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**THE GOOD SHEPHERDS VOICE**

**SERMON – by MR. JAMES WELLS**

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“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” - Luke xii.

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The Savior well knew what fears the disciples would feel when they contemplated their position apart from the Lord’s assurance that he would take care of them. They were but few in number, and yet they had the whole world to face; they were very poor, and yet they had to range over the earth; and altogether very weak, yet they had to do mighty things. And they knew at the same time that the world was like a den of lions, that the world was like a mountain of leopards, and that they themselves, as the Savior said, would be as lambs among wolves, and, as another scripture says, meaning the same thing, as sheep in the midst of wolves; and they would therefore stand but very little chance of succeeding in any way. The dear Savior, therefore, comforts them, and intends that comfort to be the comfort of his children under trying circumstances as long as the world shall last. He reminds them, in the first place, of that truth most painfully illustrated in the Scriptures, that “the fear of man bringeth a snare.” “Be not afraid of them that kill the body.” See what a snare the fear of man proved to the Israelites in the wilderness; they were afraid of the Canaanites, and that fear of man threw them back into the wilderness for thirty-eight years. And see what a snare the fear of man was to Pilate, and, indeed, to some of the Lord’s own people, temporarily. What a snare it was to Peter; it was through the fear of man that he denied the Lord, “Therefore,” said Jesus, “be not afraid of them that kill the body,” and that is doing but very little, “and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him;” keep close to him and all will be well. And, then he goes on to show what minute care the Lord takes of his own. The Savior’s manner of teaching, while it is very deep, is at the same time by similes that are very simple, and that everyone can understand. “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?” God thinks of every one of those sparrows. And then, as though he should say if this be not enough to show you how the Lord takes care of you, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered;” not merely “the hairs of your head are numbered,” but “all numbered,” —see the minute care. “Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” And while the men of this world are seeking only after this world, as though it was everything, when at the best it is comparatively but a shadow, and will very soon cease with us all to be

anything, he says, "Rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." How great the mercy of being brought under such a promise as this, or such counsel as this, connected with such a manifestation of the love and mercy, of God!

I will take a threefold view of our subject. First, here are the people of God pastorally described—"little flock;" secondly, the royal favor shown, — "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" thirdly, the way in which the Lord hath bestowed this kingdom, — "according to his good pleasure."

First, the people of God as pastorally described. There is one feature that I must dwell upon largely in this matter, and that is that the sheep of Christ are said to hear his voice, and to follow him; and if we, do not answer to that, then are we sheep at all? And after all the subdivisions among men, there are but two classes, the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat, the believer and the unbeliever, the friend and the enemy. He says, then, that his sheep hear his voice and follow him. First, the Shepherd's voice is the voice of ingathering; secondly, it is the voice of Calvary; thirdly, it is the voice of certainty. First, the Shepherd's voice to the sheep is the voice of ingathering. He hath said "I will search out my sheep where they have been scattered in the cloudy and in the dark day." They know not what that voice is at the first, but if you have those experiences that follow the saving call of the Shepherd, then, though you may not as yet altogether understand his voice—that it is his voice, yet if you have those experiences, then you have savingly heard his voice. Let us go to Ezekiel xxxiv., there the Lord says, "I will seek that which was, lost;" and Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost Now, wherever he speaks divine and eternal life into the soul, that is the thing that is brought to light, your utterly lost and ruined condition, that you have gone astray like sheep; "we have turned every one to his own way." Your utterly lost and ruined condition will cast your spirits down, and it will lie like a heavy load upon your heart, and conscience, and mind. Some know what it is to go so deep into this experience as to say in the morning, "Would to God it were evening," and in the evening, "Would to God it were morning," and would to God I had never had a soul, would to God I had never been born. What am I born for? Born to be lost. Even this world is sometimes by affliction like a little hell. Jonah calls the whale's belly the belly of hell; and so how many afflictions we see around us! And here I am, born not only to bear the troubles, and thorns, and briers, and sorrows of this life, but to be lost forever. Ah, that will make a man sober. It does not matter how riotous he was, this conviction will bring him to; it does not matter what a raging Pharisee he was, this conviction will bring him down with, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It does not matter what the man was; no, if he were like the Gadarene dwelling among the tombs, and had been bound, as it were, with chains and fetters, but snapped them all asunder, but this voice of the Shepherd casts the legion out, brings the man down, and he carries with him a full conviction that, as a sinner considered, for aught he can do he is lost. This is one part of the experience; this is the experience that Zaccheus had. Some have supposed that Zaccheus got into the sycamore tree out of mere curiosity. No; the Savior lets us into a secret afterwards, for he says, in reference to Zaccheus, that "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" Zaccheus belonged to that tribe that were notorious wrong doers, and the greatest cheats, and rogues, and swindlers in the world, and therefore were held as lost, being most enormous sinners, and he therefore supposed that there could be no mercy for him. He does not seem to have had confidence to look, even as the publican did, up to God and to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But he thought, Well, this Jesus of Nazareth is coming this way, and I

am little of stature; if I can just climb up the tree and get a sight of him; I can't tell what the Lord may do; I will be there, at any rate; I can't tell how it may be. And how astounded he was when the dear Savior called to him and said, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house." And what does the Savior say to show that Zaccheus had this conviction already? This day is salvation come to this house."

If Zaccheus had not been convinced of his lost condition, he might have said, I do not want salvation, I am not lost, —like the Pharisees, when the Savior said, "If the Son make you free," — why, said they, "we were never in bondage to any man;" but the Savior goes on to show that he who is the servant of sin is in bondage to sin, which we all are by nature. Therefore, Zaccheus had this conviction of sin. And what was the result? "He received him joyfully," and was astonished that he should thus be so noticed. Is it not, therefore, very encouraging? Now passing by all your former experiences, and your doubts and fears, have you come this morning thinking I am afraid I have been deluded, I am afraid I have never known anything in reality? I will ask this question, —Do you at this present moment see the truth of God's blessed word, that we are, by what we are as sinners, utterly, and hopelessly, and eternally lost, and that we can do nothing in a way of legal works to save ourselves? If you have this assurance you have what nature has not given you; it is the Lord that hath done this; it is the Shepherd's voice that has entered into your soul, and brought you to see this. Again, the Lord says, "I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." So not only in your lost condition, but there is something the matter, the mind is out of order, the soul is out of order; there is guilt, and darkness, and fear; the mind is wounded, and you are not happy; there is a restlessness. Now when the Lord is pleased to send home a word, and give you a sense of his pardoning mercy, that is the way in which he heals the sick and the diseased, as the Psalmist witnesses when he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and who healeth all thy diseases." When a sense of this pardoning mercy flows into the soul, then it puts everything right; you are well then, you are comfortable then, you are happy then, you can rejoice then, and perhaps say with the Psalmist when he says, "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and he then, after laying down the premises, comes to the beautiful conclusion that he shall not be lost. Again, the Lord says, "I will bring again that which was driven away." What a mercy to see so much holiness and perfection in God's law as to be driven away from all hope of ever getting to heaven that way; what a mercy is it to see so much evil and so much unworthiness in ourselves as to be driven away from all false confidence. And then again, it is also a mercy, though a painful part of experience, to see so much sin in ourselves as to be afraid to call God ours, to be afraid to call Jesus our beloved, and to be afraid to call one promise ours. We feel that our sins and sinfulness do, as it were, drive us away, not from God's truth, but from confidence; we seem to walk away, as it were, in despair; our soul draws near unto the grave, and our life to the destroyers. Then if there be a message, an interpreter, one among a thousand, and the Lord is pleased to say unto such, "I have found a ransom," then this ransom takes all this guilt away, and the ransomed shall return and come to Zion. It is, then, the voice of ingathering, and this voice gives us an experience, a knowledge, of our lost condition; gives us to feel and know from experience that in the flesh dwells no good thing; gives us to see and feel that we can be brought nigh only as the Lord brings us nigh. Let me here define as clearly as I can what it is to be nigh to God. I have heard many a child of God speak of his being afar off, when at the same time he was nigh. We generally call the sensible enjoyment of eternal things nearness to God. Well, so it is; I would not contradict that by any means whatever, because, if the Lord grant us the joy of his salvation, and make us joyful in him, and enable us to say, "Thanks be to God, that always

causeth us to triumph in Christ," there is no question but that is nearness to God; but then that is the case only now and then. Hence it stands thus, — "A little while, and ye shall see me, and again a little while, and ye shall not see me, and again a little while, and ye shall see me." Nearness to God means in the first place knowledge. The man that has a true knowledge of the truth, he by his knowledge is near to God. How is it that we are by nature far off? By our ignorance. Let me try to explain this point thus. Suppose you ask if a man understands any other language, — we will say the Hebrew language, —Does that man understand the Hebrew language? No, he is a long way from, that; he does not even know the first letter, nor the last either; therefore, he is a long way off, —that is, by his ignorance. So, by nature our ignorance puts us, as it were, a long way off, — alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us. "Brethren," said one, "my heart's desire" —and a nice, sacred desire it was— "and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved;" that is, if it were the Lord's will to save them. "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge;" for they are still afar off from God; and how are they afar off from God? Because they have not the right kind of knowledge, — "for being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" And then the apostle, in order not to leave us in the dark, says that which hundreds of you know as well as the apostle did; for aught I know, —you know it as well, I was going to say, as it can be known on this side of the grave, — "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Now if we know that he is the end of the law for righteousness, we know that he is the end of sin, we know that he is the end of death, we know that he is the end of wrath, we know that he is the end of the curse, we know that he is the end of trouble. And what is this but nearness to God? This knowledge makes you nigh to God, for we draw near by the substitutional work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is that knowledge, this experimental knowledge, knowing our lost condition, knowing our state, and seeing Christ's mediatorial work as the only way in which God is just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus—there it is we draw nigh, there it is we are nigh. Those who do not know this righteousness are afar off, but those who do know this are nigh; they walk in it, live in it, and hereby have fellowship with God. So that you will not have in one sense far to go when you die, being already in the regions where angels dwell, being already in the light of that revelation which angels desire more and more to look into, and which they glory in. They will escort your departing spirit into Abraham's bosom, where you shall shine in all the dignity of Christ Jesus the Lord, who is your house from heaven, according to the Old Testament declaration, "I will beautify the meek with salvation." Secondly, not only knowledge, but faith also, brings us nigh. "What saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Faith then brings us nigh. The man that is a believer is always nigh to God. Let me prove this, if I can. God is never away from his truth. He does not do as we do, —make promises and forget them, and go away from them. God is always with his truth. Hence said Jeremiah, "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?" Well then, if the truth is always near to you, and God is always near to the truth, then the truth is always near to God, and the truth being always near to you, you are always near to God. If I may boast for a moment, I have been near to the truth and the truth to me for above forty years, and I have been near to God from that day to this, not always in a way of enjoyment, but in a way of knowledge and of faith; my soul believes most heartily, and I was going to say most happily and triumphantly, in God's eternal and infallible truth. Then again, love is nearness to God. When they asked what was the first commandment, you know how the Savior answered them, and the Scribe to whom he

answered confessed that the Savior was right, and that he himself—the Scribe—knew that a religion of love to God and man was about the best religion; and as he had got hold of the right principle, the Savior said to him, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” It remained for him, having got hold of the right principle, to get hold of the right principle in the right way—the way in which God shows his everlasting love by sending such a Savior and establishing such blessings. Thus, then, the voice of ingathering gathers us into this knowledge of God, this experimental knowledge of eternal things; the voice of the Shepherd gathers us into this faith, turns us into believers; and the voice of the great Shepherd gathers us into this love, so that we know him, believe in him, love him, abide by him, and rejoice that this is our God.

But secondly, the voice of the Shepherd to the sheep is also the voice of Calvary. What shall I say to this part? I must remind you of the fivefold account which the Savior gives in John x. of his voice from Calvary, and all that fivefold representation is by his death. He said, “I am the good Shepherd; I lay down my life for the sheep.” You will at once see here that his death is associated with his goodness. “I am the good Shepherd;” I have goodness enough to take away all your badness; I have goodness enough to lay down my life to work out for you eternal redemption; I have goodness enough to bear all that there is to bear in order that you might be forever saved. He is the good Shepherd; so, he laid down his life as an act of goodness. And do we not all feel it? Is not the voice of Calvary a voice of pastoral goodness? Was there ever such a shepherd before, and will there ever be such a shepherd again? What broad ground there is, then, for the exhortation to rest upon, — “Fear not.” Secondly, his laying down his life was not only by virtue of his own unbounded goodness so to do, but also according to knowledge, —according to the knowledge of God. Hence the Savior said, “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” I don’t know whether you catch the idea here, — “As the Father knoweth me: that is, the Father recognizes me as the surety for the sheep; the Father recognizes me as the way in which the sheep are to be saved; he recognizes me as the great Surety, he has entrusted to me all the sheep: they are all given into mine hand. And as he thus knows me or recognizes me, so I know the Father; I know what his will is, what his counsels are; I know why I was born, and what I have to do; I know the great ends that have to be answered; and therefore I lay down my life, not only by virtue of my being good enough or having righteousness enough to do so, but also I lay down my life as an act of perfect knowledge, —I know what I am about. You read of ignorant shepherds, but Jesus Christ knew all things; Jesus Christ laid down his life according to knowledge. And then, also, by virtue of his love. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” That is expressive evidently of the manner after which he should lay down his life. “That I might take it again;” —it is a remarkable expression. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” As though he should say, “If I should lay down my life in a defective way, and leave any sin unatoned for, leave any demand of law or justice unmet, leave any foe unconquered, or fail in anything, then it would not be acceptable to my Father; but “my Father loveth me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.”

Here is the voice of the Shepherd. Here then we have goodness; here we have the work done in a perfection of knowledge, and in a fulness and an eternity of love. Then fourthly, power, - “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Where did he get that power from? The Scriptures are clear as to that; -he found the power in himself: “his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his fury, it upheld him.” Here is the voice, then, of Almighty power achieving this victory.

You have no doubt often thought of the words of the enemy; and we are apt to take one view of them, and then stop; but I think it would not be unprofitable to go a little further; —when he was on the cross they said concerning him, “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” Now we generally stop there; and we say, “Well, the enemy there has set before us two very great truths, —one that he saved others: that is a truth; and the other that himself he could not save; and that is a truth, in the sense we then mean; because we mean, of course, that, being the surety, he must undergo what was appointed for him. But may we not go a little further, and make a counter declaration that, while they said, “himself he cannot save,” may we not say he did save himself, and he is the only person ever since the foundation of the world, or that ever will be, that saved himself? He did save himself. “His own arm brought salvation unto him.” How did he save himself? By paying the mighty debt we owed, by suffering all there was to suffer, by being made sin for us, by being made a curse for us. He did save himself, brought salvation to himself brought resurrection to himself, brought infinite and eternal freedom to himself; so that, while he saved others, he did so by saving himself. He took the place of others, but no others could take his place; he was a substitute for others, but no others could be a substitute for him. You might range the universe, and you could find no one that could take his place. There he stands with all our sins, with all the curse, with all the penalty; where will you find one, from the highest archangel to the greatest man on earth, that could take his place? Take him away, there is none could take his place. He, then, was a substitute for others, but none could be a substitute for him. Then here is Divine authority, — “This commandment have I received of my Father.” Thus, then, the sheep hear this voice. They say, “Here is the goodness of God, in this wonderful ransom laying down his life, thus setting forth his personal goodness and the goodness of God; and here is the knowledge of God: this is God’s way of saving sinners, turning us into saints, and making us kings and priests to God. Here is the love of God; he thus brings out the great and immutable love of God. Here also is the power of God; for Christ is the power of God, and Christ is God. Here also is the authority of God; that as no priest under the Old Testament dispensation could take acceptably to God that priesthood to himself, so Jesus Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but him who hath said, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” It is, then, the voice of ingathering, and the voice of redemption by his death.

Perhaps I have more confused you than not in branching out upon this part, but I am very fond of going from part to part in the mediation of Christ. I do not find the grass so sweet anywhere as it is there; I do not find the still waters rise anywhere as they do there; I do not get so much honey and oil out of the rock anywhere as I do there; I do not get so much boldness to live and die anywhere as I do there; I do not see so much of God anywhere as I do there; I do not see my sins and lose my fear of them anywhere as I do there; and I do not lose my troubles and rebellions anywhere as I do there. There I am satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and am ready to say, —

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“My willing soul would stay  
In such a scene as this;  
And sit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss.”

What a wonderful voice! It may well be said that “never man spake like this man.” Who could ingather our souls as he has done? who could have such a voice for us as he has by Calvary’s wondrous cross? There is every endearment there.

Thirdly, it is the voice of certainty. Some of the people said, “There is something about this man I like; —I cannot like him altogether—do not like his doctrines;” and yet in this parable of the shepherd, and the sheep the people seemed to say, “We never heard talk of such a shepherd before, and they must be a very blessed flock;” he may well say, “Fear not, little flock.” See what a voice he has for them; —I do not understand it, but I begin to doubt. “How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.” Ah, you begin to doubt, then? that, is better than nothing; half an hour ago you were quite sure he was not the Christ, and now you begin to doubt. “Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep;” -now comes the voice of certainty, — “as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice.” What say we, then? Are we sensible of our lost condition, of our need of such a Shepherd? If so, the voice has entered our souls, the work is begun. And do we love the voice of Calvary? Are we looking to that wondrous scene for all that is needful for us to know and possess? for everything the Lord said to us in a way of love and mercy is by Calvary. There is the voice. Can we say that? Then, lastly, upon this part, can we say that we love the voice of certainty? “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,” in these footsteps, “and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” Called to be nigh to him, called by the voice of Calvary, and they are fed and delighted with the voice of certainty; “they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one,” that is, in this matter. It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little lambs should perish, and it is not my will, and I am sure it is not their will; their will is to be saved, and Christ’s will is they should be saved, and God’s will is that they should be saved. Thus, then I have given a threefold representation of this voice; it is the voice of ingathering, the voice of Calvary, and the voice of infallible certainty; — “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Believe you this?

I must now hasten to the second part; —the royal favor shown; — “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” I do not know that I can say much in this second part that I have not in a measure anticipated. What does the kingdom mean? It means something infallibly certain, something unlosable, something of infinite duration, and something very defiant. I went this morning through many things, and among the rest Nebuchadnezzar’s dream; —how I was delighted with that; but I must touch upon only one part. Daniel, when he comes in his interpretation to the beginning of the gospel economy, Said, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.” Why not? Because you cannot destroy the atonement of Christ, because you cannot destroy the mediatorial work of Christ, because you cannot destroy Christ; his work must be destroyed before this kingdom can be destroyed, for it is founded upon his mediatorial work. Take the apostle Paul’s definition, and then see its indestructibility. The kingdom of God is not bodily meats and drinks, ceremonies and fad nothings; “the kingdom of God is righteousness, —the righteousness of Christ, which cannot be destroyed; he is Jehovah our Righteousness; “the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace,” not a peace patched up by men, but the peace, that is, by the reconciliation, that Christ has made; and by the peace that he has made the perfections of God harmonize. Can you ever bring anything like a jarring note or difference into the perfections of God? And the reconciliation which he has

made cannot be destroyed; - “reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The reconciliation Christ made at Calvary’s cross cannot be undone. “And joy in the Holy Ghost.” And what is said of this joy? It is said to be everlasting joy; and “your joy,” said Christ, “no man taketh from you,” Therefore, to give you the kingdom is to give you this state of stability, this certainty, this righteousness, this peace, this joy in the Holy Ghost. Secondly, it is also unlosable. Ah, say you, the kingdom will remain, but may not the people lose it or be destroyed? No, for it is written that it shall not be given to other people. Lose whatever you may, you cannot lose your life you have in Christ; you cannot lose God. We lost him in the first Adam, but we cannot lose him and he will not lose us. It shall not be given to other people. See how defiant it is. The devil may come and say, —Well, Lord, there is that man, and that woman, and there is that one and that one, I should think thou might get some better people than these to inherit the kingdom; I would turn them out, and have some better ones in. No, bad as they are, he keeps them. Well but, Lord, thou will never keep Peter now. Oh yes, I shall keep him all the same. Ah, so it is; it shall not be given to other people. Bless the Lord for this. The people whom the world may think so little of are the very people that the most highly appreciate this wonderful kingdom, this wonderful state of things. “What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation?” It is the poor that shall give this answer, — “That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.” Now, are we lovers of this stability, of this kingdom, this state of things? Then again, it lasts forever; — “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.” Then also it overcomes all other kingdoms. Daniel saw it, and that must be understood relatively and abstractedly, —Daniel saw the kingdoms of this world as the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and the winds carried them away. So, you must be prepared to admit that the kingdoms of this world, with all their honors and riches, are but chaff in comparison of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, in comparison of our Shepherd, in comparison of the blessed God; “and what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.” All these kingdoms became as chaff. But will the kingdom of Christ ever lose its value? The kingdom of Christ and its atmosphere, its light, its supplies, its beauties, and its glories, will never lose their value or, to be clearer still, God our Father, that has loved us, will never lose his value to us; Christ will never lose his value to us; the Holy Spirit will never lose his value to us; his promise will never lose its value to us. As God cannot lose his value abstractedly, so he cannot lose his value relatively. Here is something, then, that is now and will be forever of infinite value unto us. “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you” this stability, to give you this kingdom of consecration to him, to give you this firm standing, to give you that which will last as long as eternity itself. Then if we look at the manner in which it is given—though I have said nothing of the kingdom in comparison of what might be said—but I may just give a hint here, that all that is said, in the beatitudes in Matthew v. is nothing but a description of this kingdom. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” answering entirely to the voice of ingathering; — “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” All that is said in the beatitudes, after the first verse, is nothing else but a description of this kingdom. If there is an earth spoken of, the meek shall inherit the earth; it means the new earth, the promised land, which is one and the same thing with this kingdom; and if they are to be comforted, it is by the God of this kingdom; and so of all the rest; —all the beatitudes are nothing, else but a representation of the glorious and everlasting kingdom of God.

But, lastly, the way in which the Lord hath bestowed this kingdom, — according to his good pleasure. It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” It means that he was pleased to predestinate us “unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in

the beloved?” Is not the end to be answered every way suited? —that we should be “to the praise of the glory of his grace”? I am sure, when I meet you in heaven, I shall be able to tell you that it is great grace that brought me hither, and you will answer and say, it is great grace that has brought me hither. And there will be nothing to differ about there; we shall all see alike there; there will be no odds and ends, and difficulties to clear up; all will be clear and perfect. So, then, it is his good pleasure, his delight; not anything in the creature. And then, again, the apostle goes on to show two more items of this good pleasure, “having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” And the apostle gives us two more very striking instances of the mystery of his will; first, that the inheritance that we obtain is in Christ Jesus, being predestinated thereto.

You will thus see that the dear Savior brought his disciples off from all creature confidence, and caused them to place their confidence in the Lord. May we be increasingly assured that we are not strangers to the Shepherd’s voice.