

Christ's Love for His Vineyard

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately teaches that Christ claims His Church as His own vineyard by divine gift, purchase, and espousal, and lovingly watches over and cares for it continually.

Scripture: Song of Solomon 8:12, Ezekiel 15:2-5, John 10:11, Matthew 28:20, Psalm 50:10

Topics: "Christ's Love"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound love Christ has for His Church, depicted as His precious vineyard. He emphasizes Christ's exclusive claim on the Church through divine gift, purchase, and espousal, and highlights the continual care and watchfulness Christ exercises over His people. Spurgeon also calls believers to faithfully tend their own spiritual vineyards, bearing fruit for the glory of God. This message encourages the Church to rest in Christ's love and responsibility while trusting His sovereign care.

Transcript

"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me: you, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." Song of Solomon 8:12.

You are aware that these Canticles are responsive songs—that one sentence is uttered by Solomon and the next by Solyma, his spouse. We believe that in this "Song of Songs, which is Solomon's," we also hear Christ speaking to His Church, His bride, and the Church responding to His words of love in tones which His love has suggested to her. The fact that it is a responsive song sometimes renders it the more difficult to understand because it is not easy, in every case, to discover whether it is Solomon or Solyma—Christ or His Church—who is speaking. The first sentence in our text is just of that character. It may be Christ who says, "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." Or it may be His Church, who is saying, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." With regard to the latter part of the verse, we have no difficulty, for we can see, upon the very face of it, that it is addressed by the spouse, the bride, to her Divine Bridegroom, to whom she says "You, O Solomon, must have a thousand."

I. Let us look at the first sentence: "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." We have no difficulty in understanding that this vineyard is Christ's Church. She is not compared to a grove of trees—even of fruit-bearing trees—because there are many trees which are valuable, not only for their fruit, but also for their timber. And should they bring forth no fruit, they would still be of some value. Not so is it with the members of Christ's Church—they are like the vine, for the vine, if it brings forth no fruit, is fit for nothing, it

cumbers the ground. The Lord said to the Prophet Ezekiel, "What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel: the fire devours both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?" No, if it is fruitless, it is useless. It must bear fruit, or it is of no value whatever. Hence the Church is always compared to a vineyard because if she does not bring forth fruit to the Lord Jesus Christ, she is less useful even than an ordinary mercantile and commercial community. That mercantile community, or corporate body instituted for wise purposes, may further some useful design, but the Church is of no use whatever unless she brings forth the fruits of holiness and of gratitude to her Lord, her Divine Vinedresser. Better that she be not called a church at all than that she should pretend to be the Church of Christ and yet bring forth no fruit to His praise.

So we have no difficulty in understanding that the vineyard mentioned in the text is Christ's Church because it is so significantly a symbol of the body of Believers banded together in love to their Savior—and known by the name of "the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." We must, therefore, consider the opening sentence of our text as being, first, THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. And here you see at once two things—first, that Christ claims a special property in His Church and, secondly, that He has special regard and care for her—"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me."

The Master here, then, claims a special property in His Church. Twice does He mention that claim—"My vineyard, which is Mine," as if He meant to assert His rights and to maintain them against all comers, being ready to defend them in Heaven's High Court of Chancery, or before all the hosts of His enemies who might seek to snatch His inheritance from

Him. "Whatever is not Mine," says the Divine Lover, "My Church is. She is so Mine that if I gave up Lebanon, if I should renounce Bashan and give up all the rest of My possessions, I must retain Zion, My vineyard, My best-beloved." We know that the Church is Christ's by special bonds—not simply by creation. It is true that the Lord Jesus has created all His people, but then He does not claim them merely upon that ground—because all men are His by creation. No, the very devils in Hell are His in that sense and, therefore, He does not claim His Church simply by the right of being her Creator. Nor does He claim her merely by the prerogatives of Providence, for, in that sense, the cattle on a thousand hills are His and the lions of the forest and the young ravens which cry to Him, for He supplies their needs. All things are His by Providence, from the stars of Heaven down to the gnat in the summer's air, or the worm that conceals itself in the grass at eventide. But our Lord Jesus claims His Church by a far higher title than that of creation or Providence. Nor is the Church His merely by right of conquest. It is true that He has fought for His people and that they may be considered as the spoils that He has taken in war. He has rescued His people from the hand of him that was stronger than they—all of them, as He shall take them with Him into Heaven, may be looked upon as signs and wonders, trophies of what His strong arm has done in delivering them from their mighty and malignant foes. But, Beloved, Christ claims His Church by a better title even than this!

First, He claims the Church as His own by His Father's gift. You know that the Church is the property of all the three Persons of the holy and blessed Trinity. She is the Father's property by election. She is the Son's property by donation, passing from the hand of the Father to that of the Mediator. And, then, the Church is the Spirit's by His indwelling and inhabitation—so that all three of the Divine Persons have a right to the Church for some special office which they exercise towards her. So Christ claims His Church as His Father's gift, a love-token, a reward, a sign of the Father's favor and regard towards Him. He looks on His people as being dear, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of Him who gave them to His Son, to

be His forever and ever. They are His, then, by donation and, as such, since the Father gave them to Him, they are very, very precious in His sight!

Next, Christ's Church is His by purchase. There are some who say that all men are Christ's by purchase. But, Beloved, you and I do not believe in a sham redemption which does not redeem! We do not believe in a universal redemption which extends even to those who were in Hell before the Savior died and which includes the fallen angels as well as unrepentant men. We believe in an effectual redemption and can never agree with those who would teach us that Christ's blood was shed in vain. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it. He bought His own people with His blood. He purchased not the world's wide wilderness, but the "spot enclosed by Grace," the vineyard which His own right hand has planted! Dear, then, to the heart of Jesus is every vine, and every cluster of grapes in this vineyard, because He bought the whole of it with His blood! As Naboth, when asked to sell his vineyard to Ahab, answered the king, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you," and kept it even at the cost of his life! And do you think that our Lord Jesus will ever part with His vineyard which is not only His by inheritance from His Father, but also His by purchase—"not with corruptible things, as silver and gold"—but with His own most precious blood? On every leaf in that vineyard, His blood has fallen. The red juice that flows so freely from the clusters, when pressed, is but His blood in another form! If the soil of the vineyard is rich, it is because He has enriched it with His blood. If the vines bring forth plenteously, it is because of the care He has taken with them.

More than this, the Church is Christ's by one other tie, which, perhaps, makes it still dearer to Him. She is His bride, His spouse. Now, whatever a man may not have a right to, he certainly has a right to his own wife! Whatever legal quibbles may be raised about a piece of earth, about a man's title to his freehold property, to his own wife he certainly has a clear right and title. And Jesus looks into the eyes of His spouse, when He has redeemed her out of the hand of the enemy, and taken her unto Himself—when He has placed the jewels of His Grace about her neck, in her ears and on her hands, when He has adorned her with the robe of His own righteousness and made her beautiful in His beauty—He looks at her and He says, "You are Mine; you are Mine; and no one else can claim you. My spouse, you are no harlot, you shall not play the part of an adulteress with many lovers, for you are Mine, and no one but Myself can claim you. None but Myself shall partake of your embraces, none but Myself shall receive of the love of your heart."

By these three ties, then, O Church of Christ, you are His special property—and by each of these you are endeared to Him! Jesus sees in you, O Church of God, the mark of His Father's love-gift! He sees, too, the evidence of His own loving purchase and His espousal of you unto Himself, to be His forever and ever.

But we must pass on to notice that in the first sentence of our text, we are not only told about Christ's special right to His Church, but also about His special care and observation of her—"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me."

The Church is "before" Christ in the sense that He so loves her that He never has her out of His Presence. The vineyard is so dear to the Vinedresser that He never leaves it! He may sometimes hide Himself among the vines, but He is always close at hand, watching how they progress and delighting Himself with their fragrance and fruitfulness. The Bridegroom is never absent from His spouse, for He loves her too much to be separated from her. Is it not a sweet thought that Believers are always under the eyes of Christ? He would not be happy unless He had them continually before Him. His Church may be willing to endure His absence for a while, but He loves her so much that He cannot bear to be away from her. She

may grow so cold towards Him that His absence may seem, to her, to be but a small matter, but the decay of her love is not a little matter to Him. His love is strong as death and His jealousy is cruel as the grave, so He cannot bear to have her out of His sight even for a minute. He will always pour upon her the beams of His love and always fix upon her the affection of His whole heart.

The expression, "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me," may also mean that Jesus is always caring for it, as well as always loving it. There is never a moment when Christ ceases to care for His vineyard. He Himself said, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." What? Water it every moment? Keep it night and day? Yes, He will never neglect it. His word to His Church is, "Lo, I am with you always"—not merely for half a day, or for an hour in the day, leaving His ministers to care for them at other times—but, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Jesus still walks among the golden candlesticks. He does not light the candles and then leave them to burn by themselves—He walks among them and so keeps them from going out. "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." Christ is always in His Church, always caring for His Church, always bidding His Providence assist her agencies, always upholding her in her hours of trial, leading her into all Truth, instructing her sons and daughters, and making all her members "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

There is also in this expression, not only the sense of love and care, but also of knowledge—"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." Christ knows every vine in the vineyard and He knows all the fruit that is on each vine, and how much there was last year and how much there will be in years to come. Before there was a vine in that vineyard, Christ knew how many plants would be planted, where they would be planted, of what sort they would be and how much fruit they would bring forth. He did not find out by degrees what His inheritance was to be—He knew all about it long before the worlds were formed! There is nothing in His Church that is new to Him—He foreknew, and foresaw, and foreordained every single particle of mold that lies in that vineyard, every stone that is in its walls and every vine growing within them! Yes, and every leaf. Yes, and every particle of blight or mildew that falls upon a leaf—all has been settled and ordained, or foreknown and prepared for by the great Proprietor.

"My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." There is a sweet thought here for all who love the Savior. You, as His Church, and each one of you who are His people, are especially preserved by Him. Then, "why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God?" I tell you, Soul, that He sees you as much as if there were no others for His eyes to look upon! And He cares for you as infinitely and with as undivided a heart as if you were the only soul that He ever bought with His blood! If you were His only elect one, His only redeemed one, His only loved one, He could not deal with you more tenderly and more lovingly than He is dealing with you now! If you are Christ's, you are never behind His back—you are always before Him. He can always see you, though you cannot always see Him. When the eyes of your faith is dim, the eyes of His care is not. When your heart seems dead and cold, His heart is still hot with Infinite affection—and when you say, "My God has ceased to be gracious," you belie Him and slander Him! He is really manifesting His graciousness in another fashion. He has changed the manifestation of His purpose of love and mercy, but His purpose is the same as ever—to drench you with floods of mercy, to wash you with streams of Grace and to fertilize you till you shall be like that Eshcol "branch with one cluster of grapes," which was so large and weighty that "they bore it between two upon a staff!" No, more—till the great Vinedresser shall make of you such a vine as earth has scarcely seen as yet, and shall, therefore, have to transplant you to a better vineyard, even to the hill-top of Glory!

I think, then, if we regard the first sentence as the language of Christ, it is very sweet to hear Him say, "My vineyard, which is Mine, is before Me." My Brothers and Sisters, the deacons and elders of the church must always take comfort

from this thought. If there is anything in the church that grieves us, we must feel, "It is His vineyard, not ours. It is before Him, so He will know what to do with it." I am sure, dear Brothers, we would lay down our tasks if we had not our Master with us. I would not dare to be a minister and you would not dare to be church officers unless we felt that it was before Him. In your different districts, let the sick, the sorrowful, the backsliding all be carried before your God—and let all the members feel that although we are but feeble creatures to be the leaders of so great a host, yet that the church may grow and increase until we are not only fifteen hundred, but 15,000 if the Lord wills—and that the church would then be just as carefully looked after as it is now, for it would still be before Him! He who is the Vinedresser is just as able to care for His vines when they are most numerous as if there were only one—and that one had the whole of His attention!

II. Now, very briefly, I want you to regard this first sentence of our text as THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHURCH

ITSELF.

According to the 11th verse, "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon. He let out the vineyard unto keepers— everyone, for the fruit thereof, was to bring a thousand pieces of silver." So, dear Brothers and Sisters, everyone of us whom the Lord has brought to Himself, has a part of His vineyard to keep for Him. We do not sing, with Wesley—

"A charge to keep I have,

A God to glorify,

A never-dying soul to save,

And fit it for the sky,"

because we do not believe anything of the kind! We leave the work of saving our souls in higher hands than our own— but after our souls are saved, then we have a charge to keep and that charge is to publish the name and fame of Jesus to the utmost of our power—to seek to bring others under the sound of the Gospel—and to tell them what they must do to be saved.

There are a great many people who seem to forget that they have a vineyard of their own to keep. Or else if they remember it, they cannot say, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me," for they go about gazing on other people's vineyards instead of keeping their eyes fixed upon their own. They say, "Look at So-and-So's vineyard. I don't think he trims his vines in the new style." I usually notice that those persons who have such wonderful plans of their own and who are always finding fault with other people's plans, never do anything except find fault. I like the deacons and elders of the church, and the teachers in the Sunday school to have no other plan than this—to do all the good they can and to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. When they are doing that, let other people not interfere with them, but themselves do all the good that they can. It is always well when a man has his work before him, knows what he is going to do and then goes straight at it. There are far too many people gadding about to see what others are doing and to find out their plans and methods of working. Let me tell you, Brothers and Sisters, that the best way

to succeed is to have no plan but this— "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." When I see the members of a church laying down a multiplicity of rules, I know that they are getting themselves into a multiplicity of troubles. If they will but leave rules and regulations to come up when they are needed, they will find them when they need them. Let every man who has the Spirit of God within him, set about the work which he is called to do. Let him attend to the portion of the vineyard which is before him and try to get his thousand pieces of silver out of his own portion—and not out of another's. There is always a set of grumblers about who think they could preach better and manage Sunday schools better than anybody else. They are the people who generally do nothing at all.

I sometimes receive anonymous letters asking me to amend my style in this way or the other. I know where they come from—they are either from people who are very idle, to whom the penny post gives occupation for their idle hours—or from those who think they can bring themselves to our notice by their communications. I usually thrust all such letters into the fire. Now, if these people, instead of wasting their time in that way, would write a letter with good sound Gospel teaching in it to some poor sinner who wants to know the way of salvation. Or if, instead of wasting their pennies upon me—for I think I can do better without their advice than with it—they would bestow them upon some poor crossing-sweeper, they would do more good! It is always the grumbling souls who are the idle souls—but the men who get the thousand pieces of silver out of their vineyard have their own work so constantly before them that they have no leisure to look upon the work of other people with the view of finding fault with it! They know right well that they have no right to interfere between other men and their Master and that, to their own Master, each one must stand or fall.

I pray that this church, and every member of it, may always be able to say, in the words of our text, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." I am not responsible for my brother, but I am responsible for myself. I will always keep my own work before my eyes. I will go about it and do what I have to do just as if there were nobody else in the world to do anything. I will work as hard as if I were the only Christian alive and, at the same time, I will always comfort myself with the thought that my feeble labors are not all that are being rendered to the Master, but that there are more than seventy thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal and who are serving the one living and true God! I will, while I am working, wish to every other worker greater success than I have myself. If I see any prospering more than I am, I will bless God for it, but I will still say, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." However well my neighbor is getting on, that is no reason why I should slacken my efforts—and however badly another may succeed, that is no reason why I should neglect my own duty in order to chide him. "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me."

The next time you are tempted to complain of some Brother or Sister, check yourself and say, "It is my vineyard which is before me. There are some ugly thistles in it and some great nettles over there in the corner. I have not trimmed my vines this summer. I have not taken the little foxes which spoil the vines, but, from now on I will attend more diligently to 'my vineyard, which is mine.'" A blessed way of keeping from finding fault with other people is to look well to your own vineyard.

III. I will now turn to the second part of our text which is THE LANGUAGE OF THE CHURCH TO HER GREAT PROPRIETOR LORD. "You, O Solomon, must have a thousand"—"must have a thousand." Whatever others have, our Lord must have Solomon's portion—"and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." So, then, in the first place, the fruit of the vineyard belongs to Christ, but, in the second place, both Christ and His Church agree to reward the keepers of the vineyard and to let them have their two hundred.

First, then, all the fruit of the vineyard belongs to Christ and He must have it. Dwell on that word, "must," and let each one of you feel the blessed necessity. There are some churches where if they have any fruit, they keep it to themselves. The Word has free course and is glorified—sinners are saved, saints are comforted—and then they take the honor and glory to themselves. Other churches there are which give all the glory to the minister. The work succeeds well, everything prospers and then the keeper of the vineyard has the thousand pieces of silver. There are other churches which give all the glory to the rich people in their midst. "Everything will go well," they say, "while the squire attends with us, while Mr. So-and-So is one of our deacons and Mr. So-and-So is so generous a subscriber to our funds." So that, there, also, the thousand pieces of silver are given to man. Ah, but that must not be, Brothers and Sisters. Stand back you intruders! We dare not give you so much as a farthing's worth of the fruit of this vineyard! The vineyard is Christ's. He purchased it with His own life's blood, so the fruit is all His and He must have it all—none of it must be given to anyone else. Open wide your hand, O thief, and give up the fruit you have taken unto yourself! We demand it of you imperatively! Give it all up, Sir, for Jesus Christ must have it all, even as Solomon had the thousand pieces of silver.

But, Brothers and Sisters, it sometimes happens that in a church there is no glory at all. The church is so badly off, the congregation is so small, there is such an absence of zeal and so very feeble has the spirit of prayer become, that there is no glory to be given to anyone! What shall we say to such a church as that? "Brethren, do not rest satisfied with such a state of things as that. Do not say, 'Solomon must be content with a hundred.' No, He must have His thousand." I want all the members of this church to feel that our Solomon, our Lord Jesus Christ, must have His thousand pieces of silver! We must not allow one year to go below the mark of the previous one. If Christ received Glory through us last year, He must have as much or more Glory through us this year. If we had a revival in years gone by, we must have a revival now. If Solomon had a thousand pieces of silver from us once, we must never let our tribute to Him be any less. Souls must still be brought to the Savior, even should—

"The wide world esteem it strange, Gaze and admire, and hate the change."

The ministry must still be powerful, the Prayer Meetings must continue to be full of faith and fervor, the members must keep on striving together in love for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. His Kingdom must come and His will must be done on earth as it is in Heaven! We will not put in an, "if," or a, "perhaps"—it must be so and we will not be satisfied unless it is. "You, O Solomon, must have a thousand."

Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon the past year, we find that we have not had as much of the Master's Presence, and have not done as much for Him as in years gone by? Shall we say that we will make it up next year? Oh, no! That will not do! Our Solomon must have His thousand this year! Shall He have less than the stipulated rental for His vineyard? Shall I contribute less, today, to my Lord's honor than I did yesterday? Shall I be less zealous, less useful, less laborious? Shall the minister preach less than he did? Shall the elders visit less than they used to do? Will you, church members, pray less and serve Christ less? If you love Him less, you will do so. But, Brothers and Sisters, I trust that you do not love Him less and I am sure that you owe Him more—you are plunging deeper and deeper into debt to Him every day! He is continually revealing to you more and more of the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths of His love that passes knowledge! He is always leading you further and yet still further into the mysteries of His Kingdom and teaching you to know Himself which is much more than knowing mere doctrine.

So I ask you—Can you love Him less than you did in the years gone by? Will you pray to Him less earnestly and praise Him less fervently? No, Brothers and Sisters, I think that as Christians we shall unanimously cry, "As we come nearer to You, O Lord, make us more fruitful! And as years increase upon us, let it not be said that we do less for our Master at 50 than we did at twenty-five." Let not people be able to say concerning any of us, "He ran well—what hindered him?" Let not the Spirit of God have to chide any of us and say, "You have left your first love." Let us insist upon it that as we began, so we will continue, or, rather, that we will not simply go on as we began, but that we will seek to go "from strength to strength" until everyone of us shall appear in Zion before our God! I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the undiminished beauty and the undivided love of your Lord, that you love Him no less than you did in the day of your espousal to Him! O you keepers of the vineyard, my Brothers in the ministry, and you who go out from this church to preach the Word of God—if you gave Him glory last year. If you loved the souls of men. If you knew how to wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant in months gone by—you must do the same now! You must not do less than you used to do! You must not preach less earnestly, you must not pray less fervently—but rather you must love Him more and serve Him better! May the Spirit of God enable you to do so!

But, alas, there are some of you who never give our King Solomon anything! Perhaps you are the people of God—at least you profess to be so—but what are you doing for Him? I do not think there are many members of my own church of whom I have cause to complain, but there may be some. Perhaps you have been converted for years, yet you do not know that you were ever the means of bringing a soul to Jesus. You say that you love the Savior, but what are you doing for Him? It is not doing anything for Him merely to come here on the Sabbath or on week-nights, to listen to His Word—there are other and better ways of showing your love to the Savior than by simply coming to hear another man talk to you about Him. Oh, if I have one idle member in the church who talks of loving Christ, but does nothing for Him, I would look that member in the face if I knew which one it was and I would say that faith without works is dead—that the love which does not show itself in practical piety is a pretended love, a painted flame—and not the gift of Heaven!

I feel that I must also say that if we are all doing something for Christ, we are none of us doing enough for Him. I feel, sometimes, Beloved, as if I wished that I had a thousand tongues with which to tell the story of His Grace—and as if I longed that each day were a year and each year a century in which I could keep on telling of His love! Often, when the sermon is over, I chide myself because I seem to have spoken so coldly of the theme that demands a tongue of fire. I have painted so badly that lovely face which, if you could but see it, would so captivate your hearts that you would never want to see anything else. Yet I can honestly say, from my very heart, that I desire to give my Lord and Master His thousand pieces of silver—

"I'll praise my Maker with my breath, And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my nobler powers."

I cannot stop preaching, Brothers and Sisters, and you cannot cease praying—we cannot, any of us, if we truly love our Lord, give up working for Him! I am sure that if we should live to be so very old, and so very feeble, that we could hardly get outside our own door, we would still try to serve Him to the very last—we would find some means of praising Him even on our dying bed.

Now I will conclude with a few remarks upon the last words of the text—"and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred," which means that the keepers of the vineyard are to receive a reward. Christ's ministers are to receive the love,

regard and esteem of His people for His sake. Joseph Irons put this thought very prettily. I forget His exact words, but they are to the effect that Christ's ministers really do get their two hundred. They have 100 while they are preaching, in their own enjoyment of the sweetness of the mystery which they open up to others—and then they have another hundred in the success of their ministry—in the joy of seeing sinners saved, harlots reclaimed and drunks converted. Our Master is a blessed Paymaster, for He pays us while we are doing His work, in the work itself! He pays us when the work is done and then He says that He has only begun to pay us, for, when the whole of our work is over, here, we shall enter into His joy and receive the fullness of our reward!

I may, perhaps, have some members of country churches present who are not kind to their minister. I can speak plainly upon this point because my people are almost too kind to me. But I say to members of other churches—Take care of your minister, for you will never get a blessing unless you are kind to him whom God has set over you. If your minister does not have his two hundred—that is, if he has not your love and respect, and if you do not give him sufficient wages to keep him above his needs—you cannot expect the Spirit of God to work with you. I believe there are scores of churches in which no good is ever done for this very reason. God says, "You starve My minister, so I will starve you. You find fault with him and quarrel with him—then I will find fault with you and quarrel with you. There shall be no blessing upon you—you shall be like Gilboa—there shall be neither dew nor rain upon you."

I sometimes hear sad stories of what is done in some churches to the minister of Christ. He is looked upon as the drudge and slave of the community. Some self-important, pompous man lords it over both pastor and people—and that poor man, even when he is preaching the everlasting Gospel, often has to wonder how he will get his next coat in which he is to appear in the pulpit. The one he has is nearly out at the elbows, but, if he were to hint that another is needed, he would receive notice to go elsewhere. They would tell him that he was a mere hireling, looking for loaves and fishes—as if there were either loaves or fishes to be gotten out of such people as they are! I have often heard it remarked that the minister has a certain sum paid to him, but the great mass of the people never think, "He is our pastor. We must try to cheer his heart and make glad his spirit." This state of things ought not to be and until it is altered, the Lord will have a quarrel with those who act thus!

I will say no more upon that point, but repeat that our great Solomon must have His thousand. The minister will cry, even though he is starving, "Solomon must have His thousand." I was once travelling through Hertfordshire and stayed the night at a certain place and the minister said to me, "Will you preach here this evening, Sir?" "Yes," I replied, "I should like an opportunity of talking to your people if you will give them notice." I went into the minister's house and I found that they only gave him 13 shillings a week and I saw that his coat was threadbare. When I went into the pulpit, I thought, "I will give these people something"—and I did, too, I can assure you! And after that, I gave him something and they gave him something—and we just managed to contribute together enough to get him a new suit of livery, as he called it—and I do not think that Brother has been quite as low down in the depths of poverty as he was then!

There are scores of places in the country where ministers are treated as that poor man was, but it ought not to be so. The minister of Christ must have some regard, some esteem, some honor in his church, but, after all, our Lord Jesus Christ must have His thousand. My own people may take home to themselves the first part of my discourse, but you big farmer deacons must take the latter part to yourselves. Don't you go to sleep tonight until you have thought, "What can we do for that poor dear man who is to preach for us next Sunday?" As for my own members, you can think about the first part. Let it be your joy to know that

the vineyard is Christ's vineyard and that it always lies before Him—and let each one of you seek to give to Jesus His thousand pieces of silver—all the honor, the glory, the praise, the love and the service that you can render to Him from the beginning of the year to the end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM47.

Verses 1-5. O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet

One of our sacred poets has written—

"All His work and warfare done, He into His Heaven is gone, And beside His Father's Throne, Now is pleading for His own"

—but, not merely is He "beside His Father's Throne," He is with Him sitting upon the throne—and waiting until His foes are made His footstool.

6-9. Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing you praises with understanding. God reigns over the heathen: God sits upon the Throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted. There are some in these days who have, according to their own confession, cast off the God of Abraham. They do not believe in the Jehovah who is revealed in the Old Testament—they are like those of whom Moses said, "They sacrificed to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." But as for us, we still delight to sing—

"The God of Abraham praise Who reigns enthroned above Ancient of everlasting days, And God of love! Jehovah, great I AM! By earth and Heaven confess. I bow, and bless the sacred name Forever blest!"

"But the God of Abraham is very stern," says someone. Assuredly He is! He is terrible in the majesty of His justice! Yet we worship and adore Him for that very reason. No effeminate deity such as modern thought has invented, has even an atom of our admiration, much less of our adoration! But the glorious God of the Sinai thunders who is equally terrible as the God of Justice on Calvary—this God, who, nevertheless, is Love, our hearts adore and worship!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/christ-s-love-for-his-vineyard/>

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