

watch upon the door of my lips;’ and Job, that ‘made a covenant with his eyes’? Job xxxi. 1. But rather are not we more foolhardy and negligent, do not mind our business, and consider not the inconveniency of not watching?

Use 2. To press us to this duty; there is a God that watcheth, and enemies that watch, and conscience watcheth, and will do its office first or last; a day of judgment, when you are to answer for all that you have done; and will not you watch? When you consider how much you are in danger of sin, and in danger by sin, can you be negligent and secure? Oh! watch your hearts, Prov. iv. 23; watch your tongue, Ps. xxxix. 1; watch your senses, Job xxxi. 1: gratify them and you wound your hearts. Watch your ways, Prov. iv. 24; but above all watch your state. Let us examine well our case, that we may be found in Christ, and have the ‘seal of his Spirit,’ Eph. i. 13. That is your warrant.

For means to help us in this duty of watchfulness:—

1. Sobriety, or moderation in the use of all outward things: 1 Thes. v. 6, ‘Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but watch and be sober,’ 1 Peter i. 13, iv. 7.

2. Go to God in prayer. Watching and prayer are often joined together. We are best kept when recommended into God’s hand: Ps. cxli. 3, ‘Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.’ I do observe there—(1.) That unadvised and passionate speeches do easily drop from us in our troubles, especially in our persecution. (2.) That a godly conscientious man is very tender of these, as of all evil. He that would live in communion with God for the present, and hope to appear with comfort before him hereafter, is sensible of the least thing that tends to God’s displeasure and God’s dishonour. This is the true spirit of one that will be owned by Christ at the last day. (3.) There is no way to prevent being provoked to impatience and rashness of speech, or any evil, but by keeping a watch, and renewing our obligations to God. (4.) Whoever would keep a watch must call in the aid and assistance of God’s grace: ‘Lord, set a watch upon the door of my lips.’

SERMON XI.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to every one according to his several ability.—MAT. XXV. 14, 15.

THE particle *for* showeth that this parable hath some connection with the former. We have but two great affairs in the world—the one to promote God’s glory, the other to save our own souls; or, in other words, to be faithful to God and wise for ourselves. This latter was taught us in the former parable; the wise and provident virgins made sufficient preparation for their reception into the nuptial feast. The other, faithfulness to God, in employing our gifts, talents, and oppor-

tunities for his glory, is taught in this parable. Therefore the drift of it is, to set us all a-work in our places and callings for the glory of God, that we may look Christ in the face at his coming, *for the kingdom of heaven, &c.*

In which words we have—

First, The person trusting, *a man*; who is here represented—

1. As a great lord and master, that hath servants of his own, and several gifts to bestow upon them at his pleasure. In Luke it is, 'A certain nobleman, who went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom,' Luke xix. 12. In Mark, chap. xiii. 34, 'A great master of a house,' who intrusts his servants with his goods till his return.

2. He is here considered as *travelling into a far country*. Christ's ascending into heaven is thereby intended; for gifts are the fruits of his ascension.

Secondly, The persons intrusted; he *called his own servants, and delivered to them*. Not only ministers and officers of the church are meant, though they especially; but all Christians, who are Christ's servants, employed by him in one state of life or other.

Thirdly, The things intrusted, *his goods*; they are *bona*, things good in their nature; and they are *dona*, gifts freely given, and delivered to us: and not merely given; they are *talenta*, talents; not things merely given as we give money to a beggar, but as we give to a factor. As they are *bona*, they must not be despised; as *dona*, gifts, they call for thankfulness; as talents, for faithfulness. The Jewish talent was a hundred and eighty-one pounds ten shillings. Now these talents are ordinances, opportunities, estates, gifts, graces, all that we have received from God, either *dona administrantia* or *sanctificantia*: helps and means and opportunities to glorify him, which are the occasions or the graces of the Spirit; which are the dispositions to make us so to do.

Fourthly, The variety observed in the distribution, *to one five, to another two, to another one*; which difference expresseth the divers kinds of gifts, and the measure and the degree in which they are bestowed. Though all have not equal measure, yet every one hath some gift and some measure, something that is peculiar to himself, whereby he may be useful.

Fifthly, The rule which is observed in the distribution, *to every one according to his ability*. As in the parable the wise master knoweth every servant, according to his prudence and skill, so in the explication of the parable every man is gifted and employed by Christ according to his natural receptivity. The eye hath its office as an eye, and the hand as a hand, and the foot as a foot.

I shall not pursue every minute circumstance, but only touch upon those things which are most remarkable.

First, Observe then—

Doct. 1. That Christ Jesus is the great Lord and owner.

He is so represented here with respect to persons and things. Persons: those that receive the talents are called 'his own servants;' and the several gifts and good things bestowed upon them are called 'his goods;' and these dispensed according to his sovereign will and pleasure, to one more, to another less.

Concerning Christ's being a lord and owner, let me give you these observations:—

First, The power of Christ as an owner and free lord is to be distinguished from his power as a governor and ruler. As a free lord, 'he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.' As a governor and ruler, so he 'judgeth the world in righteousness,' or according to the law or stated rule which he hath given of his will. With respect to the one, 'it is not in him that willeth, or in him that runneth, but in God that showeth mercy.' But with respect to the other 'so run that you may obtain.' Compare Rom. ix. 16, with 1 Cor. ix. 24; for God, that is arbitrary in his gifts, is not arbitrary in his judgments. His law and the precepts of it is the rule of our duty; but in the sanction of it it is the rule of God's process. But as an owner he discovereth his sovereignty and dominion; as a ruler or judge, his justice or righteousness. All acts and matters of free favour are dispensed by him as a lord, but matters of right and wrong come before him as a judge. The goodman of the house pleaded ill, 'I may do with my own as it pleaseth me,' Mat. xx. 15; that belongeth to a supreme owner. Besides, his being an owner goeth before his being a ruler, and is the foundation of it; for his absolute propriety in us giveth him a legislative power over us, to dispose of us or command us according to his own will. He may give his creatures what rules he pleaseth, and order them to what ends he thinketh good, and bind them to observe his order upon what terms he will: 'I am the Lord,' Lev. xviii. 1-6. Therefore, before the course of government established between him and the world, he is first considered as an owner.

Secondly, This power and ownership accrueth to Christ by a double title—*jure creationis, et redemptionis*.

1. By right of creation: Ezek. xviii. 4, 'Behold, all souls are mine.' He hath a right to dispose of man, and all the rest of his creatures, as being all of them the works of his hands. He that gave them their beings when they were not, and still supporteth them now they are, hath an undoubted just right to order them according to his own will. We have nothing but what we had from him; and we have nothing that we ourselves can keep a moment; and we have it upon these terms, to use it for his glory.

2. By right of redemption: Rom. xiv. 9, 'For to this end Christ both died and rose again, that he might be Lord of dead and living;' and 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and souls, which are his.' This giveth him a new title to us, though the former ceased not, but will continue.' Whilst man receiveth his being from God by creation, and the continuance of his being by preservation, it is a power commutative, not destructive; it is superadded to the former, and is more comfortable and beneficial to us, as well as bindeth us more firmly to God, wholly to be disposed, guided, and ordered by him at his will.

Thirdly, This power as owner is entire and absolute: Rom. xi. 36, 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' We receiving our whole being from God, it is all at his dispose. All human propriety is derived, limited, and respective, because we in being and operation depend upon another; and therefore man cannot be *sui juris*,

at his own dispose, and lord of his own actions. He hath *principium et finem*, a principle upon which he dependeth, and an end to which he is appointed. Now it is no more lawful to abstain from respecting and seeking his end, than it is possible not to depend upon his principle. He hath a superior, to whom he must give an account, seeing he wholly dependeth upon him, and is wholly subject to him. But this property is originally and primarily in God as a fountain, not subordinate, or dependent upon any higher. If this be not so intelligible, let me speak more plainly. There is *dominium jurisdictionis, et dominium proprietatis*; such as a prince hath over his goods and lands. His dominion is more absolute over his goods and lands than over his subjects; that is bounded by laws. God hath the most absolute title over us, and all that we possess; it is so great that it cannot be greater.

Fourthly, God cannot be divested of this power and interest in us.

1. It is so absolutely inherent in him, that it cannot be communicated to another; that is, we cannot alienate and make void this right by our sins. Though we sold ourselves for nought, Isa. lii. 3, it was to our loss, not to God's. He hath a full right to command us to keep his law, whether men be faulty or innocent. A drunken servant is a servant, though he be disabled to do his master's work. No man's right can be vacated without his consent. Creatures are creatures still, obnoxious to the law of the Creator, or his punishment for the breach of it. In that interest we have in things, the default of another doth not make void our right, especially if it be inferiors; as the rebellion of the subject doth not exempt him from the power of his prince.

2. Neither doth God give it away by bestowing gifts upon the creature; for he hath given us only *dispensationem*, the employment of these things, not *dominium*, the sovereign power over them. Man hath nothing that is his own. As to life, it is clear man is not *dominus vite*, but *custos*; which is true not only of our life, but of our time, wealth, strength, parts, yea, of all that we have. Still we are subject to a higher lord, who hath an absolute uncontrollable right. All our owning is but a stewardship, Luke xvi. 2. We have a right to prevent the encroachment of our fellow-creatures. We have a right by way of charge and trust, as a steward to things committed to him, or as a workman hath a right to his tools or instruments to do his work, or a factor in the estates committed to him; but an absolute independent right we have not. They are not ours to use as we think meet. They were rebels that said, 'Our tongues are our own,' Ps. xii.

4. Well, then, when God dispersed his gifts, he did not dispossess himself. As the husbandman doth not intend to throw away his seed when he scattereth it in the furrows, but soweth it to receive it again with increase, so God.

3. I will add this, that God cannot give this absolute right to another that is not God, no more than he can cut off the creature from depending upon himself. In our way of owning our petty interests it may be permitted, as a lord may make his vassal and slave free, or a prince his subjects; as Saul proclaimed that whosoever should overcome Goliath, he would make his house free in Israel; that is, free from

taxes, imposts, service in war, 1 Sam. xvii. 25. But now no creature can be exempted from duty to God; for dependence upon God and subjection to him are so twisted together, that the one cannot be without the other. We wholly depend upon him for being, and all things else, and therefore must be wholly subject to him. We still continue in our being; now the continuance of our very duty and being doth still depend upon God.

Fifthly, God's sovereign dominion over us, and interest in us, may be set forth by these three things, at least to our present purpose:—

1. A right of making or framing anything as he willeth, in any manner as it pleaseth him: 'As the potter hath power over his own clay to form what vessel he pleaseth, either of honour or dishonour;' Rom. ix. 21; and Jer. viii. 16, 'As clay in the hand of the potter, so are ye in my hand, saith the Lord of hosts.' Nothing before it had a being had a right to dispose of itself, neither did God make it what it was by necessity of nature, nor by the command, counsel, or will of any superior, or the direction of any coadjutor; neither is there any to whom he should render an account of his work; but merely produced all things by the act of his own will, as an absolute owner and sovereign lord of all his actions: Eph. i. 11, 'He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will;' and Rev. iv. 11, 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' Such was God's absolute power. This should be thought of by us, because whatever was given us in creation is not a matter of right, but the mere effect of God's good-will and good pleasure. He might have made us stocks and stones, and not living creatures, or, among living creatures, plants only, with a life of vegetation and growth; or if a sensitive life, in the lowest rank, toads and vipers, or at best, but as horse or mule, without understanding, and not men. Among men, all the blessings and privileges we were born to might have been withheld without any injustice. The various constitutions and complexions of men, all their gifts and natural capacities, are the fruits of his sovereign will.

2. A right of having and possessing all things so made and framed by him. Amongst men, whosoever maketh anything by his own proper art and labour, and of his own stuff, must needs have a full right to it, and a full power to dispose of it; yet no workman ever made anything without some matter; but God made all things without matter pre-existing, and therefore surely his right is greater. Wherefore God is called not only the maker of heaven and earth, but the possessor, Gen. xiv. 19. God is the great proprietor, and in a sense the only proprietor that hath *dominium proprie dictum*: 'Gold and silver are mine,' Hag. ii. 8; and Hosea ii. 9, 'I will return, and take away my corn and my wine in the season thereof;' Ps. l. 10, 'His are the cattle upon a thousand hills;' yea, 'The whole earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' Ps. xxix. 1, 16. All is God's, in whatsoever hands it be: 'The Lord hath need of him,' is argument enough. Now this doth mightily increase our confidence, check our usurpations, quicken us to faithfulness, that the great owner may not be deprived of his right.

3. He hath a right of using and disposing all things thus in his

possession according to his own pleasure. Reason will tell us that the use, benefit, and utility of anything belongeth to him whose it is; so God is the sole disposer of all things. As he made them for himself, so he governeth them ultimately and terminatively for himself; some things immediately, all things ultimately: 'By whom and for whom all things were made,' Prov. xvi. 4; all the conditions of men, riches, poverty, health, sickness, ease, pain, life, death. Now this right of disposing of us is of great use to keep us in a quiet subjection to God's laws and providence, without murmuring or repining. We cannot say to him, What makest thou? or, Why doest thou this? Isa. xlv. 9. It is enough God did it. But to apply the whole.

Use 1. It serveth to check many sins. All mischief and disorder cometh from looking upon ourselves as proprietaries and owners, and not considering who hath the great interest in us. Surely were these truths well digested and thought of by us, it would work a great cure upon mankind.

1. That nothing we have is our own.

2. That whatsoever is given us by God, is given us for his service, to be done to him.

3. That to this Lord of ours we must be answerable, who will one day call us to an account. Or will you take one of them, if all be too many to be remembered by you; and that one implieth all the rest: 'Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price.' If a man did think of this, My heart is not my own, it is God's, and he must have it, he would not fill it with the dross of evil thoughts. My time is not my own; my tongue, my wit, my language, it is not my own. Would the prodigal waste his estate so vainly? Reprove him, and he will tell you, I spend but my own. The covetous man saith, 'Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, and give it to men that I know not?' 1 Sam. xxv. 11. How easily might you persuade him to charity, could you convince him it is another's goods, and to be laid out when the Lord hath need of it. It would check our pride to consider 'who made us to differ,' 1 Cor. iv. 7. Alas! master, it was borrowed, as Elisha's servant told his master. A groom is proud of his master's horse: they are proud of that which is none of theirs, that are proud of their parts and proud of their estates. Yea, it would check our spiritual pride, when we have done anything for God, or suffered anything for God, or given anything for God's sake: 1 Chron. xxix. 12-14, 'Of thine own have we given thee, for all is thine.'

Use 2. Is to press us to more faithfulness in God's service; to serve him more with our parts, time, strength, wit, wealth, power, and interest. All the good things that God hath given us are God's still. Now you should 'give unto God the things that are God's. You are robbers if you lay not out all that you have according to his will, and for his glory. But (1.) 'Give yourselves to the Lord,' 2 Cor. viii. 5, and then other things will come in the more easily. You are his already; you cannot add to God's right; yet it may add to the obligation, bind you more strongly to subjection and obedience. Oh! then, in the first place, become his servants and vassals; avouch God to be your God: Deut. xxvi. 17, 'Thou hast avouched this day the Lord to be thy God.' Wicked men give up themselves to the Lord, but it is by constraint:

'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' But, 'Oh, that they had an heart!' Deut. v. 28, 29. (2.) Having given yourselves to the Lord, give other things to him. A Christian lays himself, and all his interests and capacities, at Jesus Christ's feet, that he may make an advantage of everything for God: Zech. xiv. 20, 'In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; yea, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord.' We have received nothing from ourselves, and therefore should improve all we are and have for God. (3.) The reality of our dedication will be known by our use, if hard at work for God, and this be the business of our lives: Phil. i. 21, 'To me to live is Christ.' It is not enough negatively that our gifts be not employed against Christ as weapons of unrighteousness, but positively for God, that he gets something by every relation and acquaintance: Neh. i. 11, 'Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and give him mercy in the sight of this man; for I was the king's cup-bearer.' He improved his place for God when he was in it. God hath made many great and rich, but what doth the Lord get by them? Are they more useful? Some have wit, but do not consecrate it to Jesus Christ; have power, interest, and great place, but they do not honour God thereby: though they profess to give up themselves to God, yet in the use of themselves there appeareth no such matter: they use their tongues as their own, hearts as their own, wealth, strength, and interests as their own. Therefore you should keep a constant reckoning how you lay out yourselves for God. Undertake nothing but what will bear this inscription upon it, 'Holiness to the Lord.' Put this question to yourselves, Can I dedicate this to the Lord? Eccles. ii. 2, 'What doth it?'

Secondly, In the parable, this man, the owner, is represented as 'travelling into a far country,' and undertakes there to receive a kingdom, and disposing of all his interests till his return. This noteth Christ's ascension into heaven; and the point will be—

Doct. 2. That Christ at his departure appointed every man his work, and at his ascension gave gifts unto men, to be employed for his glory till he come again.

There are two things offered in the parable and in the point:—

1. His appointing every man his work; as the man disposed of all his matters till his return. Christ hath given order how every man, according to his ability and calling, should employ himself till he come again. We read, Acts i. 3, how Christ before his ascension instructed his disciples in 'all things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven;' that is, in all the duties of rulers and ruled, teachers and taught; the ordinances, laws, and institutions of his kingdom, the duties and privileges of the subjects thereof; what immunities they enjoy, what obedience they must perform. This was his last charge before his departure. Now we are to keep his charge as we will answer it to him at his coming: 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14, 'I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It was needful that Christ should go from us for a while; for he would not govern the world by sense, but by faith.

Now he will make trial of our faithfulness and diligence during his absence ; and therefore, having appointed us our work, he withdraweth. He will come again to take notice not only of the malice of his enemies against his people and interest, but also of the coldness and negligence of his own servants and domestics: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He shall come in flaming fire, rendering vengeance upon them that know not God, and obey not the gospel;' nay, if not flatly disobedient, yet if evil slothful servants.

2. His giving gifts. Gifts were given at Christ's ascension ; when he took his journey, then he bestowed his goods to his servants. As Elijah let fall his mantle, when he was translated, so did Christ bestow his gifts and the graces of his Spirit : Eph. iv. 8, 'He ascended up on high, and gave gifts to men.' There is a threefold reason of this:—

[1.] The bestowing of the Spirit was necessary to supply the want of his bodily presence : John xvi. 7, 'Nevertheless, I tell you the truth ; it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' While Christ was with them, the Spirit was not given ; but when his bodily presence was removed, then cometh the Comforter : God will not withhold what is useful. If he take away outward comforts, he will give us the Spirit.

[2.] It was fit he should enter upon his kingdom before his members participate so largely of his fulness, John vii. 38. Before his incarnation grace was given upon trust, therefore more sparingly ; afterwards coming in the flesh, the disciples were dull in comparison of what they were when the price was paid. He was entered into possession of his dignity, had taken actual possession of his kingdom ; then he poureth out the gifts and graces of the Spirit, that the glorious estate of his church and subjects might not go before, but come after the glorious estate of their king and head.

[3.] To show that in his exaltation he is still mindful of his servants. As soon as warm in the mediatorial throne, he sendeth down gifts and graces : Acts ii. 33, 'Being at the right hand of the Father exalted, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' Presently he beginneth to show for what reason he is gone to heaven, powerfully to apply the work of redemption.

Use 1. Hath Christ appointed to men their work ? It should quicken us to keep the charge of the Lord : Gen. i. 16, 'Thy father did command before he died.' If we have any respect to the memory of our Lord departed from us, any expectation of his coming again, so let us be faithful in the work appointed us to do. He instructed his apostles in all the duties and privileges of the kingdom of God, and they have instructed us, and you must answer it to Christ at his coming ; therefore be diligent in glorifying God in your places.

Use 2. As he gave gifts. Look upon Christ as exalted at the right hand of God to dispense the gifts and graces of the Spirit, for the bringing about the salvation of all that come to God by him. It is said, 2 Kings ii. 9, 10, that if Elisha should see his master ascending, he should have his spirit doubled upon him. It is true here ; if by faith we look to Christ ascended, his Spirit in some measure will come upon us ; we have free liberty and access to him, to enjoy him for ever.

Thirdly, The master in the parable giveth not the same measure

of talents to each servant: Christ giveth not a like measure of grace to every one; but to some more, to some less, as he thinketh expedient. Here are five talents, and two talents, and one talent, given to each servant, as there was a different measure given to Timothy and Demas.

Doct. 3. That it pleaseth the Lord to dispense his gifts variously among his people, to some more, to some fewer talents.

See this is often inculcated in the scripture: Rom. xii. 6, 'Having then gifts, differing according to the grace given to us;' 1 Cor. vii. 7, 'Every man hath his proper gift, one after this manner, another after that.' God giveth to every one in the church a measure and portion of gifts as it pleaseth him. So 1 Cor. xii. 11, 'All these things worketh one and the same spirit,' which is the proper seat of this doctrine. So Eph. iv. 7, 'To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' So 1 Peter iv. 10, 'As every one hath received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the grace of God.' I have brought all these scriptures to show you that this is a thing worthy to be taken notice of, and seriously improved by us.

I shall give you some observations concerning this diversity and variety.

1. That every one hath some talent or other to improve for God. He that had least, had one; and the least gift is compared to a talent: there is none of God's people but they have received some gift from him, which, being rightly employed, may make them useful for the glory of God and the good of others; if not in the higher and more public office, yet as wives, children, servants, Titus ii. 10. Every one hath his service and opportunity to do something for God: all offered to the tabernacle gold, or silver, or brass, or chittim-wood, or goats'-hair, or badgers'-skins. So, as Christ went to Jerusalem, some strewed the way with garments, others cut down branches, some cried Hosanna; that was all they could do.

2. That there is a great diversity in the talents which we have. The Lord doth not give all to one, nor to all alike.

[1.] There is a diversity of employments and offices. The apostle telleth us, Rom. xii. 4, 'All members have not the same office;' some an eye, some a hand, some a head, some a foot. Magistracy, ministry are distinct offices in the church, which ought not to be confounded or invaded: Eph. iv. 11, 12, 'And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ;' and Isa. liv. 11, 'I will lay thy foundations with sapphires, and thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.' Here are variety of employments, foundations, windows, gates, borders, to hold forth the variety of the gifts and graces of the members of the Church.

[2.] There is a diversity in the kind of gifts. In the general, some are common, some saving, Heb. vi. 5, 9. Carnal men have great abilities for the good of others, the stamp may be iron or brass, though the impress be on gold and silver; some bodily, some spiritual. Some are called to glorify God with their honour and estates; so Luke

ix. 11; others with the gifts of the mind. The gifts of the mind are common or saving. Among the common gifts, 'One hath the word of wisdom, another the word of knowledge,' 1 Cor. xii. 8-10. Some are able to lay down the truth soundly, others able to apply it forcibly. Some have the gift of prayer and utterance, others are able to inform the judgment or convince gainsayers; some to clear up doctrines, others to stir affections. As the three ministers of Geneva, *Vireto nemo docuit dulcius, Farello nemo tonuit fortius, nemo doctius locutus est Calvino*. Among hearers, some have more wisdom, some more knowledge, some more affection. Amongst the penmen of scripture, there is a great variety: John is sublime and seraphical, Paul spiritual and argumentative, Peter in an easy fluent and mild way, Isaiah more court-like and lofty, Jeremiah more priest-like and grave. Among the saving gifts there is a diversity of graces, though all have all in some measure. The new creature is not maimed, yet some are more eminent, some for one grace, some for another: Abraham for faith, Job for patience, Moses for meekness, Timothy for temperance; every grace working according to the diversity of tempers. Some are modest and mild, others bold and zealous; some are mourning for sin, others raised in the admiration of the grace of God in Christ; others exemplary for strictness, and weanedness from the delights of the animal life.

[3.] There is a diversity as to the measure and degrees. Every barque that saileth to heaven doth not draw a like depth: there is 'the measure of the gift of Christ,' Eph. iv. 7; and 'the measure of every part,' ver. 16. To some it may be said, 'Great is thy faith;' to others, 'O ye of little faith!' Some are fathers, some young men, some babes in Christ, 1 John ii. 13, 14; and in heaven there are degrees of glory suitable.

[4.] That this diversity cometh from the same free love of God, and therefore not to be used contrary to the mind of the giver. This is the free gift of God, flowing from his undeserved grace, there being nothing foreseen in any that can merit the least good at God's hand: 1 Cor. iv. 7, 'Who made thee to differ?' Rom. xii. 35, 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' The sun oweth nothing to the stars, nor the fountain to the streams.

[5.] Our account must be answerable to our receipts; there is a proportion of return expected: Hezekiah rendered not according to what he received. They that have received much shall account for much; and they that have received little shall account for little: he that received five talents must look to reckon for five: as he comforted his friend that had but one eye, that he should account but for the sins of one eye.

Now for the reasons of this diversity.

1. To show the liberty of his counsels. Christ may do with his own as he pleaseth; he will be known to be the sovereign Lord in the distribution of his gifts, and giving out his grace to his creatures as he shall see good: Mat. xi. 26, 'Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight;' 1 Cor. xii. 11, 'For all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, distributing to every man severally as he will.' Not as you will, but as he will. The Spirit is compared to wind, not only

for its force, but its liberty, John iii. 8; when and how he pleaseth. To some he giveth riches, to some gifts, common knowledge and utterance; some have this gift, some that; some in a lower measure, some in a higher; some have a peculiar excellency in gifts and graces, others only the common sincerity.

2. That all may know that all fulness is only in himself, Col. i. 19. The greatest degree of gifts and graces that God bestoweth upon any is far below that fulness that is in Christ; they have a measure, but Christ without measure, John iii. 34. He giveth to none so much but there is always something wanting; and they that have received most are capable of receiving more.

3. God will have this difference for the beauty and order of the whole: variety is more grateful. Hills and valleys make the world beautiful; so do distinct orders, ranks, and degrees of men. All eye or all belly is monstrous; difference with proportion maketh beauty; therefore one excelleth another, and several gifts and ranks there are for the service of the whole.

4. That every one in the sight of his own wants may be kept humble. When we are singular for any excellency, we are apt to grow proud and unsociable; the eye is apt to say to the hand or foot, 'I have no need of thee,' 1 Cor. xii. 21. Every man hath something to commend him to the respect of others; therefore God hath so scattered his gifts that every one should need another, that we may have the use of that gift which we have not the possession of.

[1.] To maintain love and mutual respect, and that there might be no schism in the body. The apostle saith, Eph. iv. 16, 'The whole body compacted and joined together by that which every part supplieth.'

[2.] Diversity of gifts was most intended, not to dissolve the bonds of union, but to strengthen them rather; and therefore the apostle, when he had reckoned up the bonds of union, he presently addeth, 'But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,' Eph. iv. 7. First he speaketh of what is one in all, and then of those things which are not one in all, but diverse in every one. Every one hath his distinct excellency to endear him to the respects of others. Diversity of gifts are an ordinary occasion of division and strife; contempt, envy, pride, discouragement ariseth from hence, but in itself one of the strongest bonds of union; whilst all in their way contribute to the good of the whole, and make use of that excellency in another which themselves want, and we mutually communicate to one another our benefits. As divers countries have divers commodities, and one needeth another; one aboundeth with wines, some have spices, others have skins, and commodities in other kinds, that by commerce and traffic there might be society maintained among mankind; so God in his church hath given to one gifts, to another grace, to maintain a holy society and spiritual commerce among themselves.

Use 1. Is to persuade us to employ our several talents for God, be they more or less; none are to be idle: 2 Tim. ii. 6, 'Stir up the gift that is in thee.'

1. If we have but one talent, God expects the improvement of it: Adam in innocency had his work appointed him by God.

2. Those that have the greatest gifts should not contemn those that have few or less ; and those that have few not envy others that have more, but be mutually helpful one to another, acknowledging the wisdom and goodness of God in all that we have. It is a base spirit that would shine alone, or set up one gift to the prejudice of another : ‘ Let no man glory, for all things are yours,’ 1 Cor. iii. 21. He that laid the world in hills and valleys would not have all champaign and smooth ground, Prov. xvii. 15.

Use. 2. Give yourselves and all that is yours to God. Nothing is more reasonable than that every one should have his own ; therefore let us consent to God’s propriety, and absolutely resign ourselves to the will, dispose, and use of our creator ; but first ourselves, and then what is ours.

SERMON XII.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. Likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.—MAT. XXV. 16–18.

THIS is the second part of the parable. We have heard of the master’s distribution, now we shall hear of the servants’ negotiations, how they employed the talents received. There was a disparity and inequality in the distribution, so in the negotiation. Two of the servants used their talents well ; the third traded not at all, but ‘ went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.’ Among them that used their talents well there was a difference, but still with proportion to what they had received : ‘ He that had received five talents made them other five : and he also that had received two gained other two.’

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them for God’s glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of others.

Doct. 2. In trading, our returns must carry proportion with our receipts.

Doct. 3. Among those that have received talents all are not faithful ; for one hid his lord’s money.

For the first point—

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them for God’s glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of others, I shall first explain the point, and then prove it.

First, For the explication or illustration, I will inquire—

1. What things are to be accounted talents ?
2. What it is to trade with them ?
3. To whom the gain and increase redoundeth ?

First, What are these talents ? In the general, all the things God hath intrusted us with, or anything that may help to promote the glory of God ; reason, health, strength, time, parts, interests, power,