

A Cry to the whole Earth.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

From LUKE x. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

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A

CRY TO THE WHOLE EARTH.

LUKE X. 42.

*“ Mary hath chosen that good part which shall
not be taken away from her.”*

AS Christ did shew himself loving to Lazarus and his sisters, in that he raised Lazarus from the death of the soul: So did his sisters here shew their thankful minds unto Christ again; the one by receiving him into her house, and the other by entertaining him in her heart. As he was God, he was entertained by Mary, and as he was man he was received of Martha. They both desired to entertain our Saviour, as Jacob and Esau, Gen. xxvii. desired to please their aged father: but Mary made choice of the better part, and was preferred before her sister, as Jacob spec

soonest of most dainty venison, and prevented his brother of the blessing: And although the cares of Martha, in her entertainment of Christ, be not to be disliked of, yet Mary's diligence in hearing Christ's doctrine, is of no purpose preferred to Martha's care: to declare unto us that it is much better, with Mary, to study in the word, *and first to seek the kingdom of God*, Matth. vi. 35. than with Martha to labour in the world, and to neglect that heavenly kingdom. And yet notwithstanding, such is the corruption of this rusty age, that our greatest care is to provide for this present life, as did that rich man, Luke xii. that enlarged his barns, wherein to put his store for many years; but we never, or very late, do provide for that life to come, like that other rich man, that never thought of heaven till he was tormented in hell, Luke xvi.

In John v. Christ is said to love this whole family, and here he is said to come unto them, for whom he loveth he cannot but visit, like the friends of Job, Job ii. that came to comfort him in his adversity. Yea, the greatest love that Christ bears to any, the oftener he will resort unto them: yea, he will come and dwell with them,

John xiv. 25. Like Jacob that came down into Egypt, Gen. xlvii. to his beloved son Joseph, and dwelt in Goshen. But Christ is more kind than Jacob was, for he came not till he was sent for with horses and chariots: But Christ came of his own accord to this beloved family. Thus doth he always prevent us with his manifold blessings. Before he was desired, he came into the world; he called his apostles before they came unto him; and before he was invited he came into this noble house.

O happy house that entertained such a guest; but thrice happy inhabitants to whom such a guest would vouchsafe to come! When he came unto the swinish Gadarenes, they desired him to depart out of their coasts, Luke viii. preferring their swine above their Saviour: But this godly family gladly received him into their house, preferred their God before their gold, and their souls wealth before their worldly treasure. They received him into their houses, who had not a house of his own to put his head into, Matth. viii. 16. wherein their hospitality is commended, and shall more certainly be rewarded at that most dreadful day, Matth. xxv. For which these and such like works of mercy the Lord shall answer

the sentence of judgment, which is to be denounced against the wicked, that never exercised these works of mercy. Let us therefore learn by their example to be harbourers, and given to hospitality, which is so often commended to us in the scriptures, and shall be so richly rewarded at the last day. These godly fathers, Abraham, Gen. xviii. and Lot, Gen. xix. entertained angels in their houses in the habit of strangers, so we may daily entertain Christ Jesus in the habit of a poor man, of a blind man, of a lame man; and whatsoever is done to any of those that are his members, he doth account thereof as it were done to himself. Now, as this virtue of hospitality is commendable in all sorts of persons, so it is our special concern, and more especially commended unto ministers, who are expressly commanded by the apostles, 1 Tim. iii. 2. among other things to be given to hospitality: Unto the Levites in the time of the law, the Lord appointed cities of refuge, Numb. xxxv. to signify thereby, that the minister's house should be the poor man's harbour, and his store their treasury. But the true ministers, in these our days, have no cities of refuge for others, because they have none for themselves, they have not to

relieve the wants of others, for they have not to relieve their own necessities.

Now when Martha had once entertained Christ as he was man, in her house, Mary began to entertain him as he was God in her heart; she sat at his feet to hear him preaching. For no sooner came Christ into the house, but he took occasion to teach and instruct the family; and instead of bodily food, which they bestowed upon him, he bestowed upon them the food of the soul. Thus doth Christ always shew himself a thankful guest; for, into whatsoever house he entered, he leaveth better things behind him, than he findeth. He loves not to be in Zaccheus' debt for his dinner; for instead thereof he bringeth salvation to his house: neither does he here leave his supper unpaid, for instead thereof, he bestoweth on them a heavenly sermon. This should be the exercise of all faithful ministers, when they are invited to a great feast, that as they are called the salt of the earth, Mat. v. 18. to make meat savoury and well seasoned, and to preserve it from putrefaction; so the ministers and pastors should season the table with some godly conferences and communications, *to minister grace unto the hearers,* Eph. vi. 26.

Both these sisters were godly women and both earnest favourites of Jesus Christ; and yet in the manner of their devotions, there is such difference, that the worldly affections in the one, may in some sort be misliked in respect of the godly exercise and practice of the other, Martha is sore incumbered with much serving, when a little service had been sufficient; but Mary is attentive to hear the word of God, which can never be heard sufficiently. Mary sitteth to hear the word, Matt. v. as Christ used to sit, Luke iv. when he preached the word; to declare unto us, that the word is to be preached and heard with a quiet mind. In a still night every voice is heard, and when the body is quiet, the mind most commonly is quiet also. But Martha is troubled with other affairs, and therefore unfit to hear the word, as is the ground that is scorched with stones, and overgrown with weeds and thorns, which is indeed unfit to receive the seed, Matt. vi. or to yield any fruit to him that tilleth it. As often therefore as we come to hear the word of God, we must not come with distracted minds, we must not trouble ourselves with the cares of this life, which, as our Saviour saith, are but thorns to choak

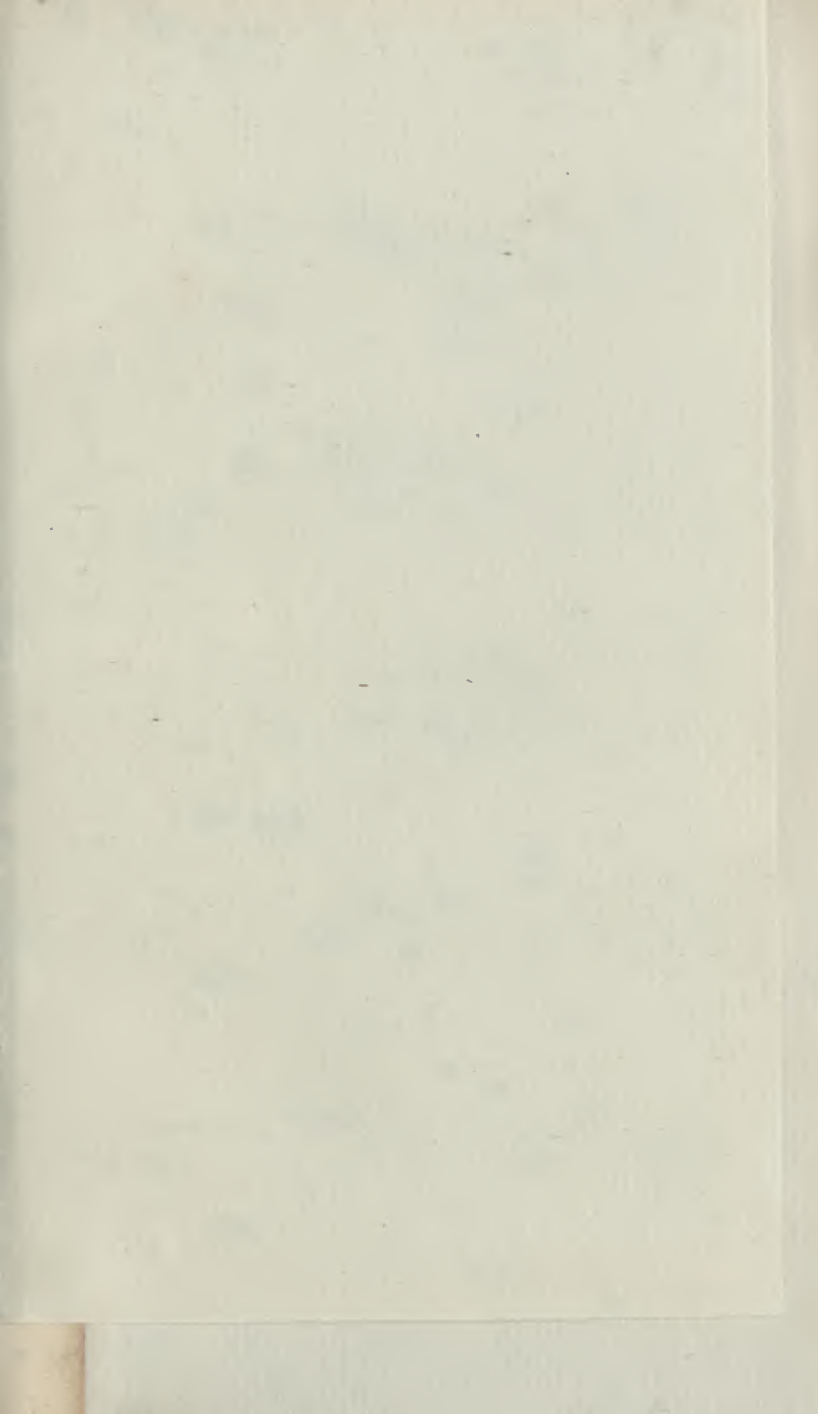
the word, Luke viii. 4. and to make it unfruitful; For as Moses was unfit to talk with God, till he had put off his shoes, Exod. iii. and the blind man unfit to come to Christ, until he had thrown away his cloak, Mark x. so we must think ourselves unfit to hear the word of God, and unapt for every heavenly exercise, till we have put off our shoes, that is our worldly cogitations and affections, and till we have cast away our cloaks, that is, all our lets and impediments, which may hinder us from profiting in our professions.

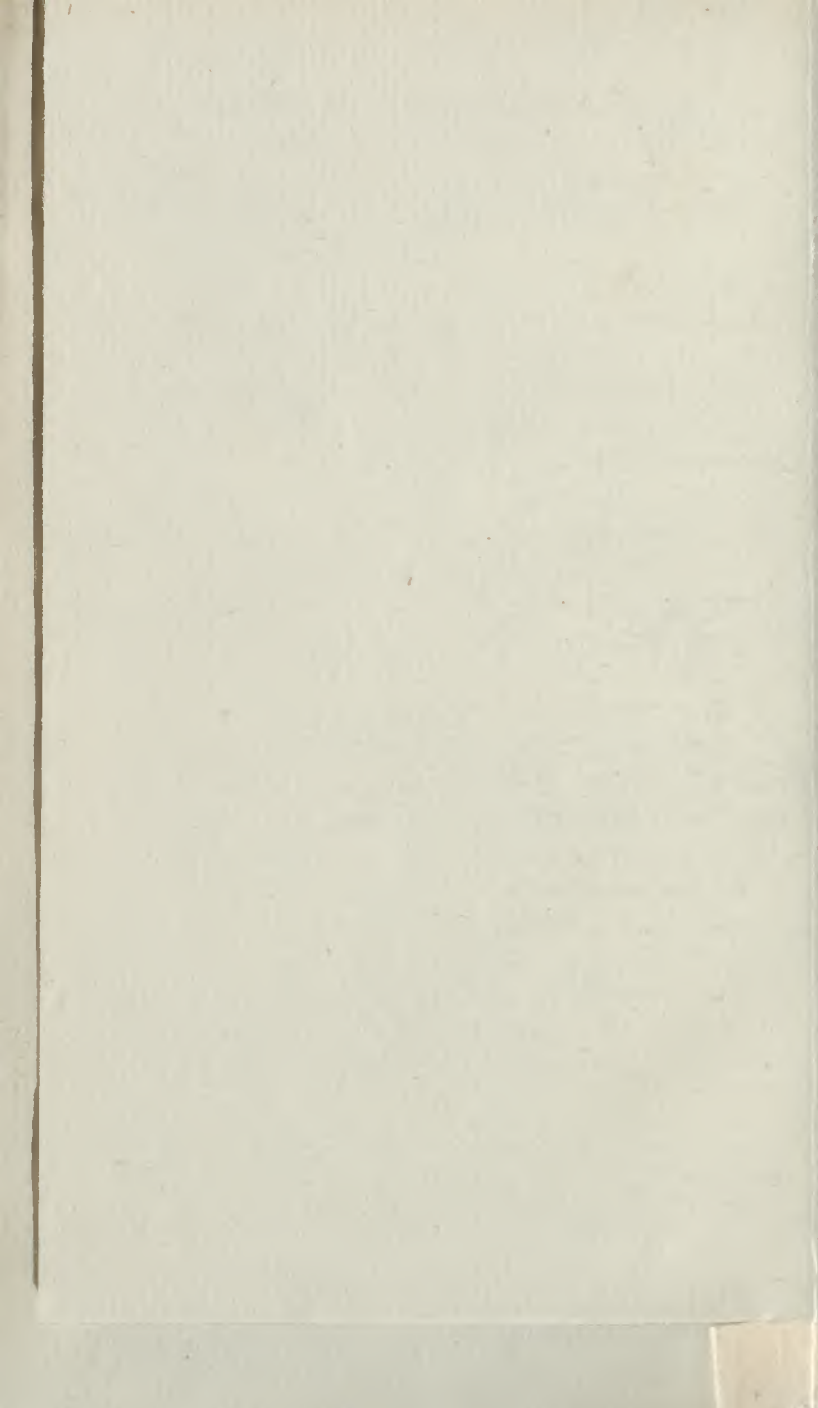
When our minds are quiet; we are fit to deal in heavenly matters: therefore the doctors conferred sitting in the temple, and God delighteth to deal with us when we are most private! He appeared to Abraham sitting in the door of his tent, Gen. xvii. the Holy Ghost, came down upon the apostles, and *'filled all the house where they were sitting;* the eunuch sitting in his chariot, was called and converted, by the preaching of Philip, Acts viii. 27. Mary sat at Jesus' feet, yet she sat not sleeping as many sit at the preacher's feet; but she sat at Christ's feet and heard his words; as Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, Acts xxii. and was perfectly instructed

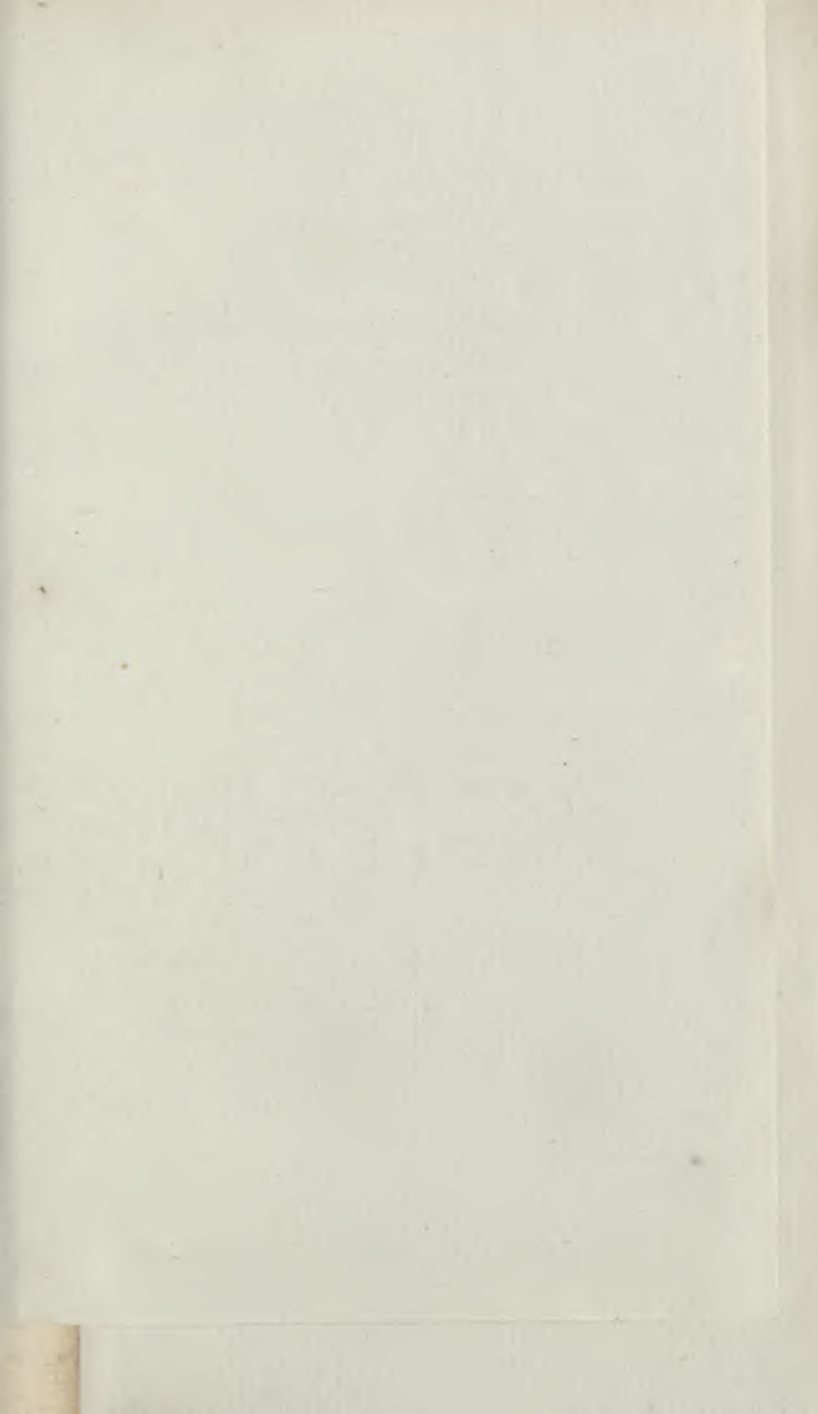
in the law of the fathers. Her humility is commendable, in that she sat at Jesus' feet, to declare to us, that the word is to be heard with all humility; her diligence and earnestness appear, in that she would not depart and help her sister; to signify that the hearing of the word must be preferred before worldly business. Her diligence and humility serve to condemn our negligence and contempt of Christ and his word; we do not sit at Christ's feet, nay, we set Christ at our feet, when we are so careless in hearing the word: We are as slow to come to the church, as was the raven to come to the ark of Noah, Gen. viii. and as loth are we to spend any time in the service of God, as Pharaoh was loth to let the Israelites go to serve the Lord. If a commodity were to be seen, out of which some worldly profit or gain might arise, how careful would we be to procure it? what pains would we take to get it? Absalom was not more desirous of a kingdom, than are the rich men of our time desirous of golden gain: but if it be a matter of cost and trouble unto them; if they cannot hear the word preached, without some hinderance to their worldly business and some extraordinary charge of their purse,

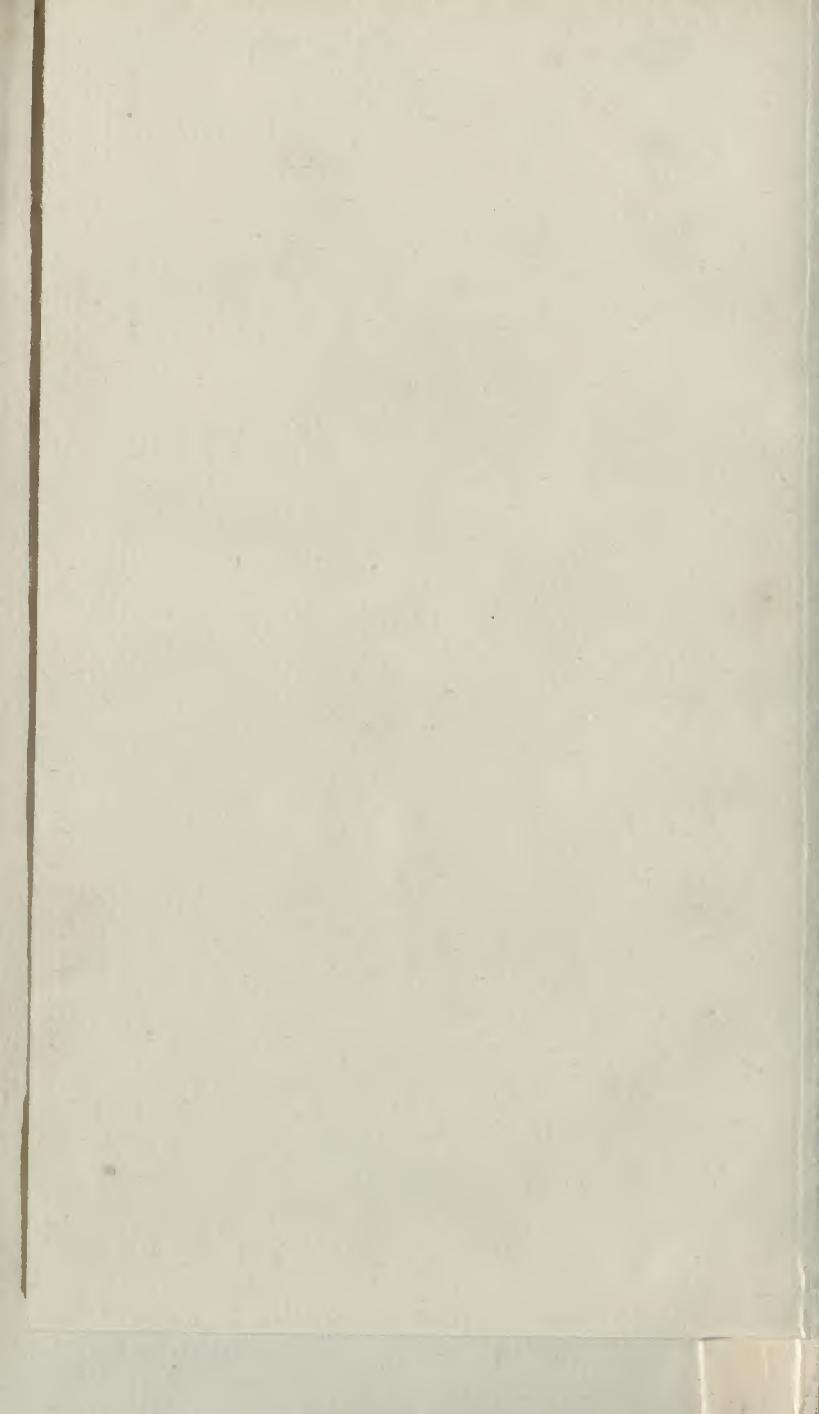
then like to the Gadarenes, Luke viii. they are content to take their leave of Christ and his word, and would rather leave that heavenly pearl, than part from their worldly pelf, Mat. xiii. 49.

Thus, in Christ we have a pattern of a good pastor, and in Mary the pattern of a good hearer; let ministers learn by this example, to take all occasions to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, 1 Tim. iv. 2. and let Christians learn by her example, Mat. vi. *First seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then to provide the things of this life.*— While Mary was careful for the food of the soul, Martha was cumbered to provide food for the body: her greatest care was to entertain Christ, and to make him good cheer; to testify her thankful mind unto him, that had done so great things for them: he had raised her brother Lazarus from death to life; therefore he was worthy to be well entertained. If Elias deserved to be well dealt with at the hands of his hostess, 1 Kings xvii. whose son he restored to life; then surely our Saviour Christ was much more welcome hither, seeing he had raised Lazarus out of his grave, where he had









Lord will defend their cause, and take their part against their adversaries; howbeit, the godly be sufferers of the injury. The Lord cannot abide to hear his servants evil spoken of, but is always ready to maintain their right, and to answer for them. He will not suffer Laban to speak one evil-word to his servant Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 24. And if Aaron and Miriam murmur against Moses, Num. xii. the Lord will punish it with leprosy. What a comfortable thing it is to be godly; and to the godly, that the King of kings will take their part, and will not suffer them to sustain any wrong. He is a most pure and trusty friend, that will not abide his friend to be backbitten, or evil spoken of, but either he will answer in their defence, or he will find some means to stop their mouths, and restrain the slanderous tongues of their enemies: as sometimes he stopped Balaam's passage when he went to curse his people, and caused the dumb ass to speak, Num. xxii. and reprov'd the madness of the prophet, rather than he would have his people to be cursed, 2 Pet. ii. 15.

The reputation of Martha's name, argueth the vehemency and earnestness of this admonition. The Lord, he is fain to be

earnest and importunate with us before he can reclaim us. So when God spake to Abraham, he calls him twice by name, Gen. xxii. Christ called Peter thrice by name, John xxi. to cause him to make his three-fold confession, for satisfaction of his three-fold denial. And when the Lord spake unto Samuel, he called him several times by name, 1 Sam. iii. before he answered. For such is the great mercy of God, that he is even content to admonish us often of our duty; and again, such is the dulness and perverseness of our crooked natures, that we cannot be gained by our first admonitions, but the Lord must call us both often and earnestly, before we will hearken unto him.

There are two things in this speech of Christ's to be observed: the first is, his modest reprehension of Martha's immoderate care. The other is, his friendly defence of Mary's choice. Although Martha was very careful to entertain Christ in the best manner, yet if he perceived any thing in her that is worthy of reprehension, he will not stick to tell her of it, he will not soothe her in her saying, nor soothe her in her own conceit, for all the trouble and cost that she bestowed upon him. If we

should be invited to some man's table, and kindly entertained thereat, it would be unkindly taken if we should find fault with any disorder; but for as much as all Christ's actions are only the instructions of Christians; therefore every Christian man, but especially preachers, to whom it more particularly appertaineth, must learn by this example, how to behave themselves when they are invited to great feasts; namely, to speak to the conscience freely when they shall see a fault. The best requital that we can make for our good cheer, is to give good counsel and wholesome admonitions to them that invite us. When Christ dined with the Pharisee, Luke xi. 18. and was disliked for not washing before dinner, he thereby took occasion to reprove their hypocrisy, even their outward shew of holiness, which was the most frequent shew and sin of the Pharisees. And at another time he noted them, Luke xiv. for pressing to the chief places at banquets, declaring, that modesty is to be used at the sitting down to meat, whatever guests should be bidden to our tables. So should preachers behave themselves towards those that do invite them, when they, see perhaps some fault or disorder, either in the master

of the feast or in some other of the guests, even to say unto them thus, or otherwise, as the cause requireth; I will warn you of one thing, that if you follow counsel, it will do you good; that is, that you would leave off your usury, or your extortions, or your covetousness or oppression; that you would leave off your swearing and blaspheming the name of God; that you would forbear to profane the Lord's sabbath; that you would leave your pride and excess in your diet and apparel; that you would forbear to speak ill of any behind their backs, or to bear any malice or hatred to any of their neighbours; these or the like are the faults which are easy to be espied almost in every place; and these are the faults which every minister of Jesus Christ should not leave unreprieved wheresoever he cometh. But as Elias told Ahab of his idolatry, 1 Kings xiii. although he was king. And as John Baptist told Herod of his adultery, altho' he did many things for him, Matth. xiv. Mark vi. 20. 'and heard him gladly;' so should the preachers reprove the people for their notorious offences, notwithstanding some favours and courtesies received of them before.

If Christ took occasion to find fault with

Martha for too much diligence in his entertainment, it seems he was not very curious of his diet, but would have been content with simple meats; he was no delicate ordinary guest, he did not delight in sumptuous banquets or costly fare, he rather requireth a religious heart, a constant faith, a willing mind to hear the word, Luke xi. 28. with an earnest-care to live thereafter. These are the things wherein the Lord delighteth; these are the morsels which he desireth, and which he preferreth before all earthly cheer: thus is Martha reprehended for her curiosity.

Now let us see how Mary is excused, and commended for her godly care. 'One thing is necessary,' saith our Saviour; and what is that one thing? Even to hear the word preached, *which is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,* Rom. i. 16. A man may better want all things than want one thing needful; and yet we desire all things, and we neglect that one thing which is so needful. This one thing hath Mary chosen, and therefore hath chosen the better part; Martha's part is good, because it provideth for this present life; but Mary's part is better, because it leadeth to eternal life. It is good to be occu-

pied about our calling to get our living ;
 but it is better to be occupied in hearing
 the word, which is able to save our souls.
 As the head and the foot are both needful
 to the body, so Mary and Martha are both
 needful in a commonwealth. Man hath
 two vocations, the one earthly by his la-
 bour, the other heavenly by his prayer.—
 There is the active life, which consisteth
 only in practising the affairs of this life,
 wherein man shews himself to be like unto
 himself, which is an earthly man, caring
 for earthly things ; and there is the con-
 templative life, which consisteth in the
 meditation of heavenly things, wherein
 man shews himself to be like to the angels,
 for they who labour in their temporal vo-
 cations do but live like men ; but they who
 labour in spiritual matters, live like angels.
 When they hear the word, they hear God
 speaking unto them ; but when they pray,
 God hears them speaking to him ; so that
 there is a continual conference betwixt
 God and them that are thus exercised, ei-
 ther in hearing, or yet in praying. Christ
 loves Martha for hospitality, as Isaac loved
 Esau for his venison ; and the Lord loves
 Mary for her care and diligence in hearing
 his word, as Rebecca loved Jacob for the

hearkening to her voice, Gen. xxv. 28. as a nurse, that having her breast full of milk, doth love the child that sucks it from her, even so the Lord Jesus Christ, when he hath his breast full of heavenly milk is glad when he hath children to suck the same. Let us therefore, as the apostles willeth, 1 Pet. ii. 1. *Lay aside all maliciousness, guile, and dissimulation, all envy and ill-speaking, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby,* to be perfect men in Christ Jesus. Let us breathe after the fountain of living water, which springeth up unto eternal life, as the hart brayeth for the rivers of water, Psalm lxii. 1. to quench his thirst. And for as much as many things are so troublesome, and one thing is so needful, let us ever be seeking that needful thing, even the end of all things, that is, to learn to '*fear God,*' and to strive continually '*to keep his commandments,*' Eccl. xii. 12. which we must learn by hearing of the word of God, whereby faith, (without the which, it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 9.) may be begotten, and nourished in the hearts of men, Rom. x. 17. This is that good part which Mary hath chosen, which is much better than her sister's choice, because it concern-

eth a better life, and hath the fruition of this present life also. Mary hath a double portion, she both heard the word, and also ate of the meat which her sister dressed, *For godliness hath the promise of this life and of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. iv. 8. As for all other things, whether they be honours, promotions, pleasures, or whatever else, they serve only for the maintenance of this present life, which is but short, and also very subject to mutability: But the word of God is the food of the soul, the breath of life that immortal seed which bringeth forth fruit unto eternal life, 1 Peter i. 23. Let the word of God be precious unto us, because it is so permanent, *for heaven and earth shall pass away,* Luke xxi. 33. *But the word of God endureth for ever.* If we make choice of any other thing besides, it must be taken from us, or we must be taken from it: But if we make choice of this one thing, it shall never be taken from us, neither in this life, nor the life to come. The Lord grant that we be not only *bearers,* but *doers of the word,* James i. 22. that it may be truly said of us, as Christ said of his disciples that heard his preaching, Matt. xii. 50. *Behold my brother, sister, and mother;* or as he made answer to the wo-

man that so commended his carnal kindred,
 Luke xi. 28. *Blessed are they that hear the
 word of God, and do the same,* Amen.

HYMN.

JESUS, lover of my soul,
 Let me to thy bosom fly,
 While the raging billows roll,
 While the tempest still is high!
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 Till the storm of life is past;
 Safe into the haven guide;
 O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none,
 Hangs my helpless soul on thee?
 Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
 Still support and comfort me:
 All my trust on thee is stay'd,
 All my help from thee I bring;
 Cover my defenceless head
 With the shadow of thy wing.

Thou, O Christ! art all I want;
All in all, in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind:
Just and holy is thy name,
I am all righteousness,
Vile and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with thee is found,
Grace to pardon all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound:
Make and keep me pure within:
Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of thee:
Spring thou up within my heart,
There to all eternity.

FINIS.