



SERMON IV.*

Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready, &c.—Luke xiv. 16, 17, &c.

THERE are two things which we have to mark in this parable. 1. The dependance thereof on the preceding words. 2. The sum and scope of Christ's words therein.

The Lord is shewing what sort of guests they must invite to their feast; even the poor and needy, whom the Lord shall recompense "at the resurrection of the just." Whereupon, a man who sat at meat with Him (whether a Pharisee or not is uncertain) says to Christ, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Many call them happy who have part in Christ, and yet think it not. Many will talk broad words for the kingdom of heaven, and of the worth of Christ; but when it comes to this, What will ye quit for Christ? Will ye quit your farms and your lands for Christ? Will ye quit your five yoke of oxen for Christ? And will ye quit your new married wife, and your children, for Christ?—then they make a stand, and question all. We are all good Christians till we be tried. We often make a fair profession, while we

* A Preparation Sermon, before the Communion, at Kirkma-
breck, in Galloway, 1634.

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mar all in practice. Many do with Jesus Christ as onlookers do in a great fair; they go through the market, and commend everything they see, but never open their purse to buy any thing. So multitudes can say, "It is good to be a Christian; O! the Son of God is worth all the world;" but they will never offer a penny for Christ's cause. They will not want a ridge of land, nor suffer the loss of an ox for Him. They will rather lose their immortal souls than lose their gear. All you who now speak proudly of Christ, when persecution comes, see what ye will lose for Him. Oh! the Lord Jesus has many friends, who yet are but false friends and flatterers at bottom. They will speak good of Him, but will do no good for Him. Few leave their nets and custom-box for Him. But the man who finds the pearl, he sells all, and buys it.

This man would here say, Blessed are they who have a keen appetite to banquet with Jesus Christ. This lets us see that many have a false stomach, and can call them blessed who eat bread with Christ, as if it were from true hunger; and yet it is only like the hunger of sick folk, who cry for meat, but as soon as they taste of it their stomach recoils, and they can take no more of it. Many have the like hunger for Christ; they are soon full of Him when they come to the table. Balaam could say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel," and yet for the peace of Jacob, he would not lose court with the King of Moab. The petty kings of clay are often obeyed at the expense of disobeying the great King of heaven.

I now come to enter upon the particulars of the parable. The scope of it is to show "that few obey the gospel of Christ," set down under the similitude

of a man who made a great supper, and invited many, who, notwithstanding of that, refused to come, the parts of which are these:—

I. The Preparation of the Supper: “*A certain man made a great supper, and bade many.*”

II. The Invitation of the Guests: “*Come; for all things are now ready.*”

III. Their refusal: “*They all with one consent began to make excuse,*” &c. And—

IV. The Servant’s coming, and “*shewing his Lord these things.*”

The Lord then takes a second course of filling up his table, albeit they refuse who were first bidden; for he loses not his supper. Wisdom’s wine that was drawn sours not: he gets two sorts of guests to eat his meat.

I. The diseased and poor. II. The common people up and down the streets. And then, III. Ye have the Lord’s sentence upon the recusants or refusers.

I. “*A certain man made a great supper.*”—The Lord is here offering mercy in the gospel, and is compared to a man, not a common man, nor to one who makes a supper only for his friends. This shows us God’s mercy in the gospel. He shows Himself to us a man, a friend, banqueting us. But when we become beasts, and like the horse or mule that have no understanding, He then turns from a man to a lion, and to the house of Judah as a young lion; “I, even I, will tear and go away, and none shall rescue him.” It is a hard word that the Lord speaks to Ephraim, Hos. v. 14, “I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and to the house of Judah as a young lion.” If we be men, God will be a man to us; but if we be beasts, God is as a lion and a bear, Lam. iii. 10, “He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places.”

*Use.* God carries Himself to us as a man and a

friend, and has been feasting us these seventy years ; and, I assure you, the Lord is near the drawing of the table. The ordinary time of removing the table is, when all at it are full, and can eat no more. The gospel is now loathed by us, and the word of God contemned. At the beginning of this Supper, one sermon or a Communion was sweet ; people ran to it like hungry banqueters ; now it is disregarded. One sermon in the day of the Lord's banquet is now thought sufficient. Well, I see men are fallen asleep. I fear, beloved, I fear (think of it as ye please) the word shall be taken from you, the board drawn, and the plague of the Lord follow it. Amos viii. 2, The famine of the word of God shall come. The

II. Part of the parable is, the Lord's invitation of the guests, "*Come, for all things are now ready.*"—Here there be three things. 1. A commission to His servant, that is, His ministers, to bid those that were called Come. 2. The Time—It is at supper-time. 3. A Reason—"All things are now ready."

I shall only touch these points, and briefly go over the words.

*Doctrine.* The Lord invites us to a banquet and great Supper. That is the hardest word that the Gospel speaks to poor sinners, "Come." Never a word of hell, the wrath of God, or the plagues of God for sin. But His words are all (though He speaks in wrath to His enemies), My dear friends, I shall think Myself in your common,\* if ye will come and sup with Me. Surely, beloved, the Lord might have supped His† alone. The angels are good company ; but God thinks He wants company if the children of men are not with Him ! In Proverbs viii. 31, says Wisdom

\* Under obligation to you. † Without any to bear Him company.

(which is Christ), "I was with God, yet playing and sporting with the children of men." Here, indeed, is love itself, the Lord inviting us to embrace the gospel! He resembles it to a great supper. Merciful God! Thou mightest command us, under the pain of condemnation, to come and believe in the Son of God. But not a word of that here: the Lord will hire us to come to the kingdom of heaven—this is evangelic. The first word that the gospel speaks is mercy, mercy to poor sinners. Song v. 2, The key wherewith Christ, the husband, opens the heart of His kirk is, "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled; for My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night." He might have said, Woe be to thee, thou hast put me to the door, and hast taken a strange lover in My place; I will quit thee; I will go suit\* in another place; the back of My hand to thee; I shall never look on thee again. No; but His hardest knock is, Sweet Dove, Love, Fair One, I am both wet and weary; let Me not lie in the streets all night. Jer. iii. 14, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord." What is the Lord's argument to move him? "For I am married unto you, I am your husband." Hosea xi. 3, "I taught Ephraim to go taking them by the arms." God's mercy is a great net; all the fish that come in the net are brought to land. Well, beloved, this is the gospel's voice, Come, ye wearied and laden; but this voice will not last aye. In that day when the heavens shall part away like a scroll, the elements melt with heat, and the wicked cry, "Hills and mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of the Lamb, for the great day of His wrath is come, and who can stand?" Not a

\* Go to woo souls.

word of a Supper then. Alas! the board will be drawn, and God will not care for your company then. The

Second particular is, The servant is sent out at supper-time, near night, and bed-time. Then the day of God's mercy is but a supper-time; the edge of the evening; the sun-setting. As long as the gospel speaks, it ever cries, Come, welcome, welcome, Sinners, ye will be welcome to sup with the Lord.

When all the rest were set down at the table, Paul came in, and the master of the house gave him the board-head.

*Use.* We shall be as welcome to come in at mid-supper, as those were, who came to the Lord's vineyard at the sixth and ninth hour of the day. If ye come at the board-drawing, as the thief who died at Christ's right hand, and those who came at the eleventh hour, ye come to the dessert. But, beloved, I beseech you, beware that ye come not after supper, when the board is drawn, the goodman of the house in his bed, and the door shut, as the foolish virgins did. Remember that it is even now Supper-time, while the word is preached, and the Sacrament of the Lord's body and blood offered; and blessed are they who come to the Supper. But woe be to them who come after, for they shall lie down in the beds of their graves unsupped. As Job says of the hypocrite, "Their bones shall be full of the sins of their youth." Oh! the world has many debtors, ill debtors, who sell their souls for sin; but what a pitiful thing! for what can they give in exchange for their souls? A man who has to cross the water will run at the first call of the seamen, because he knows the tide will not wait him. And yet now, men who profess they would sail to Canaan, will not come out at the

voice of the Lord's mariners, crying, "Come, it is now tide;" but they let the sea ebb, and sit still. And this is the devil's craft, when we have our one foot on the shore, and the other in the ship, and have a purpose to sail from our sins, Satan has a word to say. The Levite's father-in-law, urged him to stay a night with him,\* and promised him he should go to-morrow, but then, tempted him to stay another night. Even so it is here, after we have stayed in the devil's service one year, he will urge us to stay another year, and promise he shall then demit. O! that we were wise to close our eyes and ears at Satan's delays and temptations. And now in the short time of the Gospel, while the table is covered, embrace the Lord's Supper. Walk while ye have the light, says the Lord; "the night cometh wherein no man can work." Our sins tell us that the long shadows are approaching; the night is at hand, the gospel is to be removed, and happy are they who sup in time. The

Third particular is the reason why they should come—"For all things are now prepared." And so reasons Solomon, Prov. ix. 1, 2, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars; she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table." Matt xxii. 4, "Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come to the marriage." Thus is mercy offered to the people of the Jews, where their God made all external means (as the word and sacrament) ready for them. So that he says, in Isaiah v. 4, What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done. (Isaiah lxxv. 2), He stretches out His

\* Judges xvi. 6.

arms, and holds them out all the day long. (Prov. i. 20), "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets." Here God is crying, shouting, and casting out His arms, Matt. xxiii. 37, Luke xix. 40, crying and shedding tears. He would have them turn and live. But as it is true of the Jews, so it is of us; He has dressed the whole Supper Himself, covered the table, and there is no more for us to do, but sit down and eat. If we look to this dressed Supper, Christ dressed it all Himself, in the furnace of God's wrath, and the bread that we here eat is His flesh, which He gave for the life of the world. John vi. 51, The wine which is mingled and drawn is His blood. And, O, sirs, was not our Lord a hot man in making ready this Supper? Not one dish is mis-cooked, all is set before us in the gospel, and Jesus craves no more for all His pains, but only that His friends come to the banquet and eat and be merry; and if ye will come, Christ will pay all the reckoning. When the Israelites were fed with manna, they behoved to go out of the camp, and gather it themselves; but we furnish nothing of this Supper. God be thanked, Christ bears all the expense. Alas! alas! that the unhappy world will not eat heartily, since Christ pays for all. The poor sons of Adam were all sick and at the point of death, and their stomachs were so spoiled with a sour apple that Adam did eat, that they were famished and not able to eat. In comes Jesus and makes a medicinal dinner of His own flesh and blood; lays down Himself and is slain to make physic of His crucified body for us, in order to affect our cure. It is just they die for hunger, and lose their stomach for evermore, who loathe this meat. In the sacrament all things are ready; whatever the soul wants, it shall find at the Table. All the hungry shall find Christ meat and drink. John vi.



55, They who are poor shall find Him gold, they who are naked shall find Him garments, they who are blind shall find Him light to the eyes. (Rev. iii. 18), "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Look to the Supper and ye shall find it very expensive to Christ, for the fire that made it ready was the wrath of God; the fuel and the elding\* was Christ, and a great burden of the sins of the elect on His back. And if Jesus had not been green timber He had been burnt all to ashes. Christ was first boiled in His own blood, in the garden of Gethsemane; then He was roasted and burnt on the cross, and carved all to pieces with nails, spears, and buffetings, to make Him God's bread for the mouth and stomach of believers. And the sourest sauce in this supper to Christ, was His dear Father hiding Himself. And when all is done ye cannot do Him a worse turn than not to eat heartily. Now, for the Lord's sake, beloved, please the goodman of the house, and eat and welcome. The last wine will be the best. What would ye have! Here is sweet company, eat, ye are heartily welcome; and ye use to call that great cheer that has great servants. Then there is not a plate set on this table by angels, far less by man. A curse upon them who bring in *Mary's Milk*, with *Martyrs' Blood*, as a dessert! No, Christ's blood is in every dish, Christ's flesh is in every mess, and Christ's merit is a sweet sauce to all the messes. Other meats have no taste at this Supper. No, they are plain poison, put in by the devil's hand,

\* The wood for fire.

who would wish never a living man to rise from the table, but all to be poisoned.

III. "*And they all with one consent began to make excuse.*"—Reason would hold the opinion, that, when the Lord makes a great Supper for the world, they would all be glad to come, and take a meal from Him; and that they would all run, striving who might be foremost at the table, and nearest the Lord's hand! No, but it is not so here; for there be three sorts of men, who all with one consent refuse to come. The first says, I have bought a farm: the second, I have bought five yoke of oxen: and the third says, I have married a wife. Honour holds away the first; riches and profit, the second; and pleasure and lust, the third. It has been so since the beginning. God and the world have aye been at holding and drawing for men's soul; God draws and the world holds fast. Here be the world's three gods: honour, profit, and pleasure. This is their trinity, their Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. John, in his first Epistle, chapter ii., sets down the doctrine of the world's trinity. In that place he is forbidding men to love the world, and gives good reason for it. Says he, verse 16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh," that is, inordinate pleasure, "and the lust of the eyes," that is, covetousness, "and the pride of life," that is, honour, "is not of the Father, but is of the world."

"*And they all with one consent,*" says the Lord, "*refused.*" I would have you to consider two things. 1. The refusal of the guests. 2. The number of recusants.

For the first, "*All with one consent began to make excuse.*"—Indeed, it seems wonderful that, amongst the three sorts of people, not one of them will leave so much as an ox for Christ! May not the Lord bring them all in

to the Supper whom He calls? I answer, He may do that; "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. xxii. 14). But we must here consider one of the deepest mysteries of God's counsel. There is a two-fold calling. 1. There is one external, or outward, whereby God calls men who obey not: here many are called to the Supper, but few come. 2. There is an inward calling, whereof the Apostle speaks, Romans viii. 30, "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified."

1st. If you look at God's *outward* calling, in respect of the word and sacraments. This calling finds men hand and foot in Satan's chains, and looses them not; for God has bound them. He bids them loose themselves, as they are obliged to do; because obedience is a debt that reprobates, in so far as they are God's creatures, are owing to Him. And why should not the great Creator and Lord of the universe crave dyvours and bankrupts, although, by their own fault, they have nothing wherewith to pay? And, therefore, unto both such as are effectually called, and such as obtain not grace to obey, the Lord is crying, Dyvour, pay thy debt or else go to prison. God, not having elected them to salvation, and finding them in the state of sin, and so only slaves and bastards (for the Cautioner, Christ, will not pay every bastard's debt), He leaves them with this, Either pay or die; and they willingly lie still, and love to live, and die in Satan's arms. But

2nd. There is an *inward* calling, whereby God, not only by His word, cries and shouts to waken up sleeping sinners: but also by His Spirit inwardly breathes the life of God into them, and sets them upon their feet. Those are said to be given of the Father to the

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Son; the Son receives and keeps them: and this is a wonderful calling. The Father craves the debt of obedience from us, and says, "Pay, and obey My calling, as ye are obliged to do;" and in comes the Son, by His Spirit, and slips the sum into our hand, even the price of obedience, and says, Because My name is in the contract betwixt the Father and you, I will give you to pay my Father withal; and, so long as I have, you shall not want. So that, although the elect be dyvours, yet they are their Father's dyvours; and have a good Friend that pays for them.

In this calling there is a great mystery. God is both calling and answering in our hearts. In a good sense, this calling is God's calling upon His own Spirit in us, and we returning an answer by that same Spirit which dwelleth in us—the Father crying, Come to the Supper, My elect people; and the Son, by His Spirit answering in our hearts, My Father, behold we are coming. In the Word of God, this calling is called a knocking at the door of our hearts for access to come in and sup with us. And, indeed, at one time the Lord is without knocking for admittance, and at another time He is within opening the door—without knocking, and within drawing. Ye will find Scripture for this, Acts xiv. 14, Paul is preaching to Lydia's heart: now, behold, there is God without calling and knocking by the word; and behold, in the same verse it is said, "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." God be thanked, God craves and pays for us. While God is crying, Open, His one arm is without the door knocking, and the other arm is within drawing the bolt, and preparing a lodging for Himself. God is His own

harbinger,\* He makes His own bed, dresses His own supper, sweeps His own lodging, and does all when He comes. He has nothing of us but bare house-room: all the furniture is His own: He brings all with Him. The ground and reason of this inward calling and sweet election thus run equally together. Election is the King's letters and decret, ordaining such persons, by their names, to the kingdom of God; and effectual calling is comprise-ment and imprisonment,† following upon these same letters, whereby such as are in Christ's Roll and Register Book, are called by the word to grace and glory. And, when they force‡ the King's charge, the Father draws them, and the Son bears them in His arms: then He rides upon the white horse of the gospel, and shoots the arrow of the irresistible word of God into the hearts of God's elect, so that they must obey and become the Lord's prisoners, His conquered, ransomed, and bought ones by virtue of the Father's decret.§ Thus the Son has caption against the elect. The Father gives them to the Son, and He will not want them (Cant. ii. 14). He draws His church (John vi. 44). The Spirit of the Father draws us to the Son; for that Christ has of the Father by gift, and that He has by good right paid for. It is no riot for Him to break both doors and windows in the soul to get His own. He has law upon His side, and a sufficient decret passed and subscribed by His Father's hand. And the doctrine that arises from this is,

1. That the outward means of the word, without

\* One who goes on before to provide lodgings.

† Apprehension. ‡ Refuse.

§ A writ ordering the arrest of a person.

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the inward working of the Spirit, will not bring us to the King's Supper. Here are many called, but they excuse themselves that they cannot come, because of other employments. This should teach us to hang upon the word, but withal to look beyond the word, and with the use of the word, call for the inward grace of the Spirit. It is not the bottle of the physician that heals the sick, but the medicine in the bottle. The word and sacraments are but empty bottles, except the Lord fill them with His virtue; and without this secret virtue we shall set our mouth to an empty bottle, and draw in wind, to the hurt of our souls and stomachs, which shall prove the savour of death unto death, and not the wine of God's refreshing grace. Our Lord, speaking to the woman of Samaria, says two sundry times (John iv.), that it is He who gives the water of life. Now, indeed, in the word and sacraments is the well of life; and since that well is opened up in the house of David, good reason that He be found of His own, and that He be steward of His own heart's blood, and only have the key at His own girdle. And for what cause else is the kirk said to lie within the two arms of Christ? (Song ii.) How can she then fall into a swoon for hunger, or faint when she is in the house of wine, where she may be cheered up with the comforts of His word? Yes, indeed, even there at the fountain head she will die, except the Lord hold the cup of spiritual refreshment to her mouth. This was experienced in Ezekiel's day by the dry bones, chapter xxxvii., where he says, the Lord caused him to prophesy; then bone came to bone, and sinews upon the bones, and flesh upon the sinews; then to prophesy to fetch spirit and breath that they might live. So the word without the Spirit is a blank charter, without our name written in it,

without a seal, and without a subscription. The sacrament without the Spirit is no better than a piece of naked wax without seals of land. The

Second point is, the number of recusants. "*They all with one consent began to make excuse,*" says the Lord. Hence, observe,

1. The number who follow an ill course are the greatest, Gen. vi. 12. In Ahab's days, there was only one honest, Micaiah, while there was four hundred lowns.\* Abraham durst not give his word that there would be five righteous persons in five great cities. Jer. i. 18, Against the Lord and Jeremiah, are kings, princes, priests, and people: there is a whole parliament, the three Estates of the land. Desolate truth stands her alone;† she has a thin court (Matt. xxvii. 21). Men would say, Sin has not such a throng court now as it had in the days of Christ; for now men, because of their oxen and their land, come to Christ's Supper. This is soon said. If we mean only eating and drinking, that proves nothing to justify our age; for Judas came that way; and if the devil himself had a true body, he might come to the Lord's table in that way. But how many in this kirk leave their hearts at home, when they come to the table of the Lord. Try your consciences here.

2. It condemns the religion of our time. "We live as our neighbours," say many. Many have a custom of swearing. Will ye do so, then? I say, these men take upon credit, and believe as the world does. Company is good, but company in hell is small comfort. Men vow Christ to be their husband, just as kings woo their queens; for they only hear of

\* Rogues.

† Unsupported.

them by report, and see their pictures, and upon that marriage passes betwixt them: so the men of our age hear of Christ by report. They paint a heaven in their own head, and a faith of their own, and run as a beast after the drove. But a man who would serve Christ as he should do, must indeed be a mocking stock to the world, and a wonder to many, Psalm lxxi. 7. But think nothing to be counted, with Marius, a good man, all except one thing, that is, he is a Christian. Their answer is not a flat denial of God, and a disgraceful speaking of the Supper; but they all form a reason, every one, and desire to be excused. What is the meaning of the excuse I pray? You tell God that ye love Him, ye love His Supper, ye love to be in His company; but say, "I pray Thee have me excused;" I cannot but love my land, my five yoke of oxen, and my wife, better than Thee. But if men knew Christ, they would say, Woe be to that farm, woe be to that ox, and woe be to that pleasure, that holds Christ and me asunder so long. However, they refuse to come to the Supper, yet they give a fair excuse to the Lord, and pray him to excuse them.

2. There is no sin we commit, if it were even to the treading of the blood of the New Covenant under foot, but we put a mask on it. The devil has taught men to baptize their sin with a new name, lest it should appear frightful. The murdering of the Son of God is done by an assembly of kirkmen, under a fair pretence: "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die." Idolatry is called humble kneeling. Satan is a coiner of false money, and upon his reprobate coin he puts the King of heaven's stamp. Herod's killing is sold for worshipping; killing of the saints is called good service to God. The



devil comes to none and says, "I am the devil, hear my counsel, and I shall draw you to hell." No, he is not such a fool; he changes himself into an angel of light. Blessed are they who, in the wisdom of God's Spirit, can pull the mask off the devil and sin; see the devil to be the devil, and sin to be sin. If God's commandment be uppermost, it is no hard matter to discern sin. If God command a duty, no excuse in the world should cover thy disobedience. Alas! What excuse can men have for staying from the kingdom of heaven? for refusing of Jesus Christ crucified? How can Satan run so far into men's hearts, as to make them say in God's face, "Excuse me, Lord, I cannot come to heaven! Excuse me, I cannot believe in Christ, because I have other business to do!" What horrible ingratitude is here? God offers a heavenly inheritance for a few acres of land, but they refuse God, and neglect the offer of Christ. Now here is the first excuse.

*"I have bought five yoke of oxen."*—O, merciful God! shall an acre of land, or an ox, be laid in the balance with Christ? Woe be to them. Oh! how many Esaus be there in the world, who sell their heavenly inheritance for a mess of pottage. Since the day that Adam did eat of the forbidden tree, the taste of our souls is so corrupt, that we call sweet sour, and put sour for sweet. Jesus Christ is like the white of an egg, tasteless in the world's mouth. Give to Balaam the King of Moab's gold, and for all his broad words, he seeks not another heaven. Let Jeroboam keep the kingdom, he cares not for God's worship; but for fear the people revolt, he will not let them go to Jerusalem to worship, as God had commanded, but will have them to worship a god of gold nearer hand. And so it is now in our kirk, give

men a piece of ground and five yoke of oxen, and they will consent to any religion, either Arminianism or Popery. Give the soldiers Christ's coat, and they seek no more, they will shed His blood, and take away His life. A drink of Jacob's well is better to the woman of Samaria, than Christ, the water of life, or heaven. Her heaven is in the ground\* of Jacob's well, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?" (John iv. 11.) A sow is better to the Gadarenes than Jesus Christ. Christ has lost court† in men's hearts, He is worn out of fashion and request. The heaven we would have is a heaven we would see with our eyes, and catch with our hands. What is it, I pray you, that keeps the first rank of people from heaven? Not a kingdom nor a broad inheritance, that would seem something; but a piece of ground, one village, a little room that keeps only ten oxen! O, Lord God, say they, if Christ could be bought for money. But He is worth much money.

It is a dangerous thing once to let the world into the heart: if ye be in love with, and wedded to the world, then bid adieu to Christ. The world is like a great fire, if a cold man stands at a reasonable distance, it warms and comforts him; but if he go into the midst of it, it burns him. Men who have an indifferent hold of the world, and stand at a proper distance from it, are benefited thereby; but those who cast themselves into the midst of it, are thereby swallowed up, and for ever lost. Oh! but poor worldlings get but a silly‡ heaven. In Luke xvi. it is described, in the person of the rich glutton, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptu-

\* The bottom. † Favour. ‡ Paltry.

ously every day. Is that their heaven? meat and clothes! Indeed it is. Servants get no land, that is ordained for sons; but they get a present hire, and more they seek not. Poor men, they get five yoke of oxen, and a little farm. God knows that is but a pitiful portion!

He begins again here, "*I have bought a farm, and I must needs go and see it.*"—He says not, I must needs use it, enjoy it, live upon it, take my pleasure, and delight in it: but "*I must needs go and see it.*"

*Doctrine.* All that men have in the world is indeed but a sight. Eccles. v. 11, "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them, and what good is there to the owners thereof, save the beholding of them with their eyes?" When the devil would have bargained with Christ, He let Him see all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in the twinkling of an eye; but more he could not do. He could not put Christ in the peaceable possession of them. All the glory of the world wins never into the soul! It stands at the door, nay, it stands at these two utmost windows of the soul: before the two eyes, and comes no further. Mark the fool's words, Luke xii. 19, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Every word here is like the fool who speaks them. Blind liar, they are not laid up for the soul; for all his full barns and gold could never fill the soul. The poor soul did but look out at the two windows—the eyes—and see them. Then, I counsel you, since you must go to the market and buy, spend not your money on a sight; buy something that may be seen, heard, and felt. Buy Jesus Christ; ye may see Him, hear Him, and feel Him; rub souls with Him, and enjoy Him; rest upon Him, and make your moan to Him. You can never make

the world your own, but you must leave all at the mouth of the grave, and creep in like a naked worm that leaves a knot of lime at the mouth of their hole when they creep into the earth. But you may take Christ into the grave with you! ye may take Him up to heaven with you! ye may take Him to back you, and speak for you in the last day of judgment!

*"I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it. I have bought a yoke of oxen, and I must go and try them."*—But these fools are bad merchants; the first should have seen the ground before he bought it; the last should have tried the oxen before he bought them. They first buy, and then try; but Solomon's virtuous woman (Proverbs xxxi. 16), first "considers a field," and then "buys it." Thus fools first buy their land, and their oxen, and then go to see them.

*Doctrine.* The foolish worldlings buy the world before ever they take a good sight of it. The devil is a deceitful merchant; he would not give Christ a good hearty sight of the kingdoms of the world before He bought it; he showed them to Him in a short glance, in the twinkling of an eye. Like a deceitful merchant who has no will to open up his wares that are adulterate before the sun. For the devil knows if a man saw the world, the griefs, the miseries, and the wrath of God, that hang over such as give themselves up to the love of the world, he would never come speed. But the devil's bargains are blind bargains; he sells by guess, and the fools of the world buy by guess and hearsays. So, indeed, he hides the end. O that men would look to the inner side of ambition, covetousness, and love of the world, they would not then forget Abner's word to Joab, 2 Samuel ii. 26, "Will it not be bitterness in the latter end?"

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The devil causes us to buy sin before we see our merchandise. Judas bought an ill conscience before he saw the halter. The young man (Prov. vii. 21-27) sees the strange woman before he sees her dwelling-place, which is the entry of hell. Foolish souls take on the debt of sin, spend, and take aye on more till the term day come, and then God puts an account into their hands, that they must read and plead with watery eyes.

"I have married a wife and I therefore cannot come."—The third person in the world's trinity is inordinate lust. And this, indeed, you may gather from the words, is the mightiest god of the three: the other two had business which they must do, but he who worships the third god, says, "I cannot come." The other two, in a pretended humility, said, "I pray thee have me excused." The third absolutely said, "I cannot come," and never a word of "I pray thee have me excused." Then,* we see pleasure is a more dangerous temptation than either honour or profit. Beware then of the love of pleasure and inordinate lust. The thing that makes men hunt after honour and profit is pleasure, self-love, and pleasing of themselves. Men seek profit for pleasure; so that pleasure is the devil's common bait, that he puts upon all his hooks. And even in the sin against the Holy Ghost, which to nature itself is the most thorny faced sin, yet Satan puts upon it the face of pleasure. For in a sort of hellish pleasing of themselves, they spit upon the face of the well favoured and beautiful Son of God. And therefore Solomon, speaking of the adulterous woman, (Prov. vii.) uses many forcible words, expressing the

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\* Therefore.

power of this temptation ; she led the young man as an ox to the slaughter, until a dart struck through his liver. She wounds many, she slays strong men. And if ye ask where pleasure lodges? the same Solomon, in the last verse of that chapter will tell you ; she chambers in the way to hell, in the very mouth of the grave, the throat and entry of hell ; there is pleasure's dwelling house. I may well say pleasure is the devil's sportsman, and his broker, who sells and buys, and makes the price for him ; and goes through the world, and suits souls in marriage to him.

This should teach us to strive for mortification ; for when the apostle speaks of this sin, the lust of the flesh, that which is to be done against it is, that it should be taken to the cross and crucified. The eyes, the ears, and heart of the old man must be nailed to Christ's cross. We shall never get the victory over this temptation except we be dead men to the world ; and the nails that pierced Christ go through the heart, soul, and body of the man of sin. Offer to dead men, kingdoms, jewels, and much gold ; it were but a ploughing of the sand, they will neither see nor hear your offer. Mortified Joseph was crucified to the lust of the flesh ; says he, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). He being a dead man to that could not get it done. Blessed are they who are weaned from the love of the world. In the

IV. Part of the parable, the servant reports his diligence, and it works some effect in the master of the house ; it angers him, and, as Mathew says, "He went out and destroyed them, and burnt up their city."

1. The Lord takes a new course, and will not

want guests; He will have His table filled. God's Supper will not be lost for want of eaters. God, in the beginning of this parable, was as a man: now He is turned as a lion. Mercy is His first offer, Come is His first word: but when that is refused, there is nothing for those but burning and slaying. Those men need not blame God for the burning of their city, for that is not a stolen dint,\* or stroke. We may think that the servant said, Dear friends, and loving brethren, come and sup with my master; he thinks† long for you, he will not eat till you come, he loves and delights in your company, ye will be heartily welcome and well entertained. No doubt, although the servant said this, yet he also said: If ye refuse to come, God's wrath will come on you; ye shall never taste of His Supper, and ye shall seek Him, but ye shall not find Him.

God steals not a dint, or decret against such as are disobedient to the gospel. They are twice or thrice summoned, and the penalty of non-compearance set down in the Scriptures before ever God be angry. The gospel is now crying in the ears of the unthankful world, "He that believeth not is condemned already." He that refuses to come in at supper-time shall not be let in after supper. O! but the gospel makes many fair offers to sinners. The law says, "Do this and live;" but it speaks but once of life: for men having once sinned, the law never speaks another word of life. No, though you should mourn till your eyes fall out of your head, the law cries, "I will hear of no repentance; but away to hell immediately."

But the second covenant says, Jeremiah iii. 12-14;

\* A blow given stealthily,

† Wearies for.

Ezekiel xviii., "For all that has come and gone, if ye will turn and repent, sin shall not be your ruin." Our Second Husband says, Welcome to Me, although ye have played the harlot with many lovers (for love is soon entreated), yet return again unto Me, any time before supper, before the board be drawn. But if ye let the day of the gospel slip, and refuse Christ offered, till after supper, the gospel then turns into a law, and will hear no more of repentance. And why? Because there is not a covenant after the second covenant; there is not another gospel after this gospel; and there is no other collation after the King's marriage-supper. No, Christ cannot die again: death and He will never meet again; the devil will never get another yoking<sup>o</sup> with Him upon the cross.

I will give it to you in a comparison. Our heavenly inheritance was forfeit in Adam, and by our own voluntary transgression of the law; but in comes Jesus, our elder brother, and makes a charter, wherein He serves Himself nearest and lawful heir to the inheritance; whereby He loses the mortgage, redeems and makes all free, and puts us in our place again. But with this clause in the end of the charter, That if we shall sell the land again, and make a new mortgagement, and subscribe not the second covenant, by embracing the gospel, and coming precisely at supper-time,—that is, in the day of the gospel (while the word speaks to us, and the sacraments offer Christ as the body of the new charter to us): it shall serve only for as much blank paper. For Christ will not die the second time; but "the wrath of God abides on you, and ye are condemned already." And, of all condemnations of ungodly men, this shall be the

\* Assault upon,



greatest, even that of those who hear the gospel and obey it not. For the charter is offered them to subscribe, and they refuse to put to their hands. It shall be more tolerable for Turks, who never heard tell of that covenant. Then beware, ye who have been at the Lord's table, that ye start and meet Christ precisely at supper-time: for ye need not trouble yourself to seek Him in the night. Then, see to it, for if anything be doom in Scotland in the day of God's account, this will be it, "I waited My supper on you till the meat was like to be lost, and My blood became cold, but your pride kept you back till the board was drawn: now ye shall not taste of My supper, and well ye deserve such disappointment." All the quarrel with us will be, we would not agree with Him. The

2. Effect that the servant's message makes on the goodman of the house is, He commands His servants to go out to the high-ways and hedges, and bring in "the poor, the blind, the maimed, the halt, and the lame." So although all the world should refuse mercy, God can make a kirk to Himself of the very stones of the field. When the Jews will not come to the Lord's Supper, He can fill the table with Gentiles; and those that are not a people, such are made a people; those that have not obtained mercy do obtain mercy. Ye see the Lord holds up the door of the house long: He closes the door on no man. He keeps a great open house both to poor and rich; and indeed the poor, the blind, and the halt, will be at the board-head,\* when the children of the kingdom shall be shut out, and put to the door. Here, in effect, is a description of God's kingdom. They are poor ones, and have no riches of their own; but Jesus

\* Head of the table.

gives them fine gold. They have not a leg to go upon; are halt, &c., but the Lord Jesus bears them up. They have not a hand to hold Christ; but what then? Christ takes fast hold of them. They have not an eye in their head; but what then? Jesus Christ leads them. Now, that is true which Jesus saith; he justifies the fact (Luke xix. 10) in going to Zaccheus; "He came to seek and save that which was lost." Multitudes of miscarried Christians cry, Alas! I am a sinner, and can have no part in Christ! Fool, if thou be a sinner, thou art the man or woman whom he is seeking. I pray thee, What is heaven? Nothing but a company of broken-hearted sinners; and there is none of all the sons of Adam, who stand before the throne and the Lamb, but their faces were once blotted. Although they be now kings, they were once slaves; there is none born noblemen in heaven. O! this is a great comfort to the sons of Adam, that those who are most base in their own eyes are greatest in God's eyes. His calling runs upon babes, and passes by wise men (Matt. xi. 25). His call runs upon publicans and sinners, and passes by the self-righteous (Luke xvi.), and upon whores and harlots, and passes by the children of the kingdom: upon the base and off-scourings of the earth, and passes by the disputer of this world. Then, although it be ill to be a sinner, yet it is a glorious thing to be one of God's sinners, whom the Lord will call. As for the wicked and sinners indeed, they are Satan's sinners and their own sinners; Christ came not to seek them as His sinners. Now, What are those sinners in the streets and high-ways? *Answer.* When the Lord calls on us, He finds us not in our house, or under the shadow of God Almighty, but in the streets, without any shelter against the storm;

or in the fields, like Judah (Jer. ii. 23, 24), who is compared to "a swift dromedary traversing her ways." "A wild ass used to the wilderness, snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure." We are "dead in trespasses and sins—and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 1, 12). "We are cast out in the open field, dying in our own blood, and no eye to pity us" (Ezek. xvi.) Now, those who are beggars in the streets, who never dream that the king will send for them, may make the invitation welcome when it comes. And woe be to them who think we lay money upon heaven, and mortgage grace, if not to buy it at full price; for when Christ comes to us, we can see as<sup>o</sup> much as blind men, catch as much as maimed men, and run as swift as halting men.

*"And the servant said, It is done, Lord, as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room."*—There is here never a word of buying of land, trying of oxen, and marrying of wives, but immediate obedience; at the first word they come to the King's Supper. We see that where God's Spirit accompanies the word, the invited cannot but come to the Lord's Supper. In the next verse, he gives direction to his servant to compel them to come in; wherein, ye see, there is a sort of divine violence used in the effectual calling of God's children. What a long dispute is there between Him and the woman of Samaria. She gives the Lord two or three taunts, yet He will not want her nor leave her, till He say to her soul, "I that speak unto thee am He." And as Isaac said to Esau, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed;" so may the Lord say to this poor land, Blind, lame, halt, and maimed, I have called thee, and thou shalt be Mine; I have taken thee, and thou shalt be taken.

\* No more than.

Christ will lay many oars in the water before He want His own : yea, although one of the elect should run to hell, yet He will follow them. And O ! but Christ be swift in following those whom He hath chosen. The way to heaven is an unknown way to sinners ; but behold the Lord teaches them (Psalm xxv. 9). And when they are taught, they dare not go alone, because of the enemies in the way. Then that same Psalm says, verse 8, " The Lord leads sinners in the way." Ay, but sinners will not be led, because they do not like the way well : then ye shall find the Father and the son drawing and compelling them, Cant. i. 2 ; John vi. 44. And if drawing will not do the turn, ye shall find bearing and carrying in the Lord's bosom (Isa. xl. 11) and upon His shoulders (Luke xv. 5), and upon His heart (Cant. viii. 6).

What is the reason that Jesus will not want any of His own ? I answer : There be three causes of this :

1. That day that the Lord Jesus died for the elect, He bought them with His heart's blood ; with His soul he prized them, and thought them worthy of His life. Now, the Lord Jesus is God unchangeable : ye must not think that God buys any of the elect with His blood, and then begins to repent of the bargain.
2. Jesus is Almighty. Having once comprized\* the elect as His own, who can free comprizement ? Christ has law on His side, and power to execute the law ; then He cannot want His own.
3. The Father has given the elect to the Son, and He must render an account of them to the Father, man by man.

The last thing to be considered is, the Lord's sentence against the recusants—" *None of those men who were bidden shall take of my Supper.*"—This is a

\* Laid hold of.

hard word ; for in effect it 's, They shall never have part in my Christ, shall never see my face. So now those men know not what God is doing, they are home at their farm, their oxen, and their new married wife, thinking no such thing, when God is concluding a black process against them. Eli knew little what the Lord was doing, when He was leading a black process against Him and His house (1 Sam. iii. 14). And Ahab knows little what God is doing, when He is going down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, when the Lord, in the upper court, is giving out a doleful decreet against him. Elihu says of the wicked, "They cry not when He (God) bindeth them" (Job xxxvi. 13). We may be laughing, sporting, and making merry upon earth, while there is a black process going on against us in heaven. The destroying angel has gotten a commission to go forth and destroy: happy are they who can see how their process goes forward in heaven. Ye should see and try how it goes betwixt God and your souls. I pray you, beloved, when ye are toiling at your farms, trafficking, or sporting, be asking at God, Lord, how shall it go with me at the last judgment? If ye ask at me, How shall we know that, for that is a secret? Indeed, ye must go to my Lord Secretary, Jesus Christ, and pray Him to tell you, and write from heaven to you how your case thrives. Say, Lord Jesus, Is there any hope of my action? Many who are careful of their estate on earth, are often at their advocate ; they pray him, they write, and send friends to him. Why then should ye not do the same with Christ? Amen.