

JESUS JOYFULLY RECEIVED

NO. 2701

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“He...received Him joyfully.”
Luke 19:6.

THIS morning [Sermon #1624, Volume 27—*WELCOME! WELCOME!*], I showed you, dear friends, how joyfully Jesus receives sinners—how He welcomes them—how glad He is to find those whom He came to seek and to save. From this text, it appears that, when sinners receive Jesus, they receive Him joyfully, so that there is joy on both sides. It is a joyful business altogether; the Savior is glad to save, and the sinner is glad to be saved. I know which of the two has the greater joy, for it is always more blessed to give than to receive; and the great heart of Jesus, in its infinite benevolence, is conscious of a rarer joy than even the saved sinner can experience. It is a delight to Him to save; so great is His joy that He cannot contain it all within His own heart, and He represents Himself as calling together His friends and neighbors, and saying to them, “Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost.” But when the two seas meet—the sea of the saved one’s gladness and the sea of the Savior’s joy—what blessed floods they make! How the dancing waves clap their hands with delight! Surely, joy on earth then becomes more than on any other occasion parallel with the joy in heaven. Such joy before the Lord is “according to the joy in harvest;” and such days are “as the days of heaven upon the earth.” How earnestly, then, you and I ought to seek to bring men to Christ! This is the best method of making joy in this sin-cursed world. This is the surest way of plucking up the thorns and the thistles that sin has sown, and of making the myrtle and the rose to grow instead thereof according to that ancient promise: “You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands”—even before you who are the means of reconciling men to their Maker, and of bringing sinners to their Savior.

This joyous time of receiving Christ is the turning point in character, and it is also one of the tests of destiny. By this sign shall you discern between the men predestinated unto eternal life and those who have no share in the divine decree. He that receives Christ thereby proves that he is Christ’s; but he that receives Him not shall surely perish as the result of his willful rejection of the Savior. The gospel is, after all, the great fan that winnows the chaff from the wheat; it separates the precious from the vile, even as Christ said to the Jews, “You believe not, because you are not of My sheep.” Whether or no you will receive Christ when He comes your way, is the all-important matter for each one of you to decide. If your door is shut when He is passing by He may never come your way again. But if, when He bids you come to Him, as He bade Zacchaeus make haste, and come down, you receive Him with alacrity, opening the door of your heart that He may enter in, then shall you prove that you are His, that you are among those who are the blessed of the Lord, and who shall be blessed world without end. So this matter of the reception of Christ is, as I called it just now, all-important; and I want to press it upon each un-saved person here with the urgent desire and the confident hope that some, like Zacchaeus, will receive Christ joyfully.

This passage also teaches us that, often, the most unlikely persons are the first to receive the Savior. I should have said, and you would all have agreed with me, that the least likely person in the city of Jericho to receive Christ into his house was this rich little tax-gatherer Zacchaeus—this man whom all the people disliked so much that, when Christ went to his house, “they all murmured, saying, that He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.” Yet he was the one person in that place who did entertain the Lord Jesus Christ; and many a time since has Christ been shut out of good men’s doors, or the doors of those who have reckoned themselves as good men; but He has found shelter within the gates of sin-

ners, and such sinners as have been reputed among men to be utterly given over and hopeless. I would not pick my congregation even if I might do so; I would much rather that they should come, as they do come, by God's choice and constraint; for the man whom I might think most likely to be blessed would probably pass the blessing by; and he whom we, in our poor, feeble judgment, might expect to be the last to receive the Savior, might turn out to be the first, the most willing, and the most joyful receiver of Him. I cannot tell, therefore, who among you will take the Savior in; I wish I could hope that all, who have not yet done so, would do it before the sermon ends. He is such a wondrous Guest that you may all entertain Him at the same moment; and He can come to each one's heart, He may be the Guest of everyone who is a sinner, and yet each sinner who receives Him shall find that a whole Christ has come into his heart.

Let me also add that, sometimes very strange motives may bring people where they will be led to receive the Savior. I need not allude to Zacchaeus climbing the sycamore tree, or only just allude to it in passing; but many a person has come into the house of God, out of the idlest curiosity, or to oblige a friend, or to while away an hour. Rowland Hill used to say that there were some people who made a cloak of religion; and when they ran into Surrey Chapel, on a wet day, to shelter from the rain, he used to add, "and there are some who make an umbrella of it." It is just so still; people are influenced by all sorts of motives; harmless motives, vain motives, foolish motives, even condemnable motives have brought persons where Jesus Christ has been passing by; and so have been the occasion of Christ's entering into hearts which otherwise had been closed to Him. It may be so with some of you who are here; perhaps you hardly expected to be here, and you scarcely know why you came. Yet it was written in the book of destiny that, this night, you should either accept Christ as your Savior, or you should be willfully guilty of shutting the door of your heart in His face. God grant that it may not be that latter action; but may you say to Him, "Come in, blessed Savior. Let salvation come, in Your person, to my house and heart, this very hour; then will I rejoice while You shall rejoice also."

Thus have I introduced to you the text: "He received Him joyfully." Now I want to say to you, with regard to the reception of the Savior, that He is not here corporeally, physically, for He has gone back into glory, to sit at the right hand of the Father; but He is here spiritually according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He enters freely into men's hearts, but He cannot now be received corporeally into your houses, nor can He sit at your tables, and partake of your feasts; but He can, by His Spirit, enter into your hearts; and He can spiritually dwell there, and make a temple of your bodies, and reign there, finding a happy abode within your renewed nature.

I. Now, if you would receive Him, I wish to call your attention, first, to the fact that, in order to salvation, THERE MUST BE A PERSONAL RECEPTION OF A PERSONAL CHRIST: "He received Him joyfully." There you have two persons both present. "He"—that is, Zacchaeus—"received Him"—that is, Christ—"joyfully." That looks very simple, yet there is a great depth of truth in it, as I will try to show you.

For, first, *there are some persons, who suppose that, in order to be saved, they are to receive a creed.* That is quite true; you are to have a creed, and I urge you to take heed what you believe. Go to the law and to the testimony, and believe nothing but what is in the Word of God. But I pray you to also recollect that a man may receive the soundest creed in Christendom, and yet be damned. He may believe, as a matter of head knowledge, all that should be believed; and yet, for all that, he may not believe anything with his heart, and so may perish. I believe that the devil is orthodox. In all that he says, he usually seems to propound either the truth or something which shows that he knows what the truth is; yet, though, in that sense, he believes, and even goes as far as trembling, the devil is not changed in heart, nor will he be saved by what he believes. It is not receiving a creed which saves you; it is receiving a Person into your heart's love. It is not written in our text, "He received *it*," but, "He received Him." Mark that: "He received *Him* joyfully."

Again, *salvation comes not through receiving an ordinance, or ordinances, however correct or Scriptural they may be.* It is not said, "Zacchaeus received baptism;" or, "Zacchaeus received the communion." I do not doubt that Zacchaeus did receive both ordinances; but it was not said to him, "This day is salvation come to your house because you have received the sacraments." No; salvation came to him when he received Christ, when that blessed and Divine Person crossed the threshold of his heart, and was welcomed as He installed Himself in the affections of the rich tax-gatherer. It was then that he was saved; and, beloved, if you are to be saved, Christ must come in a similar fashion into your under-

standings and your hearts. Salvation comes, not through ordinances, however Scripturally and correctly they may be observed; it is Christ, and Christ alone, who can save your soul. It must be with you as it was with Zacchaeus when “he received Him joyfully.”

Furthermore, *it was not even the doctrine of Christ* that Zacchaeus on this occasion received, though he did receive the doctrine of Christ, and learned of Christ, and became His disciple; but, first, he received Christ; and, then, he received Christianity. Beware, I pray you, of being like many nominal Christians who know not Christ. Beware of that Christianity from which Christ has been eliminated. You must first receive the Master, or else it is idle to be associated with His servants. You may say that you belong to His Church; but if you are not joined to the Head, what will it avail you to claim to be in the body? If you are not vitally united to the Lord so as to become one spirit with Him, of what service will it be to you that you are reckoned among His followers, and that your names are written on an earthly church roll? Zacchaeus received Christ Himself, and this is the all-important saving matter: “he received Him.”

How did he receive Him? *He received Christ as his Guest, and entertained Him.* Will you so receive Christ—giving Him your heart, your love, yourself—letting Him come and find meat and drink for His love within your souls? I beg you to admit Him thus. Behold, He stands at the door of your heart, and knocks; again, and again, and again, with gentle hand knocking at the door, does He seek an entrance. Oh, open your heart to Him, and let Him be your Guest this very hour!

But, further, *Zacchaeus received Christ as his Lord.* Notice what he said: “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” That is the way in which you also must receive Christ as your Master and Lord.

In so doing, *Zacchaeus also admitted Christ as His Savior*, for Jesus said, “This day is salvation come to this house.” You will think it strange, but I have known some who have called Jesus “Lord,” who have not owned Him as their Savior. Thank God, it is changed with them now; but I did know some, who came to this house, who honored and worshipped Christ according to the light they had, yet they did not understand their need of Him, nor did they accept Him as their Savior. As I said, just now, this has all been changed with them; and so must it be with any of you who would truly receive Christ. If you do not accept Him in His character as Savior, you virtually reject Him altogether, since He can never be separated from the merit of His blood, and the love of His heart towards guilty sinners. What! Would you have an unwounded Christ—an unbleeding Christ—a Christ that never died for men? There is no such Christ as that except in fiction; the Christ of reality “is come to seek and to save that which was lost;” and in that character He must be received by us also if He is received at all.

II. Now I pass on to notice that THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST, TO BE REAL, MUST IN EVERY CASE BE VOLUNTARY. Willingly, Zacchaeus “made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.” That joyful reception of Christ shows the willingness of Zacchaeus; it proves how cheerfully, how gladly, how willingly—the words all carry the same sense—how joyfully, with the full freedom of his will, he received the Savior.

Observe that *the call of grace does not hinder this willing reception.* There was a previous call of grace: “Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house;” but, although that call was graciously powerful, and, in a gospel sense, irresistible, yet it did not interfere with the free agency of Zacchaeus so as to make him unwillingly receive the Savior. No; he cheerfully, joyfully, received Christ as the result of that call. Here is where many people make a great mistake. They fancy that we, who preach effectual calling, make out that men are like logs of wood or carved images—dead things that are dragged or drawn about without any reference to their own will. We teach nothing of the kind. We preach that men are intelligent, responsible agents, and that the omnipotent grace of God in which we firmly believe, and our belief in which we are never ashamed to declare, nevertheless exerts itself in a way and manner suitable to the free agency of these human beings, so that grace gets the victory; but, at the same time, a man acts as a man. Zacchaeus is not dragged down from the tree by an angel who lays hold of the nape of his neck, and throws him down against his will; and the door of his house does not open by magic; but the man comes down from the tree, in the ordinary way, by the exercise of his own will and power, and he opens the door of his home for Christ to enter; yet, secretly, in his heart there was a power other than his own which was moving him to act as he did. This may not be easy to understand or to explain in words; but it is easy enough in actual life. It is plainly seen in the lives of those who are converted to Christ. Nobody will say that Zacchaeus did not as freely let Christ

into his house as ever he had performed any action in his life. In fact, he never had put so much heart into anything he had ever done as he did into that act of receiving Christ. “He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.” He was glad to do it; he cheerfully yielded obedience to the divine command.

And, dear friends, you and I must receive Christ cheerfully, willingly, voluntarily, *or else we have not really received Him at all*. Christ will not force Himself into any man’s house, and sit there against the man’s will. That would not be the action of a guest, but of an unwelcome intruder. Christ will not come in, as it were, mailed and armed, to forcibly take possession of any man’s soul; but what He does is gently change the bias of our will so that we willingly invite Him to enter our heart. We constrain Him to come in, and to dwell with us; we say to Him, “Abide with us;” and not only are we willing to have Christ, but we are anxious and desirous to have Him. To get Him, we would, if necessary, sell all that we have. To keep Him, we would lay down our very lives, for that which once seemed undesirable to us, is now the height of our ambition, the very core and center of our highest desire. “He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.” His whole heart went with his reception of Christ.

What do you say, dear friend? Will you now receive Christ joyfully? Will you willingly receive Him? I know you will if you truly feel your need of Him, and if you realize how exactly He meets that need. I know you will gladly receive Him if you understand what blessings come in His train—what wealth of happiness and joy He gives to the heart in which He condescends to dwell. You will say to Him, “My Lord, now do I repent most sorrowfully that I ever resisted You; and, made willing in the day of Your power, I fling open the doors of my heart, and cry, ‘Come in; come in; come in; dwell with me from now on, and go no more out forever.’”

After Christ has been received into the heart, *everything else will have to be done cheerfully and voluntarily*. He did not command Zacchaeus to give the half of his goods to the poor; but, spontaneously, as soon as Christ came in, Zacchaeus said, of his own accord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” No ordinance to this effect had proceeded from the Savior’s lips: “Zacchaeus, you must restore fourfold to all whom you have wronged.” No; but gladly, out of the fullness of his renewed heart, he freely said, “If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” This is the very essence of true religion; it is cheerful voluntariness. When a man, who professes to be a Christian, begins to ask, “Must I do this?” or “Must I do that?” he makes us stand in doubt concerning him. Believers in Christ are not under the law, but under grace. The principle that rules us is not, “Must I?” but “May I?” It becomes to the believer a joy and a delight to serve Christ; he is not flogged to his duty. The slave-driver’s whip and the stocks are not for the freeborn citizens of the New Jerusalem. These things are for men of the world, who will do nothing unless they are paid for it, one way or the other. The dread of hell, or the hope of heaven—these are the only motives that they recognize; but those who receive Christ dread no hell, for they know that they can never go there. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Such a man works not to obtain heaven; why should He? Heaven is his already; in Christ Jesus, it is given to Him by a covenant which cannot be broken. So now he sings—

*“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn:
Chosen of You ere time began,
I choose You in return.”*

And this blessed voluntariness, this joyous freedom of the will, conferred by sovereign grace, becomes the very life and soul of vital godliness. Do you possess it, dear friend? If not, may God the Holy Spirit speedily give it to you! If you have it, may He nurture it, and make it to increase within you; and so, like Zacchaeus, whatever you do, you may do it joyfully, cheerfully, as unto the Lord!

III. This brings me now to close with my third remark, which is, that THE RECEPTION WHICH WE GIVE TO CHRIST MAY WELL BE A JOYFUL ONE.

To receive Christ into the heart, dear brethren and sisters, ought not that to be as glad a thing as for a man to welcome his long-desired bride, or his firstborn child, or to receive his estate when he comes to the ripeness of manhood? Yes, more than that, ought it not to be as much joy to receive Christ as to receive heaven itself, for would there be any heaven possible if we had not first received Christ? Ring the bells of heaven, and ring them yet again, for a soul has received Christ Jesus the Lord. It is the gladdest event on earth, and it gives new joy even in heaven. See how the angels fly upward from their various watching places to tell their brethren on yonder battlements, that they may publish it in every golden

street, "Another sinner has received Christ. Joy, joy forever!" These are the things that make jubilees in heaven; when sinners receive their Savior, they make glad rejoicing before the face of the Highest Himself.

If I hear that a certain person's reception of Christ had not much gladness in it, I am not necessarily led to suspect the reality of it, though I wish he had received Christ joyfully. When men receive the Word with gladness, if it is nothing but the bare Word, I can understand that they may be like the rocky ground which received the good seed; but, after a while, for lack of depth and moisture, the ground yielded not life enough or nourishment enough for the seed, so it withered away. But it is different when, instead of "it," you read "Him.": "he received *Him* joyfully." That is another matter altogether; for, if Christ is received into the soul, He will not die. If Jesus is taken into the heart, He will not disappear, and go His way; but where He once comes, He abides forever. So, let us have as much joy as we can connected with our conversion; and let us not, because of that gladness, question its genuineness; but let us rather be all the more sure that it is a true work of Christ's grace because, like Zacchaeus, we have received Christ joyfully.

Think what joy there ought to be in the heart that receives Christ into it. First of all, *what an honor it is!* O poor lowly woman, or humble man, will the Lord of glory really come and dwell in you? You are no queen, or prince, or philosopher; will the great Lord of all dwell in your frail body, which is undecorated by costly dress, perhaps unadorned by natural beauty? Has He indeed come down to dwell with you? Then, you are indeed honored even above the angels, for we never read that Christ dwells in them. You ought to be indeed glad that the Lord has permitted you to receive such an honor as this.

Then, next, where Jesus comes into the heart, *He comes to put away all sin.* Wherever Jesus is received, all the guilt of the past is blotted out and gone, never to be remembered anymore. When you receive Christ, you receive full remission of all your sin, every transgression goes into complete oblivion. Just think of that, and tell me if it is not a joyous thing to receive Christ. Will you not, then, like Zacchaeus, receive Christ joyfully?

When you receive Christ, you also receive the fountain of inward purity, *the well-spring of cleansing which shall overflow unto ultimate perfection.* Receiving Christ, sin gets its death warrant. Every buyer and seller in the temple of your nature will have to go. Everything received by false accusation will have to be given up. Where Jesus comes, the devil flies away, and angels come in with all their blessed train of beauty and holiness. To receive Christ, is to drive out hell, and to let in heaven; it is to end the darkness, and to begin the everlasting day. Then, shall we not receive Him joyfully?

Let me come close to you, and whisper a little secret in your ear. Zacchaeus did not know it, and the parallel does not hold good with his case, but it does with ours. There is great cause for joy in receiving Christ, *because He will never go away again.* When He once comes into our heart, He claims the freehold of it; and, by a divine entail, holds possession of it against all comers even to the end. I am not one of those who believe that a man can be a child of God today and a child of the devil tomorrow. Ah, no! When Christ, the strong Man armed, does really take possession of the heart, a stronger than He must come if He is to be driven out; and there is no one stronger than He is. Hell itself can find no power to match the might of Him who died to save His people from their sins; and you may depend upon it that He will fight for His own, and preserve His own, even until He comes to take them to be with Him forever. Therefore, be glad when Jesus comes into your heart, for it means salvation for you even unto the end.

And, further, *it also means eternal glory;* for He who thus comes into your heart is the same Savior who prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Oh, yes! He will bring you safely home to glory. Admit Him, and He will keep you here as His own until such a day as it shall please Him, and then He will gently waft your soul away to the better land where, transformed, and rendered white as snow, He will still dwell in you, and walk in you, and you shall be His people, and He will be your God. Oh, the bliss of admitting Christ into the heart and life! There is nothing like it under heaven; and even heaven itself can show nothing better than the joy of receiving Christ into one's inmost heart, for that is indeed heaven begun below.

So I will finish my discourse by begging all of you who are gathered together here, if you have never yet received Christ, to receive Him now. Perhaps someone inquires, "How can we receive Him?" Well, first, open the door which has hitherto been closed. Be willing that He should come into your heart, to

rule your whole life. Next, stand at the door and invite Him to come in. By earnest prayer, entreat Him to enter. Then, believe in Him; that is really to receive Him, as John says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." So that believing on Him is receiving Him. It is trusting Him. You know what it is to trust yourself wholly to the care of another. Just as you might, on some dark night, when you had lost your way on the moor, trust yourself entirely with a guide who knew the way, even so trust yourself with Christ to lead you to His Father, and He will do it. You have received Him when you have trusted Him. O dear hearts, do receive my Master! Blessed Spirit, lead them to do so, and to do so at once!

I admire Zacchaeus very much for one thing in which he differed from a good many of you. You ask such a lot of questions, and when you get them answered, or if they are not answered, you ask so many more. If Zacchaeus had been like you, I can imagine how he would have sat up in that sycamore tree, and when Christ called out to him, "Make haste, and come down," He would have said, "But,—;" and Jesus would have listened, and heard what he had to say, and answered him. Then he would have said again, "But, Lord,—;" and there he might have stayed up in that sycamore tree, but no blessing would have come to him. There are so many of you, who have been, as it were, up a sycamore tree for years. You always want to know more than you ever will know. You seem to be very clever at picking holes in the gospel; you have wonderful skill in the art of trying how you can damn yourselves; and you will do it, one of these days, unless God should prevent you by His almighty grace. If you can, you even spoil the precious promises of Scripture; you lay hold of one of God's golden coins, and try to deface it. I mean, that you take His promise, and then seek to get the very life and soul out of it—not that you may claim it for yourself, but in order to show that it does not belong to you. I never yet heard of a man going to the law to prove that a fortune was not his. Men are eager enough to get temporal things; but when you come to spiritual things, there are thousands of people who seem only anxious to prove that they can never be saved. If I were in your place, I would let the devil do that kind of work if he liked, it is very much to his taste; but, as for you, do not have even a little finger in it. Look at Zacchaeus. I can see him. As soon as ever Christ says to him, "Come down," why, dear me, the man is down before we can utter another word! And soon he is at the door of his house, and saying to the Master, "Come in, Lord, come in! Heartily do I welcome You!" Now, then, go and do likewise; ask no more questions, but make haste, and come down, and receive Christ joyfully. "But I want to know this." You shall know it when you have received Christ. "But am I one of His elect?" I will answer your question as soon as you receive Him. A good Wesleyan brother said to a Calvinistic friend down in Cornwall, "Now, Malachi, I owe you these two pounds; but, before I pass them over, you must tell me whether you are predestinated to have them." Malachi said, "Just put the two pounds here, in the middle of my hand, and I will tell you directly." That was very sensible on the part of Malachi; and I say to you—Do not be asking about predestination or anything else, but just receive Christ; and when you have accepted Him, you may rest assured that He has given you power to become a son of God. You have believed on His name, and therefore you are saved. That is the all-important point. So, like Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, and receive Christ joyfully. The Lord grant that you may do it; and unto His name shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 19:1-27.

Verses 1, 2. *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

Many of those tax-gatherers were rich; they usually farmed the taxes, and took care to extort all that they possibly could out of the poverty of the people.

3. *And he sought to see Jesus who He was;*

He did not seek to hear Him; his curiosity lay in another direction—he desired to see Him. Who could this man be who created such a stir? What kind of man was He?

3-5. *And could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him,—*

Zacchaeus went up into the sycamore tree that he might see Jesus, but he was himself seen there by Jesus; and that, dear friends, is the first act in the process of salvation. Jesus looks at us, and then we look at Him. So, here, the Lord spied out Zacchaeus up among the branches of the tree; “He looked up, and saw him,”—

5. *And said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.*

His surprise at receiving such a message must have been overwhelming, yet he did not allow that surprise to delay his obedience to Christ’s command.

6, 7. *And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

“This professedly superior teacher, this purist, this teacher of the highest morality, has gone to be guest with this tax gatherer—a man who is a sort of outlaw, a disreputable person altogether.” Ah! How does the legal spirit, in self-righteous men, cry out against the sweet benevolence of our blessed Master, who comes into the world for this very purpose—to be the Guest of sinners, that He may be the Physician of sinners!

8. *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;*

There was not one among those self-righteous people who would have done a tenth as much as Zacchaeus declared that he would do.

8. *And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

There was not one among the murmurers who would have dared to say as much as that. There are a great many people who are quick to condemn those who are a hundred times better than themselves. I wonder whether there are any people of that sort here; I should not wonder if there are.

9. *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.*

When our Lord was here, His personal mission as a soul-winner was to the Jews, to those who were of the house of Abraham; so He shows that however much despised this man might be, he came within the compass of the Christ’s immediate mission: “forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.”

10, 11. *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*

Some of them dreamt of a temporal sovereignty with Christ at its head, so He taught them that His kingdom was something very different from that.

12, 13. *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.*

“Use these pounds on my account; be stewards of them for me until I return.”

14-16. *But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds.*

He was a modest man; he did not say, “I have gained ten pounds;” but, “Your pound has gained ten pounds.” And if God has blessed anyone so as to enable him to bring in a large result from the talent entrusted to him, he must ascribe it all to God, and not to himself: “Lord, Your pound has gained ten pounds.”

17-19. *And he said unto him, Well, you good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, your pound has gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be you also over five cities.*

Observe that, whatever the triumph of Christ is to be, His faithful servants are to share in it. He is to be the King of the many cities in the rich provinces of His Father’s domain; but He will give to one of His servants ten cities, and to another five cities. But what a vast dominion that must be out of which He can afford to give such rewards as this! Ten cities—can any earthly king give in this fashion? There are royal rewards at the last for those who are faithful now. No pitiful pence shall fall to the lot of those who

diligently serve the Lord Christ; they shall have a rich reward, not of debt, but of grace; and, therefore, all the larger.

20. *And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.*

He had not lost it, he had not spent it, he had not even dug a hole in the earth and hidden it; he had used a nice piece of linen to wrap it in, and had taken great care of it; and there it was just as when he received it. It had not diminished; neither had it grown at all.

21. *For I feared you, because you are an austere man: you take up that you laid not down, and reap that you did not sow.*

So there is a slavish kind of fear, a dread, a horror of God, which will keep men out of His service. It ought not legitimately to do so; but, undoubtedly, there are some persons who, out of an evil timidity, are afraid to attempt anything for God or man, and hence their life is useless. Their talent cankers and rusts in the napkin in which they have wrapped it.

22. *And he said unto him, Out of your own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man,—*

“That was your opinion; according to your own confession, that was your idea concerning me: ‘You knew that I was an austere man,’”—

22, 23. *Taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: why then gave not you my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required my own with usury?*

“With proper interest.” God does not trouble about clearing His character with ungodly men. You and I are very particular and punctilious in defending ourselves against false accusations; but God’s character needs no clearing. It is so transparent that, if ungodly men choose to smear it, He argues with them on their own ground, and does not stay to answer their slanders. When I have heard people say of God that He is unjust or too severe, all I have felt inclined to say in reply was just this, “Whatever He may be, He is the God who will judge you at the last; and if you think thus of Him, so much the more ought you to yield yourself to Him, and submit to His infinite majesty, for He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. It is an ill day when we attempt to be the judge of our Judge, and pretend to be the god of God. He is infinitely glorious, so let us bow before Him.”

24-26. *And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that has ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he has ten pounds). For I say unto you, that unto everyone which has shall be given; and from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him.*

They who have some already shall have more, especially in the matter of grace. If you serve God well, He will give you more to do. If you love Him ardently, He will reward you by enabling you to have more love to Him; and if you exercise great faith, He will give you yet more faith. The way to be truly enriched, spiritually, is to be faithful to God in what we have.

27. *But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*

Whatever these words mean, it is certain that there is a terrible doom in store for all who are God’s enemies. May none of us be found among them!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—408, 537.

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