

October 27.]

A. D. 83.

Luke xvi: 19-31.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

GOLDEN TEXT:—*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death.*—Proverbs 14: 32.

This parable, like that of the Prodigal Son, is spoken with immediate reference to the Pharisees. Being "covetous" (v. 14) they "derided" the Lord's teachings in the parable of the Unjust Steward. Notwithstanding their asceticism they loved the "world" not less than the luxurious Sadducees. "Our Lord grasps the whole character of the covetous and self-seeking Pharisees, and shows a case in which it is carried to the utmost by one who made no friends with the unrighteous mammon." The issue of this character is shown in the world which lies beyond sense. The explanation which makes Dives (the rich man) represent the Jews, and Lazarus the Gentiles, though embraced by several of the Fathers and some recent expositors, cannot be consistently and naturally carried out. Nor, again, does Dives stand for Herod and Lazarus for John; though many of the particulars are fulfilled in them. The rich man possesses all that delights the senses, and cares for nothing else. His motto is "let us eat and drink for, &c." He is not accused of flagrant crimes; but it is utterly false to say that he was condemned simply for his wealth and Lazarus saved simply for his poverty.

Lazarus (Ebenzer), means "the help of God," "Laid" or flung by those who last cared for him at Dives' gate, nothing can be more deplorable, to sense than the condition of this ulcerated, famishing beggar. The only sympathy shown him is by the dogs—such as wander through the streets of an eastern city. Ps. 14: 16. But death, to the one and the other, much changes the scene. Lazarus, in mercy first taken, is carried by angels (see Matt. 18: 10, Heb. 1: 14, Ps. 91: 12) to "Abraham's bosom": as the Jews called the happy side of Hades or the unseen world. For this his piety, matured through suffering, had prepared him. Dives is "buried"—buried in splendour; but in "hell" (Hades) he begins to reap the fruit of a life of purely sensual indulgence. He is in "torments"; for though the final judgment is future, retribution in measure, has begun. He implores that Lazarus may be sent to bring him the slightest alleviation of his sorrow. Abraham calling him "son" (would that he had been a son of God) replies with a calmness that is terrible, that, on two grounds, his request could not be granted. (1) He and Lazarus—in the state now past and in that entered upon—were both dealt with according to the just and righteous government of God. ("Thy good things"—what thou didst choose as good.) (2) By divine decree (and therefore righteously) the separation of the classes now made is permanent. "A yawning chasm too deep to be filled up or bridged over" divides the saved from the unsaved. Rich has gone to his own place: like is gathered like for evermore.

Though repulsed for himself, he urges a request for his "five brethren." The way is not barred to that upper world: let Lazarus be sent to "testify" to them—so speak of what he has seen; and thus in time secure their repentance. This anxiety for his brethren's good does not show that a better mind is beginning to appear in Dives; it is rather a secret justifying of himself, and an accusing of God for not sufficiently warning sinners. The weighty reply of Abraham shows us that faith being a moral act "cannot be forced by signs and miracles." We cannot fail to remember that when another "Lazarus" did rise from the dead the Pharisees sought to kill him. John 11: 47 and 52: 10-11. The reply, however, imparts not the evidential value of the Lord's resurrection, 1 Cor. 15: 12-30.

November 3rd.]

A. D. 33.

[Luke xvii: 11-19.

THE TEN LEPROSERS.

GOLDEN TEXT:—*And Jesus answering said: Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?—Verse 17.*

The Lord is now most probably making His last journey to Jerusalem. He is passing "through the midst of" (rather "passing between") Samaria and Galilee. On entering a village he is met by ten men afflicted by a disease—in its last stages very dreadful—which has much prevailed in the East—leprosy. This disease, eating into the system until the poor subject of it is little else than a living skeleton, is a striking type of sin. It is certainly in Scripture so regarded, and hence the significance of Christ's so often healing it. For the full account of leprosy and the levitical regulations regarding it, see Lev. chs. 13 and 14; Num. 5: 2-4; Luke 5: 12-16; Matt. 8: 2. As unclean, lepers must remain at a distance from the untainted; hence they stand "afar off." Though secluded, some knowledge of the great Healer had reached them; and though they knew Him not as Messiah, (they call Him "Master" not "Lord," regarding Him doubtless as a prophet), they believe that He can make them clean. The Lord will "have mercy on them;" but it does not, as on former occasions, touch them saying "be thou clean." To honour the representatives of theocracy; to secure official declaration of their cleansing; but more to test their faith and gratitude (the sequel shows this), He sends them to the priests. Their misery has brought Jew and Samaritan together, and they go in company to "show" themselves. The healing virtue takes effect while they are on the way; they know that they are cured. We cannot tell at what distance the nearest priests were, but one of the ten waits not to complete the journey. Full of gratitude he returns back to render "glory" to God and "thanks" to his great benefactor. The other nine suffer the priestly declaration would return to their homes—very glad no doubt; but deeper love leads this one back to his deliverer. He falls at the feet of that "Master" who will soon teach him that He is more than a prophet—even the Son of the Highest. And this man whose devotion and eremitic to single him out, is not a Jew—not of them to whom "certain of the apostles on the glory, the covenants, &c." (Rom. 9: 4, 5); he is a despise "Samaritan." His grace has not respected national limits and prejudices.

In reply to his thanksgivings, the Saviour utters both a complaint and an eulogy. A complaint for He sorrowfully enquires *where were the nine* who had not returned? How defective their gratitude to God when they come not to thank him who, even in their own view, was the medium of their cure! And yet they, perhaps all of them, were Jews. The first are last and the last first. A eulogy; for this "stranger" ("foreigner.") See 2 Kings 17: 24-1) is touched with gratitude and gives glory to God, if the Jew does not. He is one of those who shall sit down with the children in the Kingdom, (ch. 14: 28, Matt. 4: 11.) With peculiar pleasure, we may be sure He who spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan recognizes true piety in a race so despised by the self-righteous Jews, vain of their Abrahamic descent.

By the words with which the cleansed man is dismissed "the benefit is heightened, confirmed, sanctified." "Thy faith hath made thee whole." This is more than the removal of his leprosy. Words these often used by the Lord. See Matt. 9: 22, Mk. 10: 52, ch. 7: 50 and 18: 42. How precious a gift is faith! Some measure of it was required of the subjects of miraculous cure; but through it, wholly comes the salvation of the soul. Rom. 3: 28; Eph. 2: 8.