

Notes from meditations on Luke

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Luke 1 and Luke 2

It is impossible to read chapters 1 and 2 of this Gospel without feeling that heaven is opened, and opened very widely too, to the view of earth. Do you enjoy the thought of heaven bringing itself near to you? God is an intrusion to the heart that does not enjoy Him. We ought to read all Scripture with personal application. There was a very beautiful opening of heaven at Jacob's ladder. Again, it was opened to Stephen when he looked up and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. So in the beginning of Luke, we get the opened heaven communicating with earth, and we ought to have a welcome for such a sight.

Things have been going on in a very homely kind of way since the prophets. Then heaven opened with a witness So it will be by-and-by, though there may be a pause now. Zacharias had been serving the Lord in the temple, as others, and the angel's visit was a surprise to him. He was not quite prepared for it. Listen to the angel's language: "Fear not." Does the thought of nearness to God awaken alarm in your soul? Very right that it should, in one sense. We are all revolted creatures, but how blessed to see God quieting such alarms! The angel speaks the mind of God "Fear not." Can your heart let in the comfort of that? Do you know what it is to have alarm as a sinner, and then to have your alarm quieted?

We must acquaint ourselves with the personal application of these things.

Zacharias is not quite prepared, and he confesses it, and the angel rebukes him. There is comfort in this let us examine it. Would it be happy to you if a person did not show confidence in you? Just so it is with the blessed God. So the angel expresses resentment: "I am Gabriel," he says, "that stand in the presence of God." And why, beloved, why is your faith, too, challenged? Have you read the Romans with care? Why does God challenge your faith there? Would it be comfortable to you if God did not care for your confidence? It would not be so between friends. We do not read Scripture with sufficient intimacy of heart. We read it as if we were acquainting ourselves with words and sentences. If, by Scripture, I do not get into nearness to God in heart and conscience, I have not learned the lesson it would teach me.

In the sixth month the angel goes up to a distant village of Galilee, to Mary God still communicates with earth. Mary has a more simple faith than Zacharias. How often we see a poor unlettered soul that knows more of the simplicity of the truth of God than many who can talk much of the Bible. Again the angel's words, "Fear not." Do not pass that. What consolation in the fact that a visitor from heaven had such words upon his lips! He then speaks largely of what God is about to do. And Mary answered, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Is that the echo of our hearts? What is the proper answer to grace? Faith. If a person shows you a kindness, you accept it. It is the only return you can tender. The grace of God shines out, bringing salvation, and the sinner's duty is to accept it. The eunuch accepted it and went on his way rejoicing. The joy of faith is responsive to the communication of grace. No element is more responsive to the gospel than joy. I have mistaken the glad tidings if they have not made me happy. If I have so listened to the gospel as to find it glad tidings, my answer is joy. So it was with Mary.

Now we get Elizabeth and Mary coming together. I do not know that we find in Scripture a more beautiful sample of communion in the Holy Ghost than here. Elizabeth was the wife of the high priest; Mary, the betrothed of a carpenter. Perhaps they would never have come together but for this. Now they meet not merely in the flesh, but in the spirit. Now Elizabeth bows to Mary as the more highly honoured "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Communion arises when people forget the flesh and act only in the spirit. There was no grudging on the part of Elizabeth, no pride on the part of Mary; Elizabeth holds herself meekly, Mary holds herself humbly. There is plenty of intercourse nowadays, but too little communion, even among the people of God. Communion is according to relationship in Christ.

Now we see a beautiful thing in Zacharias's mouth being opened. Unbelief had shut it faith opened it. God does not afflict willingly, but personally with an end in view. It was very right that he should be put into silence for a time, but as soon as possible his mouth was opened, wider than ever he counted on.

It was but a little bit of the world that heaven had opened upon. The great world lay, as we read in the Luke 2, in the hands of Caesar. We will leave the big world for a moment and come to the fields of Bethlehem. There is something here exceeding what we get in Luke 1. We see the glory coming out of the opened heaven, and not one angel, but a host of them. When the poor shepherds tremble at the sight, we hear that word unchanged on the lips of heaven, "Fear not." Again, and again, and again, heaven echoes its own words in speaking to trembling sinners. Do not pass them by as commonplace, unnecessary words, but drink them in. What title had the poor shepherds to them that you and I have not? They were poor sinners. Faith entitled them to it. And the angel said, "Unto you is born . . . a Saviour." Not a judge nor a lawgiver. The grace of God, as the Apostle tells us, brings salvation. The

angels talked of salvation. From beginning to end of the book from the woman's seed down to "Whosoever will" let him come, salvation is the burden. So here "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Though very easy to us, it cost Christ everything. It brought the Son from the Father to be made flesh; and the beginning of the story of His sorrows is here. The poor weak infant. lying in a manger! The moment He touched the flesh, the story of what His days were to be, began to tell itself out.

Suppose I showed you a person, it might be only his back, and say, He did you a kindness once; you could not but look after him with interest. The Lord Jesus has done you a kindness, in the three hours of darkness, and if by faith you entertain the thought, you cannot but be interested in Him. It is a simple, believing mind we want, to bring our minds into contact with the Person of Jesus.

The moment the glad tidings are announced, the hosts raise their acclamations. Now the word of the Apostle begins to be accomplished: "God was manifest in the flesh . . . seen of angels." 1 Tim. 3: 16. The angels are deeply interested. In the Old Testament we get the cherubic figures hanging over the ark to express their desire to look into the things of Christ. That is the Old Testament form of the New Testament truth. The moment He is manifested, they begin to take up their attitude. The angels come to watch the path of the Son of man. They are interested, and they have less interest in it than you have.

The next person that is introduced to us is Simeon in the temple. We find him rehearsing his joy, as the angels and Elizabeth and Mary rehearsed theirs. The Holy Ghost gave him warning who the Child was; and at once, without asking leave of any, he took Him in his arms for salvation. Have you ever acted the part of Simeon and taken Christ in your arms for salvation? We are not indebted to Mary, to the Church, or to the brethren. Faith refuses to be debtor to a fellow creature. A brother may help us; a friend may comfort and cheer our spirits; but as to the question of the soul and eternity, we know nothing but Jesus. What a wretched piece of sophistry it is that sets up Mary for our souls! When it comes to a question of salvation, Mary must stand by, and all the saints in the calendar. Then poor Simeon is ready to depart. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." The moment the soul is introduced to the blood, it is made meet for the glory. It is very blessed to grow in knowledge, but the moment that by faith I have stepped into the kingdom of God's dear Son, that moment I am made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Are attainments to be my title? Attainments are very right, but the blood is my title. Would Christian watchfulness allow one carnal thought? No; but still, all that is not my title. The dying thief caught hold of the fountain, and his next step was paradise. So with Simeon salvation in his arms, the crown upon his brow.

Next we come to Anna the widow-hearted Anna. Her widowhood is over, exchanged for nuptial beauty and joy. She talks of Him to all. If we were more familiar with these chapters, it would enable us to live much in heaven. Here "Heaven comes down our souls to greet." Is there cloud, sorrow, defilement there? Look at the angels with joy and shining garments. There is joy and strength in His presence. Under the law, no priest had any more right there in sorrow than in pollution. If heaven is the place of unspotted holiness, it is the place of unchecked joy.

At the close of the chapter, we get a little bit ashamed of Mary. She is the only one that leaves a blot on these chapters. Zacharias did, but it was more than compensated by his returning faith. And this Mary is the one in whom men boast! O the subtlety of Satan! He will place anything between the heart and Christ. Ah, none but Jesus! Commit your souls to none but Christ. Even when a gift exercises itself before me, I am to judge it; but where the committal of your soul is concerned, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace." There is a thing abroad in Christendom that tells me to commit my soul to the Church. Will I? By God's help never. May God acquaint our consciences with Jesus for

sufficiency, and our hearts with Him for satisfaction. Amen.

Luke 3, Luke 4, and Luke 5

We looked at chapters 1 and 2 of this Gospel in our last meditation. Let us now look at chapter 3. There is a great interval between the time of Luke 1 and Luke 2, and that of Luke 3. We get the Lord there in infancy and boyhood. Now He has travelled on to the age of 30 years. I ask, What sense are we to have of the Lord during that period of 18 years? What apprehension of Him is my soul to take? The answer is intimated in the closing verses of chapter 2; and the intimation is full of meaning. He was all that time under the law, growing up as an untainted sheaf, and the only untainted sheaf of human fruit "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." This was the proper fruit of fulfilling the law. By-and-by He provoked much enmity. But suppose I fulfilled the law, and loved my neighbour as myself; should not I grow in favour with all men? So with the Lord. There is nothing more interesting than this, and I invite you to consider it. One act of complacency waited on Him from the manger to the cross perfect complacency in the mind of God. The complacency might change its character, but not its quantity. There was not a single flaw in it from first till last. It is delightful to know that one such person has passed before the mind of God. He was equally perfect growing up in subjection to His parents as when the veil was rent.

Eighteen years have passed, and now we find Him introduced to His present ministry. He has magnified God under the law, and now He comes forth to walk among men as the witness of grace a vessel about to display the grace of God to a ruined world. We must be prepared for tracking His path in its varied glory. Now we see Him as the perfect one under the gospel. He was introduced by John. John preached the baptism of repentance. "Bring forth . . . fruits worthy of repentance." Moses had prescribed a law, and they failed to keep it. John prescribed repentance, and they failed in that too. Then the Lord comes and dispenses grace. Supposing I had offended you, you would be disposed to give me space for repentance. This is just the ministry of John. The way of God is so simple that a wayfaring man will not err as he tracks it. Man broke the law, but before God gave him up, He gave him space to repent. He failed in that, so we see that whether he was tried by law, or by ability to repent, he failed under all. We must each one conclude that this poor self is a ruined thing. I have destroyed myself, but in God is my help.

The Lord comes to John, but He is not kept under John's ministry for a single hour. Ere He left the water, the Holy Ghost descended as a dove, and ordained Him for His ministry. Why was this? For a most simple and beautiful reason. There could be no fruit of repentance demanded from one who had never broken the law. You would not ask a person who had never erred, to repent. He would fulfil all righteousness. This was the divine appointment, and He would pass under it; but He could not stay under it for a moment. The moral beauty of this is perfect. We see the Lord fulfilling all the demands of Moses for thirty years; and though He passes under John's baptism, He does not stay under it for a moment. Now He goes forth to do His own work. Now we see a minister, not coming with demands upon you and me, but bringing something to you and to me. Moses and John came in the way of righteousness. The difference is this: The law exposes yourself in all your failure; the gospel reveals God in the plenitude and riches of His grace, for salvation.

Now we enter Luke 4, and it is beautiful. Now that the Lord has been ordained, what is the first thing He ought to do? What is the first thing any man ought to do before he speaks to another? Speak to himself. Do not speak to another and carry a careless heart yourself. "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" Rom. 2: 21. Now, before the Lord goes to assail Satan, He must withstand

Satan. He lets him see that he has nothing in Him. If I take part in evil, I cannot rebuke it. So now He lets the devil see that there was not one single principle or touch of the power of darkness in Himself. The Holy Ghost leads Him up as the champion of holiness as the champion of light to contend with darkness, and His victory was complete. Satan may come in every form. He tries to get into the Lord what he got into Adam, but he utterly failed here, as he entirely succeeded before. In Genesis 3 you get the defeat of man; here you get the victory of man. Did you ever study with interest the Lord's being tempted? It is our stupidity that does not make every scene, jot and tittle of His journey interesting to us. The Lord lets us know that "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 14: 30.

Now He returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. Under the power of the Spirit, He goes into the synagogue and teaches: and, as He teaches, He opens the book of the prophet Esaias. He does not find it open, but finds the place Himself. I pray you mark that. Why does He turn it over till He comes to Isa. 61. Because chapter 61 is the deep, earnest, precious expression of the ministry He was entering upon the ministry of grace. It was the very language that expressed the infinite varied grace that was about to mark His ministry. Do you believe that you and I are entitled to listen to such a voice? It makes no demands on me, as did Moses and John. I am called to listen to One that is doing everything for me. How do you find secret communion of heart with God? as a judge or as a Saviour? Nature puts you before Him in the character of a judge; the gospel puts you before Him in the character of a Saviour. While you are figuring God to yourself as making demands upon you, you are under law. If you are listening with ravished attention to grace, you are under the gospel. Oh, happy soul that knows what it is to listen to Jesus! It will do more for the purifying of the soul than can Moses and John. "The joy of the LORD is your strength." Neh. 8: 10. If I drink it in, it will make my heart too glad for it to serve my pride and vanity. Then He closed the book as much as to tell them, That is everything. Do I believe, when I have listened, that there is my rest forever? Happy the poor sinner that takes up that attitude that closes his heart where Jesus closed the book. The people marvelled at His gracious words. At the close they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" What principle in human nature dictated that? It was their pride that could not brook the thought that the carpenter's son should be their teacher. They wanted a teacher from the college fresh from the hand of man. The Lord finds out the two currents in their hearts. Supposing a mere sentiment awakens in your mind; is there any moral power in it? There was sentiment here, but pride got the mastery. Nothing will do but faith that principle that lays hold on Jesus. Their fine admiration is gone; they are a defeated people. Their sentiment has been obliged to yield to a stronger current of pride, and they would have cast Him over the brow of the hill. He that trusts his heart is a fool. There is much excitement abroad now, and I welcome it, but I do not trust it. There must be a hold on Christ to secure victory. The lusts of the heart are too powerful to yield to excitement

Then we find Him teaching in the synagogue, and they were amazed at His word; and, at the setting of the sun, He healed all that were sick.

And now I will introduce you to Luke 5, just to show how and where it is that the link is to be formed between Him and you. Admiration, as we have seen, will not form it, nor the healing of the body, of the ten lepers, but one returned to give glory. Nothing but a work in the conscience will do. You must learn your need learn that a poor sinner cannot do without Him. Then the link is formed for eternity. We get this in Peter. How blessed to see this simplicity! The world is full of its wisdom, its religion, and its speculations. The gospel makes short work of it. It lets me know that I need a Saviour, and then shows me that I have a Saviour. If any soul cannot comfortably say, I have Him, I just ask, Do you want Him? If so, you are welcome to Him.

"He stood by the lake of Gennesaret," and He entered into a boat. It was Peter's. Peter was a good-hearted man, and would lend Him a boat. It is simply told. So He taught the people, and when that was done, He said, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Well, said Peter, We will, but we have toiled all night and caught nothing. It was the reply of a good-natured man, willing to lend his boat to a stranger, and do a little thing the stranger asked him. But when Peter saw the multitude of fishes, the Spirit was forming a link that never was to be broken; he cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." What had taught him that? The draught of fishes was the expression, to his conscience, of divine glory. The veil had dropped off from the face of the Nazarene, and the glory of God shone out. Who but God could have commanded the wealth of the lake into Peter's net? So Peter's conscience, coming in contact with the glory, found out that he was a sinner. How do you know you are a sinner? Because if God broke the blue heavens and came down, you could no more stand before Him than did Adam. You would call on the rocks to cover you. There was the happiest intercourse between God and Adam in Genesis 2. In Genesis 3, Adam flies from Him and hides himself behind the trees of the garden. This is just the difference between innocence and sin. Peter says, "Depart from me," and what is the Lord's answer? If you have found out, poor sinner, that you want Me, you shall have Me. Fear not. Has that intercourse ever gone on between you and Christ? Have you found out that you are a poor sinner and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ is your all in all? You may spend your admiration, scholarship, sentiment, on the Book. It will not do. Your conscience must have to do with Him. How simple it is! How worthy of God to be so simple! "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4: 6. He who said, "Let there be light," said also, "Believe and be saved."

We have pursued our meditation down to the middle of Luke 5, and have seen the Lord introduced to His ministry. If we scan with attention the characteristics of His ministry, we shall find out the mind of God. What the Lord was, God is. He tells us Himself, not by the lengthened descriptions of others, but by acting and speaking Himself. Would not we much rather learn Him from His own activities, than let another describe Him to us? We do not spend our time describing ourselves to others; we let our actions speak for us. We ought not to pass such a thought without blessing Him! The Son has come into our midst, not merely personally by incarnation, but He has brought Himself into the history of everyday transactions, and can say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Shall we sit down to mark the characteristics of His ministry with increased desire? It is a highway cast up, to lead us to the bosom of the Father. We discern God Himself in the activities of the Lord's speaking and doing. The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament shows His handiwork; but the firmament has no glory, by reason of that which excels. Does anyone who has seen Him in the face of Jesus need to go up to the heavens to seek Him? Could the heart be satisfied there? If I have discovered the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, His glories in the heavens and in the flowers cannot satisfy me. It is like sending a man back to the alphabet after he has read some of the precious treasures of a language. Christ is your lesson as well as your teacher. I could not do with Him exactly as a teacher only. What would He teach me?

But when He sits before me as a lesson, I have but to read my lesson. We find out in His ministry the moral glory that characterizes Himself, and he that has seen Him has seen the Father.

In the opening of Luke 5 we see the link formed between Christ and Peter. In Luke 4 we saw how admiration failed to form that link. What admiration formed went to pieces under the assault of the pride of life. So also the healing of the body formed no permanent link. Those who were healed could come and go, but the moment conscience forges the link, it is not coming and going, but coming and

staying. Yes, and until this hour it is the same thing. If we are not conscious that there is a link between the conscience and Christ, there is no link that will abide. To be sure, it is right to admire, but if we merely admire, the link may be shattered by the first blow of pride; but if you cry out, I want Thee, and cannot let Thee go, that is Peter's place; and he and Christ were joined for eternity. Nothing can be simpler. I would not have anything but my necessity bind me to Christ, and when that link is formed, it is so blessed that I would not exchange it for anything. Adam outside the garden knew more of God than when inside. It was no condescension for God to make the heavens, but He must have emptied Himself to make a coat for a poor naked sinner.

Genesis 3 might well prepare me for John 13. I am not surprised to see the Lord washing the disciples' feet. God delights in the work of grace. Adam might have walked through the flowers of Eden for eternity, and never have found out God in that character. Do you think he would have exchanged his pardoned for his innocent state? his clothed for his naked state? He had found out God in a richer way than ever he would have done as an untainted man. So in Ephesians 3 we find the angels have to learn through the Church the manifold wisdom of God the tale of divine goodness through pardoned sinners.

Now let us look at some of the characteristics of the Lord's ministry. First we come to the poor leper. What does he say? "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Do you believe in the reality of the varied ministerial glories of Christ? Then delight in it. Is the first thing I have to do to imitate Him? My soul deeply says that the duty that attaches to the first look at Christ, is delight to be "lost in wonder, love, and praise." Then, if such an object pass before me, I say I will appropriate it. I say, That is for me. This is the duty of faith the obedient attitude of faith. When I can trust myself to Him, that is the most blessed obedience I can render.

The leper comes with a half heart "Lord, if Thou wilt." It was a shabby thought. We should be ashamed to come to one another and say, You have a hand if you have a heart. I say it was a shabby thought, but the Lord bore with it. "I will," He says, "be thou clean." Can you trust the heart of Christ? Faith says it can trust the heart of Christ better than any other heart. Here is comfort. I may be very conscious that I have approached Him feebly. Fallen human nature is a legalist an arrant unbeliever. But I am encouraged here to know that though my approach may be feeble, the answer will be blessedly full.

Next we have a poor palsied man, let down through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. How does He treat him? The moment He looked at him He said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." How magnificent! The same condescension that comes down to a weak faith, delights in a bold faith. When Jacob said to the Lord, in Genesis, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me," how did the Lord entertain the thought? Just as He did here. He allowed Himself to be overcome. If He condescends to a feeble faith, He allows Himself to be overcome by a bold faith. When the blind beggar met Him, what happened? His bold faith commanded Christ. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He commanded all His resources. Does not such a picture of Jesus suit you? It is worthy of Him, but it suits you. If you approach Him with a bold, unclouded faith, He will delight in it. Mark now, "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?" He intimates here, that as the poor palsied man got up and glorified God, so you, coming to Him as a sinner, should rise up and go out glorifying God. He who could say, "Rise up and walk," could say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The Lord is His own commentator and He tells you that even though you cannot bring your diseased body to Him to be healed, you can bring your sins. He is the text and the commentator, so that He may give the lesson and then comment upon it, till He lays it down at your own door. The act happened almost 2000 years ago, but by the comment of the Lord, I have the pardon of my sins laid down at my own

door today.

We are still pursuing the discovery of Christ, and at verse 27 Levi is called. The Lord simply said, "Follow Me," but Matthew felt His power. He brought in the hidden operative power of the Holy Ghost. How was Lydia's heart opened? Who saw the operation? "The wind bloweth where it listeth." The Lord was opening the heart while Paul was addressing the ear. So here, the Lord was addressing Levi while the Spirit of the Lord was opening his heart. Suppose you are happy in Christ; will you attribute it to nature? No; learn in simplicity to trace it to Christ. What virtue was there in the words, "Follow Me"? None; and yet in spite of himself, he rose up and followed Jesus. It was the wind blowing where it listed. What carried Zaccheus through the crowd and up into the tree? It was the drawings of the Father in the hidden energy of the Holy Ghost that threw the bands and cords round him to draw him to Jesus. What mighty power was detaching Levi from everything he had in the world? It was the voice of the Lord that breaks the cedars. Do you know such a moment? We should never have been at the feet of Jesus if the Lord had not drawn us. Levi rose at His bidding. And he made Him a feast and, with blessed beautiful intelligence, what company is it he brings? The very company that the Lord came to seek and to save. This was power clothing itself in light strength accompanied by intelligence. The moment he is in company with the Lord, he knows the atmosphere he is in. What spreads a feast for Christ? knowledge of Himself. That is what spread the feast here.

The poor prodigal spread a feast for Him, and the Lord found delight at the table. He quickly transfigures Himself from the guest into the host, as He did at another time, with the disciples going to Emmaus. He makes Levi's feast His own He answers the Pharisees, Do not complain; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. I came, I spread the feast, not Levi. Levi had spread the feast, but he spread it in deep-hearted sympathy with the mind of His Master. Have you ever in your house a table of which the Lord could say that He spread it, and not you? that He could appropriate it? How blessed to get into such personal intimacy with Him! Oh, let the Pharisees to this day break their heads over this! What villainous Pharisaism lurks about you and me! What should we do if Christ had not come to spread a table for poor sinners? Joy in Christ is what you and I want. If we had more of that, we should have more victory over the world.

The Lord then puts an interesting figure before their thoughts. It is the bustle of the bride-chamber we are in now. We are on the way to the marriage. It is a happy bustle the foreshadowings of a blissful day. Is your spirit breathing that atmosphere? Do you know the activities that suit the children of the bride-chamber? Oh, if I knew the atmosphere that suits the place preparing for the joys of Christ, the old wine would have little power over me!

Luke 6 and Luke 7

We are meditating on this Gospel with the purpose of discovering the ministerial glories of Christ. Every jot and tittle ought to have an interest with us, because if we discover the ministry of Christ, we discover Himself. It is the complexion of all that He was. It is not so with us. We are all more or less deceitful in our ways.

Then we travel from that up to God Himself. Man by wisdom knows Him not, but in the face of Jesus Christ we do know Him; and the more we discover the lineaments of His face, the more we know of the Father. We should acquaint ourselves with Him as reflected in the ways of Jesus. We can track our way back to His presence only through Jesus. His precious death is my title to put my foot on the road, and all that He is and was is my light on the road.

"The second sabbath after the first," is generally supposed to be some one sabbath between the Passover and Pentecost. On this occasion, as they were passing through the cornfields, His disciples plucked the ears of corn. The Pharisees objected, and this brings out a beautiful commentary on the temple (Luke 6: 3, 4). What was the Lord doing after creation? Resting. And has He not had creation rest disturbed? To be sure He has, as John 5: 17 declares distinctly, when the Pharisees complain of His breaking the sabbath. The moment His rest was disturbed, He became a workman afresh, and prepared a coat for Adam. When sin turned Him out of creation rest, He entered upon the work of redemption. In the opening of Genesis, He comes forth as the Creator, and on the seventh day He rests. Man intrudes and disturbs His rest; and the Creator sets to work again. He is not overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good. He sets to work for the very creature that had disturbed His rest. He quickens one poor sinner after another, till we shall see the sabbath of redemption the rest which is called glory. Creation rest depended on the fidelity of Adam; it was lost. Redemption rests on the blood of Christ, and can never be lost. If their ox or their ass fell into a pit, they would trespass on the sabbath. So God trespasses on it. The rest of the Redeemer was intruded on the rest of the Creator. We are debtors to Him for our eternity. He quotes Hosea (Matt. 12: 7), "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." He is not looking for you to bring something to Him, but He brings something to you. If only we were happy in Him, we would work much better for Him. It is joy in Christ that gives victory over the world. Why are we all in subjection to the world? Just because we have not found in Christ all the joy we ought to find. If I rightly use the grace of God, it will purify me. As Titus says, "The grace of God... hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" God links my redemption with my purification.

Next we get the choosing of the twelve. In Matthew we have only the choosing of the twelve; here the seventy are also chosen, because the Lord shows Himself in a larger character. There He is rather as the Son of David; here He is the Son of man. Therefore the seventy are sent out, to show how illimitable is the grace of God that surveyed the whole family of man. Salvation is to all the world. The twelve were confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Contrast that with Paul's wide-spread ministry in The Acts; and "that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." The Apostle of the Gentiles was standing as the representative of the present ministry of God. That ministry stretches to the ends of the earth.

After the choosing of the twelve, He came down into the plain; and great multitudes came to Him, and He healed all their diseases. He was a divine visitor to this world a heavenly stranger among men a divine visitor to men. He had not where to lay His head while He was visiting their necessities with all the resources of God. This is the ideal of a saint of God to be independent of all that the world can give, while, with open heart and lavish hand, bestowing upon it all the benefits and blessings of God. If he is a mere heavenly stranger, he may be an ascetic, if a visitor only to the world, he may get involved in its corruptions.

In this chapter there is an epitomized presentation of the sermon on the mount. It begins with the poor, the hungry, the mourner, and tells them that they are "blessed." Now, would that have been the voice of God when He had accomplished His creation? In Genesis 2 He put Adam among the fruits and Bowers of Eden an obedient creation. Enjoyment was the duty then, but patience now. God has not put me here to enjoy myself, as He did Adam. Sin has cast out the Lord of glory, the Prince of life, and my proper place is patience. It is not, blessed are they that walk amidst the fruit and Bowers, but, blessed are they that suffer, they that mourn, they that are persecuted. We have seen the Lord in infancy and then as a healer. Now we have Him as a teacher, and the burden of His teaching is, I call you not to enjoyment, but to patience. Was Adam in the garden to be poor? There was no end of his wealth. But

there is a new kind of blessedness now, because He who became poor has been in the world. God is a stranger now in a defiled world, and are you and I to settle down in a world where Christ has been crucified? We will not go through these verses, but that is the burden of them. In patience possess your souls; do not count upon enjoyment.

In Luke 7 we find the Lord in company with the centurion. Two needy ones crossed the path of our Lord here the widow of Nain and the centurion. The centurion took his place at once, and he pleads through the Jews. This is a beautiful instance of the intelligence of faith. He took his place as a Gentile, having no right to approach immediately to the Lord, but comes through His own nation. There is great beauty in the intelligence of an understanding illuminated by the mind of Christ. He approached by the right door got at the Lord by the elders of the Jews. And the Lord says, I will go. Then, at the due time, he began to be busy when Jesus was on the road. He did not begin by going to Him, but the moment He was on the way to the house, it was time for the centurion to begin to stir himself. We want these fine touches of the mind of Christ, for we are not only cold and narrow, but awkward and clumsy. By a Spirit-led soul we get all this beauty. Now, he says, Lord, I am not worthy, but speak the word only, and it is enough. Servants are at my bidding, he says, but diseases are at Yours now.

I pity the soul that cannot enjoy such a specimen of the workmanship of the Spirit. That is communion, when we can sit together and enjoy one another as the workmanship of the Spirit. The Lord marvelled. It was the marvel of deep and rich enjoyment. Nothing in this world refreshed Christ but the traces of His own hand. The joy of the woman at the well of Sychar did not come up to her Saviour's joy. So here, He was overwhelmed for the moment. To speak after the manner of men, He did not know what to do with it. Christ found no water in this world, but when the Holy Ghost knocked a poor rocky heart to pieces, then there was water for Jesus.

Now we have the widow of Nain. The Spirit presents, in a few words, the deep loneliness of her condition. The dead man was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The heart of Jesus was arrested, and then He arrested the bier of the dead young man. His compassions always went before His mercies. It is commonly said that the heart moves the hand. Do you not prize a blessing that comes to you in that way? Salvation came gushing forth from the heart of Christ. To say that the cross of Christ is the source of our blessedness, would be slandering the heart of God. God loved the world, and sent His Son; Christ's heart went before His hand. A blessing from Christ is given, as Jeremiah says, with His whole heart and His whole soul. "He came and touched the bier." He was undefilable, or He must have gone to the priest to cleanse Himself after touching it. Did Christ ever need the washings of the sanctuary? He might have restored the young man without touching him, but He has God's relationship to iniquity. He not only stood apart from the actuality of sin, but from the possibility of it. "And He delivered him to his mother." Let me be bold and say, The Lord does not save you that you may serve Him. To suggest the thought would be to qualify the beauty of grace. He did not say, I give you life that you may spend it for Me. Let His love constrain you to spend and be spent for Him, but He never stands before your heart and says, Now I will forgive you if you will serve Me. Surely, He had purchased him; yet He gave him back to his mother. Yet you and I go back to the world, and seek to make ourselves happy and important in it. Ah, throw the cords of love around your heart, and keep it fast by Jesus! Amen.

We have now reached the well-known mission of John the Baptist to the Lord. We were observing that the Lord's ministry is the discovery of Himself, because everything about Him was infinitely truthful. So also it is a highway cast up before us by which to reach the blessed God. If man seeks by wisdom to reach Him, His answer is, I dwell in this darkness; but when we follow Him through Jesus, we get Him in His full glory

Now John sends his messengers to inquire, "Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another?" There is such a thing as faith, and the patience of faith. Abraham illustrated both of these. He was called out to listen to the promise in the starlit night, and he believed God; that was simple faith. Afterward, he was called to give up all he hoped in; that was the patience of faith. That is where John failed. He believed, and pointed out the Lamb of God, but the prison was too much for him. He was a choice servant, but he failed in this, and did not like being passed by when others were being attended to. He was offended. Therefore he sends this unbelieving and rather a little insulting message. It was very faulty, but the Lord bore with it. He stood as the champion of God's rights in the world, but He passed by every insult to Himself. This was part of His moral perfection. He does not resent John's insulting style, but sends a word home to him that none but he could understand. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." He couched His rebuke in such terms that none could decipher it but the conscience of John. If I find a fault in anyone, nature disposes me to go and whisper it in the ear of a neighbour. The blessed Lord did exactly the contrary. He saw that John was not quite prepared for what the service of Christ brought upon him. If another trespasses against you, you ought to rebuke him, but take care to tell him his fault between him and you alone. It is as if the Lord had written an admonishing letter in a language that none but John could understand.

It is equally beautiful when He turns to the multitude. He paints two or three dark grounds to set off John to them. The first is a reed, and by that He shews out John; then, king's courts; then all that are born of women. He is presenting these things that John might shine out in relief. How perfect the Lord's path is! He sends a message of rebuke to John's conscience, and then turns round and sets him out in every way He can. Now what is meant by, "He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he"? Did you ever look upon John as greater than Moses or David? No. It is not the person the Lord speaks of here, but this secret that God's ways are always advancing, as from the prophetic to the evangelic. In this way John was greater than all that were born of women. He was not personally above Moses, but he stood in an advanced stage of God's dispensational purposes. So now, every saint, however feeble or strong, is in a higher dispensational condition than John, Moses, or David. The light of His unfolding purposes shines brighter and brighter. You stand in the resurrection and in the risen glories of Christ; and will anyone tell me that it is not a higher place than Moses had?

In verse 31 He looks at the generation and says, Now what are you like? How He delights to hang over His servant John! He has got John before Him here, and He puts him in company with Himself. In substance He says, "We have come to you, children of the market-place, both piping and lamenting, and you have neither danced nor wept." The hand of God is very skilful in touching the instrument, but He can get, no, not one note of music in return. That is you and me, beloved; for the Lord is delineating our common nature, and He says God's finger has touched the instrument in every possible way, and He can get no answer. "In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

Let us pause for a little at verse 36. Did you ever consult the occasions on which the Lord is seen at different tables? We see Him at the Pharisee's, at Levi's, at Zaccheus's, with the two disciples going to Emmaus, and at the table at Bethany. What an interesting theme for meditation, to see the Lord sitting and forming one of a family scene in this social world of ours! He occupies each table in a different manner. In Luke 7 and Luke 14, He sits at the tables of two Pharisees in the character He had earned outside. He goes there, not to sanction the scene, but because He is invited. One Pharisee may have a better apprehension of Him than the other, but He goes in on the credit of the man He was when outside. He continues to be the teacher in the chapter before us. He has a right to be a teacher or a rebuker, because it was in that character He was invited when outside. Then we see Him at the house of Levi. Levi had been called, and left all and followed Him, and was so impregnated with the mind of the

One he had invited, that he puts publicans and sinners at the table with Him. The Lord sits there, not as a teacher, but as a Saviour. How beautifully He can thus morally transfigure Himself! Then, when the Pharisees complain, He pleads for Levi and the poor publicans with him: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Zaccheus had just been moved by a desire to see Him, and He calls him by his name, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down." He went in as one that had been desired, and would gratify that desire. He said, as it were, You have looked for a passing sight at Me, and I will abide all day with you. Do you look around in the gospel for these glittering rays of His moral glory? He does not violate His character in any of these. He goes to Zaccheus as one who would cherish and nourish an infant's desire.

Now we come to look at the disciples journeying to Emmaus. Here we get two, I will not call them backsliders, but two who had got under the power of unbelief. "O fools, and slow of heart," He calls them, but He does not leave them till He leaves them with kindled hearts. It was a kindled heart that said, "Abide with us," and He stays till He could have them, in spite of the nightfall, go back to Jerusalem and tell that they had seen the Lord.

Last, we see Him at Bethany, not here as a teacher or a Saviour, but as a familiar friend, one who adopts completely the sweet and gracious truth of the Christian homestead; and He would have left the family scene as He found it, if Martha had not stepped out of her place. She might have been a housekeeper still, but the moment she leaves her place and becomes a teacher, He will rebuke her.

In the case before us, in the Pharisee's house, we have two persons. This is the most complete expression we get in the gospels of a consciously accepted sinner. She came, knowing that her sins were forgiven, and bringing everything she had with her, her heart, her person, and her wealth. This is a beautiful witness of what we would be if the sense of salvation were simple with us. The Lord entered into Simon's reasonings, but they were lost on the woman. One loves the soul that is resting peacefully in the conclusion, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." If the reasonings of a doubtful mind are lost on you, happy are you! So happily have thousands reached this conclusion, that they cannot understand the reasonings of others. She is occupied with her joy.

Another thing: When the Lord speaks to Simon about her, it is of what she has done; when He speaks to her ear, it is, "Thy faith hath saved thee." It was not her love, but her faith that saved her. Was that a cold word? Do you ever suspect the Lord of treating you coldly? She might have thought it a cold word, but go behind her back and hear His words: Simon, do you see her? Was that a cold heart? So if in His direct immediate providence He seems to deal coldly with you, just go behind what is behind your own back, so to speak. Do not judge Him by His providence to your face, but by the love that never, no, never forsakes you, but has recorded in His book every cup of cold water given in His name. Let us pray that He will keep us near Him. We want, inside, to be as near to Christ as ever we can get, and outside, to go on from victory to victory in His name.

Luke 8

This chapter is the beginning of a series Luke 8, Luke 9, and Luke 10. Chapter 8 is the Lord's own ministry, chapter 9 is the ministry of the twelve, and chapter 10 is the ministry of the seventy. The very fact that we have the ministry of the seventy is symptomatic of Luke's Gospel. Very properly, we do not get it in Matthew. The Lord is there in contact with the Jew, and the ministry sent forth is accommodated to the Jew. Here He was more on moral ground, and human ground, and therefore He sends forth a ministry characterizing the gospel sent forth largely to the whole human family. Did you ever think it a strange thing that the kingdom of God had to be preached in this world? It is a witness

against the world that God has to publish His claims in it. The Lord has not only to announce that which meets the necessity of sinners, but God's rights in the world. We find that God lays His claim to me, as well as makes provision for me. I cannot accept salvation without bowing to His claims. The Creator has to publish His rights in His own creation. What a thought! Earth in mad rebellion against its Creator! We get both these thoughts in what is called preaching the gospel, and preaching the kingdom of God. God is proposing His rights to man, as well as revealing His provision for man.

When the Lord went forth, how was He attended? By the twelve by men that had been attracted to Him, and women out of whom He had cast devils. That is His suited train quite a different train from that of Him who comes upon the white horse in judgment. That is a suited train too. "The armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses"; but this is a degraded company, and the more largely you sum up the account of their degradation, the more you magnify the grace of Him who led them on. It will not be so when He comes in judgment.

The chapter begins with the parable of the sower. Do you think you have found the secret of that parable? It is to expose man. The seed was one and the same, but the dropping of the seed here and there was to expose the character of the soil. The seed makes manifest the soil. There is not a heart that is not seen in one or the other of these soils. The first character is the highway; that is where the devil prevails. The second is the rock; that is where nature prevails. The third is the thorny ground; that is where the world prevails. The fourth is the good ground; that is where the Holy Ghost prevails. If you examine your heart, day by day, you will find that one of these has its pleasure with you. The business of the parable is to expose you to yourself, and to make manifest the four secret influences under the power of which we are all morally moving every hour. Take the joy of the stony ground hearer. It is well to rejoice, but, if when I listen to the claims of God my conscience is not reached, that is a bad symptom. It is the levity and sensibility of nature. How wretchedly we are treating God if we do not deal with Him in conscience! If I have revolted from such a one, am I to return to Him without conviction of conscience? It would be an insult to Him. Supposing I had insulted you, would it be well for me to come and talk to you about some light matter? We have all insulted God, and are we to come to Him with a little animal-like joy?

The thorny ground hearers are a grave-hearted people that weigh everything in anxious balances. They carry the balances in their pocket, and try the importance of everything; but the mischief is that, as they weigh, they make the world as heavy as Christ. Are we not often conscious of that calculating spirit prevailing? In contrast with the others, we get the good ground. We are not told what has made it good, but suppose we have the devil, nature, and the world (in the first three parables), what is the only remaining influence? There is nothing but the Holy Ghost. It is very needful nowadays to testify that the plow must come before the seed basket. What makes the heart good? He that has gone forth to plow the fallow ground and sow the seed.

God could never get a blade of grass from our hearts if He did not work Himself. The heart can never have anything for God that has not gone through the process of the plow. Be it with the light measure of the eunuch, or the deeper strength of the jailer, the plow must go through the fallow ground. Those of the thorny ground talk of their farm, their business, their merchandise. Those by the highway say, Oh, let us think of it tomorrow. Then too, there is a sensibility that can rejoice under a sermon. It is happy for me that my conscience has to do with God, for when my conscience has to do with Him, then everything has to do with Him. We should try to get our hearts into the ministerial glories of Christ. Then we have Himself, because everything that passed from Him had the mark of deep truthfulness. Then, if we reach Himself, we reach God. It is the way we are introduced to God in this world. The world is full of its speculations about God, and the issue of them all is thick darkness which the wisdom

of man finds impenetrable; but in Christ we find nothing less than the full glory of God. Let me take the happy path of studying Jesus. By that blessed happy path I can study the Father.

Now we come to a little passage in His life. "On a certain day... He went into a ship," and He fell asleep. "So He giveth His beloved sleep." Now if the disciples had been wise, what would they have done? With what intent and worshipping gaze would they have looked at their sleeping Master! The musing of their hearts would have been, Let winds and waves arise; He has said, Let us go to the other side, and that is the pledge of safety. They might have gone to sleep with their Master but, instead, they look at the rising waves, and cry, "Master, we perish."

Are you often, in providence, called into company with a sleeping Jesus? He does not always manifest Himself at your side; nevertheless, He has said, "Let us go over unto the other side." His thought is on the end of the journey yours and mine on the path. He never would have slept if He had not pledged them the end of the journey. Then, when the Lord makes good all that He had promised, they reap astonishment where they should have reaped worshipping admiration. Have you not often found it so? How often He comes down to your level when you cannot reach His elevation! The result is a poor experience instead of a bright and sunny experience. If He cannot take you up on the wings of faith to His elevation, He will come down and save you to the end, though He will show you what you have lost.

Now we get three cases together: Jesus in Gadara, in the crowd, and at the bedside. It is a series of victories. First we see Him in Gadara. Here is the strength of Satan displayed. He did not wait on faith here. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and would destroy them. In the case of the poor woman in the crowd, He waits for and upon faith. We have often marked the traces of His grace and the pathway of His glory. Nothing could meet this poor captive of Satan. Human power left him as it found him. The Lord delivers him, and deliverance in His hand is as perfect as captivity in Satan's. Yes, and something more. His restoration is more than mere restoration. Restoration would never describe the ways of God. With Him it is a bringing forth of fresh glories from ruins. Not only was Legion cast out, but the man was impregnated with this principle, that he would be with Jesus for eternity; yet, at His bidding, would go to the ends of the earth. Is that merely restoration? What would not one give for such a mind as that! To have found a home in His presence; yet, if it be His blessed will, to go to the ends of the earth in drudging service!

Now, as He passed on, a poor woman touched Him in the crowd. He was touched by thousands, but the virtue that was in Him waited on faith. The moment faith commanded, virtue went forth. Now, have you more in Christ than a healer? This poor woman had. She did not know when she came up that she had a title to Himself. So she modestly retreated as a debtor. Very right that a debtor should carry herself with humility; but oh, Christ is more to you and me than that. The healer puts Himself into relationship. When He inquired after her she began to tremble. Her faith had measured her title to touch Him, but she was not prepared when He called her face to face to look at Him, till He said, "Daughter, be of good comfort." There is no spirit of liberty in our souls if we do not know relationship. Nature cannot trust God, but the blessed way of God is to show me that I have an interest in Himself, as well as in the saving virtue that is in Him. We have relationship now it does not wait for glory. In spirit I walk in the family mansion now, as soon I shall personally in the glory. The woman left Him, not only with a healed body, but with a calm and satisfied spirit. Is any book so worthy of reading as the book that we call Jesus?

Now we get to the house of Jairus, and the Lord meets the power of death in its fresh victory. The poor damsel is delivered from the bands of death, as the man was delivered from the bands of Satan,

and the poor woman from the bands of corruption. Oh, let us acquaint ourselves with Him, and say, "Christ for me, Christ for me!"

Luke 9

A very important thing is suggested at the opening of this chapter. We were observing the three distinct ministries of chapters 8, 9, and 10, and that the largeness of the ministry set forth bespeaks the character of this Gospel. The Lord did not, it is true, step over Jewish limits, but He is looking at man in the Jew, and not, as in Matthew, at the Jew in the Jew. Now observe, in sending out the twelve, He told them to heal the sick and to preach the kingdom of God. They were to cure diseases and to challenge the claims of God in the face of the world. Do you think that God has come into the world, bringing salvation, to surrender His own rights to your necessities? He could not do it; and you, if in a right mind, could not wish it. The glory of the gospel is, that He is glorified while you are saved. Could you enjoy a robbery? It would be a robbery if you could get a blessing which took glory from God. You get this in the cross if you read it aright. It is the glory of the gospel that God could be just and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. We get a sample of that here. He tells them, then, to take with them neither scrip, nor money, nor bread. He says, as it were, You are going forth-with My message; lean on Me. No man goeth a warfare at his own charges. I will take care of your necessities, and do you let your moderation be known unto all. He says, "Whosoever will not receive you,... shake off the very dust from your feet." While there is a graciousness attaching to such ministry, there is a solemnity too.

Now let us look at Herod for a moment. Tell me, do you think you have done with sin, when you have committed it? One thing is certain: It has not done with you. The charm of sin is gone the moment it is perpetrated. That is your way of disposing of sin, but conscience which makes cowards of us all, lets you know that it has not done with you. Herod had beheaded John long before, but now it was said of some that John was risen from the dead, and he is perplexed. Here the worm that never dies was doing its business. I am not of course determining its eternity, but the Lord in such cases lifts the veil from hell and shows us the worm at its work. Herod could not rest. How could he? the murderer of the greatest witness of God in the world at that moment!

Now the apostles return and tell what they have done, and we have the scene of feeding the multitude. Here we get the largeness of the heart of Christ, in contrast with every human heart. Could you get a sample of the human heart more easy to love than Peter's? He was an open-hearted, good-natured man that you could easily have loved; but look at it in contrast with the heart of Christ! They said, "Send the multitude away." No, said He, Give ye them to eat. And they said, What! are we to go and buy. It was said in a sulky mood of mind, but the Lord did not refuse to go on with His sulky disciples. He met with vanity, ignorance, heartlessness, bad temper. It is a very interesting study to see how He always overcame evil with good. If my bad temper puts you into a bad temper, you have been overcome of evil. God never gives place to evil. This is a beautiful instance of it. The disciples said, Send them away. "Make them sit down," said Jesus; then, being the master of the feast, He must supply the guests.

Now, mark something of the moral beauty of Jesus' feast. He sits at the head of the table in the glory of God, and as the perfect Man. As God He puts forth creative powers, and was acting without robbery. He not only was God, but there was no form of divine glory that He would not assume no act of divine power that He would not put forth. But He took His place also as the perfect Man. He was an entire contradiction to Adam. What was Adam's offence? He did not give thanks, but assumed to be master of all. It was a man refusing to be thankful. The Lord gives thanks. I see Him taking His place at

the head of the table in the wilderness, as perfect God and perfect Man. The worship that God got in the Person of Jesus was richer incense to Him than if Adam had lived forever as a thankful man. He came to erect out of the ruins a temple for the glory of God that the creation in integrity would never have yielded.

Now the blessed God would have us know that at His table there is always more than enough. We know what it is to sit comfortably at a plentiful board. When I see very God making the feast, and very Man giving thanks, then leaving cart-loads, so to speak, of fragments, what can I do but be thankful! We may, each one and all, be full and go away thankful that there is plenty for others.

Now we get a very important part in the gospel story. The Lord was in prayer, and when He arose, He asked His disciples, "Whom say the people that I am?" Let me say, there is a great deal to be found out in the style of the moment in Scripture. The very style in which an event comes out, gives it a character. That question draws out the proof that the world was rejecting Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." You are now in the vestibule of the mountain of transfiguration. He has ascended into heaven as the earth-rejected Son of man. If you ask, Were not all things known to God from the creation of the world? surely they were; but these things came out in great moral glory. Man would not give Him place here, so God took Him up to heaven. "Whom say the people that I am?" And they answered, "Some say, . . . Elias; and others, . . . one of the old prophets." What! is that the best thought that Israel has of Me? "But whom say ye that I am?" "The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." Let us search out the undercurrent of the spirit of Scripture, not merely track the words. Now the Lord says to the disciples, Do not you be loving your life. Come away up to the hill with Me, and there I will show the glory. And now I will ask you, What suits the man on his way to heavenly glory? Is it money and power, and such like, he should be seeking? Judge in yourselves, Is it consistent in a man to load himself with clay on his way to a place where there is to be no clay? The Lord shows you the path, and shows you the end of the path. It is only our love of present things that makes such a lesson difficult. My whole soul seals it; would that my whole heart adopted it.

After this the Lord comes down and meets His disciples in their inability to cast out a demon. Now, on no occasion does the Lord express disappointment of heart more vividly than here. "O faithless and perverse generation." All human development in Christ was perfectly natural. I ask you, When you have been particularly happy on the mount with Christ, would not the pollutions of the earth, and the poverty and degradation of the Church, pain your spirit more, in contrast with the joy and liberty you have been tasting? The Lord had been tasting the joys of His own land, and He comes down to find faithlessness and defilement. He does not look for glory here, but He does look for the labouring and energy of faith; and when He finds Himself unhelped by the disciples, He says, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?"

Now when they came down they were amazed at His glory, and while they wondered, He said, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears." In verse 51, He had sent His disciples to prepare His way, and the villagers would not receive Him. The disciples would have commanded fire to come down and consume them, but He rebuked them. Now, why do I put these two things together? I see, in the developments and expression of the Lord's human beauty, a man who knew both how to be abased and how to abound. It is a beautiful virtue in human nature. Paul may have learned it by severe moral culture, but Jesus learned it by the perfection of His own human nature. How willing and ready our wretched and corrupt nature is to take advantage of a flattering moment! Jesus had not become an object of wonder and amazement, and at once He hides Himself behind a veil of deep degradation. While the rays of glory were shining still about His countenance, He says, Let this be your understanding of Me. And afterward, when they would have brought down fire upon the Samaritan

villagers, He said, No. He knew how to be abased. In these ways His moral beauties shine out.

At the close, one comes and says, "I will follow Thee"; and He says, Do not you see how the villagers have treated Me? If you will follow Me, you must take part with One who has not where to lay His head. Now, mark another thing. Another comes and says, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." The sense of the dignity of His ministry was with Him wonderfully. He answers, One fellow creature may do the office of the dying to the dying, but go you and do the office of a living Saviour in the world. He carried with Him a sense of His ministerial glory. Paul had it in the vessel going to Rome, and before Agrippa. There he was, a prisoner in chains and degradation, and he stands and says, I would you were like me. What consciousness of secret dignity in the midst of public degradation! "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" go and do My business, the business of life, and not of death, in a sin-stricken world. Now tell me, whom do you admire in this world? Do you speak well of those who do well to themselves? Do you hate the practice that speaks of men according to their standing in society? Accustom your selves to see true glory. It shone in the carpenter's Son, in the captive at Rome, and it shines in the poor in this world, rich in faith. May the Lord open our eyes to see God's objects in God's light! Amen.

Luke 10

We have reached chapter 10 in our meditations on this Gospel. "The entrance of Thy words giveth light."

We were observing in the progress of this ministry that we get in chapter 8 the Lord's own ministry; in chapter 9, the ministry of the twelve; and now here in chapter 10, we have the ministry of the seventy. Observe, here it is added, "Whither He Himself would come." The thing that principally strikes us in this is, that the Lord was giving emphasis and every advantage and opportunity to this His closing ministry. He would send forth precursors and follow in their track, that the cities and villages might be without excuse. He was both the Labourer in the field, and the Lord of the harvest. He may have intimated that here, in sending precursors, as great men are wont to do. He carried the sense of the dignity of the Lord of the harvest, as well as of being an earnest-hearted labourer.

Now look for a little at the commission of the seventy. He gave them full notice of what they were to expect. Nothing provokes the world like testimony. Goodness will not suffer here. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" But if you stand in the way of righteousness against the tide of moral evil and, still more, if you testify for Christ, you may count upon martyrdom. The reason we suffer so little is that we stand so little in testimony. They were not merely to witness of courteous civility between man and man, but of the serious things existing between God and sinners. Then, though they are in the midst of wolves, let their business be that of peacemakers. In verse 7, "In the same house remain." We had this in the mission of the twelve Do not be looking out for better fare. What a defiling thing, to see the followers of Christ seeking to make themselves comfortable here! Let the restraining, yielding principle mark your ways. Verse 9 presents again that combination which we were looking at some time ago. Christ stands out severely for the rights of God, and He does graciously for the necessities of sinners.

They were to say, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," as well as to heal the sick. What a terrible verdict against this world, that God has to publish His kingdom in it! A well-regulated family would be insulted if you told the children to be in subjection to their parents, but that the world has to be told to be in subjection to God, only shows its true condition. "Go your ways" here is something more than courtesy. "Shake off the dust of your feet" an insulting kind of thing to do. Ah, this is the

seriousness of the message. Let them learn, if they receive it not, in the most awful terms you can convey, how they have jeopardized themselves. In verse 17, they return and tell Him that the devils are subject to them. The moment they say this, He gets into the book of Revelation, where not only is there power to cast out devils from this body and that, but He penetrates to where, in the majesty of His authority, Satan shall be cast down. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning." In this the Lord shows Himself to be God.

Let us step aside for a moment, and ask, Have you been accustomed to think of Satan as being in heaven? We find him there in Job, in Kings, here, and in Ephesians; and in the Revelation we see him cast down from heaven. He has possession of the earth, and he is seeking to get possession of that which rules the earth. Now, the disciples come with a sample of power which is to be fully illustrated in Revelation.

Which is dearer to your hearts this moment your relationships or your circumstances? The Lord puts these balances into the hands of the disciples: You may have power on earth, but it ought not to be so dear to you as your family place in heaven. Did it open Adam's mouth when he was made lord of all around him? No. It was not opened by a sense of property or power; it was opened when he got relationship when he got Eve. Property ought to be nothing compared with affection.

How beautifully the Lord delineates what the heart ought to be! In the day of his coronation, Adam might have rejoiced, but in the day of his espousals, his mouth was opened; his heart had its property, and he was satisfied. "Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." See how the Lord falls into the current of their joy for a moment. We ought to drop into the current of one another's joy. Then the Lord looks up to heaven and rejoices there. If you look at this utterance, and the same in Matthew 17, you will find a beautiful contrast. There it is the utterance of a heart relieved of its burden here, the utterance of a heart joyful with what had spread before it. Then He goes on with the joy as He turns to His disciples and says, in substance, Happy are ye (vv. 23, 24). I do not know that the Lord was ever happier than here, save yes, let us tell it for our comfort save when a poor, believing heart gave Him meat to eat that others knew not of. Angels may have joy over the repentant sinner, but they do not originate it; it is in their presence. It is beautiful to see God leading the joy of His creation. God leads the joy; the angels only echo it.

The Lord here gave Himself to the disciples. They returned with joy, and He entered into their joy and swelled it out. This is intruded upon in verse 25, and we see that, while the Lord can drop down to a gracious current, He knows how to meet a contrary current. You do not like to have your currents forced from their course, but the Lord puts up with it. The lawyer's intrusion is the worse for what it spoils. The Lord was rejoicing in grace, and the lawyer comes to trespass on every bit of it. The Lord turns to the intrusion at once. Now let me draw a contrast. The disciples, in John 4, beautifully took knowledge of His spirit, and stood back, holding themselves in silence. That is communion. The deepest and richest communion is often in silence. No one said, Why talkest Thou with her? Now this rude scribe knew nothing of the Master's spirit. A blessed thing to be disciples of the spirit of Christ to know something of His mind! This man comes, and the Lord turns in divine meekness and answers at once, "This do, and thou shalt live." If the law be consulted on a question of acquiring life, the Lord shows what it will say. But the lawyer was willing to justify himself, because, the moment we are put in a legal atmosphere, an effort must be made to reduce the demands of the law. We know little of the mind of God even in legislation, so we do all we can to reduce the law to our own capacity. So the lawyer put another question, little thinking the answer he would get. The Lord indites a parable, and He sketches, what? What was He forced to sketch? He was forced to sketch His own life and death, because His own life and death was the only illustration of neighbourly love which He could get. He

could not escape an illustration that exhibited Himself; I speak it to His praise. We never touch the borders of neighbourly love but in the perfect life of Jesus.

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead." Leaving him half dead there was our condition. He was ruined, but still his life was in him well for us our life was in us when we met Jesus. And by chance there passed by that way a priest and a Levite. We may take this up in two aspects. It is a striking characteristic of the impotency of the law to take up our condition; but the Lord shows too, here, that the representatives of the law did not keep what they taught. I learn here, to the eternal confusion of all lawyers, priests, and Levites, that they have never kept what they set forth. Were they authorized to pass by on the other side? The law will never do for me a sinner, or make its abettors and assertors the thing it would have them to be.

Why is the blessed Lord of glory called a Samaritan? Because He was a stranger. A stranger from heaven has come down to show neighbourly love on earth. He has come to exhibit to earth, what earth never could exhibit to itself. How did He do it? First, "He . . . came where he was." Who could unfold that duly! Did not the Lord do so with you? "And when he saw him, he had compassion." What is the source of all the salvation found in Him? Was there anything in you to draw it out or provoke it? No. Something in Him suggested it. The poor waylaid man was silent from first to last. Was not the poor prodigal silent when that clothed him with the best robe, and Joshua, while they "clothed him with garments," in Zechariah? There is no more blessed answer to the grace of God than the stillness of faith. Joshua, be silent while they clothe you from head to foot, and set a fair mitre on your head; poor waylaid man, let Him do to you as He will. The Lord acts from Himself at the suggestion of His own compassion. And he poured in oil and wine. He happened to have with him the very wealth that was suited to the man that lay in the road. The Lord Jesus came freighted with the very fullness that was fitted to your condition. "And set him on his own beast." He exchanged places with us. He was rich, and we were poor. He became poor that we might be rich.

Next, he had charged himself with the man, and he would look after him. That is the gospel, and that is neighbourly love. Again, I say, the blessed Lord was forced on a picture of Himself when He was asked, "Who is my neighbour?" And now, how are we to act the part of the Samaritan? We must begin by being debtors to Jesus, before we can follow Him in the neighbourly love be the waylaid man before we can be the Samaritan. How simply He unfolds the story of our necessity and His fullness.

Now we pass on to the house of Martha and Mary. We see the Lord in a social scene and, as we were observing before, this is the richest table at which we have seen Him; it is the richest exhibition of the Christ of the social scene that the evangelist presents. He was here not as a rebuker or a Saviour, as we have seen Him in other places, but as an intimate family friend; and by this scene He has sanctified a Christian household. The presence of Jesus to this day will take hospitality at such a place, in the person of His poor members. The Lord lifts up a picture for our admiration, and we shall have it by-and-by, for heaven itself is but an extended scene of family affection. May the Lord grant you and me to dwell in desire of it. Amen.

Luke 11

We will now meditate on chapter 11. We are tracing certain characteristics in the Lord's ministry. Here we find the minds of the disciples in what we may call a very interesting moment. They were learning the necessity of taking the new creation place. The law never taught them that. Prayer is the expression of dependence-the law taught them independence. The soul was insensibly learning its

necessities, though not formally, or dispensationally, till after Christ's death. John went beyond Moses; his disciples wanted to be taught to pray. So it is here, with the disciples of the Lord. Then, as the perfect minister of their souls, He sets Himself to teach them, and you find a form of prayer. He suits His words to their then condition. Prayer is the expression of the heart in its present condition.

Then He speaks of man going to a friend at midnight and asking for three loaves. "And he from within"; these are pregnant words! Are you "within"? It is a dangerous condition in this world. What I mean by that is, losing your sympathies with the joys and sorrows around you. So the Lord shows out God's grace on the dark ground of that man's selfishness. You have not to "ask" and "seek" and "knock"; that is importunity. But "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." See the divine readiness in answer to human necessities. Never say importunity is needed to move God. At your leisure read Daniel 10. For "three full weeks" Daniel was chastening his heart before God, and no answer was given. At the end of that time the answer came; and how? The angel told him that as soon as ever he began to pray, he was heard; but a certain transaction that was going on in heaven, hindered the answer. He went on in importunity for three weeks, but as soon as ever he had prayed, he was heard. So you may have been praying for a long time, and getting no answer, but be sure the interval has been well employed; if not in heaven, in the chastening of your spirit. This beautifully illustrates what we get here. There is no reluctancy in God not that selfishness to be overcome that there was in the man at midnight but there may be reasons to delay the answer, and when it does come, it may be in a way you are little prepared for. Paul prayed three times, and the thorn was not taken away; but the answer came at last, and in a way he had not expected. The thorn was left until the day of his death, but he was given grace by which he could triumph in it.

When the Lord has thus commented on prayer, he enters (v. 14) on a solemn scene. Two antagonist thoughts come up to Christ. The Lord was constantly enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself. The one set of people came to charge Him with casting out devils by Beelzebub; the other, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven; the first of these represents perverted religion; the second represents infidelity. We will look at these for a little. We have the same thing to meet to this hour. The Lord takes up the first of these. He begins to address those who say He cast out devils by the prince of the devils. Mark, here is exquisite beauty. "If Satan . . . be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" He begins by the gentler argument. I wish you and I copied Him in the beauty of His style and in the truth of His substance His style was inimitable as His substance was perfect. In answering this contradiction, He begins by showing them the folly of their thought. Would Satan be so foolish? Why are you so senseless?

Now, His argument is addressed to themselves: Let us go back to your favourite, David, when he tuned his harp and delivered Saul from the evil spirit. The carnal mind is not enmity to David, but to God. How He presses in on their consciences! "By whom do your sons cast them out?" Now, He is approaching the serious part of the matter. No doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you; therefore, take care what you are about. The very style in which He conducts the argument has a beauty and an order. He begins by the gentler argument and then goes on to the stronger, and He says, Take care; you are on dangerous ground. Then He indites the parable of the strong man to show that it was by the finger of God He cast them out. The strong man only gets his house rifled by a stronger than himself. God alone is stronger than Satan. We have already been conquered and made slaves by the devil, so that when we get him bound in this world, God alone has done it, for no child of man could. If I see anyone stronger than Satan in this world, I have a witness that God is here. He shows that what Satan is doing, he is doing in collision with God that his bruiser has appeared. That is what He taught Satan in the wilderness. Satan is not afraid of us, but he has more than his match in the Son of God. He is bold

as a lion when he comes to you and me, but he trembles in the presence of Christ.

Now, in verse 23, He draws a very solemn conclusion. The battle is proclaimed, and there is no neutrality. God has made the world the scene of the conflict in which the question between Himself and Satan is to be decided, the fruit of which is to occupy eternity. The voice goes forth: "He that is not with Me is against Me." Then when the Lord had thus solemnly sounded the voice of the trumpet across the field the blast of the silver trumpet, proclaiming war, in verse 24 He sketches a very solemn sight, where we may linger a little. It is a most pregnant, awful picture. It was illustrated in Israel, and I believe will be in Christendom. The besom of Babylon may have swept the house of Israel, and to this day they may abominate idols, but a clean house may be just as fit for Satan as an unclean one; reformation will not do. So it is with Christendom. I trust there is not a single heart here that trusts in reformation. We are all thankful for that which gives us the privilege of sitting here together in peace; mere Protestantism will not do. The Lord teaches us that the swept and garnished house may be worse than before. What has taken the place of idols in reformed Christendom? Is it knowledge of Jesus? Yes, in His own elect; but human vanities have conducted man in Christendom by the same path as the Jew. It is only hurrying on to a matured form of apostate iniquity.

Then He turns to those who were requiring a sign, and says, "There shall no sign be given." Now, why was it ever said to Christ? Show us a sign from heaven? Worldliness dictated it. They wanted a Christ that would astonish the world. The Lord would not and could not answer that. If you and I could not accept our Jesus in rejection, we shall never have Him in glory. Shall I think to see my Lord glorified in a defiled world, in the midst of such moral elements as fill it? He will give no sign here. If He is accepted, it must be under the sign of the prophet Jonas not with a crown on His head, but buffeted and spit upon. Instead of giving a sign from heaven, He gives one from the bowels of the earth, in death and humiliation.

Next He gives the beautiful instance of the Queen of Sheba. Her conscience and affections were stirred when she heard that Solomon had the knowledge of God. 'When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD' (1 Kings 10: 1), she took the long journey from the South to Jerusalem, just to find out God. What suited the conscience of the men of Nineveh? Jonah's words. "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Then the king clothed himself with sackcloth. What a ridiculous thing to put horses and sheep in sackcloth! Who can measure the throes and compunctions of an awakened conscience! You may sit and analyze and criticize, but it will give no account to you. It is blessed to see, as in the stricken cases nowadays, that the convicted conscience cannot stand upon measure. Send us a sign, they said. No, says the Lord, You must believe on Me with your conscience.

While the Lord was about to answer the second of these questions, there was a woman in the company whose affection was stirred. Now tell me, do you not often find human affections stirred under the cross? The daughters of Jerusalem took their places apart from the prosecutors. Now I am not to trust this excitement of nature, but I am not to treat it as vile. There may have been a crop for Jesus in it a blessing in the cluster. You may be prepared for a variety of moral activities nowadays. The Lord says to this poor woman, There is a mistake in your judgment; rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it. Connection with Christ is to be spiritual and not fleshly, divine and not human. Do you not delight to know that nothing less than your necessity as sinners is to form the link between you and Jesus? Anything else would snap asunder like the withes that bound Samson.

Luke 12

At the close of chapter 11 we see the Lord at the house of a Pharisee again. He does not sit in the house of Bethany in the same character as He does here. Such is the multiform beauty of the Lord. We see Him at the houses of three different Pharisees, in Luke 7, Luke 11, and Luke 14. And here is one beauty of the mind of Christ He was ever set upon distinguishing things that differ. In that way He illustrated one of the divine properties, as we read in Hannah's song "The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." The Lord was a God of knowledge, always weighing actions; but He never weighed an action in its relation to Himself, but in its relation to God and the person acting. He would pass by an affront offered to Himself (as in the Samaritan villagers), but He would stand firmly against an affront offered to God, as when He made a whip of small cords and drove out the moneychangers from the house of God. We are all prone to judge of actions in relationship to ourselves. That is not Christ, but ruined nature. The Lord might be flattered, and He would not be perverted. It is just as easy for human nature to be perverted by flattery, as to be made angry by an affront. There is scarcely a single person who is not tempted to value or misappreciate actions by the way in which they affect himself. You and I soon become the captives of a little flattery. If Peter had said to you in kindly humanity, That be far from thee, would you have said, Get thee behind me? I will answer for you, No. But Peter's softness was not enough to provoke easiness in Christ.

If you examine at your leisure these three Pharisees, in their moral condition, you will find that the Lord had the balances in His hand in each case. All Pharisees were not the same. Some were amiable, some besotted; some led, and some leading; but Christ distinguished between them all. The Pharisee of this chapter, of course, was courteous like the others, and the Lord accepted it, for He was the social Son of man, and came eating and drinking; but He was judging all the time. The Pharisee wondered that He had not "first washed before dinner," and the Lord answered him, and went on with earnest-hearted rebuke, verse after verse, to the end. I should have wondered to read such rebukes after such a simple remark, but wait a little. No rough word or providence will ever cross your path that He will not be able to vindicate. The last verses are His vindication here. He discerned what was underneath the flattery a hypocritical enmity to Christ, and here it comes out in the end. They were "laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him." You will not find that He treats Simon, in Luke 7, in the same manner. He knew there was a different pulse in him, and there was not the peremptory stern rebuke, but, "Come now, and let us reason together." "Simon, I have some what to say unto thee." Do not go clumsily through society. Carry the balances of God with you. So did the Lord.

Luke 12 is the appendix to the scene in the Pharisee's house. He speaks to the multitude and warns them against hypocrisy. He had just been the victim of it, and the Lord always takes a natural text. He did so in John 4. There the water was His text, and here His text is naturally the scene in the Pharisee's house. In verses 2 and 3 He shows the folly of it. If you and I walked in the light of eternity, everything that had not reality would be arrant folly to us. What a fine style the Lord can use when He chooses! For the soft whispered slander in the ear, the day shall come when the angel of the Lord shall proclaim it on the housetop. There is the answer to the insinuations that go abroad in well-conducted society.

The next subject is that of fear the fear of man and see how beautifully the Lord discusses it. The words of Jesus would give you a well-regulated mind, but your mind must first own its relationship to God as its great paramount circumstance. Now He tells you, if fear finds a place in your mind, not to fear man but God. Then He goes on to show how, if you fear God, you need not fear as a slave, but as a

son; not servilely, but with confiding reverence. Take Him up in this blessed way; there is not a single hair of your head that He has not numbered. Would you stand in fear before a friend who has numbered your hairs that you might not lose one That is the way to extract fear. Then He goes on to say, in verses 8 and 9, Now you who confess Me, do not fear the Pharisees. Confess Me, for a day is coming when I will confess you. Could any reasoning be more perfect to extract fear from the heart? If you confess Me before perishing men, I will confess you before the indestructible glory of God. Then He goes on, "Unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven." You and I are the vessels of the Holy Ghost. A personal insult to the Son of man might be forgiven, but refusal of that which the Church carries is without remedy.

Now having disposed of fear, He takes up the subject of worldliness. "One of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," and the Lord answers, Do you not understand Me? Is it Me business to make a man richer in this world? The Lord has promised deep peace to His people, but never honour or wealth. This man mistook His mission, so He now preached a sermon on covetousness, and He gives a striking parable. Now, is the plentiful bringing forth of the ground evil? No. There is nothing evil in a good harvest. Plentifulness is a mercy, but I will tell you what is in it not evil, but danger. And so it proved with the man in the parable; for he began to turn it to the account of his earthly mind, instead of to the account of the Lord paramount of the soil; and if people are in a thriving way of life, very right, I say, to employ their hands and skill, and it is a mercy if the crop be plentiful, but there is danger in it.

Then from verse 22, He goes on in that exquisite discourse of which, if one did not speak a word on it, the very reading is edification. I am sure of this, that the life of faith and hope is the only deliverance from worldliness. In the keen, discerning, vivid mind of Christ, that is what He shows us in this discourse. A man may be blameless and harmless, and yet he is a worldly man if he is not nourishing the life of faith and hope. Go and get lessons from the ravens and lilies. "Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not." Do you welcome such a lesson as that? Do you love to have the subtilty of a worldly mind shown to you? The love of present things rests itself most sweetly in the heart of man. If I am not trusting in God and waiting for glory, I am exposed by the Lord here as having a worldly mind. If in the Book there is a chapter of moral power, it is this. Get the girdle around your loins, the lamp of hope in your hand, and you will be delivered from worldliness not waiting for bigger barns, but for the Lord. Does not this beautiful style extricate us for a moment? Ah, if it were kept fresh in our affections all the day long, I will answer for it, our wretched hearts would not be worldly.

Now, He shows that if thus waited for, when He comes, He will change places. You wait on Him now; He will wait on you when He comes. No longer wonder at the certain Samaritan. The travelling Samaritan changes places, and here the girded Lord serves. Love could do nothing more than that. This is love to a neighbour indeed. He will practice it in glory as He did in degradation. These words are easily read, but I ask you one thing: Could they be exceeded? Do you think it hard to gird your loins in waiting for such a master? He will not find it a hard matter to gird Himself and to wait on your joy. Thus speaking, Peter interrupts Him. In this Gospel He is constantly interrupted, because the Lord is here drawing out the human mind to give the passions of the heart their answer. He lets man expose himself. So Peter says, "Speakest Thou this parable unto us?" and the Lord answers, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household?" Again He changes places. If I only wait for Him in heart, He will gird Himself; but if I go forth and serve Him in hand and foot, He will make me ruler. Do you not call Him "Lord" as well as "Saviour"? Then He will make you lord.

Next He distinguishes about the many and few stripes. He was carrying the moral balances here not judicial. He did not come to judge, but by-and-by the day will come when He will hold the balances of righteousness and be as accurate there as He was here. If He did not confound the Pharisees, He will not confound His servants. It is a great relief to the heart to know that a day of retributive justice is coming. There is not a single moral action you ought not to judge; but retributive judgment awaits another day.

In verse 54 He turns again to glance at the request, Show us a sign. "Ye hypocrites," you are asking a sign; now do you not discern the west wind laid up as a forerunner of heat? Now, where are you to get your forerunner? In Scripture, of course, where they ought to have got theirs, like the wind and cloud, to tell them what was coming. Look at Me, He says, in poverty and fullness, and witness that God has come among you.

In the last two verses, He glances back at the man who asked Him to be a divider. You have been dragging your brother to a magistrate. Another is dragging you, and I would advise you to make terms with him Moses, the law of God. Make all diligence, for I tell you, if once you get there, you will not get away till you answer the demands of the throne of God. Could anyone here do it? If you cannot stand before the throne of God, you are not saved.

So, while that beautiful chapter morally addresses itself to saints, it closes by a word addressed to the conscience of man.

Oh, how one longs to feel the girdle a little tighter, and to walk in the light of the lamp of expectation, and "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Luke 13

I believe that in this chapter the Lord's thoughts from beginning to end are in company with Israel and Jerusalem. Many things filled the Lord's eye the world, and the land of Israel, and, in the land, the city. So it will be, no doubt in the Millennium the nations, with Israel as the metropolitan part of the earth, with Jerusalem in their midst. In this rich, varied scenery, the Church holds a special part in peculiar relationship to Christ.

Are you not charmed when thoughts flow naturally? We do not like anything artificial. The Lord here had a piece of the news of the day brought to Him. He hears it, as it may be, and at once tells how to make use of it. The style is homely; you do not want to be in a foreign land with Christ. At once He turns and says, Do you think that those were sinners above all? No; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. Now, this is not exactly the doom of sinners. It is true, if we do not believe, we have no life; but here the Lord had the nation in His mind, and if they did not repent, they would perish. The blood of the Galileans, shed by a Roman soldier, stood out as representing the judgment coming on the nation generally.

Then there is exceeding prophetic beauty in the tower of Siloam. The judgment of Israel was the judgment of the descending stone. Upon whomsoever that stone should fall, it should grind him to powder. There is exquisite beauty in this, and perfect prophetic truthfulness. I grant you, sinners will perish, but the Lord's mind is more perfect than yours. He is looking at Jerusalem's condition as ripe for the judgment of God.

Having said this, He indites the parable of the fig tree. This is just a beautiful parabolic picture of what the Lord had been doing with Israel. He was travelling through the land for three years in long-suffering. Did you ever mark the departing glory in Ezekiel? how it lingers, passing from cherubim to

cherubim, loath to leave its ancient place? So loath is the divine favour to leave an object that has engaged it. And will you not allow the Lord to be reluctant in withdrawing Himself from a nation that has so much engaged Him? The whole ministry of Jesus was the lingering of the love of God over unrepentant Israel. Suppose He had executed judgment when the Bethlehemite was refused; Israel would have perished. But He lingered for three years. Righteousness from the throne said, "Cut it down"; grace in the vinedresser said, "Let it alone." The three years spent themselves, and then, after that, He cut it down.

The tower of Siloam fell-the sword of the Roman came in and did the work of judgment. Now there comes the woman with the spirit of infirmity, and the ruler; and here comes out the secret of all the terrible judgment the Lord had been anticipating. Judgment is His strange work. He is provoked to judgment grace is from Himself. The stone that fell was provoked by the unfruitful disappointment of the fig tree He had dressed year after year. Judgment is provoked; grace springs naturally. Why did salvation ever visit us? Did our good works provoke it? God's nature was the provocation of salvation; sin provoked judgment. It is blessed to see how God stands vindicated before all our thoughts.

The ruler is indignant that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day. Here was the representative of the need of Israel, standing out in the poor woman, and the representative or the moral condition of Israel standing out in the ruler that talked about healing for six days. You know what John Newton says: "If the most patient man that ever lived had the ruling of the earth, he could not stand it for a single hour." What do you do with your ass on the Sabbath day? says the Lord. How He exposes the man to himself, that he positively valued his ass more than his fellow creature! Then, having looked at this terrible apostasy, He goes on in the parable following to keep apostasy in view. It is the story of the kingdom of God, as well as the kingdom of Israel. We are in that story and not a whit better than Israel. It is a leavened thing a thing that lodges the unclean birds. Can you rest yourself in Christendom? The birds of the air have found a home there. Can you? Or are you walking as a stranger there? Too often strangership is overborne by citizenship; but the mind of Christ can never rest in such a world. The Lord's eye passes on, that you and I may be rebuked, as well as Israel.

In verse 22 He is pursuing His way to Jerusalem. Did you ever observe in the structure of Luke's Gospel that the great bulk of it is made up of the Lord's doings and teachings on the journey to Jerusalem? You see Him in chapters 9, 13, and 18 on His way; but He is looking at the distant city, in different places, in different lights. In chapter 9, it is as the place that was to witness His ascension; here, as the place about to fill up the measure of its sin by crucifying Him; and in chapter 18, as the place where He was to finish His journey as the Lamb of God. The mind of Christ is a beautiful thing, dealing with everything variously, yet accurately. Do you not long for such a fruitful mind?

Now as He is thus addressing Himself to the journey, one says to Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" No doubt the man saw something in His eye that awakened the question. No doubt those that marked His bearing often saw something significant in it, as when the disciples held back in chapter 4 of John. So here, as He went on, one said, "Are there few that be saved?" Does He say "few" or "many"? Does He answer categorically? No. There is a style among ourselves that is often painful. You hear people say, Is he a Christian Is he a Christian? We are not to confound light and darkness, but we ought not to answer such naked questions so serious in their import. He does not say "many" or "few," but, You seek to get in. He looks at the inquirer, not the inquiry.

Are the striving and seeking in verse 24 merely different measures of the same thing? No. They are not different measures of intensity, but different actions. The man that seeks does so after the master of the house is risen up at the last moment but see that you begin beforehand. Do not let the

rising up put you in that attitude of a seeker. Take the ground of Christ now, not the terror of a seeker then. The Lord's ministry dealt with three persons God, Satan, and man. For a little moment let me present a few qualities of His ministry as addressed to man. He was ever exposing, relieving, and exercising him. He was letting him see himself to be a poor worthless thing, and then relieving him. Is it not blessed to see Him exposing your wretchedness, and providing relief out of it? We have to do with a faithful friend, not a flattering friend. But while exposing and relieving, He was exercising too. He called the conscience and heart into activity. Was He not putting the conscience of this man on a goodly piece of moral activity? If you could part . with one of these things, the ministry of Christ would be defective. Then the Lord goes on to show the plea the seeker may put in. But "depart from Me." It will not do. He pleads his privileges and intimacy. "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets." "Depart from Me." It will not do. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What is the difference between the two? Do not confound them. Weeping is the expression of sorrow: gnashing of teeth is the expression of wickedness, as in Stephen's case, when they "gnashed upon him with their teeth." The incurred iniquity and villainy of the human heart is there, and they know it for ever. If the condemned soul carries its sorrow, it carries its enmity too forever. These are serious thoughts.

Now we find the Lord approaching the city and He comes into Herod's jurisdiction, and they say to Him, "Depart hence; for Herod will kill Thee." "Go... tell that fox," He answers. How He looked in the face of that monster and let him know He would move on unfearing. He exposes him as a fox and reveals Himself by the similitude of the hen. This is the story of Israel. They refused the hen, and preferred the fox; and, because of the mountain of Israel that lies desolate, the Roman foxes and the Turk and the Arab have walked there. Jesus would have gathered them, but they would not; and the foxes shall walk there till He that can gather as the hen is received, and they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." When they shall turn to the Lord, and the veil be taken away, and He, as the gathering hen, be accepted, in the homely style of this beautiful figure, Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the earth with fruit.

Read Isaiah 54 and Luke 15 and you will find yourself in company with the same God of grace. In Isaiah 54, Jerusalem is looked at as a widowed thing. The Lord had said, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement?" Did I get tired of her? But in chapter there is not a thought of divorcement but widowhood. In chapter 15 of Luke, when the prodigal is introduced, is it, This is my wicked son? No, but, My lost and dead son. Oh, the tenderness and beauty of this! He does not wish to keep our iniquity in remembrance, but our sorrow, and will not introduce Jerusalem as a thing once put to shame, but as one long in sorrow and widowhood. The divine eye has no capacity to look on that which is worthless, but on that which is dead, and alive again, lost and found. Why has the Lord so little of our hearts? Just because we so little know Him. May He reveal Himself to each one of us, and discover Himself before the thoughts of our souls. Amen.

Luke 14 and Luke 15

Put together, these are wonderful chapters. In the first, the Lord visits our world; in the second, we visit His. In the 14th, He makes Himself acquainted with our ways; in the 15th, we are called to acquaint ourselves with His. This is the grand moral distinction between the two chapters, and nothing can exceed them in interest. In the 14th chapter we find that nothing satisfies Him. Are you prepared for this conclusion? There is nothing thoroughly according to His mind. In the 15th, everything is suited to Him, and if we were divinely intelligent and divinely sensitive, we should find that nothing in man's world and everything in Christ's world would do for us. It is the grand character of the

Apocalypse, that there is not a thing in it but suits the mind of the glorified Church

Chapter 14 opens by the Lord's being invited to eat bread in a Pharisee's house, and, as He enters, at once all the sympathies of His mind are intruded on. The house is a type of man's world. As He went in, "they watched Him," and there came in a poor man that had the dropsy, and He asked them, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" Now why did they hold their peace? It was a hypocritical silence. They ought to have answered, but they wanted to catch Him. Oh! what wretched, miserable tricks these hearts of ours can play! Your heart is under the lion and serpent violence and subtlety Satan is represented as both these. The Lord healed him, and then said to them, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" Ought not you to have gathered your answer to the question from your own ways? The Lord takes us on our own showing, and exposes us out of our own mouth and our own ways. I do not need anyone to show me what I am; I know very well.

In verse 7, He has entered the house and looked around. That is exactly where we fail. We are so much taken up with ourselves that we do not look around to see things with the eyes of the Lord. The Lord came with the heart and resources of God to dispense blessing, but with the eye and ear and sensibility of God, to acquaint Himself with the moral of the scene here. What does He see here? First, the guests, and they do not please Him. He saw they chose the highest rooms. Now suppose you had the eye of God, and looked on the scene around you, day by day; would you not see the same thing? We savour too much of it ourselves, and therefore cannot testify against it. Christ was infinitely pure, so that He could detect the smallest bit of impurity. He saw that it was pride that animated the scene under His eye, and you and I must have very false notions of what is abroad if we do not see the same thing. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life mark the spirit that animates the activities around us.

Now He looked at the host, but there was no relief for Him there. Selfishness in another form shows itself to Him. It was not the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind that the Pharisee asked to his feast; but his rich neighbours were seated on his right hand and on his left. Here the heart of Christ tells itself out in calling those who cannot recompense Him. It is very happy that Christ cannot be pleased with your world. What would your Lord Jesus be to you if He could put up with such a world? If Christ could have found sympathy with man's world as delineated here, you and I should never have been saved. He acted on directly contrary principles.

Now, one of the company says, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" a gracious movement, I believe. I do not say whether it ended in good or not but a certain gracious instant passed over the soul. The Lord was not unaffected by it. He pays attention to the interruption. Oh, the precious and perfect humanity of Jesus! His deity was equal to the Father's; His humanity was equal to yours and mine, not in its corruption, but in all the beautiful traits that could adorn it in its perfection. He waits and indites the parable of the marriage supper. The man had said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," and the Lord brings out this parable to exhibit eating bread in the kingdom of God. This shows that the Lord is willing to wait on the secret stirring of your spirit, and give it a suited response; and that word of the man that sat at table gives Him occasion to expand before his eyes a feast spread in the heavenly country; and, oh! what a different one from that here. Not one of the bidden guests came. No, and not a single bidden guest since Adam will be at that table. What do I mean? There must be more than an invitation. God must fill the chairs as well as the table. He must force His guests in, as well as fill the board. He sends His servant, and says, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." There is a peep into heaven. Did you ever know such a place in all your life? The richest feast ever seen, and not one at it that has not been compelled to come in! And

does God put up with this? If there had only been the mission of the Son, there would never have been a single guest. If there had only been the mission of the Holy Ghost, there would have been no feast spread. What a wonderful exhibition of the love of God! If you had prepared a kindness for another, would you like to find an indisposed heart in him? No, you would not ask him again, but would say, Let him go and get what he values more. But there is the double mission of the Son and the Spirit. The Son prepares the feast, and the Spirit prepares the guests. So there is not a single merely bidden guest there; they are compelled guests. What a wretched exhibition of the heart you carry! One has bought a piece of ground, another has bought five yoke of oxen. Anything but the Lord's feast. This is the contrast between God's table and man's.

When the Lord had delivered the parable, as He was leaving the house, great multitudes followed Him; and He turned and said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." Now, how do you treat the Lord Jesus? Do you look at Him as a pattern an example? Well, you will say, I ought to do so, and I grant it; but you and I are thoroughly wrong if our first communion with Him is as a pattern; it must be as with a Saviour. The multitudes followed Him as a pattern, and the Lord says, If you will be like Me, you must give up everything.

The next chapter opens with publicans and sinners, and there is communion of soul with Him as a Saviour. The moment the Lord got that object, He was at home. He passes on through all till "publicans and sinners" draw near to Him. He had entered and left the Pharisee's house, and His spirit had not breathed a comfortable atmosphere; but when a poor sinner comes and looks at Him, that moment His whole heart gave itself out, and uttered itself in the three beautiful parts that follow.

It is impossible to follow the spirit of Christ in this chapter without being comforted. Could I know Christ as I would know Him if He could find a home in my world? No! but He says, If I cannot find a home here, you come and find a home with Me. You have disappointed Me, but I will not disappoint you. As one said once, "In preaching the gospel, the Lord said, 'Well, if I cannot trust you, you must trust Me.'" It is another version of the same thought here, and these beautiful illustrations show one leading and commanding truth that God's world is made happy by sinners getting into it. Do you believe that you, as a sinner, are important to heaven? Whether you believe it or not, it is true. It is not our gain in the matter of salvation that is presented here, but God's joy, and that only. He takes these homely figures that our thoughts may not be distracted, and that you may learn that you are lost; but you learn, too, the joy of God in recovering you. I do not believe a richer thought can enter the soul of man. I sit down in heaven, not as a recovered sinner only, but as one whose recovery has formed the joy of heaven. Now you are at Christ's table, in Christ's world, and you see what kind of a place it is. As for the poor lost sheep, if left to itself it would only have wandered farther still; and as for the piece of money, it would have lain there to this hour if the woman had not searched diligently till she found it.

Now let us combine these two chapters. In chapter 14, you get the words, "compel them to come in," and in chapter 15, you get the prodigal compelled. We were observing the missions of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost never gives me my title to glory, but He enables me to read it. If I could not read it, it would be of no use to me. Now, I ask, what is this compulsion? It is not against your will, but you are made willing. Take, for instance, the prodigal. When he was brought to his last penny and began to be in want, he came to himself. This was the beginning of the compelling, when the poor prodigal opened his eyes to his condition. What did the Lord do to the heart of Lydia? He opened it, and her opened heart listened to what Paul spoke. The mighty compelling power showed itself here when the poor prodigal looked around on his condition and said, What shall I do? The Holy Ghost makes you willing when He makes you see your need, and that death and judgment are before you. He

stirs you up by this till He puts you on the road to God. One poor soul says, I had better begin to look out for eternity; another is terrified by the thought of death and judgment. He will take you in any way. The thing is to get your back to the land where once you lingered. The poor prodigal says, I will arise; I have found out the end of my own doings; I will go to my father; and back he goes, and back he is welcomed! The story of the prodigal beautifully illustrates the compelling of the previous chapter. Zaccheus wished to see Jesus one morning, and up he got into the tree. That was the compelling of the Holy Ghost. Oh, what two chapters! Christ disappointed in your world, and you satiated in Christ's world!

Luke 16

We have now reached chapter 16, and it is a serious chapter. We have been, in one sense, on very happy chapters in the last two, and have seen how the Lord visited our world, and how we are to visit His world how nothing in our world pleased Him, but everything in His own. It should be so with us. If we are right-minded we cannot find a home here. Man's apostate condition has built this world, and it is a painful thing to build a house and not be happy in it; yet it should be so with us. You have built a house here, and Christ has built a house in the heavens. Do you cultivate the mind of a stranger in this world, and of a citizen in the heavens?

Having gone through this wonderful moral scenery, we enter on Luke 16 a continuation of the same scene. If there is a serious chapter in this Gospel, it is this one. The Lord begins by the parable of the unjust steward; and before we go further let me call your mind to the word "wasted," in the case of the prodigal. It was just what he had done, and it is the business of this parable to show that the elder brother may do just what the younger did. He may be a very respectable waster; there are hundreds of thousands of such in the world, and high in the credit of the world they stand; but, weighed in God's balances, they are just as much wasters as this dissolute prodigal. If we do not carry ourselves as stewards of God, we are wasters. If I am using myself and what I have as if they were my own, in the divine reckoning I am a waster. This lays the axe deep at the root of every tree. The elder brother thought he was not a waster; but let me ask you, if you are living for this world, and using what you have as if it were your own, are you not an unfaithful steward and, if so, are you not a waster? Here is a steward. We are not told how he spent his money, but it is enough to know that he was not faithful to his master. Then we see how the Lord goes on to draw out the reasoning of a man like that. He lived for this world laid plans about his history in this world and not in the next. The moral is beautifully laid to you and to me. As that man laid out his plans for this world, so you should lay up your plans for Christ's future world. If you live to yourself, do you not deny your stewardship to the Lord?

Then the Pharisees who heard Him derided Him. To be sure they must! It was a heavenly principle, and they were covetous. Covetousness is living for this world, and we are covetous just so far as we are laying our plans for this world. Now, when you find corruptions in yourself, what do you do? Do not let corruptions lead you to give up Christ, but to put on your armour. The Pharisees derided Him, and what did the Lord say to them? "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men." This is just what we were saying. The elder brother may be highly esteemed among men, but "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

We are now introduced to the rich man. Tell me, has this passage been repulsive to you, rather than attractive? There seems something rather repulsive in it, but let us look at it. Observe the difference between the rich man and the prodigal. The prodigal "came to himself" before it was too late, and the rich man, after the door was shut. The prodigal was dissolute and abandoned, and when he

came to himself he thought of his sin. The rich man came to himself in the place of judgment, and did not think of his sins, but of his misery. The prodigal came to himself in the midst of his misery here the rich man, in the midst of his torment there.

That is all the difference. The prodigal said, I will go back; what a sinner and a rebel son I have been! There was nothing of that gracious stirring in the spirit of the rich man when he lifted up his head in flames. The prodigal had not to finish the first sentence; the father answered him on the spot, and put on him a ring and the best robe, and killed the fatted calf; but the rich man cried again and again. It was too late. Here is the end of the respectable waster. Why do I call him a waster? Will you tell me he called himself a steward of God while he was living sumptuously every day, with a saint of God lying at his gate? I am bold to say you and I are just the same if we are living to ourselves. This man died a respectable waster, full of honour and gratification. He had no misery to call him to himself. Have you ever contrasted these two pictures? It has changed this picture from repulsion to attraction.

Luke 17

In the opening of chapter 17, the Lord applies all this. "It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." I call upon each one to listen to this. To offend one of these little ones is to be on the way to the judgment of the millstone. In Revelation 18, we see Babylon under the judgment of the millstone; and here the Lord sees, in the offending of a little one, something that savours of the same thing. Now what is it to offend? Beloved, the Church of God is His little one a cypher in the eyes of the world, but everything in the sight of God, and you and I ought to take care of any course of conduct that might stumble the little one. So far as I am living in this world, I am savouring of offense, having gone back to that out of which the grace of God had called me. Do you and I go through the circumstances of each day in the spirit of service to everything around us? That is the spirit of the little one. That is the beauty of the Church of God, and of every saint in the world. The moment you act as if you were privileged to dispose of circumstances after your own pleasure, you are an offender.

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." That is serving his soul. We should seek for grace to walk through circumstances as serving Christ and our neighbour. Christ is to be our Lord as well as our Saviour. He is a Saviour inasmuch as He saves for eternity a Lord inasmuch as He demands our time. This beautiful combination is exactly what Peter talks of, "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." There were some (2 Peter 2: 1) who talked about Christ as a Saviour, while denying His lordship practically. The Spirit is fruitful in revelations of grace and in admonitions of holiness. They cry out, "Lord, Increase our faith," for this is a terrible demand on us: and the Lord says, Ah, faith is the very thing that will do that for you. Faith is the very thing that God brings in, and then all things are possible. You might pluck up the roots of nature, and send them to be planted in the distant sea, in mortifying the flesh. There are two beautiful virtues of faith here, while it is a principle of self-emptying. "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants."

If I can meet a temptation with the Lord Jesus, I have the stronger man with me, and I overcome, and then come back and say, I have done that which it was my duty to do. There is an import in this chapter that makes it infinitely valuable.

Luke 17: 11 to Luke 18: 8, must be read together. We are still with the Lord on His way to Jerusalem. The historic structure of Luke delineates the different stages of His journey up to the city.

Now, as He passed through Samaria and Galilee, He came upon a certain village, and was met by ten lepers taking the place in which their leprosy put them, standing afar off. We find in Leviticus the divine dealing with leprosy. It was set apart among the plagues that visit human nature to represent sin, and to show what God would do with it. The leper was first put outside the camp, and that is just where sin puts you and me. Have you any business or right to put a spot on the fair creation of God? No, you have not; and therefore to represent that, the leper was put outside the camp; and his business there was to learn what he was. Your first business as a sinner is to learn that exile from God becomes you. So he lifted up his hands and cried, "Unclean, unclean." This, in evangelic language, is called conviction. There he is, left outside; and with whom? None in the whole creation but God. His friends and neighbours were put afar off. So none can meet our necessity but Christ. Then he was cleansed, brought back to the camp, and the priest received him back. This represents sin in its fruit and penalty, and the way in which God takes it up and deals with it.

These lepers cry, "Master, have mercy on us." This was not the language of faith, but of misery; but the Lord has an ear for the voice of misery. He had an ear for the voice of Hagar when she wandered in the wilderness; and now from their misery they howled out, "Have mercy on us," and He had mercy. "Go show yourselves unto the priests," He said; and they went, and as they went they were healed. This was the proof that they had been in God's presence that the Jesus who had spoken, was none less than God Himself, because if we look again at Leviticus we shall find that none but God had a right to speak to a leper. This just shows us that we in our sin can go to none but Jesus; if we go to any other, we have not learned what sin is that it shuts us out from all but Him. Our necessity is such that if we do not reach Christ, we do not reach blessing. The nine lepers had not discovered this; only one read the healing aright. Nine-tenths of those who hear a sermon will let it pass by. Another will ponder it and learn Christ. That was the tenth leper. He was stirred up to ponder what was done; and, instead of going to the priest, he returned to Jesus and laid his offerings at the feet of God his Saviour. This was faith; "with a loud voice" he "glorified God." The other cry was misery. He had discovered who the stranger was, and he was down on his face glorifying God. He who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," at once goes in and occupies God's relation to their misery. There is a difference between misery and faith. Did you cry to me when you howled on your beds? says the prophet. No, you did not. Yet many a one begins his eternity of joy with the howling of misery.

In verse 20 we find Him again in company with the Pharisees. How exquisitely interesting it is to trace the moral scenery that constituted the path of Christ! Here they asked when the kingdom of God should come. What a vain and insolent inquiry! What I mean is this: it was as if they had said, Oh, we are ready for the kingdom the only question is, when the kingdom will be ready for us. At once the Lord answers the condition of their souls. You must look for the kingdom within you before you can get it around. Do you not vindicate the Lord in such words? You are never ready for the kingdom in glory, till you have the kingdom within you. And having thus disposed of their question, He turns to the disciples and speaks to them of the kingdom.

The kingdom of God is a self-evidencing thing. Whenever it erects itself, it does not need a witness. Does the sun or the moon, the thunder or the lightning require a witness? They bear witness to themselves. Are you conscious that God has set up His kingdom within you? Paul says, "The kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14: 17. Now, can you have such a thing in you and not know it? It may be in feebleness. There is many a poor trembling soul whose tremblings are evidence to those who look on that it is in a better plight than it thinks; but wherever the power of God is, it makes itself known. "The kingdom of God" is an expression meaning divine power. Having established this with His disciples, He says, The days will come when you will

desire to see the kingdom in glory, but you will not see it yet. What is the path of the Church all through this age? A path of desire. Is your spirit travelling, day by day, a path of desire after your unmanifested Saviour? He says, I am to pass through rejection first, and you must pass through it with Me. The saint is desiring an absent Lord and, till He comes, is the companion of a rejected Lord, filled with the desire for His return, and filled with consent to be companion of His rejection. It is a rebuke, but let us welcome it; it is an excellent oil that will not break our heads (Ps. 141: 5).

Having presented these qualities, He goes on to show the state of things just before the Son shines out in glory. In the days of Lot and Noah you get a picture of what the world will be then. They will be going on as those that have found their object in the world. The Lord had given a sketch of what the saint in the age of His absence ought to be; now He draws a sketch of what the world would be. Then, He says, it will be a day of discerning, as the day of Noah was. Was not Noah left when the whole world was destroyed? The story of Noah is to be revived in the closing hour of earth's history. There will be two in a bed two in the field it matters not; it will be a day of discerning.

Like the pillar of cloud that was at once salvation to the Israelites and doom to the Egyptians, so the day of the Lord will rise like the sun with healing in his wings to one in a bed, while it will burn like an oven for the other. No wonder that they cried out, "Where, Lord?" Strikingly, He answers, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." He never answered a question curiously, but totally So it is here. The day of judgment will make no mistake; it will not take one it ought to have left, or leave one it ought to have taken. We ought to say, Am I ready? Do I know that if the Son were to break forth in judicial glory, I should not be part of the carcass?

Then in this connection He gives the parable of the poor widow. "He spake a parable unto them to this end," that they ought always to pray. It should not read "men." Suppose I were practically the companion of a rejected Lord; what should I naturally be doing? praying, to be sure, for strength to take my place till the Master comes back. Then He shows how the judge lent a deaf ear to the poor widow. Now does not the Lord appear to do the same? It was the judge's wickedness it is His glory, and His long-suffering. Why did the judge not answer? Because of his selfishness! Why does not the Lord come back? Because of His long-suffering. The Lord seems to pass by our prayers, as the judge did pass by the poor woman; but the judge passed her by because of his selfishness! The Lord passes by, not willing that any should perish. But He will avenge, and the book of the Apocalypse comes in to make good the word. The day is coming when He will avenge these quarrels, but look to yourselves. Take care, while you are crying out against others, that you may be found right yourselves. Cherish and cultivate the hidden life of faith to which He has called you, and into which the Spirit He has given you would lead you. This completes the scene. Oh, if there is a thing to delight our hearts, it is to discover the personal, moral, and official glories of the Lord Jesus, and to see how Scripture harmonizes to bear this lesson undistracted to your heart and mine!

Luke 18

If we meditate on that portion from Luke 18: 9 down to Luke 19: 10, we have the mind of the Lord delivered on various detached subjects. It is a blessed thing to hear the mind of Christ on any single matter. His verdict entitles me to say I know how God thinks in such a case. This is a wonderful privilege. There is a difference between the gospels and epistles. The gospels introduce your heart to Christ, to find in Him its satisfaction; the epistles introduce the conscience to Christ, to find in Him its peace.

We find here the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Lord describes the condition of

soul in both of these. The mind of the Pharisee was a mind of religious pride and self-satisfaction. The mind of the publican was the mind of a poor brokenhearted one that could not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven. Having these two objects before Him, the Lord lets us know His thoughts about them; and when He gives forth His mind, does it not make you happy to know that He approved the publican and not the Pharisee? It is a comfort to know that the mind of the Lord thus suits itself to your mind. I could not say that the publican was the expression of a fully justified man. He was justified "rather" than the other. He would not, if fully justified, have cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Is that the proper condition of a believer? No. "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2: 20. That is not a poor publican, howling about his misery. He does not utter, again I say, the language of a consciously justified sinner. No doubt he was on the way to it, for "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Still there is comfort for us in this, when we see that the Lord values these first tremblings of the poor publican. Paul may have penetrated the innermost part of the sanctuary, and the poor publican be only at the brazen altar; but all these differences are very sweet to us who are conscious of our feebleness.

The next case is that of those who brought to Him young children, that He might touch them; "But when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them." Here we have to determine between the strangers and the disciples. Now do we not know that oftentimes those who are more familiar with the things of Christ, are less intimate? I think we see it here. These strangers had a better understanding of the Lord's mind than the disciples. They said, Stand by. No, said the Lord. Would you like the Lord to have approved the disciples rather than the strangers? I will answer for it, you would not. Now, am I not right in saying that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have done a worthy and wondrous work for us in introducing our hearts to Christ? When the heart is satisfied and the conscience is at peace, you are close upon heaven. You are pleased with the judgment of the Lord in this case. Some say, The Lord is better to us than our fears. A poor thought! He is better to us than our expectations. The strangers had said, Touch them, but He took them into His arms and pressed them to His bosom (Mark 10: 16). How He exceeds all our thoughts!

Next, we have the case of the rich young ruler. He brought an uneasy conscience, and said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He saw that the Lord was a good man, as we speak; and, uneasy, he saw the life of the Lord Jesus and watched it, and had no doubt that He had the secret of peace; so he came and put the question which the Lord beautifully answers by another, "Why callest thou Me good?" because you have no right to call even Jesus "good" if He is not "God over all." This man did not apprehend His glory, so the Lord would not accept the title from him. He knew how to answer every man. He did not say He was not good, but "Why callest thou Me good?" You have no title to call Me good. You know the commandments. Well, says the young man, All these things have I kept; what lack I yet? "Yet lackest thou one thing," said the Lord; "Sell all that thou hast, . . . and come, follow Me." What is the meaning of that? Why, that if I will put myself in the track of Christ, I must be like Christ. The Lord gave up everything and came down as an emptied man to serve others. Now, if you will be perfect, go and do likewise. And, when he heard this, he was very sorrowful, for he could not comply. How would you like the kingdom of God characterized? by selfishness or by unstinted benevolence? Oh, you will say, let selfishness perish here.

The young man could not give up everything, so the Lord says that is a condition unfit for the kingdom. You may be ashamed of your own wretched, selfish heart every day, but I will answer for it, you will justify the Lord's answer. Worldliness and selfishness have no power to breathe the atmosphere of the kingdom of God. Do not all these things please you? You have to carry on a warfare with the same mind in you as was in the Pharisee, the disciples, and the young ruler. Conflict is your

perfection here, as sinlessness will be in your glorified body. What a different Christ you would have had if He had approved the Pharisee rather than the publican, kept the little children at a distance, or allowed the selfishness of the young ruler! I do not doubt that the young man was struggling after the kingdom, or that he got into it by-and-by. I do not doubt that there was a labouring of soul that was given of God.

In the 31st verse the Lord turns to speak of His going up to Jerusalem, and of all that He must suffer there; but "they understood none of these things." No, they were very ignorant. We may observe that the Lord never speaks of His death without speaking also of His resurrection; in the same manner the prophets of the Old Testament never spoke of the judgments coming on their nation without speaking of the glories that should follow. So it should be with you and me. We may talk of death at times, but resurrection and glory should come in rapidly on our thoughts.

The Lord is still on the way, and I invite you again to look at the mind of Christ. Here is a collision between a blind beggar and the multitude, and the Lord comes in to decide between the two. Are you pleased with the decision He makes? I am sure you are. You would have had a very different Christ if He had joined the multitude in telling the blind man to hold his peace. Every stroke of the Evangelist's pen is full of the beauty and perfection of Jesus. The blind man asked who passed by, hearing the multitude, and they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Is that all you know of Him? "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." What acquaintance, tell me, had this man with Christ? He knew Him (and so must you and I) in His personal glory and in the boundlessness of His grace. He called Him, "Son of David," and when they told him to hold his peace, he cried "so much the more." That is how you and I must know Him. If He be not the Person He is, all He has done is worth nothing. If He be not man, as one with the children (Heb. 2), and God as alone sufficient to put away sin by Himself, it is all in vain. If we do not recognize the glory of His Person, the grace of His work is worth nothing. We must connect His grace and His glory. The confession of the blind beggar showed an apprehension of these two things. He did not take up their word, but called Him Son of David; and when they rebuked him, he "cried so much the more." But how did the Lord decide? What is it that you want?

His dignity is beautiful as He stops on His way at the bidding of a poor blind beggar. Joshua once bade the sun and moon to stand still in the heavens, but here the Lord of the sun, and the moon, and the heavens, stands still at the bidding of a blind beggar! That is the gospel the glorious, gracious One dispensing the grace of eternal healings to meet our degradation. We often admire Jacob, laying hold on the divine Stranger, but look at Bartimeus! He would not hold his tongue, but cried out till Jesus stood and said, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Take it, said Jesus.

Now look at Zaccheus. He saw the Lord pass, and went through the crowd to get up into the sycamore tree. In the narratives of the four gospels there are two cases that distinguish themselves from each other one is an exercised faith, as in Bartimeus; the other is a quickening of spirit. This was Zaccheus. In John, the second class of these prevails most, as in Andrew, Nathanael, Philip, and the Samaritan woman. These are all cases of quickening. In the two cases before us, we get samples of what I mean. Bartimeus was exercising faith; Zaccheus was getting life. It is a very simple story. He had a desire to see Christ. Who gave the desire? The life-giving Spirit of Christ. How beautiful to see eternal life beginning in such a seed! The power that clothed the desire is strongly manifested. Pressing through crowds to climb up trees was not the habit of this rich citizen. He made himself one of the rabble to gratify this commanding desire, and got up into a tree. The Lord called him down. He not only knew that there was a man in the tree, but He knew who he was; "Zaccheus, . . . come down." Is

there intimacy in all this? Are you pleased with it? I will answer for it, you are. So we have the Lord delivering judgment in detached cases, and such a judgment as contributes to make us happy.

You can easily conceive with what haste Zaccheus came down. They spent the rest of the day together, and what is the fruit of their communion? "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." His heart instinctively uttered itself a very different thing from the boastfulness of a self-righteous mind. The simple force of communion with his Lord enabled Zaccheus thus to speak. There was power when he pressed through the crowd, and there was power when he closed that day which had given him communion with Jesus.

Luke 19 and Luke 20

We will now read from Luke 19: 11 to Luke 20: 18. We are putting those parts together which seem to belong to each other, though the chapters may separate them. We have here another instance of the way in which the Lord applies His mind to the correction of the moral scene around Him. The human mind is historic; the divine mind is moral. Here they were near the city, so they thought: a little advance, and the kingdom must appear. This was taking a simply historic view, and we are never right unless we are taking a moral view of everything. The mind of Christ was a moral mind.

The Lord addresses Himself to the thought of the multitude in the parable of the nobleman. The Lord gets His title to a kingdom sealed in heaven but where is He to administer it? Not in heaven; He comes back to earth first. That is dispensational truth. He has, it is true, a kingdom now "The kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, and peace, and joy." But I speak here of His royal glory, hereafter to be displayed on the earth. He goes on in this strikingly fine parable to tell us of a certain nobleman, going into a far country, who called his servants and delivered them ten pounds; but his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. Here are three parties — the departed nobleman hid in a distant country for a time the servants who were to occupy till his return and the citizens. This is graphic of the moment in which you live. The Lord has gone to the distant heavens to transact many things. One of these is to receive for Himself a kingdom. In Daniel 7 you see the nobleman in the distant country, but this parable only tells you that He has gone there. It is beautiful to see the prophet and the Apostle thus mingling their lights together.

The citizens were at that moment the Jewish people, but the enmity of the *Jew* is now the enmity of the world at large, which has let the Lord Jesus know it will not have Him for king. That is the relationship the world bears to Christ. The servants are those who profess to serve Him while He is absent. There is a moral secret embosomed in this part of the parable. I am never really in the spirit of service if I do not remember that He is an absent and a rejected Lord. If I serve Him as a *King*, I do not do it, to say the least, in dispensational wisdom. I am not now a subject to a king, but a servant who has to recognize the sorrowful fact that his master has been rejected and insulted here. Is it not a tender thought, that the very sorrows and insults which have been heaped upon Him here are so many fresh claims on our affection? Service, to be in the right character, should be in the recollection that it is rendered to One who has been cast out and refused. You might do but little, but that little would have a precious quality if rendered in the affection of one who owns the insults the Lord has received.

Then He returns and gives the rewards. There is such a secret as rewards. When the kingdom comes to be parcelled out, I have not a bit of doubt that there will be rewards. But there was one that hid his talent; and now, mark the Lord's reply for your comfort. "Wherefore... gavest not thou my money into the bank?" He did not say, Why have you not traded with it? I may not have the energy and

activity of my brother, but the Lord would say here, Well, do not be afraid, if you have not energy to go out and serve Me; at any rate *own Me*, and put My money into the bank. But this man had no *spirit* of service; he did not know grace; he *feared*. As far as we have a legal mind, we are serving ourselves. That is this man. The best thought he had was to serve himself to come off free in the day of reckoning. So he was cut off as one that had no link with Christ. I love that "bank." If I have not the energy of my brother in service, at least let me own that I am not my own. but bought with a price. Let us cultivate in our souls the hidden spirit that says, Though I may be feeble, yet one thing, I will cleave to Christ-I am His and not my own.

How beautifully He links the next scene with what had gone before! There were two missions on which He sent His disciples; the first was to get the ass the second, to get the guest chamber. But the ass must precede the guest chamber. Do you see the beauty of that? You must distinguish His dispensational actings His rejection before His return. The mission to get the ass was that He might offer Himself to the daughter of Zion in glory. He was rejected and, as it were, asked to descend from off the ass so He must be a guest in this world and pass on to His cross.

Here we get the Lord in royal glory, seated on the ass, descending the Mount of Olives, and about to enter the city. The multitudes follow, with palm branches and exultation, and the King is seen in full beauty. God is taking the thing into His own hands. "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof." Jesus took the place of Jehovah-Creator in Psalm 24. He had a richer title to the ass than the owner of it had. The cattle on a thousand hills are His. The owner bows to His claim, and in He goes, in the midst of the acclamations of His people. But now the Pharisees say, "Master, rebuke Thy disciples." That was the heart of the nation exposing itself in the representatives of the people. The mind of the nation stood out in that saying "Master, rebuke Thy disciples." That was rejection. "We will not have this man to reign over us."

The Lord then laments over the city. Instead of being the city of peace, Jerusalem would have to go through another history altogether. Jerusalem is but a sample of the world in general, and because of the rejection of Christ, the world will have to go through a very different history than if it had been prepared for Him. The world has forced the blessed Lord up to heaven through His cross, and now it must go to the kingdom through its judgment. He went to display His beauty to the daughter of Zion, but the daughter of Zion was not prepared for Him, so He weeps over her and announces the judgment she brought upon herself. The world is not prepared for Him and the earth must pass to its rest through the judgments that will purge it of its defilements.

Now they suggested a bit of subtlety. But there was not a bit of subtlety in the Lord's mind as He answered them. He did not lay a snare for them, though it acted as a trap. His purpose was divine. John the Baptist being rejected, it followed that Christ Himself would be rejected. It was as much as to say, I will let God answer you. In John you have God's answer to your question. It was God's way to reach Messiah through John, and as he was rejected, so would Christ Himself be.

Now look a little at the next parable. Here is another "far country." "A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time." When was that? In the days of Joshua the Lord planted a goodly vineyard and left it in the hands of Israel and told them to till it. I need not tell you how judge after judge, prophet after prophet was raised up, and all in vain. Then said the lord of the vineyard, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves." Ah! BEWARE OF REASONING. So they cast him out of the vineyard. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?" This brings us just where the parable of the departed

noble brought us to judgment. "He shall come and destroy those husbandmen." If you put these two parables together, you will get a beautiful sketch of God's dealings from the days of Joshua till the Lord's return in glory. The labourers in the vineyard give us God's dealings with Israel till the rejection of Christ, the heir of the vineyard. The parable of the "ten pounds" carries us through the present age, up to the second coming, or the kingdom of Christ. He has now gone into the distant country, not to send back servants to seek for fruit, but to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return and execute judgment. I will just ask one thing: Is it the case that the Lord is seated in heaven till His enemies are made His footstool? You know it is. That thought in the 110th Psalm links itself with both these parables. There He is expecting till His enemies are made His footstool, and here His enemies are made His footstool. These are the beautiful luminous fragments that Scripture throws in here and there, and tells you to go over the field and gather them up, and when you have filled your basket, to bring them home and feed upon them.

Luke 20 and Luke 21

In our last meditation we reached verse 19 of chapter 20. Now we enter, according to Luke, on the scene of the Lord's last conflict with His enemies. In this world, not only our sins but our enmities gave Him work. That you find continually. His sorrows on the cross, our sins put Him to; His sorrows through life, our enmities put Him to.

Now the Jews come to Him (v. 21) with a subtle question. There were three great representatives of the people the Herodians, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. The Herodian was political religionist; the Sadducee, a free-thinking religionist; and the Pharisee was a legal religionist; but these were only different forms of enmity against God. The flesh can never form alliance with God's Christ. We must be born again for that. Now they come to Him with a question "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?" They thought they had Him, and it was a sharp-sighted, subtle question. At once, detecting the moral of the occasion, He approached it. "But He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? Show Me a penny."

The Lord had no purse. When He wanted to preach on a penny, He had to ask to be shown one. The Lord had the wealthiest purse that anyone ever had in the world, but He never used a mite of it for Himself. He asked, "Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's." Very well; the Lord was not going to treat Caesar as a usurper. He was the rod of God's indignation in the land of Israel. Whether Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, or Romans, they were no usurpers. So, when the Lord saw Caesar's coin passing through the land, He saw in it Israel's shame, not Caesar's usurpation. How beautifully He escapes the snare of the fowler! "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's." That was a golden rule ever since their captivity the rule of returned captives and so it is our rule. Do you treat the powers that are ordained of God as usurpers? No, but do not confound the rights of Caesar and the rights of God. If there is a collision between them, say with Peter, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." It was a short, terse sentence, replete with divine wisdom for Israel's condition at the moment.

Then when the Herodians are dismissed, the Sadducees come forth. The enmity of Satan is never weary. If foiled in the Herodian, he will try his hand in the Sadducee. Now, Master, here is the strange thing! The Lord is ready for them. He knows how to answer every man: You are confounding heavenly and earthly things. You are mistaking things altogether, but that ye may know that the dead are raised, even Moses called the Lord the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He is not a God of the dead, but

of the living. Now do you see the difference between the resurrection of the body, and a separate life in the spirit? If the only thing brought in had been a life in the spirit, do you see that God would not have been fully glorified? So Paul lets them know in 1 Corinthians 15 that if they do not believe in resurrection, they do not know the glory of God. The enemy has brought in death to both soul and body, and God must meet him in the place of his power. If, when Satan had destroyed the body, God had said, I will now make another creature, His glory would not have been fully shown. If He took you out of the body, to dwell with Christ in spirit, it might satisfy you, but not His own glory. That is the need of resurrection.

Now He had silenced them. He confounded the interrogators, and then He put a question that baffled them: "David therefore calleth Him Lord, how is He then his son?" They were baffled, and none can answer that question who do not see the Person of Christ, the precious mystery of the God-man. Is it not a sad and terrible thing that you have sent the Lord to the right hand of His Father, there to wait till His enemies are made His footstool? You will say, He has gone there to help me, a poor sinner. Yes, but you have sent Him there too. You have a very imperfect view, if while you see Him waiting on the necessity of poor sinners, you do not see Him waiting till He comes forth to judge His enemies. at the end of the world. His grace has put Him there as the High Priest of our profession; our enmity has put Him there as waiting for judgment. Chapter 21 derives itself from this; and here I would just say, there is an exceedingly beautiful thing attending the close of the Lord's ministry.

At the early part of His ministry, He was getting consolation for Himself, as at the well of Sychar, the man blind from his birth, etc. These were the fruits of His own labour; but, from the moment He leaves Jericho and meets Zaccheus, and up to the thief on the cross, these were cases on which He never spent a moment's toil. They were consolations provided by God. The Lord was about to enter upon the darkest scenes of His sorrow, and God provides here and there a cup of cold water to refresh Him on His way. His toil was over He was preparing for Gethsemane, and Gethsemane was preparing Him for Calvary; and God said to Him, as it were, Now, You shall not toil I will bring refreshment to an untoiling Jesus. He had not expended labour on Zaccheus, or on the thief on the cross. These were brought to Him.

Now, the Lord opens the story of "the times of the Gentiles." He is up there waiting till His enemies be made His footstool, and He gives a sketch of the times of the Gentiles the age of the depression of Israel. "The times of the Gentiles" intimates the supremacy of the Gentiles and the depression of Israel. He anticipates the whole of this age. In verse 24, He calls the whole age, "the times of the Gentiles," in which the Gentiles are supreme; and Israel has no land or heritage in the earth. [While it is true that Israel again has land as a nation, the specific words of our Lord should be carefully noted: "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21: 24. It was the city of their solemnities which they are not to regain until the period of Gentile supremacy runs out. The old city of Jerusalem, with its temple site and wailing wall, is in the hands of the Arabs, although it is a prime object of Israeli aspiration. They will probably get it from the beast of the revived Roman Empire when he makes a league with them for seven years (Dan 9: 27), but the Gentile soldiers of this Roman Empire will, in all likelihood, have to patrol it to guarantee its security. Thus the Lord's exact words are being literally fulfilled. Ed.]

Look in verse 7, when they ask Him, "When shall these things be?" "Take heed," He says, People will be promising you rest before rest comes. Do you remember the mistake of the people in Luke 19, when they thought the kingdom would immediately appear? The Lord here anticipates the very same thing. He says, Now, do not mistake; the time cannot draw near till there has been judgment. And that is what I am bold to say to the world now. You are not going to have a kingdom; the time of glory is

not drawing near, nor will it, till judgment has purged the earth. It is very different with the hopes of the Church. Judgment is on the other side of my glory. I shall be glorified when I stand before the judgment seat; but will the earth enter its glory before it is purged from its iniquity? He cannot be Lord of lords till He has girt His sword upon His thigh. The world is promising itself glorious things. Do not believe it. Then He tells them, "In your patience possess ye your souls," not in false expectation. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." That day has come, and Israel has been led captive into all nations. In verse 25, He anticipates the closing days of the times of the Gentiles. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, . . . and then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Then, when fearful signs come to pass then, ye Jewish remnant lift up your heads, for your jubilee draws nigh. It is the same word as redemption.

In Leviticus we read that every fiftieth year God re-asserted His own principles. For forty-nine years they might corrupt God's order, but in the fiftieth year they were sent back, every man to his own property, and the family order and estate was resettled. The moment we get things under God's hand again, we are keeping a jubilee. God knew that He was entitled to call His world, the world where His principles reign, a jubilee. Are you wearied of man's world? God's world will be a jubilee. Man's best world is to get his vanity gratified. Are we ashamed to have a heart for such enjoyment? So when these purgings and purifyings take place, then "lift up your heads." The sword of David is doing its business, and the throne of Solomon will be erected. "This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." You will never mind it. It is now the very same generation as in the days of Christ. The world may be advanced in the accommodations of civilized life, but does that mend it? God only can cure it, and that by making an end of it. If He were to put new wine into old bottles, the bottles would burst. Then, that beautiful admonition to everyone. Do not live as if this world were your portion. The life you nourish in this world is a very different thing from the one you have to cherish for the next. If you live as if this world were your portion, that day will come upon you as a thief. So if you and I are telling our hearts to eat, drink, and be merry, the coming of the Son of man will be as morally different as the coming of a thief at night would be circumstantially different to a family that went to bed in rest and quietness.

Luke 22

We have now come to a very serious chapter and must be a little particular on each verse. We have entered a solemn moment, and the impression produced on the mind is this: that all to whom we are introduced have their thoughts on death. Immediately we find the Lord's thoughts on death, but in a very different character. His thoughts on death are of laying the foundation of the eternal kingdom. They thought if they could but kill Him it would close the matter between Him and them forever. The doom of the old thing, and the foundation of the new and eternal thing are laid in death. The blessed Son of God entered into death, and laid the foundation of the new creation exactly at the point and spot where the old creation had its close. How the unfoldings of His ways are fraught with perfection.

We see all who represented religion found in this confederacy. You may lay it up as a sure and settled thing, that the religion of flesh and blood is ever at enmity with God.

We have remarked before, that in the close of the Lord's ministry two missions are glanced at; one was to get the ass to take Him in royal glory into the city; now here is a mission to get a room to eat the Passover in. The failure of the first mission makes place for the second. If the Lord had been accepted on earth, He had a title to fill the throne of David; but the citizens would not have Him, so, being cast out as a King, He must become a stranger. He offered Himself to crown the whole system of

the earth in royal beauty, but the earth would not have herself crowned; so what does He do? When He was refused as the headstone, He must be the chief cornerstone. That is the knitting of the two missions. The first was to get Him an ass and, as Lord of the fullness of the whole earth, He claims it from its owner. He says, so to speak, You are the owner, but I am the Lord. The man bowed to the claim, and so it will be by-and-by in millennial days the supreme Lordship of Jesus owned, and His sceptre kissed to the end of the earth. Now He sends out a mission, as a traveller going into a guest chamber. How the Lord knew how to transform Himself! He knew how to abound and how to suffer need; how to be abased and how to be exalted; to ride as a King into Jerusalem, and to go and take supper with a few poor disciples in an upper room! So to this day the Lord is a mere guest here, visiting His people. The master of the house is as ready to own His claim as the owner of the ass, so they sat down at the paschal table not yet the Lord's supper, but the Jewish Passover.

Now He says, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover [for it will be the last] . . . I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." That act blotted it out forever. Now, why did He not take the cup? It was not enjoined by the paschal ordinances. Now, said the Lord, I will not taste joy. As an obedient Jew, He celebrated the Passover, but joy was reserved for Him in the kingdom. Till then, He knows no earthly joy.

Now, He institutes His own supper. He did not eat of this. He merely gave it to them. He could not take of it. He does not want redemption purchase by blood. "This do in remembrance of Me." There is a deep and blessed secret in these words. That which in other days was anticipative, is now retrospective. The Lord's supper is a memorial. What has occasioned the transfiguration? "This is My body." The Son from the bosom of the Father took a body. "A body hast Thou prepared Me." And now we do not come on the principle that sin has to be remembered, but that sin has been remitted, put away; there is no more. The paschal table anticipated the coming of the Lord to die. Now He has spread a table at which I remember that I was once in my sins, but that sin has been put away. The body prepared of God has been broken [although a bone of Him was not broken; see John 19: 36] on the accursed tree, and now sin is put away forever. The whole character of the feast turns on the victim. The whole epistle to the Hebrews turns on the passage, "How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" If your conscience is purged, what do you do with your sins? Remember that you were once in them, but that you are in them no more dead and risen with Christ.

Now see again how the thoughts of all are on death. So are the thoughts of the Lord, but with this difference: they were thinking of Him as a martyr. He was thinking of a sacrifice the victim character He was about to fulfil. The Lord died in two characters. He died a martyr at the hand of man a victim at the hand of God.

Now we see that Judas was not simply one of the multitude. He holds a more awful character. He is the representative of apostate wickedness. His was not the common form of man's enmity to God. Judas represents apostasy. There has always been apostasy. Christendom at this moment, if it be not fully blown, is on its way to apostasy. The apostasy of Judas formed the link between Christ and His enemies.

Now we are introduced to the disciples, and (oh, terrible!) were they thinking of death? They were thinking of their own pride. "I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." Prov. 5: 14. Have you not been conscious, in the most solemn moments, of your vanity and lusts? In the midst of all these deep solemnities, the thoughts of the disciples were about their vanity. I wonder that a look of the Lord would not have stilled and hushed the workings of their carnal mind!

Now see the meekness of the Lord. The proud are flattered in this world. It likes the haughty and the great. There is a verdict on the world. "But ye shall not be so." Does it not give you relief to come to the mind of Christ? "But ye shall not be so"; and He says elsewhere, "Go and sit down in the lowest room." Oh, the beauty of His mind, as well as the perfection of His grace and the brightness of His glory! "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." Rebukes never separate. Suppose you are conscious that the Lord is rebuking you; you ought to be conscious that He is not putting you at an inch of distance from Himself. A rebuked Peter, James, and John went up to the hill of glory. The disciples had all been rebuked when He said to the Father in chapter 17 of John, "They have kept Thy word." Here they are rebuked, and yet the next moment He brings them nearer to Him, as the companions of His temptations, than the angels are. Did the rebuke put them at a single inch of distance?

In the kingdom of God there will be a table and a throne. The table is the symbol of personal family intimacy; the throne is the public display of glory. By a little word like that (v. 30), what a volume the Lord conveys to our hearts! We get the sanctuary of the family, and the outer places where the dignities of the throne will be displayed and shared. Now He turns to them, and they had earned it. If He never withdraws tenderness, He never withdraws discipline. The use of the rod never for a moment stills the pulses of the heart. "Simon, Simon," says the Lord, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He had sifted Christ as wheat. Why did Satan get into Judas but that he might sift Christ? and now he desired to sift the disciples.

You see this introduces Peter in a very special way. From the very beginning he showed characteristics of being a natural leader, and the Lord can use such if there is self-judgment and dependence on Him. When all the disciples fled, Peter afterward came back, but he failed miserably. His courage failed; everything failed but his faith in Christ, thanks to this intercession. Later when he saw the Lord, he rushed into the water to get to Him. Then, when he was converted, he could stand before councils; they could not make him a coward. So, when he was converted, he strengthened his brethren. We find the opening chapters of Acts verifying this. He was sifted; he failed in all but in faith; he was strengthened and he strengthened his brethren.

"And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?" The meaning of this is very simple. When He was with them, He sheltered them; the garment is the symbol of shelter. Now that He was about to be withdrawn, they must take His place and become a militant people. They must reckon on taking His place in the face of the world's enmity. These are a weighty thirty-eight verses the beginnings of laying that foundation on which creation itself is to rest for eternity. Christ died under the doomed old thing, to bring in a new eternal thing. Nothing was as old there. The joy will be as fresh when it has run ten thousand years as it was in the beginning. The new creation is ever new and ever young.

Luke 22: 39-71

We have reached chapter 22:39 and, as we were observing, we must be more particular with each verse, for each verse is pregnant with something. It is very blessed in this chapter to see how the Lord passes through different relations with the disciples, with His Father, and with His enemies. It is beautiful to mark the moral pictures that adorn that path. Now He came out; He left the supper table and went to the Mount of Olives. That is a mystic spot. Why do I call it so? There are various lessons to learn there. A mystery is the enclosure of a secret. For instance, Abraham taking his son up to Mount

Moriah was the incrustation of a secret. We find the Lord in these chapters in three conditions coming down the mount, ascending, and on the hill. As His royal descent was refused, we see Him making a wearisome ascent; and if we read Zechariah, we find Him again on the Mount, but it will split beneath His feet in judgment.

Now He is consciously leaving the disciples for the presence of His Father, and He leaves them with wholesome words: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." His business is now with the Father. And what is He saying? "If Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me." Surely this was part of His moral perfection. It ought to have been so. His love made Him a willing victim; but it would have been a blot on the moral beauty of His journey if He did not deprecate such a relative position to God as that He was about to enter into on the cross. Since it cannot be disposed of except He drink it, "not My will, but Thine, be done."

"And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." How do you interpret that word "strengthening"? It was not the same thing as "strengthen thy brethren." It did not extend beyond His frame. That is the office of angels. They are the messengers of providences. The *Holy Ghost* deals with your spirit. So I take it they were imparting some supporting virtue to His frame. It is a proof that He was not yet forsaken. We find nothing of that in the three hours of darkness. He was left in deep unfathomable solitariness. Not a ray of light from the countenance of God gladdened Him there. But as yet He was not made an offering for sin, and angels can come and strengthen Him. He is strengthened for a fresh agony. When He rose He came to His disciples and found them sleeping. They were *His* thought, not *He theirs!* He their thought? They could not watch with Him one hour. So it is now. He ever lives to make intercession for us. Do we live ever to love Him serve Him? He ever lives for you. Do you ever live for Him?

Now He is brought into His last relationship. He is plunged into the midst and thick of His enemies. "While He yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, . . . drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him." Then one of His disciples makes a mistake. It is a terrible thing to make mistakes. There is a class of mistakes that arise not merely from an imperfect understanding, but from a wrong condition of heart. That was the mistake of the disciples here. They had not been in Christ's company as they ought to have been. Can you conceive anything more distant from the Lord's heart than drawing the sword to smite the servant of the high priest? On His way to die, the just for the unjust, to see a hair of a poor sinner's head touched! I may mistake about the calling of the Church, or about coming glories, but there is another class of mistakes that you and I should keenly judge ourselves for. The Lord of course heals him.

Now mark verse 53. It gives a character to the moment. What is meant by this "hour"? How long did it continue? How is it distinguished from all that went before it, and all that followed after it? As to what went before, they could not touch Him till that hour had come. He must be a willing captive as He was a willing victim. But now the hour of the evening has arrived, and He becomes their captive. The moment you leave that hour (which stretches to the three hours of darkness) you have a new era altogether no longer the hour of the power of darkness, but the bruising of the woman's seed. Now He puts Himself into their hands. He was a willing captive now, as He was a willing victim on the cross. They took Him!

Did you ever, in the light of Scripture, consider what the heart of man is? You will tell me it is a wicked thing. Aye, that it is; but it is not only capable of wickedness, it is incurable, desperate. Conceive a man taking stones in his hand to batter and beat a face shining like an angel's! Could you conceive it? Look at the priests in the temple in the presence of the rent veil. They plotted a lie. Look at

the soldiers in the presence of the rent tomb. They consented to a lie. The riven waters of the Red Sea did not cure Pharaoh's heart. The shining countenance of the martyr Stephen did not cure the heart of the multitude. A rent veil did not cure the priestly heart, and a rent tomb did not cure the soldiers' hearts. Now the sight of the healed ear (for the blessed Lord is a divine surgeon here) in the presence of that they take Him. Is that a picture of the heart you carry? You may have different habitudes but the flesh is the same in all not only evil, but incurable. The watery walls did not cure it, and here in the very garden, they see Him performing a wondrous divine miracle of healing, and yet they take Him with murderous purpose. Tell me what you can do with a heart that has been proof against those things? Has hell had power to cure the devil? He may be overcome in Legion; out he goes into the herd of swine.

Now we have the little episode of Peter warming himself. Cannot you fancy him sunk down into humanity? He became not the companion of Jesus of Gethsemane, but of a poor man in the outer court of the palace. Here we have two things the crow and the look. How do you interpret them? They are symbols of very different things, but two things we must all have to do with conscience and Christ. The crow awakened his conscience; the look placed him with Jesus. I want to have an awakened conscience and an eye by faith directed to Jesus. Then let Jesus close the story of my soul. If we are not all conscious of the cock-crow and the look, we are not yet in the school of God. My intellectual activity about the things of God will not do. Conscience must be occupied, and faith must be occupied. "And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." But his faith did not fail. He may be sent through sorrow and tears, but his faith does not fail.

"And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him... And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led Him into their council, saying, Art Thou the Christ?" How He looks at the inquirer! Do you think we deal faithfully with one another? No; we are too fond of letting people think well of themselves, and we call it tenderness, but it is a vapid thing! You never find in Christ the human amiability that gratifies. There was love in every form of faithfulness, but no human amiableness. Now the Lord deals with their condition in answer to their question You will not deal with Me righteously You are set on mischief, and mischief you will have You are set on My blood, and My blood you will spill. Having convicted them, He rises up; "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." This is the exhibition of Christ in judicial power. In many ways we track Christ to heaven. We think we have disposed of the ascension when we say He rose and ascended; but you must track Him to the highest heavens in various characters: personally as with the Father in His priestly character as making intercession in the sanctuary as One whom earth has sent there, and whenever we get that form, we see Him ascending in judicial glory. That is presented here. He is not gone up to heaven as a sanctuary, but as being the place of power, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. In that character we view Him here.

Now we see the way in which He was viewed by the Gentiles, by the ecclesiastical and civil powers, that every form of society might be brought in guilty before God. Pilate and Caiaphas might be amiable men, but, as touching God, one and all stand guilty in a common revolted nature. Do you and I realize that the blessed Lord consented to walk such a path for us? We may well say that such love as that "passeth knowledge." May the Lord give us to receive it by faith, and feed on it by communion. Amen.

Luke 23

We are now going to meditate on chapter 23. "The whole multitude of them arose, and led Him

unto Pilate." With what skilfulness did they adapt themselves to the moment! When He was before the Jews, they brought a charge of making Himself the Son of God. Before the Roman governor, they bring a charge of making Himself a King. He had a right to both of these titles. Both these claims were brought and challenged in a human court. Thus everything has been gainsaid and everything will be vindicated. We see Him standing as challenged before man; we find Him by-and-by vindicated before God.

Now when Pilate revives the question, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" He answers, "Thou sayest it." It is a beautiful thing for you to carry conscious glory in a hidden shape. He avowed Himself a King when He was asked. It was a glory He constantly carried, but was constantly hiding. We should be conscious of dignities that would outshine the glories of the world; but we find the world in such a moral condition that we cannot display them. That was the life Jesus. He was consciously a vessel of glory, but morally under the necessity of hiding it.

How instructive it is to see the labouring of different states of souls! Nothing can be more striking than the story of Pilate. He had no enmity against Christ. He would have discharged Him if he could at the same time have preserved his character in the world.

The Jews' conduct was a mere carnal enmity against God. In Pilate you see the victorious struggle that the world makes in the conscience. Now, Pilate naturally wished to rid himself of an uneasy conscience. So, when he "heard of Galilee," he thought it was a little door of escape, and at once he took advantage of it. Ah, it will not do to get out by back doors. The subtlety of the human heart in wickedness seeks them.

So Pilate sent Him to Herod, and we find that, before Herod, He never uttered a word. Herod was unmixedly wicked. He did answer Pilate, because there was no enmity in his heart. He answered Caiaphas for the oath of God's sake, by which he adjured Him (Matt. 26: 63); but as for Herod, He has not a word for him. He passes from before him without opening His mouth. It is a terrible thing for God to be silent. It is better that He should be speaking to us by chastenings. "Be not silent to me: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." Ps. 28: 1. The silence of God is as if you put a man into a pit. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Hosea 4: 17. The intercourse between Herod and the Lord illustrates this. "And Herod . . . sent Him again to Pilate."

"For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast." We are entering on a moral moment of great solemnity. Why must he release one at the Passover? There is no direct commentary on it, but my own thought about it is that they claimed from the Roman governor a sign of the dignity that attached to this feast when the Lord of heaven and earth made a great deliverance for them. And in order to keep up the memorial of it they demanded that one should be delivered to them. The Passover was a memorial of the ancient dignity of the nation. We like some little relic of bygone dignities. Now at that time it so happened that there was a murderer in prison one "who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison." You could not go lower in moral acting than that. Now the question arises, Will they choose such a man as that, or the Prince of Life? We find Peter in the opening of Acts making much of that. What does it tell us? It is the deep, full sifting of the heart of man, and it tells me that the heart of man in Luke 23 is exactly what it was in Genesis 3. Man in Genesis 3 preferred the lie of the serpent to the truth of God. Man here preferred a murderer to the Prince of Life! and if you do not think you are a full-grown Adam, you are deceiving yourself. I see the Jew of Luke 22 practicing the Adam of Genesis 3. The God of grace, the God of life, the God of glory, given up for the serpent. A murderer was preferred, for "he was a murderer from the beginning." So it was here.

So Pilate "said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath He done?" Still struggling! Those battles are not settled in a moment. Conscience loves ease too well to yield in a moment. Pilate is in a field of battle till he is conquered. In this wondrous Volume we get man exposed and God revealed man shown to be an incurable moral ruin God revealed as a repairer of every breach. And He will go on repairing till He turns the howling of creation into the praises of creation. He begins with the conscience. If the conscience is not restored, it is nothing to you to see creation restored; but He begins where we want Him to begin. Have I any reason to doubt that if, as a sinner, my conscience is given to howl, He can give it the garment of praise? He is to do this in creation; by-and-by He will turn its groans into praises; and is not my conscience as worthy of His workmanship as creation?

Then Pilate gave sentence. He succumbed to pressure and condemned the guiltless.

Now we are introduced to the daughters of Jerusalem. The daughters of Jerusalem are not the women of Galilee. How do we distinguish between them? They are distinguished. It is another instance of the vast moral variety of Scripture. We get the disciples the women of Galilee the daughters of Jerusalem the centurion and Joseph of Arimathea. Are you not conscious of like varieties in the scene around you? It may puzzle and grieve you; but what is too big for you, roll over upon Christ. I can hardly tell where light begins and darkness ends. It is too much for me. I must leave it with God. Now, where must you put all these varieties? Do not put them anywhere. Leave them with Christ. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Do not seek to settle it. The angels will know how to clear the field by-and-by. I converse with people every day and, if I were asked, I should not know where to classify their souls. The women of Galilee were evidently "elect according to the foreknowledge of God." But what do you say of the daughters of Jerusalem? They were not among the crucifiers. They represent, I think, the soul of the remnant by-and-by, in the first moment of awakening. "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Ah, this self-forgetting character of the Lord! I do not know that it more wonderfully displays itself than in these last scenes. If you are in trouble, do you not feel privileged to think of yourself, and to expect others to do so too? What beautiful witnesses we have here of self-forgetting love. "Woman, behold thy son"; "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me"; "Father, forgive them."

Now we pass on to the cross. What do you say about the "spirit" (v. 46) ? Have you learned with calm conclusiveness that if the believer's spirit is now delivered from the body, it is with Jesus? When Stephen followed the track of his Master, he did it in life and in death. If they were battering his body here, the Lord Jesus was receiving his spirit there. Paul went to paradise simply as "a man in Christ." Men in Christ are independent of the body. He clothes the body with immortality, and the spirit with indestructible life. In His own Person the Lord was the first to recognize the spirit's going to the Father. He was the firstborn among many brethren, and the firstborn among many spirits.

Now we come to the confession of the centurion. Then Joseph of Arimathea seemed to get courage by the confession. He "waited for the kingdom of God." What are we to make of him? Why had he not, for these many years, cast in his lot with the followers of the Nazarene? Well, we do not know; we must leave him there. He boldly goes and claims the body of Jesus. It did not cause him much trouble to go to Pilate. Pilate had no enmity.

What a chapter! The Lord closing the old creation. The Sabbath of old celebrated its perfection; the death of Jesus celebrated its close. The old creation was doomed from the beginning, and if we have not a place in the new creation, touching God we are nothing.

Luke 24

We have now reached chapter 24, and here we might generally observe that the Lord takes the scene into His own hands. We observed when He was taken in the garden, that He recognized that moment as the hour of the power of darkness. Man was the principal then; man took Him, man nailed Him to the tree, thereby verifying the word, "This is your hour." Man was disposing of the scene as it pleased him. And so it went on till the three hours of darkness. Then God took it into His hands. That was the time when God bruised Him and made His soul an offering for sin.

It is very desirable that we should see the special characteristic of that moment. All through life, His Father's countenance was beaming on Him. Was He forsaken of His Father through life? Read His utterance in Psalm 16. But now, according to the prophetic voices, according to the premonitions of John the Baptist there He was God's Lamb. Then at once He became a conqueror. God did not wait for resurrection, to sanction the death of Jesus. He sanctioned it by rending the veil. This was not the public seal; but ere the appointed third day had come, for the public seal (of resurrection), God put His private seal on it. And the rapidity of it is beautiful. We cannot measure the time between the giving up the ghost and the rending of the veil (Matt. 27: 50, 51). That was the seal of the satisfaction of the throne. In two ways He was doing the will of God here. Through life His business here, as at the well of Sychar, was turning darkness into light. That was the will of the Father when He was a living minister. As a dying victim He was doing the will of the throne. The throne where judgment was seated was satisfied when Jesus gave up the ghost. One was doing the will of the Father; the other was doing the will of God in judgment. After that, having passed through man's hour and God's hour, we see Him in resurrection in His own hour. His own hour is eternity. How blessed to be in His company, to enter a bright and intimate eternity with Jesus.

We now see Him in resurrection, and we find many things here to invite attention. We find in the opening verses that as soon as the Jewish Sabbath was over, the women came with spices which they had prepared, and they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher; but they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. Now what do you say to all that? There is something exceedingly comforting in it. It is ignorance and affection mingled. It was ignorance that took them to look for the living among the dead; affection took them, counting the dead body of the Lord of more worth than all around. What are you to do with ignorant affection? Just what Christ did with it. He could appreciate it, but He was not satisfied with it. He will not have love in the place of faith. Love is the principle that gives; faith is the principle that takes. Which is the most grateful to Christ? He will tell you in this chapter. He will have us debtors. He will occupy the place of the "more blessed." Faith says, Lord, You shall have it so. Another has said, Faith is the principle that lets God think for us; and so to that I add, That puts God into the chief room. If I come naked and empty and make God everything, that is faith. The law makes man principal, and God secondary. Man is to be doing this and that, while God is passive. The gospel changes sides altogether. In the gospel God is the giver and you are the receiver. Here, instead of faith, was ignorant love. They had affection, but they did not understand the victory He had gained in their behalf. It is Christ that has visited me in my grave, not I that have visited Him in His grave. He is the living One, I am the dead one.

So they bring their spices and ointments to the tomb, and there the angels meet them. They were afraid. They were looking for a dead body they might well be startled by a glittering stranger. The angels were fresh from heaven, the witnesses of the risen and victorious Lord. They had not been thinking of that, so the angels put them to fear. And they said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?... He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee." That was a rebuke. Do you like to see love rebuked? It is not pleasant, but it is faithful. They were

about the business of love, but the business of unbelief too. So in everything God stands vindicated.

Then they remembered the words. How much mischief we get into by not remembering God's words! When the Lord Jesus was tempted, He had the word of God at hand, and by that simple word He could gain the victory in the battle. They do this piece of foolishness, because they had not remembered the simplest words that could have fallen on their ears. How sweet to see the God of all grace in intercourse with us even in our mistakes! Would you like a person to be always standing before a glass, fitting himself for your presence? You would rather find him at ease before you, and so would God. The rebuke was well meant and well deserved, but it was an excellent oil that would not break their heads (Ps. 141: 5). Now this light puts them on quite a different road. Let my mistakes be a link with Christ, rather than the Ephraim condition, "Let him alone." "Be not silent: lest... I become like them that go down into the pit." Ps 28: 1. All this is anything but that. They were well-deserved and sharp rebukes; but again I say, Let my mistakes put me in company with Jesus, rather than that I should not be in company with Him at all.

So they went and told these things to the apostles, "and their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." Now would you call the apostles Corinthians, who, by intellectual workings, denied the resurrection? or Sadducees, who, as a depraved sect, denied the resurrection? I could not say that. I should not put them among the Sadducees of Israel or the Corinthians of the Gentiles. How then do you account for their unbelief? Ah, it is hard to believe that God is doing your business in this world. It is much easier to us to do Christ's business than to believe that He has done ours. Not a form of human religion takes up that thought. So it was with the disciples. They could bring their spices and their ointments, but they were not yet able to believe the mighty fact that He had been doing their business. We think of Him as hard, and exacting, and watching above the clouds to find occasion against us. Their hearts had been as leaking vessels of the words of Christ, and they came as the living to the dead instead of believing that He, as the living, has come down to us, the dead. We will spend our days in penances, but we will not trust Him. Then we see Peter in the same plight. Peter! Is it possible! he that had made the very confession on which the Church is founded!

When Peter had to live the confession, he failed. The one among the eleven that ought eminently to have blushed was Peter. How you can distinguish a man from himself at times his condition from his experience! If he had known what he was confessing, he never would have thought of "the Son of the living God" as among the dead.

Then we leave Peter, and return to the Lord, in company with two disciples. He got the very same element in them. The only exception lay in the distant corner of Bethany. We do not find Mary and Martha at the sepulcher. They had already been at the tomb of their brother. Was it from want of love that they were not at the empty sepulcher? No, but from faith in Christ. Ignorant love brought the Galilee women there; intelligent faith kept the Bethany women aside.

Now He joins these two disciples on the road, as with gloomy clouded hearts they were going back to the city. What made them sad? It was unbelief. That sadness was attractive to Jesus. If the affection that took the spices to His tomb was delightful to Him, the sadness that gathered round their clouded hearts was delightful to Him too. It was reality. Do you not believe that the gospels give you little bits of eternity? The gospels give you intercourse between the Lord of glory and poor sinners, and eternity will give you the same intercourse. It is worth a world to have an intimate eternity with Christ. The gospels prepare our hearts for it, even now, by such confidence. Their confidence was won and retained, though the Lord never made an effort about it. He just threw Himself out on their hearts, and they took Him up as He was.

And He drew near and asked them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" And they said, "Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" We have turned our backs not only on Jerusalem but on all our expectations. This is the third day, and now we are going home. It is all over with us. He replied, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe" to believe what? "All that the prophets have spoken." That was the cure, and that was where they came short. Oh, how that should bind round your heart and mine every jot and tittle of God's Word! Then He showed them how Christ should suffer, and expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Now their reasonings turn into kindlings. What turned them? Jesus had interpreted Himself. How natural then that He should make as though He would go farther! He was hiding Himself under a veil, and, as a stranger, He would not intrude on them. "But they constrained Him." I do not thank them a bit I thank the kindlings they were enjoying for this piece of courtesy. We had better take up our thanks to the One to whom thanks are due. We know how it ended. Be sure the joy of eternity will never weary you. Kindlings will be there in seraphic order. Give me a seraphim mind within, and the glories of Jesus around. That will be heaven.

Luke 24: 33

We are closing the Gospel of Luke, and we still find the same thing that we were meditating on the last time the unbelief that lurked in their hearts touching the resurrection. Now the Lord sets Himself to dissipate it. It must be dissipated, for it is fatal to the faith of God's elect. Nothing could be a substitute for resurrection. The whole dealing of God with sinners depends on its being an accomplished fact. In several cases during His ministry we get the people expecting Him to interfere between sickness and death. But that was not God's way. The wages of sin is death. So now, He must go into death. He must meet the enemy in the place of his strength and defeat him there. In the history of Jairus's daughter, it was just that. He tarried so long that she died a beautiful witness that the Lord did not come to intercept death, but to defeat death. So in the case of Lazarus the Lord tarried till the sickness ended in death. They were all crying and bewailing howling over the ravages of death. That was the very place for the Son of God to display Himself. To be sure, He did heal and cleanse, but He came into the world not to interfere between sickness and death, but between death and life again. He is the holder of victorious life. Supposing He had met sickness and not death, nothing would have been done, for the wages of sin is death. Did He come to qualify the original judgment, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"? He did not. He came to meet it, suffer it, verify it, and get the victory on the other side of it.

When the two disciples are satisfied, they get back to the city to report what they have seen and, while they speak, Jesus Himself stands in the midst of them. There are many things for us to observe here. I will tell you a sweet thing. He not only rose, but He rose the same as He died. Could you put up with an altered Son of God? Though throned in glory this moment, He is the very same as He was at the well of Sychar. If you want to know what Christ is now, go and learn Him in the four gospels. Do you want a different Jesus than the one that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have introduced to you? Perhaps it is hard to understand that He is the same now in glory as He was here. It is part of the business of the post-resurrection scenes to assure us that He is the very, very same. Treasure that up in your souls. It will make the pathway to heaven easy. He has come into your world before ever He asked you to go into His, and the way to make the path there easy is to know that you will find, in yonder world of glory, the very same Jesus that came into your world. The Lord of the distant glories has been in the midst of my ruins, and has shown me that He is the same in the midst of the glories as

in the midst of the ruins. It is among the moral wonders of the gospel that the blessed Lord has taken such means to accommodate my eye and ear to future glories. He has given beautiful pledges of that.

As He entered the room, He said, "Peace be unto you." Had He ever said that before? Were those strange words on His lips? He was only redeeming His pledge. Before He died, He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." After He rose, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." That is another witness. Before He died He said, I will meet you in Galilee. Did He not take up the pledge? You may say that was a little thing, but whether big or little, a risen Christ makes good what a ministering Christ had promised. Circumstances cannot change Him. Ruins here and glories there have no power to touch Him. He said before He suffered, "I go to prepare a place for you." After He rose, He said, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father."

If you go through the post-resurrection scenes, you will be able to track a risen Christ in company with a ministering Christ. taking up the pledges and showing all the beautiful traits of character that He exhibited before. Do you ever think of sudden death? You may be borne without a moment's notice into His presence. Will it be a strange place to you? I may be a stranger to His circumstances, but not to Himself. Therefore, the more we acquaint ourselves with Jesus, the more we are in heaven already. It matters little about His palace if I know Himself. The blessed Lord wants to make us intimate with Himself. So in the post-resurrection scenes He lets us know that we know Him already.

Now we come to the verification of the fact of resurrection. Why is that such an important point? Suppose God had said, Satan has ruined your body, so I will take you to be with Me in spirit; it would have been verifying the victory of Satan over the body. Did God come into the world to do that? So the Apostle says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain." Then He makes us, in our glorified bodies, the witnesses of His victory. Resurrection was not only the seal of His victory. He has made an atonement, and the throne has owned it by raising the Surety from the dead; but not only so, it is necessary to see that He has got a victory in this world; so to verify this, the Lord wonderfully condescends. "He said unto them, Have ye here any meat?" Why was all that? Simply to verify that it was no mere spirit that stood before them. The Lord came to fight a battle for you palpable flesh and blood. Palpable manhood had been destroyed palpable manhood must be redeemed. Having established the fact in the 44th verse, He makes all to hang on it. Then having recited what He had once told them, He here knits His present ministry with what had gone before. He opens to them in law, prophets, and Psalms, the things concerning Himself. We see something like this in His dealings with Peter. He had said, "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." That came to pass. Then the Lord looked at him. He had awakened his conscience by the crow; He relinked him with Himself by the look. When the Lord rose, He took up Peter exactly where He had left him. He did not want to awaken his conscience again, or relink him with Himself again; but He took him up at the critical point where He had left him. He puts him into the ministry again.

The Lord knows the path of your spirit and will take you up exactly where you are. He had told them while He was with them that all things should be accomplished, and now He gives them an opened understanding (which He had not done before), and sits down to give them a lecture on them. It is beautiful to see how He educates us. What a wonderful moment! and that moment has been continued to this moment. That was a moment that characterized the present dispensation that on the warranty of His death remission of sins should be preached to every poor sinner. In one sense we have never got beyond it, and we never shall till the last of the elect is brought in. Now He has done everything; and, as a preacher to the world, He was silent. He had declared remission of sins to a world of sinners. As an evangelist, I take leave of Jesus there. As a high priest, we have not yet fully seen Him, but, as an evangelist, that was a stereotyped moment of His ministry. He cannot add to that. He

has told me, as belonging to a world of sinners, that through death and resurrection remission of sins is preached to me.

Now He led them out to Bethany. I believe it was a silent walk. If my spirit is drinking in the simplicity of such a gospel, it will be in deep-toned, silent satisfaction of soul. "And He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." That was priestly service. There He "ever lives." I never have done with His uplifted hands, and in that attitude He was taken up to heaven to carry on His priesthood on high. What effect has all this on you and me? to look at an evangelist Jesus giving peace to the conscience, and then see Him going up to heaven in the act of blessing! What effect had it on the disciples? The whole character of their religion was changed. They were no longer trafficking with Moses. Their service became that of eucharistic priesthood. They went back to the city with great joy, "And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Can anything be more divine? Nothing. And there Christ takes leave of you. The heavens will retain Him till the times of refreshing; but have you lost Him? Could He give a more graphic impression than He has done here? He has accomplished redemption and He ever lives to bless you. Go to your Jerusalem, and be ever praising and blessing Him.

There it drops. "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness." The trail of the serpent is everywhere, but in such shining paths as I see the feet of Jesus treading here. What He lays His hand to, He accomplishes to perfection.