

“Making Light of Christ”

Originally preached by Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

I chose Richard Baxter because of his deep love and concern for people.

[Read excerpt about his life]

He is a remarkable man, used by God to call sinners to repentance, at almost unthinkable cost to himself.

[Scripture Introduction]

I chose this sermon not simply because I want to expose you to our Christian heritage, but also to present to you a picture of the passion for the lost that should be erupting within our own hearts.

This sermon comes from the parable found in the beginning of Matthew 22. I am going to read the whole parable even though this sermon is only based on verse 5.

I would ask that you follow along as I read.

[Read Scripture]

Where the ESV in verse 5 says, “but they paid no attention” the King James version which is the version Baxter used says, “But they made light of Christ.”

I hope you will be challenged in this sermon to evaluate how much you love Christ, how much you love people, and particularly, how much you love the lost.

[Prayer for illumination] Let’s pray.

Beloved hearers; the office that God has called us to, is by declaring the glory of his grace, to help under Christ to the saving of men's souls. I hope you think not that I have come here today on another errand. I have considered, often considered, what is the matter that so many thousands should perish when God has done so much for their salvation; and I find this that is mentioned in my text is the cause.

It is one of the wonders of the world, that when God has so loved the world as to send His son, and Christ has made a satisfaction by His death sufficient for them all, and offers the benefits of it so freely to them, even without money or price, that yet the most of the world should perish. Even most of those who are called by His Word. Why, here is the reason, when Christ has done all this, men make light of it. God has showed that He is not unwilling; and Christ has showed that He is not unwilling that men should be restored to God's favor and be saved; but men are actually unwilling themselves.

God takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they return and live. But men take such pleasure in sin that they will die before they will return. The Lord Jesus was content to their physician, and has provided them a sufficient amount of His own blood; but if men make light of it, and will not apply it, what wonder if they perish at all?

This Scripture gives us the reason of their perdition. This, sad experience tells us, the most of the world is guilty of it. It is a most lamentable thing to see how most men do spend their care, their time, their pains, . . . for known vanities, while God and glory are cast aside. It is most lamentable that He who is all should seem to them nothing, and that which is nothing should seem to them as good as all. It is most lamentable that God should set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, and that they should sit down, and loiter or run after the childish toys of the world, and so much forget the prize they should run for.

Were it but possible for one of us to see the whole of this business as God does, and to see in one view both heaven and hell, and which men are near to what end, and to see what most men in the world are minding, and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight that could be imagined.

Oh how we should marvel at their madness, and lament their self-delusion. What a poor distracted world! What is it you run after? And what is it that you neglect? If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or where they were to go, or what was before them in another world, then they would have been excusable.

But He has told them, over and over, till they have grown tired of it. Had he left it doubtful, there would have been some excuse, but it is His sealed Word, and they profess to believe it, and even get upset if we question whether or not they really believe it.

Beloved, I come not to accuse any of you particularly of this crime; but seeing it is the most common cause of men's destruction, I expect you will judge it the most important matter for our inquiry. To that end I will, 1) endeavor to convict the guilty, 2) I shall give them many considerations that will humble them, and 3) I shall conclude with directions that may help them that are will to escape the destroying power of sin.

[MP1] #1 consider this. It is the case of most sinners to think of themselves as free from the very sins that they are most enslaved to. This is one reason why they cannot be saved because we cannot convince them of their guilt.

It is the nature of sin so far to blind and befool the sinner, so that he knows not what he does, but thinks he is free from sin even when it is reigning in him. Sin brings men to be so un-acquainted with themselves that they know not what they think, or what they mean and intend, nor what they love or hate, much less what they are habituated and disposed to.

They are alive to sin and dead to all the reason, consideration, and resolution that should recover them to Christ.

May I hope that you that hear me today are willing to know the truth of your case? God will judge impartially; why should not we do so as well? Let me, therefore, by the following questions try to discern whether any of you are slights of Christ.

What do you highly value? First, Things that men highly value will be remembered. They will be the matter of their freest and sweetest thoughts. This is known to be true by all.

Do not those then make light of Christ and salvation since they so seldom think of Him in comparison of other things? Follow your own heart and observe what it daily runs after, and then judge whether or not your heart makes light of Christ.

Second, the things that we highly value are the matter of our discourse. Our judgments and heart will command our tongue. Freely and delightfully will our speech run after them.

Do not those men make light of Christ and salvation that shun the mention of His name? Unless of course it is for a vain or sinful use. Those that love not the company where Christ and salvation is much talked about, but prefer to hear some merry jests or idle tales, or to talk of their riches and business. They make light of Christ. If you were to follow them from morning to night, you would hardly hear a single word about Christ. How seriously do they talk of the world and speak of vanity, but how heartlessly do they make mention of Christ and salvation?

Third, the things we highly value we would secure possession. And, therefore, we would take any course to have all doubts and fears about them resolves.

Do not those men make light of Christ and salvation that have lived for 20 or 30 years and yet never seek out the right resolution of their doubts?

Are all that hear me this day certain that they shall be saved? If you had not made light of your salvation, you could not so easily bear such doubting of it. You would not rest till you had made it sure or done your best to make it sure. And that means going to somebody and inquiring of them.

And you have appointed to you ministers for that very reason. Have you gone to them and told them of your case, and asked for their help in judging your condition? Ministers may sit in their studies from one year to another and not even 10 persons among a thousand will come to them on such an errand.

Do not such people make light of Christ and salvation?

And we could go on. The things we highly value deeply affect our hearts and emotions. The things we highly value we shall think no pains too great to obtain. The things we highly value are never too costly.

The things we highly value we would help our friends to as much as we do ourselves.
The things we highly value we diligently seek after.

Thus much have I spoken for your conviction. Do not some of your consciences by this time smite you and say, "I am a man that has made light of my salvation?"

If they do not, it is because you make light of Christ still. So I beseech you to lay open your hearts to the work of grace.

Consider that you make light of Him that made not light of you though you deserve it. You are worthy of nothing but contempt. As a man, what are you but a worm to God? As a sinner, you are far more vile than a toad. Yet Christ, was so far from making light of you that He came down into the flesh, and lived a life of suffering, and offered Himself a sacrifice to the justice which you had provoked, so that your soul might have a remedy. It is no less than the miracles of love and mercy that he has showed to us, and yet, we slight Him after all.

#1 Consider the conviction of the guilty.

[MP2] #2 consider these things which should humble us.

First, the completed work of man's salvation by Jesus Christ is the masterpiece of all the works of God, wherein he would have his love and mercy magnified. As creation declares God's goodness and power, so does redemption declare His goodness and mercy.

He has contrived the very frame of His worship so that it shall consist in the magnifying of this work of redemption.

"His name is wonderful."

He did the work that none could do.

Greater love could none show than His.

All are wonders, from His birth to His ascension. From our new birth to our glorification, all are wonders of matchless mercy, and do you make light of them?

Second, consider the greatest excellency and moment in the world. You know not what it is that you slight: had you well, known you would not have done it. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "Had you known who it is that speaks to you, you would have asked of Him the waters of life." Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. So, had you known what Christ is, you would not have made light of him.

Had you one day in heaven, and seen what they possess, and seen also what miserable souls must endure that are shut out, you would never sure have made so light of Christ.

Third, consider who it is that sends this message. Is it not God Himself? Shall the God of heaven speak and men make light of it? You would not slight the voice of an angel or a prince, so consider He who sends this message.

[MP3] Finally this morning consider these directions to escape the wrath of God upon those who make light of Christ.

What do you think now friends of this business? Do you not see by this time what a case that soul is in that makes light of Christ and salvation? What need there is that you should take heed lest this should prove your own case! The Lord knows it is too common a case.

Whoever is found guilty of this sin, it would have been better for that man had he never been born. This will aggravate their misery, that Christ whom they set light by must be their judge, and for this sin He will judge them.

Consider how you will answer the question that Christ has put to your predecessors, "how will you escape hell?" And how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

Can you escape without Christ, or will a despised Christ save you then? In the name of God, brothers, I beseech you to consider how you will then bear this anger which you now make light of! You cannot make light of a little sickness or want, or of natural death, no, not of a toothache, but groan as if you were undone. How will you then make light of the fury of the Lord, which will burn against the condemners of His grace. Does it not behoove you before hand to think of these things?

Dear beloved in the Lord, I have now done that work which I came to do; what effect it has, or will have upon your hearts, I don't know. Nor is it any further in my power to accomplish that which my soul desires for you.

Were it the Lord's will that I might have my wish this morning, then the words that you have heard this day should so stick by you that the secure should be awaked by them, and none of you should perish by the slighting of your salvation. I can not follow you to your homes to apply this word to you. But I wish I could make every man's conscience which is always with you a preacher to himself that it might do it.

That way, the next time you go prayer less to bed or about some other your business, your conscience might cry out, "Do you set no more by Christ and they salvation?"

And that way the next time you are tempted to think hardly of a holy and diligent life, your conscience might cry out, "Do you se so light by Christ and they salvation?"

And that way the next time you are ready to rush upon unknown sin, and to please your fleshly desires against the command of God, conscience might cry out, "Is Christ and salvation of no more worth than to cast them away, or venture them for thy lust?"

And that way, when you are following the world with your most eager desires, and you have forgotten about the world that is to come, conscience might cry out to you, "Is Christ, and salvation worth no more than this?"

And that way when you are next spending the Lord's Day in idleness or vain sports, conscience might tell you what you are doing.

In a word . . . that in all your neglects of duty that you stick at supposing it is for a godly life; yes in all your cold and lazy prayers and performances, I desire that conscience might tell you how unsuitable such endeavors are to the reward; and that Christ and salvation should not be so slighted.

I would say no more but this at this time, it is a thousand pities that when God has provided a Savior for the world, and when Christ has freely suffered so much for their sins, and made so full a satisfaction to justice, and purchased so glorious a kingdom for His saints, and all this is offered so freely to sinners, . . . to lost unworthy sinners even for nothing, it is a a thousand pities that yet so millions should everlastingly perish because they make light of their Savior and salvation, and prefer the vain world and their lusts before them.

I have delivered my message, the Lord open your hearts to receive it. I have persuaded you with the Word of truth and soberness; may the Lord persuade you most effectually, or else all this is lost.
Amen.

Let's pray.