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THE BOOKS OF HOMILIES: Book 2—XVII. An Homily for Rogation week

May 5, 2021



Alastair Roberts

For the Easter season, I am reading the Books of Homilies, using John Griffiths' 1859 edition (https://prydain.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/the_two_books_of_homilies.pdf).

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Transcript

An Homily for the Days of Rogation Week. That all good things cometh from God. I am purposed this day, good devout Christian people, to declare unto you the most deserved praise and commendation of Almighty God, not only in consideration of the marvellous creation of this world, or for the conservation and governance thereof, wherein His great power and wisdom might excellently appear to move us to honour and dread Him, but most specially in consideration of His liberal and large goodness, which He daily bestoweth on us His reasonable creatures, for whose sake He made this whole universal world, with all the commodities and goods therein, which His singular goodness well and diligently remembered on our part, as duty is again, with hearty affection to love Him, and with word and deed to praise Him and serve Him all the days of our life.

And this matter being so worthy to entreat of, and so profitable for you to hear, I trust I shall not need with much circumstance of words to stir you to give your attendance, to hear what shall be said. Only I would wish your affection inflamed in secret wise within

yourself, to raise up some motion of thanksgiving to the goodness of Almighty God, in every such point as shall be opened by my declaration particularly unto you. For else what shall it avail us to hear and know the great goodness of God towards us, to know that whatsoever is good proceedeth from Him, as from the principal fountain and only author, or to know that whatsoever is sent from Him must needs be good and wholesome, if the hearing of such matter moveth us no further but to know it only? What availed it the wise men of the world to have a knowledge of the power and divinity of God by the secret inspiration of Him, where they did not honour and glorify Him in their knowledge as God? What praise was it to them, by the consideration of the creation of the world, to behold His goodness, and yet were not thankful to Him again for His creatures? What other thing deserved this blindness and forgetfulness of them at God's hand, but utter forsaking of Him? And so forsaken of God they could not but fall into extreme ignorance and error, and although they much esteemed themselves in their wits and knowledge, and gloried in their wisdom, yet vanished they away blindly in their thoughts, became fools and perished in their folly.

There can be none other end of such as draweth nigh to God by knowledge, and yet depart from Him in unthankfulness, but utter destruction. This experience saw David in his days, for in his psalm he saith, Behold, they which withdraw themselves from thee shall perish, for thou hast destroyed them all that are strayed from thee. This experience was perceived to be true of that holy prophet Hiram.

O Lord, saith he, whatsoever they be that forsake thee shall be confounded, they that depart from thee shall be written in the earth, and soon forgotten. It profiteth not good people to hear the goodness of God declared unto us, if our hearts be not inflamed thereby to honour and thank Him. It profited not the Jews, which were God's elect people, to hear much of God, seeing that He was not received in their hearts by faith, nor thanked for His benefits bestowed upon them.

Their unthankfulness was the cause of their destruction. Let us eschew the manner of these before rehearsed, and follow rather the example of that holy apostle St. Paul, which when in a deep meditation he did behold the marvellous proceedings of Almighty God, and considered His infinite goodness in the ordering of His creatures, he braced out into this conclusion, Surely, saith he, of Him, by Him, and in Him be all things. And this once pronounced, he stayed not still at this point, but forthwith thereupon joined to these words, To Him be glory and praise for ever.

Amen. Upon the ground of which words of St. Paul, good audience, I purpose to build my exhortation of this day unto you. Wherein I shall do my endeavour, first to prove unto you, that all good things cometh down to us from above, from the Father of light, secondly, that Jesus Christ, His Son and our Saviour, is the mean by whom we receive His liberal goodness, thirdly, that in the power and virtue of the Holy Ghost we be made meet and able to receive His gifts and graces, which things distinctly and advisedly

considered in our minds, must needs compel us in most low reverence after our bounden duty, always to render Him thanks again in some testification of our good hearts for His desserts unto us.

And that the entreating of this matter in hand may be to the glory of Almighty God, let us in one faith and charity call upon the Father of mercy, from whom cometh every good gift and every perfect gift, by the mediation of His well-beloved Son our Saviour, that we may be assisted with the presence of His Holy Spirit, and wholesomely on both our parts to demean ourselves in speaking and hearing to the salvation of our souls. In the beginning of my speaking unto you, good Christian people, suppose not that I do take upon me to declare unto you the excellent power or the incomparable wisdom of Almighty God, as though I would have you believe that it might be expressed unto you by words. Nay, it may not be thought that that thing may be comprehended by man's words, that is incomprehensible.

And too much arrogancy it were for dust and ashes to think that he could worthily declare his Maker. It passeth far the dark understanding and wisdom of a mortal man to speak sufficiently of that divine majesty which the angels cannot understand. We shall therefore lay apart to speak of that profound and insearchable nature of Almighty God, rather acknowledging our weakness than rashly to attempt that is above all man's capacity to compass.

It shall better suffice us in low humility to reverence and dread His majesty, which we cannot comprise, than by overmuch curious searching to be overcharged with the glory. We shall rather turn our whole contemplation to answer awhile His goodness towards us, wherein we shall be much profitably occupied, and more may we be bold to search. To consider this great power He is of can but make us dread and fear.

To consider His high wisdom might utterly discomfort our frailty to have anything ado with Him. But in consideration of His inestimable goodness, we take good heart again to trust well unto Him. By His goodness we be assured to take Him for our refuge, our hope and comfort, our merciful Father in all the course of our lives.

His power and wisdom compelleth us to take Him for God omnipotent, invisible, having rule in heaven and in earth, having all things in His subjection. And we'll have none in counsel with Him, nor any to ask the reason of His doing. For He may do what liketh Him, and none can resist Him.

For He worketh all things in His secret judgment to His own pleasure. Yea, even the wicked to damnation, saith Solomon. By the reason of this nature He is called in Scripture consuming fire.

He is called a terrible and fearful God. On this behalf, therefore, we may have no familiarity, no access unto Him. But His goodness again tempereth the rigor of His high

power, and maketh us bold, and putteth us in hope that He will be conversant with us and easy unto us.

It is His goodness that moveth Him to say in Scripture, It is my delight to be with the children of man. It is His goodness that moveth Him to call us unto Him, to offer us His friendship and presence. It is His goodness that patiently suffereth our straying from Him, and suffereth us long to win us to repentance.

It is of His goodness that we be created reasonable creatures, where else He might have made us brute beasts. It was His mercy to have us born among the number of Christian people, and thereby in a much more nighness to salvation, where we might have been, if His goodness had not been, among the Panems, clean void from God and the hope of everlasting life. And what other thing doth His loving and gentle voice spoken in His word, where He calleth us to His presence and friendship, but declare His goodness only, without regard of our worthiness? And what other thing doth stir Him to call us to Him, when we be strayed from Him, to suffer us patiently, to win us to repentance, but only His singular goodness, no wit of our deserving? Let them all come together that be now glorified in heaven, and let us hear what answer they will make in these points afore rehearsed, whether their first creation was of God's goodness, or of themselves.

Forsooth David would make answer for them all, and say, Know ye for surety, even the Lord is God, He hath made us, and not we ourselves. If they were asked again, who should be thanked for their regeneration, for their justification, and for their salvation, whether their desserts, or God's goodness only, although in this point every one confessed sufficiently the truth of this matter in his own person? Yet let David answer by the mouth of them all at this time, who cannot choose but say, Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give all the thank for thy loving mercy, and for thy truth's sake. If we should ask again, from whence came their glorious works and deeds, which they wrought in their lives, wherewith God was so highly pleased and worshipped by them, let some other witness be brought in to testify this matter, that in the mouth of two or three may the truth be known.

Verily that holy prophet Esaibereth reckoned, and saith, O Lord, it is thou of thy goodness that hast wrought all our works in us, not we of ourselves. And to uphold the truth of this matter against all justiciaries and hypocrites, which rob almighty God of this honour, and ascribe it to themselves, St. Paul bringeth in his belief, We be not, saith he, sufficient of ourselves as of ourselves, once to think any thing, but all our ableness is of God's goodness. For he it is in whom we have all our being, our living and moving.

If ye will know furthermore where they had their gifts and sacrifices, which they offered continually in their lives to almighty God, they cannot but agree with David, where he saith, Of thy liberal hand, O Lord, we have received that we gave unto thee. If this holy company therefore confesseth so constantly, that all the goods and graces wherewith

they were endued in soul, came of the goodness of God only, what more can be said to prove that all that is good cometh from almighty God? Is it meet to think that all spiritual goodness cometh from God above only, and that other good things, either of nature or of fortune, as we call them, cometh of any other cause? Doth God of his goodness adorn the soul with all the powers thereof as it is, and cometh the gifts of the body wherewith it is endued, from any other? If he doeth the more, cannot he do the less? To justify a sinner, to new create him from a wicked person to a righteous man, is a greater act, saith St. Augustine, than to make such a new heaven and earth as is already made? We must needs agree that whatsoever good thing is in us, of grace, of nature, of fortune, is of God only, as the only author and worker. And yet it is not to be thought that God hath created all this whole universal world as it is, and thus once made, hath given it up to be ruled and used after our own wits and device, and so take no more charge thereof, as we see the shipwright, after he hath brought his ship to a perfect end, then delivereth he it to the mariners, and take no more cure thereof.

Nay, God hath not so created the world, that he is careless of it, but he still preserveth it by his goodness, he still stayeth it in his creation, for else, without his special goodness, it could not stand long in his condition. And therefore St. Paul saith, that he preserveth all things, and beareth them up still in his word, lest they should fall without him to their nothing again, whereof they were made. If his special goodness were not everywhere present, every creature should be out of order, and no creature should have his property wherein he was first created.

He is therefore invisibly everywhere, and in every creature, and fulfilleth both heaven and earth with his presence, in the fire to give heat, in the water to give moisture, in the earth to give fruit, in the heart to give his strength, yea, in our bread and drink he is to give us nourishment, wherewithout him the bread and drink cannot give sustenance, nor the herb health, as the wise man plainly confesseth it, saying, It is not the increase of fruits that feedeth men, but it is thy word, O Lord, which preserveth them that trust in thee. And Moses agreeth to the same, when he saith, Man's life resteth not in bread alone, but in every word which proceedeth out of God's mouth. It is neither the herb nor the plaster that giveth health of themselves, but thy word, O Lord, saith the wise man, which healeth all things.

It is not therefore the power of the creatures which worketh their effects, but the goodness of God which worketh in them. In his word truly doth all things consist. By that same word that heaven and earth were made, by the same are they upholden, maintained and kept in order, saith St. Peter, and shall be till almighty God shall withdraw his power from them, and speak their dissolution.

If it were not thus that the goodness of God were effectually in his creatures to rule them, how could it be that the main sea, so raging and laboring to overflow the earth, could be kept within his bounds and banks, as it is? That holy man Job evidently spied

the goodness of God in this point, and confessed that, if he had not a special goodness to the preservation of the earth, it could not but shortly be overflowed of the sea. How could it be that the elements, so diverse and contrary as they be among themselves, should yet agree and abide together in a concord, without destruction one of another, to serve our use, if it came not only of God's goodness so to temper them? How could the fire not burn and consume all things, if it were left loose to go whither it would, and not stayed in his sphere by the goodness of God, measurably to heap these inferior creatures to their riping? Consider the huge substance of the earth, so heavy and great as it is. How could it so stand stably in the place as it doth, if God's goodness reserved it not so for us to travail on? It is thou, O Lord, saith David, which hast founded the earth in his stability, and during thy word it shall never reel or fall down.

Consider the great strong beasts and fishes, far passing the strength of man, how fierce soever they be and strong, yet by the goodness of God they prevail not against us, but are under our subjection, and serve our use. Of whom came the invention thus to subdue them, and make them fit for our commodities? Was it by man's brain? Nay, rather this invention came by the goodness of God, which inspired man's understanding to have his purpose of every creature. Who was it, saith Job, that put will and wisdom in man's head, but God only of his goodness? And as the same saith again, I perceive that every man hath a mind, but it is the inspiration of the Almighty that giveth understanding.

It could not be verily, good Christian people, that man of his own wit, unwholpen, should invent so many and diverse devices in all crafts and sciences, except the goodnessful mighty God, had been present with men, and had stirred their wits and studies of purpose to know the natures and disposition of all his creatures to serve us sufficiently in our needs and necessities, yea, not only to serve our necessities, but to serve our pleasures and delight more than necessity requireth. So liberal is God's goodness to us, to provoke us to thank him, if any hearts we have. The wise man, in his contemplation by himself, could not but grant this thing to be true, that I reason unto you.

In his hands, saith he, be we, and our words and all our wisdom, and all our sciences and works of knowledge. For it is he that gave me the true instruction of his creatures, both to know the disposition of the world, and the virtues of the elements, the beginning and end of times, the change and diversities of them, the course of the year, the order of the stars, the natures of beasts, and the powers of them, the power of the winds, the thoughts of men, the differences of plants, the virtue of roots, and whatsoever is hid and secret in nature, I learned it. The artificer of all these taught me this wisdom.

And further he saith, Who can search out the things that be in heaven? For it is hard for us to search such things as be on earth and in daily sight for us, for our wits and thoughts, saith he, be imperfect, and our policies uncertain. No man can therefore search out the meaning in these things, except thou givest wisdom, and sendest thy spirit from above. If the wise man thus confesseth all these things to be of God, why

should not we acknowledge it, and by the knowledge of it consider our duty to Godward to give him thanks for his goodness? I perceive that I am far here overcharged with the plenty and copy of matter that might be brought in for the proof of this cause.

If I should enter to show how the goodness of Almighty God appeared everywhere in the creatures of the world, how marvellous they be in their creation, how beautified in their order, how necessary they be to our use, all with one voice must needs grant their author to be none other but Almighty God, his goodness must they needs extol and magnify everywhere, to whom be all honour and glory for evermore. In the former part of this homily, good Christian people, I have declared to your contemplation the great goodness of Almighty God in the creation of the world with all the furniture thereof for the use and comfort of man, whereby we might the rather be moved to acknowledge our duty again to his majesty. And I trust it hath wrought not only credit in you, but also it hath moved you to render your thanks secretly in your hearts to Almighty God for his loving kindness.

But yet peradventure some will say that they can agree to this, that all that is good pertaining to the soul or whatsoever is created with us in body should come from God, as from the author of all goodness and from none other. But for such things as be without them both, I mean such good things which we call goods of fortune, as riches, authority, promotion and honour, some men may think that they should come of our industry and diligence, of our labour and travail, rather than supernaturally. Now then consider, good people, if any author there be of such things concurrent with man's labour and endeavour, were it meet to ascribe them to any other than to God, as the pain in philosophers and poets did err which took fortune and made her a goddess, to be honoured for such things.

God forbid, good Christian people, that this imagination should earnestly be received of us, that we worshippers of the true God, whose works and proceedings be expressed manifestly in his word. These be the opinions and sayings of infidels, not of true Christians, for they indeed, as Job maketh mention, believe and say that God hath his residence and resting place in the clouds, and consider nothing of our matters. Epicures they be that imagine that he walketh about the coasts of the heavens, and have no respect to these inferior things, but that all these things should proceed either by chance and at adventure, or else by disposition of fortune, and God to have no stroke in them.

What other thing is this to say than, as the fool supposeth in his heart, there is no God, whom we shall none otherwise reprove than with God's own words by the mouth of David. Hear, my people, saith he, for I am thy God, thy very God. All the beasts of the wood are mine, sheep and oxen that wandereth on the mountains.

I have the knowledge of all the fowls of the air. The beauty of the field is my handiwork. Mine is the whole circuit of the world, and all the plenty that is in it.

And again by the prophet Jeremy, thinkest thou that I am a God of the place nigh me, saith the Lord, and not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in so secret a corner that I shall not see him? Do not I fulfil and replenish both heaven and earth, saith the Lord? Which of these two should be most believed? Fortune, whom they paint to be blind of both eyes, ever unstable and inconstant in her wheel, in whose hands they say these things be? Or God, in whose hands and power these things be indeed, who for his truth and constance was yet never reprov'd? For his sight looketh through heaven and earth, and seeth all things presently with his eyes. Nothing is too dark or hidden from his knowledge, not the privy thoughts of men's minds. Truth it is that of God is all riches, all power, all authority, all health, wealth, and prosperity, of the which we should have no part without his liberal distribution, and except it came from him above.

David first testifieth it of riches and possessions. If thou givest good luck, they shall gather, and if thou openest thy hand, they shall be full of goodness. But if thou turnest thy face, they shall be troubled.

And Solomon saith, It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich men. To this agree that holy woman Anne, where she saith in her song, It is the Lord that maketh the poor, and maketh the rich. It is he that promoteth and pulleth down.

He can raise a needy man from his misery, and from the dunghill he can lift up a poor personage, to sit with princes, and have the seat of glory, for all the coasts of the earth be his. Now if any man will ask what shall it avail us to know that every good gift, as of nature and fortune so called, and every perfect gift, as of grace concerning the soul, to be of God, and that it is his gift only, forsooth for many causes it is convenient for us to know it. For so shall we know, if we confess the truth, who ought justly to be thanked for them.

Our pride shall be thereby abated, perceiving nought to come of ourselves but sin and vice, if any goodness be in us, to refer all lord and praise for the same to almighty God. It shall make us not to avouche ourselves before our neighbour, to despise him for that he hath fewer gifts, seeing God giveth his gifts where he will. It shall make us by the consideration of our gifts not to extol ourselves before our neighbours.

It shall make the wise man not to glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich to glory in his riches, but in the living God which is the author of all these. Lest, if we should do so, we might be rebuked with the words of St. Paul, What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why gloriest in thyself, as though thou hadst not received it? To confess that all good things cometh from almighty God is a great point of wisdom, my friends. For so confessing we know whither to resort, for to have them if we want.

As St. James bid us, saying, If any man wanteth the gift of wisdom, let him ask it of God that giveth it, and it shall be given him. As the wise man in the want of such a light gift

made his recourse to God for it, as he testifieth in his book, after I knew, saith he, that otherwise I could not be chaste, except God granted it, and this was, as he there writeth, high wisdom to know whose gift it was, I made haste to the Lord, and earnestly besought him, even from the roots of my heart, to have it. I would to God, my friends, that in our wants and necessities we would go to God, as St. James bids, and as the wise man teacheth us that he did, I would, we believe steadfastly, that God only gives them.

If we did, we would not seek our want and necessity of the devil and his ministers so oft as we do, as daily experience declareth it. For if we stand in necessity of corporal health, whither go the common people but to charms, witchcrafts, and other delusions of the devil? If we knew that God were the author of this gift, we would only use his means appointed, and buy at his leisure, till he thought it good for us to have it given. If the merchant and worldly occupier knew that God is the giver of riches, he would content himself with so much as by just means approved by God he could get to his living, and would be no more richer than truth would suffer him.

He would never procure his gain and ask his goods at the devil's hand. God forbid, you will say, that any man should take his riches of the devil. Verily so many as increase themselves by usury, by extortion, by perjury, by stealth, by deceits and craft, they have their goods of the devil's gift.

And all they that give themselves to such means, and have renounced the true means that God hath appointed, have forsaken him, and are become worshippers of the devil, to have their lucre and advantages. They be such as kneel down to the devil at his bidding, and worship him. For he promised them for so doing, that he will give them the world and the goods therein.

They cannot otherwise better serve the devil than to do his pleasure and commandment. And his motion and will it is to have us forsake the truth, and betake us to falsehood, to lies and perjuries. They therefore which believed perfectly in their heart that God is to be honoured and requested for the gift of all things necessary, would use no other means to relieve their necessities but truth and verity, and would serve God to have competency of all things necessary.

The man in his need would not relieve his want by stealth. The woman would not relieve her necessity in poverty by giving her body to other in adultery for gain. If God be the author indeed of life, health, riches, and welfare, let us make our recourse to him as to the author, and we shall have it, saith St. James.

Yea, it is high wisdom by the wise man therefore to know whose gift it is. For many other skills it is wisdom to know and believe that all goods and graces be of God, as the author, which thing well considered must needs make us think that we shall make account for that which God giveth us to occupy, and therefore shall make us to be more diligent well to spend them to God's glory and to the profit of our neighbour, that we

may make a good account at the last, and be praised for good stewards, that we may hear these words of our judge, Well done, good servant and faithful, thou hast been faithful in little, I will make thee ruler over much, go into thy master's joy. Besides, to believe certainly God to be the author of all the gifts that we have, shall make us to be in silence and patience when they be taken again from us.

For as God of his mercy doth grant us them to use, so otherwise he doth justly take them again from us, to prove our patience, to exercise our faith, and by the means of the taking away of a few, to bestow them more warily those that remain, to teach us to use them the more to his glory after he giveth them to us again. Many there be that with mouth can say that they believe that God is the author of every good gift that they have, but in the time of temptation they go back from this belief. They say it in word, but deny it indeed.

Consider me the usage of the world, and see whether it be not true. Behold the rich man that is endued with substance, if by any adversity his goods be taken from him, how fumeth and fretteth he, how murmureth he and despaireth. He that hath the gift of good reputation, if his name be any thing touched by the detractor, how unquiet is he, how busy to revenge his despite.

If a man hath the gift of wisdom, and fortune to be taken of some evil willer for a fool, and is so reported, how much doth it grieve him to be so esteemed? Think ye that these believe constantly that God is the author of these gifts. If they believed it verily, why should they not patiently suffer God to take away his gifts again, which he gave them freely, and lent for a time? But ye will say, I could be content to resign to God such gifts, if he took them again from me. But now are they taken from me by evil chances and false shrews, by naughty wretches.

How should I take this thing patiently? To this may be answered, that Almighty God is of his nature invisible, and cometh to no man visibly, after the manner of men, to take away his gifts that he lent. But in this point, whatsoever God doeth, he bringeth it about by his instruments ordained thereto. He hath good angels, he hath evil angels, he hath good men, and he hath evil men.

He hath hail and rain, he hath wind and thunder, he hath heat and cold. Innumerable instruments hath he, and messengers, by whom again he asketh such gifts as he committeth to our trust. As the wise man confesseth, the creature must need wait to serve his maker, to be fierce against unjust men to their punishment.

For as the same author saith, he armeth the creature to revenge his enemies. And otherwise, to the probation of our faith stirreth he up such storms. And therefore, by what mean and instrument soever God taketh from us his gifts, we must patiently take God's judgment in worth, and acknowledge him to be the taker and giver, as Job saith, The Lord gave, and the Lord took.

When yet his enemies drove his cattle away, and when the devil slew his children, and afflicted his body with a grievous sickness. Such meekness was in that holy king and prophet David, when he was reviled of Semei in presence of all his host. He took it patiently, and reviled not again.

But as confessing God to be the author of his innocency in good name, and offering it to be at his pleasure, let him alone, saith he to one of his knights, that would have revenge such despite. For God hath commanded him to curse David, and peradventure God intendeth thereby to render me some good turn for this curse of him to-day. And though the minister otherwiseth doeth evil in his act, proceeding of malice, yet for so much as God turneth his evil act to a proof of our patience, we should rather submit ourselves in patience, than to have indignation at God's rod, which peradventure, when he hath corrected us to our nurture, he will cast it into the fire, as it deserveth.

Let us in like manner truly acknowledge all our gifts and prerogatives to be so God's gifts, that we shall be ready to resign them up at his will and pleasure again. Let us throughout our whole lives confess all good things to come of God, of what name and nature soever they be, not of these corruptible things only whereof I have now last spoken, but much more of all spiritual graces behoveable for our soul, without whose goodness no man is called to faith or stayed therein, as I shall hereafter in the next part of this homily declare to you. In the mean season forget not what hath already been spoken to you, forget not to be conformable in your judgments to the truth of this doctrine, and forget not to practice the same in the whole state of your life, whereby ye shall obtain that blessing promised by our Saviour Christ.

Blessed be they which hear the word of God, and fulfill it in life, which blessing he grant to us all, who reigneth over all, one God in Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to whom be all honour and glory for ever. Amen. I promised you to declare that all spiritual gifts and graces cometh specially from God.

Let us consider the truth of this matter and hear what is testified first of the gift of faith, the first entry into the Christian life, without which no man can please God. First, St. Paul confesses that plainly to be God's gift, saying, Faith is the gift of God. And again St. Peter saith, It is of God's power that ye be kept through faith to salvation.

It is of the goodness of God that we falter not in our hope unto him. It is verily God's work in us, the charity wherewith we love our brethren. If after our fall we repent, it is by him that we repent, which reacheth forth his merciful hand to raise us up.

If any will we have to rise, it is he that preventeth our will, and disposeth us thereto. If after contrition we feel our conscience at peace with God through a remission of our sin, and so be reconciled again to his favour, and hope to be his children and inheritors of everlasting life, who worketh these great miracles in us? Our worthiness? Our deservings and endeavours? Our wits and virtue? Nay, verily, St. Paul will not suffer flesh and clay to

presume to such arrogancy, and therefore saith, All is of God, which hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. For God was in Christ when he reconciled the world unto himself.

God the Father of all mercy wrought this high benefit unto us, not by his own person, but by a mean, by no less mean than his only beloved Son, whom he spared not from any pain and travail that might do us good. For upon him he put our sins, upon him he made our ransom, him he made the mean betwixt us and himself, whose mediation was so acceptable to God the Father through his profound and perfect obedience, that he took his act for a full satisfaction of all our disobedience and rebellion, whose righteousness he took to weigh against our sins, whose redemption he would have stand against our damnation. In this point what have we to muse within ourselves, good friends? I think no less than that which St Paul said in the remembrance of this wonderful goodness of God, Thanks be to almighty God, thorough Christ Jesus our Lord, for it is he for whose sake we receive this high gift of grace.

For as by him being the everlasting wisdom, he wrought all the world, and that is contained therein. So by him only and holy would he have all things restored again in heaven and in earth. By this our heavenly mediator therefore do we know the favour and mercy of God the Father.

By him know we his will and pleasure towards us. For he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and a very clear image and pattern of his substance. It is he whom the Father in heaven delighteth to have for his well-beloved Son, whom he authorised to be our Teacher, whom he charged us to hear, saying, Hear him.

It is he by whom the Father of heaven doth bless us with all spiritual and heavenly gifts, for whose sake and favour, writeth St John, we have received grace and favour. To this our Saviour and mediator hath God the Father given the power of heaven and earth, and the whole jurisdiction and authority to distribute his goods and gifts committed to him. For so writeth the Apostle, To every one of us is grace given according to the measure of Christ's giving.

And thereupon to execute his authority committed, after that he had brought sin and the devil to captivity, to be no more hurtful to his members, he ascended up to his Father again, and from thence sent liberal gifts to his well-beloved servants. And hath still the power till the world's end to distribute his Father's gifts continually in his church to the establishment and comfort thereof. And by him hath Almighty God decreed to dissolve the world, to call all before him, to judge both the quick and the dead.

And finally by him shall he condemn the wicked to eternal fire and hell, and give the good eternal life, and set them assuredly in presence with him in heaven for evermore. Thus ye see how all is of God by his Son Christ our Lord and Saviour. Remember I say once again, your duty of thanks, let them be never to want, still join yourself to continue

in thanksgiving.

Ye can offer to God no better sacrifice, for he saith himself, It is the sacrifice of praise and thanks that shall honour me. Which thing was well perceived of that holy prophet David, when he so earnestly spake to himself thus, O my soul, bless thou the Lord, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. I say once again, O my soul, bless thou the Lord, and never forget his manifold rewards.

God give us grace, good people, to know these things, and to feel them in our hearts. This knowledge and feeling is not in ourself, by ourself it is not possible to come by it, and great pity it were that we should lose so profitable knowledge. Let us therefore meekly call upon that bountiful spirit, the Holy Ghost, which proceedeth from our Father of mercy and from our Mediator Christ, that he would assist us and inspire us with his presence, that in him we may be able to hear the goodness of God declared unto us to our salvation.

For without his lively and secret inspiration can we not once so much as speak the name of our Mediator, as St. Paul plainly testifieth. No man can once name our Lord Jesus Christ but in the Holy Ghost. Much less should we be able to believe and know these great mysteries that be opened to us by Christ.

St. Paul saith that no man can know what is of God, but the Spirit of God. As for us, saith he, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, for this purpose, that in that Holy Spirit we might know the things that be given us by Christ. The wise man saith that in the power and virtue of the Holy Ghost resteth all wisdom, and all ability to know God and to please him, for he righteth thus.

We know that it is not in man's power to guide his goings. No man can know thy pleasure, except thou givest wisdom, and sendest thy Spirit from above. Send him down, therefore, prayeth he to God, from thy holy heavens and from the throne of thy majesty, that he may be with me and labour with me, that so I may know what is acceptable before thee.

Let us with so good heart pray as he did, and we shall not fail but to have his assistance, for he is soon seen of them that love him, he will be found of them that seek him, for very liberal and gentle is the spirit of wisdom. In his power shall we have sufficient ability to know our duty to God. In him shall we be comforted and encouraged to walk in our duty.

In him shall we be meat vessels to receive the grace of almighty God, for it is he that purgeth and purifieth the mind by his secret working, and he only is present everywhere by his invisible power, and containeth all things in his dominion. He lighteneth the heart to conceive worthy thoughts of almighty God. He sitteth in the tongue of man to stir him to speak his honour.

No language is hid from him, for he hath the knowledge of all speech. He only ministereth spiritual strength to the powers of our soul and body. To hold the way which God hath prepared for us, to walk rightly in our journey, we must acknowledge that it is in the power of his Spirit which helpeth our infirmity.

That we may boldly come in prayer, and call upon almighty God as our Father, it is by this Holy Spirit which maketh intercession for us with continual sighs. If any gift we have, wherewith we may work to the glory of God and profit of our neighbour, all is wrought by this one and selfsame Spirit which maketh his distributions peculiarly to every man as he will. If any wisdom we have, it is not of ourselves.

We cannot glory therein, as begun of ourselves, but we ought to glory in God, from whom it came to us, as the prophet Hiram me writeth. Let him that rejoiceth, rejoice in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, for I am the Lord which showeth mercy, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord. This wisdom cannot be attained but by the direction of the Spirit of God, and therefore it is called spiritual wisdom.

And nowhere can we more certainly search for the knowledge of this will of God by the which we must direct all our works and deeds, but in the holy scriptures, for they be they that testify of him, saith our Saviour Christ. It may be called knowledge and learning that is otherwise gotten out of the word. But the wise man plainly testifieth that they all be but vain which have not in them the wisdom of God.

We see to what vanity the old philosophers came, which were destitute of this science, gotten and searched for in his word. We see what vanity the school doctrine is mixed with, for that in this word they sought not the will of God, but rather the will of reason, the trade of custom, the path of the fathers, the practice of the church. Let us therefore read and revolve the holy scripture both day and night, for blessed is he that hath his whole meditation therein.

It is that that giveth light to our feet to walk by. It is that which giveth wisdom to the simple and ignorant. In it may we find eternal life.

In the holy scriptures find we Christ. In Christ find we God. For he it is that is the express image of the Father.

He that seeth Christ seeth the Father. And contrarywise, as St. Jerome saith, the ignorance of scripture is the ignorance of Christ. Not to know Christ is to be in darkness in the midst of our worldly and carnal light of reason and philosophy.

To be without Christ is to be in foolishness, for he is the only wisdom of the Father, in whom it pleased him that all fullness and perfection should dwell, with whom whosoever is endued in heart by faith and rooted fast in charity hath laid a sure foundation to build

on, whereby he may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth, and to know the love of Christ. This universal and absolute knowledge is that wisdom which St. Paul wished these Ephesians to have, as under heaven the greatest treasure that can be obtained. For of this wisdom the wise man writeth thus of his experience.

All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands. And addeth moreover in that same place, she is the mother of all these things, for she is an infinite treasure unto men, which whosoever use become partakers of the love of God. I might with many words move some of this audience to search for this wisdom, to sequester their reason, to follow God's commandment, to cast from them the wits of their brains, to savour this wisdom, to renounce the wisdom and policy of this fond world, to taste and savour that whereunto the favour and will of God hath called them, and willed us finally to enjoy by his favour, if we would give ear.

But I will haste to the third part of my text, which as it followeth in words more plentifully in the text which I have last cited unto you, wherein is expressed further in sapience how God giveth his elect an understanding of the motions of the heavens, of the alterations and circumstances of time, so it must needs follow in them that be endued with this spiritual wisdom. For as they can search where to find this wisdom, and know of whom to ask it, so know they again that in time it is found, and can therefore attemper themselves to the occasion of the time, to suffer no time to pass away wherein they may labour for this wisdom, and to increase therein. They know how God of his infinite mercy and lenity giveth all men here time and place of repentance, and they see how the wicked, as Job writeth, abuse the same to their pride, and therefore do the godly take the better hold of the time, to redeem it out of such use as it is spoiled in by the wicked.

They which have this wisdom of God can gather by the diligent and earnest study of the worldlings of this present life, how they wait their times, and apply themselves to every occasion of time to get riches, to increase their lands and patrimony. They see the time pass away, and therefore take hold on it in such wise that otherwise they will, with the loss of their sleep and ease, with suffering many pains, catch the offer of their time, knowing that that which is once passed cannot be returned again. Repentance may follow, but remedy is none.

Why should not they then that be spiritually wise in their generation wait their time, to increase as fast in their state, to win and gain everlastingly? They reason what a brute forgetfulness it were in man, endued with reason, to be ignorant of their times and tides. When they see the turtle dove, the stork, and the swallow, to wait their times, as Hyrume saith, The stork in the air knoweth her appointed times, the turtle and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but my people knoweth not the judgment of the Lord. St. Paul willeth us to redeem the time, because the days are evil.

It is not the counsel of St. Paul only, but of all other that ever gave precepts of wisdom. There is no precept more seriously given and commanded than to know the time. Yea, Christian men, for that they hear how grievously God complaineth and threateneth in the Scriptures them which will not know the time of his visitations, are learned thereby the rather earnestly to apply themselves thereunto.

After our Saviour Christ had prophesied with weeping tears of the destruction of Jerusalem, at the last he putteth the cause, for that thou hast not known the time of thy visitation. O England, which canst not, nor will not ponder the time of God's merciful visitation, show thee from day to day, and yet wilt not regard it, neither wilt thou with his punishment be driven to thy duty, nor with his benefits be provoked to thanks. If thou knewest what may fall upon thee for thine unthankfulness, thou wouldest provide for thy peace.

Brethren, howsoever the world in generality is forgetful of God, let us particularly attend to our time, and win the time with diligence, and apply ourselves to that light and grace that is offered us. Let us, if God's favour and judgments, which he worketh in our time, cannot stir us to call home to ourself, to do that belong to our salvation. At the least way, let the malice of the devil, the naughtiness of the world, which we see exercised in these perilous and last times wherein we see our days so dangerously set, provoke us to watch diligently to our vocation, to walk and go forward therein.

Let the misery and short transitory joys spied in the casualty of our days, move us while we have them in our hands, and seriously stir us to be wise, and to expend the gracious good will of God to usward, which all the day long stretcheth out his hands, as the prophet saith, unto us, for the most part his merciful hands, sometime his heavy hands, that we being learned thereby, may escape the danger that must needs fall on the unjust, who lead their days in felicity and pleasure without the knowing of God's will toward them, but suddenly they go down into hell. Let us be found watchers, found in the peace of the Lord, that at the last day we may be found without spot and blameless. Yea, let us endeavour ourselves, good Christian people, diligently to keep the presence of his Holy Spirit.

Let us renounce all uncleanness, for he is the Spirit of purity. Let us avoid all hypocrisy, for this Holy Spirit will flee from that which is feigned. Cast we off all malice and evil will, for this Spirit will never enter into an evil-willing soul.

Let us cast away all the whole lump of sin that standeth about us, for he will never dwell in that body that is subdued to sin. We cannot be seen thankful to a mighty God, and work such despite to the Spirit of grace by whom we be sanctified. If we do our endeavour, we shall not need to fear, we shall be able to overcome all our enemies that fight against us.

Only let us apply ourselves to accept the grace that is offered us. Of almighty God we

have comfort by his goodness, of our Saviour Christ's mediation we may be sure, and this Holy Spirit will suggest unto us that shall be wholesome, and confirm us in all things. Therefore it cannot be but true that St. Paul affirmeth, of him, by him, and in him be all things, and in him, after this transitory life well past, shall we have all things.

For St. Paul saith, When the Son of God shall subdue all things unto him, then shall God be all in all. If ye will know how God shall be all in all, verily after this sense may ye understand it. In this world ye see that we be feigned to borrow many things to the necessity of many creatures.

There is no one thing that sufficeth all our necessities. If we be in hunger we lust for bread, if we be athirst we seek to be refreshed with ale or wine, if we be cold we seek for cloth, if we be sick we seek to the physician, if we be in heaviness we seek for comfort of our friends or of company. So that there is no one creature by itself that can content all our wants and desires.

But in the world to come, in that everlasting felicity, we shall no more beg and seek our particular comforts and commodities of diverse creatures, but we shall possess all that we can ask and desire in God. And God shall be to us all things. He shall be to us both father and mother.

He shall be bread and drink, cloth, physicians, comfort. He shall be all things to us, and that of much more blessed fashion and more sufficient contentation than ever these creatures were unto us, with much more delectation than ever man's reason is able to conceive. The eye of man is not able to behold, nor his ear can hear, nor it can be compassed in the heart of man, what joy it is that God hath prepared for them that love him.

Let us all conclude then with one voice with the words of St. Paul. To him which is able abundantly to do beyond our desires and thoughts, according to the power working in us, be glory and praise in his church by Christ Jesus for ever, world without end. Amen.

An exhortation to be spoken to such parishes where they use their perambulations in regation week for the oversight of the bounds and limits of their towns. Although we be now assembled together good Christian people, most principally to lord and thank almighty God for his great benefits by beholding the fields replenished with all manner of fruit to the maintenance of our corporal necessities, for our food and sustenance, and partly also to make our humble suits in prayer to his fatherly providence, to conserve the same fruits in sending us seasonable weather, whereby we may gather in the said fruits to that end for which his merciful goodness hath provided them. Yet have we occasion secondarily given us in our walks on these days to consider the old ancient bounds and limits belonging to our own township and to other our neighbours bordering about us, to the intent that we should be content with our own, and not contentiously strive for others, to the breach of charity by any encroaching one upon another, or claiming one of

the other further than that in ancient rite or custom our forefathers have peaceably laid out unto us for our commodity and comfort.

Surely a great oversight it were in us, which be Christian men in one profession of faith, daily looking for that heavenly inheritance which is bought for every one of us by the blood-shedding of our saviour Jesus Christ, to strive and fall to variance for the earthly bounds of our towns, to the disquiet of our life betwixt ourselves, to the wasting of our goods by vain expenses and costs in the law. We ought to remember that our habitation is but transitory and short in this mortal life. The more shame it were to fall out into immortal hatred among ourselves for so brittle possessions, and so to lose our eternal inheritance in heaven.

It may stand well with charity for a Christian man quietly to maintain his right and just title, and it is the part of every good townsman to preserve, as much as he desireth in him, the liberties, franchises, bounds, and limits of his town and country. But yet so to strive for our very rights and duties with the breach of love and charity, which is the only livery of a Christian man, or with the hurt of godly peace and quiet, by the which we be knit together in one general fellowship of Christ's family, in one common household of God, that is utterly forbidden. That doth God abhor and detest, which provoketh almighty God's wrath otherwise to deprive us quite of our commodities and liberties, because we do so abuse them for matter of strife, discord, and dissension.

St. Paul blamed the Corinthians for such contentious suing among themselves to the slandering of their profession before the enemies of Christ's religion, saying thus unto them, Now there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why rather suffer ye not wrong? Why rather suffer ye not harm? If St. Paul blameth the Christian men, whereof some of them for their own right went contentiously so to law, commending thereby the profession of patience in a Christian man, if Christ our Saviour would have us rather to suffer wrong, and to turn our left cheek to him which hath smitten the right, to suffer one wrong after another, rather than by breach of charity to defend our own, in what state be they before God who do the wrong? What curses do they fall into which by false witness defraud either neighbour or township of his due right and just possession, which will not let to take an oath by the holy name of God, the author of all truth, to set out a falsehood and a wrong? Know ye not, saith St. Paul, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? What shall he then win, to increase a little the bounds and possessions of the earth, and lose the possession of the inheritance everlasting? Let us therefore take such heed in maintaining of our bounds and possessions, that we commit not wrong by encroaching upon another. Let us beware of sudden verdict in things of doubt.

Let us well advise ourselves to advouce that certainly whereof either we have no good knowledge or remembrance, or to claim that we have no just title to. Thou shalt not, commandeth almighty God in his law, remove thy neighbour's mark, which they of old

time have set in thine inheritance. Thou shalt not, saith Solomon, remove the ancient bounds which thy fathers have laid, and lest we should esteem it to be but a light offence so to do, we shall understand that it is reckoned among the curses of God pronounced upon sinners.

Accursed be he, saith almighty God by Moses, who removeth his neighbour's doles and marks, and all the people shall say answering, Amen, thereto, as ratifying that curse upon whom it doth light. They do much provoke the wrath of God upon themselves, which used to grind up the doles and marks, which of ancient time were laid for division of meres and borks and the fields, to bring the owners to their right. They do wickedly which do turn up the ancient terries of the fields, that old men before time with great pains did tread out, whereby the Lord's records, which be the tenants' evidences, be perverted and translated, sometime to the disheriting of the right owner, to the oppression of the poor fatherless or the poor widow.

These covetous men know not what inconveniences they be authors of, sometime by such craft and deceit be committed great discords and riots in the challenge of their lands, yea, sometime murders and bloodshed, whereof thou art guilty, whosoever thou be that giveth the occasion thereof. This covetous practising, therefore, with thy neighbour's lands and goods, is hateful to almighty God. Let no man subtly compass or defraud his neighbour, biddeth St. Paul, in any manner of cause.

For God, saith he, is a revenger of all such. God is the God of all equity and righteousness, and therefore forbiddeth all such deceit and subtlety in his law by these words. Ye shall not do unjustly in judgment, in lying, in weight or measure.

Ye shall have just balances, true weights and true measures. False balance, saith Solomon, are an abomination unto the Lord. Remember what St. Paul saith, God is the revenger of all wrong and injustice, as we see by daily experience.

However it thriveth ungraciously which is gotten by falsehood and craft. We be taught by experience how almighty God never suffereth the third heir to enjoy his father's wrong possessions, yea, many a time they are taken from himself in his own lifetime. God is not bound to defend such possessions as begotten by the devil in his counsel.

God will defend all such men's goods and possessions which by him are obtained and possessed, and will defend them against the violent oppressor. So witnesses Solomon, the Lord will destroy the house of the proud man, but he will establish the borders of the widow. No doubt of it, saith David, better is a little truly gotten to the righteous man than the innumerable riches of the wrongful man.

Let us flee therefore, good people, all wrong practices in getting, maintaining and defending our possessions, lands and liveloads, our bounds and liberties, remembering that such possessions be all under God's revengeance. But what do I speak of house and

land? Nay, it is said in scriptures that God in his ire doth root up whole kingdoms for wrongs and oppressions, and doth translate kingdoms from one nation to another for unrighteous dealing, for wrongs and riches gotten by deceit. This is the practice of the Holy One, saith Daniel, to the intent that living men may know that the Most High hath power on the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever he will.

Furthermore, what is the cause of penury and scarceness, of dearth and famine? Any other thing but a token of God's ire, revenging our wrongs and injuries one done to another. Ye have sown much, upbraideth God by his prophet Agai, and yet bring in little. Ye eat, but ye be not satisfied.

Ye drink, but ye be not filled. Ye clothe yourselves, but ye be not warm. And he that earneth his wages putteth it into a bottomless purse.

Ye look for much increase, but lo it came to little. And when ye brought it home into your barns, I did blow it away, saith the Lord. O consider therefore the ire of God against gleaners, gatherers, and encroachers upon other men's lands and possessions.

It is lamentable to see in some places how greedy men used to plough and grate upon their neighbour's land that lieth next them, how covetous men nowadays plough up so nigh the common balks and walks, which good men before time made the greater and broader, partly for the commodious walk of his neighbour, partly for the better shack in harvest time to the more comfort of his poor neighbour's cattle. It is a shame to behold the insatiableness of some covetous persons in their doings, that where their ancestors left of their land a broad and sufficient by-walk to carry the corpse to the Christian sepulcher, how men mince at such by-walks, which by long use and custom ought to be inviolably kept for that purpose, and now they either quite ear them up and turn the dead body to be borne further about in the high streets, or else if they leave any such mere, it is too straight for two to walk on. These strange encroachments good neighbours should be looked upon, these should be considered, in these days of our perambulations, and afterward the parties monished and charitably reformed, who be the doers of such private gaining to the slander of the township and to the hindrance of the poor.

Your highways should be considered in your walks, to understand where to bestow your day's works according to the good statutes provided for the same. It is a good deed of mercy to amend the dangerous and noisome ways, whereby thy poor neighbour, sitting on his seely weak beast, foundereth not in the deep thereof, and so the market the worse serve for discouraging a poor vittler's to resort thither for the same cause. If now, therefore, you will have your prayers heard before Almighty God for the increase of your corn and cattle, and for the defence thereof from unseasonable mists and blasts, from hail and other such tempests, love equity and righteousness, ensue mercy and charity which God most requireth at our hands, which Almighty God respected chiefly in making

his civil laws for his people the Israelites, in charging the owners not to gather up their corn too nigh at harvest season, nor the grapes and olives in gathering time, but to leave behind some ears of grain for the poor gleaners.

By this he meant to induce them to pity the poor, to relieve the needy, to show mercy and kindness. It cannot be lost which for his sake is distributed to the poor. By he which ministereth seed to the sower and bread to the hungry, which sendeth down the early and latter rain upon your fields, so to fill up the barns with corn and the wine-presses with wine and oil, he, I say, who recompenseth all kind benefits in the resurrection of the just, he will assuredly recompense all merciful deeds showed to the needy, howsoever unable the poor is upon whom it is bestowed.

O saith Solomon, let not mercy and truth forsake thee. Bind them about thy neck, saith he, and write them on the table of thy heart, so shalt thou find favour at God's hand. Thus honour thou the Lord with thy riches, and with the firstfruits of thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with abundance, and thy presses shall burst with new wine.

Nay, God hath promised to open the windows of heaven upon the liberal righteous man, that he shall want nothing. He will repress the devouring caterpillar, which should devour your fruits. He will give you peace and quiet to gather in your provision, that ye may sit every man under his own vine quietly, without fear of the foreign enemies to invade you.

He will give you not only food to feed on, but stomachs and good appetites to take comfort of your fruits, whereby in all things ye may have sufficiency. Finally, he will bless you with all manner abundance in this transitory life, and endue you with all manner benediction in the next world, in the kingdom of heaven, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour everlastingly. Amen.