

the Prophet who said, "Lay not up treasure on earth?"

Yet this man forsakes his money-making to follow the Nazarene carpenter. He does his best to bring his old comrades in chicanery and sin to Jesus, inviting him and them to a "great feast." And, strangest of all, Jesus goes.

Two objections were made to this proceeding :

1. *By the Pharisees*, ver. 16. "We thought," they would say, "this Jesus was well conducted and respectable at all events—but how is this? what is he doing in such a place? how can he make such people his friends?" (See Matt. xi. 19; Luke xv. 2.) How does the Lord answer? "Are you so good, and these people so bad? Well, then, to which should I go? Who need the physician, the healthy or the sick? Here is the reason why he went among publicans and sinners. Why does a doctor go to a sick man: to catch his disease or to cure him? Here, too, is the reason why they came to him. His words had made them feel their wickedness, and they wanted a Friend—not a comrade in sin, but a Saviour from sin. When a man seeks the doctor what does it show that he feels?"

2. *By the disciples of John the Baptist*, verse 18. They have no objection to Jesus receiving publicans; their own master had done the same (Luke iii. 12; vii. 29)—but how would he have dealt with them? Would he not have appointed them long and strict fasts? Why, then, does Jesus join them at a feast? Here we must notice that the fasting of the Baptist's disciples was not a spontaneous mourning for their Master's imprisonment, but a regular ascetic practice enjoined by him. This is clear from Luke's account, (chap. v. 33, 34.) Observe the expressions, "Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast?" and, "The disciples of John fast often, and make prayers."

Now see Christ's answer to this objection. To the Pharisees he urged that he was a physician; now he urges that he is a bridegroom. What has he come from above for? Not to punish men, not to set hard tasks by which they may gain heaven, but to invite them freely to be happy as men are happy at a wedding. His followers would have a sad time by and by, and would fast then because there would be a reason for it. But not now. To cramp their devotion and joy with old strict rules would be like mending a worn-out coat with an *un-shrunk* piece out of a new one—like putting fresh wine, while yet fermenting, into old wine skins. To do so would be to spoil everything.

Here is the application :

1. *Matthew was called. So are we.* What to give up? Sin, of course; and also any good thing, even, that keeps us from Christ. See Matt. x. 37; xix. 22; Luke xiv. 18-20; 2 Tim. iii. 4. Called to what? Not to hard rules and a gloomy life, but to be happy. We cannot, like Matthew, invite Jesus to a feast; but he invites us. Isa. lv. 1.

2. *Matthew obeyed. Are we hesitating?* Think who calls—what he did for us. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. And think of the end, as Moses did, Heb. xi. 26; and St. Paul, Phil. iii. 7, 14.

### Seed-Thoughts for Senior Scholars.

1. Why did Christ so often preach at the sea-side?
2. By what other name was Levi known? (Matt. ix. 9.)
3. What meant Christ's words, *Follow me? When? Where? How much?*
4. Did Levi understand what was implied in it?
5. Did he feel himself prepared or honored by the call? (See Luke v. 29.)
6. What, if any, change occurred in his moral nature or feeling at that time?
7. In what respect was his example worthy?
8. Why did Christ, contrary to Jewish custom, sit at meat with a mixed multitude?
9. Who gave this supper, or feast?
10. For what reason was the feast given?
11. Why did the Scribes and Pharisees enter their complaints to the disciples, instead of Christ?
12. Was it morally or traditionally wrong to keep company with sinners?
13. What rule or law governed Christ in all his earthly associations?
14. How did his words in ver. 17 apply to the settlement of this question?
15. Are we thus taught to come down to a level with sinners, in all respects, in order to save them?

Blackboard.



The Crown of Grace! Who is it for? *The followers of Jesus. Why? Because Jesus alone*