permitted to go on working. Indeed, this is one way in which we get our wages during the day. If we keep one

precept, God gives us grace to keep another. If we perform one duty, God gives us the privilege to perform another. So we are paid well. We work in the work. We say not "for the work," for we are unprofitable servants. Yet is there the penny a day.

Matthew 20:3. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

It was bad for them to be standing there. No good is learned by idlers in idle company. Idle men together kindle a fire that burns like the flames of Hell.

Matthew 20:4-5. And said unto them; Go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

Much more out of charity than out of any good that he could get from them. Especially was this manifest, when it got towards the latter end of the day. So late, so very late, it was but little they could do. Yet for their good he bade them come in.

Matthew 20:6. And about the eleventh hour--

Why, then, surely the day was over. They were ready to put away their tools and go home. But--

Matthew 20:6. He went out, and find others standing idle, and says unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle?

"Why?" Can you give a reason for it? Why stand you here in the market-place, where men come together on purpose to be hired? Why stand you here, you able-bodied ones that still might work? Why stand you here all the day? That you should be idle a little while is bad enough. Why stand you here all the day, and why stand you here all the day idle, when there is so much work to be done, and such a wage to receive for it?

Matthew 20:7. They say unto him, Because no man has hired us. He says unto them, Go you also into the Vineyard; and, whatever is right, that shall you receive.

And so the great householder was glad when he had emptied the marketplace of the idlers, and brought in from early morning, even until set of sun, so many that should be at work — happily at work there. I wonder whether there are any here early in the morning of life who have not yet come into the vineyard. If so, the Master calls you. Are you in middle life? Have you reached the sixth hour, and are you not enlisted in his service? Again the Master calls you. And if you have reached the eleventh hour, where are you? Decrepit — leaning on your staff — leaning downward to your grave; yet if you are not called now, now he calls you and bids you, even at this late hour, come into the vineyard.

Matthew 20:8-9. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard says unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

And when souls come to Christ, however late it is, they have the same joy, the same matchless, perfect peace, the same salvation even, as those who have come while yet they are young. True, they have lost many days, many hours of happy service. They have permitted the sun to decline, and have wasted much time; but yet the Master gives them the same life within them, the same adoption into the family of God, the same blessing.

Matthew 20:10. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

Why, there are some of us that have now been in Christ's vineyard ever since we were boys, but we must not think that we shall receive, or can have, more than those who have just come in. I have heard people say, "Why, here are these people just lately converted, and they are singing and rejoicing; and there some of the old people that have been following the Lord for years, and do not seem to have half the joy. No, no; that is true. It is the old story of the elder brother and the prodigal, over again. But do not — do not let us repeat that forever and ever. Do not let us get off of the lines of free, rich, sovereign grace, and begin to think that there is some desert in us, some merit in us. Oh! my brothers, I will be glad enough to sit at the feet of the meanest child of God, if I am but to be humored in the family — glad enough to have the same salvation which the dying thief obtained, though at the last moment only he looked to Christ. Yet there is this spirit that will grow up — that some who have been longer in the work ought certainly to have more joy, more of everything, than those that have just come in. See the answer to it.

Matthew 20:11-16. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good-man of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour. and you have made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them. and said, Friend, I do you no wrong: did not you agree with me for a penny? Take that your is, and go your way: I will give unto this last, even as unto you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is your eye evil. because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

The great principle of election in divine sovereignty will crop up, not in one place, but in many. God will have us know that he is Master, and that in the kingdom of grace he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and in the distribution of that grace he will give according to his own good pleasure; and the moment we begin to murmur or set up claims he answers us at once with, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Yet that unevangelical spirit, that ungospel spirit of imagining that we have some Sort of claim or right will crone in, and it must be sternly repressed. It is of grace — of grace alone — of grace to begin with, of grace to go on with, of grace to close with: and human merit must not be allowed to put a single finger anywhere. "Where is boasting, then?" says the Apostle. "It is excluded." It is shut out — the door shut in its face. It must not come in. If you and I serve God throughout a long life, we shall certainly have much greater happiness in life than those can have who come to Christ only at the last. But, as far as the gospel blessing is concerned, which Christ gives, it is the same salvation which the newly-born Christian enjoys as that which the most advanced believer is now enjoying. It is to every man the penny, hearing the King's own impress.

Matthew 20:17-20. And Jesus going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in, the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshiping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

Then, in the most inopportune time in all the world, when Jesus was talking of being mocked and crucified, and put to death, here comes Mistress Zebedee with an ambitious request about her sons

Matthew 20:21. And he said unto her, What will you? She says unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on your right hand, and the other on the left, in your kingdom.

He is thinking of a cross, and they are dreaming of a crown. He is speaking of being mocked and put to death, and they have ideas of royalty, that they want to have the chief place in the coming kingdom. Oh! how like ourselves. Our Master thinks of how he can condescend, and we are thinking of how people ought to respect us, and treat us better than they do. Oh! the selfishness that there is in us. May our Master's example help to stay it.

Matthew 20:22-24. But Jesus answered and said, You know not what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he said unto them, You shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give. but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren

Thus showing that they were exactly like them, "For," said they, "look at these two — these James and John — they want to have the preference over us. We will not have it." It was exactly the same spirit in each one — ambition in them all for priority of honor. Ah! dear friends, it often happens that when we are so intense in our condemnation of others, it is only because we fall into the same sin. Some, I have no doubt whatever, hate the Pope because they have the essence of popery in themselves. Two of a trade will never agree; and one man is very angry with another because he is so angry; and one is quite indignant that another should be so proud. He is not proud. He is proud to say he is humble — he is; therein proving how proud he is. Oh! that those beams in our eyes could be got out. Then the motes in our brothers' eyes would probably no more be seen.

Matthew 20:25-28. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Verses 29-34

Matthew 20:29-30. And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, you son of David

On Jericho a curse had rested, but the presence of Jesus brought it a blessing. We suppose he must needs go through Jericho as once before he must needs go through Samaria. Our Lord departed from Jericho, and a vast crowd attended him; for his fame had spread far and wide. Nothing striking is noted concerning his doings until two beggars come upon the scene. Mercy needs misery to give it an occasion to work. Behold, two blind men sitting by the way side. They could not behold Jesus, but we are asked to behold them. They had taken up a hopeful position, by the way side, for there they would be likely to hear any good news, and there they would be seen by the compassionate. They had ears if they had not eyes and they used their hearing well. On inquiry, they learned that Jesus passed by, and believing that he could restore their sight, they grew earnest in prayer to him: they cried out. Their plea was pity: "Have mercy on us." Their appeal was to the royal heart of Jesus: "O Lord, you son of David." Our Lord's sermon was

interrupted by the repeated outcries of these two blind beggars of Jericho; but this never displeased him; neither would true preachers of the gospel be disconcerted if some of their hearers were to cry out with similar eagerness for salvation.

Matthew 20:31. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, you son of David.

The crowd desired to hear Jesus, but could not do so because of the shouts of the blind men: therefore the multitude rebuked them. Did they upbraid them for ill manners, or for noise, or for harshness of tone, or for selfishly wishing to monopolize Jesus? It is always easy to find a stick when you wish to beat a dog. The people wanted them to be quiet, and hold their peace, and found plenty of arguments why they should do so. This was all very well for those who were in possession of their faculties; but men who have lost their sight cannot be quieted if there is an opportunity of obtaining sight; and as that opportunity was rapidly passing away from these poor men, they became vehement in their earnestness. Unhindered by the threats of the crowd, they cried the more. Some men are urged onward by all attempts to pull them back. When we are seeking the Lord, we shall be wise to make every hindrance into a stimulus. We may well bear rebukes and rebuffs when our great aim is to obtain mercy from Jesus. Unvarying was the blind beggars' cry: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, you Son of David!" Variety of words they had no time to study. Having asked for what they needed, in words which leaped from their hearts, they repeated their prayer and their plea, and it was no vain repetition.

Matthew 20:32. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will you that I shall do unto you?

Jesus stood still. At the voice of prayer, the Sun of righteousness paused in his progress. Believing cries can hold the Son of God by the feet. He called them: and this because they had called him. What comfort that call yielded them! We are not told that they came to him: there is no need to tell us that. They were at his feet as soon as the words were uttered. How sadly blind are those who, being called a thousand times by the voice of mercy, yet refuse to come! Our Lord enlightened minds as well as eyes, and so he would have the blind men intelligently feel and express their needs. He puts to them the personal inquiry: "What will you that I shall do unto you?" It was not a hard question, yet it is one which many an attendant at our places of worship would find it difficult to answer. You say you "wish to be saved": what do you mean by those words?

Matthew 20:33. They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

Just so. They needed no time for second thoughts. Oh, that our people were as quick to pray, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened"! They went straight to the point. There is not a word to spare in their explanatory prayer. No book was wanted, no form of words, the desire clothed itself in simple, natural, earnest speech.

Matthew 20:34. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

So, that is, since they thus stated their desire, and had so great a need Jesus had compassion on them, pitying their loneliness in the dark, their deprivation of enjoyment, their loss of power to follow a handicraft, and their consequent, poverty. He touched their eyes. What hands were those which undertook such lowly fellowship with human flesh, and wrought such deeds of power! Immediately their eyes received sight. Only a touch and light entered. Time is not necessary to the cures of Jesus. Proof of their sight was at once forthcoming, for they followed him. We best use our spiritual sight when we look to Jesus, and keep close to his heel. Oh, that the reader, if he be spiritually blind, may ask for the touch of Jesus, and receive it at once, for immediately he will receive sight! An inward light will in an instant shine forth upon the soul, and the spiritual world will become apparent to the enlightened mind. The Son of David still lives, and still opens the eyes of the blind. He still hears the humble prayer of those who know their blindness and their poverty. If the reader fears that he, too, is spiritually blind, let him cry unto the Lord at this very instant, and he will see what he shall see, and he will forever bless the hand which gave sight to the eyes of his soul.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 9:27-35; and Matthew 20:29-34.

Chapter 21

Verses 1-5

Matthew 21:1-3. And when they drew near unto Jerusalem, and were come the Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and immediately you shall find an donkey tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say anything unto you, you shall say, The Lord has need of them; and immediately he will send them.

The time was for our Lord to finish his great work on earth, and his going up to Jerusalem was with this intent. He now determines to

enter his capital city openly, and there to reveal himself as King. To this end, when he came near to the city, Jesus sent two disciples to bring him the foal of an donkey whereon he would ride. His orders to the two disciples whom he commissioned, when they were come to Bethphage, are worthy of our serious attention. He directed them as to the place where they should find the animal: "Go into the village over against you." The Lord knows where that which he requires is to be found. Perhaps it is nearer to us than we dream: "over against you." He told them that they would not have to search: "immediately you shall find." When the Lord sends us on an errand, he will speed us on our way. He described the condition of the creatures: "an donkey tied, and a colt with her." Our Lord knows the position of every animal in the world, and he counts no circumstances to be beneath his notice. Nor did he leave the disciples without orders how they were to proceed: "loose them, and bring them." Demur and debate there would be none; they might act at once. To stand questioning is not for the messengers of our King: it is their duty to obey their Lord's orders, and to fear nothing. The two animals would be willingly yielded up by their owner when the disciples said, "The lord has need of them;" nay, he would not only give them up, but "immediately he will send them." Either the owner was himself a secret disciple, or some awe of the Lord Jesus was on his mind, but he would right joyfully consent to lend the donkey and its foal for the purpose for which they were required. What a singular conjunction of words is here, "the Lord" and "has need"! Jesus, without laying aside his sovereignty, had taken a nature full of needs; yet, being in need, he was still the Lord, and could commend his subjects, and requisition their property. Whenever we have anything of which the Lord's cause has need, how cheerfully should we hand it over to him! The owner of the donkey and her colt regarded it as an honor to furnish Jesus with a creature to ride upon. How great is the power of Jesus over human minds, as that by a word he quietly moves them to do his bidding! We have here the record of two disciples being sent to fetch an donkey: those who do little things for Jesus are honored thereby. Their errand appeared strange, for what they did might seem like robbery; but he who sent them took care to protect them from the least shade of suspicion. The messengers raised no question, offered no objection and met with no difficulty. It is ours to do what Jesus bids us, just as he bids us, and because he bids us; for his command is our authority.

Matthew 21:4-5. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell you the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King comes unto you, meek, and sitting upon an donkey, and a colt the foal of an donkey.

Matthew is always reminding us of the Old Testament, as well, indeed, he may, for our Lord is always fulfilling it. Every point of detail is according to the prophetic model: All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. The Old and New Testaments dovetail into each other. Men have written "Harmonies of the Gospels"; but God has given us a Harmony of the Old and New Testament. The passage referred to is in Zechariah 9:9. It represents Zion's King as meek and lowly even in the hour of his triumphant entrance to his metropolis, riding, not upon a war-horse, but upon a young donkey, whereon no man had sat. He had before said of himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart," and now he gives one more proof of the truth of his own words; and, at the same time of the fulfillment of prophecy: "Tell you the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king comes unto you, meek and sitting upon an donkey." He did not, like Solomon, fetch horses out of Egypt to minister to his pride; but he who was greater than Solomon was content with a colt the foal of an donkey, and even that humble creature was borrowed, for he had none of his own. The tenderness of Jesus comes out in the fact of his having the donkey brought with her foal that they might not be parted. He was, as a King, all gentleness and mercy: his grandeur involved no pain, even for the meanest living thing. How blessed is it for us to be ruled by such a King!

Verses 23-46

Matthew 21:23. And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto, him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority do you these things? and who gave you this authority?

Jesus knew that these men came to him for no good purpose, mad that willing were only trying to trip him up in his speech. He was always willing to teach when men were willing to learn, but he did not care to cast his pearls before swine. Therefore, mark the holy caution, the sacred ingenuity with which our Lord replied to these men.

Matthew 21:24-27. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from Heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From Heaven; he will say unto us, Why did you not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

He carried the war into the enemy's camp. He answered his accusers by asking them a question which they could not answer in either way without condemning themselves.

Matthew 21:28-32. But what think you? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus says unto them, Truly I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto

you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and you, when you had seen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him.

Those poor fallen women and degraded tax-gatherers practically said, by their conduct, "We will not serve the Lord." Their past evil life had been a deliberate rejection of the authority of God; and yet, when John the Baptist came, they repented, and they believed. Each of them had said, like the elder son, "I will not," yet they did it. But as for these chief priests and elders, who all their lives had been outwardly serving the Lord, and Saying, "We will go and work in God's vineyard." when John came, and pointed them to God's own Son, they would not accept him. They had, just now, by refusing to tell whether the Lord's messenger was from Heaven or of men, again rejected him, and proved that they had not repented. They did not believe John, they had themselves confessed that it was so; and, therefore, out of their own mouths they were condemned. I wonder whether there is any lesson in this parable to some who are here; I should not be surprised if there is. I hope that there are some among you, who hitherto have said, "I will not go," who will repent, and go and serve your God; and, on the other hand, it is to be feared that there may be some here, who have always been saying, "I go, sir," who nevertheless have not gone, and perhaps never will go; but will remain to the last disobedient to the command of God. The Lord grant that it may not be so!

Matthew 21:33-41. Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to gardeners, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the gardeners, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the gardeners took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the gardeners saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do unto those gardeners? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other gardeners which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

You see at once how this parable related to the leaders of the Jewish people. From generation to generation, they scorned the prophets of God, persecuted them, and put them to death; and when our Lord himself appeared, though his glory might easily have been seen by them, yet they cast him out from among them, and put him to death. Yet, beloved friends, we must never regard the Scriptures as referring only to strangers and people of past ages; we must also look to see what bearing they have upon ourselves. The rejection of God's prophets is the sin of our common humanity; and the murder of the Son of God was the crime, not of the Jews only, 'but of the whole human race. We, too, have a share in it, for we have rejected the Son of the Highest. "But we were not there," say you. No; and yet we may have repeated that terrible tragedy in our own lives. God has sent you many messengers; and if you remain, at this moment, unconverted, you have not treated them well, else you would have yielded your heart to God. Some of them you have rejected by your neglect, and others have been the subject of your ridicule and contempt. Against some, you have striven violently, for your own conscience has been touched, and you have had to do violence to conscience in order to reject their message. Last of all, the Son of God himself has come to you in the preaching of the gospel. You have heard of his death, and of his atoning sacrifice, but you have rejected them; and, in acting thus, you have done, as far as you could, the same as they did who crucified the Savior. You still refuse to have him for your Savior; you disown him as your King; you strive against his righteous sway. You tell me that you do not. Well, then, you have yielded to him, and you are saved. But if that be not the case, you still remain such an adversary of God that you reject his Son. Take care lest of you also that prophecy should become true, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other gardeners, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

Matthew 21:42. Jesus says unto them, Did you never read in the scriptures,—

What a question this was for our Lord to put to men who professed to have the whole of the Scriptures at their fingers ends, and to be the only qualified interpreters of them: "Did you never read in the Scriptures,"—

Matthew 21:42-43. The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head, of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

And, at this day, we Gentiles enjoy the privileges of the gospel, while poor Israel is scattered to the four winds of Heaven. But he, that spared not the natural olive, will not spare the engrafted branches if we are found unfruitful. God takes the gospel away from one nation, and gives it to another; but it is not accepted by the other one, and if he has not all the glory of it ascribed to him, he will take it away from that nation, too. He may deal there with us; if England becomes and remains a drunken nation, a cruel nation, a proud nation, an unbelieving nation, a superstitious nation, and brings forth the evil fruits of the vine of Sodom, we may not expect that God will always continue his kingdom among us. He will say to us, as Christ said to these chief priests and elders, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

Matthew 21:44. And whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken:

If you stumble over Christ, the chief Corner-stone of God's building, you will be broken in pieces. If you reject him, you shall suffer serious loss.

Matthew 21:44. But on whoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

If you arouse the wrath of Christ, and the Rock of ages falls on you,—a huge cliff comes toppling from its lofty height upon the traveler, and crushes him past all recognition,—you will be ground to powder.

Matthew 21:45-46. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spoke of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

Unhappy people, to reject him who alone could bless them, and yet to stand in fear of him whom they tried to despise! Let it not be so with any of us, but may Jesus become our Teacher, and our Friend, and our Savior for ever, by his abounding grace! Amen.

Chapter 22

Verses 1-14

Matthew 22:1-3. And Jesus answered and spoke unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Observe, that it was a king who made this wedding feast; therefore, to refuse to come to it when the command implied great honor to those who were bidden, was as distinct an insult as could very well be perpetrated against both the king and his son. "They would not come." Had the one who invited them been only an ordinary person, it might not have been their duty to come, and they might even have been justified in their refusal. But this was a king, who sent his servants to summon the guests to the marriage of his son; and I bid you to take notice that the gospel marriage feast, to which you are invited, is the feast, not only of a king, but of the King of kings, your Creator, and your God; and in refusing to come, in obedience to his command, you commit an overt act of rebellion against his Divine Majesty. The king "sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come." They were bidden, yet they would not come; from whence I gather that those who think the invitations of the gospel are to be restricted to certain characters, because they say it is useless to invite others, "do err, not knowing the Scriptures." What have we to do with the apparent uselessness of what we are commanded to do? It is our duty to give the invitation according as our King directs us; but it is not our business to decide whether that invitation will be accepted or rejected. In this case, we know what happened: "They would not come."

Matthew 22:4. Again he sent forth other servants,

Perhaps, in the kindness of his heart, he thought that the first servants, whom he sent, were somewhat offensive in their manner; and that, therefore, the guests would not come; just as it may be that some of you will never receive the gospel from one minister, for you have a prejudice against his way of putting it; so the Lord may, in the greatness of his mercy, send you his Word by the mouth of another. I am quite sure that any of us, who are the King's servants, would be very glad for somebody else to take our place if he could succeed better with you than we can. This king, in his wisdom and kindness, "sent forth other servants,"-

Matthew 22:4-6. Saying, Tell them, which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.

The great majority of those who heard the invitation, "made light of it," and still is this the habit of the hulk of mankind, and even of many whom I am now addressing. Any day will do for you to think about Christ, so you seem to fancy. He may have your leavings; when it shall come to the last, you think that you can send for a minister to come and pray with you, and that then all will be well. You make light of it,—you make light of present mercy, of immediate reconciliation to God, you make light of the love and grace of God, and of the precious blood of Jesus. Take heed what you are doing, for the great King in Heaven regards this as high treason against himself, he looks upon it as a presumptuous attempt to lower his infinite majesty in the eyes of men. When a king has killed his oxen and fatlings for his son's wedding feast, and there is nobody to eat the provision, then is it a dishonor to him; and if it were possible for the gospel provisions to be universally rejected, God would be dishonored. There are some, however, who go further than merely making light of the invitation; "the remnant" who would, if they could, maltreat and slay the messengers of mercy; and, as they cannot, nowadays, kill their bodies, they try to slay their reputations. Any slander which they have heard, or any lie which they have invented, will do to tell in order to make the minister of Christ of less repute than he deserves to be.

Matthew 22:7-10. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then says he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go you therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

This is the glorious rule of the gospel still. Those who were first bidden to the great wedding feast were the Jews; they would not come, and there fore, Jerusalem was destroyed. Now the gospel is preached to all nations, and all sorts of people in all nations; yet the same sinful rejection of the invitation is constantly being repeated. You, who hear the gospel from Sunday to Sunday, are bidden by it to come to the great supper; and, as some of you will not come, God, in his infinite mercy, is sending his gospel to the poorest and the vilest of mankind. Many of them do come, and thus the Lord provokes you to jealousy by a people who were not a people; and astonishes you as you find that many come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and sit down in the kingdom of God, while you, who reckoned yourselves to be the children of the kingdom, because you have long been privileged to hear the gospel, shall be cast out. The king's servants "gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good." The best gathering into the visible church is sure to be a mixture; there will be some coming into it who should not be there.

Matthew 22:11. And when the king came in to see the guests,

For whom he had provided sumptuous garments suitable for the wedding,-for, as we provide what is supposed to be appropriate array for mourners at a funeral, so, in the East, they provide, on a much larger scale, suitable apparel for wedding guests.

Matthew 22:11. He saw there a man, which had not on a wedding garment:

He might have had one, for it was provided. The fact that he had not one was as great an insult to the king as a refusal of his invitation would have been. He was not bound to provide himself with a wedding garment; he could not have done it, for he was probably one of those swept up out of the highways. But there it hung, and he was requested to put it on; but he refused, and he had the impertinence to sit there without the indispensable wedding garment. If he could not show his contempt for the king in one way, he would do so in another; and he dared, in the midst of the wedding feasters, to defy the authority of the king, and to refuse to do honor to the newly-married prince.

Matthew 22:12. And he says unto him, Friend, how came you in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

He could give no reply; the king's presence awed him into silence.

Matthew 22:13. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

You may manage to get into the church even though you are not converted; but if you are not trusting in Christ, you are not saved, and your false profession will only make your destruction the more terrible. Woe unto us unless we are found wearing the righteousness of Christ,-unless our lives are made holy by the gracious influence of his blessed Spirit! These are the wedding garments which we are to wear. If we have them not, our presence at the festival will not avail us in the great testing time that is coming.

Matthew 22:14. For many are called, but few are chosen.

All who hear the gospel are called, but the call does not come with equal power to every heart. And with some, the power with which it comes is not that which saves; it only convinces the intellect, so that an outward homage is paid to the Word, and the inward obedience of the soul is not rendered to the Lord. God grant that each of us may have on the wedding garment when the King comes in to see the guests!

Chapter 23

Verses 29-39

Matthew 23:29-31. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you be witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them which killed the prophets.

They talk in the same conceited manner, and they claim self-righteousness, as their fathers did; and if their ancestors killed the prophets, these men garnish their sepulchers, and so are sharers in their forefathers' deeds. How often it happens that men say they would not have done such crimes as others have committed, whereas they do not know the vileness of their own hearts. If they

were under the same conditions as others, they would act in the same way. It would have been a better sign if the scribes and Pharisees had lamented before God that they themselves were not treating his prophets as they ought to be treated. How very faithful was our Master! He was very tender in spirit; but still, he spoke very severely. The old proverb says that "a good surgeon often cuts deeply," and so it was with the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not film the evil matter over, he lanced the wound. He is not the most loving who speaks the smoothest words; true love often compels an honest man to say that which pains him far more than it affects his callous hearers.

Matthew 23:32-33. Fill you up then the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of Hell?

This is Christ's utterance, let me remind you. Our modern preachers would not talk like this, even to scribes and Pharisees who were crucifying Christ afresh, and putting Him to an open flame. They would search the dictionary through to find very smooth and pretty words to say to Christ's enemies. We are not of their way of thinking and speaking, nor shall there be while we desire to follow in the footsteps of our Lord.

Matthew 23:34. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

Which they did; the servants of Christ were thus worried and harried all over the land.

Matthew 23:35-36. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias whom you slew between the temple and the altar. Truly I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

So they did. The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. There must have been nearly a million and a quarter of people killed during that terrible siege, and even Titus, when he saw the awful carnage, said, "What must be the folly of this people that they drive me to such work as this? Surely, the hand of an avenging God must be in it." Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood.

Matthew 23:37-38. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

What a picture of pity and disappointed love the king's face must have presented when, with flowing tears, he spoke these words! It was the utterance of the righteous Judge, choked with emotion. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom, and its guilt was about to culminate in the death of the Son of God.

Matthew 23:39. For I say unto you, You shall not see me henceforth, until you shall say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 23:29-39; and Matthew 24:1-21.

Chapter 24

Verses 1-21

Matthew 24:1. And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

Ah, me! the rejected king took but slight interest in the temple of which his disciples thought so much. To them the appearance was glorious; but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father's house, which ought to have been a house of prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves, and soon would be utterly destroyed.

Matthew 24:2. And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? truly I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And it was so. Josephus tells us that Titus at first tried to save the temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no avail; and at last he gave orders that the whole city and temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. Yet the stones of the temple were such as men very seldom see, so exceedingly great; they looked as if, once in their place, they

would stand there throughout eternity, but all are gone, according to our Lord's prophecy.

Matthew 24:3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives,

The little procession continued ascending the Mount of Olives, until Jesus reached a resting-place from which he could see the temple.

Matthew 24:3. The disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

There are here two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples inquired first about the time of the destruction of the temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming, and of "the consummation of the age", as it is in the margin of the Revised Version. The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious, and that could only be fully understood as that which he foretold actually occurred. He told his disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned his Second Advent, and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Savior's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

Matthew 24:4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for his disciples was not that they might know when "these things" would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time.

Matthew 24:5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And they did. A large number of impostors came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, giving out that they were Messiahs.

Matthew 24:6. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars:

And they did. The armies of Rome were soon after this on their way to the doomed city.

Matthew 24:6-8. See that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquake, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

One would think that there was sorrow enough in famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places; but our Lord said that all these were only "the beginning of sorrows" — the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede his coming, either to Jerusalem or to the whole world.

Matthew 24:9-14. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he who shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

But as for this destruction of Jerusalem, the Savior gave them clear warning.

Matthew 24:15-16. When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever reads, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:

As soon as Christ's disciples saw "the abomination of desolation", that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatrous emblems, stand in the holy place, they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived, and they did "flee into the mountains." You will say to me, perhaps, "but there were Romans there before." Yes, the Romans were in possession, but the eagles and other idolatrous symbols were never exhibited in Jerusalem. The Romans were often very lenient to the different people whom they subdued, and these symbols were kept out of sight until the last war came. Then wherever the Jews and Christians looked, they could see those various images of Caesar and of the Roman state which were worshiped by the soldiery, and then were the faithful to flee to the mountains. It is a remarkable fact that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem; the followers of Christ fled away to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the unbelieving Jews.

Matthew 24:17-18. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

They were to flee in all haste the moment they saw the Roman standards,

Matthew 24:19-21. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray you that your flight be

not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

You and I would have believed that all this came true without any confirmation from outside history, but it was very remarkable that God should raise up the Jew Josephus, and put it into his mind to write a record of the siege of Jerusalem, which curdles the blood of everyone who reads it, and exactly bears out the statement of the Master that there was to be "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be."

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 23:29-39; and Matthew 24:1-21.

Verses 1-28

Matthew 24:1-2. And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciple came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? truly I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

The King, having finished his first discourse in the temple, left it, never to return: "Jesus went out, and departed from the temple." His ministry there was ended. As his disciples moved away with him towards the mount of Olives, they called his attention to the great stones of which the temple was constructed, and the costly adornments of the beautiful building. To them the appearance was glorious; but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father's house, which ought to have been a house of prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves, and soon would be utterly destroyed: Jesus said unto them, "See you not all these things? truly I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Josephus tells us that Titus at first tried to save the temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no avail; and at last he gave orders that the whole city and temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. This was so thoroughly done that the historian says that there was but nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. We sometimes delight in the temporal prosperity of the Church as if it were something that must certainly endure; but all that is external will pass away or be destroyed. Let us only reckon that to be substantial which comes from God, and is God's work. The things which are seen are temporal.

Matthew 24:3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

The little procession continued ascending the mount of Olives until Jesus reached a resting-place from which he could see the temple (Mark 13:3). There he sat down, and the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?" These are the questions that have been asked in every age since our Savior's day. There are here two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples inquired first about the time of the destruction of the temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming, and of "the consummation of the age" (R.V. margin). The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious, and that could only be fully understood as that which he foretold actually occurred. He told his disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned his Second Advent, and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Savior's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

Matthew 24:4-6. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for his disciples was not that they might know when "these things" would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time. Therefore, Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." They were to beware lest any of the pretended Messiahs should lead them astray, as they would pervert many others. A large number of impostors, came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, giving out that they were the anointed of God, almost every page of history is blotted with the names of such deceivers; and in our own day we have seen some come in Christ's name, saying that they are Christ's. Such men seduce many; but they who heed their Lord's warning will not be deluded by them. Our Savior's words, "You shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars," might be applied to almost any period of the world's history. Earth has seldom had a long spell of quiet, there have almost always been both the realities of war, and the rumors of war. There were many such before Jerusalem was overthrown; there have been many such ever since; and there will be many such until that glorious period when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "See that you be not troubled" is a timely message for the disciples of Christ in every age. "For all these things must come to pass," therefore let us not be surprised or alarmed at them, "but the end is not yet." The destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning of the end, the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. It was an end; but not the end: "the end is not yet."

Matthew 24:7-8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famine, and pestilences, and

earthquakes, in divers places, All these are the beginning of sorrows.

One would think that there was sorrow enough in "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places", but our Lord said that "all these" were only "the beginning of sorrows", the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede his coming, either to Jerusalem, or to the whole world. If famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are only "the beginning of sorrows", what may we not expect the end to be? This prophecy ought both to warn the disciples of Christ what they may expect, and wean them from the world where all these and greater sorrows are to be experienced.

Matthew 24:9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

Our Lord not only foretold the general trial that would come upon the Jews, and upon the world; but also the special persecution which would be the portion of his chosen followers: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." The New Testament gives abundant proof of the fulfillment of these words. Even in Paul's day, "this sect" was "everywhere spoken against." Since then, has there been any land unstained by the blood of the martyrs? Wherever Christ's gospel has been preached, men have risen up in arms against the messengers of mercy, and afflicted and killed them wherever they could.

Matthew 24:10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

This would be a bitter trial for the followers of Christ, yet this they have always had to endure. Persecution would reveal the traitors within the Church as well as the enemies without. In the midst of the chosen ones there would be found successors of Judas, who would be willing to betray the disciples as he betrayed his Lord. Saddest of all is the betrayal of good men by their own relatives; but even this they have many of them had to bear for Christ's sake.

Matthew 24:11-12. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

What could not be accomplished by persecutors outside the Church, and traitors inside, would be attempted by teachers of heresy: "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." They have risen in all ages; in these modern times they have risen in clouds, until the air is thick with them, as with an army of devouring locusts. These are the men who invent new doctrines, and who seem to think that the religion of Jesus Christ is something that a man may twist into any form and shape that he pleased. Alas that such teachers should have any disciples! It is doubly sad that they should be able to lead astray "many." Yet, when it so happens, let us remember that the King said that it would be so. Is it any wonder that, where such "iniquity abounds" and such lawlessness is multiplied, "the love of many shall wax cold"? If the teachers deceive the people, and give them "another gospel which is not another", it is no marvel that there is a lack of love and zeal. The wonder is that there is any love and zeal left after they have been subjected to such a chilling and killing process as that adopted by the advocates of the modern "destructive criticism." Truly, it is rightly named "destructive", for it destroys almost everything that is worth preserving.

Matthew 24:13. But he who shall endure unto the end, the same shall he saved.

Again our Savior reminded his disciples of the personal responsibility of each one of them in such a time of trial and testing as they were about to pass through. He would have them remember that it is not the man who starts in the race, but the one who runs to the goal, who wins the prize: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." If this doctrine were not supplemented by another, there would be but little good tidings for poor, tempted, tried and struggling saints in such words as these. Who among us would persevere in running the heavenly race if God did not preserve us from falling, and give us persevering grace? But, blessed be his name, "the righteous shall hold on his way." "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Matthew 24:14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

The world is to the Church like a scaffold to a building. When the Church is built, the scaffold will be taken down; the world must remain until the last elect one is saved: "Then shall the end come." Before Jerusalem was destroyed, "this gospel of the kingdom" was probably "preached in all the world" so far as it was then known, but there is to be a fuller proclamation of it "for a witness unto all nations" before the great consummation of all things: "then shall the end come," and the King shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and decide the eternal destiny of the whole human race.

Matthew 24:15-18. When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place, (whose reads, let him understand;) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

This portion of our Savior's words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ's disciples saw "the abomination of desolation", that is, the Roman ensigns, with their idolatrous emblems, "stand in the holy place", they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived; and they did "flee into the mountains." The Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages, "in Judea", availed themselves of the first opportunity for eluding the Roman armies, and fled to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the Jews. There was no time to spare before the final investment of the guilty city, the man "on the house-top" could "not come down to take anything out of his house", and the man "in the field" could not "return back to take his clothes." They must flee to the mountains in the greatest haste the moment that they saw "Jerusalem compassed with armies" (Luke 21:20).

Matthew 24:19-21. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

It must have been a peculiarly trying time for the women who had to flee from their homes just when they needed quiet and rest. How thoughtful and tender was our pitiful Savior in thus sympathizing with suffering mothers in their hour of need! "Flight . . . in the winter" or "on the Sabbath day" would have been attended with special difficulties; so the disciples were exhorted to "pray" that come other time might be available. The Lord knew exactly when they would be able to escape, yet he bade them pray that their flight might not be in the winter, nor on the Sabbath-day. The wise men of the present day would have said that prayer was useless under such conditions, not so the great Teacher and Example of his praying people; he taught that such a season was the very time for special supplication. The reason for this injunction was thus stated by the Savior: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Read the record written by Josephus of the destruction of Jerusalem, and see how truly our Lord's words were fulfilled. The Jews impiously said, concerning the death of Christ, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Never did any other people invoke such an awful curse upon themselves, and upon no other nation did such a judgment ever fall. We read of Jews crucified until there was no more wood for making crosses; of thousands of the people slaying one another in their fierce faction fights within the city; of so many of them being sold for slaves that they became a drug in the market, and all but valueless, and of the fearful carnage when the Romans at length entered the doomed capital and the blood-curdling story exactly bears out the Savior's statement uttered nearly forty years before the terrible events occurred.

Matthew 24:22. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

These were the words of the King as well as of the Prophet, and as such, they were both authentic and authoritative. Jesus spoke of what "should be", not only as the Seer who was able to gaze into the future, but as the Sovereign Disposer of all events. He knew what a fiery trial awaited the unbelieving nation, and that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." If the horrors of the siege were to continue long, the whole race of the Jews would be destroyed. The King had the power to cut short the evil days, and he explained his reason for using that power: "For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Those who had been hated and persecuted by their own countrymen became the means of preserving them from absolute annihilation. Thus has it often been since those days, and for the sake of his elect the Lord has withheld many judgments, and shortened others. The ungodly owe to the godly more you they know, or would care to own.

Matthew 24:23-26. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert; go not forth behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

It is a grand thing to have such faith in Christ that you have none to spare for imposters. It is important not to distribute your faith too widely. Those who believe in a little of everything will, in the end, believe nothing of anything. If you exercise full faith in that which is sure and steadfast, "false Christs and false prophets" will not be able to make you their dupes. In one respect, the modern teachers of heresy are more successful than their Judean prototypes, for they do actually "deceive the very elect", even though they cannot "show great signs and wonders." One of the saddest signs of the times in which we live is the ease with which "the very elect" are deceived by the smooth-tongued "false Christs and false prophets" who abound in our midst. Yet our Savior expressly forewarned his followers against them: "Behold, I have told you before." Forewarned is forearmed. Let it be so in our case. Our Savior's expressive command may be fitly applied to the whole system of "modern thought" which is contrary to the inspired Word of God: "Believe it not."

Matthew 24:27. For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

When HE comes, we shall know who he is, and why he has come. There will be no longer any mystery or secret about "the coming of the Son of man." There will be no need to ask any questions then; no one will make a mistake about his appearing when it

actually takes place. "Every eye shall see him." Christ's coming will be sudden, startling, universally visible, and terrifying to the ungodly:" as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west." His first coming to judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem had terrors about it that until then had never been realized on the earth; his last coming will be more dreadful still.

Matthew 24:28. For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Judaism had become a "carcass", dead and corrupt; fit prey for the cultures or carrion-kites of Rome. By-and-by, there will arrive another day, when there will be a dead church in a dead world, and "the eagles" of divine judgment "will be gathered together" to tear in pieces those whom there shall be none to deliver. The birds of prey gather wherever dead bodies are to be found; and the judgments of Christ will be poured out when the body politic or religious becomes unbearably corrupt.

Verses 42-51

Matthew 24:42. Watch therefore: for you know not what hour your Lord does come.

That he will come, is certain. That his coming may be at any moment, is equally sure; and, therefore, we ought to be always ready for his appearing.

The Lord made us to be so!

Matthew 24:43-44. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes.

Perhaps you can imagine how eagerly the householder watches when he expects thieves. Every little sound alarms him. He thinks he hears someone at the door; then he fancies it is someone at the window; but he is on the alert, with eye and ear and his whole being wide awake. So ought we to be, with regard to the coming of the Lord, as watchful as if we knew that Christ would come tonight; we do not know that he will come so soon, yet it may be so, "for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes."

Matthew 24:45-46. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing.

Doing whatever the Master has appointed him to do; if he be a minister, preaching the truth with all his heart; if he be a teacher, endeavoring to feed the minds of the young with sound doctrine; whatever may be his calling, endeavoring to fulfill it to the great Taskmaster's satisfaction, as if he should suddenly break in upon the work, and look at it there and then, and judge his servant by it. This is the way to live.

Matthew 24:47. Truly I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

There are rewards for faithful service; — not of debt, but of grace; — not according to the law, but according to the discipline of the house of God. Oh, that we may be such faithful servants that our Lord may make us rulers over all that he has!

Matthew 24:48-51. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that, he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

He was a servant, you see; so this is a warning, not to the outside world, but to you who are inside the nominal church, and who profess to be servants of God; and it is especially a warning to those of us who are ministers of the gospel. Oh, that we may never begin to smite our fellow servants! Of course, we shall not do it with the fist, but we may do it with the tongue; and may we never be numbered with those who are living for the delights of the flesh! If so, see what must come to us. Our Lord still continued to speak upon the same subject of watchfulness by delivering the very stirring parable of the wise and foolish virgins.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 24:42-51; and Matthew 25:1-13.

Chapter 25

Verses 1-13

Matthew 25:1-2. Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, And five were foolish.

What a division this makes in the visible Church of God! Let us hope that we are not to gather from this that as many as half the professors of Christianity at any time are like these foolish virgins; yet our Lord would not have mentioned so high a proportion if there were not a very large admixture of foolish with the wise: "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

Matthew 25:3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

They thought that, if they had the external, it would be quite enough. The secret store of oil, they judged to be unnecessary, because it would be unseen. They would employ one hand in carrying the lamp, but to occupy the other hand by holding the oil-flask seemed to them to be doing too much,—giving themselves up too thoroughly to the work; so they "took their lamps, and took no oil with them." They might just as well have had no lamps at all.

Matthew 25:4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Oil in their lamps, and oil with their lamps. Lamps are of no use without oil; yet the oil needs the lamp, or else it cannot be rightly used. The light of profession cannot be truly sustained without the oil of grace. Grace, wherever it exists, ought to show itself, as the oil is made to burn by means of the lamp; but it is no use to attempt to make a show unless there is that secret store somewhere by which the external part of religion may be maintained.

Matthew 25:5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Both the wise and the foolish fell into a state which seemed alike in them both. In the case of good men, Christ's delaying his coming often causes disappointment, weariness, and then lethargy, and even the true Church falls into a deep slumber. In the foolish, the mere professors, this condition goes much further. There being in them no true life, the very name to live becomes abandoned, and before long, they give up even the profession of religion when there is no secret oil of grace to sustain it.

Matthew 25:6. And at midnight

When things had come to the worst,—at midnight"—the coldest and darkest hour, when everybody was asleep.

Matthew 25:6. There was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him.

That was a cry which startled everybody; none of the virgins could sleep when once it was announced that the bridegroom was coming. I wish, dear friends, that we thought more of the great truth of the Second Advent. The oftener it is preached, in due proportion with other truths, the better. We need still to hear that midnight cry, "Go you out to meet him."

Matthew 25:7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

They could not sleep any longer; they were fairly startled and aroused.

Matthew 25:8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil;

Ah, me! now they began to value what they had aforetime despised. They were foolish enough to think that oil was unnecessary; but now they saw that it was the one essential thing, so they cried to the wise virgins, "Give us of your oil." And hear the dreadful reason:—

Matthew 25:8. For our lamps are gone out.

I do not know any more terrible words than those, "Our lamps are gone out." It is worse to have a lamp that has gone out than never to have had a lamp at all. "'Our lamps are gone out.' We once rejoiced in them. We promised ourselves a bright future. We said, 'All is well for the marriage supper.' But 'our lamps are gone out,' and we have no oil with which to replenish them." O sirs, may none of us ever have to lift up that mournful cry! On a dying bed, in the extremity of pain, in the depth of human weakness, it is an awful thing to find one's profession burning low, one's hope of Heaven going out, like the snuff of a candle.

Matthew 25:9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

It is no easy matter to go and rouse up the seller of oil when the midnight hour has struck. O you who are putting off repentance to a dying bed, you are foolish virgins indeed! Your folly has reached the utmost height. You will have more than enough to do, when you lie there with the death-sweat cold upon your brow, without then having to seek the grace which you are neglecting to obtain today, but which you will value then.

Matthew 25:10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came;—

While they were going.

Matthew 25:10-11. And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Too late, so that they could not enter.

Matthew 25:12. But he answered and said, Truly I say unto you, I know you not.

"I never knew you," says Christ in another place; and this knowledge of his is always bound up with affection. He loves no heart that he knows not in this sense. Those whom he knows, he loves. Will he ever say to me or to you, dear friend, "I know you not"? God grant that he never may have cause to do so I

Matthew 25:13. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.

Verses 14-30

Matthew 25:14. For the kingdom of Heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

This parable has to do with you who are professors of Christianity. He "called his own servants," those who, by their own consent, were numbered among his household servitors: "He called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." Not theirs, but his; and therefore to be used for him. If you are Christ's servant, your abilities are his, he has lent them to you to be employed for your Lord. "He called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods."

Matthew 25:15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and immediately took his journey.

He is gone; our Lord has risen; and we, his servants, are left behind to trade with his goods for his glory.

Matthew 25:16-18. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he who had receded one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

We are grieved to know that there are persons with five talents, and others with two talents, who do as this man did; but the case is put in this way, so as to reach us all. Since most persons have but one talent, they are the most often found each one saying, "I have so little ability, I will not do anything. If I had five talents, I might become distinguished; if I had two, I might be very useful; but with one, I need not attempt anything. I am a private person,— a mother, quite obscure, with my little family around me, what can I do?" It is very often a strong temptation from Satan, to those who have but one talent, to make them think that they may, with impunity, hide that one. And then, you see, the argument cuts the other way. If it be wrong to hide one talent, much more wrong is it to hide two, and far worse to dig in the earth, and bury five.

Matthew 25:19. After a long time the lord of those servants comes, and reckons with them.

Always remember the reclining. We have heard of one, who went into a house of entertainment, and fed most luxuriously; but, when the landlord brought him the bill, he said, "Oh, I never thought of that!" And there are many who spend their whole lives without ever thinking of the reckoning; yet it must come, and for every hour, for every opportunity, for every ability, for every sin, and for every omission of duty, they must give account. "The lord of those servants comes, and reckons with them."

Matthew 25:20-21. And so he who had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, you delivered unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord.

I do not doubt that this man had often reckoned with himself,— for he who never reckons with himself may well be afraid of being called to reckon with his God; — and I expect that he had often grieved to think that he had not turned the five talents into twenty. He must have thought that, to gain only five talents more, was very little; but he found his master was well content with what he had done. Do you think, brother, that all of you who have five talents have gained five talents more? You were richly endowed as a youth; have you increased the ability to serve your God? You see, the parable speaks not so much of what they had done for other people, as of what they had themselves gained, and still had in hand. Have you more grace? Have you more tact? Have you more adaptation to your Master's service? Are you conscious that it is so? I should not wonder if you are mourning that you are not more useful, and more fit to be used. It is well that you should mourn in that way; but when your Master comes, I trust that he will say, "Well done, you good and faithful servant."

Matthew 25:22-23. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, you deliver unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your lord.

That is a beautiful reward,— not so much to have a joy of our own as to enter into the joy of our Lord. It is not a servant's portion that is given to us; it is the Master's portion shared by his servants. How it ennobles Christian work to feel that it is not simply our work, but work done by the Master through the servant; and the reward shall not so much be our joy as our entrance into our Master's joy. That is indeed giving to us the best of the best in return for our poor service here.

Matthew 25:24-25. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew you that you are an hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have that is your.

"I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth." See, friends, how fear may often be the mother of presumption. Confidence in God begets holy fear; but unholy fear begets a doubt of God, and leads us to desperate rebellion of unbelief. God save us from such fear!

Matthew 25:26-27. His lord answered and said unto him, You wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: you ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

His lord took him on his own ground, and condemned him out of his own mouth.

Matthew 25:28-29. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which has ten talents. For unto every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance:

He who has faith shall have more faith. He who has a secret taste for heavenly things shall have a greater love for them. He who has some understanding of the truth of God shall get more understanding of it. God gives to those that have; it is equally true that he gives to those who confess that they have not.

Matthew 25:29. But from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has.

If you want an instance of taking away from a man what he has not got, you may have seen it sometimes in the case of a person without any education or knowledge, who is quite content to remain in that condition. But, on a sudden, he is introduced into learned society; he hears what educated people have to say, and he exclaims, "What a fool I am!" What he thought he had, though he never had it, suddenly goes from him.

Matthew 25:30. And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

If we give any description of the world to come which is at all terrible, those who reject the Scriptures begin to cry out that we have borrowed it from Dante, or taken it from Milton; but I take leave to say that the most awful and harrowing descriptions of the woes of the lost that ever fell from human lip do not exceed or even equal the language of the loving Christ himself. Listen: "Cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He is the true lover of men's souls who does not deceive them. He who paints the miseries of Hell as though they were but little is seeking to murder men's souls under the pretense of being their friend. May God give all of you grace to trust in Jesus for yourselves, and then to point others to him, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Chapter 26

Verses 6-30

6, 7. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

This is not the woman who anointed Christ's feet with ointment, but another of the holy women who ministered to him. I believe this was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who came to Jesus, "having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat."

8, 9. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

When you do the best you can do, from the purest motives, and your Lord accepts your service, do not expect that your brethren will approve all your actions. If you do, you will be greatly disappointed. There was never a more beautiful proof of love to Christ than this anointing at Bethany, yet the disciples found fault with it. As they could not object to the thing itself, they objected that there might have been another thing done that would have been better. There is a great deal of that kind of wisdom in the world which can always teach you how you might have done a thing better, but if you wait until you learn that wisdom, you will never do anything for your Lord. If this devoted and enthusiastic woman had waited for the advice of these prudent people, she would neither have sold the ointment, nor poured it out. She did well to take council with her own loving heart, and then to pour the precious oil upon that dear head which was so soon to be crowned with thorns. She thus showed that there was at least one heart in the world that thought nothing was too good for her Lord, and that the best of the best ought to be given to him. May she have many imitators in every age until Jesus comes again!

10. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble you the woman?

She had been very happy in the act, probably it was the happiest hour in all her life when she gave this costly gift to the Lord she loved so well. But a cloud passed over her bright face as the whispered complaints reached her ear. She was evidently a tender-hearted soul, so the Savior said to the disciples, "Why trouble you the woman?"

10. For she has wrought a good work upon me.

We cannot do what this woman did; but we can perform good works upon others for Christ's sake; and he will accept them as though they were done unto himself.

11-13. For you have the poor always with you; but me you have not always. For in that she has poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Truly I say unto you, Wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her.

She probably did not know all that her action meant when she anointed her Lord for his burial. We often do much more than we think we do. The consequences of the simplest action done for Christ may be much greater than we suppose. This woman is preparing Christ's body for his approaching burial. Little dreams she that it is so, but so it is. Go you my sister, and do what God bids you; and it shall be seen that you have done far more than you know. Obey the holy impulse within your spirit, my brother; and you may do ten thousand times more than you have ever imagined to be possible. This woman's outburst of affection, this simple-hearted act of love to Christ himself, is one of those things which are to live as long as the gospel lives. The aroma of this loving deed is to abide as long as the world itself endures.

14, 15. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?

Out of twelve apostles, one was a Judas Iscariot. Marvel not, therefore, if, among your friends and kinsfolk, you have one who turns against you, and betrays you to your enemies.

15. And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

The price of a slave, thus they were fulfilling the ancient prophecy: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver."

16. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

The traitor sold his Master for thirty pieces of dirty silver; yet many have sold Jesus for a less price than Judas received: a smile or a sneer has been sufficient to induce them to betray their Lord.

17, 18. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where will you that we prepare for you to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.

How truly royal was Jesus of Nazareth even in his humility! He had only to send two of his disciples "into the city to such a man," and the guest chamber, furnished and prepared, was at once placed at his disposal. He did not take the room by arbitrary force, as an earthly monarch might have done; but he obtained it by the diviner compulsion of almighty love. Jesus knew something about this man that you and I do not know, so he said to his disciples: Just go and say to him, 'The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" Was he not himself a disciple? I cannot say but this I do know, that the Lord Jesus has a certain number who are willing to help his cause, even though as yet they hardly call themselves his disciples. I should think, however, that after this man had once had the Master and his disciples in his house, there must have been a blessing left behind, and he would want to become one of that goodly company. It is well, dear friend, that you are willing to have the prayer-meeting in your house, it is well that you will stand up on the side of truth, even if you have no share in it as yet, for maybe, — and I hope the

"maybe" will become a certainty, — you will yet be one of Christ's disciples.

19. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.

They went to this man, delivered Christ's message, and he showed them a large upper room, furnished and prepared. If Christ's disciples always loyally did as Jesus appointed them, they would always speed well on his errands. There are many more people in the world ready to yield to Christ than some of us think. The person sitting or standing by your side is quite unknown to you, but, if you will speak to him about the Savior, he will probably respond to your word. At any rate, try him, and see if it be not so. Whether standing or sitting, there must be someone here not yet a disciple, who only needs for you to speak a kind word, and the deciding work will be done.

20, 21. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Truly I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

"One of you" — and his eyes would glance round the table as he said it, — "one of you shall betray me."

22. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him Lord, is it I?

No one said, "Lord, is it Judas?" Perhaps no one of the eleven thought that Judas was base enough to betray the Lord who had given him an honorable place among his apostles. It is certainly a mark of grace that "every one" of the apostles put to their Lord the question, "Is it I?"

23, 24. And he answered and said, He who dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

We learn from our Lord's words that divine decrees do not deprive a sinful action of its guilt: "The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" The criminality of Judas was just as great as though there had been no "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" even as it was with those to whom Peter spoke so boldly on the day of Pentecost, when he charged them with the murder of Jesus.

20. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.

What a chill that answer must have cast over the little band around the table, especially when Judas rose, and started off, to carry out his dreadful purpose of staining his soul with the blood of his Lord!

26-29. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Thus Jesus took the great Nazarite vow never to drink of the fruit of the vine until he should drink it new with His disciples in His Father's kingdom. O Lord, you have pledged us in this cup, and you will return before long, and then what festivals we will hold with you, what joy we shall have in you forever and ever!

30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives.

Was it not truly brave of our dear Lord to sing under such circumstances? He was going forth to his last dread conflict, to Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha; yet he went with a song on His lips. The door opens, they go downstairs, they are in the open-air, that night of the full moon, and they wend their way to the Mount of Olives. Then came that desperate struggle in which the great Captain of our salvation wrestled even to a bloody sweat, and prevailed.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 147, And Matthew 26:6-30.

Verses 14-35

Matthew 26:14-16. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

It was one of the twelve, who went unto the chief priests, to bargain for the price of his Lord's betrayal. He did not even mention Christ's name in his infamous question, "What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" The amount agreed upon, thirty pieces of silver, was the price of a slave; and showed how little value the chief priests set upon Jesus, and also revealed the greed of Judas in selling his Master for so small a sum. Yet many have sold Jesus for a less price than Judas received; a smile or a sneer has been sufficient to induce them to betray their Lord. Let us, who have been redeemed with Christ's precious blood, set high store

by him, think much of him, and praise him much. As we remember with shame and sorrow, these thirty pieces of silver, let us never undervalue him, or forget the priceless preciousness of him who was reckoned as worth no more than a slave.

Matthew 26:17-18. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where will you that we prepare for you to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.

How truly royal was Jesus of Nazareth even in his humiliation! He had no home of his own therein he could "keep the Passover" with his disciples; he was soon to be put to a public and shameful death; yet he had only to send two of his disciples "into the city to such a man," and the guest-chamber, furnished and prepared, was at once placed at his disposal. He did not take the room by arbitrary force, as an earthly monarch might have done; but he obtained it by the diviner compulsion of almighty love. Even in his lowest estate, our Lord Jesus had the hearts of all men beneath his control. What power he has now that he reigns in glory!

Matthew 26:19. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.

If Christ's disciples always loyally did as Jesus appointed them, they would always speed well on his errands. There are many more people in the world ready to yield to Christ than some of us think. If we would only go to them as Peter and John went to this man in Jerusalem, and say to them what "the Master says", we should find that their hearts would be opened to receive Christ even as this man's house was willingly yielded up at our Lord's request.

Matthew 26:20-21. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Truly I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Our Lord remained in seclusion until the evening, and then went to the appointed place, and sat down, or rather, reclined at the paschal table, with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, "Truly I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." This was a most unpleasant thought to bring to a feast, yet it was most appropriate to the Passover, for God's commandment to Moses concerning the first paschal lamb was, "With bitter herbs they shall eat it." This was a painful reflection for our Lord, and also for his twelve chosen companions: "One of you", and his eyes would glance round the table so he said it, "One of you shall betray me."

Matthew 26:22. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

That short sentence fell like a bomb-shell among the Savior's bodyguard. It startled them; they had all made great professions of affection for him, and, for the most part, those professions were true. And they were exceeding sorrowful: and well they might be. Such a revelation was enough to produce the deepest emotions of sorrow and sadness. It is a beautiful trait in the character of the disciples that they did not suspect one another, but every one of them inquired, almost incredulously, as the form of the question implies "Lord, is it I?" "No one said, "Lord, is it Judas?" Perhaps no one of the eleven thought that Judas was base enough to betray the Lord who had given him an honorable place among his apostles. We cannot do any good by suspecting our brethren; but we may do great services by suspecting ourselves. Self-suspicion is near akin to humility.

Matthew 26:23-24. And he answered and said, He who dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

A man may get very near to Christ, ay, may dip his hand in the same dish with the Savior, and yet betray him. We may be high in office, and may apparently be very useful, as Judas was; yet we may betray Christ. We learn from our Lord's words that divine decrees do not deprive a sinful action of its guilt: "The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed." His criminality is just as great as though there had been no "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." The doom of Judas is worse than non-existence. To have consorted with Christ as he had done, and then to deliver him into the hands of his enemies, sealed the traitor's eternal destiny.

Matthew 26:25. Then Judas which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.

Judas appears to have been the last of the twelve to ask the question, "Is it I?" Those who are the last to suspect themselves are usually those who ought to be the first to exercise self-suspicion. Judas did not address Christ as "Lord," as the other disciples had done; but called him Rabbi, "Master." Otherwise his question was like that of his eleven companions; but he received from Christ an answer that was given to no one else: He said unto him, "You have said." Probably the reply reached his ear alone, and if he had not been a hopeless reprobate, this unmasking of his traitorous design might have driven him to repentance, but there was nothing in his heart to respond to Christ's voice. He had sold himself to Satan before he sold his Lord.

Matthew 26:26-28. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

The Jewish Passover was made to melt into the Lord's supper, as the stars of the morning dissolve into the light of the sun. As they were eating, while the paschal supper was proceeding, Jesus instituted the new memorial which is to be observed until he comes again. How simple was the whole ceremony! Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Christ could not have meant that the bread was his body, for his body was reclining by the table; but he intended that broken bread to represent his body which was about to be broken on the cross. Then followed the second memorial, the cup, filled with "the fruit of the vine", of which Christ said, "Drink you all of it." There is no trace here of any altar or priest; there is nothing about the elevation or adoration of the host; there is no resemblance between the Lord's supper and the Romish mass. Let us keep strictly to the letter and spirit of God's Word in everything; for, if one adds a little, another will add more, and if one alters one point, and another alters another point, there is no telling how far we shall get from the truth. The disciples had been reminded of their own liability to sin; now their Savior gives them a personal pledge of the pardon of sin, according to Luke's record of his words, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Matthew 26:29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Thus Jesus took the great Nazarite vow never to drink of the fruit of the vine until he should drink it new with his disciples in his Father's kingdom.

He will keep his tryst with all his followers, and they with him shall hold high festival forever.

Matthew 26:30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Was it not truly brave of our dear Lord to sing under such circumstances? He was going forth to his last dread conflict, to Gethsemane, and Gabbatha and Golgotha; yet he went with a song on his lips. He must have led the singing, for the disciples were too sad to start the hallel with which the paschal feast closed: And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then came that desperate struggle in which the great Captain of our salvation wrestled even to a bloody sweat, and prevailed.

Matthew 26:31-32. Then said Jesus unto them, All you shall be offended because of me, this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Observe our Lord's habit of quoting Scripture. He was able to speak words of infallible truth, yet he fell back upon the Inspired Record in the Old Testament. His quotation from Zechariah does not seem to have been really necessary, but it was most appropriate to his prophecy to his disciples: "All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Jesus was the Shepherd who was about to be smitten, but he foretold the scattering of the sheep. Even those leaders of the flock that had been first chosen by Christ, and had been most with him, would stumble and fall away from him on that dread night, but the Shepherd would not lose them, there would be a re-union between him and his sheep: "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." Once again he would resume, for a little while, the character of their Shepherd-King, and with them he would revisit some of their old haunts in Galilee, before he ascended to his heavenly home. "I will go before you," suggests the idea of the good Shepherd leading his flock after the Eastern manner. Happy are his sheep in having such a Leader, and blessed are they in following him wherever he goes.

Matthew 26:33. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended.

This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence it betrayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of the Master's declaration. Jesus said, "All you shall be offended because of me this night," but Peter thought he knew better than Christ, so he answered, "Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended." No doubt these words were spoken from his heart; but "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Peter must have been amazed, the next morning, as he discovered the deceitfulness and wickedness of his own heart, as manifested in his triple denial of his Lord. He who thinks himself so much stronger than his brethren, is the very man who will prove to be weaker than many of them, as did Peter, not many hours after his boast was uttered.

Matthew 26:34. Jesus said unto him, Truly I say unto you, That this night, before the rooster crow, you shall deny me thrice.

Jesus now tells his boastful disciple that, before the next morning's cock-crowing, he will thrice deny his Lord. Not only would he stumble and fall with his fellow-disciples, but he would go beyond them all in his repeated denials of that dear Master whom he professed to love with intense affection than even John possessed. Peter declared that he would remain true to Christ if he were the only; faithful friend left, Jesus foretold that, of all the twelve, only Judas would exceed the boaster in wickedness.

Matthew 26:35. Peter said unto him, Though I shall die with you, yet will I not deny you. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Here again Peter contradicts his Master straight to his face. It was a pity that he should have boasted once after his Lord's plain prophecy that all the disciples would that night be offended; but it was shameful that Peter should repeat his self-confident declaration in the teeth of Christ's express prediction concerning him. He was not alone in his utterance, for likewise also said all the disciples. They all felt that under no circumstances could they deny their Lord. We have no record of the denial of Christ by the other ten apostles, although they all forsook him and fled, and thus practically disowned him. Remembering all that they had seen and heard of him, and especially bearing in mind his most recent discourse, the communion in the upper room, and his wondrous intercessory prayer on their behalf, we are not surprised that they felt themselves bound to him forever. But, alas, notwithstanding their protests, the King's prophesy was completely fulfilled, for that night they were all "offended."

Verses 14-45

Matthew 26:14-15. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

At what a price did the traitor sell our blessed Master! O you who have been redeemed with his precious blood, set a high value upon him, think much of him, say much in praise of him! Remember these thirty pieces of silver, and never be guilty of despising the Lord of glory, as these chief priests did when they paid for him the price of a slave.

Matthew 26:16-19. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where will you that we prepare for you to eat the Passover? And he said, go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.

See the absolute control which Jesus has over the minds of men. He can have any man's house that we wants, and he knows who will be glad to welcome him. Yet this same Jesus was about to die, and this shows how perfectly voluntary was his sacrifice. He was not forced to stand in our stead, nor was he compelled to suffer except by the constraint of his own great love. All was free, as became the freedom of his grace. Then, shall not our heart's love flow out freely to him? Shall we need to be scourged to obedience? Oh, no, beloved! So let us think what we can voluntarily do in honor of our Divine Lord, who gave his all for us.

Matthew 26:20-22. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Truly I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful,

And well might they be sad.

Matthew 26:22. And began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

What anguish does that question always stir within the heart and mind of every true believer! "Shall I ever betray my Lord and Master? Shall I every deny or forsake him?" God grant that none of us may ever do as Judas did!

Matthew 26:23. And he answered and said, He who dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

He who had been entrusted with the charge of the finances of the little band of Christ's immediate disciples, he who carried the bag, was the one who was about to betray his Lord. Since then, Christ has often been betrayed by those who have been in positions of trust, those who have led the way among the disciples of Christ, those who have, as it were, been so familiar with Christ as to dip their hand with him in the dish.

Matthew 26:24-25. The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.

Judas seems to have been the last to ask the question, "Master, is it I?" yet he was the guilty one, —the one who had already covenanted with the chief priests to sell his Lord.

Matthew 26:26-31. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and give it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then said Jesus unto them, All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Observe our blessed Lord's habit of quoting Scripture. He was able to utter words of infallible truth which had never before been used, you he constantly quoted from the inspired Scriptures. Those who nowadays cavil at the Word of God, and yet profess to be

followers of Christ, find no excuse for their conduct in the example that he has left us, for he even quoted Scripture sometimes when it might not have seemed to be necessary to do so. Brethren and sisters in Christ, have your Bible first in you hearts, then at your tongue's end, I was going to say at your fingers' end, so that you may always be able to give a good reason, a solid and divinely-authoritative reason, for any statement that you may make.

Matthew 26:32-33. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended.

No doubt Peter said this from his heart, but "the heart is deceitful above all things." Peter may have thought that he was stronger than his brethren, yet he was the very one who proved to be the weakest of the whole apostolic band. "Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended."

Matthew 26:34. Jesus said unto him, Truly I say unto you, That this night, before the rooster crow, —

That is to say, before that period of time which was called the cock-crowing, —

Matthew 26:34. You shall deny me thrice.

According to Mark's record, the rooster was to crow once before Peter had denied his Lord thrice, and this it did; and when he had give his third denial, it crowed a second time, and then his slumbering conscience was awakened, and "he went out, and wept bitterly." Some persons, who are well acquainted with the religious ceremonies of the Jews, say that the period called the cock-crowing was the time for the sacrifice of the morning lamb, and that it was about that time that Peter denied his lord.

Matthew 26:35. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with you, yet will I not deny you.

It is a great pity that peter said this after he had received so plain a warning from his Master, yet he was not alone in his boasting.

Matthew 26:35. Likewise also said all the disciples.

They all felt quite sure that, under no circumstances, could they be so base as to forsake their Lord; and if you think of the washing of their feet by their Lord and Master, the wonderful words of Christ to which they had listened, and that solemn communion service in the large upper room, you may not be surprised that they felt themselves bound to Christ forever, —felt that they could never leave him, nor forsake him; yet they all did so.

Matthew 26:36-39. Then comes Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and says unto the disciples, Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then says he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry you here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as you will.

Christ had to tread the winepress alone, yet he showed how complete was his humanity by wishing to have a few choice friends near at hand. Yet even the chosen three failed him in his hour of greatest need.

Matthew 26:40. And he comes unto the disciples, and finds them asleep, and says unto Peter, What, could you not watch with me one hour?

Peter had constituted himself the spokesman of the apostolic company, so the Master addressed the question to him, though it also applied to his companions: "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" They had all declared their devotion to him, yet they had fallen asleep while he had bidden them watch.

Matthew 26:41-45. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done. And he came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then comes he to his disciples, and says unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Verses 17-30

Matthew 26:17-26. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where will you that we prepare for you to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover, at your house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Truly I say

unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He who dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it.

So the Jewish Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper. Indeed, so gently did the one dissolve into the other that we scarcely know whether this incident, relating to Judas Iscariot, occurred during the Passover or the Supper. According to one account, it would seem to be one; and according to another account, the other, but, indeed, the one ordinance was almost imperceptibly merged into the other. I want you carefully to notice, as we read this narrative through, whether you can see here any trace of an altar. Look with both your eyes, and see whether you can find any trace of a priest offering a sacrifice. Watch diligently to see whether you can perceive anything about kneeling down, or about the elevation or the adoration of "the host." Why, even the Romish church knows better than to believe in what it practices. Most of you have seen copies of the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci, himself a Catholic of the old school. How does he picture those who were at the institution of the Lord's Supper? Why, they are all sitting around a table, with the Lord Jesus in their midst. I wonder that they exhibit, and still allow to be in their churches, a picture like that, which, painted by one of their own artists, most effectually condemns their base idolatry, in which a wafer-God is lifted up, to be adored by men, who must be besotted indeed before they can prostitute their intellects so grossly as to commit such an act of sin. What a rebuke to that idolatry is conveyed by this simple statement: "As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it," —

Matthew 26:26. And brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said. Take, eat; this is my body.

The Romanists do not even break the bread. They have a wafer so as to avoid anything like an imitation of the example set by our blessed Lord and Master. He took a piece of the bread which was provided for the paschal feast, — the ordinary unleavened bread, and he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said to them, "Take, eat, this is my body." Not, of course, the literal body, which was there at the table; but this was the emblem of his body about to be broken on the cross on the behalf of all his people.

Matthew 26:27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it;

"Every one of you, take your own personal share." This also the Papists have perverted by denying the cup to the laity.

Matthew 26:28-30. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.

It was a social feast, somewhat funereal, and tintured with sadness, for Jesus was about to go from them, to die, still, it was a joyous celebration, closing with a hymn. At the paschal feast, the Jews always sang Psalms 113-118. Probably our Lord sang all these through. At any rate, Christ and his apostles sang a hymn; and I always like to think of him as leading the little company, — going to his death with a song upon his lips, his voice full of melody, and made more sweet than ever by the near approach of Gethsemane and Calvary. I would like always to sing, whenever we come to the communion table, after the fashion in which they sang that night: "When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." Now let us read what the apostle Paul writes concerning the Lord's Supper.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:17-30; and 1 Corinthians 11:18-34.

Verses 20-30

Matthew 26:20. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

Why so many people celebrate the Lord's supper in the morning, I cannot imagine, unless it be that they desire to do everything contrary to their Lord's command and example: "When the even was come, he sat down with the twelve." I do not think there is any binding ordinance making the evening the only time for the observance of this ordinance; but to make the morning the only time is certainly not according to the Word of God.

Matthew 26:21-22. And as they did eat, he said, Truly I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, —

There was enough to make them sorrowful in the fact that their Lord had just told them that one of the twelve who were his body-guard, his closest companions, his nearest and dearest friends, would betray him. "They were exceeding sorrowful," —

Matthew 26:22. And began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

It shows a beautiful trait in their character that they did not suspect one another, and least of all, I suppose, did they suspect Judas;

but each one asked, "Lord, is it I?" It is an admirable way of hearing a sermon to take it home to yourself, especially if there be a rebuke or a caution in it.

Matthew 26:23-24. And he answered and said, He who dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goes as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

The doom of the wicked is something far worse than non-existence, or Christ would not have said, concerning Judas Iscariot, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born." This is especially true of all those who, having for a while consorted with Christ, afterwards deny it and betray him. O brothers and sisters, may all of us be kept from this terrible sin! May none of us ever betray our Master after all the fellowship we have had with him! It would be better to die for him than to deny him; and it would be better never to have been born than to have been in intimate association with him, and then to have betrayed him.

Matthew 26:23. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.

"It is even so," With a sorrowful gesture, he made it plain to his sad little circle of friends and followers that he knew all that was going to happen, and that Judas was the man who was going to turn traitor.

Matthew 26:26. And as they were eating, —

As they were eating the Passover. The one ordinance gradually melted into the other: "As they were eating," —

Matthew 26:26-27. Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it;

"Each one of you, my disciples, take a draught of this cup."

Matthew 26:28. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

They had had gross sin brought prominently to their minds; they had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin; and now they were to have a personal pledge concerning the pardon of sin: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sin."

Matthew 26:29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Taking, as it were, the great Nazarite vow never to taste of the fruit of the vine "until that day." He will keep his tryst with us, my brethren; and we shall drink the new vine of his Father's kingdom with him by-and-by; but, until then, he waits.

Matthew 26:30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:20-30; And 1 Corinthians 11:20-26.

Verses 26-30

We will read, first, Matthew's account of the institution of the Lord's supper.

Matthew 26:26. And as they were eating,

In the middle of the Paschal Feast our Lord instituted the sacred festival which was ever afterwards to be known as "the Lord's supper." The one ordinance was made to melt gradually into the other: "as they were eating."

Matthew 26:26. Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take eat; this is my body.

"This represents my body." He could not possibly have meant that the bread was his body; for there was his body sitting at the table, whole and entire. They would have been astonished beyond measure if they had understood him literally; but they did not do so, any more than when Christ said, "I am the door," or "I am the Good Shepherd."

Matthew 26:27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it;

"Every one of you." Was this the Lord's supper? Yes. What say the Romanists about it? Why, that the people may not drink the cup! Yet our Savior says to his disciples, "Drink you all of it."

Matthew 26:28. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

They had had sin brought to their minds; they had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin; now they were to have a

perpetual pledge of the pardon of sin, in the cup, which was the emblem of Christ's blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins."

Matthew 26:29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Jesus took the Nazarite vow to drink no more, to partake no more of the fruit of the vine, until he should meet us again in his Father's kingdom. He has pledged us once for all in that cup, and now he abstains until he meets us again. Thus he looks forward to a glorious meeting; but he bids us take the cup, and thus remember him until he come.

Matthew 26:30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

To his last great battle the Champion goes singing, attended by feeble followers, who could not protect him; but who could sing with him. I think he must have led the tune; his disciples were too sorrowful to sing until his clear voice started the Hallelujah Psalms; but they joined him in the holy exercise, for "they" as well as their Lord sang the hymn. When you are about to face a trial, offer a prayer; but, if you can, also sing a hymn. It will show great faith if, before you enter into the burning fiery furnace, you can sing psalms unto the Lord who redeems his people. Now let us read Paul's version of this same matter.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:20-34

Verses 31-75

The story of Peter's denial of his Master is recorded in all four of the Gospels. There are some differences of expression in each version, so it will not be tautology if we read all four of them; and if we read them attentively, we shall get a clear view of the whole incident.

Matthew 26:31-33. Then says Jesus unto them, All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended.

This was a very presumptuous speech, not only because of the self-confidence which it displayed, but also because it was a flat contradiction of what the Master had just said "All you shall be offended because of me this night." Peter thought he knew better than Christ did, so he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended."

Matthew 26:34. Jesus said unto him, Truly I say unto you, That this night, before the rooster crow,-

The cock-crowing was a recognized mark of time; it was just before the rising of the sun "This night, before the rooster crow,"-

Matthew 26:34-35. You shall deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with you, yet will I not deny you.

Here, again, he contradicts his Master straight to his face.

Matthew 26:35. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Matthew 26:57-58. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

Matthew 26:69-75. Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what you say. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely you also are one of them; for your speech betrays you. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the rooster crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the rooster crow, you shall deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Now let us read Mark's account, which will specially interest you if you remember that, probably, Mark wrote under the direction of Peter, and, no doubt, received many of his facts from Peter. You will notice how severe is this description of the whole scene; it is just snob an one as the chief actor in it would be sure to give as he recalled his fall and restoration.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:31-35; Matthew 26:57-58; Matthew 26:69-75 Mark 14:53-54; Mark 14:66-72 Luke 1:54-62; and John 18:15-18; John 18:25-27.

Verses 36-46

Matthew 26:36-40. Then comes Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and says unto the disciples, Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then says

he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry you here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as you will. And he comes unto the disciples, and finds them asleep, and says unto Peter, What, could you not watch with me one hour?

He felt the need of human sympathy in that awful hour; yet he trod the winepress alone.

Matthew 26:41. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Admire the tenderness of Jesus in making this apology for his disciples. What he said about them was true: but it is not everybody who would have uttered that gentle truth at such a trying time. Dear friends, make excuses for one another whenever you can; never make them for yourselves, but often make them for others, and especially, when some treat you as you think very untenderly, be the more tender towards them.

Matthew 26:42-44. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

You cannot use much variety of language when your heart is very heavy; you will usually dwell upon just a few words at such a time. Do not blame yourself for doing so; it is natural, and it is right. Even your Lord, the Master of language, "prayed the third time, saying the same words."

Matthew 26:45-46. Then comes he to his disciples, and says unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that does betray me.

May the Master never have to say this concerning any one of us, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from John 17:15-26; And Matthew 26:36-46.

Verses 57-68

We shall read two or three short portions of God's Word in order to bring before you the wonderful contrast to which I am about to direct your thoughts.

Matthew 26:57. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

It was night, but these wicked men could sit up for this cruel deed, to judge the Lord of glory, and to put the innocent One to shame. They "led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

Matthew 26:58. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

I have heard Peter represented as if he did wrong to follow Christ "afar off." I think he was the bravest of all the apostles, for scarcely one of them followed Christ at all at that time. Afterwards, John bethought himself, and came into the judgment hall. Peter kept at a distance from his Lord, but he did follow him, and he did go into the high priest's palace. He "went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." Peter was right enough in following Christ; it was afterward, when the temptation came, that he fell so grievously.

Matthew 26:59-60. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none:

Because they did not agree, they would not hold together. This is the weakness of falsehood, that it contradicts itself. These men felt that they must have some show of truth-likeness even in condemning Christ, and this they could not get at first even from their false witnesses.

Matthew 26:60-61. Yes, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Brethren, observe, that this was a little twisting of Christ's words, but that slight wresting made them as different as possible from what Christ had really said. I suppose that, if you want to know how this twisting or wresting is done, any one of our general elections will give you the most wonderful examples of how everything that any man may say can be twisted to mean the very reverse of what he said. If there is one thing in which English people are expert beyond all others, it is in the art of misquoting, misstating, and misrepresenting. As our Lord was wronged in this fashion, nobody need be surprised if the like should happen unto him. "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."

Matthew 26:62. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answer you nothing? what is it which these witness against you?

What was the good of answering? What is ever the good of answering when the only evidence brought against one is palpable and willful misrepresentation? So the Savior was silent; and thus, he not only proved his wisdom, but he also fulfilled that marvelous prophecy of Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opens not his mouth."

Matthew 26:63. But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you be the Christ the Son of God.

Now came the answer, the good confession that our Lord witnessed before his cruel adversaries.

Matthew 26:64. Jesus says unto him, You have said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.

How that sentence must have come with the vividness of a lightning flash before their faces! What a declaration of power from One who stood there bound before his enemies, apparently helpless, and about to die!

Matthew 26:65-68. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now you have heard his blasphemy. What think you? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, you Christ, Who is he who smote you?

Our Lord had told these mockers that they should one day see him coming in the clouds of Heaven. Let us read in the Book of the Revelation concerning that great event.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:57-68. Revelation 6:12-17; Revelation 19:11-16; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 21:1.

Verses 59-68

Matthew 26:59-60. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none:

Neither for love nor money.

Matthew 26:60. Yes, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none.

That is, none that agree; the lie that one man spoke was refuted by the next.

Matthew 26:61. At last came two false witness, and said this —

They did not say any other word, as if they did not know any word in any language vile enough for him. "This"; our translators have very properly put in the word fellow.

Matthew 26:61. Fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

He never said anything of the kind; it was a most wicked misrepresents of what he had said. If men wish to find an accusation against us, they can do it without any materials.

Matthew 26:62-64. And the high priest arose and said unto him, Answer you nothing? what is it which these witness against you? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure you by the living God, that tell us whether you be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus says unto him, You have said: nevertheless I say unto you. Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.

He binds them over to make their appearance before him when he becomes the judge, and they shall take the place of the criminal.

Matthew 26:65-66. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now you have heard his blasphemy, What think you?

He looks round upon the seventy elders of the people who were sitting there in the great council, and "They answered and said, He is guilty of death:." Probably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not there;: they were the only two friends the Lord had in the Sanhedrin.

Matthew 26:66-68. They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, prophecy unto us, you Christ, Who is he who smote you?

This ended the regular ecclesiastical trial of Christ. A little time was spent, before Pilate, the judicial ruler, was ready to see Christ, but soon as the dawn was come, they dragged him before another tribunal. We shall now turn to Luke 23.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 26:59-68; Luke 23.

Chapter 27

Verses 15-54

We are now to read about our Lord before Pontius Pilate.

Matthew 27:15-30. Now at that feast the governor was accustomed to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will you that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have you nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will you that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate says unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil has he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see you to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Surely, mockery could have gone no further; we marvel at the boldness and ingenuity of their scorn. Oh, that we were half as earnest in seeking to honor him, — as careful to think of everything that might make our homage perfect. But we, alas! too often fail to give him due honor and glory, even when others are all aflame with zeal to insult him.

Matthew 27:31. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own clothing on him, and led him away to crucify him.

Perhaps they were afraid that he would die from sheer exhaustion and so, with a cruel mercy, they would keep him alive for the infliction of further tortures.

Matthew 27:32. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

Any one of us might well have wished to have been Simon, yet we need not envy him.

There is a cross for every one who is a follower of the Crucified; may we have grace to carry it after him!

Matthew 27:33-34. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

He wholly abstained from that which might have lessened his pain. He came to suffer, and he intended to go through with all that he had undertaken. He would do nothing that would blunt the edge of the sacrificial knife. He forbids not the soothing draught to other sufferers who are in pain; but, as for himself, he will not partake of it.

Matthew 27:35-37. And they crucified him, and parted his garment, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there, and set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And so he is, and so he shall be, — King of the Jews even on that cross, and never so royal as when he had surrendered everything for love of those whom he came to redeem.

Matthew 27:38-43. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself. If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He

saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

What pain this taunt must have caused to the Savior! Because he is so pure, and never yields to temptation, we are very apt to forget that temptation was really temptation even to him, and that it grieved his pure and holy Soul thus to be tempted to turn aside from the path of perfect trust in his Father, and complete obedience to him. No doubt the pain of temptation is in inverse ratio to our willingness to yield to it. When we yield to temptation, we feel a pleasure in it; but when we are horrified at it, and start back from it, then we feel the pain of it. Oh, for a mind and heart, so perfectly subject to the will of God, that we should feel such a temptation as this to be the very agony of grief to us, as it was to our Lord!

Matthew 27:44. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Nobody seemed to look upon him with any desire to help him, but even the lowest of the low would contribute their portion of mockery to increase his misery.

Matthew 27:45-54. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calls for Elijah. And immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Spirit, and, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

John gives us some details of our Lord before Pilate which Matthew does not mention.

This exposition consisted of readings from Matthew 27:15-54; and John 18:28-38.

Verses 22-50

Our Lord was brought before the Roman governor Pilate. He was anxious to let Jesus go; but he was a weak-minded man, easily swayed by the noisy cry of the people, prompted by the chief priests and elders.

Matthew 27:22-23. Pilate says unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil has he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

A blind, unreasoning hate had taken possession of the people. They gave no answer to Pilate's wondering inquiry, "Why, what evil has he done?" for he had done nothing amiss; they only repeated the brutal demand, "Let him be crucified! Let him be crucified!" The world's hatred of Christ is shown in similar fashion today. He has done no evil, no one has suffered harm at his hands, all unite to pronounce him innocent; and yet they practically say, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

Matthew 27:24. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see you to it.

Ah, Pilate, you cannot rid yourself of responsibility by that farce! He who has power to prevent a wrong is guilty of the act if he permits others to do it, even though he does not actually commit it himself. If you are placed in positions of power and responsibility, do not dream that you can escape from guilt by merely allowing other people to do what you would not do yourself.

Matthew 27:25. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

All the people willingly took upon themselves the guilt of the murder of our dear Lord: "His blood be on us, and on our children." This fearful imprecation must have been remembered by many when the soldiers of Titus spared neither age nor gender, and the Jewish capital became the veritable Aceldama, the field of blood.

Matthew 27:26. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

Why scourge him before delivering him up to be crucified? Surely this was a superfluity of cruelty. The Roman scourging was something which I scarcely care to describe, one of the most terrible punishments to which anyone could be subjected; yet Pilate first scourged Jesus, and then gave him up to die by crucifixion.

Matthew 27:27-28. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

Some old soldier's coat, that they found lying about, they cast upon Christ in imitation of the royal robes of Caesar or Herod.

Matthew 27:29-31. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own clothing on him, and led him away to crucify him.

By that fact, though they did not intend it, our Lord was recognized in the street as the same person who had been taken into the Praetorium by the soldiers. Had Jesus been brought forth in the scarlet robe, persons looking at him might not have known him to be the same man who wore the garment woven from the top throughout; but in his own seamless clothing, they readily recognized the Nazarene.

Matthew 27:32. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

I wonder if he was a black man. There was a Simon in the early Church; and it certainly was the lot of the Ethiopian to bear the cross for many and many an age. This Simon was a stranger, anyhow, and a foreigner; truly honored was he to be compelled to bear the cross after Christ.

Matthew 27:33. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

From its shape. There appears to be to this day a hill still in the form of a human skull outside the gate of Jerusalem. When they came to that common place of execution, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of the city,

Matthew 27:34. They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

A stupefying draught was given to the condemned that is the only mercy that there was about the whole thing. The Romans did give to the crucified a draught of myrrh to take away something of the agony of crucifixion; but our Lord came not to be stupefied, he came to suffer, therefore he would not take anything that would at all impair his faculties. He drank even to the dregs the bitter cup of grief and woe.

Matthew 27:35. And they crucified him,

Horrible scene, to see those blessed hands and feet pierced with nails, and fastened to the cross!

Matthew 27:35. And parted his garments, casting lots:

Rattling the dice-box at the foot of the cross! Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. I believe that crimes have been committed by persons, under the influence of gambling, which never could have been committed by them in any other condition of mind: "They parted his garments, casting lots." See here, you gamblers! With Christ's blood bespattering them, these soldiers dared still to raffle for his robe.

Matthew 27:35-36. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there;

His enemies gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of his sufferings; his friends with many tears watching his amazing griefs. It is for us, tonight, with humble faith and grateful love, to mark the incidents connected with his painful death.

Matthew 27:37-38. And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Giving him the place of honor, which means in this case the place of dishonor. He was the apex of that terrible triangle.

Matthew 27:39-40. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself. If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

This is the cry of the Socinians today, "Come down from the cross. Give up the atoning sacrifice, and we will be Christians." But, by rejecting his vicarious atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as those mockers at Golgotha did.

Matthew 27:41-42. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

Just so. Get rid of a crucified Savior, then they will believe in Him. Atonement, substitution, vicarious sacrifice, this staggers them. They will have Christ if they can have him without his cross.

Matthew 27:43-46. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also,

which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Every word in this terrible cry from the cross is emphatic; every syllable cuts and pierces to the heart.

Matthew 27:47. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calls for Elijah.

They knew better, yet they jested at the Savior's prayer.

Matthew 27:48. And immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge,

It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In his death, the whole circle of creation was completed.

Matthew 27:48-50. And filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Spirit.

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered "with a loud voice", like the shout of a conquering warrior. He need not have died on account of any infirmity in himself; but voluntarily, for your sake, for your sake and mine, he "yielded up the Spirit." Blessed be his holy name!

Verses 27-54

Matthew 27:27-30. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

Ridicule is very painful to bear at any time, and soldiers have been masters of that cruel art when they have been encouraged in it by their leaders. Remember, brethren and sisters, who it was that bore all this shameful treatment from these brutal men, — your Lord and the angels' Lord, the Maker of Heaven and earth, who had designed, for a while, to veil his Deity in human flesh. And there he stood, to be "set at nothing," — to be made nothing of, — by those rough Roman legionaries, the creatures of his own hand, whom he could have destroyed in a moment by a word or a wish. What matchless condescension our gracious redeemer displayed even in his own deepest degradation and agony!

Matthew 27:31-32. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own clothing on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

And methinks that he must have been a glad man to have such an honor thrust upon him, yet you need not envy him, for there is a cross for you also to carry. Bear it cheerfully. If anything happens to you, by way of ridicule, for Christ's sake and the gospel's, bow your shoulder willingly to the burden, and as knights are made by a stroke from a sword held in their sovereign's hand, so shall you be made princes of the realm of Christ by bearing the cross after him.

Matthew 27:33. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, —

We do not know why it was so called. There have been many conjectures concerning the name, but they are only conjectures. It was probably just a little knoll, outside the gate of the city, — the common place of execution for malefactors, and the special points to be noted are that Jesus suffered without the gate, in the regular place of doom, — the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem, — and so was numbered with the transgressors.

Matthew 27:34. They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall:

A stupefying draught was usually given to the criminals who were crucified, to mitigate their agony; but Christ did not wish for that to be done in his case.

Matthew 27:34. And when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

He came to earth that he might suffer, and he would retain all his faculties while suffering, he would have every nerve made into a straight road for the hot feet of pain to travel over, for he would drink, even to the last dregs, every drop that was in the cup of suffering for his people's sin.

Matthew 27:35-36. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there;

Some of them gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of his suffering others watching him out of mere curiosity, but there were some, hard by the cross, who stood there to weep in sympathy with him, — a sword piercing through their own hearts while the Son of man was being put to death.

Matthew 27:37. And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And so he is. When will the Jews own him as their King? They will do so one day, perhaps they will do so when Christians begin to think and speak more kindly of them than they usually do. When the hardness of heart on our part towards them shall pass away, it may be that their hardness of heart towards Christ will also pass away. Long have they been despised, and oppressed, and persecuted in many lands, so that, by some means, they might be brought to look, in penitence, upon him whom they crucified, and to own him as their Lord and Savior!

Matthew 27:38-40. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save your self. If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

That is the devil's old doctrine: "Save yourself; look out for yourselves; live for yourselves; be selfish." But Christ could never act like that; he came to live and die for others. "Save yourself," was not the doctrine that he either preached or practiced. And this is another old taunt of Satan and those who follow him: "If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in you." There are plenty who would be willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ crucified. "He was a good man," say they, "a great prophet, no doubt, far in advance of his times," and so on. But, if you talk like that, you are not on safe ground, for if Christ was not the Son of God, at any rate he professed to be, and he made people think he was; and if he was not, he was an impostor, and not a good man at all. You must either repudiate Christ altogether, or take him with his cross; it must be Christ crucified, or no Christ at all.

Matthew 27:41-44. Likewise also the chief priest mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, —

Those subjects who were crucified with him, and were sharers of his misery, — ,

Matthew 27:44-46. Which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

This was the climax of his grief, — not merely to suffer intense agony of body, not only to be mocked alike by priests and people, but to be forsaken of his God. Yet this was needful as a part of the penalty that was due to sin. God must turn away from anyone who has sin upon him, so, as sin was laid upon Christ, God had to turn away his face even from his well beloved Son because he was bearing his people's sins upon the accursed tree.

Matthew 27:47-49. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calls for Elijah. And immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

Mocking him even in his prayers, for they well knew the difference between Eloi and Elijah.

Matthew 27:50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Spirit.

You know what he said when he cried with a loud voice: "It is finished."

Matthew 27:51-54. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquakes, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly that was the Son of God.

Verses 32-49

Matthew 27:32. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

Perhaps they were afraid that Christ would die from exhaustion; so they compelled Simon to bear his cross. Any one of Christ's followers might have wished to have been this man of Cyrene; but we need not envy him, for there is a cross for each of us to carry. Oh! that we were as willing to bear Christ's cross as Christ was to bear our sins on his cross! If anything happens to us by way of

persecution or ridicule for our Lord's sake, and the gospel's, let us cheerfully endure it. As knights are made by a stroke from the sovereign's sword, so shall we become princes in Christ's realm as he lays his cross on our shoulders.

Matthew 27:33-34. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Golgotha was the common place of execution for malefactors, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of Jerusalem, outside the gate of the city. There was a special symbolical reason for Christ's suffering without the gate, and his followers are bidden to "go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:11-13). A stupefying draught was given to the condemned, to take away something of the agony of crucifixion; but our Lord came to suffer, and he would not take anything that would at all impair his faculties. He did not forbid his fellow-sufferers drinking the vinegar mingled with gall ("wine mingled with myrrh," Mark 15:23), but he would not drink thereof. Jesus did not refuse this draught because of its bitterness, for he was prepared to drink even to the last dreadful dregs the bitter cup of wrath which was his people's due.

Matthew 27:35. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

There is a world of meaning in that short sentence, "and they crucified him," driving their bolts of iron through his blessed hands and feet, fastening him to the cross, and lifting him up to hang there upon a gibbet reserved for felons. We can scarcely realize all that the crucifixion meant to our dear Lord; but we can join in Faber's prayer: —

"Lord Jesus! may we love and weep,

Since you for us are crucified."

Then was fulfilled all that our Lord had foretold in chapter 20:17-19, except his resurrection, the time for which had not arrived. The criminals' clothes were the executioners' perquisite. The Roman soldiers who crucified Christ had no thought of fulfilling the Scriptures when they parted his garments, casting lots; yet their action was exactly that which had been foretold in Psalms 22:18. The seamless robe would have been spoiled if it had been rent, so the soldiers raffled for the vesture, while they shared the other garments of our Lord. The dice would be almost stained with the blood of Christ, yet the gamblers played on beneath the shadow of his cross. Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. Beware of it in any form! No games of chance should be played by Christians, for the blood of Christ seems to have bespattered them all.

Matthew 27:36. And sitting down they watched him there;

Some watched him from curiosity, some to make sure that he really did die, some even delighted their cruel eyes with his sufferings; and there were some, hard by the cross, who wept and bewailed, a sword passing through their own hearts while the Son of man was agonizing even unto death.

Matthew 27:37. And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

What a marvelous providence it was that moved Pilate's pen! The representative of the Roman Emperor was little likely to concede kingship to any man; yet he deliberately wrote, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," and nothing would induce him to alter what he had written. Even on his cross, Christ was proclaimed King, in the sacerdotal Hebrew, the classical Greek, and the common Latin, so that everybody in the crowd could read the inscription. When will the Jews own Jesus as their King? They will do so one day, looking on him whom they pierced. Perhaps they will think more of Christ when Christians think more of them; when our hardness of heart towards them has gone, possibly their hardness of heart towards Christ may also disappear.

Matthew 27:38. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

As if to show that they regarded Christ as the worst of the three criminals, they put him between the two thieves, giving him the place of dishonor. Thus was the prophecy fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors." The two malefactors deserved to die, as one of them admitted (Luke 23:40-41); but a greater load of guilt vested upon Christ, for "he bare the sin of many," and, therefore, he was rightly distinguished as the King of sufferers, who could truly ask: — "Was ever grief like mine?"

Matthew 27:39-40. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself. If you be the son of God, come down from the cross.

Nothing torments a man when in pain more than mockery. When Jesus Christ most wanted words of pity and looks of kindness, they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. Perhaps the most painful part of ridicule is to have one's most solemn sayings turned to scorn, as were our Lord's words about the temple of his body: "You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself." He might have saved himself; he might have "come down from the cross"; but if he had done so, we could never have become the sons of God. It was because he was the Son of God that he did not come down from the cross, but hung there until he

had completed the sacrifice for his people's sin. Christ's cross is the Jacob's ladder by which we mount up to Heaven. This is the cry of the Socinians today, "Come down from the cross. Give up the atoning sacrifice, and we will be Christians." Many are willing to believe in Christ, but not in Christ crucified. They admit that he was a good man and a great teacher; but by rejecting his vicarious atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as these mockers at Golgotha did.

Matthew 27:41-43. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

The chief priests, with the scribes and elders, forgetting their high station and rank, joined the ribald crew in mocking Jesus in his death pangs. Every word, was emphatic; every syllable cut and pierced our Lord to the heart. They mocked him as a Savior; "He saved others; himself he cannot save." They mocked him as a King; "If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." They mocked him as a believer; "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him." They mocked him as the Son of God; "For he said, I am the Son of God." Those who say that Christ was a good man virtually admit his deity, for he claimed to be the Son of God. If he was not what he professed to be, he was an impostor. Notice the testimony that Christ's bitterest enemies bore even as they reviled him: "He saved others"; "He is the King of Israel" (R.V.); "He trusted in God."

Matthew 27:44. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

The sharers of his misery, the abjects who were crucified with him, joined in reviling Jesus. Nothing was wanting to fill up his cup of suffering and shame. The conversion of the penitent thief was all the more remarkable because he had but a little while before been among the mockers of his Savior. What a trophy of divine grace he became!

Matthew 27:45. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

Some have thought that this darkness covered the whole world, and so caused even a heathen to exclaim, "Either the world is about to expire, or the God who made the world is in anguish." This darkness was supernatural; it was not an eclipse. The sun could no longer look upon his Maker surrounded by these who mocked him. He covered his face, and traveled on in tenfold night, in very shame that the great Sun of righteousness should himself be in such terrible darkness.

Matthew 27:46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

In order that the sacrifice of Christ might be complete, it pleased the Father to forsake his well-beloved Son. Sin was laid on Christ, so God must turn away his face from the Sin-bearer. To be deserted of his God was the climax of Christ's grief, the quintessence of his sorrow. See here the distinction between the martyrs and their Lord; in their dying agonies they have been divinely sustained; but Jesus, suffering as the Substitute for sinners, was forsaken of God. The saints who have known what it is to have their Father's face hidden from them, even for a brief space, can scarcely imagine the suffering that wrung from our Savior the agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:47. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calls for Elijah.

They knew better, yet they jested at the Savior's prayer. Wickedly, willfully, and scornfully, they turned his death-shriek into ridicule.

Matthew 27:48-49. And immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

A person in such agony as Jesus was suffering might have mentioned many pangs that he was enduring; but it was necessary for him to say, "I thirst," in order that another Scripture might be fulfilled. One of them, more compassionate than his companions, ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, from the vessel probably brought by the soldiers for their own use, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In his death the whole circle of creation was completed. As the sponge brought refreshment to the lips of our dying Lord, so may the least of God's living ones help to refresh him now that he has ascended from the cross to the throne.

Verses 33-44

Matthew 27:33-34. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

This was a stupefying draught, which was usually given to prisoners about to die in order to mitigate their pain, and therefore Christ would not drink it, for he was determined to suffer even to the bitter end. He had no mitigation of his agony when he was offering his

atonement for us; and so, "when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."

Matthew 27:35. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

This is a point upon which we cannot say much, but, to the peculiarly sensitive soul of Jesus, it must have been a great part of his shame thus to be stripped of every garment, and hung up before the sun.

Matthew 27:36-37. And sitting down they watched him there; and set up over his head his accusation written: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

By their own confession, he died for being a King, and he died for being too greatly good, too royal in his love. He, being King of kings, died that you and I might live forever, and be kings and priests unto God,

Matthew 27:38-39. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.

Not only they that sat there, such as the scribes, and Pharisee, and soldiers, and they that hung there, the thieves that were crucified with him, but the passers-by must needs revile him, indulging in a sneer.

Matthew 27:40-43. And saying, You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself. If you be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others: himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

That is the cry of the mockers today. If we will but give up the Atonement, men say that they will believe in Christ. His character is so excellent that they will accept him as an example, (no they say,) but they will not have his Godhead, nor his precious blood. This proves that they are enemies, for they use the same language as his bitterest foes did when he hung upon the cross. As for the scribes, they were learned in the Psalms, and therefore they quoted what we have already read.

Matthew 27:43-44. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Thus the Master passed through bitter trial and ignominy for our sakes.

This exposition consisted of readings from Psalms 22:1-9; and Matthew 27:33-44.

Verses 50-54

Matthew 27:50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Spirit.

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior. And what a word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence; but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, and depth, and length, and height altogether immeasurable. Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed, he yielded up the Spirit, willingly dying, laying down his life as he said he would: "I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Matthew 27:51-53. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Christ's death was the end of Judaism: The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime. The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus; and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning sacrifice. See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ: The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. Thus did the material world pay homage to him whom man had rejected; while nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth only, but also Heaven. These first miracles wrought in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued until he comes again, —rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened, and come out from among the dead, and go unto the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

Matthew 27:54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that

were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious prisoner whom they had put to death: "Truly this was the Son of God." It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders denied; yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God while their religious rulers have denied his divinity.

This exposition consisted of readings from Luke 23:27-49, and Matthew 27:50-54.

Verses 50-66

Matthew 27:50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Spirit.

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior. And what a word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence, but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted, length, and height altogether unmeasurable. Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed; he yielded up the Spirit, willingly dying, laying down his life as he said he would: "I lay down my life for the sheep . . . I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Matthew 27:51-53. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose. And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Christ's death was the end of Judaism: "The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime. The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus; and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning sacrifice. See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ: "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened." Thus did the material world pay homage to him whom man had rejected; while nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth only, but also Heaven. These first miracles wrought in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued until he comes again —rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened, and come out from among the dead, and go unto the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

Matthew 27:54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious prisoner whom they had put to death, "Truly this was the Son of God," It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders denied; yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God, while their religious rulers. have denied his divinity.

Matthew 27:55-56. And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

We have no record of any unkindness to our Lord from any woman, though we have many narratives of the loving ministry of women at various periods in his life. It was meet, therefore, that even at Calvary "many women were there beholding afar off." The ribald crowd and the rough soldiers would not permit these timid yet brave souls to come near; but we learn from John 19:25 that some of them edged their way through the throng until they "stood by the cross of Jesus." Love will dare anything.

Matthew 27:57-58. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

This rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, was Jesus' disciple, "but secretly for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38); yet when his Lord was actually dead, extraordinary courage nerved his spirit, and boldly he went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Joseph and Nicodemus are types of many more who have been emboldened by the cross of Christ to do what, without that mighty magnet, they would never have attempted. When night comes, the stars appear; so in the night of Christ's death these two bright stars shone forth with blessed radiance. Some flowers bloom only at night; such a blossom was the courage of Joseph and Nicodemus.

Matthew 27:59-60. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.

Our King, even in the grave, must have the best of the best; his body was "wrapped in a clean linen cloth, and laid in Joseph's own new tomb, thus completing the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9. Some see in this linen shroud an allusion to the garments in which priests were to be clothed. Joseph's was a virgin sepulcher, wherein up to that time no one had been buried, so that, when Jesus rose, none could say that another came forth from the tomb instead of him. That rock-hewn cell in the garden sanctified every part of God's acre where saints lie buried. Instead of longing to live until Christ comes, as some do, we might rather pray to have fellowship with Jesus in his death and burial.

Matthew 27:61. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher.

Love and faith were both typified by these two Mary's sitting over against the sepulcher. They will be the last to leave their Lord's resting-place, and the first to return to it when the Sabbath is past.

Can we cling to Christ when his cause seems to be dead and buried? When truth is fallen in the streets, or is even buried in the sepulcher of skepticism or superstition, can we still believe in it, and look forward to its resurrection? That is what-some of us are doing at the present time. O Lord, keep us faithful!

Matthew 27:62-64. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the Sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen. from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

Those punctilious priests and Pharisees, who were so scrupulous about keeping the Sabbath, did not mind profaning the day of rest by holding a consultation with the Roman governor. They knew that Christ was dead and buried, but they still stood in dread of his power. They called him a "deceiver," and they even pretended to "remember" what "he said, while he was yet alive." At his trial, their false witnesses gave another meaning to his words, but they knew all the while that he was speaking of his resurrection, not of the Temple on Mount Zion. Now they are afraid that, even in the sepulcher, he will bring to nothing all their plans for his destruction. They must have known that the disciples of Jesus would not steal him away, and say unto the people, "He is risen from the dead"; so they probably feared that he really would come forth from the tomb. Whatever conscience they had made great cowards of them; so they begged Pilate to do what he could to prevent the rising of their victim.

Matthew 27:65-66. Pilate said unto them, You have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

The chief priests and Pharisees wanted Pilate to make the sepulcher sure, but he left them to secure it. There seems to have been a grim sort of irony about the governor's reply, "You have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as you can." Whether he mean it as a taunt, or as a command to secure the sepulcher, they became unconsciously witnesses that Christ's resurrection was a supernatural act. The tomb in the rock could not be entered except by rolling away the stone, and they guarded that by sealing the stone, and setting a watch. According to the absurd teaching of the Rabbis, rubbing ears of corn was a kind of threshing, and, therefore, was unlawful on the Sabbath; yet here were these men doing what, by similar reasoning, might be called furnace and foundry work, and calling out a guard of Roman legionaries to assist them in breaking the Sabbath. Unintentionally, they did honor to the sleeping King when they obtained the representatives of the Roman emperor to watch his resting-place until the third morning, when he came forth Victor over sin, and death, and the grave. Thus once more was the wrath of man made to praise the King of glory, and the remainder of that wrath was restrained.

Chapter 28

Verses 1-15

Matthew 28:1-2. In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

See what concern angels have about our Lord. Are they here tonight? Do they make a habit of coming where the saints meet together? I think they do. We have intimations in Scripture that that is the case. Let us behave ourselves aright tonight "because of the angels"; and as they worship and count it their highest honor to serve the Son of man, let us also worship Jesus, and adore him. What a picture this scene would make!

Matthew 28:3-4. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

He said nothing as he rolled back the stone; he did not shake a sword at them, or over them, to fill them with terror. The presence of perfect purity, the presence of heavenly things, is a terror to ungodly men. May you and I be such that our very presence in company will cast a hush over it! "It was e'en as though an angel shook his wings," they said of one good man, when he spoke in common conversation. May there be about us enough of the heavenly to make the powers of evil quail before us!

Matthew 28:5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not you:

But I notice that they did fear, although the angel said, "Fear not." Neither men nor angels can so speak as to silence fears in trembling hearts; but Jesus can, as we shall see farther on. One word from his lips has infinitely more power than all the words of angels or of saints.

Matthew 28:5. For I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified.

And if you and I tonight can truly say that we are on the side of Jesus, that we seek him who was crucified, then we can bear all the shame with which philosophy would gladly cover the cross, and we have no cause for fear. Ridicule and all that it brings from this ungodly generation will not hurt you.

Matthew 28:6. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.

"As he said." A few words, but what a world of meaning! "As he said." He always does "as he said." He always gives "as he said." He always reveals himself "as he said" not otherwise. He never fails to fulfill a promise, or forgets even the mode of promising; not only does he do what he said, but as he said: "He is risen, as he said."

Matthew 28:6. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

For even the place where he lay is hallowed to you. And, beloved, if there is a place where you have ever had communion with Christ, you will remember it. You might bless the spot of ground where Jesus met with you. Here, tonight, I hope that some of you can see the place where the Lord appeared to you.

Matthew 28:7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;

Such good news ought to be spread quickly. "Go and tell his disciples," they are trembling, they have fled, — "that he is risen from the dead."

Matthew 28:7. And, behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see him: lo, I have told you.

Brethren, this is good news for us tonight, though all may not, perhaps, feel the power of it. "He is risen." We have no dead Christ; we serve a living Savior. He is risen, and therefore he can come to us tonight in the power of his resurrection-life, and he can make us glad. "Behold, he goes before you into Galilee." There is a great deal about Galilee in Matthew's Gospel; it is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and yet it often talks about Galilee, that border-land which touches Gentiles, as well as the chosen seed of Abraham. There is the place where Jesus will meet his people, in the border-land between Jew and Gentile, there the risen Christ will hold the first general assembly of his Church.

Matthew 28:8. And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy;

What a mixture, fear and joy! But notice that the fear was not great, and the joy was: "Fear and great joy." Observe the proportions of the mixture; and if tonight you have some fear, yet I hope you will have great joy; and then the bitterness of the fear will pass away. A holy fear, mixed with great joy, is one of the sweetest compounds we can bring to God's altar. Some of us have brought those spices with us tonight. These holy women brought other spices to the sepulcher; but these were the spices that they took away from it, "Fear and great joy."

Matthew 28:8-9. And did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him.

He would not let Mary Magdalene do that when they were alone, but he said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: it is more needful for you to go now and tell my disciples that I have risen from the dead. There will be time by-and-by for further fellowship with me." But now Jesus permits these godly women to hold him by the feet. It was an act of humility, worshiping and holding; and holding not his hands, but his feet. They must have seen the nail-prints before Thomas did, as they held him by the feet, and worshiped him. I do not find that these women ran to the angels, they rather shrank back from them; but they came to Jesus, for we are told that they came, and held him by the feet. I think that there must have been a new attraction about Christ after

he had risen from the dead, something more sweet about the tones of his voice, something more charming about the countenance that had been so maimed at Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha.

Matthew 28:10. Then said Jesus unto them,

As he saw their palpitating hearts, and perceived that they were still all in a flurry, for the angel had not dispelled their fears,

Matthew 28:10. Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

The angel talked of "disciples"; Christ talks of "brethren." He always has the sweeter word.

Matthew 28:11. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

While good people were active, bad people were active, too. It is wonderful to think of how much good and evil is being done at the same time. While we are thankful that holy women are running with holy messages for Christ, here come the soldiers of the watch, and they are going in to those vile priests.

Matthew 28:12. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel,

They ought at once to have repented when the watch came, and told them that Jesus was risen. Ought they not to have gone, and fallen at his feet, and begged for mercy? But instead of that

Matthew 28:12. They gave large money unto the soldiers,

Money, wherever it comes in, seems to do mischief. For money Christ was betrayed, and for money the truth about his resurrection was kept back as far as it could be. Money has had a hardening effect on some of the highest servants of God, and all who have to touch the filthy lucre have need to pray for grace to keep them from being harmed by being brought into contact with it.

Matthew 28:13. Saying, Say you, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

If they were asleep, how did they know what happened? How could they know it if they were asleep? Evidence which is borne by men who were asleep at the time is evidently not worth regarding; but when you have to tell a lie, I suppose that, as any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, any lie will do to slander one whom you hate.

Matthew 28:14-15. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught:

No doubt you have heard of the man who said that he did not believe all the articles of his church because his salary was so small that he could not be expected to believe them all for the money. Oh, the depraving and debasing power of the whole system of bribery and falsehood! May none of us ever be affected by considerations of profit and loss in matters of doctrine, matters of duty, and matters of right and wrong!

Matthew 28:15. And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

You may start a lie, but you cannot stop it; there is no telling how long it will live. Let us never teach even the least error to a little child, for it may live on and become a great heresy long after we are dead. There is scarcely any limit to its life and to its power.

Verses 1-20

Matthew 28:1. In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

While the Jewish Sabbath lasted, they paid to it due respect. They did not even go the sepulcher to perform the kindly offices of embalment; but when the old Sabbath was dying away, and the new and better Sabbath began to dawn, these holy women found their way back to their Lord's tomb. Woman must be first at the sepulcher as she was last at the cross. We may well forget that she was first in the transgression; the honor which Christ put upon her took away that shame. Who but Mary Magdalene should be the first at the tomb? Out of her Christ had cast seven devils, and now she acts as if into her he had sent seven angels. She had received so much grace that she was full of love to her Lord. "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher." You can just see them in the gray light of the dawn; it is not clear enough to make out their form and shape; but in the twilight they are coming into the garden, and finding their way to the new sepulcher.

Matthew 28:2. And, behold, there was a great earthquake:—

The women must have wondered as they felt that tremor beneath their.

feet. If you have ever felt an earthquake, you will never forget it; and this was a great one, not one of an ordinary kind: "a great earthquake." Death was being upheaved, and all the bars of the sepulcher were beginning to burst. When the King awoke from the sleep of death, he shook the world; the bed-chamber in which he rested for a little while trembled as the heavenly Hero arose from his couch: "Behold, there was a great earthquake." Nor was the King unattended in his rising,—

Matthew 28:2. For the angel of the Lord—

It was not merely one of the angelic host, but some mighty presence-angel:

"the angel of the Lord"—

Matthew 28:2. Descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

Jesus was put in the prison of the tomb as a hostage for his people; therefore he must not break out by himself, but the angelic sheriff's officer must bring the warrant for his deliverance, and set the captive at liberty. He was immured because of human debt; but the debt is paid, so he must go free. Like a flash of fire, the angel descends from the right hand of God. He stands at the mouth of the tomb, he touches the great stone, sealed as it was, and guarded by the soldiery, and it rolls back; and when he has rolled back the stone from the door. he sits upon it, as if to defy earth and Hell ever to roll it back again. That great stone seems to represent the sin of all Christ's people, which shut them up in prison; it can never be laid again over the mouth of the sepulcher of any child of God. Christ has risen, and all his saints must rise, too. The angel "rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." I think I see there one of the grandest sights that ever man beheld, for one greater than an earthly king is sitting on something better than a throne.

Matthew 28:3. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow:

Dazzling in its purity, like the clothing worn by Christ upon the Mount of Transfiguration, whiter than any fuller can make it.

Matthew 28:4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

First a palsy of fear, and then a stiffening of fright, fell upon them, for they had never seen such a sight as this before. They were Roman soldiers, who knew nothing of the meaning of cowardice; yet at the sight of this messenger of God, "the keepers did shake, and became as dead men."

Matthew 28:5. And the angel answered and said unto the women,—

We had almost forgotten them; we had been thinking of the earthquake, and the angel, and the flaming lightning, and the frightened soldiers; but this angel's thought is all about the women. He whose countenance was like lightning, and whose garments were white as snow, said to the women,—

Matthew 28:5-7. Fear not you: for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;

Notice the angel's words; first "See," and then "Go." You cannot tell the message until you know it. You who would serve God, must first be instructed yourselves. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay;" and then, "Go quickly." If you have seen, then go. Do not sit down, and admire the sight, and forget the thousands who have never seen it; but come, see the place where the Lord lay, and then go, and "go quickly."

Matthew 28:7. And Behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see him: lo, I have told you.

That is a very beautiful touch of condescension on the Savior's part,—that he would go before his disciples into Galilee. Why, Galilee was the very opposite of a classic region; it was a district that was much despised. The clod-hoppers, the boors, the illiterate people of no account, lived in "Galilee of the Gentiles." "Yet," says Christ, "I will meet you there." It was the King's own rendezvous,—not in the courts of earthly monarchs, nor in the palaces of the priests, but away down in Galilee. What cares he for the grandeur of men, and their empty pomp and boasted wisdom? He goes to places that are despised, that he may lift them up by the glory of his light: "Behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see him: lo, I have told you."

Matthew 28:8. And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy;

That seems a strange mixture: "fear and great joy." Yet there was plenty of reason for both emotions. Who would not fear that had felt an earthquake, and seen an angel, and marked the tomb broken open? Yet who would not rejoice that had had such a cheering message, and such an assurance that the crucified Christ had risen from the dead? Experience is the best explanation of

experience; you must feel for yourself these two emotions working together before you can understand how they can live in anyone at the same time: "They departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy."

Matthew 28:8. And did run to bring his disciples word.

Good women! "They did run." These stayed matrons did run, and who would not run to tell of a risen Lord?

Matthew 28:9. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them,—

Happy are the ministers who meet their Lord when they are going up the pulpit stairs; blessed are the teachers who meet Jesus when they are going to the class. They will be sure to preach and teach well when that is the case: "As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them."

Matthew 28:9. Saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him.

These holy women were not Unitarians; knowing that Jesus was the Son of God, they had no hesitation in worshiping him. Perhaps these timid souls clung to their Lord through fear that he might be again taken from them, so "they held him by the feet, and worshiped him," fear and faith striving within them for the mastery.

Matthew 28:10. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Note how Jesus dwells upon this despised district of Galilee; I should like to dwell upon it, too. He said nothing about classic Corinth, or imperial Rome, or proud Jerusalem; but his message is, "Tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." If we will be humble, if we will cast aside the pride of life, there shall we meet him who is meek and lowly of heart.

Matthew 28:11-13. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say you, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

You must often have noticed what a mixture of falsehood this was. "You were asleep; you are sure that you were asleep?" "Yes." "Yet you say that the disciples came; you knew they were the disciples though you were asleep. And they stole him away? You know how they did it, you can describe the stealthy way in which they took away the body of Jesus; you were the witnesses of it, although you were sound asleep all the while." Go, sirs, it is worse than trifling to listen to the lying of a witness who begins by swearing that he was fast asleep all the time; yet this was the tale that the soldiers were bribed to tell; and many a worse lie than this has been told to try to put the truth of God out of countenance. The modern philosophy which is thrust forward to cast a slur upon the great truths of revelation, is no more worthy of credence than this lie put into the mouths of the soldiers; yet common report gives it currency, and among a certain clique it pays. But the soldiers naturally said, "We shall be put to death for sleeping while on duty;" so the chief priests said,—

Matthew 28:14. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

"We can give some more of those arguments that have been so telling in your hands, and they will prevail with the governor as they have prevailed with you."

Matthew 28:15. So they took the money, and did as they were taught:—

Plenty do this still, and I have no doubt they will continue to do so as long as the world is what it is: "They took the money, and did as they were taught:—"

Matthew 28:15-17. And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted.

Where will not Mr. Doubting, and other members of his troublesome family be found? We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the Church, since even in the presence of the newly-risen Christ some doubted. Yet the Lord revealed himself to the assembled company, although he knew that some among them would doubt that it was really their Lord who was risen from the dead.

Matthew 28:18-20. And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

We say, "Amen," too. May he be most manifestly with us here even now, for his sweet love's sake! Amen.

Matthew 28:16. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

Away from the haunts of men, where he had been accustomed to be, in a country familiar to them, and with which he was familiar, in a despised country, "Galilee of the Gentiles."

Matthew 28:17. And when they saw him, they worshiped him:

Probably this was the occasion referred to by Paul, when the risen Savior "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once."

Matthew 28:17. But some doubted.

There were some honest doubters then. The breed has been kept up ever since, only there are more dishonest doubters by a great deal than there are of honest ones now. We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the church, since even in the presence of the newly-risen Christ "some doubted."

Matthew 28:18. And Jesus came and spoke unto them,

These words seem to imply that he came nearer to them than he was at first; unveiling himself still more, and revealing himself more clearly.

Matthew 28:18-19. Saying, All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations,

"Teach", that is, disciple, make disciples of "all nations."

Matthew 28:19-20. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you:

There is teaching again. It is as much the duty of the Christian to teach after baptism as to teach before baptism; he must be ever teaching. Hence believers are always to be learners, since Christ would have his servants always to be teachers: "Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you." We are not to invent a gospel; we are not to change, and shift, and cut, and shape it to meet the advancement of the age; Christ's command is plain: "Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you."

Matthew 28:20. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

They have their commission, here is the seal to it; here is the source of their power; here is the society in which they are to work: "Lo, I am with you always." God grant that you and I, going forth to teach for Christ. may always have the sound of our Master's feet with us, even to the end of the world! Amen.

This exposition consisted of readings from Luke 4:16-30; Luke 9:57-62; and Matthew 28:16-20.