

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

Luke xix.

(Synopsis of a discourse delivered by the Editor before the annual meeting of the Disciples at Lot 48, on the second Lord's day of June, 1896).

(Concluded.)

The order of the universe is receiving life from God and communicating that life to others. Whatever receives life and ceases to communicate it, opposes this order and dies. This is true of grass, of trees and animals. Jesus gives life to men that they may bear fruit by extending that life to others. His people and his church are left on earth for that purpose. When they bear much fruit he purges and acknowledges them as his true disciples; when they cease to communicate his life to others, they are cut off from the living vine to wither and die.

The gospel order is not the lost seeking the Saviour; but the Saviour seeking the lost. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost—to seek them first and then to save them. He knew the lost would never seek him, and he came to seek them; and for this purpose he lived and died. When leaving the world he solemnly charged his disciples to go everywhere and seek the lost that he might save them. His faithful servants lived and died in the grand work with the clear understanding that those whom they found and Jesus saved would carry the gospel to others who were unsaved. God has been pleased to send the gospel by his servants to us. We would never have gone after the gospel, but would have perished in our sins. It was brought to us.

And what argument or what excuses can we have in keeping it from the lost and dying,

"Shall we whose souls are lighted
By wisdom from on high
Shall we to men benighted,
The lamp of life deny?"

How reasonable, and just and binding, are the words of the dear Saviour—"Freely ye have received, freely give."

But Jesus, as no other teacher, knows all things and all times. The past, the present and the future are all alike to Him. And "the high and the lofty One who inhabiteth eternity" closes the parable with a minute description of the nobleman's return. Having gained the kingdom he comes and calls his servants to whom he had given the pounds to ascertain how much every man had gained by trading. The first came and said—"Lord thy pound hath gained ten pounds." Mark his humility. He does not say my diligence hath gained ten pounds; but "thy pound." Those who labor most and suffer most in the Saviour's cause, think least of their service, and are ready to say—"We are unprofitable servants," but admire the power and glory of the gospel of Christ and give him all the glory. "Thy pound hath gained ten pounds."

And he said unto him: "Well, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little have thou authority over ten cities." The servant who had kept himself and his labors in the shade, the king thus acknowledges before the hierarchy of the universe—"Well, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." His watchfulness and care to increase his Lord's money to the worldly minded seemed small indeed, and, to himself, it seemed so very little he did not care to speak of it, but it was carefully recorded in God's book of remembrance, and because of it the king sets him over ten cities.

From this we learn that the joy of eternity is not idleness but blessed employment. Man was not made to be idle, and when God creates many anew in Christ Jesus it is unto good works ordained before of God that he should walk in them. The blessedness of working for Christ on earth is a foretaste of heavenly joy, and the training thus received is a discipline for that employment which will ever increase with the growing capabilities of the redeemed.

The second (servant) came saying "Lord thy pound hath gained five pounds." And he said likewise to him, "Be thou also over five cities."

We are not told why it was that the second servant had gained only five pounds while the first had gained ten. It is enough to know that each one had the approval of his Lord and was rewarded according to his work. Although the vessels of glory shall differ in size all will be completely filled with the joy of their Lord. Efficiency in a servant is great but faithfulness is greater.

Another (servant) came saying, "Lord behold here is thy pound which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee because thou art an austere man; thou takest up that thou layedst not down and reapest that thou didst not sow." Here is *egotism* in perfection. He lauds self and insults the king. I am not a spendthrift I did not waste thy pound. Here is all you gave me or can claim of me. I kept thy pound laid up in a napkin. I knew thee to be austere and unjust, etc., and was determined to keep clear of thee and now return thee thine own. We see how prominent the *I* is in this address while it does not once occur in that of first and second, and how wonderful the power that causes this servant to express before that tribunal the rebellious mutterings of his inmost heart. How many in the church and out of it cherish in their heart the great argument of the wicked servant, although they may have no thought of expressing it on the day of judgment; viz. that God requires men to do what he has not given them the power to do. "Thou art an austere man reaping where thou didst not sow." The enemy will use all his subtlety at this point to ruin souls, and Christians should especially watch and pray to escape the snare. Jesus' commands are not grievous but in

the keeping of them there is great reward. But Satan strives to make them appear otherwise. He will paint and magnify the faults of Christians to the eyes of their brethren so as to make the latter think they cannot love one another but must break the Saviour's new commandment. What commandment has Jesus given to his disciples but the enemy will labor to persuade them that they are unable to obey? If they are told to feed the hungry or clothe the naked he has ready for them the excuse of inability. If to visit the sick or the imprisoned their lack of time is urged. Their imagined difficulty looms up before them to prevent their attending the house of God. If to send the gospel to the perishing their excuse is, the Lord knows how hard the times are, that we can scarcely make ends meet and that we are not able to support that cause—He reaps where he did not sow.

Brethren, Jesus has so clearly described the future that in comparing our lives by his words we can foresee the day of judgment and read in advance our eternal destiny. How blessed when we can thus read our title clear to a mansion in the skies. He that hears Christ's sayings and does them will build upon the immovable rock.

Those out of the church who hear the gospel and admit its justice and claims but obey it not, excuse themselves on the grounds of inability to obey Jesus and be saved. Although their conscience rises against the preaching that tells them they are as dead as Lazarus in his grave, yet they rest behind the bulwarks of their inability to do what Christ tells them and thus contend that he reaps where he did not sow.

The last persons mentioned in the parable are the citizens who sent the message after him. We will not have this man to reign over us. These evidently meant the Jews who claimed to be God's people and to speak directly to him. After Jesus had gone from earth to heaven they sent this insulting message after him to God. They had witnessed his miracles, had seen his life of infinite purity and goodness, but they desired a murderer to be granted to them and crucified the Holy One as a blasphemer, and now they could do no more to him. Despite their efforts to keep him in the grave God had raised him from the dead and exalted him to his right hand. They could only send a message after him. They had no cloke for their sin, could obtain no mercy and were now doomed to fall into the hands of the living God. "Bring them forward," says the king, "and slay them before me."

Unconverted sinners with what party in this parable do you stand. Jesus leaves no neutral ground, so that he who is not for him is against him. You have heard over and over again of Jesus and his love. Actions you know speak louder than words. Have not your actions till this hour declared that you will not have this man to reign over you? Will you declare it still? Will you today go from this house more strongly determined to stand with the citizens with the awful doom hovering over you? O stop and think before you further go. How can you deliberately reject one that loves you so much. O think how he has loved you, how he lived and died on earth to save you, and how in heaven he has pled with his Father to spare you and give this opportunity of hearing his sweet inviting voice.