

SERMON IX.

Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.—MAT. XXV. 11, 12.

IN these words we have two branches:—

1. The supplication of the foolish virgins, ver. 11.

2. The answer of the bridegroom, ver. 12.

In the first consider the time when it was. These foolish virgins came *afterwards*, when the door was shut.

Secondly, The blandishment and compellation here used, *Lord, Lord*.

First, For the time when it was. 'These virgins came *afterwards*, when it was too late. They should have knocked and cried for mercy before the door was shut: Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.' Otherwise our cries are but howlings, the fruit of our discontent rather than our own choice. Heb. xi. 5, it is said of Enoch that he pleased God. If we would live with God in a blessed estate hereafter, we must please God ere we depart hence. This is the time of grace, or God's patience: Luke ii. 14, 'Peace upon earth, good-will to men;' and 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. 'This is the time of labour and service, Eccles. ix. 10. Judgment findeth us as death leaveth us, Eccles. xi. 3. Then we are *in termino*. When this life is ended, all opportunities of doing good end with it. Corn doth not grow in the barn, but in the field; therefore we had need to work now, seek grace now, be instant with God now: John ix. 4, 'I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, wherein no man can work.' And now, that is, not only while life lasteth, but instantly.

Secondly, Here is the blandishment, and compellation used, *Lord, Lord!* So Mat. vii. 21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven;' and ver. 22, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord.'

1. Here is a title of honour given to Christ by hypocrites, and it is ingeminated. The title of honour given to Christ is due to him: John xiii. 13, 'Ye call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.' But the title must be verified by suitable practice. Men may delight to be flattered with the title of Lord, Lord, by those that inwardly bear them no reverence; but Christ, who knoweth the heart, will not be pleased with those glorious titles, when your hearts give your tongues the lie: Luke vi. 46, 'Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' As they cried, 'Hail king of the Jews,' when the soldiers mocked him. Many often intitle Christ to their party, take upon them to be his disciples in words; but the 'kingdom of God standeth not in word, but in power.' But these served their master more with mouth than with heart; therefore Christ doth not accept of them, nor approve of them for his servants. They call Christ Lord, but obey the devil, are led and governed by the flesh, disobedient

to Christ's counsels and precepts. I hear 'Lord, Lord;' but what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? Therefore it is vain to use this honourable title to move pity in the judge.

2. They ingeminate it to show the ardency of their desires, and earnestness to have Christ for their Lord. Now, first or last every knee shall bow to Christ; they are forced to fly to him now in their extremity and pressures of misery. Though men will not come to Christ for grace, yet they will come to him for glory. Now they cannot come because busied about something else, Luke xiv. 18-20; indeed, will not come: John v. 40, 'And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.' But then it is all 'Lord, Lord.' Oh! how fain would they own Christ, and be owned by him! But alas! their repentance cometh too late, their desires too late, their tears too late; it is all forced by their extremity: Job xxvii. 9, 'Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?' A hypocrite would not much care if he were heard in the times of peace, and the affluence of outward enjoyments; but then, when he would fain flatter God into a hearing, God rejecteth him. In extremity they prize mercy above a thousand worlds; but all will not do, the door is shut.

3. The matter of the petition, 'Open to us;' that is, the door of the nuptial chamber. None but desire happiness. This petition, as set here, noteth two things:—

[1.] The innate desire of happiness that is in man. All desire to enter, and to be saved at length, however they neglect the means for the present, to get oil in their vessels, or to keep in their lamps.

[2.] How deeply leavened with self-confidence and self-conceit the hearts of men are, so that they are not easily dispossessed of it. When the door is shut, the foolish virgins make full account to enter. The most sottish think they shall do well enough: Deut. xxix. 19, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, and add drunkenness to thirst.' Especially the temporary, who is the refined hypocrite: 'Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name,' &c.; make full account to go to heaven, that shall never come there. They trust to false evidences; use negligent endeavours, please themselves with uncertain and deceitful hopes; but all vain and false pretences shall then be confuted, and those that have a high and false opinion of their interest in Christ shall then be disappointed by him.

Secondly, I now come to the bridegroom's reply, Where note—

1. The vehemency and asseveration, 'Verily I say unto you.' To cut off all further hope, his answer is peremptory and decisive.

2. The reply itself, 'I know you not.' There is a twofold knowledge—intuitive and approbative. (1.) By an intuitive knowledge: 'Known unto the Lord from the beginning are all his works,' Acts xv. 18. God had an idea of all things in himself before he gave them actual being: he knoweth all whom he conserves by his providence. Every wise man knoweth what he hath. Christ knew that virtue went from him in the throng. (2.) But this knowledge is here meant of the knowledge of approbation, as we find it often in scripture. Now Christ's knowledge of his own people is threefold:—

[1.] As they fall under the purposes of his grace. So it is said, 2

Tim. ii. 12, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' This is also in scripture called his fore-knowledge: Rom. viii. 29, 'Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;' 1 Peter i. 2, 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.' God the Father having all persons that ever should be in the world under his all-seeing eye, he did out of his free love single and choose out some to be the objects of his grace, designing them by the redemption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit to come unto glory. He particularly treated with Christ about them, John xvii. 6, put them into his hands, to be justified, sanctified, and finally saved. This is 'the foundation of the Lord that standeth sure.'

[2.] As they are under the care of his special providence, when they are in actual being, to supply them with all things necessary and good for them. So it is said, Ps. i. 6, 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish;' John x. 14, 'I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.' Christ knoweth them man by man, person by person; and all their safety cometh from his particular care over them: Gal. iv. 9, 'But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.' He assigneth the work of conversion to God's preventing grace. Sinners in an unconverted estate are such of whom God taketh no notice and knowledge so as to be familiar with them, and to communicate his special and saving blessings to them.

[3.] It is put for his rewarding grace; and so he is said to know, or not to know. To know his people: 1 Cor. viii. 3, 'If any man love God, the same is known of him.' Those that choose God for their portion, and cleave to him, and serve him faithfully, Christ will own them or 'confess them before his Father in heaven,' Luke xii. 8; but others he will not own. See Mat. vii. 21, 'And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.' He will not own them in judgment that will not own and obey him now. So Luke xiii. 25-27, 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door; and ye begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence you are: then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell ye, I know you not.' Here is no entertainment for such as you, who have by your sloth, negligence, and improvidence forfeited the advantages offered you. I never approved you for my disciples and servants. *Μάλλον δέ τῆς γέεινός τουτο, &c.*, saith Chrysostom; these words are more cutting and grievous than hell itself, 'I know you not.' Well, these three sorts of knowing must be distinguished.

The first is this, that Christ hath a particular and exact knowledge of all the elect, and who they are that shall be saved, wherein he will not be disappointed: John xiii. 18, 'I know whom I have chosen.'

The second is the ground of our present comfort and support. He hath a special affection to them, taketh special notice and care of them, and will bring them to know, love, and acknowledge him, as he doth also them: he beareth a suitable impression thereto.

The third is matter of our hope, and will be our honour at the last day, that Christ will come to us, and own us, and reward us for all that we have done or suffered for him here. When others have the entertainment of strangers, and are rejected as no true believers and professors of the gospel, then shall we be owned and admitted into heaven by him.

Here is a large field of matter. I shall single out those things that are most obvious and worthy of our remark and observation.

First, That they came afterwards; I shall take occasion to show the necessity of hastening our preparation for the day of our accounts.

Secondly, From their passionate desire to have the door opened to them; here is a strong insinuation, and vehement desire, 'Lord, Lord;' that even in reprobates and castaways there may be a desire of entering into the joys of everlasting life.

Thirdly, From Christ's reply, I shall show you the dreadful misery and direful effect of being disowned by Christ at his coming.

For the first, since the foolish virgins came too late, we should all take care to begin with God betimes; the sooner the better.

1. Because you make a necessary work sure, and put it out of doubt and hazard. The time of life is the time of grace, Luke ii. 14; 2 Cor. vi. 2. Now the time of life is uncertain: James iv. 14, 'Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? it is but a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' And a work of necessity should not be left on peradventures: therefore we ought to bestir ourselves without delay or fore-slowing. We know not how soon opportunity will be over. It cannot be done too soon, it may be done too late: and therefore it is good to be on the surest side. Ludovicus Capellus telleth us, out of Rabbi Jonah's book of the Mystery of Repentance, that when a disciple came to his teacher to know what was the fittest time to repent in, he answered, One day before his death, meaning presently; for we have not assurance of another day: Prov. xxvii. 1, 'Thou knowest not what to-morrow may bring forth.' Our greatest works, and of most absolute necessity, should be done first, and have the quickest despatch, lest it be too late before we go about them. Oh! woe to us if God should call us off before we have minded coming to him, and walking with him.

2. In point of obedience; God presseth to now. God doth not only command us to please him, but to do it presently: Heb. iii. 7, 8, 'Now, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.' Pompilius the Roman ambassador, when he made delays and excuses, the emperor drew a circle on the ground, saying, *Intra hunc*—answer me before thou stirrest from this place. God standeth upon his authority, and will have a present answer: if he say, To-day, it is flat disobedience for you to say, To-morrow. Now is the time of salvation, at this instant, 2 Cor. vi. 2. You are charged in his name, as you will answer the contrary. You say, No; I will please the flesh a little longer. It may be just with God, if you refuse him, never to call you more.

3. In point of ingenuity: we receive a plenteous recompense for a small service. When a man thinketh what God hath provided for them that love him and serve him, he should be ashamed that he

receives so much and does so little ; and therefore he should redeem all the time that he can, that he may answer his expectations from God. Shall we adjourn and put off God to our decrepid time, when he hath provided for us eternal happiness? Can a man that hath any ingenuity in his breast be content to dishonour God longer, grieve his Spirit longer, provided that at length he may be saved? Those that have any due sense of God's kindness, or their own duty, will think God hath too long been kept out of his right, and that all the time that remaineth is too little to express our love and thankfulness to him, 1 Peter iv. 3. Men that do delay, do in effect say, Let me despise thy commands, and abuse thy mercy a little longer ; but then when my lusts are satisfied, and youthful heats are spent, I will see what I can do to be saved. What baseness of spirit is this !

4. It is our advantage to begin betimes, both here and hereafter.

[1.] Here. The sooner you begin to please God, the sooner you have an evidence of your interest in his favour, more experience of his love, more hopes of living with him in heaven. Oh! these things are not slight things! When once you come to taste the comfort of them you will be sorry that you had begun no sooner ; as Paul complaineth that he was 'born out of due time,' 1 Cor. xv. 8, because he lost the advantage of seeing Christ in the flesh, and so of many sweet conferences, and many sweet visits of love and experiences of grace, that otherwise might fall to his share : Rom. xvi. 7, 'They were in Christ before me.' An early acquaintance with Christ bringeth many benefits with it, as peace, and comfort, and joy, and hope, which others that set forth later want. The consolations of God should not be vile and cheap with us: if you were acquainted with them you would leave your husks for bread in your Father's house.

[2.] The sooner you begin with God the greater will your glory be hereafter, for the more we improve our talents here, the greater will our reward be in heaven : Luke xix. 16-19, 'And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant ; because thou hast been faithful in a little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, and said, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds : and he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.' And when the mother of Zebedee's children came to Christ, and desired that her two sons might sit, one at his right hand, and the other at his left, Mat. xx. 23, Christ doth not deny the thing, that there are degrees of glory, set forth by sitting on the right hand, and on the left ; but telleth her that it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of his Father ; as in hell there is a hotter and cooler judgment. Certainly then they that have long pleased God, and made it the whole business of their lives, shall have larger measures of happiness.

Use. Is to reprove those that adjourn and put off the work of religion from time to time, till they have lost all time. It is Satan's artifice to cheat men of the present opportunity, by promises of a future obedience. Oh! consider the work is much, and life is short. If we did live as many years as days, all would be little enough ; therefore let us begin betimes. There are three arguments to press this. If this work must be once done, why not now? your hearts will not be better, nor the terms less.

1. Your hearts are not like to be better; for the longer we continue in sin, the heart is the more hardened. As the highway by continual treading groweth the harder, and the anvil by continual smiting is hardened the more, so long use in sin obdureth the heart, and long resistance grieveth the Spirit, and carnal affections grow upon us: Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' It is hard to transplant an old tree. The affections are now more settled in a course of sin.

2. The terms of the gospel will not be more easy, and we better able to obey them hereafter than now we are. The laws of Christianity are always the same. The pleasures of sin must one day be renounced, or we are for ever miserable; and why not now? Sin will be as sweet hereafter as now it is; and salvation dispensed upon the same terms. You cannot be saved hereafter with less ado, or bring down Christ or heaven to a lower rate. If this be a reason, it will ever be as a reason against Christ and religion, because you are loath to part with this or that pleasing lust; and so it will never be.

3. The suspicion that is upon a late repentance. It is seldom sound, and therefore always questionable. That is no true repentance which ariseth merely from horror and the sense of hell. This sensible work that men have upon them may be but the beginning of everlasting despair. All men seek the Lord at length, but the wise seek him in time. This was the great difference between the wise and foolish virgins; one sought him 'in time,' the other 'out of time.' They would covet his favour at last. Upon a death-bed the most profane would have God for their portion: when they can sin no more, and enjoy the world no longer, then they cry and howl for mercy and comfort, and a little well-grounded hope of heaven or eternal life: but who can tell whether this sensible work that is upon them be not merely an act of self-love, and the fruit of those natural desires which all the creatures have after their own happiness, or a mere retreat others have when they can hold the world no longer. We cannot say this repentance is true, nor affirm the contrary, that it is false; but it is doubtful. There is but that one instance of the thief on the cross, that truly repented when he came to die. The scriptures contain a history of four thousand years, or thereabouts; and yet all that while we have but this one instance of a true repentance just at death; and in that instance there is an extraordinary conjunction of circumstances which cannot reasonably be expected again. Christ was now at his right hand, in the height of his love drawing sinners to God: never such a season as then; and it is more than probable he had never a call before then. Well, then, let us put this necessary work of preparation for God out of doubt betimes; yea, let the children of God, if they have not yet prevailed against such a lust, or lived in the neglect of such a duty, could not bring their hearts to it hitherto, make speed, lest they be surprised, and this defect in their preparation make their death uncomfortable. A good Christian is always converting, yet not fully converted: the first work is often gone over, and he is still getting nearer to God by a more affectionate compliance with his whole will.

Doct 2. That those that are finally refused by the Lord may yet have a desire of the joys of heaven.

1. Consider them in this world, and in the world to come. These two respects are different; for though self-love be the common cause of their desiring heaven both now and then, yet there is a difference: it is more commendable to desire it now than to desire it then, though neither be an argument of any gracious constitution of soul. It is more commendable to desire it now, when it is a matter of faith to believe the world to come, than when it is a matter of sense; as when all shadows are chased away, then it is no hard matter to convince men of things that lie within the veil; that is, of the truth and worth of heavenly things: and yet if they should be convinced of this, we cannot say they are gracious, however they are better than mere infidels; for carnal men may desire a share in the state of the blessed, as Num. xxiii. 10, 'Oh! that I might die the death of the righteous!' Balaam had his wishes. And those that did not like Christ's doctrine, but departed from him, said, John vi. 34, 'Lord, evermore give us of this bread of life.' They would fain be happy. When this happiness was represented unto them, it may and doth stir up strange motions in the hearts of those that are unrenewed and unchanged.

2. There is a difference in the end and use of this desire of happiness. Now and then God leaveth these velleities and inclinations as a stock upon which to graft grace; as a spinster leaveth a lock of wool to fasten the next thread; as Nebuchadnezzar's shape remained when he was turned a-grazing among the beasts; and as Job's messengers, 'I alone am escaped to tell thee.' There are these inclinations to happiness that are escaped out of the ruins of the fall. God by our self-love would draw us to love himself: man will not be dealt with else. It leaveth men capable of heaven¹ the doctrine of life represented to them, they are without excuse if they refuse it. This is the use of it now; but then when we are *in termino*, it hath another use. This love of their own happiness, and desire to be saved, serveth for this very use, to make them sensible of their loss, the grief of their condemnation and lost estate is increased thereby. Now this is little thought of by carnal men, because they have *oblectamenta sensus*, the entertainments of sense to divert their minds; but when separate and set apart from all these, then, if they have no other punishment, this is enough. Surely their understanding remaineth, having nothing to comfort them and allay the bitter sense of their loss. But now let us see—

1. How far carnal and unregenerate men desire happiness.

2. Why this is so little improved, and they make so little use of it.

First, How far a carnal and unregenerate man may desire happiness?

1. They may desire good *confuse, non indefinite*,² happiness in the general; but this desire cometh under no deliberation and choice. The happiness that is offered by Christ, or that life and immortality that he bringeth to light, cometh under another consideration. Good, good, is the cry of the world. Certainly no man would be miserable, but all would be happy, and live at ease. Christians, pagans, all good men, bad men, they that seldom agree in anything, do all agree

¹ Qu. 'having'?—ED.

² Qu. 'definite'?—ED.

in this, they would have good. To ask men whether they would be happy or no, is to ask them whether they love themselves, yea or no.

2. They would not only have good in the general, but some eternal good. And because this is not so evident by nature, they grope and feel about for it, Acts xvii. 26. There is an unsatisfiedness¹ in present things, and therefore they are scrambling and feeling about for some better thing. As Solomon tried all experiments, so do men go about seeking for good, Eccles. vii. 29. Since we lost the straight line of God's direction, we seek it sometimes in one thing, sometimes in another; and Christ saith, Mat. xiii. 45, 46, that the 'kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; and when he had found one pearl of good price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' Man would have something contentful, that may be an everlasting ground of rejoicing to him.

3. As to true happiness and eternal good, when it is discovered to us, our inclinations to it are but weak and ineffectual. Without grace we discern it but weakly; for there is a great mist upon eternity, and the light of nature being dim, cannot pierce through it, 2 Peter i. 9. As a spire at a distance, men see it so that they cannot know whether they see it, yea or nay; or as the blind man, when his eyes were first touched by Christ, he saw men walking like trees. Again we consider it but weakly, the mind being diverted by other objects. As when we see a man in a crowd, we can hardly take notice of him; so men seldom retire to consider what God offereth them in Christ. When God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, he biddeth him go and view the length and the breadth of it, Gen. xiii. 14-17. So when he promiseth the kingdom of heaven, he doth in effect speak the same to us; for certainly no man shall enter into that land of promise but he that hath considered it, and well viewed it, and can lay aside his earthly distractions sometimes, to take a turn in the land of promise: but few do this; few send their thoughts before them as spies into that blessed land, and therefore it worketh so little upon them. And we desire it but weakly; the affections being prepossessed and pre-engaged by things that come next to hand, we conceive only a wish or a velleity for this happy estate, not a serious volition, or a firm bent of heart; and therefore we pursue it but weakly, as children desire a thing passionately, but are soon put out of the humour: they do not pursue it with that earnestness, exactness, and uniformity, which is requisite: 'The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing,' Prov. xiii. 4, 'because his hands refuse to labour,' Prov. xxi. 25. So that this inclination to happiness is neither serious, nor constant, nor laborious: these desires are but desires.

4. If they like the end, they dislike the means. Our souls are more averse from the means than from the end. All agree in opinions and wishes about a supreme and immortal happiness; yet there is a great discord in the way that leadeth to it, not so much in opinion as practice. Men like not God's terms: Esau would have the blessing, yet sold the birthright, Heb. xii. 16, 17. Indeed in things natural we do not expect the end without the means; but in things supernatural we do, and so by refusing the means, we do separate the end, Ps. cvi. 24.

¹ Qu. 'unsatisfyingness'?—ED.

Heaven is a good place, but it is a hard matter to get thither ; so loath are we to be at the cost and pains : we desire happiness, not holiness. God doth promote those things we naturally desire ; but still that we submit to those things we are naturally against. Whatsoever maketh for ourselves we are naturally more willing of than what maketh for the honour of God : now if we will not submit to the one, we shall not have the other. We would all be pardoned, and freed from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell ; but we are unwilling to let go the profit and pleasure that we fancy in sin.

Secondly, Why this is no more improved, and why we make no better use of it? There are four causes of it—(1.) Ignorance. To many the object is not represented ; as to heathens and to sottish Christians. (2.) Inconsideration. Spiritual objects must not only be represented, but enforced upon the will by the efficacy and weight of meditation, Ps. i. 3. (3.) Unbelief. They have not a sound persuasion of these truths : Heb. xi. 13, ‘ They were persuaded of them, and embraced them.’ They had not a guess, but a sound belief. (4.) Unsubjection of will : Rom. viii. 7, ‘ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ It is easier to cure their errors than to mortify their affections.

Use. Oh ! do not rest in desiring to be happy ; there is no great matter in that ; the damned would have the door opened to them : but desire grace, Ps. cxix. 5 ; Rom. vii. 23 ; desire it prevalently, so as not to be put out of the humour ; as children would fain have something when they are in pain, but are pleased with rattles or any toy. If your vain delights abate not, this desire will do you no good. Desire it so as to labour for it, yea, so as to make it your main business, Ps. xxvii. 4 ; yea, to part with all for it, Mat. xiii. 46. This is the way to be happy indeed.

Doct. 3. That it is a dreadful misery to be disowned by Christ at his coming : ‘ I know you not.’

1. Consider who may be disowned. Many that profess respect to Christ, and may be well esteemed of in the visible church ; many that cry ‘ Lord, Lord ;’ many that have ‘ eat and drunk in his presence.’ There is a great deal of difference between the esteem of God and the judgment of the world. Many whom we take to be forward professors, yea, many that have great gifts and employments in the ministry, and with great success, Mat. vii. 22. If only pagans, or only profane persons were damned, or the opposite party to Christ, it were another matter ; there were not such cause of fear : but those of Christ’s faction, many that profess to know him, but were never subdued by the power of his grace, John xi. 52–54, Christ doth not know, because he doth not love them.

2. The misery of being disowned. (1.) This disowning is the act and sentence of a judge. If it were the frown of a bare friend in our misery, it even cuts the heart in sunder ; but when a neglected Saviour shall become an angry judge, when his favour hath been slighted long, then he will stir up all his wrath. When it is ‘ kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him,’ Ps. ii. 12. (2.) It is the disappointment of a hope. They supposed he meant to own them,

and therefore put in their plea. There is a hope that will leave ashamed, Rom. v. 5. (3.) It is the cause of all other misery. *Pœna damni* maketh way for *pœna sensus*. Here we care not for him, so long as we can be well without him. It may be now you esteem it nothing to have a frown from Christ in the day of his patience; but then, 'Depart, ye cursed.'

Use. Oh! let this make you more serious for the time to come. Do not grieve the Spirit any longer, Eph. iv. 30. Do you receive and own Christ when others refuse him, and you will be owned by Christ: Luke xii. 8, 9, 'And I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.'

SERMON X.

Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.—MAT. XXV. 13.

HERE is the conclusion of the whole parable, as the illative particule *therefore* showeth. Every passage in it will infer this conclusion.

First, The suddenness and unexpectedness of his coming, *watch therefore*.

Secondly, Only those that are ready shall enter into the marriage-chamber, *watch therefore*, that ye may be always ready.

Thirdly, The shutting the door, and exclusion of the unprepared, *watch therefore*.

Fourthly, The door is shut, as never to be opened again. When they beg entrance they are refused and disowned by Christ, as having not his mark upon them, *watch therefore; for ye know not the day, neither the hour, &c.*

In the words we have—(1.) A duty; (2.) The reason of it. The one will explain the other.

1. For the duty; what is meant by watching? Because we are pressed to it upon the account of the uncertain time of Christ's coming. Here it meaneth a care to get and keep ourselves always ready, and in a posture to receive him for our Lord, as himself explaineth it, Mat. xxiv. 42, 'Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.'

2. The reason, 'For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh;' Mat. xxiv. 44, 'For in such an hour you think not of, the Son of man cometh.'

Doct. The great duty that lieth upon them that believe and look for Christ's coming is watching.

My business will be to show you what watching is in the general notion of it. As it is taken spiritually and metaphorically, it implieth a diligent care and heed to the great affairs of our souls; for it is a mixed thing, made up of prudence and diligence. It implieth a prudent foresight of the soul's danger, with a diligent care to avoid it. It