

# CHAPTER 20

We have four things in this chapter.

- I.** The parable of the labourers in the vineyard (v. 1-16).
- II.** A prediction of Christ's approaching sufferings (v. 17-19).
- III.** The petition of two of the disciples, by their mother, reproved (v. 20-28).
- IV.** The petition of the two blind men granted, and their eyes opened (v. 29-34).

## Ⓜ MATTHEW 20:1-16

### THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

This parable of the labourers in the vineyard is intended,

**I.** To represent to us *the kingdom of heaven* (v. 1), that is, the way and method of the gospel dispensation. The laws of that kingdom are not wrapt up in parables, but plainly set down, as in the sermon upon the mount; but the mysteries of that kingdom are delivered in parables, in sacraments, as here and Matthew 13. The duties of Christianity are more necessary to be known than the notions of it; and yet the notions of it are more necessary to be illustrated than the duties of it; which is that which parables are designed for.

**II.** In particular, to represent to us that concerning the kingdom of heaven, which he had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, that *many that are first shall be last, and the last, first*; with which this parable is connected; that truth, having in it a seeming contradiction, needed further explication.

Nothing was more a mystery in the gospel dispensation than the rejection of the Jews and the calling in of the Gentiles; so the apostle speaks of it (~~Ⓜ~~ Ephesians 3:3-6); that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs: nor was any thing more provoking to the Jews than the intimation of it. Now this seems to be the principal scope of this parable, to show that the Jews should be first called into the vineyard, and many of them should come at the call;

but, at length, the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should receive it, and be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews; should be *fellow-citizens with the saints*, which the Jews, even those of them that believed, would be very much disgusted at, but without reason.

But the parable may be applied more generally, and shows us,

1. That God is debtor to no man; a great truth, which the contents in our Bible give as the scope of this parable.
2. That many who begin last, and promise little in religion, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at greater attainments in knowledge, grace, and usefulness, than others whose entrance was more early, and who promised fairer. Though Cushi gets the start of Ahimaaz, yet Ahimaaz, choosing *the way of the plain*, outruns Cushi. John is swifter of foot, and comes *first to the sepulchre*: but Peter has more courage, and goes *first into it*. Thus *many that are last shall be first*. Some make it a caution to the disciples, who had boasted of their timely and zealous embracing of Christ; they had left all, to follow him; but let them look to it, that they keep up their zeal; let them press forward and persevere; else their good beginnings will avail them little; they that seemed to be *first*, would be *last*. Sometimes those that are converted later in their lives, outstrip those that are converted earlier. Paul was *as one born out of due time, yet came not behind the chiefest of the apostles*, and outdid those that were in Christ before him. Something of affinity there is between this parable and that of the prodigal son, where he that returned from his wandering, was as dear to his father as he was, that never went astray; *first and last alike*.
3. That *the recompence of reward* will be given to the saints, not according to the time of their conversion, but according to the preparations for it by grace in this world; not according to the seniority (<sup>443</sup>Genesis 43:33), but *according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. Christ had promised the apostles, who followed him *in the regeneration*, at the beginning of the gospel dispensation, great glory (<sup>408</sup>Matthew 19:38); but he now tells them that those who are in like manner faithful to him, even in the latter end of the world, shall have the same reward, shall *sit with Christ on his throne*, as well as the apostles, (<sup>425</sup>Revelation 2:26-3:21). Sufferers for Christ in the latter days, shall have the same reward with the martyrs and confessors of the primitive times, though they are

more celebrated; and faithful ministers now, the same with the first fathers.

We have two things in the parable; the *agreement* with the labourers, and the *account* with them.

**(1.)** Here is the agreement made with the labourers (v. 1-7); and here it will be asked, as usual,

**[1.]** Who hires them? *A man that is a householder.* God is the great Householder, *whose we are, and whom we serve;* as a householder, he has work that he will have to be done, and servants that he will have to be doing; he has a great family in heaven and earth, which is named from Jesus Christ (<sup>4085</sup>Ephesians 3:15), which he is Owner and Ruler of. God hires labourers, not because he needs them or their services (for, *if we be righteous, what do we unto him?*), but as some charitable generous householders keep poor men to work, in kindness to them, to save them from idleness and poverty, and pay them for working for themselves.

**[2.]** Whence they are hired? Out of *the market-place*, where, till they are hired into God's service, they *stand idle* (v. 3), *all the day idle* (v. 6). Note, *First*, The soul of man stands ready to be hired into some service or other; it was (as all the creatures were) created to work, and is either a *servant to iniquity*, or a *servant to righteousness*, <sup>4110</sup>Romans 6:19. The devil, by his temptations, is *hiring labourers* into his field, to *feed swine*. God, by his gospel, is *hiring labourers into his vineyard, to dress it, and keep it*, paradise-work. We are put to our choice; for hired we must be (<sup>4125</sup>Joshua 24:15); *Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.* *Secondly*, Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle; a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may really be called *a state of idleness*; sinners are doing nothing, nothing to the purpose, nothing of the great work they were sent into the world about, nothing that will pass well in the account. *Thirdly*, The gospel call is given to those that *stand idle in the market-place*. The market-place is *a place of concourse*, and there *Wisdom cries* (<sup>4110</sup>Proverbs 1:20, 21); it is a place of sport, there the *children are playing* (<sup>4115</sup>Matthew 11:16); and the gospel calls us from vanity to seriousness; it is a place of business, of noise and hurry; and from that we are called to retire. "Come, come from this market-place."

**[3.]** What are they hired to do? To labour in his vineyard. Note, *First*, The church is God's vineyard; it is of his planting, watering, and fencing; and

the fruits of it must be to his honour and praise. *Secondly*, We are all called upon to be labourers in this vineyard. The work of religion is vineyard-work, pruning, dressing, digging, watering, fencing, weeding. We have each of us our own vineyard to keep, our own soul; and it is God's and to be kept and dressed for him. In this work we must not be slothful, not loiterers, but *labourers*, working, and *working out our own salvation*. Work for God will not admit of trifling. A man may go idle to hell; but he that will go to heaven, must be busy.

[4.] What shall be their wages? He promises, *First*, *A penny*, v. 2. The Roman penny was, in our money, of the value of a sevenpence half-penny, a day's wages for a day's work, and the wages sufficient for a day's maintenance. This doth not prove that the reward of our obedience to God is *of works*, or *of debt* (no, it is *of grace, free grace*, ~~808~~Romans 4:4), or that there is any proportion between our services and heaven's glories; no, when we have done all, *we are unprofitable servants*; but it is to signify that there is a reward set before us, and a sufficient one. *Secondly*, *Whatsoever is right*, v. 4-7. Note, God will be sure not to be behind-hand with any for the service they do him: never any lost by working for God. The crown set before us is *a crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give*.

[5.] For what term are they hired? For *a day*. It is but a day's work that is here done. The time of life is the day, in which *we must work the works of him that sent us* into the world. It is a short time; the reward is for eternity, the work is but for *a day*; man is said *to accomplish, as a hireling, his day*, ~~846~~Job 14:6. This should quicken us to expedition and diligence in our work, that we have but a little time to work in, and *the night* is hastening on, *when no man can work*; and if our great work be undone when our day is done, we are undone for ever. It should also encourage us in reference to the hardships and difficulties of our work, that it is but *for a day*; the approaching *shadow, which the servant earnestly desireth*, will bring with it both rest, and *the reward of our work*, ~~872~~Job 7:2. Hold out, faith, and patience, yet a little while.

[6.] Notice is taken of the several hours of the day, at which the labourers were hired. The apostles were sent forth at *the first and third hour* of the gospel day; they had a first and a second mission, while Christ was on earth, and their business was to call in the Jews; after Christ's ascension, about *the sixth and ninth hour*, they went out again on the same errand,

*preaching the gospel to the Jews only, to them in Judea first, and afterward to them of the dispersion; but, at length, as it were about the eleventh hour, they called the Gentiles to the same work and privilege with the Jews, and told them that in Christ Jesus there should be no difference made between Jew and Greek.*

But this may be, and commonly is, applied to the several ages of life, in which souls are converted to Christ. The common call is promiscuous, to come and work in the vineyard; but the effectual call is particular, and it is *then* effectual when we come at the call.

*First*, Some are effectually called, and begin to work in the vineyard when they are very young; are sent in early in the morning, whose tender years are seasoned with grace, and the remembrance of their Creator. John the Baptist was *sanctified from the womb*, and therefore *great* (<sup>4115</sup>Luke 1:15); Timothy *from a child* (<sup>3115</sup>2 Timothy 3:15); Obadiah *feared the Lord from his youth*. Those that have such a journey to go, had need set out betimes, the sooner the better.

*Secondly*, Others are savingly wrought upon in middle age; *Go work in the vineyard, at the third, sixth, or ninth hour*. The power of divine grace is magnified in the conversion of some, when they are in the midst of their pleasures and worldly pursuits, as Paul. God has work for all ages; no time amiss to turn to God; none can say, "It is all in good time;" for, whatever hour of the day it is with us, the time past of our life may suffice that we have served sin; *Go ye also into the vineyard*. God turns away none that are willing to be hired, for *yet there is room*.

*Thirdly*, Others are hired into the vineyard in old age, *at the eleventh hour*, when *the day of life is far spent*, and there is but *one hour* of the twelve remaining. None are hired at the twelfth hour; when life is done, opportunity is done; but "while there is life, there is hope."

1. There is hope *for* old sinners; for if, in sincerity, they turn to God, they shall doubtless be accepted; true repentance is never too late. And,

2. There is hope *of* old sinners, that they may be brought to true repentance; nothing is too hard for Almighty grace to do, it *can change the Ethiopian's skin, and the leopard's spots*; can set those to work, who have contracted a habit of idleness. Nicodemus may *be born again when he is old*, and *the old man may be put off, which is corrupt*.

Yet let none, upon this presumption, put off their repentance till they are old. These were *sent into the vineyard*, it is true, *at the eleventh hour*; but nobody had hired them, or offered to hire them, before. The Gentiles came in *at the eleventh hour*, but it was because the gospel had not been before preached to them. those that have had gospel offers made them *at the third, or sixth hour*, and have resisted and refused them, will not have that to say for themselves at the eleventh hour, that these had; *No man has hired us*; nor can they be sure that any man will hire them at the ninth or eleventh hour; and therefore not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that *now is the accepted time; if we will hear his voice*, it must be *to-day*.

(2.) Here is the account with the labourers. Observe,

[1.] When the account was taken; *when the evening was come*, then, as usual, the day-labourers were called and paid. Note, Evening time is the reckoning time; the particular account must be given up in the evening of our life; for after death cometh the judgment. Faithful labourers shall receive their reward when they die; it is deferred till then, that they may wait with patience for it, but no longer; for God will observe his own rule, *The hire of the labourers shall not abide with thee all night, until the morning*. See <sup><5245></sup>Deuteronomy 24:15. When Paul, that faithful labourer, departs, he is with Christ presently. The payment shall not be wholly deferred till *the morning of the resurrection*; but then, in the evening of the world, will be the general account, when *every one shall receive according to the things done in the body*. When time ends, and with it the world of work and opportunity, then the state of retribution commences; then call the labourers, and give them their hire. Ministers call them into the vineyard, to do their work; death calls them out of the vineyard, to receive their penny: and those to whom the call into the vineyard is effectual, the call out of it will be joyful. Observe, They did not come for their pay till they were called; we must with patience wait God's time for our rest and recompence; go by our master's clock. *The last trumpet, at the great day, shall call the labourers*, <sup><5146></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:16. *Then shalt thou call*, saith the good and faithful servant, *and I will answer*. In calling the labourers, they must begin from the last, and so to the first. Let not those that come in at the eleventh hour, be put behind the rest, but, lest they should be discouraged, call them first. *At the great day, though the dead in Christ shall rise first, yet they which are alive and remain, on whom the ends of the world (the eleventh hour of its day) comes, shall be*

*caught up together with them in the clouds; no preference shall be given to seniority, but every man shall stand in his own lot at the end of the days.*

[2.] What the account was; and in that observe,

*First*, The general pay (v. 9, 10); *They received every man a penny.* Note, *All that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, shall undoubtedly obtain eternal life* (~~401~~ Romans 2:7), not as wages for the value of their work, but as the gift of God. Though there be degrees of glory in heaven, yet it will be to all a complete happiness. They that come from the east and west, and so come in late, that are picked up out of *the highways and the hedges, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, at the same feast, ~~401~~ Matthew 7:11. In heaven, every vessel will be full, brimful, though every vessel is not alike large and capacious. In the distribution of future joys, as it was in the gathering of the manna, he that shall gather much, will have nothing over, and he that shall gather little, will have no lack, ~~403~~ Exodus 16:18. Those whom Christ fed miraculously, though of different sizes, *men, women, and children, did all eat, and were filled.*

The giving of a whole day's wages to those that had not done the tenth part of a day's work, is designed to show that God distributes his rewards by *grace* and *sovereignty*, and not of *debt*. The best of the labourers, and those that begin soonest, having so many empty spaces in their time, and their works not being filled up before God, may truly be said to labour in the vineyard scarcely one hour of their twelve; but because *we are under grace*, and *not under the law*, even such defective services, done in sincerity, shall not only be accepted, but by free grace richly rewarded. Compare ~~410~~ Luke 17:7, 8, with ~~412~~ Luke 12:37.

*Secondly*, The particular pleading with those that were offended with this distribution in gavel-kind. The circumstances of this serve to adorn the parable; but the general scope is plain, that *the last shall be first*. We have here,

**1.** The offence taken (v. 11, 12); *They murmured at the good man of the house;* not that there is, or can be, any discontent or murmuring in heaven, for that is both guilt and grief, and in heaven there is neither; but there may be, and often are, discontent and murmuring concerning heaven and heavenly things, while they are in prospect and promise in this world. This signifies the jealousy which the Jews were provoked to by the admission

of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven. As the elder brother, in the parable of the prodigal, repined at the reception of his younger brother, and complained of his father's generosity to him; so these labourers quarrelled with their master, and found fault, not because they had not enough, so much as because others were made *equal* with them. They boast, as the prodigal's elder brother did, of their good services; *We have borne the burthen and heat of the day*; that was the most they could make of it. Sinners are said to *labour in the very fire* (~~ABB~~Habakkuk 2:13), whereas God's servants, at the worst, do but labour in the sun; not in the heat of the iron furnace, but only in the heat of the day. Now *these last have worked but one hour*, and that too in the cool of the day; and yet *thou hast made them equal with us*. The Gentiles, who are newly called in, have as much of the privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah as the Jews have, who have so long been labouring in the vineyard of the Old-Testament church, under the yoke of the ceremonial law, in expectation of that kingdom. Note, There is a great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and other too much, of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little, in the work of God. Very apt we all are to undervalue the deserts of others, and to overvalue our own. Perhaps, Christ here gives an intimation to Peter, not to boast too much, as he seemed to do, of his having *left all to follow Christ*; as if, because he and the rest of them had borne the burthen and heat of the day thus, they must have a heaven by themselves. It is hard for those that do or suffer more than ordinary for God, not to be elevated too much with the thought of it, and to expect to merit by it. Blessed Paul guarded against this, when, though *the chief of the apostles*, he owned himself to be *nothing*, to be *less than the least of all saints*.

**2.** The offence removed. Three things the master of the house urges, in answer to this ill-natured surmise.

**(1.)** That the complainant had no reason at all to say he had any wrong done to him, v. 13, 14. Here he asserts his own justice; *Friend, I do thee no wrong*. He calls him *friend*, for in reasoning with others we should use soft words and hard arguments; if our inferiors are peevish and provoking, yet we should not thereby be put into a passion, but speak calmly to them.

**[1.]** It is incontestably true, that God can do no wrong. This is the prerogative of the King of kings. *Is there unrighteousness with God?* The apostle startles at the thought of it; *God forbid!* ~~ABB~~Romans 3:5, 6. His

word should silence all our murmurings, that, whatever God does to us, or withholds from us, he does us no wrong.

[2.] If God gives that grace to others, which he denies to us, it is kindness to them, but no injustice to us; and bounty to another, while it is no injustice to us, we ought not to find fault with. Because it is free grace, that is given to those that have it, boasting is for ever excluded; and because it is free grace, that is withheld from those that have it not, murmuring is for ever excluded. Thus *shall every mouth be stopped, and all flesh be silent before God.*

To convince the murmurer that he did no wrong, he refers him to the bargain: “*Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? And if thou hast what thou didst agree for, thou hast no reason to cry out of wrong; thou shalt have what we agreed for.*” Though God is a debtor to none, yet he is graciously pleased to make himself a debtor by his own promise, for the benefit of which, through Christ, believers agree with him, and he will stand to his part of the agreement. Note, It is good for us often to consider what it was that we agreed with God for. *First*, Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; they choose *their portion in this life* (~~174~~ Psalm 17:14); in these things they are willing to *have their reward* (ch. 6:2, 5), *their consolation* (~~172~~ Luke 6:24), *their good things* (~~175~~ Luke 16:25); and with these they shall be put off, shall be cut off from spiritual and eternal blessings; and herein God does them no wrong; they have what they chose, the penny they agreed for; *so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it*; it is conclusive against them. *Secondly*, Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and they must remember that they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take God’s word for it? Thou didst; and wilt thou go and agree with the world? Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all, and to take up with nothing short of it? And wilt thou seek for a happiness in the creature, or think from thence to make up the deficiencies of thy happiness in God?

He therefore,

**1.** Ties him to his bargain (v. 14); *Take that thine is, and go thy way.* If we understand it of that which is ours by debt or absolute propriety, it would be a dreadful word; we are all undone, if we be put off with that only which we can call our *own*. The highest creature must go away into nothing, if he must go away with that only which is his own: but if we

understand it of that which is ours by *gift*, the free gift of God, it teaches us *to be content with such things as we have*. Instead of repining that we have no more, let us take what we have, and be thankful. If God be better in any respect to others than to us, yet we have no reason to complain while he is so much better to us than we deserve, in giving us our penny, though we are unprofitable servants.

**2.** He tells him that those he envied should fare as well as he did; “*I will give unto this last, even as unto thee; I am resolved I will.*” Note, The unchangeableness of God’s purposes in dispensing his gifts should silence our murmurings. If he will do it, it is not for us to gainsay; for *he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Neither giveth he an account of any of his matters;* nor is it fit he should.

**(2.)** He had no reason to quarrel with the master; for what he gave was absolutely his own, v. 15. As before he asserted his justice, so here his sovereignty; *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?* Note,

**[1.]** God is the Owner of all good; his propriety in it is absolute, sovereign, and unlimited.

**[2.]** He may therefore give or withhold his blessings, as he pleases. What we have, is not our *own*, and therefore *it is not lawful for us to do what we will with it;* but what God has, is his own; and this will justify him, *First,* In all the disposals of his providence; when God takes from us that which was dear to us, and which we could ill spare, we must silence our discontents with this; *May he not do what he will with his own? Abstulit, sed et dedit — He hath taken away; but he originally gave.* It is not for such depending creatures as we are to quarrel with our Sovereign. *Secondly,* In all the dispensations of his grace, God gives or withholds the means of grace, and the Spirit of grace, as he pleases. Not but that there is a counsel in every will of God, and what seems to us to be done arbitrarily, will appear at length to have been done wisely, and for holy ends. But this is enough to silence all murmurs and objectors, that God is sovereign Lord of all, and *may do what he will with his own.* We are in his hand, as clay in the hands of a potter; and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or strive with him.

**(3.)** He had no reason to envy his fellow servant, or to grudge at him; or to be angry that he came into the vineyard no sooner; for he was not sooner called; he had no reason to be angry that the master had given him wages

for the whole day, when he had idled away the greatest part of it; for *Is thine eye evil, because I am good?* See here,

[1.] The nature of envy; It is an evil eye. The eye is often both the inlet and the outlet of this sin. *Saul saw that David prospered, and he eyed him,* ~~189~~ 1 Samuel 18:9, 15. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. What can have more evil in it? It is grief to ourselves, anger to God, and ill-will to our neighbour; and it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour, in it; *it is an evil, an only evil.*

[2.] The aggravation of it; “It is because I am good.” Envy is unlikeness to God, who is good, and doeth good, and delighteth in doing good; nay, it is an opposition and contradiction to God; it is a dislike of his proceedings, and a displeasure at what he does, and is pleased with. It is a direct violation of both the two great commandments at once; both that of love to God, in whose will we should acquiesce, and love to our neighbour, in whose welfare we should rejoice. Thus man's badness takes occasion from God's goodness to be more exceedingly sinful.

*Lastly,* Here is the application of the parable (v. 16), in that observation which occasioned it (~~189~~ Matthew 19:30); *So the first shall be last, and the last first.* There were many that followed Christ now in the regeneration, when the gospel kingdom was first set up, and these Jewish converts seemed to have got the start of others; but Christ, to obviate and silence their boasting, here tells them,

**1.** That they might possibly be outstripped by their successors in profession, and, though they were before others in profession, might be found inferior to them in knowledge, grace, and holiness. The Gentile church, which was as yet unborn, the Gentile world, which as yet stood *idle in the market-place*, would produce greater numbers of eminent, useful Christians, than were found among the Jews. More and more excellent shall be *the children of the desolate than those of the married wife,* ~~250~~ Isaiah 54:1. Who knows but that the church, in its old age, may be more fat and flourishing than ever, to show that the Lord is upright? Though primitive Christianity had more of the purity and power of that holy religion than is to be found in the degenerate age wherein we live, yet what *labourers* may be *sent into the vineyard in the eleventh hour of the church's day*, in the Philadelphian period, and what plentiful effusions of the Spirit may then be, above what has been yet, who can tell?

2. That they had reason to fear, lest they themselves should be found hypocrites at last; for *many are called but few chosen*. This is applied to the Jews (<sup><424></sup>Matthew 22:14); it was so then, it is too true still; many are called with a common call, that are not chosen with a saving choice. All that are chosen from eternity, are effectually called, *in the fulness of time* (<sup><483></sup>Romans 8:30), so that in making our effectual calling sure we *make sure our election* (<sup><610></sup>2 Peter 1:10); but it is not so as to the outward call; *many are called*, and yet refuse (<sup><302></sup>Proverbs 1:24), nay, as they are called to God, so they go from him (<sup><310></sup>Hosea 11:2, 7), by which it appears that they were not chosen, for *the election will obtain*, <sup><611></sup>Romans 11:7. Note, There are but few *chosen* Christians, in comparison with the many that are only *called* Christians; it therefore highly concerns us to build our hope for heaven upon the rock of an eternal choice, and not upon the sand of an external call; and we should fear lest we be found but seeming Christians, and so should really come short; nay, lest we be found blemished Christians, and so should *seem to come short*, <sup><304></sup>Hebrews 4:1.

## <sup><417></sup>MATTHEW 20:17-19

### THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST PREDICTED

This is the third time that Christ gave his disciples notice of his approaching sufferings; he was not going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and to offer up himself the great Passover; both must be done at Jerusalem: there *the passover must be kept* (<sup><615></sup>Deuteronomy 12:5), and there a prophet must perish, because there the great Sanhedrim sat, who were judges in that case, <sup><433></sup>Luke 13:33. Observe,

**I.** The privacy of this prediction; *He took the twelve disciples apart in the way*. This was one of those things which were told to them in *darkness*, but which they were afterward to *speak in the light*, <sup><412></sup>Matthew 10:27. His secret was with them, as his friends, and this particularly. It was a hard saying, and, if any could bear it, they could. They would be more immediately exposed to peril with him, and therefore it was requisite that they should know of it, that, being fore-warned, they might be fore-armed. It was not fit to be spoken publicly as yet,

1. Because many that were cool toward him, would hereby have been driven to turn their backs upon him; the scandal of the cross would have frightened them from following him any longer.

2. Because many that were hot for him, would hereby be driven to take up arms in his defense, and it might have occasioned *an uproar among the people* (<sup>4165</sup>Matthew 26:5), which would have been laid to his charge, if he had told them of it publicly before: and, besides that such methods are utterly disagreeable to the genius of his kingdom, which is not of this world, he never countenanced any thing which had a tendency to prevent his sufferings. This discourse was not in the synagogue, or in the house, but *in the way*, as they travelled along; which teaches us, in our walks or travels with our friends, to keep up such discourse as *is good, and to the use of edifying*. See (<sup>5107</sup>Deuteronomy 16:7).

II. The prediction itself, v. 18, 19. Observe,

1. It is but a repetition of what he had once and again said before, (<sup>4162</sup>Matthew 16:21; 17:22, 23. This intimates that he not only saw clearly what troubles lay before him, but that his heart was upon his suffering-work; it filled him, not with fear, then he would have studied to avoid it, and could have done it, but with desire and expectation; he spoke thus frequently of his sufferings, because through them he was to enter into his glory. Note, It is good for us to be often thinking and speaking of our death, and of the sufferings which, it is likely, we may meet with betwixt this and the grave; and thus, by making them more familiar, they would become less formidable. This is one way of dying daily, and of taking up our cross daily, to be daily speaking of the cross, and of dying; which would come neither the sooner nor the surer, but much the better, for our thoughts and discourses of them.

2. He is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than any time before. He had said (<sup>4161</sup>Matthew 16:21), that he *should suffer many things, and be killed*; and (<sup>4172</sup>Matthew 17:22), that he *should be betrayed into the hands of men, and they should kill him*; but here he adds; that he *shall be condemned, and delivered to the Gentiles, that they shall mock him, and scourge him, and crucify him*. These are frightful things, and the certain foresight of them was enough to damp an ordinary resolution, yet (as was foretold concerning him, (<sup>3901</sup>Isaiah 42:4) *he did not fail, nor was discouraged*; but the more clearly he foresaw his sufferings, the more

cheerfully he went forth to meet them. He foretels by whom he should suffer, by *the chief priests and the scribes*; so he had said before, but here he adds, *They shall deliver him to the Gentiles*, that he might be the better understood; for the chief priests and scribes had no power to put him to death, nor was crucifying a manner of death in use among the Jews. Christ suffered from the malice both of Jews and Gentiles, because he was to suffer for the salvation both of Jews and Gentiles; both had a hand in his death, because he was to reconcile both by his cross, <sup><4026></sup>Ephesians 2:16.

**3.** Here, as before, he annexes the mention of his resurrection and his glory to that of his death and sufferings; *The third day he shall rise again*. He still brings this in,

**(1.)** To encourage himself in his sufferings, and to carry him cheerfully through them. *He endured the cross for the joy set before him*; he foresaw he should rise again, and rise quickly, the third day. He shall be straightway glorified, <sup><4030></sup>John 13:32. The reward is not only sure, but very near.

**(2.)** To encourage his disciples, and comfort them, who would be overwhelmed and greatly terrified by his sufferings.

**(3.)** To direct us, under all *the sufferings of this present time*, to keep up a believing prospect of *the glory to be revealed*, to look at *the things that are not seen, that are eternal*, which will enable us to call the present afflictions light, and but for a moment.

## <sup><4111></sup>MATTHEW 20:20-28

### AMBITION CORRECTED

Here, is first, the request of the two disciples to Christ, and the rectifying of the mistake upon which that was grounded, v. 20-23. The sons of Zebedee were James and John, two of the first three of Christ's disciples; Peter and they were his favourites; John was the disciple whom Jesus loved; yet none were so often reproved as they; whom Christ loves best he reproveth most, <sup><4019></sup>Revelation 3:19.

**I.** Here is the ambitious address they made to Christ — that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, v. 20,

21. It was a great degree of faith, that they were confident of his kingdom, though now he appeared in meanness; but a great degree of ignorance, that they still expected a temporal kingdom, with worldly pomp and power, when Christ had so often told them of sufferings and self-denial. In this they expected to be grandees. They ask not for employment in this kingdom, but for honour only; and no place would serve them in this imaginary kingdom, but the highest, next to Christ, and above every body else. It is probable that the last word in Christ's foregoing discourse gave occasion to this request, that *the third day he should rise again*. They concluded that his resurrection would be his entrance upon his kingdom, and therefore were resolved to put in betimes for the best place; nor would they lose it for want of speaking early. What Christ said to comfort them, they thus abused, and were puffed up with. Some cannot bear comforts, but they turn them to a wrong purpose; as sweetmeats in a foul stomach produce bile. Now observe,

1. There was policy in the management of this address, that they put their mother on to present it, that it might be looked upon as her request, and not theirs. Though proud people think well of themselves, they would not be thought to do so, and therefore affect nothing more than *a show of humility* (<sup>4128</sup>Colossians 2:18), and others must be put on to court that honour for them, which they are ashamed to court for themselves. The mother of James and John was Salome, as appears by comparing <sup>4173</sup>Matthew 27:61, with <sup>4150</sup>Mark 15:40. Some think she was daughter of Cleophas or Alpheus, and sister or cousin german to Mary the mother of our Lord. She was one of those women that attended Christ, and ministered to him; and they thought she had such an interest in him, that he could deny her nothing, and therefore they made her their advocate. Thus when Adonijah had reasonable request to make to Solomon, he put Bathsheba on to speak for him. It was their mother's weakness thus to become that tool of their ambition, which she should have given a check to. Those that are wise and good, would not be seen in an ill-favoured thing. In gracious requests, we should learn this wisdom, to desire the prayers of those that have an interest at the throne of grace; we should beg of our praying friends to pray for us, and reckon it a real kindness.

It was likewise policy to ask first for a general grant, that he would do a *certain* thing for them, not in faith, but in presumption, upon that general promise; *Ask, and it shall be given you*; in which is implied this qualification of our request, that it be according to the revealed will of

God, otherwise we *ask and have not*, if we ask to *consume it upon our lusts*, <sup><304B></sup>James 4:3.

**2.** There was pride at the bottom of it, a proud conceit of their own merit, a proud contempt of their brethren, and a proud desire of honour and preferment; pride is a sin that most easily besets us, and which it is hard to get clear of. It is a holy ambition to strive to excel others in grace and holiness; but it is a sinful ambition to covet to exceed others in pomp and grandeur. *Seekest thou great things for thyself*, when thou hast just now heard of thy Master's being mocked, and scourged, and crucified? For shame! *Seek them not*, <sup><248B></sup>Jeremiah 45:5.

**II.** Christ's answer to this address (v. 22, 23), directed not to the mother, but to the sons that set her on. Though others be our mouth in prayer, the answer will be given to us according as we stand effected. Christ's answer is very mild; they were overtaken in the fault of ambition, but Christ *restored them with the spirit of meekness*. Observe,

**1.** How he reprov'd the ignorance and error of their petition; *Ye know not what ye ask*.

**(1.)** They were much in the dark concerning the kingdom they had their eye upon; they dream'd of a temporal kingdom, whereas Christ's kingdom is not of this world. They knew not what it was to sit on his right hand, and on his left; they talk'd of it as blind men do of colours. Our apprehensions of that glory which is yet to be revealed, are like the apprehensions which a child has of the preferments of grown men. If at length, through grace, we arrive at perfection, we shall then put away such childish fancies: when we come to see face to face, we shall know what we enjoy; but now, alas, we know not what we ask; we can but ask for the good as it lies in the promise, <sup><301P></sup>Titus 1:2. What it will be in the performance, eye has not seen, nor ear heard.

**(2.)** They were much in the dark concerning the way to that kingdom. *They* know not what they ask, who ask for the end, but overlook the means, and so put asunder what God has join'd together. The disciples thought, when they had left what little *all* they had for Christ, and had gone about the country awhile preaching the gospel of the kingdom, all their service and sufferings were over, and it was now time to ask, *What shall we have?* As if nothing were now to be look'd for but crowns and garlands; whereas there were far greater hardships and difficulties before them than they had

yet met with. They imagined their warfare was accomplished when it was scarcely begun, and they had yet but run with the footmen. They dream of being in Canaan presently, and consider not what they shall do in the swellings of Jordan. Note,

[1.] We are all apt, when we are but *girding on the harness, to boast* as though we *had put it off*.

[2.] We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in our way to it.

2. How he repressed the vanity and ambition of their request. They were pleasing themselves with the fancy of sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in great state; now, to check this, he leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, and leaves them in the dark about their glory.

(1.) He leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, which they were not so mindful of as they ought to have been. They looked so earnestly upon the crown, the prize, that they were ready to plunge headlong and unprepared into the foul way that led to it; and therefore he thinks it necessary to put them in mind of the hardships that were before them, that they might be no surprise or terror to them.

Observe,

[1.] How fairly he puts the matter to them, concerning these difficulties (v. 22); “You would stand candidates for the first post of honour in the kingdom; but *are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?* You talk of what great things you must have when you have done your work; but are you able to hold out to the end of it?” Put the matter seriously to yourselves. These same two disciples once knew not what manner of spirit they were of, when they were disturbed with anger, <sup><915></sup>Luke 9:55; and now they were not aware what was amiss in their spirits when they were lifted up with ambition. Christ sees that pride in us which we discern not in ourselves.

Note, *First*, That to suffer for Christ is *to drink of a cup*, and *to be baptized with a baptism*. In this description of sufferings,

1. It is true, that affliction doth abound. It is supposed to be a bitter cup, that is drunk of, wormwood and gall, those waters of a full cup, that are wrung out to God's people (<sup><911></sup>Psalm 43:10); a cup of

trembling indeed, but not of fire and brimstone, the portion of the cup of wicked men, <sup><B16></sup>Psalm 11:6. It is supposed to be a baptism, a washing with the waters of affliction; some are dipped in them; the waters compass them about even to the soul (<sup><B15></sup>Jonah 2:5); others have but a sprinkling of them; both are baptism, some are overwhelmed in them, as in a deluge, others ill wet, as in a sharp shower. But,

**2.** Even in this, *consolation doth more abound*. It is but a cup, not an ocean; it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but we shall see the bottom of it; it is a cup in the hand of a Father (<sup><B11></sup>John 18:11); and it is full of mixture, <sup><B18></sup>Psalm 75:8. It is but a baptism; if dipped, that is the worst of it, not drowned; perplexed, but not in despair. Baptism is an ordinance by which we join ourselves to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, <sup><B17></sup>Ezekiel 20:37; <sup><B10></sup>Isaiah 48:10. Baptism is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;” and so is suffering for Christ, for *unto us it is given*, <sup><B19></sup>Philippians 1:29.

*Secondly*, It is to drink of the same cup that Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the same baptism that he was baptized with. Christ is beforehand with us in suffering, and in that as in other things left us an example.

**1.** It bespeaks the condescension of a suffering Christ, that he would drink of such a cup (<sup><B11></sup>John 18:11), nay, and such a brook (<sup><B10></sup>Psalm 110:7), and drink so deep, and yet so cheerfully; that he would be baptized with such a baptism, and was so forward to it, <sup><B21></sup>Luke 12:50. It was much that he would be baptized with water as a common sinner, much more with blood as an uncommon malefactor. But in all this he was made *in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was made sin for us*.

**2.** It bespeaks the consolation of suffering Christians, that they do but pledge Christ in the bitter cup, are *partakers of his sufferings*, and *fill up that which is behind* of them; we must therefore arm ourselves with the same mind, and *go to him without the camp*.

*Thirdly*, It is good for us to be often putting it to ourselves, whether we are able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with this baptism. We must expect suffering, and not look upon it as a hard thing to suffer well and as becomes us. Are we able to suffer cheerfully, and in the worst of times

still to hold fast our integrity? What can we afford to part with for Christ? How far will we give him credit? Could I find in my heart to drink of a bitter cup, and to be baptized with a bloody baptism, rather than let go my hold of Christ? The truth is, Religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing; but it is worth little, if it be not worth suffering for. Now let us sit down, and count the cost of dying for Christ rather than denying him, and ask, Can we take him upon these terms?

[2.] See how boldly they engage for themselves; they said, *We are able*, in hopes of sitting on his right hand, and on his left; but at the same time they fondly hoped that they should never be tried. As before they knew not what they asked, so now they knew not what they answered. *We are able*; they would have done well to put in, “*Lord, by thy strength, and in thy grace, we are able, otherwise we are not.*” But the same that was Peter's temptation, to be confident of his own sufficiency, and presume upon his own strength, was here the temptation of James and John; and it is a sin we are all prone to. They knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism, and therefore they were thus bold in promising for themselves. But those are commonly most confident, that are least acquainted with the cross.

[3.] See how plainly and positively their sufferings are here foretold (v. 23); *Ye shall drink of my cup*. Sufferings foreseen will be the more easily borne, especially if looked upon under a right notion, as drinking of his cup, and being baptized with his baptism. Christ began in suffering for us, and expects we should pledge him in suffering for him. Christ will have us know the worst, that we may make the best of our way to heaven; *Ye shall drink*; that is, ye shall suffer. James drank the bloody cup first of all the apostles, <sup>410</sup>Acts 12:2. John, though at last he died in his bed, if we may credit the ecclesiastical historians, yet often drank of this bitter cup, as when he was banished into the isle of Patmos (<sup>411</sup>Revelation 1:9), and when (as they say) at Ephesus he was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but was miraculously preserved. He was, as the rest of the apostles, in deaths often. He took the cup, offered himself to the baptism, and it was accepted.

(2.) He leaves them in the dark about the degrees of their glory. To carry them cheerfully through their sufferings, it was enough to be assured that they should have *a place in his kingdom*. The lowest seat in heaven is an abundant recompence for the greatest sufferings on earth. But as to the

preferments there, it was not fit there should be any intimation given for whom they were intended; for the infirmity of their present state could not bear such a discovery with any evenness; “*To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, and therefore it is not for you to ask it or to know it; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*” Note,

[1.] It is very probable that there are degrees of glory in heaven; for our Saviour seems to allow that there are some that shall sit on his right hand and on his left, in the highest places.

[2.] As the future glory itself, so the degrees of it, are purposed and prepared in the eternal counsel of God; as the common salvation, so the more peculiar honours, are appointed, the whole affair is long since settled, and there is a certain measure of the stature, both in grace and glory, <sup><4013></sup>Ephesians 4:13.

[3.] Christ, in dispensing the fruits of his own purchase, goes exactly by the measures of his Father's purpose; *It is not mine to give, save to them* (so it may be read) *for whom it is prepared.* Christ has the sole power of giving eternal life, but then it is *to as many as were given him,* <sup><817D></sup>John 17:2. *It is not mine to give,* that is, *to promise* now; that matter is already settled and concerted, and the Father and Son understand one another perfectly well in this matter. “It is not mine to give to those that seek and are ambitious of it, but to those that by great humility and self-denial are prepared for it.”

**III.** Here are the reproof and instruction which Christ gave to the other ten disciples for their displeasure at the request of James and John. He had much to bear with in them all, they were so weak in knowledge and grace, yet he bore their manners.

**1.** The fret that the ten disciples were in (v. 24). *They were moved with indignation against the two brethren;* not because they were desirous to be preferred, which was their sin, and for which Christ was displeased with them, but because they were desirous to be preferred *before them,* which was a reflection upon them. Many seem to have indignation at sin; but it is not because it is sin, but because it touches them. They will inform against a man that swears; but it is only if he swear at them, and affront them, not because he dishonours God. These disciples were angry at their brethren's ambition, though they themselves, bay *because* they themselves, were as

ambitious. Note, It is common for people to be angry at those sins in others which they allow of and indulge in themselves. Those that are proud and covetous themselves do not care to see others so. Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, or is the cause of more indignation and contention, than ambition, and desire of greatness. We never find Christ's disciples quarreling, but something of this was at the bottom of it.

**2.** The check that Christ gave them, which was very gentle, rather by way of instruction what they should be, than by way of reprehension for what they were. He had reprov'd this very sin before (<sup>48B</sup> Matthew 18:3), and told them they must be humble as little children; yet they relapsed into it, and yet he reprov'd them for it thus mildly.

*He called them unto him*, which intimates great tenderness and familiarity. He did not, in anger, bid them get out of his presence, but called them, in love, to come into his presence: for *therefore* he is fit to teach, and we are invited to learn of him, because *he is meek and lowly in heart*. What he had to say concerned both the two disciples and the ten, and therefore he will have them all together. And he tells them, that, whereas they were asking which of them should have dominion a temporal kingdom, there was really no such dominion reserved for any of them. For,

**(1.)** They must not be *like the princes of the Gentiles*. Christ's disciples must not be like Gentiles, no not like princes of the Gentiles. Principality doth no more become ministers than Gentilism doth Christians.

Observe,

**[1.]** What is the way of the princes of the Gentiles (v. 25); to *exercise dominion and authority* over their subjects, and (if they can but win the upper hand with a strong hand) over one another too. That which bears them up in it is, that they are great, and great men think they may do any thing. Dominion and authority are the great things which the princes of the Gentiles pursue, and pride themselves in; they would bear sway, would carry all before them, have every body truckle to them, and every sheaf bow to theirs. They would have it cried before them, *Bow the knee*; like Nebuchadnezzar, who slew, and kept alive, at pleasure.

**[2.]** What is the will of Christ concerning his apostles and ministers, in this matter.

First, “*It shall not be so among you.* The constitution of the spiritual kingdom is quite different from this. You are to teach the subjects of this kingdom, to instruct and beseech them, to counsel and comfort them, to take pains with them, and suffer with them, not to exercise dominion or authority over them; you are not to *lord it over God's heritage* (<sup>401B</sup>1 Peter 5:3), but to labour in it.” This forbids not only tyranny, and abuse of power, but the claim or use of any such secular authority as the princes of the Gentiles lawfully exercise. So hard is it for vain men, even good men, to have such authority, and not to be puffed up with it, and do more hurt than good with it, that our Lord Jesus saw fit wholly to banish it out of his church. Paul himself disowns dominion over the faith of any, <sup>402A</sup>2 Corinthians 1:24. The pomp and grandeur of the princes of the Gentiles ill become Christ's disciples. Now, if there were no such power and honour intended to be in the church, it was nonsense for them to be striving who should have it. *They knew not what they asked.*

Secondly, How then shall it be among the disciples of Christ? Something of greatness among them Christ himself had intimated, and here he explains it; “*He that will be great among you, that will be chief, that would really be so, and would be found to be so at last, let him be your minister, your servant,*” v. 26, 27. Here observe,

1. That it is the duty of Christ's disciples to serve one another, for mutual edification. This includes both humility and usefulness. The followers of Christ must be ready to stoop to the meanest offices of love for the good one of another, must *submit one to another* (<sup>403B</sup>1 Peter 5:5; <sup>403A</sup>Ephesians 5:21), and *edify one another* (<sup>404B</sup>Romans 14:19), *please one another* for good, <sup>405A</sup>Romans 15:2. The great apostle made himself every one's servant; see <sup>406A</sup>1 Corinthians 9:19.
2. It is the dignity of Christ's disciples faithfully to discharge this duty. The way to be great and chief is to be humble and serviceable. Those are to be best accounted of, and most respected, in the church, and will be so by all that understand things aright; not those that are dignified with high and mighty names, like the names of the great ones of the earth, that appear in pomp, and assume to themselves a power proportionable, but those that are most humble and self-denying, and lay out themselves most to do good, though to the diminishing of themselves. These honour God most, and those he will honour. As he must become a fool that would be wise, so he must become a servant

that would be chief. St. Paul was a great example of this; he *laboured more abundantly than they all*, made himself (as some would call it) a drudge to his work; and is not he chief? Do we not by consent call him the *great* apostle, though he called himself *less than the least*? And perhaps our Lord Jesus had an eye to him, when he said, There were *last* that should be *first*; for Paul was *one born out of due time* (~~448~~1 Corinthians 15:8); not only the youngest child of the family of the apostles, but a posthumous one, yet he became greatest. And perhaps he it was for whom the first post of honour in Christ's kingdom was reserved and prepared of his Father, not for James who sought it; and therefore just before Paul began to be famous as an apostle, Providence ordered it so that James was cut off (~~449~~Acts 12:2), that in the college of the twelve Paul might be substituted in his room.

(2.) They must be like the Master himself; and it is very fit that they should, that, while they were in the world, they should be as he was when he was in the world; for to both the present state is a state of humiliation, the crown and glory were reserved for both in the future state. Let them consider that the *Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, v. 28. Our Lord Jesus here sets himself before his disciples as a pattern of those two things before recommended, humility, and usefulness.

[1.] Never was there such an example of humility and condescension as there was in the life of Christ, who came not to be *ministered unto, but to minister*. When the Son of God came into the world, his Ambassador to the children of men, one would think he should have been ministered to, should have appeared in an equipage agreeable to his person and character; but he did not so; he made no figure, had no pompous train of state-servants to attend him, nor was he clad in robes of honour, for he took upon him the *form of a servant*. He was indeed ministered to as a poor man, which was a part of his humiliation; there were those that *ministered to him of their substance* (~~450~~Luke 8:2, 3); but he was never ministered to as a great man; he never took state upon him, was not waited on at table; he once washed his disciples' feet, but we never read that they washed his feet. He came to minister help to all that were in distress; he made himself a servant to the sick and diseased; was as ready to their requests as ever any servant was at the beck of his master, and took as much pains to serve them; he attended continually to this very thing, and denied himself both food and rest to attend to it.

[2.] Never was there such an example of beneficence and usefulness as there was in the death of Christ, who *gave his life a ransom for many*. He lived as a servant, and went about doing good; but he died as a sacrifice, and in that he did the greatest good of all. He came into the world on purpose to give his life a ransom; it was first in his intention. The aspiring princes of the Gentiles make the lives of many a ransom for their own honour, and perhaps a sacrifice to their own humour. Christ doth not do so; his subjects' blood is precious to him, and he is not prodigal of it (~~324~~ Psalm 72:14); but on the contrary, he gives his honour and life too ransom for his subjects. Note, *First*, Jesus Christ laid down his life for a ransom. Our lives were forfeited into the hands of divine justice by sin. Christ, by parting with his life, made atonement for sin, and so rescued ours; *he was made sin, and a curse for us*, and died, not only *for our good, but in our stead*, ~~408~~ Acts 20:28; ~~411~~ 1 Peter 1:18, 19. *Secondly*, It was a ransom for many, sufficient for all, effectual for many; and, if for many, then, saith the poor doubting soul, "Why not for me?" It was for many, that by him many may be made righteous. These many were his seed, for which his soul travailed (~~250~~ Isaiah 53:10, 11); for many, so they will be when they come all together, though now they appear but a little flock.

Now this is a good reason why we should not strive for precedency, because the cross is our banner, and our Master's death is our life. It is a good reason why we should study to do good, and, in consideration of the love of Christ in dying for us, not hesitate *to lay down our lives for the brethren*, ~~616~~ 1 John 3:16. Ministers should be more forward than others to serve and suffer for the good of souls, as blessed Paul was, ~~402~~ Acts 20:24; ~~387~~ Philippians 2:17. The nearer we are all concerned in, and the more we are advantaged by, the humility and humiliation of Christ, the more ready and careful we should be to imitate it.

## ~~412~~ MATTHEW 20:29-34

### SIGHT GIVEN TO THE BLIND

We have here an account of the cure of two poor blind beggars; in which we may observe,

**I.** Their address to Christ, v. 29, 30. And in this,

1. The circumstances of it are observable. It was as Christ and his disciples departed from Jericho; of that devoted place, which was rebuilt under a curse, Christ took his leave with this blessing, for he received gifts even for the rebellious. It was in the presence of *a great multitude that followed him*; Christ had a numerous, though not a pompous, attendance, and did good to them, though he did not take state to himself. This multitude that followed him for loaves, and some for love, some for curiosity, and some in expectation of his temporal reign, which the disciples themselves dreamed of, very few with desire to be taught their duty; yet, for the sake of those few, he confirmed his doctrine by miracles wrought in the presence of great multitudes; who, if they were not convinced by them, would be the more inexcusable. Two blind men concurred in their request; for joint-prayer is pleasing to Christ, ~~(189)~~ Matthew 18:19. These joint-sufferers were joint-suitors; being companions in the same tribulation, they were partners in the same supplication. Note, It is good for those that are labouring under the same calamity, or infirmity of body or mind, to join together in the same prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken one another's fervency, and encourage one another's faith. There is mercy enough in Christ for all the petitioners. These blind men were *sitting by the way-side*, as blind beggars used to do. Note, Those that would receive mercy from Christ, must place themselves there where his out-goings are; where he manifests himself to those that seek him. It is good thus to way-lay Christ, to be in his road.

*They heard that Jesus passed by.* Though they were blind, they were not deaf. Seeing and hearing are the learning senses. It is a great calamity to want either; but the defect of one may be, and often is, made up in the acuteness of the other; and therefore it has been observed by some as an instance of the goodness of Providence, that none were ever known to be born both blind and deaf; but that, one way or other, all are in a capacity of receiving knowledge. These blind men had heard of Christ by the hearing of the ear, but they desired that their eyes might see him. *When they heard that Jesus passed by*, they asked no further questions, who were with him, or whether he was in haste, but immediately *cried out*. Note, It is good to improve the present opportunity, to make the best of the price now in the hand, because, if once let slip, it may never return; these blind men did so, and did wisely; for we do not find that Christ ever came to Jericho again. *Now is the accepted time.*

2. The address itself is more observable; *Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David*, repeated again, v. 31. Four things are recommended to us for an example in this address; for, though the eye of the body was dark, the eye of the mind was enlightened concerning truth, duty, and interest.

(1.) Here is an example of importunity in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest; men in want are earnest, of course. Cold desires do but beg denials. Those that would prevail in prayer, must stir up themselves to take hold on God in duty. When they were discountenanced in it, they cried the more. The stream of fervency, if it be stopped, will rise and swell the higher. This wrestling with God in prayer, and makes us the fitter to receive mercy; for the more it is striven for, the more it will be prized and thankfully acknowledged.

(2.) Of humility in prayer; in that word, *Have mercy on us*, not specifying the favour, or prescribing what, much less pleading merit, but casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to, the Mediator's mercy, in what way he pleases; "Only have mercy." They ask not for silver and gold, though they were poor, but mercy, mercy. This is that which our hearts must be upon, when we come to *the throne of grace, that we may find mercy*, <sup><3046></sup>Hebrews 4:16; <sup><1107></sup>Psalms 130:7.

(3.) Of faith in prayer; in the title they gave to Christ, which was in the nature of a plea; *O Lord, thou Son of David*; they confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, and therefore had authority to command deliverance for them. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Christ *Lord*, <sup><4218></sup>1 Corinthians 12:3. Thus they take their encouragement in prayer from his power, as in calling him the Son of David they take encouragement from his goodness, as Messiah, of whom so many kind and tender things had been foretold, particularly his compassion to the poor and needy, <sup><1722></sup>Psalms 72:12, 13. It is of excellent use, in prayer, to eye Christ in the grace and glory of his Messiahship; to remember that he is the Son of David, whose office it is to help, and save, and to plead it with him.

(4.) Of perseverance in prayer, notwithstanding discouragement. *The multitude rebuked them*, as noisy, clamorous, and impertinent, and bid them *hold their peace*,,, peace,%% and not disturb the Master, who perhaps at first himself seemed not to regard them. In following Christ with our prayers, we must expect to meet with hindrances and manifold discouragements from within and from without, something or other that bids us hold our peace. Such rebuke are permitted, that faith and fervency,

patience and perseverance, may be tried. These poor blind men were rebuked by the multitude that followed Christ. Note, the sincere and serious beggars at Christ's door commonly meet with the worst rebukes from those that follow him but in pretence and hypocrisy. But they would not be beaten off so; when they were in pursuit of such a mercy, it was no time to compliment, or to practise a timid delicacy; no, *they cried the more*. Note, *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint; to pray with all perseverance* (~~EXE~~ Luke 18:1); to continue in prayer with resolution, and not to yield to opposition.

**II.** The answer of Christ to this address of theirs. The multitude rebuked them; but Christ encouraged them. It were sad for us, if the Master were not more kind and tender than the multitude; but he loves to countenance those with special favour, that are under frowns, and rebukes, and contempts from men. He will not suffer his humble supplicants to be run down, and put out of countenance.

**1.** *He stood still, and called them*, v. 32. He was now going up to Jerusalem, and was straitened till his work there was accomplished; and yet he stood still to cure these blind men. Note, When we are ever so much in haste about any business, yet we should be willing to stand still to do good. *He called them*, not because he could not cure them at a distance, but because he would do it in the most obliging and instructive way, and would countenance weak but willing patients and petitioners. Christ not only enjoins us to pray, but invites us; holds out the golden sceptre to us, and bids us come touch the top of it.

**2.** He enquired further into their case; *What will ye that I shall do unto you?* This implies,

**(1.)** A very fair offer; “Here I am; let me know what you would have, and you shall have it.” What would we more? He is able to do for us, and as willing as he is able; *Ask, and it shall be given you*.

**(2.)** A condition annexed to this offer, which is a very easy and reasonable one — that they should tell him what they would have him do for them. One would think this a strange question, any one might tell what they would have. Christ knew well enough; but he would know it from them, whether they begged only for alms, as from a common person, or for a cure, as from the Messiah. Note, It is the will of God that we should in every thing make our requests known to him by prayer and supplication;

not to inform or move him, but to qualify ourselves for the mercy. The waterman in the boat, who with his hook takes hold of the shore, does not thereby pull the shore to the boat, but the boat to the shore. So in prayer we do not draw the mercy to ourselves, but ourselves to the mercy.

They soon made known their request to him, such a one as they never made to any one else; *Lord, that our eyes may be opened*. The wants and burthens of the body we are soon sensible of, and can readily relate; *Ubi dolor, ubi digitus* — *The finger promptly points to the seat of pain*. O that we were but as apprehensive of our spiritual maladies, and could as feelingly complain of them, especially our spiritual blindness! Lord, that the eyes of our mind may be opened! Many are spiritually blind, and yet say they see, ~~John~~ John 9:41. Were we but sensible of our darkness, we should soon apply ourselves to him, who alone has the eye-salve, with this request, *Lord, that our eyes may be opened*.

**3.** He cured them; when he encouraged them to seek him, he did not say, *Seek in vain*. What he did was an instance,

**(1.)** Of his pity; *He had compassion on them*. Misery is the object of mercy. They that are poor and blind are *wretched and miserable* (~~Revelation~~ Revelation 3:17), and the objects of compassion. It was the tender mercy of our God, that gave light and sight to them that sat in darkness, ~~Luke~~ Luke 1:78, 79. We cannot help those that are under such calamities, as Christ did; but we may and must pity them, as Christ did, and draw out our soul to them.

**(2.)** Of his power; *He that formed the eye, can he not heal it?* Yes, he can, he did, he did it easily, he touched their eyes; he did it effectually, *Immediately their eyes received sight*. Thus he not only proved that he was sent of God, but showed on what errand he was sent — to give sight to those that are spiritually blind, *to turn them from darkness to light*.

*Lastly*, These blind men, when they had received sight, *followed him*. Note, None follow Christ blindfold. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. They followed Christ, as his disciples, to learn of him, and as his witnesses, eye-witnesses, to bear their testimony to him and to his power and goodness. The best evidence of spiritual illumination is a constant inseparable adherence to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Leader.