



LESSON XII.—DEC. 23.

Parable of the Pounds.

Luke xix., 11-27. Memory verses 26-27.
Read Matt. xxv., 14-30.

Alternate Christmas Lesson.

Matt. ii., 1-11.

Golden Text.

'Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.'—Rom. xiv., 12.

Lesson Text.

(11) And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. (12) He said, therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. (13) And he called his ten servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. (14) But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. (15) And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. (16) Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. (17) And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in very little, have thou authority over ten cities. (18) And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. (19) And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. (20) And another came, saying, Lord, behold there is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: (21) 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. (22) And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: (23) Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? (24) And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (25) And they said unto him Lord, he hath ten pounds. (26.) 'For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. (27) But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Suggestions.

The pounds in this parable evidently represent some possession common to every Christian, in this the parable of the pounds differs from the parable of the talents in which the treasure is apportioned according to the various abilities of the servants. The common possession of all Christians, great or small, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, is the redemption from sin by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Natural abilities and advantages count for nothing in this competition for the only rewards given are for faithfulness and loving zeal. Special opportunities and favorable surroundings count for nothing, for every life is filled with great and special opportunities for prayer, the less opportunity in other directions, the more opportunity for prayer. The ignorant child has as good a chance to gain the greatest reward for faithfulness as has the most learned professor.

'Last year, as a matter of experiment, I planted two kernels of corn. They were from

the same cob, exactly alike in every respect, so far as I could see. One I planted in a deep, rich, well-pulverized soil, and the other in a poor, hard, clay soil. They both germinated and were ready for the development of cultivation. The one I planted in the rich soil I left to take care of itself, but that planted in the poor soil I took special pains with, fertilizing the soil, and removing every weed. When the harvest time came I found three finely formed ears of corn on that one stalk; while on the other I found a little puny stalk with one wee nibbin' of corn upon it. Now, I see just such human plants every day. I see two boys "born equal," so far as mental strength is concerned. One may be planted in the rich soil of wealth, and the other in the barren soil of poverty. But the poor boy may fertilize his mind by education and cultivate it by study; and his life be made a shining success.' In the same way faithfulness in doing right, in serving God, in making the world better will win a sure and large success.—Quoted in the 'Golden Rule.'

A certain nobleman, literally, a man well born, one of high rank and noble blood. Went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. The story of this parable seems to have been founded on facts familiar to his hearers, to whom the magnificent palace which Herod Archelaus had built in Jericho was a familiar sight. "Two nobles"—Herod the Great and his son Archelaus,—had actually gone from Jericho to a far country, even to Rome, for the express purpose of "receiving a kingdom" from the all-powerful Caesar.—Cambridge Bible. Archelaus, on the death of his father, Herod the Great, went to Rome, B.C. 3, to receive from Augustus the same royal dignity, and the Jews sent at the same time a deputation to the emperor, consisting of 500 Jews (according to Josephus), who were supported by 8,000 Roman Jews, asking Augustus to dethrone the cruel family of the Herodians. 'He received from the emperor only a part of his father's dominions, with the inferior title of Ethnarch, and on his return put to death those who opposed his pretensions.' It was this unexpected succession of Herod Archelaus that caused Joseph and Mary, on their return from Egypt with the infant Jesus, to turn away from Judea, and bring up Jesus in Nazareth (Matt. ii., 22).

The pound was the Attic mina, the Roman money then in use in Palestine, and was worth 100 drachmae or denarii (so often translated pence), or about \$17.

The man of noble birth represents Christ himself, of royal blood and divine descent. He was the realization of the highest ideal of nobility, noble in character, in power, in deeds, in ability.

The far country represents heaven, and the state of glory with his Father, where Jesus went after his death and resurrection to remain unseen till the time of his appearing shall come.

The kingdom he was to receive is the Messianic kingdom of God, holding its benign sway over all the earth.

Christ is coming again to receive his kingdom and to judge the world (Matt. xxv., 31-46). But not only then, but oftentimes there comes a day of judgment to nations and to individuals. The destruction of Jerusalem was one of those times; so are Providential crises, the hour of revelation of crime long continued in secret, and the hour of death. Every one has to give a strict account of all that God has entrusted to him.—Peloubet's Notes, 1896.

Illustration.

A man was confined many years in a dungeon, where was but one aperture in the wall. Through that the sunbeams came a few minutes daily, making a bright spot on the opposite side of the cell. Often the lonely man looked upon that little patch of sunshine. A purpose to improve grew within his soul. Groping upon the floor of his cell he found a nail and a stone, and with these set to work on the white portion of the wall for a few minutes each day during which it was illuminated, until he succeeded in bringing out upon it a rude sculpture of Christ upon the cross. In the 'little' situations, with the 'little' light, if we are but 'faithful' we can carve out of the rough places in our lives a likeness of our crucified Lord. And one day there will be a rich

reward; the one pound shall have become ten.

Reward is promised for faithfulness not for success, to him who uses what he has for God's glory, not to him who does many things. 'If there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to what a man hath and not according to what he hath not.' 2 Cor. viii., 12. God accepts the will for the deed, when there is not the ability to perform. In his sight, the value of service is in proportion to the amount of heart put into it. Our Lord said concerning the widow's mite: She 'hath cast in more than they all.'—A.C.M.

If we use what God gives us faithfully, it will increase, and we shall have more and more. If we study faithfully, our powers of mind increase; if we exercise rightly, our bodies grow stronger, etc. Boys that smoke cigarettes, or drink intoxicating drinks, trifle with their bodies, and lose the good gift of God, physical and mental strength.—'Practical Commentary.'

Questions.

How does the parable of the pounds differ from the parable of the talents?

Has every one the same chance of a reward for faithfulness?

Is each one of us accountable to God for the best use of what we have?

What did the Lord Jesus come to this world for?

Why did he go away?

Is he coming again?

Are you making the most of what he has given you?

C. E. Topic.

Dec. 23.—The glory of Christ. John. 1, 1-14. (Christmas meeting.)

Junior C. E. Topic.

CHRIST'S CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

Mon., Dec. 17.—First gifts to Jesus.—II. Cor. viii., 5.

Tues., Dec. 18.—Youth.—Prov. xxii., 6.

Wed., Dec. 19.—Love.—John xxi., 15.

Thurs., Dec. 20.—Life.—Col. iii., 23.

Fri., Dec. 21.—God's gift to you.—John iii., 16.

Sat., Dec. 22.—'Give me thine heart.'—Ps. li., 16, 17.

Sun., Dec. 23.—Topic.—What birthday gifts shall we bring to Christ? Matt. ii., 1-12. (A Christmas meeting.)

Teaching Helpful.

The statement of the Bible, 'There is that giveth and yet increaseth,' and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty,' applies to mental and moral as well as to pecuniary giving. It especially applies to the work of imparting religious instruction.

One benefit of teaching is the deepening of the sense of personal responsibility. There can be no reaching out of the soul after that which is truly excellent without a sense of personal responsibility. There can be no desire to measure up to the utmost extent of our capabilities without it. The teacher as he appears before his class Sabbath after Sabbath, if he is suitably impressed with the relation he sustains to every member of his class, can not help but feel that their welfare, in this life and in the life to come, depends a great deal upon what he is and upon what he does. He feels an earnest desire to be able to say at the day of judgment, 'Lord, here am I, and the children thou hast given me.' This constantly deepening sense of personal responsibility is of great benefit to the teacher. It makes him zealous, faithful and conscientious.

The constant study, necessary to efficient teaching, is of great benefit to the teacher. His knowledge of the Bible and of divine things becomes broader and more thorough as he makes weekly preparation for the teaching of the lesson. New beauties in the blessed Word of God are brought to view as he delves by prayerful study into the mysteries of God's revelation to man. His desire to study God's Word becomes stronger and stronger, and there is a corresponding capacity not only to discover but also to digest spiritual truth.—'Evangelical Sunday School Teacher.'