

2. It is the trial of our love to Christ. He hath made the poor his proxies and deputies. We would cozen ourselves with an empty faith, and a cheap love, if God had not devolved his right upon our brethren: 1 John iii. 17, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' If Christ were sick in a bed, we would visit him; if in want, we would relieve him. Christ is so nearly conjoined with his servants, that in their afflictions he is afflicted, in their comforts he is comforted; he looks upon it as done to him. The godly of old time thought themselves much honoured if they could get a prophet or an apostle to their houses: Heb. xiii. 1, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' Here is Christ himself; will you refuse him who is heir of all things?

3. It is the great question interrogated by him at the great day of accounts. It is not, Have you heard? have you prophesied? have you ate and drank in my presence? but, Have you fed? have you clothed? have you visited? We are one day to come to this account, and what sorry accounts shall we make! So much for pleasure, for riot, for luxury, for bravery in apparel, and pomp in living, and little or nothing for God and his people; as if a steward should bring in his bill, so much spent in feasts, in rioting, in merry company, when his master's house lieth to ruin, the children starved, and the servants neglected. We are very liberal to our lusts, but sparing to God. A man that expecteth to be posed, is preparing himself, and would fain know the questions aforehand. Christ hath told us our question.

SERMON XXIII.

Then shall the righteous answer and say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? and thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? and naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—MAT. XXV. 37-40.

WE have handled the sentence and the reason. The reason is amplified in some parabolical passages, which contain a dialogue or interchangeable discourse between Christ the King and his elect servants. In which you may observe—(1.) Their question, ver. 37-39; (2.) Christ's reply and answer, ver. 40. Not that such formal words shall pass to and fro at the day of judgment, between the judge and the judged; but only to represent the matter more sensibly, and in a more lively and impressive way to our minds.

First, For their question; certainly it is not moved—(1.) By way of doubt or exception to the reason alleged by the judge in his sentence, there being a perfect agreement and harmony of mind and will between

them. Neither (2.) Out of ignorance, as if they knew not that Christ was so much concerned in their works of love done to his children for his sake; for this they knew aforehand, that what was done to christians is done to Christ, and upon that account they do it as to Christ; and such ignorance cannot be supposed to be found in the glorified saints. (3.) Some say the question is put to express a holy wonder at what they hear and see; and no question Christ will then be admired in his saints, 2 Thes. i. 10. And three causes there may be of this wonder:—

1. Their humble sense of their own nothingness, that their services should be taken notice of and rewarded; that he should have such a respect for their mean offices of love, which they little esteemed of, and had no confidence in them.

2. The greatness of Christ's condescension, that he should have such a care of his mean servants, who were so despicable in the world.

3. The greatness of the reward. Christ shall so incomparably, above all that they could ask or think, reward his people, that they shall wonder at it. This sense is pious, taken up by most interpreters. I should acquiesce in it, but that I find the same question put by the reprobates afterwards, ver. 42-44; they use the same words; therefore I think the words are barely parabolical, brought in by Christ that he might have occasion further to declare himself how they fed him and clothed him, and what esteem he will put upon works of charity; and to impress this truth the more upon our minds, that what is done to his people is accepted by him as if it were done to his person. However, because the former sense is useful, I shall a little insist upon it in this note.

Doct. That when Christ shall come to reward his people, they shall have great cause to wonder at all that they see, hear, and enjoy.

1. They shall wonder at the reason alleged. They that are holy ever think humbly of their own works, and therefore, considering their no-deservings, their ill-deservings, they cannot satisfy themselves in admiring and extolling the rich grace of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that he should take notice of anything of theirs, and produce it into judgment. See how they express themselves now: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant;' *Non dicit, Cum hostibus tuis.* So Ps. cxxx. 3, 'If thou shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?' So 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am not I thereby justified;' Isa. lxiv. 6, 'But we are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' This thought they have of all they do, and their minds are not altered then, for this is the judgment of truth as well as of humility: Luke xvii. 10, 'When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants.' Their Lord hath taught them to say so and think so; they did not this out of compliment. And for their works of mercy, they were not to let their left hand know what their right hand did, Mat. vi. 3. It is a proverb that teaches us that we should not suffer ourselves to take notice of what we give in alms, nor esteem much of it, as if there were any worth therein; and therefore, when Christ maketh such reckoning of these things, their wonder will be raised; they will say, 'Lord, when

saw we thee an hungry or athirst?' Their true and sincere humility will make them cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour.' Lord, it is thy goodness; what have we done? The saints, when they are highest, still show the lowest signs of humility to their Redeemer, and confess that all the glory they have they have it from him, and are contented to lay it down at his feet, as holding it by his acceptance, and not their own merit; they have all and hold all by his grace, and therefore would have him receive the glory of all.

2. They shall wonder at the greatness of Christ's condescension and hearty love to his servants, though poor and despicable; for in the day of judgment he doth not commemorate the benefits done to him in person in the days of his flesh, but to his members in the time of his exaltation: he doth not mention the alabaster box of precious ointment poured on his head, nor the entertainments made him when he lived upon earth, but the feeding and clothing of his hungry and naked servants. The greatest part of christians never saw Christ in the flesh; but the poor they have always with them. Kindness to these is kindness to him. Again, among these he doth not mention the most eminent, the prophets and apostles, or the great instruments of his glory in the world, but the least of his brethren, even those that are not only little and despicable in the esteem of the world, but those that are little and despicable in the church, in respect of others that are of more eminent use and service. Again, the least kindness shown unto them: Mat. x. 42, 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' He had spoken before of kindness to prophets and righteous men, men of eminent gifts and graces; then ordinary disciples; among these, the least and most contemptible, either as to outward condition or state of life, or to use and service, and, it may be, inward grace. Now all this showeth what value Christ sets upon the meanest christians, and the smallest and meanest respect that is showed them. The smallness and meanness of the benefit shall not diminish his esteem of your affection: anything done to his people, as his people, will be owned and noted. When the saints, that newly came from the neglects and scorns of an unbelieving world, shall see and hear all this, what cause will they have to wonder, and say, Lord, who hath owned thee in these? Alas! in the world all is quite contrary. Let a man profess Christ, and resemble Christ in a lively manner, and own Christ thoroughly, presently he is (*σημείον ἀντιλεγόμενον*) set up for a sign of contradiction; and that, not only among pagans, but professing christians; yea, by those that would seem to be of great note in the church, as the corner-stone was refused by the builders, 1 Peter ii. 7. And therefore, when Christ taketh himself to be so concerned in their benefits and injuries, they have cause to wonder: Christ was in these, and the world knew it not.

3. At the greatness of the reward; that he should not only take notice of these acts of kindness, but so amply remunerate them. In the rewards of grace God worketh beyond human imagination and apprehension: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither

have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love him.' We cannot, by all that we see and hear in this world, which are the senses of learning, form a conception large enough for the blessedness of this estate. Enjoyers and beholders will wonder at the grace, and bounty, and power of their Redeemer. It is a transcendent, hyperbolical weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. Where is anything that they can do or suffer that is worthy to be mentioned or compared with so great a recompense? When these bodies of earth and bodies of dust shall shine like the stars in brightness, these sublime souls of ours see God face to face, these wavering and inconstant hearts of ours shall be immutably and indeclinably fastened to love him and serve him and praise him; as without defection, so without intermission and interruption; and our ignominy turned into honour; and our misery into everlasting happiness: Lord, what work of ours can be produced as to be rewarded with so great a blessedness?

Use. That which we learn from this question of theirs, supposed to be conceived upon these grounds, is—

1. A humble sense of all that we do for God. The righteous remember not anything that they did worthy of Christ's notice; and we should be like-minded: Neh. xiii. 22, 'Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.' When we have done our best, we had need to be spared and forgiven rather than rewarded. On the contrary, Luke xviii. 11, 'The pharisee stood and prayed thus to himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' And those, Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?' They challenge God for their work. None more apt to rest in their own righteousness than they that have the least cause. Formal duties do not discover weakness, and so men are apt to be puffed up; they search little, and so rest in some outward things. It is no great charge to maintain painted fire. The substantial duties of christianity, such as faith and repentance, imply self-humbling; but external things produce self-exalting. They put the soul to no stress. Laden boughs hang the head most; so are holy christians most humble. None labour so much as they do in working out their salvation; and none so sensible of their weaknesses and imperfections. Old wine puts the bottles in no danger, there is no strength and spirits left in it; so do formal duties little put the soul to it. On the other side, they are conscious to so many weaknesses as serious duties will bring into the view of conscience, and have a deep sense of their obligations to the love and goodness of God, and a strong persuasion of the blessed reward. None are so humble as they: they see so much infirmity for the present, so much obligation from what is past, and such sure hope of what is to come, that they can scarce own a duty as a duty. None do duties with more care, and none are less mindful of what they have done. They discern little else in it, that they contribute anything to a good action, but the sin of it. This is to do God's work with an evangelical spirit; doing our utmost, and still ascribing all to our Mediator and blessed Redeemer.

2. What value and esteem we should have for Christ's servants and faithful worshippers. Christ treateth his mystical body with greater indulgence, love, and respect than he did his natural body; for he doth not dispense his judgment with respect to that, but these. He would not have us know him after the flesh, 2 Cor. v. 16; please ourselves with the conceit of what we would do to him if he were alive and here upon earth; but he will judge us according to the respect or disrespect we show to his members, even to the meanest among them; to wrong them is to wrong Christ: Zech. ii. 8, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.' The church's trouble goes near his heart, which in due time will be manifested upon the instruments thereof. To slight them is to slight Christ: 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me.' To grieve and offend them is to grieve and offend Christ: Mat. xviii. 10, 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' Did we but consider the value Christ puts upon the meanest christian, we would be loath to offend them. What comfort, love, kindness you show to them, it is reckoned by Christ as done to himself. If we would look upon things now as they shall be looked upon at the day of judgment, we would find our hands and tongues tied and bridled from injuring Christ's faithful servants; yea, we would show more of a christian spirit in relieving their bodily and spiritual necessities, and doing good upon all occasions.

3. It teacheth us to take off our thoughts from things temporal to things eternal; both in judging of ourselves and others. The great miscarriage of the world is because they measure all things by sense and visible appearance: 'Now we are the sons of God; but it doth not appear what we shall be,' 1 John iii. 2. Heirs in the world are bred up suitable to their birth and hopes, but God's sons and heirs make no fair show in the flesh.

[1.] Do not judge amiss of others. God's people are a poor, despised, hated, scorned company in the world as to visible appearance; and what proof of Christ is there in them? Who can see Christ in a hungry beggar? or the glorious Son of God in an imprisoned and scorned believer? or one beloved of God in him that is mortified with continual sicknesses and diseases? 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or sick, and in prison?' A pearl or a jewel that is fallen into the dirt, you cannot discern the worth of it till you wash it, and see it sparkle. A prince in disguise may be jostled and affronted. To a common eye things go better with the wicked than with the children of God. They enjoy little of the honour and pleasure and esteem of the world, and yet they are the 'excellent ones of the earth,' Ps. xvi. 3. If you can see anything of Christ in them, of the image of God in them, you will one day see them other manner of persons than now you see them, or they appear to be. These will be owned when others are disclaimed, and glorified when they are rejected and banished out of Christ's presence; and though your companying with them be a disgrace to you now, it will then be your greatest joy and comfort.

[2.] Do not judge amiss of yourselves. When the world doth not esteem of us, but is ready to put many injuries upon us, and to follow us with hatred and sundry persecutions, we are apt to judge ourselves

forsaken of God ; that we have no room or place in his heart, or else these things would not befall us. Oh, no ! Christ may be imprisoned in his members, banished in his members, reduced to great straits and exigencies in his members ; yea, by the hand of God you may be made poor and hungry and naked ; but all this shall be recompensed to you. We must not walk by sense, but by faith, 2 Cor. v. 7. Time will come when they that wonder at our afflictions shall wonder at us for the glory that Christ will put upon us, when you and all the saints about you shall say, Little did I think that a poor, base, laborious, miserable life should have such a glorious end and close. Christians, wait but a little time, and you will have more cause to wonder at the glory that shall be revealed in you than at the afflictions you now endure.

Secondly, We now come to Christ's answer and reply to this question. Wherein—

1. Take notice of the note of averment and assurance, ' Verily I say unto you.' I do the rather observe it, because I find the like in a parallel place : Mat. x. 42, ' Verily I say unto you, He shall in nowise lose his reward.' This showeth that it is hardly believed in the world, but yet it is a certain truth.

2. The answer itself ; wherein the former passages are explained of Christ's being hungry, thirsty, naked, exiled, imprisoned ; the riddle is opened. What is done to the afflicted, Christ taketh it as if it were done to him in person.

In this answer observe—

[1.] The title that is put upon afflicted christians ; they are his ' brethren.'

[2.] The extent and universality of this title ; the meanest are not excepted, ' The least of these my brethren.' The meanest as well as the most excellent ; the poor, the abject of the world, believing in Christ, are accounted his brethren.

[3.] The particular application of this title, to every one of them, ' To one of the least of my brethren.' We cannot do good to all ; yet if we do good to one, or to as many as are within our reach or the compass of our ability, it shall not be unrewarded.

[4.] The interpretation of the kindness showed to these brethren, ' What you have done to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.'

1. I shall first consider the force and importance of these expressions.

2. Their scope and intendment here, which is to bind us to acts of charity and relief to Christ's poorest servants.

First, For the force and importance of these expressions. And there, first, observe, that whoever believeth in Christ are accounted as his brethren and sisters, and he will not be ashamed to own them as such at the last day.

Here I shall show you—(1.) Who are brethren ; (2.) What a privilege this is.

First, Who are brethren ? Some by brethren understand mankind ; and so, ' What you have done to the least of my brethren,' in their sense, is to the meanest man alive, partaker of that human nature

which I have honoured by assuming it. But that is brethren in the largest sense. No ; that is not his meaning here. Upon what grounds charity is to be expressed to them I shall show you more fully by and by. To do good to a poor man, as to a poor man, is a work of natural mercy ; but to do good to a poor man, as he is one of Christ's brethren, is a work of christian charity : 2 Peter i. 7, 'Add to brotherly kindness, charity.' *Φιλαδελφία* and *ἀγάπη*, is distinguished. There is a more kindly and tender affection that we owe to those who are children of the same father, or are in charity bound to judge so, by sympathising with them in trouble, supplying their necessities, every way studying to promote their spiritual and temporal welfare. But a general love to all we must thirst after, and endeavour the true good of all, to whom we may be profitable. But the title of brethren to Christ groweth from faith, by which we are made the children of God : John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' And therefore Christ calleth them brethren. And it is very notable to observe : Heb. ii. 11, 'For both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one ; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.' Mark, the kindred is only reckoned to the sanctified : though all mankind have the same nature, come of the same stock, yet 'He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one ; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.' There the relation holdeth of both sides. Christ is born of a woman, and they are born of God, John i. 13 ; and so he is a kinsman doubly. *Ratione incarnationis suae et regenerationis nostrae*, as Macarius. He taketh part of flesh and blood, partaketh of human nature ; and we are made partakers of a divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4 ; and Mat. xii. 47-50, 'Then one said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee : but he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother ? and who are my brethren ? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren ; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.'

Secondly, Now I shall show you, in the next place, what a privilege this is. I shall show you—

1. What condescension there is on Christ's part, that he should count the least of his people, not only for his own, but for his brethren. The apostle saith, 'He is not ashamed,' Heb. ii. 11. We are said to be ashamed in two cases :—

[1.] When we do anything that is filthy. As long as we have the heart of a man, we cannot do anything that hath filthiness in it without shame. Or—

[2.] When we do anything beneath that dignity and rank which we sustain in the world. The former consideration is of no place here ; the latter then must be considered. Those that bear any rank and port in the world are ashamed to be too familiar with their inferiors ; yet such is the love of Christ towards his people, that though he be infinitely greater and more worthy than us, yet 'he is not ashamed to call us brethren.' It is said, Prov. xix. 7, 'All the brethren of the poor do hate him.' If a man fall behind-hand in the world, his friends

look askew upon him ; but Jesus Christ, though he be the eternal Son of God, by whom he made the world, the splendour of his Father's glory, and the brightness of his person, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and we be poor, vile, and unworthy creatures, yet he disdaineth not to call us brethren, notwithstanding our meanness and unworthiness, and his own glory and excellency. Divines observe that Christ never gave his disciples the title of brethren but after his resurrection ; before, servants, little children, friends, were their usual designations ; but then he expressly calleth them brethren : John xiii. 13, 14, 'Ye call me lord and master, for so I am ;' and John xii. 26, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall my servant be.' Friends : John xv. 15, 'I have called you friends.' But after the resurrection the style of brethren is very frequent : Mat. xxviii. 10, 'Go tell my brethren, I go into Galilee ;' and John xx. 17, 'Go to my brethren, and tell them, I go to my Father, and your Father.' And at the last day he giveth this title to all the elect, that are put at his right hand.

Quest. But what is the reason of this ?

Ans. Though the ground were laid in the incarnation, when Christ naturalised himself to us, and became one of our own line, yet he doth expressly own it after his resurrection, and will own it at his coming to judgment, to show that his glory and exaltation doth not diminish his affections towards his people, but rather the expressions thereof are enlarged. He still continueth our brother, and will do so as long as our nature remaineth in the unity of his person, which will be to all eternity.

2. That it is a real privilege to us ; it is a title of great dearness and intimacy ; it is not an idle compliment, for there is cause and reason for it, *διὰ τὴν αἰτίαν*. All mankind coming of one father, and being made of one blood, are brethren ; and Christ reckoneth himself among us, and assumeth the relation proper to his nature, especially when we get a new kindred by grace. It is not an empty title, but a great and real privilege ; not a nominal, titular relation, to put honour upon us, but to give us benefit, Rom. viii. 17, and for the present assureth us of his tender respect.

Use 1. It comforts us against the sense of our own unworthiness. Though our nature be removed so many degrees of distance from God, and at that time polluted with sin, when Christ glorified it, and assumed it into his own person, yet all this hindered him not from taking our nature, and the title depending thereupon. Therefore the sense of our unworthiness, when it is seriously laid to heart, should not hinder us from looking after the benefits we need, and which are in his power to bestow upon us. This term should revive us. Whatever serves to our comfort and glory, Christ will think it no disgrace to do it for us. This may be one reason why Christ biddeth them tell his brethren, 'I am risen,' Mat. xxviii. 10. The poor disciples were greatly dejected and confounded in themselves ; they had all forsaken him, and fled from him ; Peter had denied him, and forsworn him ; what could they look for from him but a sharp and harsh exprobration of their fear and cowardice ? But he comforts them with this message, 'Go tell my disciples, and Peter, that I am risen.' The fallen man is

not forgotten. Peter was weeping bitterly for his fault, but Christ sends him a comfortable message, 'Go tell Peter I am risen.'

Secondly, The next thing that I shall observe is—

Doct. That what is done to his people, to the least of them, Christ will esteem it as done to himself.

1. It holdeth true in injuries: Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;' and Acts ix. 4, 'And he fell to the earth, and he heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' Christ was wronged when the saints were wronged. He is above passion, but not above compassion. The enemies of the church have not men for their enemies, but Christ himself. When they are mocked and scorned, Christ is mocked and scorned.

2. It holdeth also true of benefits. The least courtesy or act of kindness showed to them is showed to Christ; that which is done in Christ's name, and for Christ's sake, is done unto Christ. You do not consider the man so much as Christ in him. The apostle saith they 'received him even as Christ Jesus,' Gal. iv. 14; that is, in his name, and as his messenger, 2 Cor. v. 10; and Luke x. 16, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me;' as a king is resisted in a constable armed with his authority. As when we go to God in Christ's name, whatever we obtain is put upon Christ's account (it is not for our merit, but Christ's), so whatsoever you do to any person in Christ's name, and for Christ's sake, is done to Christ. If you send another in your name, if he be denied, you take yourselves to be denied; if granted for your sake, you think it granted to you.

I come now to consider—

Secondly, The scope. These things are parabolically represented, to increase our faith concerning the reward of charity. The doctrine is this—

Doct. That one special end and use unto which rich men should employ their worldly wealth should be the help and relief of the poor. Consider—

1. In the general, it is not to the rich, but to the poor. Feasts and entertainments are usually for the rich; but Christ saith, Luke xiv. 12-14, 'When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, thy brethren, neither thy kinsman, nor thy neighbour; lest they bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame; and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' Many truck with their kindness; they make merchandise rather than impart their charity: this is not charity, but merchandise.

2. Of the poor there are three sorts:—

[1.] *Pauperes diaboli*, the devil's poor; such as have riotously spent their patrimonies and reduced themselves to rags and beggary by their own misgovernment. These are not wholly to be excluded when their necessity is extreme; you give it to the man, not to the sin: it may work upon them, especially when you join spiritual alms with temporal.

[2.] There are *pauperes mundi*, the world's poor: such as come of

poor parents and live in poor estate ; those are to be relieved : there is a common tie of nature between us and them : Isa. lviii. 7, 'Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh.'

[3.] There are *pauperes Christi*, Christ's poor ; such as have suffered loss of goods for Christ's sake, or being otherwise poor, profess the gospel ; these especially should be relieved : Rom. xii. 13, 'Distributing to the necessities of the saints ;' and Gal. vi. 10, 'Let us do good to all, especially to the household of faith.' There is an order ; first, our own families, our parents, our children or kindred, 1 Tim. v. 8 ; then strangers ; and among them those that profess the same faith with us ; and then them who do most evidence the reality of faith by a holy life ; and then to all, as occasion is offered.

Reasons of this duty.

1. The near union that is between Christ and his people. Christ and believers are one and the same mystical body, with Christ their head : 1 Cor. xii. 12, 'For, as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body ; so is Christ.' Now that union compriseth all : 'When one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it,' ver. 26. There is a sympathy and fellow-feeling. When you tread upon the toe the tongue will cry out, and say, You have hurt me. They cast themselves out of the body that have not common joys and common sorrows with the rest of the members.

2. Christ hath commended them to us as his proxies and deputies. He himself receiveth nothing from us ; he is above our kindness, being exalted into the heavens ; but in every age he leaveth some to try the respects of the world. Oh ! what men would do for Christ if he were now in the flesh ! It is a usual deceit of heart to betray our duties by our wishes. Now Christ hath put some in his place : 1 John iv. 20, 'If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?' We would be as much prejudiced against Christ as we are against the godly poor. That which your servant receiveth by your order, you receive it. He receiveth your respects by the hands of the poor ; he hath devolved this right on the poor as his deputies : Mat. xxvi. 11, 'For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always.' We pretend much love to Christ ; if he were sick in a bed, we would visit him ; if in prison, or in want, we would relieve him. What is done to one of these is done to him.

3. It is a great honour put upon us to be instruments of divine providence and preservation of others. You are God's substitutes in giving, as the poor in receiving. As gods to them, we relieve and comfort them. He could give to them without thee, but God will put the honour of the work upon thee. This is the greatest resemblance of God : Acts xx. 35, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive ;' that is, more God-like. It is a great mercy to be able and willing : Luke vi. 36, 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful.' The true advantage of wealth is in relieving and supporting others ; nothing showeth our conformity to God so much as this. Christ saith not, If ye fast, ye shall be like your heavenly Father, or, If ye pray, or, If ye prophesy, or, If ye be learned ; but, 'If ye be

merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful.' Thou holdest the place of God, and art as it were a god to them.

4. The profit of this duty. It seemeth a loss, but it is the most gainful trade in the world. It is the way to preserve your estates, to increase them, to cleanse them, to provide for eternal comfort in them.

[1.] To keep what you have. Your goods are best secured to you when they are deposited in God's hands; you provide 'bags that wax not old.' Many an estate hath been wasted for want of charity, James v. 2, 3.

[2.] To increase it, as seed in the ground. The husbandman getteth nothing by keeping the corn by him: 2 Cor. ix. 6, 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully;' Deut. xv. 10, 'When thou givest to thy poor brother, the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto.' All your works of mercy and liberality shall be abundantly repaid: Luke vi. 36, 'Give, and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.' But above all, Prov. xix. 17, 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord; that which he hath given he shall pay him again.' If you would put out your money to the best advantage, lend it to the Lord; the interest shall be infinitely greater than the principal. What better security than God's? He is a sure paymaster, and he will pay them to the full, great increase for all that he borroweth, a hundred for one, which is a usury not yet heard of in the world. You can expect nothing from the poor sort; they have nothing to give you; but God is their surety, he that is the great possessor of heaven and earth, that never broke his word. Nay, we have his hand and seal to show for it; his bond is the scriptures, his seal the sacraments; therefore he will pay you. But you will say, These are words. Venture a little and try: Mal. iii. 10, 'Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord. Give, and it shall be given to you.' Whereas, on the contrary, if you forbear to give, God will forbear to bless; as the widow's oil, the more it run the more it increased, and the loaves were multiplied by the distribution. And then—

[3.] It cleanseth your estate; you will enjoy the remainder more comfortably. Wells are the sweeter for draining; so are riches, when used as the fuel of charity. There are terrible passages against rich men: 'How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' There is no way to free ourselves from the snare but to be liberal and open-handed upon all occasions: Luke xi. 41, 'Give alms, and all things shall be clean to you.'

[4.] You may possess an estate with a good conscience. It will not easily prove a snare. Nay, you shall have comfort of it for ever; you shall have treasure in heaven: Luke xii. 13, 'Sell that you have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.' Whatever shift you make, rather sell than want to give out disbursements in this life, and your payment shall be in the next.

Use is reproof, because there are so few true christians in the world. Many men have great estates, but they have not a heart to be helpful to their poor brethren and neighbours, are very backward and full of

repinings when they give anything. They are liberal to their lusts, gaming, drinking, rioting, luxury, in lawsuits, and costly apparel. Do these men believe there is a heaven and hell, and a day of judgment?

For motives.

1. Thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Thou shalt not part with thy goods, so much as change them for those that are incomparably better. There is a reward for the liberal and open-handed. What is given to the poor is not cast away, but well bestowed. Now is the seed-time, the harvest is hereafter. The poor cannot requite thee; therefore God will: Luke xii. 14, 'A cup of cold water, given in charity, shall not want its reward,' Mat. x.

2. This reward is propounded to encourage us. Christ doth not only instruct us by commands, but allure us by promises. There is a dispute whether we may look to the reward. I say, we not only may, but must. Did we oftener think of treasure in heaven we would more easily forego present things.

3. The reward which we shall receive not only answereth the reward,¹ but far exceeds it. It is called a treasure: 'The riches of glory,' Eph. i. 18; and so are far better than these transitory riches which we cannot long keep. Thou shalt have eternal riches, which shall never be lost. Our treasure in heaven is more precious and more certain, Mat. vi. 19, 20.

4. This reward is not in this life, but in the life to come; treasure in heaven. What is it to be rich in this world? They are but uncertain riches: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches; but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.' Bracelets of copper and glass and little beads, and such like trifles, are valued by the rude barbarians, that are contemptible with us. The use and valuation of earthly things ceaseth in the world to come; it only holdeth on this side the grave. What we now lend to the Lord we must make it over, that we may receive it by exchange there.

5. It is a very pleasing thing to God: Acts x. 4, 'Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before the Lord.' They are a delight to God: Heb. xiii. 16, 'For with such sacrifices God is well pleased;' as the sweet incense that was offered with the sacrifice; not appeased, but well pleased. So Phil. iv. 18, 'An odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.'

SERMON XXIV.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.
—MAT. XXV. 41.

I COME NOW to speak of hell. Startle not at the argument; we must curse as well as bless. See our gospel commission, Mark xvi. 16.

In this verse you have—(1.) The persons sentenced; (2.) The sentence itself.

¹ Qu. action,' or some such word?—ED.