

The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B., - NOVEMBER, 1896

EDITORIAL.

THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

—
Luke xiv.

(Synopsis of a discourse delivered by the Editor before the annual meeting of the Disciples at Lot 18, on the second Lord's day in July, 1896.)

The Saviour's teaching becomes more interesting the longer we study it. This is especially true of his parables. The very efforts we make to understand the truths he set forth in symbols discipline the mind to grasp and retain these truths and make them our own.

Luke states two reasons for Jesus speaking this parable. The first was because the way was nigh to Jerusalem, the other because they thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear. It was probably spoken in the house of Zaccheus, fifteen miles from Jerusalem, and a week before the crucifixion. His friends seemed much excited at the number and grandeur of his miracles and cherished high hopes that he would at this time enter the capital publicly, assert his claims to David's throne, expel Roman officials, put an end to Roman rule, and exalt his favorites to high positions in his new kingdom. It was to banish from their minds these vain and carnal expectations Jesus spoke this parable.

Let us first consider who are represented by the different persons mentioned. The nobleman evidently means himself, going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. The servants whom he intrusts with a pound a-piece represent Jesus' professed people, and his citizens who hated him the Jews who sent the rebellious message after him, and all who follow their example by positively and persistently refusing to accept of Christ as their Saviour and King. He embraces in this parable all to whom salvation is offered. The servants and citizens may be found in this audience today, for it is certain we all have to do with Jesus and will have to do with him when he will return to judgment.

Verse 13. He called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds and said unto them, Occupy till I come. Two hundred years ago the word "occupy" was used in a different sense from its use today. Now it means simply to own a thing irrespective of how we use it. The Revised Version gives the proper meaning, "*Trade ye herewith till I come.*" It is evident from its connection that such is its meaning. He finds out at his coming how much every one has gained by trading. Many make a mistake just here and understand the religion of Christ to consist principally in enjoyment, rather than in service and self-denial to advance the cause of Christ and save others. With them the man who says much of his love for

Christ and his people, and constantly talks of exhorting and edifying the church is the model Christian, though he may make but little sacrifice or effort to reach the perishing with the gospel of Christ or imitate the Master in doing good. To overcome the world with them means to prevent the world from overcoming us. Jesus has overcome the world, not by preventing the world from overcoming him, but he has conquered it by his life and death. By his cross he has slain its enmity and turns his fiercest enemies into his dearest friends. He sends his people to make known his light and love to others, and declares that he who overcomes shall sit with him on his throne even as he has overcome and has sat with his Father on his throne. His solemn charge to his servants is, "Trade on this pound until I come."

We next enquire what this pound represents? A pound at that time and place was a little under twenty dollars in our money, a small sum indeed for a nobleman to start his servant in business with. But it was sufficient to test his skill and faithfulness. It was something that would grow and every pound added would gain a city. If a true, enlightened Christian is asked, What gift has God bestowed upon you since your conversion which you esteem of the greatest value? What thing have you in your hands that gives you light and love and comfort and strength? The answer would be *The Word of God*. There is no other gift to be compared to it. The words which Jesus has spoken are spirit and they are life. This is the spiritual food whereof if a man eat he shall live forever.

Jesus in going away gave his servants his word containing his gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The gospel was first delivered to the apostles to preach to every creature. This treasure was committed to earthen vessels that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of them. The vessels might be broken but the power could not. The apostles preached to the people and the people received it not as the word of men but as it was in truth the word of God, which effectually worked in them that believed. The man who received the gospel in truth and love was not in his element till he told to others the story of Jesus and his love. And when they heard it they would exclaim, We have heard him ourselves and know indeed that Jesus is the Son of the living God, and our Saviour.

When the proper business of the church was attended to the word of God increased. Thus when men were chosen to serve tables, the word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. Acts vi. 7.

Nor was this growth of the Word of God confined to the sunny heights of prosperity, it was equally fruitful in the gloomy vale. In Acts xi, we read of the grief of the church when vexed by the ungodly Herod, who killed James with the sword and im-

prisoned Peter, to make him the next victim. But the angel of the Lord delivered Peter and smote his would-be murderer just when he was accepting the idolatrous adorations of the eringing multitude.

Herod died a loathsome monument of divine displeasure, but the Word of God grew and multiplied, verses 18-24. James, the first of the apostles to suffer martyrdom, though an honorable vessel in God's great house was broken, but the treasure committed to him only grew the faster. Paul, the aged prisoner of Jesus Christ, could in his chains triumphantly exclaim, "But the Word of God is not bound."

The labors, trials and triumphs of primitive Christians show us how to trade upon, and increase the Master's pound, and in the judgment he will ask us: "How much have you gained by trading?" As our answer to this question is to decide our eternal destiny what can be so important as to keep it before us, and know how we are handling the Word of God.

We are living in a peculiar period of the world's history. Sectarianism is gradually but surely losing its hold on the public mind. Human creeds and devisive opinions are passing into the dead office, and the living oracles taking their place. The questions are not, What do you think of this great theologian or that leader, or of this or that form of church government; but, What think you of Christ: whose Son is he? How can we best lead the perishing to his cross.

The two themes which now ring from different parts of Christendom, and will make famous the close of the nineteenth century are: CHRISTIAN LABOR AND CHRISTIAN UNION. These call for our attention and our best energies. They afford us grand opportunities for spreading the blessed gospel and of serving our generation according to the will of God. Nothing can so edify us and bring us nearer to our God as the assurance that he is hearing our prayers and blessing our efforts in the salvation of our families and neighbors and friends, as well as in carrying the gospel of salvation to the dying in the regions beyond.

(To be concluded in our next.)

Original Contributions.

IS IT SO.

John xii. 24.

BY H. E. COOKE.

When the religion of Jesus Christ is studied as a science nothing is more abstruse. But when it is studied as the science of divine grace simplified by the atonement of Christ, nothing is more comprehensible. Christ is the "X Ray" of divine grace turned on by the Holy Spirit to discover the defects of sin in the human soul.

There is a wonderful likeness between the works of nature and the works of grace. The Saviour, as a teacher, very frequently opened the book of nature to illustrate the