

SERMON XIII.

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverdst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverdst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.—MAT. XXV. 19-23.

WE now come to the third part of the parable.

The first we called the distribution; the second, the negotiation; and the third, the account. This account is—

1. Spoken in the general, ver. 19.

2. More particularly described and set forth. There we shall take notice—

First, Of the reckoning with the good servants.

Secondly, With the bad one. In the passages that concern the good servants, you may take notice of the servants' account and the master's approbation. The account of the first servant is in ver. 20; of the second, in ver. 22; the master's approbation in ver. 21 and 23. He entertaineth both the servants with the same countenance and the same words.

First, I begin with the general intimation of the account, ver. 19; where the time—

1. When he cometh, *after a long time*.

2. His work; what he will do when he cometh; he *reckoneth with his servants*.

First, For the time.

Doct. 1. There is a good space of time between Christ's ascension and second coming.

Quest. But why is this last reckoning so long delayed?

Ans. Not from any unreadiness in Christ; he is ready to judge if we be ready to be judged, 1 Peter iv. 5.

1. There is a reason on the part of the good; and that is, that the number of the elect may be gathered, who live in several ages and places; and it requireth some time and pains to work upon each soul of them; for 'not one of those must perish,' 2 Peter iii. 9. And after they are converted, there must be some time allowed to exercise their diligence: they must have a day to work in, John ix. 4, and to try their faith and patience in: Rev. vi. 11, 'They should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.' A certain number are enrolled for sufferings, as well as for heaven, many of which had

not obtained their crown; as the high priest tarried within the veil till his ministration ended. As long as there is need of Christ's intercession, he defers his second coming.

2. On the wicked's part; it is necessary they should have a time of improvement, that they may be left without excuse: Rom. ix. 22, 'What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?' It is for the glory of God that he should take them when ripe. Then the 'angel thrusts in his sickle,' Rev. xiv. 15. Therefore they have longer time of prospering in their sinful ways.

[1.] Let us not make an ill use of this, either to deny or doubt of his coming, as those, 2 Peter iii. 3, or of slackening or putting off your preparation, as the naughty servant, Mat. xxiv. 48, 49. But let us 'wait with patience,' and 'hold out to the very last.' Saul held out till Samuel was even ready to come, and so forced himself to offer sacrifice, whereby he lost his kingdom, 1 Sam. xiii. 8, 9. If he had stayed a little longer, Samuel had come. So many grow weary of doing and suffering, and miscarry in the very haven. We wait in ordinary things: James v. 7, 8, 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' His hastiness cannot alter the seasons; so we, in improving our interests and employing our talents, should not faint: Gal. vi. 4, 'And be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.'

[2.] Let us shame ourselves that, having so much time, we have done so little work. Our master hath tarried long, and given us a large space of time wherein to employ ourselves; but what have we done for his glory? Alas! either we do *nilil agere*, or *male agere*, or *aliud agere*; either we do nothing, or nothing to the purpose, or that which is worse than nothing, which will undo us for ever. Oh! what thoughts will we have of a careless and misspent life when we come to die! Many do not think of the end of their lives till their lives be ended; and then they moan and bewail themselves when they lie a-dying. Oh! rather think of your last end and great account betimes. It is lamentable to begin to live when we must die. *Quidam tunc incipiunt vivere cum desinendum est*—they end their lives before they begin to live. Therefore if hitherto you have been pleasing the flesh, idling and wantoning away your precious time, say, 1 Peter iv. 3, 'Let the time past suffice.' I have been long enough dishonouring God, and destroying my own soul: hath my master tarried so long, and shall I still abuse his patience? 'This is a holy and right use of this delay.'

Secondly, His work, what he will do when he cometh: he 'reckoneth with his servants.'

Doct. 2. Those that have talents must look to reckon for them, for though he be long first, yet at length the Lord cometh.

1. Consider the certainty of this account; his wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth require it. His wisdom requireth it; for no wise man would put his goods to trust, and never look after them more; and

shall we imagine that the wise God would send reasonable creatures into the world, and furnish them with excellent gifts and endowments, and never consider how they employ themselves? Is man God's servant? then certainly he is liable to an account. You had never come into the world but for this business, to serve and please God. For God maketh nothing in vain, but all things for himself, Prov. xvi. 4. And do you think that after you are made for this end you may live as you list, and never be called to a reckoning? So absurd a thought cannot enter into the heart of a reasonable man: Ecces. xi. 9, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' Man would be but a sort of beast if he had no other end of his actions but to eat and drink and sleep, and no other account to give. Surely the most wise God would not have given us such excellent faculties in vain. He fitteth all creatures for their use: every workman fitteth his work for the end for which it serveth; so God hath made man for some end and use. And God's justice requireth it that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do ill. In the world it is not so: his servants are very often abused while doing their work most faithfully, the world thinks them mad, hateth them. They that neglect their own work beat their fellow-servants; therefore the honour of his justice requireth they should be called to an account: 1 Peter iv. 5, 'Who must give an account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' There is not a thought in wicked men's hearts, nor a word in their mouths, contrary to God and his people, but he taketh notice of it, and will exact an account thereof, a strict and impartial account of all their hard speeches. And the goodness of God requireth it. His goodness to the world in general; the world would be a wilderness, and men like ravenous beasts, if there were not some bridle and awe of a world to come upon them; but every one that had power would prey upon others, but that there is a higher judge. God hath appointed a supreme tribunal, where causes are judged over again; otherwise those that have power enough to do mischief would be under no restraint. But it is goodness to his people, whom he hath set a-work, and therefore hath appointed a day when he will give them their wages; his goodness will not permit that they should be any losers by God, their love and obedience to him that deny themselves, their own affections and interest, for his sake. Therefore certainly the great God of recompenses will come and call the world to an account, that the faithfulness of his servants may appear with praise and honour. This is a supreme truth: Heb. xi. 6, 'That he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' And his truth requireth it, it is laid at pledge in the word; that is the proper ground for faith to build upon. Now there we have not only God's word, but God's oath: Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 'For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' There we have plentiful evidence.

2. It is a personal account: Rom. xiv. 12, 'So then every one of us

shall give an account of himself to God.' We should not look to others what they be and do. As to ourselves, we must give an account of ourselves, our life, our heart, our own thoughts, words, and actions. It is personal, partly because every one must give his account apart; not every one shuffled together and in gross; but every servant apart and severally; first he that had five talents, then two, then one. And partly because every one unavoidably must answer for himself. Here we may have our attorney or advocate to appear for us in court; but there every one for himself, every man must in person, give an account of his own fidelity.

3. It is an impartial account, every one without exception: Rev. xx. 12, 'I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God.' Small and great, king and peasant, they shall all one day be called to an account, whether faithful or no. None so high as to be exempted from this account; none so mean as to be neglected in it: he that received five talents and he that received one both gave an account. The poor beggar is not left out, nor the king excused.

4. It is a particular account. God will not take our accounts by the heap and lump, but there is a narrow search into all our hearts and ways. The great thing is, What we have done in that place and relation where God hath set us our stewardship? Luke xvi. 2, but that is not all; we are to give an account of every action: Eccles. xii. 14, 'For God shall bring every work into judgment.' Every idle word must be accounted for, Mat. xii. 36. All the time we have spent, degrees of grace we received, what we have done, proportionable to our trust, five for five, two for two.

5. It is an exact account, that nothing is lost: Rev. xx. 12, 'The books were produced;' the book of conscience, and the book of God's remembrance: one of these is in the sinner's keeping, and yet it cannot be blotted out nor defaced: but at the day of judgment, conscience shall be extended to the recognition of all our ways. Now these books of account that are kept between God and the creature are somewhat like the books of merchants, of debtor and creditor, what returned and what received. God's mercies to us are booked, so are our returns. That God's mercies are put upon the book and register appeareth by the expostulations used in scripture when God proceedeth to any particular judgment; as for instance, opportunities of grace, and instructions of the word; the word preached, *εις μαρτυριαν*: Mat. xxiv. 14, 'And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.' God keepeth exact account: 'Behold, these three years came I seeking fruit,' Luke xiii. 7; 'This second epistle write I unto you,' 2 Peter iii. 1. He taketh notice of a former. God remembereth the prophets' words when the prophets are dead and gone. Every pressing sermon, every notable help: 'This second miracle did Jesus in Cana of Galilee,' John iv. 54. Christ's special works and manifestations of himself ought to be marked and kept in memory. God doth so for deliverances from danger: Isa. xi. 11, 'The Lord shall arise the second time for the deliverance of his people.' He taketh notice that he has been once at it, and would be again. So what talents and gifts we have had, whether five, two, or one. Secondly, on the other side, all the good

that we do ; therefore the apostle speaketh of 'fruit abounding to his account,' Phil. iv. 17. The Lord taketh notice of our faithfulness in evil times : Mal. iii. 15, 16, 'And now we call the proud happy ; yea, they that work wickedness are set up ; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another ; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name ;' 1 Kings xix. 18 ; Acts xvii. 34. Kindness to his servants : Mat. x. 42, 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall not lose his reward ;' Eccles. xi. 1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days ;' it is not lost. On the other side, injuries done to his people ; he hath a bottle for their tears, and a book for their sorrows, Ps. lvi. 8. All the snares centived : Deut. xxxii. 34, 'Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures ?' Job xiii. 27, 'Thou lookest narrowly to all my paths, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.' Every action leaveth a track, every word, Mat. xii. 36, every thought, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

Use. Is our account ready against that great day of audit ? Most neglect it, put off the thoughts of it. Take occasion hence to reckon with yourselves aforehand, and see what an account you can give to conscience. We should prepare more for this solemn day of reckoning, and therefore should take notice of what we do, and what we receive. We had need keep a register of every day's work, and every day's mercies. There are three questions in scripture ; often put them to your hearts : Deut. xxxii. 6, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise ? is not he thy Father that hath bought thee ? hath he not made thee and established thee ?' Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?' Isa. v. 4, 'What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it ? Wherefore, when I looked for grapes, behold it brought forth wild grapes ?' The profit of daily arrainging conscience is great.

1. It keepeth us sensible of our duty, maketh us often have recourse to grace, when we continually observe our sins, duties, afflictions, mercies, comforts, opportunities of receiving grace, and do but intermingle this thought, that one day for all these I must give an account.

2. It presseth us to be more earnest for pardoning mercy, and every day to make even. This is the great folly of men, that they put off sin when God doth not put it away. There is an expression often used in scripture, 'Their iniquities shall find them out ;' this notion of accounts will help us to understand it. It was committed many years ago, never heard of it since, but at length they shall hear of it : God reckoneth with them. If men escape and prosper a month, or a year, or two, they think all is forgotten, but at length it findeth them out. Sins are called debts, and all debts lie upon account against us, till they be cancelled. Augustus bought his quilt of one who slept securely, when he owed an hundred thousand sesterces. We may wonder at the security of sinners, who sleep when their damnation sleepeth not ; they run upon the score, and never think of a reckoning. Solomon adviseth a man in debt 'not to sleep till he be delivered like a roe from the hunter,' Prov. vi. 4, 5. It is good advice to us, to get

our spiritual debts discharged: Ps. li. 1, 'Blot out my transgressions.' Christ hath taught us to pray for daily pardon as well as daily bread. The thought of these records that are kept, and the account we must make, should quicken us to it. Oh! what a clamour will our sins make when God sets them all in order before us! Ps. l. 21. Thousands of vain thoughts, light words, and sinful actions, much mispense of time, abuse of mercies. We know not how soon God will put the bond in suit: other debts have a day of payment fixed, but this God hath reserved in his own breast, when he will call us to an account.

3. It presseth us to live always as those that are to give an account. Paul quickened himself to diligence upon this consideration, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. If we were never to be called to an account, we should do God all the service that possibly we can, we are so much obliged to him; but he hath set a day wherein he will reckon with us. Oh! what watchfulness, what diligence and faithfulness, should this produce in us! James ii. 12, 'So speak and so do as those that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' We read in the story of the Albigenes, when the president of St Juliers coming to Angrogne would have forced a man to re-baptize his child in the popish way, he prayed the president that he would give it in writing, and sign it with his own hand, that he would discharge him before God, and take the peril upon himself; this made him relent and profess his trouble. Conscience is startled at God's records. If a man should do nothing, and speak nothing but what is to be registered and proclaimed at the market-cross, how watchful would he be! All is recorded, the books will be opened; therefore, when we are about to do anything unworthy, say as he, Acts xix. 40, 'We are in danger to be called to an account for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse;' so should you. We that are to give an account, how careful should we be how we use our time, health, strength, understanding, authority, wealth, and other blessings of God. The commonness of these notions maketh them to lose their life and influence; therefore we should especially act faith in believing, and urging the soul with this account.

Secondly, It is particularly described; and there—

1. Of the servants' allegation.

2. The master's approbation.

First, The servants' allegation, ver. 20 and 22. The two first servants came cheerfully to their account, as having discharged their duty faithfully, and with all diligence improved the talents received. Not that in the day of judgment good men shall make any narrations of what they have done; they need not, for Christ shall do it for them: they rather wonder that anything they have done is taken notice of, as in the 37th verse of this chapter; but all this is spoken after the manner of men, and to keep up the decorum of the parable. If it signifieth anything, it signifieth the confidence of a good conscience, and what comfort and boldness it breedeth in the day of our accounts.

Doct. That a faithful discharge of our duty will give us comfort and boldness when our Lord cometh to reckon with us.

1. There is a confidence and comfort that ariseth from a good con-

science, or from sanctification as well as justification. In the inward court, conscience is one of the witnesses, as well as the Spirit of God, Rom. viii. 16, and much comfort ariseth from its testimony: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience.' A carnal man is ashamed of the grounds of his rejoicing, and what it is that keepeth his heart merry; but a godly man can own the causes of his joy, which are, in the first place, the blood of Christ: Rom. v. 11, 'We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement;' next, the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincere walking. But if a man can live with these comforts, can he die with them?

2. The review of a well-spent life is a great comfort in death. Our Lord Jesus, at the end of his days, when he was to go out of the world, John xvii. 4, saith, 'I have glorified thee upon earth, and finished the work thou gavest me to do.' Hezekiah, when that sad message was brought to him, that he must die, and not live, Isa. xxxviii. 4, that comforted him upon his death-bed: 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done what is good in thy sight.' So the apostle Paul, when he drew nigh his end, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, saith, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' Oh! it is a blessed thing if we can have this comfort, when conscience puts off all disguises, and the everlasting estate is at hand, and we are immediately to appear before the Lord: to remember then that we have been careful to please and honour God, and done his work, how sweet is it!

3. In the day of judgment; their works follow them into the other world, Rev. xiv. 13. Their wealth doth not follow them, but the conscience of having done well abideth with them. Conscience is heaven or hell to us. In hell it maketh up a part of the worm that never dieth; so in heaven, it giveth us confidence, 1 John ii. 28; and 1 John iv. 17, 'That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.' Works are not meritorious, and have no causal influence upon our salvation, yet they have the full place of an evidence, and so may wonderfully comfort and embolden our hearts.

Use. Let us labour to get this evidence. The time of death is a time that will rife all our false hopes. You are in your health and strength now, but how soon you may shoot the gulph, you know not; we are hastening into the other world apace. When you are immediately to appear before God, you will have other thoughts of the world to come, and the necessity of preparation for it, than you have now; that which will comfort you now, will not comfort you then. You must look that the devil will then be most busy to tempt and trouble you, and as now he prejudiceth you against the precepts of the gospel, so then against the promises of it: all your worldly comforts then will fail, and have spent their allowance, and become to you as unsavoury as the white of an egg. Will this comfort you, that you have sported and gamed away your precious time? that you have fared of the best, and lived in pomp and honour? Oh, no! but this will

comfort you: I have made it my business to glorify God, I have been faithful in my place, have gotten some evidence of the love of God. It is not riches or greatness, or any earthly advantage will do you good. Oh! it is a cutting thought to the careless and negligent: Now I must give an account of every day and hour I have spent in this world; the improvement of every opportunity will be called for. Then all your vanities and carnal pleasures will be smart upon you, and vex your souls with the grievous remembrance of them. Well, then, can you in any measure look back upon the discharge of your duty? There are two extremes:—

1. Some are presumptuous and confident, because, they are not gross sinners. But what have they done for God? The sluggish and unprofitable servant was cast into utter darkness; he did not misspend his talent, but yet he did not improve it. The tree that bringeth forth no fruit is hewn down, though it did not bring forth bad fruit. It is not a negative religion will comfort thee, but a positive and a fruitful one. You are no drunkard, no adulterer, no profane person; but have you been at work for God?

2. Others are pusillanimous and diffident, because they do not arrive at the eminency and perfection of the highest. David had other worthies besides the first three. There were two faithful servants; one brought five talents, the other two. Now the middle is of those that can see in themselves more zeal than formality, more grace than corruption, that, for the main, have made it their business to honour God, though conscious to many weaknesses and defects, yet throughout grace gets the upper hand; according to the degrees of grace received they are faithful with God.

Secondly, The master's approbation, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' The faithful servants are well accepted by Christ. First, he entertaineth them with praise, ver. 21, 23. Secondly, with preferment and advancement, 'Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many.' Thirdly, with joy, 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord.'

Doct. That at Christ's appearing, faithful servants shall not only be commended, but gloriously rewarded.

1 Peter i. 7, that your faith may be found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ.

1. There is not only verbal commendation, but real remuneration; glory and honour put upon them, as well as praise ascribed to them. (1.) Praise, because he shall then commend their faith before men and angels: Rev. iii. 5, 'I will confess his name before my Father and his angels.' (2.) There will be a solemn owning and honouring of them, when all the holy angels shall be present. Oh! what a favour is it to be commended of God! 2 Cor. x. 18, 'For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.' When they had finished the tabernacle, all was viewed and approved by Moses: Moses blessed them. Oh! what is it to be blessed and commended by the Son of God in that great assembly of the whole world!

2. Here is preferment and advancement to a higher place in the family. Christ will prefer them as men do their servants: Mat. xxiv. 47, 'Make him ruler over all his goods.' These expressions are taken

from the greatest honours a man can do his faithful servants in the world, 1 Kings xii. 20. As Jeroboam was made ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph, so will Christ advance his servants to high dignity, sometimes expressed by ‘setting them upon thrones,’ Rev. iii. 21; ‘giving them crowns,’ 1 Peter iv. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 8. That antithesis is to be regarded; few things, and many things. All things are few in comparison of heaven, our works, our gifts, our sufferings; the reward is far above all these: Rom. viii. 18, ‘For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;’ 2 Cor. iv. 17, ‘For our light afflictions, that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’ It is all little that we do or suffer; it is little that God hath done for us in this world, in comparison of what he will do for us there. Here is the earnest; that is but a small part of the whole sum.

3. The next expression is, ‘Enter into the joy of thy Lord.’ Here Christ slideth into the thing signified by the parable, as afterward in assigning punishment unto the unfaithful servant: ver. 30, ‘Cast him into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Here is joy, and ‘the joy of the Lord;’ and faithful servants are said to enter into it.

[1.] The estate of the blessed is a state of joy; which ariseth partly from the beatifical vision; partly from their own blessedness, and also the blessed company.

(1.) The beatifical vision, or the vision of God: Ps. xvi. 11, ‘In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand pleasures for evermore.’ There is a mighty complacency that we take now in seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. What can be found in the creature is but a drop to the ocean in comparison of what a believer findeth in God himself. God is to them an overflowing fountain of all felicity. But there is *gaudium vite*, and *gaudium patrie*. Here it admits of increase and decrease; but there the soul is so filled that it cannot receive any more: Ps. xvii. 15, ‘As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.’ God maketh out himself in the utmost latitude. As to the wicked, he stirreth up all his wrath. Here he punisheth by the creature, and so doth not put forth all his power; as a giant striking with a straw cannot put forth his strength. In heaven the soul shall be filled with unspeakable joy and delight. What delight is to the sense, that joy is to the mind. Three things are necessary to delight—a faculty, or power of the soul capable of pleasure; and then the thing itself; which being brought to the mind, doth stir up delight. As in bodily things, colours, fruits, tastes, pleasure consists in the near union and conjunction of these things. The more noble the faculty, the more excellent the object; the nearer the conjunction, the greater the delight and pleasure. Now in heaven our faculties are perfected: God is the subject, and there is a near conjunction. Oh! what embraces between him and the soul!

(2.) In their own glorified estate: 1 Peter iv. 13, ‘Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.’ So Jude:

‘Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.’ The fulness of our joy is suspended till then, that we may long much for that day. It will be a glad day to all faithful ones. Joy is *quies animi in bono adepto*; there is an aggregation of all good for soul and body. If the hope of this blessed estate breedeth joy, what will enjoyment, what will fruition do? If a glimpse or taste be so sweet, what will the full enjoyment be? Rom. v. 2, In deep troubles, yet ‘we rejoice in hope of the glory of God;’ 1 Peter i. 8, ‘Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.’ Their hearts are now and then filled with such a joy as they can hardly contain and keep within doors, when they have but a well-grounded hope, or assurance of the full possession of it.

(3.) In the company of the blessed. It is comfortable to meet with the saints of God now, though it be but in a mourning duty; but the communion of saints there is quite another thing; they are our everlasting companions; they are free from all sin and weakness, Heb. xii. 23. Especially it will be a delight to them whom we have been a means to bring home to God: 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20, ‘For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy;’ and Phil. ii. 16, ‘That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not laboured in vain, nor run in vain.’ The glory that shall be put upon gracious souls at the day of judgment will add to the glory and joy of those faithful ministers by whose labours they have been gained to God.

[2.] It is called the ‘joy of the Lord;’ that is, either provided by him—called ‘my joy,’ by Christ, John xv. 11; this by way of purchase, allowance, and gift, dignified as one of those whom the Lord delighteth to honour, Esther vi. 6—or such as he himself possesseth. Jesus Christ himself had his ‘joy set before him,’ Heb. xii. 2, that happy and glorious estate that happened upon his sufferings: to this he inviteth us, into his own joy. Men are not wont to treat their servants so as to let them enter into their joy: Luke xvii. 7, ‘Which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go, and sit down to meat?’ No; but, Make ready. But Christ, Luke xii. 37, ‘will make them sit down to meat, and he will come forth and serve them.’ In the civil law, *Accubitus servi a domino invitati*, it was a token of manumission. Now Christ will bring us into his joy, Luke xxii. 30, ‘That ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel;’ John xvii. 24, ‘Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be where I am, and behold my glory;’ Rom. viii. 17, ‘If we suffer with him, we may also be glorified together;’ 2 Tim. ii. 12, ‘If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.’ We are sharers in all the happiness that he enjoyeth, and are partakers of the same glory, and the same kingdom, and the same joy.

[3.] We enter into it. It is a Hebraism such as that, Ps. lxix. 27, ‘Let them not come into thy righteousness;’ that is, be partakers of

it. So Ps. lix. 11, 'Not enter into my rest;' that is, partake of it. So the servant entereth into his Lord's joy, *ut possessor sit gaudii, non tantum spectator*. However, it noteth the highest and fullest participation; they enter into the blessed state of eternal joy, and it abideth for ever with them, in a full, constant, uninterrupted joy. We shall have as much as we can hold, and we shall hold more than now we do.

Use 1. It informeth us that it is good to be Christ's servants, and to be faithful in his work. See how ready the Lord is to reward our little sorry service. Come and receive the fruit of my bounty, and the reward of your fidelity. Who would not serve such a master?

2. Consider it, this doth make up all the shame and disgrace that can be in our trials. We have enough in hand for all the pains and shame that we suffer for his service; the inward peace that we have, and the sense of his approbation: but our great reward, when we and he meet together, should strike all discouragements dead, and be enough to allay all the sorrows of this life, and the censures of men.

3. To quicken us to diligence, let us often think of this. When God intended to give Canaan to Abraham, he biddeth him 'walk through the land, and view it,' Gen. xiii. 17. He hath promised to give the joys of heaven to us; we should often consider it; then encouragement is no encouragement if it be not regarded.

Lastly, The same words are used to both alike; the second servant is approved, his faithfulness commended and rewarded, as well as the first servant.

Doct. Whether our talents be few or many, yet if we be but sincere, we shall be put into everlasting happiness.

The essential happiness of the saints is the same, though the degrees differ; ten cities, and five cities, in Luke.

1. They may be alike in fidelity, though a difference in opportunity. Their industry will be alike. Though their gifts and opportunities be not alike, their zeal to God and love to souls will be alike.

2. The grounds of essential happiness are the same to all.

[1.] They have the same Redeemer and Mediator, Exod. xxx. 15. If they had a better Christ, another mediator to ransom their souls, they might expect another happiness; but all is brought about by the same Redeemer, Jesus Christ, theirs and ours, 1 Cor. i. 2, by his mediation, sacrifice, and meritorious righteousness.

[2.] The same covenant, which is the common charter of the saints: Acts ii. 39, 'The promise is to you, and to your children, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' A covenant which offereth the same benefits, and requireth the same duties. The same benefits, pardon and life. Pardon: Rom. iv. 23, 24, 'Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.' Life is the common portion of all the saints: 1 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; and not for me only, but for all those that love his appearing.' It requireth the same duties of all the saints, and they have the same rule to walk by, Gal. vi. 16; 'This same gospel is the power of God unto the salvation of every one that believeth,' Rom. i. 16. Well,

then, if all have no other charter from God to show for pardon and life, and all are bound to the same duties, surely all shall have the same happiness.

[3.] The same Spirit to be Christ's agent, to sanctify, and to prepare them for this glory. He is at work in all the saints: 1 Cor. xii. 4, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;' 2 Cor. iv. 13, 'We having the same Spirit of faith.' This is considerable, because the Spirit doth form us for this very thing; that is, prepare us for this very estate. If all have the same heavenly principle, all shall have the same heavenly happiness. We have the same almighty power within to destroy sin, to raise our dead and earthly hearts to God, to keep in us the same love to him, and prepare us for this blessed estate.

[4.] The same mercy of the same God distributeth the reward. The main grounds of the expectation of the best are the mercy of God and the merits of Christ; and we have the same mercy to trust unto: Rom. x. 12, 'For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.' As rich in mercy to you as to others, to pardon your failings, to wash off your stains, and finally to receive you into his blessed presence. They look for mercy, and we look for the same mercy, Jude 21. All that keep themselves in the love of God may do so.

3. The things which are absolutely requisite to this essential happiness are the same. As the vision and fruition of the same God, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, with John xvii. 24, 'All that believe in me through their word:' they have the same place, heaven; the same state, the same company; they all make one family, Eph. iii. 15. Now some are in heaven and some on earth, but then they shall all make one heavenly society, called 'the city of God,' Heb. xii. 22, 23; they shall all 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' They have the same work, which is, to love and laud God for evermore.

Use 1. To persuade us to be contented with the meanest estate, till God's providence call us to a higher. Every one must glorify God in the place where he hath set him; as in a choir of voices, it is not who sings the bass or who the treble, but who well discharges his own part, bass or treble. So in our account, it is not what part we have acted, so much as how we have acted it, whether glorified God in the work which he hath given us to do, John xvii. 4. If thou hast doubled thy talents, though but two, Christ will welcome thee into the 'joy of thy Lord.' It is not who hath undergone the greatest bodily labour in religion, or passed the severest sufferings, or gone through the eminentest offices and employments, but who hath most honoured God in his place, got most holiness in his heart, been most humble and contented with his condition.

Use 2. Is for the encouragement of poor weak Christians, who have the essentials of godliness, though they be weak, and have not attained to the eminency of many others. These should not be dismayed; there are persons of all sizes, and several degrees in heaven, and they are all possessed with the same common happiness: 2 Peter i. 2, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.' Mean believers in some sense have like precious faith with an apostle, as to the great

ends of the covenant; the same jewel. *Complectitur et puerulus, complectitur et gigas*; one holds with a strong, the other with a trembling hand; the jewel is of the same value. The same sacrifice for sin; we all depend upon the infinite mercies of the same God; the same physician of souls hath us in cure who hath cured all others; the same captain that hath saved others who are more eminent is conducting us to salvation, and is preparing us for the same estate which they hope to enjoy. They have no greater nor better high priest and mediator with God than we have; they are going to the same place that we are, and we that they are; only they have gotten the start a great way before us. But whilst we strive to overtake them, and make as much haste as we can, though we bewail our imperfections, yet we should not lose the comfort of our sincerity.

Doct. 2. Though the essential happiness of the saints be the same, yet there are degrees in glory.

Luke xix. 16-19. We read there of having authority over ten cities and five cities. More is required of the first servant and more is given him; and more is required of the first servant than the second; as we expect a horseman should come sooner than a footman. But more particularly to prove that there are degrees of glory. First, from scripture: 2 Cor. ix. 6, 'He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. As there is a difference in the kind of the crop, according to the kind of the seed, Gal. vi. 6, 7, so according to the degree. Some do well, others do better; so some fare well, others fare better, are more bountifully rewarded; for God will deal more liberally with them who shall accordingly with greater fidelity acquit themselves in well-doing. There is a proportion observed. Again, the common happiness of the saints is to shine as the stars, Mat. xiii. and Dan. xii. 3; yet the apostle telleth us, that 'one star differeth from another in glory; so shall it be in the resurrection from the dead,' 1 Cor. xv. 41; namely, that their glory shall be according to their inequality in zeal, service, and faithfulness to God. Another place shall be that, 1 Cor. iii. 8, 'Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour;' that is, according to the degree; for he speaketh there of degrees of serviceableness in the church. Every man hath a labour of his own, that is, such a measure and degree of service appropriately his; and so by consequence hath his own reward, somewhat which doth exactly answer his labour. Some have thought no, that the saints in heaven, their reward is exactly equal. It is true all shall have enough, but some more than others: so Eph. vi. 8, 'Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free;' that is, shall be punctually and particularly considered by God for it; he shall receive the same, not for kind, but quantity and proportion; they shall have in their reward a particular and appropriate consideration; a bondman a bondman's reward, a freeman a freeman's reward; every degree of goodness shall be considered by God: so there seemeth to be a distinction between a prophet's reward, and a righteous man's reward, and a disciple's reward, Mat. x. 41, 42. Add that concerning Zebedee's children, Mat. xx. 21, 22. She cometh to Christ, and prayeth that her two sons might sit one at his right hand and the

other at his left in his kingdom. Christ doth not deny but that something there is which may be signified by his right hand and his left; yea, rather asserts it; for he saith, 'It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.' There are some chiefest and highest places of glory and preferment in his kingdom, and he hath prepared these places for persons of the greatest worth and eminency in his service; for these the greatest honours of the world to come are reserved.

Reasons of the point.

1. From the nature of that glory and blessedness we expect. It standeth in communion with God, and conformity to him, or the vision and full fruition of God, Ps. xvii. 15; 1 John iii. 2. Now the more holy the more suited to this happiness, and therefore have larger measures of it: Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' We 'behold his face in righteousness.' Now we are more capacitated, vessels of a larger bore. It is unreasonable to imagine that clarified souls have no more fruition of God than those that only have grace enough to make a hard shift to get to heaven: *Sicut se habet simpliciter ad simpliciter, ita magis ad magis*. Holiness singly fits to see God, and without it we cannot see him. So a little holiness fits us to take in a little of God; the more holiness the more of God.

2. From the pleasure God taketh in his own image. So much of the image of God as his creature hath, so far more amiable in the sight of God: 'The Lord delighteth in the upright,' Prov. xi. 20. If God delighteth in them, he delighteth more in one that is more holy and upright. Thus from God's holiness we may argue he doth not delight in the impure: Ps. v. 4, 'Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness.' He cannot so fully delight in the less pure: Ps. xviii. 25, 26, 'With the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright, with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.'

3. From the justice of God, and the quality of that happiness which we expect. Though it be an act of free grace and bounty in God to bestow it on us, yet it is a reward; and reward is considerable with respect to the work. The reward is not of merit, but grace; but yet God's merciful justice respecteth the degree of our service: Heb. vi. 10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work of faith and labour of love.' It is an act of remunerative justice, according to the new covenant. The higher service hath an ordinability to the greatest reward.

4. God doth in this world give the greatest blessings to those that do most eminently glorify him; therefore signal faithfulness is eminently rewarded in the world to come; as God promiseth to make a covenant with Phinehas, because he was zealous for God, to make an atonement for the people, Num. xxv. 13. This the rather holdeth good, because the rewards of the Old Testament were a kind of figure of eternity.

5. In the punishment there are degrees, therefore in the reward God will punish men differently, more or less according to the rate of their sins. We read of *ἀνεκτότερον*, more tolerable. So he will reward men more or less according to the different degrees of their faithfulness: so Mat. xi. 21, 22, 'It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the

day of judgment than for you.' So Luke xii. 47, 48, we read of many stripes and few stripes. It is true the reward is not of debt; yet there is an equity observed in his bounty.

6. The glorified state of the saints in all probability suiteth with all the rest of the creation. There is a difference and disparity in everything else. Among men in the world, in wisdom and rank, and quality and riches; in the church some have meaner, some larger gifts. There are degrees among the devils. We read of Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Among angels there are archangels, principalities, powers, thrones, dominions. So it is likely among the saints.

7. The profit: it encourageth to godliness: this inequality of rewards giving greater things to those that do more, and be more faithful, than to imagine that they who sow more sparingly shall reap as plentifully as those that sow liberally. It is a great damp to all worthy dealing and signal excellency, that all shall fare alike; but it quickeneth us to our utmost activity to remember that as our work is our reward will be.

Use. Is to quicken us to be more faithful to God for these considerations:—

1. Heaven being the perfection of holiness, if you do not desire more degrees of holiness, you do not desire heaven itself: 1 John iii. 2, 3, 'Behold now ye are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as he is pure.'

2. It is gross self-love to go as near the brink of hell and destruction without falling into it, and to beat down the price of salvation as low as we can; and he that will do nothing more than what is simply necessary to salvation will never be faithful with God. To save the stake of their souls they will serve God as little as they can.

SERMON XIV.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not straved: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.—MAT. XXV. 24, 25.

WE have seen the account and reception of the faithful servants; we now come to the master's reckoning with the unfaithful one. The order is observable: first he rewardeth the faithful servants, and then punisheth the careless and negligent. His own nature inclines him to reward; he doth good and showeth mercy out of his own self-inclination; but our sins force him to punish. And mark, he that had received one talent is called to an account as well as he that had received more, that no man may think to be excused for the meanness of his gifts and place. It is true he giveth an account for no more than he hath, but for so much as he hath he must give account.