

*One Parson Haberdyne was taken at Hartley Row, Hampshire, about 1600, by highwaymen who took his money and then made him, for their amusement, preach them a sermon.*

*This is what he said;*

I greatly marvel that any man will presume to dispraise thievery, and think the doers thereof to be worthy of death, considering it us a thing that cometh near unto virtue, being used of many in all countries, and commended and allowed of God Himself. The which things, because I cannot compendiously show unto you at so short a warning and an so sharp a weather, I shall desire you, gentle audience of thieves, to take an good part these things that at this time cometh to my mind, not misdoubting that you of your good knowledge are able to add much more unto it than this which I shall now utter unto you.

First, fortitude and stoutness of courage and also boldness of mind is commended of some men to be a virtue; which being granted who is it then that will not judge thieves to be virtuous? For they be of all men most stout and hardy and most without fear. For thievery is a thing most usual among all men; for not only you that be here present, but many other in divers places, both men and women and children, rich and poor, are daily of thus faculty (as the hangman of Tyburn can testify).

And that it us allowed of God Himself, as it us evident in many stories of the Scriptures; for if you look in the whole course of the Bible, you shall find that thieves have been beloved of God. For Jacob, when he came out of Mesopotamia, did steal his uncle Laban's kids. The same Jacob did also steal his brother Esau's blessing. And yet God said "I have chosen Jacob and refused Esau". The children of Israel when they came out of Egypt, did steal the Egyptians' jewels of silver and gold as God commanded them so to do. David, in the days of Abiazar the high priest, did come into the temple and did steal the hallowed bread. And yet God said "David is a man after mine own heart".

Christ himself, when he was here on the earth did take an ass and a colt that was none of his; and you know that God said of him. "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I delight".

Thus you may see that God delighteth in thieves. But most of all I marvel that men can despise you thieves, whereas in all points (almost) you be like unto Christ himself. For Christ had no dwelling-place: no more have you. Christ went from town to town; and so do you. Christ was laid wait upon in many places; and so are you. Christ at the length was caught, and so shall you be. He was brought before the judges; and so shall you be. He was condemned; and so shall you be. He was hanged; and so shall you be.

He went down into Hell; and so shall you do. Marry, in this one thing you differ from him, for he rose again and ascended into heaven; and so shall you never do, without God's great mercy, which God grant you! To whom with the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*They returned his money to him, and gave him in addition a payment of 2s for the sermon, with which to buy a drink.*

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