

market-place of life, "Go to work in my vineyard."

3. *What are they hired to do?* To labor in the vineyard of the Lord. And this does not mean that one must drop every other activity and be spent wholly in singing hymns and reading Scripture. No, no! To labor in the Lord's vineyard means to accept Christ as the object of the soul's trust and service, and carry the spirit and principles of your religion into everything you do—into every thought and every act. It means to do right every time you do anything. It is true, also, that the Church is the Lord's vineyard, it is of his planting, watering, and fencing, and it is of it that he must be to his honor and praise. We are also called upon to labor in this vineyard. The work of religion is vineyard work—pruning, dressing, digging, watering, fencing, weeding. We have each of us our own vineyard to keep, our own soul; and it is God's, and to be kept and adorned for him. "What is the honor?" In this work we must not be slothful, not loiterers, but laborers, working, and working out our own salvation. Work for God will not admit of trifling. A man may go idle to perdition, but he that will go to heaven must be busy.

4. *What shall be their wages?* "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Every laborer in the Lord's vineyard, whether he begins in the morning, or at noon, or near sundown, shall receive eternal life—the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In this sense, all laborers receive the same wages. Pardon, justification, peace with God, hope of heaven—great and precious as they are, granted to all who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and control their lives accordingly. In other respects, we have reason to believe the wages will not be the same. But, however this may be, we have the assurance that, "whosoever is right" will guide the action of the paymaster.

PAY, PAY, PAY.

It never pays to do right if we do right to be paid.

If we belong to the kingdom of heaven let it not seem to be paid in the currency of earth.

We are not seeking first the kingdom of God, if we expect first the rewards of the kingdoms of this world.

Men pay for work, God pays for willingness, when work cannot be performed. "If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat of the fruit of the land."

HISTORIC REWARDS.

God rewarded Daniel with the lion's den—and the third place in the kingdom.

God rewarded Job with loss of all—and its restoration greatly increased.

God rewarded Paul with imprisonment and torture—and contentment, and the crown of righteousness.

God rewarded John the Baptist with death, and with Christ's supreme praise, and lasting earthly renown.

God rewarded Christ with the cross—and with the wondrous recognition, "Thou art my beloved Son."

DEBT AND CREDIT.

"We often record in our memories what we think to be God's failure to repay our service for him, and compare ourselves with others, repining at our poor success, or lack of prosperity. But if we should set out to record the other side, we should soon see that it is the only proper side to record. Keep a book in which you will set down the ways in which you are rewarded for the good you do—the gratitude, the love, the appreciative words, the looks of affection, the happy memories, and other material returns that come to you. You will be amazed to see how rapidly the book is filled."

FLASHLIGHTS.

1. Worldly salaries are limited; God's pay is generous.

2. Worldly employers pay some time after the work is done. God's payment begins as soon as the work begins.

3. "I'm a Methodist," "I'm a Baptist," "I'm an Episcopalian," amounts to nothing, outward religious profession amounts to nothing, unless there is personal faith in Christ, and personal service for him.

4. If God does not always pay in kind, he always pays in kindness far more liberally than we could ask, and in just the way we should ask if we knew how to ask.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

This is rather a difficult parable to interpret. But you will find help in the exposition preceding. The topic is peculiarly appropriate for the League in its aggressive work for Christ and the Church. The laborers in the vineyard. What are the laborers doing in your League? Are they *laborers at all*, or are they standing all the day idle? What is the president doing? What are the vice-presidents doing? What is each member doing? Make the topic personal—don't apply it to people living in Chicago, but to yourselves. If you are not all laboring faithfully, start ahead, before the sun goes down, for "the night cometh when no man can work."

MARCH 11—"REJECTING CHRIST."

Mark 12: 1-9.

HOME READING.

Mon., Mar. 5. Proofs of the divine love. Rom. 5: 6-11
Tues., Mar. 6. Christ's attitude toward men. Gal. 1: 1-5; 2: 19

Wed., Mar. 7. Overtures of the Spirit. John 14: 26; 1 Thess. 5: 1-2

Thurs., Mar. 8. The sin of rejection. Matt. 23: 29-39
Fri., Mar. 9. The reprobation of Christ. Luke 6: 4-6
Sat., Mar. 10. Indifference. Heb. 2: 1-3

Everyone makes mistakes in life. The character of all men is marred by imperfections. But these mistakes and imperfections are not necessarily fatal. But when one willingly and persistently rejects Christ, and lives a life of unbelief in the Saviour of the world, one is not only making a mistake, but committing a fatal crime against the interests of his soul, and shaping for himself an unhappy present and a disastrous future. There is no sin so common as the sin of unbelief. The rejection of Christ and his divine work and claims lies at the basis of almost all other sins. There is no matter, therefore, of so much importance to one as the duty and privilege of accepting Christ, and bringing one's life into harmony with his spirit, his life, and his teachings.

PERSONS AND THINGS IN THE PARABLE.

The *householder* represents God as the creator and owner of all things, the proprietor of the material universe, and of all human souls. Man is not his own; he belongs to God, and wise is he if he acknowledges God's claim upon him.

The *vineyard*. Our Lord draws his illustration from common life and familiar objects. Palestine was a vine-growing country, and fitted in consequence of its climate for rearing the very finest grapes. The vineyard represents the kingdom of God as realized in the Jewish nation, the Christian Church, and the individual soul. This kingdom is in each case planted by God, and is his by creation, by preservation, and by redemption.

The *hedge* denotes a fence, and no doubt the great majority of fences that surrounded the vineyards of Palestine would consist of walls composed either of stones, or of stones and baked mud combined. The hedge represents the law and the divine institution

which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, and was a protection against the invasions of immorality and idolatry of the surrounding nations. So every one in Christ's kingdom is hedged about by his promises, by his Word, by his providence, by his Spirit, and by the institutions of the Church.

The *vinepress*. The vinepress of to-day in Palestine is a hollow place, usually a rock scooped out, considerably deeper at one end than the other. The grapes are put into this trough, and two or more persons with naked feet descend into it, when they jump up and down, crushing the fruit as they trample on it, while to enliven their labor they often sing at the same time.

The *tower*. A watch-tower was sometimes built forty or fifty feet high, and was used for the watchmen who guarded the vineyard; and during the vintage as an abode for the workers, a place of recreation, and probably for storing fruit. The vinepress and the tower represent the various advantages conferred by God upon the Jewish people; and indicates how the provision made by God for the protection and prosperity of his people, all the influence God confers upon us to make us fruitful—the Bible, the Sabbath, Christian homes, the influences of the Spirit.

The *husbandmen*. It is customary in the East, as in Ireland and other parts of Europe, for the owner to let out his estate to husbandmen, that is, to tenants who pay him an annual rent, either in money or in kind. The husbandmen represent the rulers of the Jews, but the people as a whole are included. Nowadays, each person to whom God has committed powers, opportunities, and influences for the building up of the kingdom of God in the world, and in his own soul, is a husbandman.

The *householder's servants*. These represent among the Jews, the prophets and other eminent ministers of God who were raised up and sent to the people with the message from heaven. In these times, every special call to love and serve God, every service at the church, every voice of the Holy Spirit, every season of revival, is a servant whom God sends to us for the fruits that are due him.

The *rent*. When the fruit season came, the householder sent to the husbandmen for the rent to which he had a right. The rent represents God's claim on us to serve him. The fruits that were demanded in the case of the Jews were obedience, love, righteous living, teaching the true God to the nations.

We have always to pay rent for very privilege. For our country, we should pay the rent of national purity, justice, and patriotism; for our spiritual privileges, the rent of faith and obedience. For the blessings God has bestowed upon us, both natural and spiritual, especially for the blessings of the Gospel, God has a right to expect from us all the fruits of the Spirit—consecration, holy lives, labors, and efforts for the salvation of men.

Treatment of the messengers. The first servant they caught and beat, and sent away empty. The second they stoned, wounded, and sent away shamefully handled. And they killed others various ways. It is true that the sons of the prophets were not merely maltreated, but actually put to death. The patience of the householder under these circumstances, these extraordinary provocations, is divinely wonderful. The behavior of these husbandmen is only a picture of the way impatient men still treat God's messengers of mercy—the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the influence of Church and religion—rejecting and sending them away empty.

He sent unto them his Son. After sending many servants, the householder at last sent his own Son, with the hope that the husbandman would respect and reverence him. But no! "they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him." This repre-