

rest." Straight, gracious, divinely assertive, had been his utterances. But suddenly he changed his method. He ceased making direct statements. He put the truth in peculiar round-about fashion. He spoke many things to them in the form of a connected narrative wherein he would institute some spiritual comparison. "He opened his mouth and uttered parables:" and, for the time being, "without a parable spake he not unto them." Indeed, so marked was his change of method, that the disciples became perplexed and asked, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" The words of the text, which form part of his answer, must not be understood as unfolding an isolated thought. They apply expressly to the parables. Blessed are your eyes: for they see what is to be seen in the parables. Blessed are your ears: for they hear what is to be heard in the parables. No good can be gained by seeking a more profound and mystical sense. It is a simple commendation of His disciples' eyes and ears, in contrast to the eyes and ears of the world. Let us keep these eyes and ears where they belong, in the body of his own interpretation.

First, then, THE FUNCTION OF THE EYE IN PARABOLIC TEACHING.

Things we can see are used to teach us about things we cannot see. The parables are either about processes in nature, or else events in human experience. They are patent to all. They are matters of ordinary

observation. We can see the sower going forth; see the fishers dragging their net; see the prodigal leaving home and coming back; see the Pharisee and Publican at prayer; see the mustard seed growing to a great size. In a word, we can see *all* the processes and transactions drawn upon in the parables. They are pre-eminently matters of sight.

But we may see without seeing. Many in the crowds who heard Jesus saw the sower going forth to sow, just as vividly as if he were before their eyes: indeed, he may actually have been before their eyes as Jesus spoke to them: but they saw only the sower. Many saw the net filled with fish: perhaps the fishermen may have been dragging it not far from where the multitudes sat and Christ from his floating pulpit may have pointed it out: but they saw only fishers, only a net, only fish. Many saw a wayward son going from home and then coming back for forgiveness: who never for a moment felt the least personal interest in the situation. Many saw the two men praying in the temple without seeing themselves. Many saw the extraordinary growth of the mustard seed and perhaps thought only of the commercial aspects of it.

And so far as the mere observation of the things about us is concerned, *any* man might have uttered these parables. In fact, other teachers *did* utter parables not dissimilar to these: as, for instance, the Rabbins of the Talmud. But Jesus spake as never