

LUKE 12:13–34

Matthew 6:25–34

THE FOOLISH RICH MAN / DON'T WORRY

Story Notes

File no. 140

A man in the crowd that is listening to Jesus asks for help to get justice but Jesus senses a deeper need. The Lord has compassion for the sick and the hungry, but he has no time to sort out a quarrel about this property. He is concerned to give his people their inheritance (Matt. 5:5) because God has promised to do this for Israel, but he will not intervene to promote someone's covetousness. This man deeply misunderstands what Jesus is about.

Jesus says that there are regular authorities to which this enquirer can go. In the mean time, he thinks it best to warn him about the drive that does not arise from a love of justice but from the desire to have something without God. If we wish to be successful in the world rather than rich toward God (cf. Rom. 6:10), this parable calls us to account for the loss of our humanity. Our life is not what we possess but our love for God and our neighbour.

So, Jesus tells a story about a rich but covetous man. This person should have seen his prosperity as a sign of God's favour and as a witness to the other nations of God's goodness (Deut. 28:1-14). As such, it could have had eternal significance (Luke 16:9-13). In fact, he sees it as something to trust, to indulge and to relish. He has a soul, that is, a life derived directly from God (Gen. 2:7). This very night, he will lose this life and answer to God for how he used it. He will never enjoy anything of his treasure and others (whom he should have been serving with his wealth) will receive his inheritance.

What of the disciples who hear this pastoral lesson? They don't have great wealth but need the same warning lest they think their life is no more than food and clothing. Their Father cares for birds that collect food rather than produce and store it, and cares for plants that do no work. They all prosper without worry. The disciples should stop seeking and worrying over provisions (making it their life's main concern). Worrying about preserving this life doesn't extend it any more than the wealth of the rich man did in the story. Rather, disciples should seek God's reign over all things: his kingdom. They should seek it because that is what God eagerly wants to give them. In worrying, they are acting like Gentiles who have no hope (cf. Eph. 2:12).

Jesus, as on other occasions, speaks in absolute terms to make his point clear (e.g. Matt. 5:30). Possessions should matter so little to the disciples, that, if occasion should require it, they will sell them and give to the poor. When the Spirit comes, this is exactly what believers will do (Acts 2:44-45). They are so assured of a lasting kingdom that they give freely from their earthly inheritance to share with those in need. They do this, not as a cult requirement but because they are confronted with need and because it is the way of the kingdom into which they have now come. They know God as their Father and love his world.

JOHN 11:1–52

DEAD FOR FOUR DAYS (JESUS RAISES LAZARUS)

Story Notes

File no. 141

Jesus has concluded his public ministry (as recorded in this Gospel), and retires from the hostility in Jerusalem to be among his disciples at the place where he had begun his work by the River Jordan (10:39-42 with 1:29). But then, his good friend Lazarus falls ill, and his sister, Mary, wants Jesus to come. He already knows that Lazarus will die and that he will display his glory in raising him up. But going to Lazarus means travelling to Bethany, and being dangerously close to Jerusalem.

John tells us that Mary is the one who will soon anoint the feet of Jesus as a mark of great love (12:1-3), but the love she has for Jesus at this point is not free of the fear of death, as the story will show (cf. 1 John 4:18).

Jesus loves this family but does nothing for two days. Then, calmly, he announces he will travel to Bethany. This town is less than three kilometres from Jerusalem and hostile Jews will hear about anything that happens, and get there (12:9). The disciples see the danger in this, but Jesus wants them to live in the light that he is to the world (1:4, 9; 8:12; 9:5), not in their fears. He hints at what he is going to do, but then, tells them plainly that he will raise Lazarus from the dead. His absence from Bethany when Lazarus was sick, and now, this great miracle, is needed to help the disciples see and believe. But they still don't understand. Death, for them, is still the final word.

Jesus comes to Bethany, but so do some 'Jews' from Jerusalem. (The family seems to be well known.) The 'Jews' in this Gospel are usually people who are hostile to Jesus. They have come, according to custom, and whether sympathetic or not, to comfort the family in their bereavement.

Martha excuses herself to speak to Jesus alone. The limits of her faith are immediately confronted. She can only think of Jesus working with what is alive, but Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life'. One may even die and still live. What does she believe? She answers well, with the limits of her faith: Jesus is the Christ promised to Israel, the Son of God.

Jesus has spoken of raising the dead before (5:21, 24-29; 6:39-40; 8:51-52). Having this power signifies that he is Judge (5:21-22, 24).

Jesus calls for Mary and she also laments that Jesus was not present while Lazarus was alive. The Jews have followed her, thinking she is headed for the tomb, so Jesus sees, not only Mary, but a whole mass of weeping people. The reaction on him is striking. He 'snorts in rage' (vv. 33, 38—a literal translation of his being 'deeply moved') and is greatly troubled (or experiences an 'inward commotion'). The Jews misunderstand his strong reaction: they think he weeps for sorrow, but he weeps for us who do not yet understand his victory over death.

Jesus comes to the tomb, 'snorts in rage' again and wants it opened. Martha, always practical, points out that the smell will be overpowering after four days. Then Jesus prays to his Father who always hears him, but prays for us to hear, so we will believe that the Father has given Jesus to us, to be the resurrection and the life. When Jesus speaks, what can Lazarus do but get up and come out! He is raised from the dead as an anticipation of the resurrection to come (5:28).

Some Jews, perhaps hostile before, now believe. But not all do, and these quickly pass news on to the chief priests and the Pharisees in Jerusalem. The Jewish Council is called and the matter debated. Many see themselves politically cornered by the undeniable evidence of what Jesus can do. People will follow Jesus, the religion of Israel will be changed and the Romans, suspicious of this new movement, will take away their temple ('our place') and their nation. Caiphas is more politically astute, and ruthless. One man dead is better than many. Killing Jesus will save the nation—save it, of course, not for God but for them. He speaks better than he knows, because Jesus will die for the people, and save them from their sins (1:29). Jesus, the King of the Jews, will gather Israel, and the many others whom God will bring to him, to make one new people who know that death has been defeated.

MARK 10:17–31

Matthew 19:16–30, Luke 18:18–30

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Story Notes

File no. 142

Those who come under the reign of God as children, seeking his blessing, will enter his kingdom. Rich people will find it difficult. The disciples have trouble with both of these points. They still wrestle with grace being undeserved. Little children, weak and dependent, have done nothing to deserve what they receive. Rich people appear already to have been rewarded by God. But these external facts are no guide to the strangeness of the grace that is present in Christ.

Jesus receives a young rich man who is eager to have eternal life, not as a gift (v. 15) but as a reward for his deeds. Even calling Jesus 'good' is ill advised because he also thinks himself to be good. He needs advising that only God is good.

Jesus directs him to something he already believes (Deut. 30:15-16), that life will come to him through keeping the law.

Perhaps he thinks he is eligible for the coming kingdom, that his riches are a sign of life. He has outwardly conformed to the law (as in Phil. 3:6) since his youth (age 13 when he became a 'son of the law' at his *bar mizvah*). This is a notable accomplishment, yet he knows he lacks something. Jesus loves this man and directs his steps to what he lacks: the forsaking of his false trust in riches.

To join the true members of the kingdom by having no recourse to money is too much for him. He still loves the power and significance which money provide. No wonder he feels he lacks something.

The disciples also stumble over the question of money, which they see as a sign of God's favour. Jesus adds to their amazement: getting a rich man into heaven is like threading a needle with a camel. However, Jesus assures them that rich people can be saved, but only by the miracle of grace which enables them to see that they have nothing in their wealth.

The apostles have come further than they thought. They have forsaken everything and will have riches where it really counts, that is, in the coming renewal of all things. But it is not in their having or not having anything that they have eternal life but in their reliance on Jesus as the Christ.

The disciples are comforted by Christ's word about their everyday life. God will make provisions for this life for those who forsake everything to follow Christ, a hundred times more than is lost, material, relational and eternal, albeit, with persecutions. Christ entrusts us to the generosity of his Father and to the richness of community life that comes to those who live for his kingdom.

The rule of God turns everything upside down as far as this world is concerned. People who seem to be first will then be shown to be last and *visa versa*.

The story continues with Jesus striding on to Jerusalem, amazing his disciples with his resolution to face what would meet him there. It continues also with the disciples wishing to have special places in the kingdom. It was going to take more than teaching to bring through to them, and to us all, the truth of childlikeness in the kingdom.

MATTHEW 19:27 — 20:16

THE WORKMEN AND THEIR WAGES

Story Notes

File no. 143

Context: Matthew 19:16 — 20:28

A rich young man enquired about a good deed he would have to do to have eternal life. He does not understand the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom belonging to children or the childlike. Jesus told him to give away his riches in this world so as to have riches in heaven, and to follow him, but he could not bring himself to do this.

Jesus then talked to the disciples about how hard it is for rich people to enter the kingdom of God. This amazed the disciples because they supposed that riches were God's reward to righteous people. Jesus said rich people could be saved, but with difficulty. Peter wondered then if anyone could be saved and Jesus said that, of ourselves, this was impossible, but not with God.

Peter seems to see this as unjust. Had they left everything to gain nothing? He had the same problem as the rich man, and was unaware of how he had come to have such a rich promise of the kingdom.

Jesus assured them that, when all things were renewed, that is, recreated to have their true purpose and function, with himself, the Son of Man, seated in authority over all things, they would be reigning with him. Even in this life, any believers who lost their homes or families or property because they followed him, would receive these same things in this world, and eternal life as well.

However, the disciples still had a very different view of the kingdom to Jesus. He was talking about being killed and rising again (20:17) and of giving his life as 'a ransom for many' (20:28). The disciples were thinking of their own advantage, both James and John whose mother sought their pre-eminence, and the others who were indignant with them (20:20–28).

The parable between the request of the young man and the request of the Zebedee mother is directed to his followers, and to all of us who must be weaned from thinking about earning merit, or about securing advantages for ourselves. In God's kingdom, what we think of as first is last and what we think of as last is first (19:30; 20:16). What seems reasonable in this world cannot describe the reign of God's grace.

The 'first' in the story Jesus told are those who begin their work early and earn a full pay for bearing 'the burden of the day and the scorching heat' (20:12). The 'last' are those who had no opportunity to work earlier (no criticism is made of those who start late) but are paid the same as the others for just one hour of work. "You have made them equal to us" is the complaint of the full day workers.

Clearly, the employer is eager to get his work done. He went several times to the market place to pick up people who may be free to work. He agreed to pay them 'whatever is right' (20:4). The employer makes an issue of his right to do as his wishes, and what he wishes is generosity. 'Do you begrudge my generosity?' is his question.

Who can afford to begrudge the King of the Kingdom his generosity? All of us stand in need of it. It is a generosity that would be measured later on by Christ giving his life as a ransom for many.

The 'first' who think they can earn the favour God gives, and who appear to have done so, are 'last'. They do not understand the kingdom and are misrepresenting its King, and may be in danger of never entering it.

However, God is generous to all. Those who know they have not deserved what they have received are the 'last', and they are 'first' because they know the nature of the king of the

THE WORKMEN AND THEIR WAGES con't

kingdom. They know that everything they have, even though they laboured through the heat and burden of the day, is a gift of grace.

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LUKE 14:1, 7–24
THE GREAT FEAST
Story Notes
File no. 144

The issue in these chapters is, will people come to Jesus and be saved? He knows that our hearts are stubborn and so, the doorway into salvation is narrow (13:23-24), as this narrative continues to show.

Vv. 1-6

Jesus has dinner with a leader of the Pharisees, but the invitation is not friendly. He and other Pharisees present are seeking to find fault with him. This party has not been friendly to Jesus (11:53-54). Their religion is hypocritical (12:1) and they want Jesus out of the way (13:31). As it happens, it is a Sabbath day and a man with dropsy (modern oedema — an accumulation of fluid in parts of the body, indicating, or leading to, serious illness) arrives expecting to be healed. Jesus, as he will soon teach others, is always ready to serve, not to preserve himself, so he heals the man. He says they would do the same if what was needing help on a Sabbath day was their own son or their own animal, regardless of what rules they had made up about not working on the Sabbath.

Vv. 7-11

Jesus sees that the Pharisees are shuffling about to get the best seats. They are not really friendly, even amongst themselves! He illustrates how the kingdom of God works by telling them what to do at the next wedding they attend. Look for the lowest seat. Perhaps you will be invited to a better one. Surely, it is better to be honoured by the host than to scramble for one's own honour. The religion of the Pharisees is all about scrambling for honour. In fact, Jesus says, we enter the kingdom of God, or are saved, by coming humbly, in great need, and being invited to a seat of honour by the Lord, our Host.

Vv. 12-14

Jesus speaks directly to his host, this ruler among Pharisees. He should not invite people who can repay his kindness but invite needy people—like the one Jesus had healed. This is the way to be blessed by God at the time of the resurrection. The scrambling of Pharisees at this dinner occasion shows they have no knowledge of God or his kingdom. God is richly generous, not self-serving and his servants should be the same.

Vv. 15-24

One of the guests warms to this mention of the coming kingdom. 'How good it will be' he says. All Israel knew that God had promised them a kingdom and they anticipated it warmly. With a story, Jesus seeks to awaken them to the fact that the kingdom is already among them (cf. 10:9, 11; 11:20).

What could be better than to be invited to a banquet! The invitations have been delivered earlier (and we may presume, been accepted) and the summons is simply to tell everyone the feast is ready. Who would normally let their property or production or even a recent marriage prevent them from attending, unless, of course, they have become disenchanted with the host! This snub angers him, but he is insistent that his feast is shared, even if by outcasts and wayfarers. But when this happens, there is no room left for those first invited.

The kingdom is like a feast of good things prepared by God (e.g. Is. 25:6; Matt. 28:11). All Israel has been invited and has entered into a covenant with God. The Pharisees are well aware of this. With the coming of his Son, the kingdom is now among them and the Father is summoning Israel to share his feast. They show their disdain by offering piffling excuses for not coming. So the Father's joy in his Son's presence in the world will be passed on to 'the poor and crippled and blind and lame' (v. 21)—those the ruling Pharisee should have invited to his feast in the first place (v. 13). There will be no room left in the kingdom for those who will not appreciate the gracious gift of God's presence in Christ.

LUKE 16:19–31

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Story Notes

File no. 145

Jesus continues his engagement with the Pharisees (14:1; 15:1; 16:14). They presume that their status before God is secure but they cannot understand Jesus' mercy on 'lost' people (15:1), and they love money rather than God (16:14), which demonstrates that they have not heard Moses or the Prophets. Jesus tells a story to show them their true situation.

The rich man (the traditional name 'Dives' is Latin for 'rich man') in this story is not just rich but showy and indulgent (purple dyed material is expensive, and linen is top quality and he wears it all the time). He is also careless of the poor sick man at his gate. The name Lazarus may derive from the Hebrew name Eleazar meaning 'God has helped', which is ironic given the man's awful condition. He longs for some scraps at the gate of this rich man and seems helpless to stop dogs licking his sores. The rich man is willfully ignorant of his covenant duty to this poor man, things that the Law and Prophets had made clear.

Both men die. The rich man has a funeral, but Lazarus has angels to transport him to the 'bosom of Abraham', meaning, not just acceptance in the afterlife but a place of honour. This man is now helped in the place where it really counts.

The scene changes to the afterlife where the rich man addresses Abraham. He is now in worse trouble than Lazarus ever was. Hades means the place of the dead but Jesus uses it here as the place of final punishment for those who disobey God. The rich man still thinks of Abraham as his covenant father. He asks for mercy, some moisture on his tongue in the midst of flames. Mercy was something he never thought he needed before. And he expects Lazarus to be his servant, someone he had never thought to serve.

Abraham tells the rich man (and, of course, Jesus is telling the Pharisees what Abraham is saying to them) his riches in life were received, not deserved. We could say that the poor man's poverty, likewise, was his gift, not his punishment. But things are now changed and nothing can change this situation. The two destinies are forever separated.

The rich man thinks that, perhaps, his family may be warned if Lazarus is sent tell them what lies ahead. But Jesus says that Moses and the prophets are all they need to know about how one should treat others in need, and of the punishments that will come to those who ignore God's word. The rich man thinks a person raised from the dead would be persuasive. Not so says Jesus. Evil can become so entrenched that not even miracles will be persuasive. This proved to be true when Jesus raised the real Lazarus from the dead (John 11:45-50).

We can hear Jesus pleading with the Pharisees. They should hear Moses and the Prophets because these writings would not only show them what God would do with law breakers but point to Christ by whom they could be saved (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

LUKE 17:11–19
THE TEN LEPERS
Story Notes
File no. 146

Vv. 11-18

Luke reminds us that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. Nothing he does will be complete without what he will do there. In fact, the story seems to be at the beginning of this journey because Jesus is passing between Samaria and Galilee, possibly heading for Perea. Many years before, Samaritans had compromised Jewish purity by intermarrying with non-Jews. As a consequence, their worship was not true (John 4:22). They sometimes attacked pilgrims if they travelled through their territory.

Becoming a leper made all these national distinctions irrelevant. All lepers were outcasts, and now, there is one Samaritan among this small community. In some way, they all understand that God's blessing is available through Jesus. They acknowledge him as 'Master' and ask for mercy. Lepers not only suffered from their disease and the social exclusion it entailed, but were regarded as beyond the reach of God's blessing, but Jesus grants them the mercy promised to his people (1:72), and also includes the Samaritan in his blessing. National distinctions are passing away with the greatness of the revelation of grace in Jesus (John 4:9; Col. 3:11).

The men must act in faith because Jesus sends them to the priests (to obtain a certificate of health so that they can rejoin Jewish society—Lev. 14:1-2). It is as they make their way there that they notice that they are well.

An earlier story of a leper's healing (5:12-16) places the healing first, and then the command to show themselves to the priest. Each healing takes place according to the Lord's purpose for those he helps.

Only the Samaritan returns to give thanks to Jesus. 'Where are the other nine?' he asks. All were full of noise when they came asking for help, but only this foreigner recognises the kindness done to him. In fact, Jesus says, he has returned to give praise to God. He goes away well, but also, with the affirmation of Jesus that he is a man of faith, and has received the blessing of God. The true worship of God that Jews still had in their temple and sacrifices meant nothing if it was not mixed with faith (Heb. 4:2) and with thanks (Rom. 1:21). In this case, a Samaritan has more of the truth than those who are Jews.

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LUKE 19:1–10
ZACCHEUS WELCOMES JESUS
Story Notes
File no. 147

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem has now brought him to Jericho, in the Jordan Valley. Tax collectors and sinners have come to listen to Jesus before (15:1) and Zaccheus is also attracted. Tax collectors were hated because they collaborated with Rome, and Zaccheus is a chief among them. Jericho is one of the three Jewish centres for this tax, and the hub of much trading, so Zaccheus is rich. This has been his life, but now, the grace of Christ's ministry makes him run and climb a tree to get a view of this man. Jesus has said it is difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom, but not impossible with God (18:24-27), and he is about to illustrate his point.

Christ recognises one of his own people, and summons Zaccheus into his service. Right now, he *must* come down from his tree and give hospitality to Jesus. Our Lord doesn't look for virtue in this man but comes to call him to repentance, just as he has done with the disciple Levi (5:27, 32). Jesus makes it abundantly clear to his critics, in his teaching as well as his actions, that he has not come to reward virtue but to seek and save what is lost.

The rest of the story must happen in the home of Zaccheus, where, in all probability, he hears more from Christ of the grace of salvation. Proof is readily available to all present that salvation has come to Zaccheus—'today'. He has repented and is truly a child of Abraham (that is, a true Jew—Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:9, 29). His reparation is abundant. The law required either one fifth of what was unjustly taken (Lev. 6:1-5; Num. 5:7), or double (Ex. 22:4, 7, 9), but Zaccheus volunteers half of his wealth to the poor and 400% reparation.

Later, Paul tells us that 'the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age' (Titus 2:11-12).

MARK 10:46–52

Luke 18:35–43

BLIND BARTIMAEUS

Story Notes

File no. 148

For some time, Jesus had been leading his disciples towards Jerusalem in a manner that amazed them (v.32). They knew it would not be safe there and Jesus was teaching them that that was where he must die and rise. Yet they still sought places of prestige in the kingdom. So, they arrived at Jericho, little more than 20 kilometres from Jerusalem.

The word that came to the blind Bartimaeus was that 'Jesus of Nazareth' was near. His cry was to the 'Son of David'. Did he use this cry because he knew that Jesus was the Messiah? We cannot tell, but Mark shows us that it is David's great Son who is coming to Jerusalem, and this blind man proclaims that his coming has to do with mercy.

The crowd were accustomed to blind beggars, and sought to silence Bartimaeus, but to Jesus, blind beggars were symptomatic of the state of the nation (John 9:25, 39-41) and he loved to heal them. Prophecies had indicated God would come to remove the (spiritual) blindness of his people (Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-6), or that his King would do this (Isa. 32:1-3).

The crowd changed their tune when Jesus requested to see the man. They too were learning what the priorities were in this man's kingdom.

What did Bartimaeus want? It was obvious, but then, it was important for him to ask. Being near to Jesus now, he called him 'teacher', and was healed, and healed because he believed. How important this believing was. God was giving mercy to the nation by sending their Messiah. There could be no blessing from God other than by the blessing he had already sent.

So Jesus made his way to Jerusalem, but now, Bartimaeus was not 'sitting by the roadside' (v. 46) but 'followed him by the way' (v. 52).

This is the last miracle recorded by Mark. The task of Messiah, or of God himself, was to remove the blindness of Israel, and lead them, exultant, to God. This, Jesus was doing. Before long, many would sing of Jesus coming into Jerusalem, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!' (11:9-10).

Perhaps Bartimaeus was one of the crowd. Generally, Mark does not record names, but he includes this one. It may be that Bartimaeus continued to follow Christ and was known in the community for which Mark wrote.

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LUKE 19:11–27

Matthew 25:14–30

TRADING FOR THE KING (*Parable of the pounds*)

Story Notes

File no. 149

Disciples, and others, have heard, and seen evidence of Jesus' claim to be seeking and saving the lost. It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom, but they have just seen it happen. Are they impressed by this and think that the kingdom is 'around the corner'? Or, perhaps, they are now in Jericho, less than 30 kilometres from Jerusalem and ready for a Passover celebration. Will Jesus take his authority then? We have already heard that they do not understand that Jesus must die. At various times, the disciples think the kingdom will come soon (Mark 10:35-45; Acts 1:6), and, by implication, without their labour, so, Jesus must correct this impression and he does so with a parable. (A similar story in Matthew 25:14-30 is used to make a different point.)

The nobleman must travel far away to receive his kingdom (cf. Matt. 24:14; 25:5, 19). It was not uncommon for a leader to travel to Rome to receive a commission to rule, and, on some occasions, for popular submissions to alter the result. It had happened with Archelaus (son of Herod the Great) during Jesus' childhood. In this story, however, nothing will be able to change the outcome.

Three of the king's servants each receive a large sum to utilise as his stewards. (A mina = 100 drachmas, or 100 day's pay; so, if a labourer earns \$100 per day, the sum may be around \$100,000.) The main point is that each servant receives the same amount. This responsibility will not be conducted in favourable circumstances (and this may be what the disciples are missing) because the citizenry is hostile.

So the period of waiting and trading begins, with different degrees of success for the first two, and with resentment and tardiness in the case of the third. If this third man really believes he will have to give an answer for his conduct, would he not have at least put the money with a banker? He seems, rather, to reflect the hostility of the citizens amongst whom he must conduct his affairs and makes no use of what is entrusted to him. He believes his master to be unjust and unfair.

The nobleman returns as king of his kingdom and has authority to dispose further benefits, 10 cities to one, five cities to another. The hostile servant is self-condemned: if he believed the master to be exacting, he should have made some profits, even if without his labour. It seems that he never believed he would have to give an account for what he had received. What he was given is taken away. He has nothing at all from the king. And the hostile citizens are executed in the presence of the king. The servant's complicity with those who were hostile has been in vain.

Jesus tells us that we should not expect to enter the kingdom without sharing in the administration of it, and, or course, in the love of it. If Jesus seeks and saves the lost, then so must his servants. We do not cause the kingdom to succeed by our labours; the Father has appointed it to the Son; but we do show ourselves worthy of the kingdom by what we do here, and are made ready for further responsibilities. This task is conducted in the presence of those who are hostile to Christ but we are to diligently 'trade' with what we have been given—grace upon grace! Paul knew that his service was a service of administering grace (Acts 20:24; 2 Cor. 4:1). Those who make no use of the kindness given to them are showing that they do not believe the King has any real authority and they will have nothing from Christ. Fearful indeed! They have copied those who are hostile to God, those who will be destroyed at Christ's coming. Is this why Paul says, '...knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others' (2 Cor. 5:11)?