

## Cyril of Alexandria's Commentary on Luke Sermons 27 - 38

### From Sermon 27.

#### Explanation of what follows.

#### **6:20. *Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.***

[From the Syriac] Those are the Saviour's words, when directing His disciples into the newness of the Gospel life after their appointment to the apostolate. But we must see of what poor it is that He speaks such great things: for in the Gospel according to Matthew it is written, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:" wishing us to understand by the poor in spirit the man who entertains lowly thoughts of himself, and whose mind, so to speak, is closely reefed, and his heart gentle, and ready to yield, and entirely free from the guilt of pride.

[From Mai.] Such a one is worthy of admiration, and the friend of God; yea, He even said by one of the holy prophets; "Upon whom will I look but upon the humble and peaceable, and that trembleth at my words?" And the prophet David also said, that "a contrite and humbled heart God will not set at nought." Moreover, the Saviour Himself also says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble in heart." In the lessons, however, now set before us, He says, that the poor shall be blessed, without the addition of its being in spirit. But the Evangelists so speak, not as contradicting one another, but as dividing oftentimes the narrative among them: and at one time they recapitulate the same particulars, and at another that which has been omitted by one, another includes in his narrative, that nothing essential for their benefit may be hidden from those who believe on Christ.----[From the Syriac.] It seems likely, therefore, that He here means by the poor, whom He pronounces blessed, such as care not for wealth, and are superior to covetousness, and despisers of base gifts, and of a disposition free from the love of money, and who set no value upon the ostentatious display of riches.

And so the most wise Paul manifestly guides us into the best doctrines, where he says, "Let your disposition be free from the love of money, being contented with what it has:" and to this he has added, that "having nourishment and the means of shelter, we will be therewith content." For it was necessary, absolutely necessary, for those whose business it would be to proclaim the saving message of the Gospel to have a mind careless about wealth, and occupied solely with the desire of better things. The argument, however, does not affect all whose means are abundant, but those only whose desire is set upon riches: and who are these? All to whom our Saviour's words apply: "Store not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth."

#### **6:21. *Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled.***

In Matthew, however, again He says; "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled:" but here He simply says, that "those that hunger shall be filled." We say, therefore, that it is a great and noble thing to hunger and thirst after righteousness: that is, habitually to take part in earnest endeavours after piety:----for such is the meaning of righteousness:----as if it were our meat and drink. And inasmuch as we ought to give to this passage also a meaning, in accordance with the foregoing explanations, we say again as follows: The Saviour pronounced those blessed who love a voluntary poverty, to enable them honourably, and without distraction, to practise the apostolic course of life. For it

is in plain keeping with the having neither gold nor silver in their purses, nor two coats, to endure also very great hardness in their way of life, and scarcely obtain food for their need. But this is a burdensome thing for those who are suffering poverty and persecutions, and therefore He That knoweth hearts, very suitably does not permit us to be dispirited because of the results of poverty: for He says, that those who hunger now for their piety's sake towards Him shall be filled: that is, they shall enjoy the intellectual and spiritual blessings that are in store.

**6:21. *Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.***

[From the Syriac.] He pronounces them that weep blessed, and says that they shall laugh. But by those who weep, we say that those are not meant who simply shed tears from their eyes: for this is a thing common to all without exception, whether believers or unbelievers, if ought happen of a painful nature; but those rather who shun a life of merriment and vanity, and carnal pleasures. ---[From Mai.] For of the one we say, that they live in enjoyment and laughter; whereas believers abandoning luxury and the careless life of carnal pleasures, and all but weeping because of their abhorrence of worldly things, are, our Saviour declares, blessed; and for this reason, as having commanded us to choose poverty, He also crowns with honours the things which necessarily accompany poverty: such, for instance, as the want of things necessary for enjoyment, and the lowness of spirits caused by privation: for it is written, that "many are the privations of the just, and the Lord shall deliver them out of them all."

**6:22. *Blessed are ye when men shall hate you.***

Already did the Lord mention persecution, even before the Apostles had been sent on their mission. The Gospel anticipated what would happen. For it was altogether to be expected that those who proclaimed the Gospel message, and made the Jews abandon their legal mode of worship to learn the Gospel way of virtuous living, while too they won over idolaters to the acknowledgment of the truth, would come in contact with many impious and unholy men. For such are they who, in their enmity against piety, excite wars and persecutions against those who preach Jesus. To prevent them, therefore, from falling into unreasonable distress whenever the time should arrive at which such events were sure to befall them from some quarter or other, He forewarns them for their benefit, that even the assault of things grievous to bear will bring its reward and advantage to them. For they shall reproach you, He says, as deceivers, and as trying to mislead: they shall separate you from them, even from their friendship and society: but let none of these things trouble you, He says: for what harm will their intemperate tongue do a well-established mind? For the patient suffering of these things, will not be without fruit. He says, to those who know how to endure piously, but is the pledge of the highest happiness. And besides, He points out to them for their benefit, that nothing strange will happen unto them, even when suffering these things: but that, on the contrary, they will resemble those who before their time were the bearers to the Israelites of the words that came from God above. They were persecuted, they were sawn asunder, they perished slain by the sword, they endured reproaches unjustly cast upon them. He would therefore have them also understand that they shall be partakers with those whose deeds they have imitated; nor shall they fail in winning the prophet's crown, after having travelled by the same road.

**Sermon 29**

**(6:24)**

receive those things that will lead you unto life eternal. For it is written, that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that goeth forth from the mouth of God." All Scripture, indeed, is inspired of God; but this is especially true of the proclamations in the Gospels: for He Who in old time delivered unto the Israelites by the ministry of Moses the law that consisted in types and shadows, the very same having become man spake unto us, as the wise Paul testifies, writing; "God, Who in divers manners spake in old time to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son:" and "we are taught of God:" for Christ is in truth God and the Son of God. Let us therefore fix our careful attention upon what He says: and scrupulously examine the very depth of His meaning. For "Woe, He says, unto you rich, in that ye have received your consolation."

Very fitly is this added to His previous discourse: for having already shewn that poverty for God's sake is the mother of every blessing, and said that the hungering and weeping of the saints would not be without a reward, He proceeds to speak of the opposite class of things, and says of them, that they are productive of grief and condemnation. For He blames indeed the rich, and those who indulge immoderately in pleasures, and are ever in merriment, in order that He may leave no means untried of benefitting those who draw near unto Him, and chief of all the holy Apostles. For if the endurance of poverty for God's sake, together with hunger and tears:---by which is meant the being exposed to pain and afflictions in the cause of piety:---be profitable before God, and He pronounce a threefold blessedness on those who embrace them; as a necessary consequence, those are liable to the utmost blame, who have prized the vices, that are the opposites of these virtues.

In order therefore that men may be won by the desire of the crowns of reward unto willingness to labour, and voluntary poverty for God's sake; and, on the other hand, by fear of the threatened punishment, may flee from riches, and from living in luxury and merriment, that is to say, in worldly amusements, He says that the one are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, but that the others will be involved in the utmost misery: "for ye have received, He says, your consolation."

And this truth we are permitted to behold beautifully delineated in the Gospel parables like as in a painting. For we have heard read that there was a rich man decked in purple and fine linen, at whose gate Lazarus was cast, racked with poverty and pain; and the rich man felt no pity for him.---But Lazarus, it says, was carried to Abraham's bosom; while he was in torments and in flame. And when he saw Lazarus at rest and in happiness in Abraham's bosom, he besought saying, "Father Abraham have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But what was blessed Abraham's reply? "Son, thou hast received thy good things in thy life, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is here in happiness, and thou art tormented." True therefore is what is here said by Christ of those who live in wealth and luxury and merriment, that "ye have received your consolation:" and of those who now are full, that they shall hunger, and that those who laugh now shall weep and lament.

But come and let us examine the matter among ourselves. Our Saviour in His parables has thus spoken: "Two men went up unto the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. And the Pharisee forsooth prayed saying, God I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of mankind, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or like this publican. I fast twice in the week: and

I pay tithes of all that I possess. But the publican, He says, did not venture to lift up his eyes unto heaven, but stood smiting his breast and saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner. Verily I say unto you, that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." For the proud Pharisee was boasting over the publican, and indecently assuming the rank of a lawgiver, would have condemned one, on whom it was rather his duty to have shewn pity: but the other was the accuser of his own infirmity, and thereby aided in his own justification; for it is written, "Declare thou thy sins first, that thou mayest be justified." Let us therefore unloose, that is, set free those who are suffering sicknesses from having been condemned by us, in order that God may also unloose us from our faults: for He condemneth not, but rather sheweth mercy.

Closely neighbouring, so to speak, upon the virtues which we have just mentioned is compassion, of which He next makes mention. For it is a most excelling thing, and very pleasing to God, and in the highest degree becoming to pious souls: and concerning which it may suffice for us to imprint upon our mind that it is an attribute of the divine nature. "For be ye, He says, merciful, as also your heavenly Father is merciful." But that we shall be recompensed with bountiful hand by God, Who giveth all things abundantly to them that love Him, He has given us full assurance by saying, that "good measure, and squeezed down, and running over shall they give into your bosom:" adding this too, "for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." There is however an apparent incompatibility between the two declarations: for if we are to receive "good measure, and squeezed down, and running over," how "shall we be paid back the same measure wherewith we mete?" for this implies an equal recompense, and not one of far-surpassing abundance. What say we then? The all wise Paul frees us from our difficulties, by bringing us the solution of the matters in question. For he says, that "he that soweth sparingly, meaning thereby, that he who distributeth the necessaries of life to those who are in penury and affliction moderately, and so to speak, with contracted hand, and not plentifully and largely," shall also reap sparingly: and he "that soweth in blessings, in blessings shall also reap." By which is meant, he who bountifully [From Mai] So that if anyone hath not, he has not sinned by not giving it; for a man is acceptable according to that which he hath, and not according to that which he hath not. [From the Syriac.] And this the law of the very wise Moses has taught us in type: for those that were under the law brought sacrifices to God according to what they severally possessed, and were able to afford: some for instance bullocks, and some rams, or sheep, or doves, or pigeons, or meal mingled with oil, but even he who offered this \* \*, because he had no calf to offer, though so little and to be procured so cheaply, was equal to the other as regards his intention. From

### **Sermon 29 (Different variant)**

#### **6:24. *Woe unto you rich; For ye have received your consolation.***

This too we must discuss among ourselves: For is it the case, that every one who is rich, and possesses abundant wealth, is determinately cut off from the expectation of God's grace? Is he entirely shut out from the hope of the saints? Has he neither inheritance nor part with them that are crowned? Not so, we say, hut rather on the contrary, that the rich man might have shewn mercy on Lazarus, and so have been made partaker of his consolation. For the Saviour pointed out a way of salvation to those who possess earthly wealth, saying, "Make unto yourselves friends of the unrighteous mammon, that when ye depart this life they may receive you into their tents."

***Love your enemies.***

[From Mai.] The blessed Paul speaks the truth where he says, that "if any one be in Christ, he is a new creation:" for all things have become new, both in Him and by Him, both covenant, and law, and mode of life. But look closely and see how thoroughly the mode of life here described becomes those holy teachers, who were about to proclaim the message of salvation to every quarter of the world: and yet from this very fact they must expect that their persecutors would be beyond numbering, and that they would plot against them in many different ways, if then the result had been that the disciples had become indignant at these vexations, and wished for vengeance on those that annoyed them, they would have kept silence and passed them by, no longer offering them the divine message, nor calling them to the knowledge of the truth. It was necessary therefore to restrain the mind of the holy teachers by so solemn a sense of the duty of patience, as to make them bear with fortitude whatever might befall, even though men insulted them, yea and plotted against them impiously. And such was the conduct of Christ Himself above all others for our example: for while still hanging upon the precious cross, with the Jewish populace making Him their sport, He put up unto God the Father prayers in their behalf, saying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Yea, and the blessed Stephen too, while the stones were smiting him, knelt down, and prayed, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin upon them." And the blessed Paul also says, "being reproached we bless, being reviled we entreat."

The exhortation of our Lord therefore was necessary for the holy apostles, and most useful for us also, to oblige us to live rightly and admirably: for it is full of all philosophy. But our mistaken preconceived ideas, and the fierce tyranny of our passions, render it a thing difficult for our minds to accomplish: and therefore knowing that the natural man does not admit of these things, regarding as folly and mere impossibilities the oracles of the Spirit, He separates such from those able to hear, and says, "I speak unto you that hear and are prepared readily to perform My words." For the gloriousness of spiritual fortitude is displayed in temptations and labours. Imitate therefore in these things Christ, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again, suffering He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." But perhaps thou wilt object, saying within thyself, 'Christ was God, but I a frail man, having but a feeble mind, and one unable to resist the attack of covetousness and pain.' Thou speakest rightly: for the mind of man easily slides into wrong doing. Nevertheless, I say, The Lord has not left thee destitute of His compassion and love: thou hast Him by thee, yea within thee, by the Holy Ghost: for we are His abode, and He lodgeth in the souls of them that love Him. He gives thee strength to bear nobly whatever befalls, and to resist manfully the attacks of temptations. "Be not overcome therefore by the evil, but overcome the evil in the good."

***6:29. To him that striketh thee on the cheek, offer also the other.***

That Christ is the end of the law and the prophets, is declared by the most wise Paul: for the law served as a schoolmaster to guide men unto His mystery. "But now that faith has come, as the blessed Paul has again himself said, we are no longer under a guide: for no longer are we children in mind, but, on the contrary, have grown up to the perfect man, to the measure of the mature age of the fulness of Christ." We do not therefore require milk, but rather, food of a more solid nature, such as Christ bestows upon us, by setting before us the pathway of that righteousness which surpasses the power of the law. For He said Himself to the holy apostles, "Verily I say unto you, except your righteousness be over and above, more than of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." This then it is necessary to

discuss, what, namely, is meant by the "over and above" in the righteousness in accordance with the saving message of the Gospel.

The law spoken by Moses to them of old time enacted like for like: and while it forbade the doing a wrong, it by no means commanded those who had already been injured to bear patiently, as the Gospel law requires. For it says, "Thou shalt not kill: thou shalt not steal: thou shalt not forswear thyself." But to this is added, "Eye for eye, hand for hand, foot for foot, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." Such an enactment required a man not to injure others; and supposing him to have sustained an injury, that his anger at the wrong doer must not go beyond an equal retribution. But the general bearing of the legal mode of life was by no means pleasing to God; it was even given to those of old time as a schoolmaster, accustoming them by little and little to a fitting righteousness, and leading them on gently to the possession of the perfect good. For it is written, "To do what is just is the beginning of the good way:" but finally, all perfection is in Christ, and His precepts. "For to him that striketh thee. He saith, on the check, offer also the other." In this there is pointed out to us the pathway to the highest degree of patience. But He wills besides, that we pay no regard to riches; so that even if a man have but one outer garment, he must not count it a thing unendurable to put off with it also his undergarment, if it so befall. But this is a virtue possible only for a mind entirely turned away from covetousness: for "do not, He says, ask back whatever any one taketh away that is thine: but even give to every one that asketh of thee:" a proof indeed of love and willingness to be poor; and the compassionate man must necessarily also be ready to forgive, so as to shew friendly acts even to his enemies.

**6:31. *As ye wish that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them.***

It was probable however that the holy apostles would perchance think these things difficult to put into practice: He therefore Who knoweth all things takes the natural law of self-love as the arbiter of what any one would wish to obtain from another. Shew thyself, He says, to others such as thou wishest them to be towards thee. If thou wouldest have them harsh and unfeeling, fierce and wrathful, revengeful and ill-disposed, shew thyself also such: but if on the contrary thou wouldst have them kind and forgiving, do not think it a thing intolerable to be thyself so. And in the case of those so disposed, the law is perchance unnecessary, because God writes upon our hearts the knowledge of His will: "for in those days, saith the Lord, I will surely give My laws into their mind, and will write them on their heart."

**6:36. *Be ye therefore merciful.***

Great is the glory of compassion, and so verily it is written, that "man is a great thing, and the merciful man an honourable thing." For virtue restores us to the form of God, and imprints on our souls certain characters as it were of the supreme nature.

**6:37. *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.***

He cuts away from our minds a very unmanageable passion, the commencement and begetter of pride. For while it is men's duty to examine themselves, and to order their conduct according to God's will, they leave this alone to busy themselves with the affairs of others: and if they see any infirm, forgetting as it seems their own frailties, they make it an excuse for faultfinding, and a handle for calumny. For they condemn them, not knowing that being equally afflicted with the same infirmities as those whom they censure, they condemn

themselves. For so also the most wise Paul writes, "for wherein thou judgest the other, thou condemnest thyself: for thou that judgest doest the same things." And yet it were rather our duty to have compassion on the infirm, as those who have been overcome by the assaults of the passions, and entangled without hope of escape in the meshes of sin, and to pray in their behalf, and exhort them, and rouse them up unto soberness, and endeavour ourselves not to fall into similar faults. "For he that judgeth the brother, as the disciple of Christ saith, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law." For the lawgiver and judge is One: for the judge of the sinning soul must be higher than that soul: but since thou art not so, the sinner will object to thee as judge, "why judgest thou thy neighbour?" But if thou venture to condemn him, having no authority thereto, it is thyself rather that will be condemned, inasmuch as the law permits thee not to judge others.

Whoever therefore is guided by good sense, does not look at the sins of others, nor busies himself about the faults of his neighbour, but closely scans his own misdoings. Such was the blessed Psalmist, falling down before God, and saying on account of his own offences, "If Thou, O Lord, O Lord, closely regardest iniquities, who can endure?" And once again, putting forward the infirmity of human nature as an excuse, he supplicates for a not unreasonable pardon, saying, "Remember that we are earth."

### **6:39. And he spake a parable unto them.**

This parable He added as a most necessary appendage to what had been said. The blessed disciples were about to be the initiators and teachers of the world: it was necessary for them therefore to prove themselves possessed of every thing requisite for piety: they must know the pathway of the evangelic mode of life, and be workmen ready for every good work, and able to bestow upon well-instructed hearers such correct and saving teaching as exactly represents the truth. This they must do, as having already first received their sight, and a mind illuminated with the divine light, lest they should be blind leaders of the blind. For it is not possible for men enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, to guide those who are afflicted in the same way into the knowledge of the truth: for should they attempt it, they will both roll into the ditch of licentiousness.

Next, overthrowing the vaunting passion of boastfulness, to which most men give way, that they may not emulously strive to surpass their teachers in honour, He added; "The disciple is not above his teacher;" and even if some make such progress, as to attain to a virtue that rivals that of their teachers, they will range themselves no higher than their level, and be their imitators. And Paul shall again be our warrant, saying, "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ." Since therefore the Teacher as yet judgeth not, why judgest thou? For He came not to judge the world, but to shew pity. And according to the foregoing explanation, if I, He says, judge not, neither must you the disciple. But if thou art guilty of worse crimes than those for which thou judgest another, how canst thou keep thyself from shame when thou art convicted of it? And this the Lord made plain by another parable.

### **Sermon 33**

6:41. "And why, saith He, beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Having previously shewn us that the judging others is utterly wicked and dangerous, and the cause of final condemnation:---for "Judge not, He said, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned." He now

by conclusive arguments persuades us to avoid the very wish of judging others: and rather to examine our own hearts, and try to free them from the passions that dwell within them, and their frailties, by asking it of God: for He it is Who healeth the broken in heart, and freeth us from the maladies of the soul. For if thou, He says, art thyself sick with maladies more dangerous and severe than those of others, why, neglecting thy own, dost thou find fault with them, and whilst thou hast a beam in thine own eye, commencest a hot accusation against those who have a mote? Tell me by what boldness doest thou this? Deliver thyself first from thy great crimes, and thy rebellious passions, and then thou mayest set him right who is guilty of but trifling faults.

Wouldst thou see the matter clearly and plainly, and that it is a very hateful thing for men to give way to this feeling? Our Lord was once walking on the sabbath day among the cornfields, and the blessed disciples plucked some ears, and rubbing them in their hands, ate the grains. But some Pharisees drew near, and say, "Behold, Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on sabbath days!" And yet they themselves in manifold ways were guilty of disregarding the law altogether. For even the prophet Isaiah cried out against them, saying, "How has the faithful city Zion become a harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it:---but now murderers. Your silver is reprobate; thy merchants mix the wine with water; thy princes are contentious, the partners of thieves, loving bribes, pursuing after recompense; they judge not the orphans, and to the widow's suit they have no regard." Yet these very men, themselves liable to these most severe reproaches, accused the disciples of breaking the sabbath!

But they met with just rebuke from Christ, Who said unto them; "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! who tithe mint and cummin, and have neglected the weighty matters of the law, judgment, and mercy, and faith." And again, "Ye are they who strain out a gnat, but gulp down a camel." For while their teaching was of mere trifles, and they condemned the people under them for the most contemptible matters, they had the hardihood, as I said, to treat as of no consequence those weighty crimes. For this reason the Saviour called them "whitened sepulchres, which outside appear indeed to men to be beautiful, but inside are full of the bones of the dead, and of all unclanness."---And such is every hypocrite: and whenever they would cast an imputation upon others, who have yielded to infirmity in any particular, deservedly will they have it said to them, "First cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then thou wilt see to cast out the mote from thy brother's eye."

The commandment, therefore, is indispensable for every one who would live piously: but, above all, for those who have been intrusted with the instruction of others. For if they are good and sober-minded, and enamoured of the elect life, and not merely acquainted with, but also practisers of virtuous arts, and setting in their own conduct the pattern of a holy life, they can with open countenance rebuke those who will not do the same, for not having imitated their example, nor imprinted their virtuous manners on themselves: but if they are careless, and quickly snared by pleasures to do evil, how can they blame others when similarly affected? Wisely, therefore, did the blessed disciples write, saying; "Let there not be many teachers among you, my brethren: for ye know that we shall receive greater condemnation." For as Christ, Who is the Distributor of the crowns, and the Punisher of those who do wrong, Himself says; "He who shall do and teach, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven: but he who hath not done, but hath taught, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

But I can imagine some one saying, How are we to distinguish the man who has a beam in his eye, but finds fault with those who have a mote, and are infirm only in part? But there is

nothing difficult in this, He says; for any one who will, may see it easily: "for it is not a good tree that brings forth evil fruit: nor a good tree that brings forth good fruit: for every tree is known by its fruit." Each man's actual life, therefore, is that which decides what are his morals: for it is not by mere outside adornments, and fictitious virtues that the beauty of the truly honourable life is delineated, but by the deeds a man does: for they are the fruits of a mind that for the love of piety chooses a blameless life. It is by deeds, therefore, and not by outside shew, that we must see who is the man truly approved, and who is not so. Again, Christ somewhere says, "Beware of those who come to you in the likeness of sheep, but within are ravenous wolves." See again, Christ commands that those who come unto us must be distinguished not by their clothing, but by what they really are. "For by its fruit, He says, the tree is known:" and just as it is ignorance and folly for us to expect to find the choicer kinds of fruits on thorns, grapes for instance, and figs; so it is ridiculous for us to imagine that we can find in hypocrites and the profane ought that is admirable, the nobleness, I mean, of virtue.

Wouldst thou see the truth of this again? Wouldst thou see who the wolves are that clothe themselves in the sheep's skin? Examine the writings of the holy Apostles: hear what they say of certain men: "For they who are such are false Apostles: deceitful workers, transforming themselves into angels of righteousness: and no wonder, for Satan even transforms himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing, therefore, if his ministers also transform themselves into angels of righteousness." These one may well call thorns and briars: in such there is no particle of sweetness, but every thing that is bitter and of an evil nature: for the fig grows not on thorns; nor will one find any thing pleasant in them, for grapes are not produced on briars. We must decide, then, the character of the teacher, not by appearances, but by the acts of each one's life.

This is also made clear by another declaration of our Lord: "for the good man, He says, as out of a good treasure, poureth forth from the heart good things:" but he who is differently disposed, and whose mind is the prey of fraud and wickedness, necessarily brings forth what is concealed deep within. For the things that are in the mind and heart boil over, and are vomited forth by the outflowing stream of speech. The virtuous man, therefore, speaks such things as become his character, while he who is worthless and wicked vomits forth his secret impurity.

Every thing, therefore, that is to our benefit, Christ teaches us, and requires His disciples to be on their guard against deceit, and vigilant and careful. For this reason He shews them the straight way, and discloses the snares that lead down to wickedness, that thus escaping from offences, and being steadfast in mind beyond risk of sin, they may quickly reach the mansions that are above by Christ's blessing: by Whom and with Whom to God the Father be praise and dominion with the Holy Ghost for ever and ever, Amen.

### **Sermon 34**

**6:46-49. *But why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Every one that cometh unto Me, and heareth My words, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like. He is like a man building a house, who dug and made it deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock: and when there was a flood, the river beat against that house, and could not shake it, because it was well built. But he that hath heard and not done, is like a man who built a house upon***

***the earth without foundation, against which the river beat, and that moment it fell, and the fall of that house was great.***

THERE is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," for so the wise Paul writeth. For both the name of lordship, and also the reality, are appropriate solely to that nature Which transcends all, and is supreme; even That Which is divine, and to be worshipped, as possessing and governing all things. For so Paul again somewhere says of Him; "For even, if there be Gods many and Lords many, in heaven or in earth; yet for us there is one God, the Father, from Whom is all, and we by Him: and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by Whom is all, and we by Him." As therefore we acknowledge God the Word alone, Who reigneth with God the Father, as by nature and verily Lord, we accordingly give this name to Him. "But why, He asks, call ye Me indeed Lord, but do not the things which I say?" For if He possess no real authority, nor glory of lordship, but, on the contrary, it is conferred upon Him from without, and bestowed by favour, do not offer Him thy obedience: refuse His service: consent not to be subject unto Him. But if He be verily, and in its precise meaning Lord, and the whole nature of things created bow beneath His sceptre, and as a thing set under the feet of its Lord, then pay what is due: accept the yoke: and as being due, offer Him thy obedience; that thou mayest not hear Him blaming thee in words spoken by one of the holy prophets to them of old time; A son honoureth his father, and a servant his lord: if I then am a father, where is My honour? and if I am a lord, where is My fear? saith the Lord Almighty."

For come, and let us see by what takes place among us the blame to which we become liable by disobedience. We are ourselves accustomed to require of our servants obedience mingled with tear: and when they plan rebellion, and throw off the yoke of servitude; we make them humble by bonds and tortures and the scourge. When therefore we, who are of earth, and by nature the brethren of those who are bowed beneath the yoke, cannot tolerate them when rebellious, how will God endure it;---He Whom principalities, thrones, and lordships worship: in Whose presence the high-exalted Seraphs stand, readily rendering their service? For the divine David somewhere says of them in the Psalms; "Bless the Lord, all ye His angels, who hearken to the voice of His words. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts: His ministers, who do all of them His pleasure."

It is dangerous, therefore, and merits final condemnation, to be unwilling to submit to Christ the Almighty: but those who prize His service, shall receive the most excellent blessings. For He has said by one of the holy prophets to those who run away from His yoke, and will not submit to be set under His authority; "Behold, they that serve Me shall eat; but ye shall suffer hunger: behold, they that serve Me shall drink; but ye shall suffer thirst: behold, they that serve Me shall exult; but ye shall mourn: behold, they that obey Me, shall be merry with joy; but ye shall cry out for the grief of your heart, and howl for contrition of your spirit." Thou seest that the crown of those who bear the yoke of servitude is very beautiful, worthy of being acquired, and precious: while severe and manifold condemnation is decreed against the rest.

And yet again in another place thou mayest see that the true servant is adorned with surpassing honour, while the disobedient and careless is rejected with disgrace, or rather is banished to the outer darkness. For they who received the talents, and doubled for the owner what had been given them, were honoured by him with praises: for he said to each one of them, "O good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will set thee over many things: enter the joy of thy lord." But him who hid in the ground what had been

given him, as not loving service and indolent, he condemned to severe and inevitable punishment.

Elsewhere too He has said, "Who then is that faithful and wise servant, whom his lord <sup>14</sup> shall set over his household to give them meat at its season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord shall come and find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath."

Those therefore who keep our Saviour's will are made glorious, and worthy of emulation, and adorned with praises for their fidelity: yea, moreover, they have a name given them, for He has said again of them in a certain place, "On them that serve Me, there shall be called a new name,<sup>15</sup> even That Which is blessed upon earth."

And there is yet another point which I think must be added to what has been already said, namely, that by being willing to submit to our Saviour's words and serve Him, we shall gain in return the honour of freedom by His decree. For He said to those that believe in Him, "If ye abide in My Word, ye are truly My disciples, and ye shall acknowledge the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We gain therefore the glory of freedom by subjection: that is, by servitude under Him. This makes us sons and heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ: of which He again shall be thy proof, saying; "that every one that doeth sin is the servant of sin: but the servant abideth not in the house for ever. If therefore the Son make you free, ye are really free."

The being willing therefore to serve is that which invites us to freedom, and the honour which is the especial prerogative of sons: but disobedience humbles us to a base and ignominious servitude, if it be true, as true certainly it is, that "every one that doeth sin is the servant of sin."

But yes! says some one, obedience unto Christ's service is a most excellent thing, and highly to be appreciated; but it is by no means an easy matter: for there is much that stands in the way, and is able to exhaust our zeal. Yes, so say I too:---for first of all Satan resists whatever is excellent:---and the flesh, in its fondness for pleasure, strives against the Spirit, "for they are contrary one to the other," according to the expression of the wise Paul: and the law of sin that is in the members, savagely and very bitterly makes opposition. For I know that Paul, who was instructed in the law, excellently discusses these questions. For he said, "For I rejoice in the law of God in the inner man: but I see another law warring against the law of the mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, that is in my members." And again; "I therefore in my mind serve indeed the law of God, but in my flesh the law of sin." And besides this, there is a certain powerful inclination of the mind of man, which makes the will wander after pleasures: and engenders the delights of worldly lusts, and leads it away from the wish to labour in the cause of virtue. Shall we, therefore, on this account, refuse our service? Is He ever seen to command ought that is impossible, and that cannot be done? Does He demand of us anything that exceeds the limits of our nature? And who would venture to say this? For certainly He adapts to our minds whatever is commanded. When, therefore, thou tellest me of the difficulty of obedience,

I tell thee also: Do those things that are great and excellent come of themselves? or do those who seek to win them succeed without toil? or, on the contrary, are they attained to by earnestness and labours? Who are the men that in the conflicts of the palestra are accustomed to win the crown? Is it those who have entirely devoted themselves to skill in the art of

wrestling, and have gone through bitter toils? for "they endure all things," according to the expression of St. Paul: or, on the contrary, is it the indolent and luxurious, and those entirely unacquainted with what is suitable for athletes? Who of those that till the ground have their threshing-floor full of sheaves? Is it such as neglect ploughing, and will not undertake the severe toil of the mattock: or, on the contrary, is it the diligent and industrious, and such as apply themselves to the labours necessary for ensuring a prolific crop? The answer is known, even if no one speak it; that it is with those who are willing to labour, and not with those whose wont it is to be at ease, that a life of happiness is to be found, and nothing wanting for a tranquil existence. The Psalmist also bears witness, in a passage where he makes mention of the tillers of the ground as an exemplification of something else, "They went out, and that with tears, carrying their seed: but they shall surely come with joy bringing their sheaves." Joy therefore is the fruit of labour.

Moreover, the Lord Himself somewhere quickens us for the love of exertion in every praiseworthy pursuit, by saying, "Enter at the strait gate: because narrow is the gate, and strait the way that leadeth unto life; but broad and wide is that which leadeth down those that run thereon unto destruction." Observe therefore that the end of that strait path leadeth unto life, while the easy descent of the broad way sends men to the flame and never-ending torments.

If therefore we call Christ, the Saviour of us all. Lord, let us do the things which He says. For He teaches us Himself what the benefit is of our being willing to do that which is commanded: and what the loss of our refusing to obey: for He says, "Every one that heareth My words and doeth them, is like a man who builds a house, and firmly places its foundations upon the rock:" while he who does not obey, he also is like a man building a house, but who has taken no care for its stability. For he who is obedient and tractable holds a thoroughly firm position in every thing that is honourable and good, by reason of his being not so much a hearer of the law, as a doer of its works: he resembles therefore a house firmly settled, and having a foundation that cannot be shaken, so that, even though temptations press upon him, and the savageness of the passions that dwell within us assail him like some winter torrent, or a waterflood, he will sustain no serious loss. But he who merely inclines his ear to what Christ saith, but stores nothing up in his mind, nor performs anything that is commanded, he, on the other hand, is like a house just ready to fall. For he will be led away at once into things unseemly whenever pleasure allures him, and leads him into the pitfalls of sin.

The service therefore of Christ invites us, as we affirm, unto every blessing: and if we will blamelessly fulfil it, Christ will crown us with His grace; by Whom and with Whom to God the Father be praise and dominion with the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever, Amen.

### **Sermon 35.**

***7:1-10. And when He had ended all His words in the hearing of the people, He entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant who was dear unto him was sick, and near to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him elders of the Jews, beseeching Him to come and save his servant. And when they came unto Jesus, they besought Him earnestly, saying, that he is worthy that Thou shouldst grant this unto him: for he loveth our nation, and hath also built us himself a synagogue. And Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far distant from the house, the centurion sent his friends unto Him,***

***saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not sufficient that Thou shouldest enter under my roof: therefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee: but speak only with a word, and my child will be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And when Jesus heard these things, He marvelled at him, and turned Himself, and said to the multitude that followed Him, I say unto you, that I have not found so great faith even in Israel. And when they who had been sent returned unto the house, they found the servant whole.***

THE wise Evangelist filleth our minds with sacred lessons, and endeavours to throw abundant light upon whatever makes our faith assured: for this is the object of his tidings concerning Christ. Very appropriately therefore he introduces Him as at one time teaching the holy Apostles things superior to the service enacted in the law, and pointing out to them a path new and untrodden by them of old time of the conversation that becometh saints: and at another, he very beautifully displays to us the manifestation of a godlike power, in order that in every way it may be known that the Only-begotten Word of the Father is very God even though He became flesh, that is, man,----" and produces every thing by the word of his power:"----as is proved unto us by the examination of what is written concerning Him.

When then, so to speak, he had satiated the holy Apostles with the most perfect doctrines, and had set before them a banquet of evangelical commands, and had mingled the wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and very clearly told them the means by which they would become triumphant and praiseworthy, He goes down to Capernaum. And there also He works a great and wonderful deed, worthy of the greatness of His majesty: there a glorious theatre was moved with astonishment, in which angels and men were spectators. For Israel is rebuked, and is dull of understanding, and unready for faith: while the multitude of the heathen, in mind at least, is ready thoroughly both to understand and believe: so that Christ is seen by just decree rejecting His servant Israel, while He accepts and honours and crowns by His grace those who of old served the creature apart from the Creator: who were in gloom and darkness, and without the knowledge of God: and had bowed the neck of their slavish mind to the wickedness of demons.

What, then, was that which was accomplished, or what was the miracle? There was a pious man, distinguished for the excellence of his conduct, and the commander of a body of soldiers, who was a fellow inhabitant with the people of Capernaum. A faithful servant of his as it chanced fell sick, and, so to speak, had already reached the gates of death, and to all appearance was now at his last gasp. "And he was dear to him," so that he was pierced with anguish. What remedy, then, can he find for what has happened, or what aid can he procure for him who is lying ill? "He heard, it says, the things of Jesus;" and so he sends unto Him, asking of Him manifestly as of God things that exceed the nature and power of man. For his request was, that one who was laid prostrate in the last stage of sickness might be delivered from the bands of death. And whence, then, did he know Jesus, since he was not as yet of the number of those who believed on Him? for hitherto he had been one of the mass wandering in error. He heard, it says, the things concerning Him. And since certainly he had never heard His personal instruction, nor seen any of His miracles, nor had met with the writings of Moses, nor searched the divine Scriptures, he could only have attained to faith in Him from simple rumours and hearsays. But as being fully assured that by the mere act of His will He

could accomplish his request, he sends as supplicants in his behalf the principal men of the Jews; and these were the elders.

Upon their arrival they offer their request, saying, "that he is worthy that Thou shouldst grant this unto him." O marvellous act! They who slandered Christ's glory, request Him to work a miracle! Those who refused to believe in Him, ask Him to display before men who had not yet believed such acts as lead on to faith! Tell me in what character dost thou approach with thy request? Dost thou know and believe that He is able to perform things that are the prerogative of God? Art thou fully convinced that it belongs solely to the supreme Substance, Who is above all, to be able to make alive, and to deliver men from the snares of death? If so, how then didst thou say when thou sawest Jesus working miracles, "This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub, Prince of the devils?" And when that man who had been blind from his mother's womb was wonderfully healed, and gained an unwonted light, thou advisedst him, saying, "Give God the glory, we know that this man is a sinner." Dost thou then ask this sinner, as thou calledst Him, to perform an act of Deity? Is not this madness, and sheer stupidity? Are not those who hitherto had not believed far better than those who had been taught by the law and the prophets?

Wouldst thou see the fact that such is the case and such only? Observe what follows; The Saviour had now set out upon His way to restore the sick man: but the centurion sent unto Him, saying, "Lord, trouble not Thyself; but speak with a word, and my child will be healed." Consider then, that these elders of the Jews begged Jesus to go to the house of him who requested His aid, as not being able in any other way to raise him up who was lying ill, except by going to his side: ---whereas the other believed that He could do it even at a distance, and effect it by the inclination of His will. He asked for the saving word, the loving assent, the all mighty utterance; and justly therefore did he win a sentence of surpassing worth: for Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, that not even in Israel have I found so great faith." The proof then and demonstration, follows closely and immediately from what we have now said. Finally, He delivered that same hour from his sickness him who a little before had been the prey of death: for He Who willed the undoing of what had happened was God. As I said then at the beginning of this discourse, by God's holy decree Israel fell from his relationship unto Him, and in his stead the heathen were called and admitted, as having a heart better prepared for that faith in Him, which justly is required. And of this the divine Psalmist shall again be our proof, where he says concerning them; at one time, "Thou hast inclined Thine ear because of the preparation of their heart;" and at another, "Many were their infirmities, and afterwards they went quickly." For many indeed were the offences laid to their charge, to which he gently gives the name of infirmities: for they were wandering in error, and guilty of abominable crimes, not merely in one way, but in many: but they went quickly to the faith, that is, they were not slow in accepting the commands of Christ, but very readily embraced the faith. For that they were to be caught in Christ's net, He teacheth thee where He saith by one of the holy prophets, "For this wait for Me, saith the Lord, until the day of My rising up to bear witness, because My judgment is for the congregations of the heathen." For when Christ rose from the dead, He bestowed on those that were in error that judgment which is for their happiness and salvation. For He even commanded the holy disciples, "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and teaching them to observe all those things that I have commanded you."

By the holy decree therefore, and just sentence of our common Saviour Christ, the heathen were honoured; but Israel we see rejected from His love and affection. For what do we find the

chief Shepherd of all saying to them by one of the holy prophets? "And I have declared, He says, that I will not feed you, and that which is dying shall die: and that which is fainting shall faint: and those that are left shall devour every one the flesh of his neighbour." And again; "God hath rejected them, because they have not heard Him: and they shall be wanderers among the heathen." And again by the voice of the prophet Ezechiel, "Thus saith my Lord, the Lord; that I will drive them among the heathen, and disperse them over the whole earth." Take the actual result of facts for your persuasion and faith in what is here said. For they are vagabonds and strangers in every land and city, neither preserving in its purity the worship enjoined by the law, nor submitting to accept the gloriousness of the excellency of the Gospel life: while we, who have received the faith are fellow-citizens with the saints, and called the sons of the Jerusalem that is above, in heaven, by the grace of God which crowneth us. And Him we affirm to be the completion of the law and the prophets: we confess His glory; we admire Him as He worketh miracles; by Whom and with Whom, to God the Father be praise and dominion with the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever, Amen.

### **Sermon 36**

***7:11. And it came to pass the day after, He was going to a city called Nair, and His disciples were going with Him,...***

[From Mai and Cramer] But observe how He joins miracle to miracle: and in the former instance, the healing of the centurion's servant, He was present by invitation: but here He draws near without being invited. For no one summoned Him to restore the dead man to life, but He comes to do so of His own accord. And He seems to me to have purposely made this miracle also follow upon the former. For there was nothing improbable in supposing that at some time or other some one might rise up and say, in opposition to the Saviour's glory, 'What is the prodigy wrought in the case of the centurion's son? For though he was ailing, he was in no danger of death, even though the Evangelist has so written, shaping his narrative rather with a view to what was pleasant, than to what was true.' To stop therefore the intemperate tongue of such detractors, he says, that Christ met the dead young man, the only son of a widow. It was a pitiable calamity, able to arouse one's lamentation, and make one's tears gush forth; and the woman follows, stupified with her misfortune, and all but fainting, and many with her.

[From the Syriac]: for that dead man was being buried, and many friends were conducting him to his tomb. But there meets him the Life and Resurrection, even Christ: for He is the Destroyer of death and of corruption: He it is "in Whom we live and move and are:" He it is Who has restored the nature of man to that which it originally was; and has set free our death-fraught flesh from the bonds of death. He had mercy upon the woman, and that her tears might be stopped, He commanded, saying, "Weep not." And immediately the cause of her weeping was done away: how, or by what method? He touched the bier, and by the utterance of his godlike word, made him who was lying thereon return again to life: for He said, "Young man, I say unto thee. Arise;" and immediately that which was commanded was done: the actual accomplishment attended upon the words, "And that dead man, it says, sat up, and began to speak, and He gave him to his mother."

Observe here too, I pray you, the accuracy of the expression: for the divine Evangelist not only says, that the dead man sat up, but lest any one should by false arguments attack the miracle, saying, 'What wonder! if by means of some artifice or other the body was set upright! for it is

not as yet clearly proved to be alive, or delivered from the bonds of death:'----for this reason he very skilfully notes down two proofs one after the other, sufficient to produce the conviction that he did in very truth arise and was restored. "For he began, he says, to speak"--- -but an inanimate body cannot speak----"And He gave him to his mother:"----but assuredly the woman would not have taken her son back to her house if he had boon dead, and had breathed his last.

Those persons therefore who were restored to life by the power of Christ, we take as a pledge of the hope prepared for us of a resurrection of the dead: and these were, this young man, and Lazarus of Bethany, and the daughter of the chief of the synagogue. And this truth the company of the holy prophets proclaimed before: for the blessed Isaiah said, "The dead shall arise, and those in the graves shall be restored to life: for the dew from Thee is healing to them." And by dew he means the life-giving operation of Christ, which is by the instrumentality of the Holy Ghost. And the Psalmist bears witness, thus speaking concerning them in words addressed to God the Saviour of us all. "When Thou turnest away Thy face they are troubled, and return to their dust. Thou sendest Thy Spirit, and they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the ground." For it was by reason of Adam's transgression of the commandment that we, having our faces turned away from God, returned to our dust: for the sentence of God upon human nature was, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return:" but at the time of the consummation of this world, the face of the earth shall be renewed: for God the Father by the Son in the Spirit will give life to all those who are laid within it.

It is death that has brought men to old age and corruption: death therefore has made old, that is to say, has corrupted: for "that which is made old, and is growing aged, is near corruption," as Scripture saith: but Christ renews, in that He is "the Life." For He Who in the beginning created, is able again to renew unto incorruption and life. For one may well affirm that it is the office of one and the same energy and power, to effect both the one and the other. As therefore the prophet Isaiah says, "He hath swallowed up death, having become mighty." And again, "The Lord hath taken away all weeping from every countenance. He hath taken away the reproach of the people from all the earth." By the reproach of the people he means sin, which disgraces and depraves men: and which, together with destruction, shall be slain, and sorrow and death shall perish, and the tears cease which are shed on its account.

Disbelieve not therefore the resurrection of the dead; for long ago Christ wrought it among us with a Godlike majesty. And let no man say, that He Who raised two, for instance, or three, and effected thus much, is not thoroughly sufficient for the life also of us all. Such words, foul with utter ignorance, are simply ridiculous. Right rather is it for us to understand, that He is the Life, and the Life-giver by nature. And how can the Life be insufficient for making all alive? It would be the same thing as to say in one's excessive folly, that the Light also is sufficient indeed for little things, but not for the Universe.

He therefore arose who was descending to his grave. And the manner of his rising is plain to see; "for He touched, it says, the bier, and said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise." And yet how was not a word enough for raising him who was lying there? For what is there difficult to it, or past accomplishment? What is more powerful than the Word of God? Why then did He not effect the miracle by a word only, but also touched the bier? It was, my beloved, that thou mightest learn that the holy body of Christ is effectual for the salvation of man. For the flesh of the Almighty Word is the body of life, and was clothed with His might. For consider, that iron, when brought into contact with fire, produces the effects of lire, and fulfils its functions;

so, because it became the flesh of the Word, Who gives life to all, it therefore also has the power of giving life, and annihilates the influence of death and corruption . May our Lord Jesus Christ also touch us, that delivering us from evil works, even from fleshly lusts, He may unite us to the assemblies of the saints; for He is the giver of all good, by Whom, and with Whom, to God the Father, be praise and dominion, with the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever, Amen.

### **Sermon 37.**

***7:17-23. And this word concerning Him went forth in all Judaea, and in all the region round about. And his disciples told John of all these things: and John called certain two of his disciples, and sent them unto Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another? When the men came to Him, they said, John the Baptist sent us to Thee, saying, Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another? But in that same hour he healed many of sicknesses and scourges, and of evil spirits: and unto many that were blind He gave sight. And He answered and said to them, Go tell John what things ye have seen and heard: that the blind see; and the lame walk; and the lepers are cleansed; and the deaf hear; the dead arise, and the poor are preached unto; and blessed is he who is not offended in Me.***

On the present occasion also the Word about to be addressed to you, and the investigation of the sacred doctrines cannot but be most certainly for your benefit. Come then, that together with the holy angels we may praise the universal Saviour: for He is worshipped, as in heaven so also in earth; and to Him every knee shall bow, as it is written. Be it therefore known to people everywhere, that the Lord is God, and even though He appeared in fashion like unto us, yet has He given us the indications of a godlike power and majesty on many occasions, and in a multitude of ways: by driving away diseases; by rebuking unclean spirits; by bestowing on the blind their sight; and finally, oven by expelling death itself from the bodies of men;---- death which cruelly and mercilessly had tyrannized from Adam even unto Moses, according to the expression of the divine Paul. That widow's son then at Nain arose unexpectedly and wonderfully, and the miracle remained unknown to no one throughout the whole of Judaea, but was noised abroad as a divine sign, and admiration was upon every tongue. And some of his intimate friends, that is, his disciples, tell it also to the blessed Baptist: and he chose out and selected two persons from the rest, and sends them to Jesus to ask Him, if it is He Who cometh, or whether they must wait for another. What hast thou done, O excellent Baptist! Dost thou not know Him Whom thou preachedst, being thyself the precursor of this rising, as the morning star proclaims the coming sun? Thou wentest before Him like a torch. Thou pointedst Him out to the holy apostles, saying very plainly, "Behold the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sin of the world!" Elsewhere also we heard Thee saying to the multitudes of the Jews, that "after me cometh the man who was before me, because He is before me. And I knew Him not: but He who sent me to baptize in water, He said unto me, On Whom thou seest the Holy Ghost descend from heaven, and remain upon Him, He it is Who baptizeth in the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bore witness, that This is the Son of God." How then dost thou ask, if it is He that cometh? For thou saidst, "I saw and bore witness, that He is the Son of God." But the blessed Baptist did not fail to recognise the Word of God Who had become man. Do not imagine so. Well and very clearly was he persuaded that He was He that cometh; but what He did was something wise and well-contrived, and fit in no slight degree to benefit his disciples. For they indeed, because they did not yet know Christ, inasmuch as His glory and

all-excelling majesty was concealed from them, were even silently stung at His working miracles, and surpassing the Baptist in the greatness of the deeds wrought by Him. For on one occasion they even drew near to him, pining with envy and vexation, and with their heart still requiring to set free from Jewish maladies, and said to the blessed Baptist concerning Christ the universal Saviour, "Rabbi, He Who was with thee on the other side of Jordan, to Whom thou bearest witness, He baptizeth, and every man cometh to Him." For they did not wish any one else to baptize at all, and exalt himself against the honour of John. They learnt however from him the superiority of Christ's **138** glory, and the incomparable greatness of His splendour: for they heard him say in answer, "Ye are yourselves my witnesses that I said, that I am not the Christ, but that I have been sent before Him. He who hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the bridegroom's friend, who standeth and heareth his voice, joyfully rejoiceth because of the bridegroom's voice: this therefore, which is my joy, is complete. He must grow great, but I must be made small." We do not however say that the blessed Baptist in any respect whatsoever decreased in dignity, himself of himself, during the time that Christ's glory was constantly receiving addition from those that believed on Him: but inasmuch as the blessed John continued in the measure of human nature:---for it was not possible for him ever to advance to anything beyond:---but the incarnate Word, being in His nature God, and ineffably begotten of God the Father, advancing continually to His proper glory, was admired of all men; for this reason it was he said, "He must grow great, but I must be made small." For he who remains in exactly the same state seems to grow small, in comparison with one who is continually advancing. But that it was right that as being by nature God, He should surpass in might and glory human things, he explained to them saying: "He Who cometh from above is above all: and he who is of the earth, belongeth to the earth, and speaketh of the earth." Who then is He Who cometh from above, and is above all as being God? Plainly the only-begotten Word of the Father, Who was in His likeness, and on an equality with Him: but for the love He had unto the world, humbled Himself to our estate. As being such therefore, He must necessarily surpass one who was of the earth: one, that is to say, numbered among the things of earth, and their like in nature, such as was the Baptist. For he was indeed praiseworthy in virtue, and incomparable in piety, and had attained to the perfection of all righteousness, and was honourable and worthy of admiration: for the Lord bore him witness saying, "There hath not risen among the sons of women one greater than John the Baptist." But he was not from above; not of the Substance, I mean, that is set above all: rather he was from below, a son of earth, and one of us. Therefore, to return from this digression, as their heart was not free from Jewish maladies, they tell the blessed Baptist of the Saviour's divine signs: and he, as thoroughly knowing Who it was That wrought the miracles, exulted indeed in himself, in seeing the Saviour's glory spread abroad: but to produce a firm and steadfast faith in Him, in those, who as yet were halting, nor thus far convinced that He is the Christ, he puts on the appearance of ignorance, and so sends to Him certain to ask Him, saying, "Art Thou He That cometh, or do we wait for another?" Cometh whither perhaps some will say: for there are men who think that we ought to understand something of this sort: ---that as the Baptist was about before the precious cross to undergo death by the wickedness of Herod, and, so to speak, anticipate Christ's departure, and as His forerunner, precede His arrival in Hades, he asks whether He will come there also, to redeem those in darkness and the shadow of death, and entangled in inevitable bonds. But such an opinion is utterly to be rejected: for nowhere do we find that the Scripture inspired of God has declared that the divine Baptist preached beforehand to the spirits in Hades the coming of the Saviour. And this also we may truly say, that inasmuch as once for all he knew the whole effect of the dispensation in the flesh of the Only-begotten, he of course knew, in addition to the

other particulars, that He will redeem those in Hades, and shine forth even upon them, as "by the grace of God tasting death for every man," that as Paul says, "He may be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

What then does he wish to understand by asking, "Art Thou He that cometh, or do we wait for another?" I said then, that he puts on the appearance of ignorance purposely, not so much that he might himself learn:----for as being the forerunner he know the mystery:----but that his disciples might be convinced, how great is the Saviour's superiority, and that, as the word of the inspired Scripture had announced before, He is God, and the Lord That was to come. All the rest then were servants, sent before a master, preceding Him Who is beyond all, and preparing the way of the Lord, as it is written. By the holy prophets therefore the Saviour and Lord of all is called, "He that cometh." For the prophet David in a psalm declares: "Blessed be He That cometh in the Name of the Lord." And what means that expression "in the Name of the Lord?" it means in godlike glory, and lordship, and all transcending majesty. And this again he has signified in what follows: "The Lord is God, and hath shone forth upon us." For Moses indeed came, and appeared in his season, and by his instrumentality the law was spoken to the Israelites: and then after him Jesus the son of Nun commanded the host, and then in order the blessed prophets. And they were indeed holy men, honourable beyond comparison, and endowed with a spiritual and all-excelling splendour: but no one of them shone forth upon the inhabitants of earth in the name of the Lord, in the glory that is of Godhead and dominion. But the only-begotten Word of God shone forth upon us as being in His nature and verily God and Lord. So God the Father named Him by the prophet Habakuk, thus saying; "Yet a little He That cometh will come, and will not tarry." And again also by another prophet the only-begotten Word of God thus speaketh: "Rejoice, and be glad, O daughter of Zion: for behold! I come, and will lodge in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall find refuge in the Lord on that day; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people." And that this has come to pass, one may see by actual facts: for a multitude of nations has been caught in the net, and Christ is their God, and they are His people.

Having therefore taken from the inspired Scripture the name of "He That cometh," the divine Baptist sent certain of his friends to ask, "if He were He that cometh." And what follows? Inasmuch as Christ by nature and in truth is God, the purpose of John did not escape Him, but as well knowing the cause of his disciples' coming, He especially at that particular time began accomplishing divine miracles many times more numerous than those which He had hitherto wrought. For so the wise Evangelist has told us, saying, "In that same hour He healed many of sicknesses and of scourges, and of evil spirits: and gave sight to many that were blind." Having then been made spectators and eyewitnesses of His greatness, and gathered into them a great admiration of His power and ability, they bring forward the question, and beg in John's name to be informed, whether He is He Who cometh. Here see I pray the beautiful art of the Saviour's management. For He does not simply say, I am; though had He so spoken, it would have been true: but He rather leads them to the proof given by the works themselves, in order that having accepted faith in Him on good grounds, and being furnished with knowledge from what had been done, they might so return to him who sent them. "For go, He says, tell John the things that ye have seen and heard." For ye have heard indeed, He says, that I have raised the dead by the all-powerful word, and by the touch of the hand: ye have seen also, while ye yourselves stood by, that those things that were spoken of old time by the holy prophets are accomplished: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the dumb hear, and the dead arise, and the poor are preached unto. All these things the

blessed prophets had before announced, as about in due time to be wrought by My hands. If then I bring to pass those things that were prophesied long before, and ye are yourselves spectators of them, return and tell those things which ye have seen with your own eyes accomplished by My might and ability, and which at various times the blessed prophets foretold. And then He added necessarily to these things; "And blessed is he who is not offended in Me!" For the Jews indeed were offended, either as not knowing the depth of the mystery, or because they did not seek to know. For though the inspired Scripture announced beforehand, in every part of it, that the Word of God would humble Himself to emptiness, and be seen upon earth, plainly referring to when He was such as we are, and would justify by faith every thing under heaven, yet they stumbled against Him, and struck against the rock of offence, and fell, and were ground to powder. For though they plainly saw Him invested with ineffable dignity and surpassing glory, by means of the wondrous deeds He wrought, they threw stones at Him and said: "Why dost Thou, being a man, make thyself God?" In answer to these things, Christ reproved the immeasurable infirmity of their intellect, and said; "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not: but if I do, then though ye believe not Me, believe My works." Blessed therefore is he, who doth not stumble against Christ; that is, who believeth in Him.

And what the advantage is that is derived from this, and in what way we are benefitted by attaining to faith in Him, every one knows: nothing however forbids our enumerating a few particulars. For first indeed we obtain the light of the true knowledge of God: and next, when by the aid of holy baptism we have washed away the stains of sin, being purified that we may serve Him purely, we are also made partakers of His divine nature, and gain Him to dwell within us by having the communion of the Holy Ghost. And we are made also sons of God, and win for ourselves brotherhood with Him Who by nature and verily is the Son. Moreover, in addition to those things, we are exalted to the inheritance of the saints, and dwell in bliss in the enjoyment of those blessings which are bestowed on those who love Him, and which the divine Paul declares surpass understanding and description: "for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and into the heart of man have not entered the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Of those may we also be thought worthy by the grace and love of Him Who giveth to every one bountifully all good things, even of Christ, by Whom and with Whom, to God the Father, be praise and dominion with the Holy Ghost, for over and ever, Amen.

### **Sermon 38**

***7:24-28. And when the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed, shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clad in soft garments? Behold they who wear soft clothing, are in the abodes of kings. But what went ye out to see? A Prophet? Yea, I say unto you: and more than a prophet: for this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send My messenger before Thy face, to prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say unto you, Among those born of women there is no one greater than John: but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.***

YE who thirst for the knowledge of the divine doctrines, open once again the treasure-house of your minds: satiate yourselves with the sacred words: or rather, give way to no feeling of satiety herein: for gluttony in things that tend to edification is a quality worth the gaining. Let us approach, then, the Saviour's words, not carelessly, and without due preparation, but with

that attentiveness and vigilance which befits those who would learn. For so alone can those subjects for contemplation, which are difficult of comprehension, be rightly understood. Let us, therefore, ask of Christ that light, which He sends down upon the mind and heart, that thus being enabled correctly to understand the force of what is said, we may again admire the beautiful skill of the management. For He had been asked by the disciples of John, whether He is He that cometh? When then: He had answered them in a suitable manner, and commanded them to return to him that sent them. He began to say unto the multitudes concerning him, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken by the wind?" And what the instruction is which we gain from this, or what the end to which our Saviour's words have reference, how must it not be worth our while to inquire? Let us examine, therefore, the meaning of what is said: let us search it as a treasure: let us spy into its secrets: and fixing our mind upon the profundity of the mystery, let us be like careful moneychangers, proving every thing, as Scripture says.

There were then certain who prided themselves upon their performance of what was required by the law: the Scribes namely, and Pharisees, and others of their party; who were regarded according to their professions as exact observers of the law, and claimed on this score, that their heads should be adorned with honours. This too is the reason why they neither accepted faith in Christ, nor paid due honour to that mode of life which truly is praiseworthy and blameless: even that which is regulated by the commands of the Gospel. The purpose, therefore, of Christ the Saviour of all, was to shew them that the honours both of the religious and moral service that are by the law, were of small account, and not worthy of being attained to, or even perhaps absolutely nothing, and unavailing for edification: while the grace that is by faith in Him is the pledge of blessings worthy of admiration, and able to adorn with incomparable honour those that possess it. Many, then, as I said, were observers of the law, and greatly puffed up on this account: they even gave out that they had attained to the perfection of all that is praiseworthy, in the exact performance of the righteousness that consisted in shadows and types. In order, then, that, as I said, He might prove that those who believe in Him are better and superior to them, and that the glories of the followers of the law are evidently but small in comparison with the evangelic mode of life, He takes him who was the best of their whole class, but nevertheless was born of woman, I mean the blessed Baptist: and having affirmed that he is a prophet, or rather above the measure of the prophets, and that among those born of women no one had arisen greater than he in righteousness, that namely, which is by the law, He declares, that he who is small, who falls short, that is, of his measure, and is inferior to him in the righteousness that is by the law, is greater than he:--- not greater, in legal righteousness, but in the kingdom of God, even in faith, and the excellencies which result from faith. For faith crowns those that receive it with glories that surpass the law. And this thou learnest, and wilt thyself affirm to be the case, when thou meetest with the words of the blessed Paul: for having declared himself to be free from blame in the righteousness that is by the law, he added forthwith, "But those things that were gain unto me, those I have counted loss for Christ's sake: and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ: not having my own righteousness which is by the law, but the righteousness that is of the faith of Jesus Christ." And the Israelites he even considers deserving of great blame, thus saying: "For being ignorant of God's righteousness, that namely which is by Christ, and seeking to establish their own; even that which is by the law; they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the completion of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth." And again, when speaking of these things: "We, he says, who by nature are Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, we also have believed in

Jesus Christ, that we may be justified in Him." The being justified, therefore, by Christ, that is to say, by faith in Him, surpasses the glories of the righteousness that is by the law. For this reason the blessed Baptist is brought forward, as one who had attained the foremost place in legal righteousness, and to a praise so far incomparable. And yet even thus he is ranked as less than one who is least: "for the least, He says, is greater than he in the kingdom of God." But the kingdom of God signifies, as we affirm, the grace that is by faith, by means of which we are accounted worthy of every blessing, and of the possession of the rich gifts which come from above from God. For it frees us from all blame; and makes us to be the sons of God, partakers of the Holy Ghost, and heirs of a heavenly inheritance.

Having prefaced therefore thus much by way of preparation, and to explain the connection of the ideas, come now. and let us examine the actual words. As I have already said then, He exalts the divine Baptist to a great height, and crowns the Forerunner with surpassing honours purposely; that thou mayest the more thoroughly admire faith; as that which makes believers to have a grandeur far surpassing even that of men thus illustrious. He asks the Jews, then, saying "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken by the wind?" Now He compares to a reed,----a thing tossed about, and, so to speak, reeling and shaken to and fro by the violence of the winds,----the man who lives in worldly honours and pleasures, and in the grandeur of temporal sovereignty. For there is nothing stable or firm or unshaken with such persons, but things change frequently in an unexpected manner, and to that which they did not anticipate, and their prosperity lightly passes away. For true it is, that "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower falleth." Did ye then, He says, go out into the desert to see a man like a reed? This, however, possibly he is not, but of a different character; one of those who live in pleasures, and are wont to be clad in beautiful garments, and value childish honour. And yet one does not see persons such as these dwelling in the desert, but at the courts of kings: and as for the blessed Baptist's raiment, it was of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle upon his loins.

What then did ye go out to see? Perhaps ye say, A Prophet. Yea, I also say as well as you. For he is a saint and a prophet: nay, he even surpasses the dignity of a prophet; for not only did he announce before that I am coming, but pointed Me out close at hand, saying? "Behold the Lamb of God, That beareth the sin of the world." Moreover, he was testified of by the prophet's voice, "as sent before My face, to prepare the way before Me." And I bear him witness that there hath not arisen among those born of women one greater than he: but he that is least----in the life I mean according to the law----in the kingdom of God is greater than he. How and in what manner? In that the blessed John, together with as many as preceded him, was born of woman: but they who have received the faith, are no more called the sons of women, but as the wise Evangelist said, "are born of God." "For to all, he says, who received Him, that is, Christ, He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His Name: who have been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." For we have been born again to the adoption of the sons, "not of corruptible seed," but, as Scripture saith, "by the living and abiding Word of God." Those then who are not of corruptible seed, but, on the contrary, have been born of God, are superior to any one born of woman.

There is also another respect in which they surpass those born of women. For they have earthly fathers: but we Him Who is above in heaven. For we have received this also of Christ, Who calleth us to the adoption of sons and brotherhood with Him. For He has said, "Ye shall not call any one on earth father: for One is your Father, Who is in heaven. But ye, all of you,

are brethren." And most wise Paul gives us surety of this, writing as follows: "For because ye are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, calling Father, our Father." For when Christ rose, and spoiled hell, the spirit of adoption was then given to them that believed on Him, and first of all to the holy disciples; for "He breathed upon them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. If ye remit the sins of any, they are remitted them; and if ye retain the sins of any, they are retained." For inasmuch as they have become partakers of the divine nature, by being richly endowed with that lordly and all-governing Spirit; therefore He has also given them the godlike power of remitting the sins of whomsoever they will, and of retaining those of all others. But that previously to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and His ascent to heaven, there was not among men the spirit of adoption, the most wise Evangelist John makes plain where he says: "For the Spirit was not as yet: because that Jesus was not yet glorified." And yet certainly, how can the Spirit be unequal in eternity to God the Father, and the Son? And when did He not exist, Who is before all? For He is equal in substance to the Father, and the Son. "But inasmuch as Christ, he says, was not yet glorified," that is to say, had not yet risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven, the spirit of adoption did not as yet exist for men. But when the Only-begotten Word of God ascended up into heaven, He sent down for us in His stead the Comforter, Who is in us by Him. And this He taught us, thus saying: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but when I have departed, I will send Him unto you."

Even though, therefore, we be inferior to them who have fulfilled the righteousness that is by the law: inferior, I mean, in righteousness of life, yet are we who have received faith in Him endowed with greater privileges. We must, however, bear in mind, that although the blessed Baptist was thus great in virtue, yet he plainly confessed that he stood in need of holy baptism: for he somewhere said, speaking to Christ, the Saviour of us all, "I have need to be baptized of Thee." But he would have had no need of holy baptism, nor have requested leave to have it granted him, had there not been in it something more and better, than the righteousness that is by the law.

Christ therefore does not contend against the honours of the saints; nor is it His purpose to diminish and strip of their renown those holy men who had before attained to victory: but as I said, it rather is to prove that the Gospel mode of life is superior to the legal worship, and to crown with surpassing honours the glory of faith, that we all may believe in Him. For so we enter by Him, and with Him, into the kingdom of heaven: by Whom and with Whom to God the Father be praise and dominion, with the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever, Amen.