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SERMON CCCCXIX.

BY THE REV. GEORGE POTTS, D.D.
PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN UNIVERSITY
PLACE, NEW YORK.

THE HOUR.*

“Father! the hour is come.”—JOHN, xvii. 1.

We cannot believe ourselves mistaken in maintaining that, although every religious service should be perfumed with the odour of Christ, the service which so distinctly and affectingly records his *death*, should with especial sacredness, be consecrated entirely to such thoughts as grow immediately out of that grand subject. Surely if at any time we are to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, this is the time. Remoter topics however important in their place, would divide attention and exhaust a portion of the energy of thought and emotion, which the great duty of the occasion, requires and deserves. Then let the first and the last thought of the soul upon this day be—the love wherewith He loved us, who gave himself for us—the more especially as the appointment upon which we are to attend, comes with the emphasis of a special injunction, “Do this *in remembrance of me.*”

In this spirit, we have now, as upon all similar occasions, selected words from the pages of sacred scripture, which directly summon us into the very midst of the wonders we commemorate. We wish, not so much to reason as to feel: not to present truth in controversy, but truth admitted, and so to present it, as to draw our souls out of the range of their ordinary associations; and from the eminence which our subject alone affords, to contemplate the most momentous realities which human history presents to our view. Such a height is the historical period of the passion of the Redeemer of men: and to reach it, let all our energies of thought, attentive thought, excited and consecrated by the Divine Spirit, be given to the deep significance which belongs to the words of our text “Father! the hour is come.”

* A Communion Sermon.

SERMON CCCCXX.

BY REV. ELISHA YALE, D. D.
KINGSBORO', NEW YORK.

CHARGES TO THE RICH.

.. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1. Tim. vi. 17, 19."

Them that are rich—that have abundance. Though we cannot define the term *riches* with any certainty, yet the term *abundance* will suffice for all practical purposes with such as candidly own the truth. To others we expect not to present a charge, even from God, with much hope of success.

Charge them that are rich. We say, as a judge of Israel once said to a king of Moab, "I have a message from God unto thee." And the command of God to us is, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." "To you, O men, do I call; and my voice is unto the sons of men." The Lord hath spoken—*Charge them that are rich.* The Lord does not say, "Let them alone, for there is no hope." But he says, *charge them*—evidently to do them good, and call them to the noble and god-like work of doing good. Had he determined absolutely to destroy them, he would send them no warning. But inasmuch as he says, *charge them*, we may believe it possible that they may obtain mercy. The fact also that a few rich men have obtained mercy encourages the hope, that a charge to the rich may not be in vain. And the words of the Saviour encourage us still farther, as he says, "That which is impossible with men, is possible with God." Hope, therefore, a little hope there is, of reaching them that are rich in this world. Hear, then, hear ye that are in prosperity, for God has not passed you by: it is possible that your souls may live—barely possible—so that good tidings may reach even to you, the most inaccessible of all human beings, of whom the God of truth once said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Despair not, however, for "with God all things are possible." He sends a message unto you.

But the charge must be delivered in the name of the Lord; it must be heard and regarded; and then your souls shall live, and your riches shall be a blessing to yourselves and to the world.

CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD,

1. *That they be not high-minded.* Lofty thoughts do not become men, who have nothing but what they have received. Nor

does pride suit the condition of those who come from the dust, and claim affinity with worms, and soon return to dust again. It is unfit to assume lofty airs in comparison with others, when even a beggar may be more highly esteemed among the holy angels. Be not *high-minded*. Was not the highest among the angels condemned for his pride? Were not he and his host cast down into Tartarus to punish their pride? Are not men cautioned not to be lifted up with pride, lest they fall into the condemnation of the devil? Let the rich, therefore, *be not high-minded*. You condemn pride in others: condemn it also in yourselves. You know that humility is a precious gem, that sparkles with gentle lustre in every lowly bosom: let it be so splendid in yours as to outshine all the gems of your riches. *Be not high-minded*, "but be clothed with humility." You will find this robe set very easy and pleasantly upon you, though it be not very easy to put it on and to keep it on at all times. When you look round upon your houses and lands, your flocks and herds, your attendants and equipage, and, at the same time, know the abundance of your silver and gold, or the securities which you hold for the same, how can you, without deep humility, forbear to say, "my hand has gotten me this wealth?" How can you forbear comparing yourself with others, and thinking more highly of yourself on account of your superior possessions? Will you not flatter yourself because of your means of distinction? Will you not be liable to spurn from you the applicant for relief? As did once a man of the house of Caleb, who said to the servants of David, "There be many servants now-a-days, that break away every man from his master." How different was the conduct of the Prince of Uz, who said, "If I did despise the cause of my manservant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up, and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me make him? And did not one fashion us? So do all the rich feel, when they are not high-minded. They consider themselves to be but dust and ashes, as Abraham said before God. They know that they are by nature children of wrath even as others. They know that all they possess belongs to the Lord, and that he alone maketh them to differ from others. And they know that they will soon lay their heads in the dust and to go to the world of spirits, as destitute and as naked as the poorest among mortals. They are therefore deeply humbled; and they are also jealous of themselves, lest they should be deceived by their abundance, and finally perish with their riches. To such, we know, the charge will be welcome, *be not high-minded*. How much soever some of the rich may spurn at the charge, given them in the name of the Lord, or be disposed to say, Let every man mind his own business; such as Job will welcome both the message and the messenger. With such, there may be some hope of prevailing in the charges which follow. And though

it is painful to part with such as remain high-minded, yet we have little hope in regard to them, and fear that they will not hear till the voice of the Master shall say, "Give account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."

Again—CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD:

2. *That they trust not in uncertain riches.*—Every one as naturally trusts in something as a vine clings to a tree. And as various objects present themselves to our reach we are prone to entwine our affections around them and trust in them. As "money answers all things," so are men prone to trust in it. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city." He has the means to build and to plant, to increase a profitable income and supply himself, his friends and dependants with all that money can purchase. If his fields bring forth abundantly, so that he has no place to bestow his fruits and his goods, he can pull down his barns and build greater. Then he can say, and he naturally will say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: eat, drink and be merry." This is one way to trust in riches. But how soon was it said to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Does not such an example say to the rich man, *Trust not in uncertain riches?* Uncertain in this case, because the steward is suddenly put out of his stewardship, and leaves all his wealth unto others.

Another rich man "adds house to house and joins field to field," not so much for the purpose of furnishing a supply that he may eat, and drink and be merry, as for the purpose of accumulation. His insatiable desire increases with his means. And, as his object is not to enjoy, but to gain, he is like vessels always full, and always enlarging. All that he wants is not a supply, but a larger vessel. Of such an one Solomon says, "What hath a man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity." *Trust not in uncertain riches.* Uncertain in this case, because they do not allow a man to enjoy what he has for any valuable purpose, or to lay them out for any desirable end. "What profit is there, only in the beholding of them with his eyes?"

Instead of trusting in uncertain riches the charge is, to *trust in the living God.* We are dependent, and, in the nature of the case, we must trust in something. When we withdraw our confidence in one vanity it should not be that we may confide in another. Therefore should the rich, as well as others, *trust in the living God.* In regard to all things, and also at all times, should every one trust in the living God. In him trust the care of the soul and all our spiritual interests. But in this connexion we are to regard

specially the supply of all things, for which riches may be deemed a substitute. Instead of trusting in uncertain riches for such things as we need in this life, trust in the living God, who is the high Possessor of heaven and earth. How much more rational is it that we trust in the first cause of all things, than in secondary, and dependent causes! "Better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. Better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." The Saviour says, "Consider the lillies of the field—Consider the fowls of the air." "Take no thought." As the Apostle expresses it, "Be careful for nothing; but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." In the spirit of these divine counsels the pious Payson said with true faith, "I would ask God to give me a world if I needed it, just as readily as I would ask for a straw." How much more reasonable is it to trust for supplies in the exhaustless fountain, than to trust in a broken cistern; in infinite wisdom, than in human folly; in unchangeable goodness, than in the caprice of fallible man? It may be more difficult for the rich than for the poor to trust in the living God, because their houses and lands, their flocks and herds, their silver and gold, block up the way to God. But it is not less needful and essentially necessary, For they are as really dependent, and can do nothing without the living God. Hence must they break through all barriers, and overcome all obstacles, that they may come to the living God, and repose upon his paternal bosom, while they cast all their cares upon him—the unspeakable privilege of the poor and needy, and the only safety and security of the rich. Trust in the living God: for in so doing, your riches are just as available, while you are entrusted with them; and, if they leave you, or you leave them, the living God is your portion. Therefore trust in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

Farther—CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD.

3. *That they do good.*—It becomes us to say to the rich, ye are the Lord's stewards. "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." Ye are not proprietors and lords, but stewards. Not a penny is your own absolutely, though entrusted with you for a season, to answer the purposes of the owner.

It has been well said by some one, that "the whole gospel is a vast system of giving." God, the Father, gave his only begotten Son. God, the Son, gave himself. God, the Father, gave the Spirit to the Son, when he ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. God, the Son, gives the Spirit to his disciples. God, the Holy Ghost, gives a new heart and all the Christian graces. So all things in this world are freely given to us of God; and to crown all, the Saviour says to his flock, "I give un-

to them eternal life, and they shall never perish." God's people partake of his Spirit, and they too are of the giving sort. As Jesus said unto his disciples, "Freely ye have received; freely give." And he was accustomed to say, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive." Need we marvel, then, that the converts, under the effusion of the Holy Spirit, were so ready to give? They sold their possessions and goods, and imparted them to all men, as every man had need." They did so because they were full of the Holy Ghost. For the same reason the churches of Macedonia were so liberal—the grace of God was bestowed upon them. In this system, every one is expected to give "as God has prospered him." The widow of her penury, casts in two mites; and all the rich, of their abundance, cast in much. And those who have neither silver nor gold, give such as they have. Some give themselves to be the Lord's servants, and wait on Him continually in the work of the gospel ministry. We have heard of a widow, who gave her three sons to this service; and of a father, who gave his son, as a foreign missionary, and the means to support him. The rich are therefore specially enjoined to do good, if they would belong to the Christian system. For although a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, and yet be destitute of charity; yet "if a man have this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Tell, if ye can, ye that are rich in this world, and shut up your bowels of compassion from the needy. We know not how such a thing can be, if the love of God be in you.

Not only are ye to do good, as all men should do, but as ye are rich in this world, ye are to be *rich in good works*. That is, be abundant in good works. One thing corresponds with another. To whom much is given, of them will much be required. The appropriate use of wealth is to be *rich in good works*. In such a world as this, while the rich look around and behold their abundance, they may look around and behold a multitude, that need their liberality. God has provided for them so that they shall never want for opportunity to do good. The poor, the idle, the vicious are under their eye. But they are the poorest of mankind, who know not the glorious gospel of the blessed God. With such a multitude you are not required to scatter abroad your Master's goods, as did the fabled Fortune, standing on a round stone, blind, throwing handfuls among the people. Such is not the christian method of doing good. But with eyes open, and mind discriminating must you, that would be rich in good works, bestow the bounties of your Lord. Relieve the pressing wants of the needy; provide employment for the idle; apply means to reclaim the vicious; and send forth the treasures of the gospel to such as are perishing for lack of knowledge.

As Christ commands us to preach the gospel to every creature,

and as man must go to preach and carry Bibles and other good books, so must they be sustained in the work. Thus the Apostles went forth "to turn the people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God." While thus employed they were sustained, partly by their own manual labor, and partly by the contributions of the churches. The heathen then were as the heathen now; selfish, blind, sottish, and regardless of the wants of the ministers of Christ. Hence, Paul labored with his hands among the Corinthians, to sustain himself and his fellow laborers, when preaching the gospel to them at the first: but afterwards he said, "I robbed other churches to do you service." The Macedonians and others sent to his relief both at Corinth, and in other places. How blessed is the service now, when such as you are *rich in good works*, and sustain the faithful missionary, in his self-denial, his toil, his suffering, while wasting away his strength, his little all, and his life, to save the people that are ready to perish! Be ye *rich in good works*. And, if ye equal not the Lord Jesus Christ, "who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich;" yet, just in proportion as ye are *rich in good works*, do ye follow in his steps, and make those rich in the grace of salvation, who are now poor, and would perish but for your aid. Precious privilege do ye enjoy, in that ye may be able, by a wise and faithful use of your abundance, to aid in winning souls to Christ, through the labors of fainting missionaries, whom ye sustain.

Another beautiful quality does the Apostle depict in the character of such as are rich in good works—*Ready to distribute*. Following the apostolic direction to lay by in store, as God has prospered you, never can a call be made upon you at an unseasonable time. You need not expect the Master to call in person, but he sends his servants. And you can say, as said the Rev. John Newton, "not a man knocks at my door, but I think that God sent him. And if he calls for aid in the Master's cause, he will find you ready. You will not say, "go, and call again." But you will cheer both his heart and your own, by a ready distribution of so much as you think and he thinks the Master requires for that particular object. How beautiful the expression, *Ready to distribute*.

But there is another expression which is no less beautiful and is found often in connexion with the offerings made for the service of the Lord—*Willing to communicate*. In the wilderness God invited such as were *willing*. David, after stating to his people that he had given, because he had set his affection to the house of his God, asked, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" And on the day of pentecost and afterwards under the influence of the Holy Ghost, how cheerfully did the people offer their substance for the relief of the needy! So, if you be rich in good works, and possess all the qualities, which the Lord requires and loves, you will be *willing to communicate*. You will

not be angry, or put on a forbidding air; but you will win the love of God and man by cheerfulness. "For the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." This is the way to be RICH IN GOOD WORKS; ever to give abundantly, readily and willingly. Thus every donation will increase "the riches of your liberality."

Nor is this all.—CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD.

4. *That they lay up in store for themselves a good foundation.*

Beloved, God does not intend that you, who are rich in this world, should receive all your good things here. He would have you enjoy a richer treasure, dwell in more splendid palaces, feast upon more delicious food, be enrobed in more elegant apparel, be engaged in more magnificent operations, and enjoy better company and a sweeter felicity. And that you may not be ruined by your abundance, but turn all to the best account, he condescends to give you his heavenly counsel. Use not all now, but lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life.

The time to come is the eternal world. Millions of ages after the close of this earthly state, and the burning of this world, the time to come will be—when not an atom shall remain of your riches in this world, then will you need,

A good foundation.—"A certain good; happiness firm and stable." Are there those who seek a *good foundation*, on which their surplus treasures may rest in this world? Do they enquire about public stocks? Do they ask, what stocks have the best foundation? Such inquiries are judicious: for no man wishes to invest money in stocks, which are liable to explode in a few days—and many wish to invest all their property in real estate. For lands will not make wings and fly away, while buildings are consumed, and banking institutions fail. So God orders us to charge the rich to *lay up for themselves in store a good foundation against the time to come.* A good foundation indeed, in a world which shall never pass away! In a world, "where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Of this the Apostle Peter says, "It is an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Laying up in store.—It is not wrong to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. Only let the time be eternity, and the foundation "a certain good, happiness firm and stable."—Lay up in store as much as possible. But how is this to be done?

We answer, by the use you make of your riches. As said the

Savior "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." In order to this there must be exchanges; for your gold and silver, and houses and lands, and such other items of wealth as are current and available in this world, will not pass in heaven. Not because they, who dwell in that better country, do not know the value of your earthly treasures, like the savage islander, who valued a knife more than a twenty thousand pound bank note: but because they know too well the inferior quality of your treasures. God is indeed bringing the glory and honor of the nations into his holy city, New Jerusalem; but as he has no need there of such treasures as constitute your wealth here, it will be of no use to think of presenting any thing you have in its present form. But as a man, going into a foreign country, makes exchanges and procures money, which is current in that country; so must the rich do, who would lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. They must now be negotiating exchanges. As it is written, "He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that, which he hath given, will he pay him again." Prov. 19, 17. This is the method of effecting exchanges between earth and heaven. The Lord, the owner of all you have as stewards, promises to pay you again, in the currency of heaven, all that you expend, according to his will, in showing mercy to the poor, and the perishing in this world. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, preach the gospel to the destitute, relieve all manner of distress, or give even a cup of cold water to any one out of regard to Christ, and you will by no means lose your reward. Be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and, when Christ comes, he will pay you again "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."—This is the promise of God. If you like the security you will engage largely and liberally and immediately in the work of negotiating exchanges, so that you may *lay hold on eternal life*. So are we to encourage the rich to do, not as the sole object at which they should aim. For they, as well as others, are bound to glorify God as their supreme end, and love their neighbour as themselves. But they may seek their own good too, even eternal life. And though they are not to purchase eternal life, but receive it as a free gift through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; yet, as they are entrusted with their Lord's goods, they must use them according to his will, or they will fail of eternal life. So did a rich young man once, who enquired very earnestly and respectfully of Jesus, what shall I do that I may have eternal life? But when Jesus told him to sell all he had and give to the poor, the young man went away sorrowful.

The expression in the text denotes danger—that *they may lay hold on eternal life*—the danger is of failing to lay hold. As when an object is presented to us and comes within our reach, but we are so heedless, or rebellious, or have our hands so full of other things,

that we fail of seizing it at *once*, when we may, and thus lose it for ever. So is eternal life to every one, but especially to the rich. God in the offers of his grace, presents eternal life to every one of us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." But what does he say to the rich?—Well were the disciples astonished above measure, when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." In the parable of the sower he gives the reason—"The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Hence does he represent the salvation of the rich as a *bare possibility*. "It is impossible with men; but with God all things are possible." Hence the need of charging the rich to use their wealth so that they may *lay hold on eternal life*. We are not to tell them to expect eternal life on any conditions different from other men. We promise them not eternal life, because they use wealth liberally, or even "if the give all their goods to feed the poor." On the contrary, they have a more difficult task than other men. For while they must be born again, or not enter into the kingdom of God; and repent, or perish; and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or never see life: they are encompassed with the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, which render it next to impossible that they should ever be saved. They must deny themselves in the midst of all the means of gratification. They must crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, while their abundance, their friends and the cares of this world combine to pamper the flesh with its affections and lusts. They must look at the things, which are not seen, through the splendour which cluster thick around them, and dazzle their eyes. They must hear the still, small voice of God, calling to their conscience, amid the clamors of the gay, the thoughtless, and the pleasure-loving world. And, "while worldly fancy feeds on golden dreams," and flatters them that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant," and another time, "a more convenient season."—Alas! Alas! how can the rich *lay hold on eternal life*? Is it possible for them with their eyes, ears, hands and heart full, and more still pressing for their acceptance, to lay hold on an object, so difficult to seize, and to hold, as eternal life? Will they be induced to part with all they have, if the Lord demand it? How can they bear to hear him say to them as to the lovely young man, referred to before, "Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come take up the cross and follow me."—"He went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions"—*great possessions!* He kept his great possessions for a season, but lost his soul for ever. Surely, if any in a christian land need our sympathy, they that are rich need it. Their souls are as *precious* as

the souls of others. Others are in danger and can be saved with great difficulty. What then will become of the rich? They can hardly be saved. The Lord Jesus pitied, while he warned them. The apostle, Paul, warned them, and urged Timothy to charge them to lay hold on eternal life. The apostle, James, cried out to them, saying, "Weep and howl!" O, my soul, "Envy not the rich," but as God bids, charge them not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

If you are unconverted, your wealth is "a wall to keep you out of heaven." It is a car, to roll you easily and speedily down to hell. Would you ever be converted, now receive the Lord Jesus gladly as did Zacheus. Then, like him, quietly give the half of your goods to be rich in good works, or some proportion equally acceptable to God. And, if you have gained any thing unjustly, be prompt in making restitution. Thus will the Lord say of you, as he did of him, "This day is salvation come to this house."

If you profess to be Christians, and yet are not possessed of the spirit enjoined in the text, we leave you with the words of the Apostle James, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

POINTING THE ARROWS.

The celestial armory is well supplied with weapons. They are not carnal but spiritual. They are of ethereal mould, and of divine workmanship.—When well directed, they pierce the heart and wound the conscience. They are the arrows of the Almighty and when they are made to strike fast in the soul, their wounds are deep, their poison drinketh up the spirits of men, and constrains them in the agony of their aching hearts to hasten to the Great Physician for balm to heal their wounds. Unlike all other arrows and wounds, they have a blessed design and wonderful efficacy.

There is a class of men—soldiers of the cross—who are specially appointed to this celestial archery, whose solemn business it is to go in the name of heaven's King to his armory, where are stores of