

*So am I as the rich, whose blessed key
 Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,
 The which he will not every hour survey,
 For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure.
 Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
 Since coming in the long year, set
 Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
 Or captain jewels in the carcanet.
 So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
 Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
 To make some special instant special blessed
 By new unfolding his imprison'd pride.*

*Blessed are you, whose worthiness gives scope;
 Being had to triumph, being lacked to hope.*

Now, having returned to the proximity of his friend, the speaker, in an effusion of joy, compares himself to a wealthy man who can, with a key, open up his sweet treasure. Though he can act at will, he does not want to gaze at it too often for that would dull the pleasure. The speaker supports this idea by comparing it to having feast days infrequently. Such days, in turn, are compared to precious jewels set at wide intervals, or to conspicuous gems on ornamental collars known as carcanets. (l. 8)

The string of similes continues into the sestet. Just as precious is the time that keeps the friend in the speaker's chest. Or it is like a valuable garment hidden away in a wardrobe, something to be brought out on very special occasions and unfolded to beholders as a matter of pride.

The irony of all these riches being described so enthusiastically is that they can be enjoyed best only for a short period of time. Is the speaker simply making the best of his limited opportunities to be with his friend? The last phrase of the sonnet reveals the truth: although the friend's virtue ("worthiness," l. 13) makes bliss possible, its absence leaves only hope. The friend is blessed and the speaker is lucky if he can share in the glory for a moment, but if the speaker is denied the opportunity, all is lost but hope. His position may be like that of a wealthy man, but it is brief and perhaps precarious.