

JAMES ARCHER SERMONS [14]

Matthew 13:25

Sermon for 5th Sunday after the Epiphany

Venit inimicus ejus, & [et] super seminavit zizania in medio tritici.

His Enemy came, and Sowed Tares^[1] upon the Wheat.

The tares which the Gospel makes mention of, very naturally represent to us the bad |evil| sayings |speeches| that are mixt in Conversation with the good, which almost always operate the same effect in the spiritual order as weeds do in the natural, I mean that in like manner as weeds choke the good seed and hinder it from coming |springing| up, so ill placed and scandalous sayings |speeches| do not fail to choke in the heart all the good sentiments which it had conceived by hearing edifying discourses. As there is nothing ~~in the world~~ more frequent in the world than conversations, so there are not more dangerous occasions of offending God, of ruining ones neighbour and of damning oneself |[?] unerring] eternal misery|. ~~This then engages me I~~ undertake this day Christian Auds [Auditors] to speak to you on the Subject of Conversations, ~~to cause you to observe take notice of~~ in order that you may be able to discover the most ordinary defects and great number of sins that are therein committed without fear or scruple. How happy should I be, and you would be also be D^r Christians, if I could, if not entirely destroy |eradicate|, at least moderate this strange itching |propensity| to talk which daily augments the great load but then you will carry to the dreadful

[¹ “Tares” – A species of vetch. In the Douay-Rheims Bible, the Latin “zizania” is translated as “cockle.”]

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judgment seat of God! Behold my design in a few words. The fruits of good Conservation, will be the subject of the first ~~p~~ part of my discourse and the evils that proceed from from [word duplicated] bad Conversation the matter of the second.

The day on which the Saviour of the world rose again, two of his disciples went to Emaus a town not far from Jerusalem.^[2] Being on the road they entertained themselves about what their master had suffer'd in ~~his death and~~ Passion and at his death; & at the same instant |time| he joined |associated| himself with them without their knowing him, and asked them of what they were talking. They told him the subject of their discourse. Then he explicated to them several passages of the holy Scripture, where mention was made of the death and Resurrection of the Messiah. He opened their understanding |mind| to understand them and inflamed their hearts with his divine love. These happy Disciples by their holy |pious| conversation drew Jesus Christ in to their Company; they were replenished with heavenly light by his divine instructions; and were animated with the most ardent love of God. Behold Christian Aud. what will happen to you in your Conversations if they be pious and truly Christian; you will merit to have Jesus in your

[² The precise location of the city of Emmaus remains uncertain. According to Luke 24:16 (DRB) it was “sixty furlongs from Jerusalem,” approximately seven and a half miles distant.]

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~~Company, who~~ in the midst of you; he will enlighten your undersatnding [understanding], and he will inflame your hearts, by the good words you shall say |speak| or hear. Three great Benefits of holy |pious| Conversation, which ought to render ~~them most~~ it very dear to us.

I say in the first place that God is always present in good |pious| Conversations. He himself hath said |assured| it. Where two, or three are gathered Luke C.14^[3] together in my name, there I am in the midst of them. The disciples of Emaus did not know that their Divine Master was with them, because, as the holy Scripture tells us, their eyes were hindered, that Matth C18^[4] they should not know him; never theless they had the happiness to enjoy his Company. Altho' you do not see Jesus in your pious Conversation, he does not fail to be in the midst of you. What a happiness! What a favour! What would you not do D^r Breth. [Brethren] to see Jesus Christ conversing among men as he did heretofore during his mortal life? Though ~~you should~~ it were necessary to sacrifice you[r] goods you[r] health and repose, you would not hesitate a moment, you would not [...] regret your expensces [expenses] nor your pain. Now you may have the benefit of being with Jesus your loving Saviour without any cost, without giving yourselves the least trouble, you have only to enter tain one another with pious talk |conversation|, with edifying discourse, and you are assured that Jesus will be in the midst of you. He hath promised it, and you cannot doubt thereof. How much would you not think yoursel [yourself/yourselfes]

[³ Marginalia: "Luke C.14" Archer has placed this note adjacent to the incorrect quotation (see quote below) and erred in the citation. See Luke 24:16.]

[⁴ Marginalia: "Matth C.18" Archer has placed this note adjacent to the incorrect quotation (see quote above). See verse 20.]

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honoured with the visit of a King, with whom you might speak familiarly, and have the permission of asking the |of him| the greatest favours?

It depends upon yourselves to have the Company of the King of Kings, of the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, before whom the greatest Monarchs are but dust and ashes; you may converse familiarly with him as one friend does with another, you may confidently ask for any thing you stand in need of; he will not refuse you. ~~You will be then~~ How imprudent ~~and [?~~ ~~insensible]~~ to then & regardless must you be of your own interest if you will not make use so every means of procuring yourselves such great benefits |blessings|.

But by pious conversations you will not only in a particular manner enjoy the presence of your B. [Blessed] Saviour but he will enlighten your minds as he did those of his disciples who were going to Emaus. He will make you comprehend the holy truths of Religion. He will ~~serve himself with you employ~~ make use of you to enlighten ~~others wh~~ those who |with whom you| shall converse holily with you, and the others in like manner to instruct you in your obligations. Yes D^r Christians, ~~I dare ascertain, that I affirm it~~ I will ventur [venture] to affirm that| there is no occasion in which people can instruct and correct one another, with so great facility, and more fruit |effect|, than in pious and familiar conversations. ~~In sermons and and public instructions they |some [...] people| do not understand~~

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In Sermons and public instructions, often times people do not hear or do not understand what is said: There are persons of a less penetrating understanding who go from them ~~the same~~ as the [they] came[;] that is[,] knowing little or nothing of what has been said. Moreover it happens but too often that ~~the corrections which the ministers of the Lord employ use for the conversion of Sinners~~ are people attribute and apply to others, instead of themselves, the corrections which the Ministers of the Lord use for the conversion of Sinners; and thus they reap no benefit from the holy word |word of God|. But in particular conversations they are parents friends and neighbours, who with freedom communicate their thoughts and sentiments to one another, who give each other advice, and use charitable admonitions, which penetrate ~~to the bottom of~~ |and [word not stricken]| the heart: in these occasions if they should not at first understand what the others say, or do not ~~far well~~ perfectly hear them, ~~he cause~~ they cause them to repeat it, they propose their doubts and difficulties and are thus very usefully [usefully] instructed. Fathers and Mothers, Masters and Mistres[ses,] Heads of families, it is here, that you may acquit yourselves of one of your most principal |essential| duties, towards your Children, your servants, and those under your Charge. I mean of your indispensable obligation of instructing them. What more easy than to assemble them on Sundays and Feasts |Holy days|, and [? during] the long winter nights, and to make them some pious lecture of a Catechism, of the lives of Saints, or of some other book of devo=

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tion, according to their Capacity, or to make them repeat the most essential articles of their Christian Doctrine, and the obligations of their state, and at the same time to give them advice, and salutary corrections |admonitions| if necessary. There is not question here of a simple Counsel; it is a very strict precept; ~~and if you are wanting herein St Paul declares to you from the part of God, that you~~ For S^t Paul 1st Timothy C. 5 declares to you on the part of God that if any man take not care of his own, and especially of his own house, he hath denied the Faith and is worse than an infidel. But perhaps instead of this good entertainment of which we are speaking, you even suffer them in your presence ~~to come out with dangerous~~ to use bad words, to sing immodest songs, and to hold obscene and impure discourses, or that of backbiting and calumny |detraction|: Perhaps you are so miserable |wicked| as yourself as to give yourselves to set them a fatal example of thereof. You complain afterwards that your Children and servants are libertines, rebellious, and disobedient; and too often debauched and scandalous: be not surprised thereat; attribute it to your own fault. You have let them always follow their own inclinations; you have not corrected nor chastised them; you have entirely neglected their salvation; far from edifying them, you have been a scandal to them: Now they are become ~~in a manner~~ incorrigible, they cause you to wither |pine| away with vexation; ~~it is~~ tis a just punishment of your negligence. Beg of our Lord that these disorders may not

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continue any longer, that they may not be the cause of your eternal damnation |perdition| as well as of theirs, which will infallibly be if you do not put a stop to them.

The third benefit of good conversation is to feel the heart touched by our Lord. The disciples of whom I have been speaking at length knew their Master; but immediately disappeared to exercise their faith. Then they said to each other: Was not our heart burning in us, while he talked in the way, and opened to us the scriptures? The same thing will happen to you in the holy conversations which you shall hold together. Jesus will touch your heart by means of some word you shall hear or say, he will permit that some sayings of [? words ...] spoken by a parent, a friend, by a person whom you esteem shall penetrate to the bottom of your Soul; and that will suffice to procure your conversion, and draw you out of the abyss of sin if you have the unhappiness to be there, or if you be just[,] to animate you to persevere in piety. How many examples have we seen of great sinners being converted in such occasions. Out of vast number I will recount one: A sensual man was visited by pious friend, who having touched his bed which was very soft said to him: my friend remember this sentence of of [word duplicated] the Prophet Isaih[.] In a short time worms will be your covering, & corruption your bed. The night of following

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these words came into his mind and so lively touched him, that he could not sleep. The next day after many serious reflections, he took the resolutiof [resolution] of quitting the world and of leading a penitent life. Happy words which were the source & principle of his eternal happiness.

By holy conversations people acquit themselves of many essential duties towards one another. They instruct, edify and comfort one another, they animate one another to good and withdraw one another from evil, they give each other salutary corrections and charitable advice[.] It was thus that the servants of God at all times conversed with one another, all those who had an earnest desire of their their [word duplicated] salvation, and of that of their neighbour, and above all the primitive Christians whose conversations were so holy.

They assembled to gether for no other end than to praise the Lord, and to entertain themselves, with pious discourses. They very carefully banished from their conversations not only all dangerous and disedifying speeches, capable of scandalizing the weak, but moreover all unprofitable discourses, all idle words, and all those that appeared capable of ~~giving causing any stain [...]] to~~ tarnishing Christian virtues.

You perhaps will say that you have not studied, that you do not find yourselves capable to talk ~~of p~~ about piety and

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devotion, and to instruct others. I answer you that, when there is question of temporal affairs, of the interests of the present life, you can speak well enough, you can be even eloquent and able to find the strong[est] expressions, and that you can if you will do the same for your spiritual interests. I answer you again that it is not necessary to be very learned to say good things. For ~~what is there question of? have you to do. You have only to~~ is there question of? there is question of calling to mind what you have so often have heard preached, what you have read yourselves, or heard others read, what you have learnt in your Catechisms and familiar discourses; there is

question of the principal truths of religion, which you cannot be ignorant of without a crime, and without exposing your salvation. Is it very difficult for example to talk of the Death and Passion of our Lord, of the four last things, of the Sacraments, of the beauty of virtue and heinousness of sin; to enter tain yourselves upon the Commandments of God and of the Church, of the duties of your state and such like which you ought not to be ignorant of; and if you have the unhappiness to be ignorant of them, you must be instructed in them, and you cannot be more effectually [...] than in good conversations.

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You will tell me again that you cannot always be talking of serious matters, I agree with you; I know that the mind must have relaxation, that it is not always time to be serious; and that you may sometimes entertain yourselves with recreating and diverting things. But this must always be on condition that there be nothing against piety, nothing that may attack the virtue of purity, neither calumny nor detraction, nor any other speech or words opposite to |against| charity or good manners. If it be so, you will add, what then must we entertain ourselves about in joyful conversations? What! You know not how to speak without offending God, without attacking your neighbours; without saing [saying] things repugnant to modesty and other christian virtues? You are then very unhappy indeed. It were much better that you had never had the use of speech than you should employ it to your damnation. But with how many different subjects may you not fill up these sort of conversations? Talk of your temporal affairs, of your business of your work. You have before your eyes the works of the Almighty, which are a large field to entertain yourselves in; The Sky[,] the heavenly bodies[,] the Animals, the plants. Call to mind the events that you have been witness to, or that you have heard your

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parents tell of, and so many other such like things, which do not cause prejudice to any one nor ~~hurt your~~ wound the conscience. Observe faithfully this rule which I am going to ~~give you~~ lay down to you. When ~~there is~~ you are about to say some thing think a little whether you should like to have said it at the hour of death. There is not a stronger curb to restrain the impetuous motion of the tongue than this salutary [? salutary/statutory] thought. You have now seen the advantages of good conversations. We should now proceed to see the evils that are caused by wicked conversations, but as my discourse would be too much protracted ~~to too great a length~~ if I should now ~~detail these evi~~ enter into that copious detail which this ~~subject re~~ important subject would require. I think it more proper to [...] it ~~untill a nother time~~ defer it till next Sunday. ~~In the mean~~ Hence In the mean while I must exort [exhort] you D^f Chris. to entertain yourselves in pious conversations in order to obtain the company of Jesus in this life and you will not fail eternally to enjoy his blessed company in the next. Which I heartily wish you[.] In the name of the Father &c. [etc.]