

A Prayer for Charity

Jeremy Taylor

Anglican · Post-Reformation · Exegesis

STROMATA 92

Downloaded from *The Stromata* (thestromata.com). Free for personal, educational, and ministry use.

INTRODUCTION

A devotional lyric from the seventeenth-century Anglican divine best known for *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, composed in the rhymed octosyllabic couplets favored by the devotional poets of his generation. Taylor, who preached through the upheavals of the English Civil War and lost three sons in quick succession, here catalogues the healing miracles of the Gospels, the blind, the lame, the leper, the mute, the demoniac, and turns each into an argument for fraternal forgiveness. The poem belongs to the same Caroline tradition of meditative verse that produced Herbert and Vaughan, where doctrine is worked out in measured rhyme rather than argued in prose. Read it slowly, as a prayer rehearsed aloud: the petition does not arrive until the final lines, and everything before is preparation.

Full of Mercy, full of Love,
Look upon us from above;
Thou who taught'st the blind mans night
To entertain a double light,
Thine and the dayes (and that thine too)
The Lame away his Crutches threw,
The parched Crust of Leprosie
Return'd unto its infancy:
The Dumb amazed was to hear
His own unchain'd tongue strike his ear:
Thy powerful Mercy did even chase
The Devil from his usurp'd place,
Where thou thy self shouldst dwell, not he.

O let thy love our pattern be;
Let thy Mercy teach one Brother
To forgive and love another,
That copying thy Mercy here,
Thy Goodness may hereafter reare
Our Souls unto thy Glory, when
Our Dust shall cease to be with men. Amen.

Source: The Golden Grove, Jeremy Taylor. London: Printed by J.F. for R. Royston at the Angel in Ivie-lane, 1655. Text sourced from Project Canterbury (anglicanhistory.org).

Transcribed from the 1655 first edition by Project Canterbury (Anglican History Project, anglicanhistory.org). Taylor composed The Golden Grove during his years of enforced exile in Wales under the Interregnum, when Anglican worship had been suppressed and he was living under the protection of Richard Vaughan, Earl of Carbery, at the estate from which the book takes its name. The text is in the public domain; Taylor died in 1667. No translator is involved; this is Taylor's own English.

<https://www.thestromata.com/texts/a-prayer-for-charity>