

THE HUNGRY FILLED, THE RICH EMPTIED

NO. 3019

A SERMON
 PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1906
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
 ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 25, 1869

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”
Luke 1:53

DIVINE providence is like a wheel, and as the wheel revolves, that spoke which was highest becomes the lowest, and that which was lowest is elevated to the highest place. It seems to be one of the works in which God delights to cast down the lofty, and to lift up the lowly. He hurleth down princes from their thrones, and lifteth up beggars from the dunghill. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.”

Like the woodman with his axe, the providence of God is cutting down the high and goodly cedars, while making fruitful trees that were dry and withered. That which is full, God empties, and that which is empty, God fills. That which is something, He makes to be nothing, and that which is nothing, He makes to be something. That which is reckoned the wisdom of this world, God maketh to be utter folly, but base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, that He may elevate them, and crown them with His glory.

I am going to take our text as one instance of the general providence of God, and to use it, first, *in reference to sinners*, then *in reference to saints*, and lastly, *in reference to saints in their capacity as workers for Christ*.

I. First, then. WITH REFERENCE TO SINNERS, it is true that “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”

“The hungry” are the poorest of the poor. When a man is homeless, he is poor, but he may still have something in his purse with which to supply his present necessities. When a man is penniless, he is certainly poor, yet he may have just satisfied the cravings of his hunger, and before the time shall come for another meal, he may be able to procure it. But when the hour has passed in which the man should have refreshed himself, and he is literally hungry, yet has no means of getting food, then he is one of the poorest of the poor.

There are thousands, in London, who are very poor, but still, they are not actually hungry. They are brought down to poverty, but yet, by some means or other, they are able to get their daily wants supplied, but the hungry man is worse off, and he represents the lowest degree of spiritual poverty. When a man has lost all his former treasures of self-righteousness, when he has no merits, no strength, no might whatever, when he is entirely empty, and his soul craves for what it cannot find in itself, nor earn of itself, nor by any possibility procure by its own merit or power, then is the man in the lowest state of spiritual destitution, and when he is brought to that state, then may he expect, in his experience, the fulfillment of the first part of our text, “He hath filled the hungry with good things.”

More than that, the man who is hungry is not only abjectly poor, but *he feels his poverty in a way that does not permit him to forget it*. The man who has but few clothes upon his back may, by reason of the genial weather, scarcely realize that he is wearing the garb of poverty. A man who sleeps in a miserable hut may seldom have been better housed, and therefore may scarcely recognize that he is dwelling amongst the very poor. But he that is hungry has internal evidence that will not suffer him to deny, nor even for a moment to forget, his destitution.

So is it with certain sinners. They have within them an insatiable hunger, which causes a desperate disquietness. There is no peace to them, neither by day nor by night can they be at ease. Their sins haunt them, and the fear of punishment dogs their heels. They long to find mercy, but know not how to seek it aright. They would be indeed thankful to be saved from the wrath to come, but they wonder whether salvation is possible to them. They know they are guilty in the sight of God, yet possibly, they feel grieved to think that they do not feel as much grieved as they should and are vexed to think that they are not more vexed on account of their sins. All this shows very clearly how utterly destitute they must be, and how truly they may write themselves down among the spiritually “hungry.”

I hope I am now addressing some who are in this condition. Dear friends, you are well aware that there is no good thing in you, yet you wish there were, though, sometimes, you fear that you have not even the desire to be right. To be able to confess your sins with a proper tenderness of conscience seems to be a task beyond your powers. You say that you wish you could repent, and could believe, and I think you are repenting and believing all the while. But even if you are not, this only proves how abjectly poor you are spiritually, and how far you have gone astray from God, and how lost, how undone you are, and then comes in this blessed message of our text, “He hath filled the hungry”—that is, such sinners as you are, so full of needs—“he hath filled the hungry with good things.”

How is it that the hungry get filled while the rich are sent empty away? I think it is, partly, because *the hungry are not to be satisfied with anything but bread*. There are many, in the world, who spend their money for that which is not bread, and they are contented when they get unsubstantial diet, but a really hungry soul knows that it needs bread and will not be put off with anything else. When a soul really feels the pressure of sin, it wants to have it pardoned, and it will not be content with anything less than pardon. It wants peace with God, and it will never rest till it gets it.

The soul that once hungers after God, the living God, will not be put off with ceremonies and so-called “sacraments.” It wants Christ Himself, it wants to hear Him say, “Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven; go in peace.” You can pacify those whose desires are only whims; but when men’s desires are based on such voracious appetites as the hungry have, you cannot satisfy them by the clatter of plates and dishes, and the rattling of knives and forks, or even with the sight of food.

They must have it to eat, they will not be put off without it. They cry until they get it, and hence they do get it, for God hears their cry, and grants their request. If a man’s prayer be of such a character that only sovereign grace, real pardon, and true salvation will content his soul, then he shall not be put off with anything else, but he shall have that for which his soul craves. Such a man prays, with one of our hymn writers—

*“Gracious Lord, incline Thine ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear;
Hear my never-ceasing cry;
Give me Christ, or else I die.*

*“Lord, deny me what Thou wilt,
Only ease me of my guilt;
Suppliant at Thy feet I lie,
Give me Christ or else I die.*

*“Thou hast promised to forgive
All who in Thy Son believe;
Lord, I know Thou canst not lie;
Give me Christ, or else I die.”*

How vain a thing it is for a man to boast of the privileges he enjoys rather than of the use which he has made of them! How many say, like the Jews of old, “The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these,” because they think they belong to an orthodox denomination, or

they are members of a church which is correct in its creed, or they attend a ministry which God has greatly blessed to the salvation of souls. Ah, sirs! but if the creed be not believed in your heart, and if the ministry be not blessed to you, your boasting is as vain as that of one who was clothed in rags, and died in poverty, but who boasted of the wealth of London, or of the man who shut his eyes, but who nevertheless boasted of the light that shone upon his countenance. Except you use your privileges, unless you get through the external husks into the very spirit and kernel of them, instead of boasting, you have reason to be ashamed, and to hide your heads.

But the truly hungry soul is not satisfied with privileges and opportunities, he wants Christ. To sit in a place of worship to hear a Gospel sermon, he counts to be a favor, for he is very humble, but it is a favor that cannot content him. His soul cried, "Lord, give me Christ, give me salvation, give me now to know that my many iniquities are cast behind Thy back, to be remembered against me no more forever." He cannot be content with anything short of a full Christ for his poor empty spirit.

Further, a hungry soul is likely to get the blessing it craves *because it is an importunate soul*. You know that our Lord Jesus Christ, in His parable of the widow and the unjust judge, set forth the prevalence of importunate pleading with God, and on another occasion, our Lord used the figure of one, who though not himself hungry, was able to satisfy the hunger of a friend, who had unexpectedly called upon him when he had nothing to set before him, but by his importunity, he obtained for his friend the food that he needed.

Ay, and let a man really have the fear of hell before his eyes, and a sincere desire after reconciliation with God, let his soul be really hungering after peace with God through Jesus Christ, and he will be at mercy's door both night and day, he will hammer away at the knocker, and give God no rest until He puts forth His hand, and gives the Bread of life to that poor starving suppliant. Yes, it is holy importunity that wins the day, and the spiritually hungry man gets the blessing because his importunity gives success to his pleading with God.

I feel sure that there are some in this place who, knowing their need, being painfully conscious that they have no good thing of their own, are hungering after eternal life. I do trust that this hunger will grow into a craving that will never be satisfied until you get what your spirit wants. I pray God that you may never be comforted till Christ comforts you, never get peace till He becomes your peace, never feel that you are safe till you get into the very heart of Christ, and never suppose that you are clean till you are washed in the fountain filled with blood.

Beware of getting peace apart from Christ, always be afraid of a hope that is not grounded upon Him, for it is better far to continue to hunger and to thirst than to be satisfied with the dust and ashes of this world's religion, or this world's pleasures. O ye hungry ones, hear the words of the text, and be encouraged, "He hath filled the hungry." Look at that blessed word "filled." He has not merely given them a little refreshment, or administered some temporary consolation to them, but "he hath *filled* the hungry,"—given them all that they can wish for, all that their souls really need.

Turn to this blessed Book of God, and see what promises are there for needy souls. Do they need pardon? There is plenteous forgiveness. Do they need adoption? "They shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the LORD Almighty." Do they need comfort? There is the Holy Spirit Himself to be their Comforter. Do they need anything on earth or in heaven? Then it shall not be denied to them, seeing that, in giving Christ to them, God has given them all things. "He hath filled the hungry."

It is a blessed thing to see the man, who once was spiritually hungry, after he has had his soul filled by God. How he rejoices! He dances like David did before the ark, nay, more than that, his soul seems as though it would dance into heaven itself with glorious leaps of overwhelming joy. As Christ is mine, and Christ is all, I have in Christ all that I can ever desire. It is a blessed fullness, a divine satiety, a heavenly satisfaction which the Lord gives to us when He makes our youth to be renewed like the eagles by filling our mouth with good things.

We must notice one other word in the text, "He hath filled the hungry with *good* things." I shall not be altering the text, but only giving its true sense, if I say that He fills the hungry soul with the best of

things. They are positively good, and they are good comparatively, better than all the good things of the world, and they are superlatively good, for even heaven itself hath no better things than God giveth to poor hungry souls when they come unto Him by faith in Jesus.

We are apt to think that, if men are starving, the commonest kind of food will do for them so long as they are able to keep away from death's door, but it is not thus that God deals with the spiritually hungry. He spreads the table bounteously, royally, with the best of food, and filleth the hungry with good things—not simply with a good thing, but the word is in the plural, “with good things.” Their needs are many, so the mercies given to them shall also be many. Their needs seem to be as many as their moments, but the mercies of God exceed their utmost needs. All their capacious souls can wish, they shall find in Jesus Christ, who shall be their All-in-all.

The text, you observe, refers to the past, but it may be taken for granted that what God did yesterday He will do today, and what He does today He will do forever, so far as it is needful and right, and as He is “the same yesterday, and today, and for ever,” all the blessings that He gives to His people shall be continued to them as long as they need them.

Some of us can say that we were filled with these good things twenty years ago, and we have never again hungered as we hungered then. The Lord hath satisfied our souls by giving us Christ, and we are fully content with Him. His own word is true to us, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

God is still filling the hungry with good things. There are many, in this house, who can testify that, in answer to prayer, they have had their griefs assuaged, and heavenly comforts granted to them, and poor sinner, God is willing to do the same for you. If you are hungering and thirsting, come unto Him, for there is as much grace in Him today as ever there was, so come, just as you are, and trust Him, rely upon Him, and you too shall be filled with good things.

The other half of the text, in its reference to sinners, I shall touch upon very briefly, “The rich he hath sent empty away.” Oh, how many sinners there are who think themselves rich! According to their own valuation, they are rich in merit, but the Gospel has nothing to do with merit, it only deals with misery, and therefore it sends them away empty, because it does not conduct its business on the lines that they approve. There are many sinners, who are so rich in their own estimation, that they will not take Christ and His cross for nothing.

David knew enough to say to the Lord, “With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. For thou wilt save the afflicted people, but wilt bring down high looks.” If a man thinks that he is so good that he does not need the Gospel, God regards him as so vile that the Gospel brings no message of mercy to him until he humbles himself and repents. Jesus said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Of all the sins that can happen to us, perhaps the deadliest of all is that of not being conscious of having any sin. A good old Scotchman used to say that there was no devil in the world so bad as having no devil at all, and that not to be tempted was the worst sort of temptation. So I think, and not to be conscious of any sin is, perhaps, to be at the furthest point from God to which any human being can go, for the nearer we are to God, the more conscious we are of our own shortcomings, and the more earnestly do we struggle to overcome every atom of sin which we discover to be within our souls.

“The rich” are those who are far from being hungry, they have enough, and to spare. Instead of going down upon their knees, like beggars, to ask mercy from God as a charity, they talk proudly about what they deserve, and what good deeds they have done, and what they mean to do in the future, and therefore, they thank God that they are not as other men are.

Now, what becomes of these sinners, who think themselves so rich that they have no need of the good things with which God fills the hungry? The text does not simply say that they are not fed, it does not say that the door of mercy is shut in their faces, but it says that they are sent right away from mercy's door because they have no right to stand there. Why should a man be allowed to pray when he

has nothing to pray for? These rich people are sent away from mercy's table because they do not want to feed on mercy's fare. Why should they sit there, and uselessly occupy places where hungry ones might sit and feast? So they are sent away.

And mark you, it is an awful thing to be sent away from the Gospel, and it is a remarkable thing that the only people who are sent away from the Gospel are those who consider themselves spiritually rich. You who think yourselves so excellent, moral, and amiable, you who cannot see any fault in yourselves, you who think you are going to heaven because of your good deeds—the Gospel not only does not open its door to you, but it even sends you away from its door, and how does it send you away?

The text says, "The rich he hath sent empty away." Empty even of what you once thought you had. I only hope that the gracious meaning of the text may be fulfilled to some of you, and that, while listening to the Gospel, you may be made to feel that, after all, you are not spiritually rich, but that you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." It will be the best, day's work that was ever done for you if you are brought to realize your true position, and come to Christ confessing your abject poverty, for as Joseph Hart well says—

*"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."*

We know what happened to the two debtors, [See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 3015, "The Two Debtors"], "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both," but if they had had anything with which they could pay, there would have been no forgiveness vouchsafed to them. Oh, for such an emptying that you may afterwards be filled with good things!

But there are some, who are sent away from hearing the Gospel with the same conceit of fullness as they had before, and they are suffered to remain empty without discovering their true condition. This is a dreadful state for anyone to be in—to go on deceiving one's self, and thinking all is well for time and eternity, and only to find out one's fatal mistake where the discovery will come too late. "Woe is me!" cries the self-righteous professor, when he wakes up in the world to come, and finds that he is shut out of heaven—"Woe is me, that I should ever have fancied that I had a sufficient store of good things for eternity, yet now I have not so much as a drop of water to cool my tongue, and I am tormented in this flame! Woe is me, that I am banished forever from the presence of God, and from the glory of His power—'sent empty away'!"

O my dear hearers, may this text be fulfilled to you in a gracious sense, and not in this sense of terrible justice! One of the two it must be, for if you are "rich" as the text uses that term, you must be "sent empty away" in one sense or the other. I pray that, instead, you may be filled with good things because the Spirit of the Lord has caused you to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

II. I shall now briefly use the text WITH REFERENCE TO SAINTS.

Beloved brother and sister in Christ, if your experience at all tallies with mine, I think you will have found that the first clause of this portion of Mary's song is most true to you in your spiritual experiences. I find that, whenever I am hungry—that is to say, conscious of my utter unworthiness, weakness, insignificance—then it is that Christ is most precious to me, the promises are peculiarly sweet, the covenant of grace is a dainty morsel, and the assembling of myself with the Lord's people brings me to the King's banqueting table.

Is it so with you? When you are hungry, do you get filled with good things? You remember when you were under the Lord's chastening hand, and much broken in spirit through bodily pain, how precious that promise was, "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." You were laid aside both from the means of grace and the cares of business life, and your soul had time for thought and meditation, and

in its hunger the Lord was made very sweet to you. You remember when you were poor, some years ago, when you had to live from hand to mouth, what blessed times you had with your Lord and Master.

You are supposed to be better off now, but you are really worse off if you do not have so much of Christ as you had then. You used, then, to take the promise, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure,” in a more literal fashion than you do now. A message which came to your soul with quickening power was this, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” You were hungry then, so your Lord filled you with good things.

Every now and then, the pangs of this hunger seize us, our spirits sink, our confidence grows dim through the smoke of our sin, and we get such a sense of our sinnership as we have not had, perhaps for months. We feel as if we ought never to have made a profession of religion. We are so ashamed of ourselves that, if we could ship with Jonah to go to Tarshish, we should be glad to flee from the presence of the Lord and from the presence of His people too.

At such a time as that, if we hear a Gospel sermon preached to the very chief of sinners, if the preacher opens his mouth wide concerning sovereign grace, and forgiving mercy, and the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus, oh, how welcome the message is to us! We go to the sanctuary, not to criticize the preacher, but to seek spiritual food for our souls, and if the preacher does the work which God gave him to do, we are filled with good things.

But on the other hand, those who reckon themselves to be spiritually rich are “sent empty away.” Yes, “sent empty away” from a full Gospel! How many people there are, who have such peculiar tastes—they call them such refined tastes—that there are only one or two ministers whom they can hear in a radius of twenty miles! It is a sure sign of a bad spiritual appetite when you must always have little dainties all to yourself, or in other words, when the old-fashioned truths become distasteful to your palate.

There are two things that I always like to see on the table, whether at breakfast, dinner, or tea, they are never out of place, and those two things are bread and salt. And the old-fashioned Gospel, like bread and salt on the table, ought to be in every sermon, and those whose souls are in a right spiritual condition will always want to hear it. There are some who crave fancy cookery, this dish must be prepared after the Plymouth fashion, and that dish must be spiced according to some other mode, and if it is not made according to the last new fashion in theology, there are some who cannot feed thereon.

Oh, to be brought down from such richness as that, and to be made spiritually poor! I am sure that our Bibles would be a hundred times richer to us than they are now if we were a hundred times poorer than we are, by which I mean, that the Bible would be more truly to us what it really is if we had a truer sense of what we really are. As we went down in our own esteem, it would go up, and the doctrines of the Bible, the promises of the Bible—ay, and even the precepts of the Bible—would possess a wonderful sweetness to us if we had a greater spiritual hunger. Solomon said, “The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”

There is such a thing as getting full of our own graces, full of our own prayers, full of our own sermons, full of our own good works, full of our own selves, and what state can be worse than this? It is being blown out almost to bursting. Then, soul, empty yourself of yourself, and when you think of yourself as you ought to think, you will abhor yourself, you will see no good in yourself whatever, but you will see the black finger marks of your fallen nature even upon the bright alabaster works of grace within your soul, and you will mourn over even your best things because you have defiled them. When we become thus empty, God will fill us with good things.

III. Now, lastly, I believe, brethren and sisters in Christ, that our text is true WITH REFERENCE TO CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CAPACITY OF WORKERS FOR CHRIST.

Give me hungry dogs to hunt with, and give me really hungry workers to work with for the Lord Jesus Christ, I mean, men and women who are dissatisfied with the present spiritual condition of the nominal Christian church, dissatisfied with the progress that is being made, earnestly longing for something better, determinately set on doing something that shall be for God’s glory, and the good of

the people, crying and sighing for the conversion of souls, not satisfied with ones and twos, but wanting to see the kingdom of Christ come in all its power, and the will of God done on earth as it is done in heaven. Give me men who will not slumber although the professing church of God slumbers, men who cannot rest because sinners do not find rest in Christ, men who have no peace because Christ has not become the sinner's peace. Give me such men, for they will be filled with good things.

A church that longs for the blessing, and will not be content without it, will get it, but on the other hand, the "rich" church, which says, "We have got the blessing, we are doing very well, we cannot see anything in which we could improve, we preach the Gospel, we have all the usual agencies, they are all conducted with propriety, and with a measure of success, everything goes on exceedingly well, on the whole, perhaps we are ahead of the rest of the churches, we ought to let well alone, and not try to get up excitement, or be seeking after what is not attainable, and attempting such great things that we are pretty sure to fail in our attempts,"—such "rich" people will be "sent empty away."

Self-satisfaction is the death of progress. Contentment with worldly goods is a blessing, but contentment in spiritual things is a curse and a sin. What said Paul? "Not as though I had already attained." Some of us think, "If we could get as far as Paul did, we should be satisfied." But Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained," and then he added, "Forgetting those things which are behind,"—why, some of us wish we had such things to recollect, but he wished to forget all that he had done, and to think only of what remained to be done—"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Oh, for this sacred forgetfulness, by way of contentment, of all successes and achievements, so as still to be pressing forward! I would that every believer had, for the glory of God, that spirit which is never satisfied, but always cries for more. I would have the hearts of Christians insatiable as death and the grave, for how can we bear that men should be forever lost? How can we be quiet while hell is being filled, and souls are perishing day and night? How can we be at ease while God is blasphemed, while Christ is unknown in a great part of the world, and where He is known, He is not beloved? How can we be contented while the black prince of hell seeks to steal the crown rights of King Jesus?

Contented and satisfied? Never, till all over this our highly-favored land Christ shall reign as Sovereign Lord, nay, not then, nor till in every continent and island the nations of the whole world shall have heard the Gospel, and vast multitudes have prostrated themselves at Messiah's feet in loyal and lavishing adoration. Up, saints of God, from your resting places of inglorious sloth, and begin to cry aloud, and spare not, come to God's throne with a sacred spiritual hunger, for thus shall the church of God be filled with good things. May God, in His infinite mercy, bless His message, and His shall be the praise and glory forever. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

LUKE 1:26-56

Chapter 1. Verses 26-27. *And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*

It was by the temptation of an evil angel that man fell, and Paradise was lost, it was, therefore, most appropriate that good angels should be sent to announce the coming of the Restorer, through whom Paradise is regained, "Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth." Christ's coming to earth must be announced in the lowliest of cities, and He must be born in the small Judæan town of Bethlehem, but it was also decreed that He must die at Jerusalem—in the metropolitan city. Mark the simplicity, and yet the sublimity, of the arrangement by which the meek and lowly Savior was to be born in our nature. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin, whose name was Mary.

28-29. *And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.*

The best of news may sometimes cause the greatest perturbation of mind and heart. If you feel troubled when you receive a message from God, do not be astonished, as though some strange thing had happened unto you. See how Mary, who was told that she was to receive the greatest honor and favor possible to a mortal being, was troubled by the angel's speech, perplexed by his extraordinary salutation.

30. *And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.*

If we have found favor with God, there is no cause for us to fear. If God is gracious to us, we are raised above all reason for alarm. Some court the fickle favor of men, but even if they gain it, they may well fear that they may shortly lose it, but the angel said, "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God," and having found that favour, she would never lose it.

31-32. *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great,—*

How true is that prophecy, "He shall be great." Christ is the greatest of all great ones. How great He is in our esteem! The tongues of men and of angels could not tell all His greatness. "He shall be great,"—

32-37. *And shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

It seemed meet that the Gospel dispensation should thus begin with two great wonders. The age of wonders has opened upon us now that the day of grace has dawned. Now shall the barren woman keep house, and be the joyful mother of children, according to the ancient prophecy.

38. *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*

Oh, that we all had such a spirit of submission as she had, that we might be willing to place ourselves absolutely at God's disposal, for him to do with us as He pleased!

38. *And the angel departed from her.*

His mission was accomplished, so he might go back to the glory from which he had come at God's command.

39-43. *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

The most gracious people are always the most humble people. This question of Elisabeth, "Whence is this to me?" has been one that we have often put concerning ourselves. She was the older woman of the two, but she felt herself highly honored by this visit from her younger relative, whom the Lord had so wondrously favored.

It is well when Christian people have a high regard for one another, and think less of themselves than they do of others whom God has specially favored. It is one of the traits in the character of God's true people, that they have this mind in them, while they who think themselves great prove that they are not the Lord's. If you think much of yourself, He thinks little of you.

44-45. *For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed:*

Not only Mary, who believed the angel's message, and was therefore blessed; but every one of us, who believes in God, may share in this benediction.

45-46. *For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said,—*

This humble Jewish maiden was a woman of great natural ability. This song of hers is worthy to be sung throughout all ages. It is true that it is mainly taken from the song of Hannah, and other songs of devout persons in former ages, but this shows how Mary had studied the Word of God, and laid it up in her heart. The best preparation that you young people can have for the highest honor and service in your future life is to bathe frequently in the Word of God, and to perfume your whole life by a familiar and accurate acquaintance with Scripture truth. Nothing else can make you so pure, or so prepared for all service which God may yet have for you to perform.

46. *My soul doth magnify the Lord,—*

That is a good beginning. Mary does not magnify herself in her Magnificat, she has nothing to say concerning her own dignity, though she was of a noble lineage, but she sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."—

47. *And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

She needed a Savior as much as we do, for she was a sinner like ourselves, and though she was blessed among women, she here indicates that she owed all that blessedness to the grace of God, who had become a Savior to her, as well as to us.

48. *For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:*

The family, from which Mary sprang, had become poor, and she dwelt in lowliness at Nazareth.

48-49. *For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.*

She was indeed a blessed woman to have such holy thoughts, such reverence for God, such a true idea of His might and majesty, and of the marvellous favor which He had shown to her.

50. *And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.*

Remember this, it was not mercy to Mary only, it was mercy to us, and mercy to all, who truly trust the Savior in whom she trusted.

51. *He hath shown strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*

Sometimes, we read of God's "finger," That refers to a part of His great power. At other times, we read of His "hand." That is a more brilliant display of His power. But here, as elsewhere, we read of His "arm." This is the majesty of His omnipotence. Pharaoh's magicians told their king that it was the finger of God that wrought the plagues of Egypt, but it was with His outstretched arm that He divided the Red Sea, and overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts, Mary felt that, in the work of salvation we see God's arm, not merely His finger, or His hand.

52. *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.*

This is what God is constantly doing—casting down the high and mighty ones, and lifting up the meek and lowly.

53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

They who are self-satisfied shall, sooner or later, be cast out, but those who look to God alone, and are hungry after Him, shall be satisfied with His favor.

54-56. *He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.*

END OF VOLUME 52

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.