

Sermon Notes
ON THE
Parables of Jesus

By Frank L. Cox

GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY
Nashville, Tennessee
1954

John 14

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**Sermon Notes on the
PARABLES OF JESUS**
BY FRANK L. COX

Containing

Lessons for Adult Classes
Suggestions for Prayer Meeting Talks
Outlines for Gospel Sermons
and Material for Private Study

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A PARABLE

The word "parable" comes from a Greek word, which signifies placing besides or together. A parable is therefore a comparison, a similitude, an illustration of one thing by another. Through the parables of the Bible are, for the most part, in story form, the word "parable" does not of itself imply a narrative.

The Master, during the days of his earthly ministry, made use of parables in his discourses. (See Matt. 13: 34.) Forty or more of these are recorded in the Gospels. They present briefly yet forcibly great moral and spiritual truths concerning the kingdom of God, its value, its growth, its relation to the world, its conflicts, its ultimate triumph; they set forth man's duty toward man and toward God.

In all literature there is nothing comparable to the parables to which he gave utterance. They are inexhaustible in their teaching. They are simple enough for the child, yet profound enough for the sages or the ripest scholars. Blessed is the man who reads them, who comes to understand them, who lays them to heart.

THE TWO BUILDERS

Matt. 7: 24-27

In the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 5, 6 and 7, we have a record of the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest oration that ever fell on listening ears. With the parable of the two builders, Jesus brought to a climax and close his immortal message; and this, the last portion of it, has been pronounced the "greatest portion" of the sermon. Assuming this to be true, how weighty and how wonderful are the words we have just read!

Embedded in the narrative are four cardinal truths which we shall consider in order.

- I. *All men are builders.* There are two kinds:
 1. The wise builder. How shall we describe him?
 - (a) He is attentive: for he "heareth."
 - (b) He is attentive to the right doctrine: for he "heareth these words of mine."
 - (c) He is also a practitioner: for he "doeth them."
 2. The foolish builder. And how shall we describe him?
 - (a) He is attentive: for he "heareth."
 - (b) He is attentive to the right doctrine: for he "heareth these words of mine."
 - (c) He is not a practitioner: for he "doeth them not." (See Matt. 7: 21; Jas. 1: 22.)
- II. *All builders have the choice of two foundations.*
 1. The rock. A firm, durable foundation. (See Luke 6: 47, 48.) The rock is the Christ—his doctrine, his Divine personality. (See Isa. 28: 16; Eph. 2: 19, 20.)
 2. The sand. A movable, unstable, a treacherous foundation. The man who "hears and does not" builds thereon.
- III. *All buildings are tested.* (See 1 Cor. 3: 13.) Note here:
 1. The severity of the test. The war of the elements came from all directions—rain upon the roof, the flood against the foundation, the wind against the wall. Our trials come from every direction, culminating in the judgment. (See Job 1: 11; Luke 22: 51; 2 Cor. 12: 7; Rev. 3: 10; 2 Cor. 5: 10.)
 2. The impartiality of it. Both houses were exposed to the

same perils. Reminding us that the storm strikes you and your fellowman with equal severity. Both are endowed with the same passions; both live in the same evil world; both are exposed to the same trials and temptations.

IV. *Only one building will stand.*

1. The house of the wise man "fell not for it was founded upon a rock." (See Luke 11: 28; John 13: 17; 1 John 2: 16, 17; 1 Peter 2: 6.)
2. The house of the foolish man "fell: and great was the fall thereof." It was pronounced a "great" fall for at least three reasons, namely:
 - (a) Because of the suddenness of it—it was not a decline but a crash.
 - (b) Because of the completeness of it. It was not a partial fall, but a complete fall.
 - (c) Because of the finality of it. The house was never rebuilt.

MEMORY SELECTION

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7: 21.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Where do we find a record of the Sermon on the Mount? How does it rank with other great orations in the history of the world?
2. With what parable did the Master bring this incomparable sermon to a close?
3. Tell the story of this parable.
4. Are all men builders? Into how many classes did the Master divide the builders?
5. Describe: The wise builder; the foolish builder.
6. Do the builders have a choice of the foundation upon which they build? Name the two foundations. What does the rock represent? the sand?
7. Are all buildings tested? What can you say of the severity of the test? of the impartiality of it?

8. How many buildings will stand? Why did the house of the wise man stand? Why was the fall of the foolish man's house called "great"? Give at least three reasons.
9. What is the lesson of the parable?
10. Quote the Memory Selection.

◆ ◆ ◆
THE SOWER
Luke 8: 4-15

In this parable by the sea we have: First, the sower, who is Jesus himself; second, the seed, which is the word of God; and third, the soil or the hearts of the hearers. This has been called "the parable of the sower." With as much or more fitness it might have been called "the parable of the soils (hearts)," for the soils are emphasized.

The four kinds of soils represent the four kinds of hearers or hearts.

I. *The wayside.* (Verses 4, 5, 12.)

1. The nature of the hearts represented: The cold, cynical, indifferent; the hearts without spiritual capacity.
2. Where the seed fell: "By" the wayside. The word, when spoken, fails to penetrate the intellect; it is left on the surface. The devil, knowing its power, "taketh away the word from their hearts." The Athenians were of this type. (See Acts 17.)
3. Results: No life.

II. *The rocky ground.* (Verses 6, 13.)

1. Nature of the hearts represented: The shallow, the emotional; the hearts that are moved by sentiment rather than the intellect.
2. Where the seed fell: "On" the rocky ground. The word finds a hiding place in the shallow soil, but does not take root. The word is given only a passing interest. In time of temptation or persecution they fall away. The Galatians were of this type. (See Gal. 1: 6; 4: 12-16.)
3. Results: Life, but it is only momentary.

III. *The thorny ground.* (Verses 7, 14.)

1. Nature of the hearts represented: The double-minded, the hearts with mixed-motives.

2. Where the seed fell. "Admist" the thorns. The word finds a hiding place, life springs forth, but it is subjected to dissipated influences. These influences are specified in verse 14, also in Mark 4: 18, 19. The Corinthians were of this type.

3. The results: Life, but no fruit to perfection.

IV. *The good ground.* (Verses 8, 15.)

1. Nature of the hearts represented: Good and honest.

2. Where the seed fell: "Into."

3. Results: Life and fruit in abundance.

Let us Learn:

1. That the sower should be faithful and impartial. The great Sower scattered seed over all the soils, giving an opportunity to each kind. (See Mark 16: 15.)
2. That the harvest does not depend altogether on the faithfulness of the sower or the quality of the seed, but also on the nature of the soil.
3. That there are three reasons why people fail in life, namely: Indifference, shallowness, and double-mindedness.
4. That in order to succeed in life one must receive the word of God, meditate upon the same and exercise patience in the Christian life.

MEMORY SELECTION

"And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience." (Verse 15.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Where was the parable of the sower spoken?
2. Who is the sower? What is the seed? What is the soil?
3. How many kinds of soils or hearers are mentioned in the parable?
4. Describe the wayside. What kind of hearers does it represent? When the word is spoken to hearers of this type, what becomes of it? Why does the devil take away the word? **Read**

- Acts 17 and note that the Athenians were hearers of this type. What result followed this sowing?
5. Describe the rocky ground. What kind of hearers does it represent? When the word is spoken to hearers of this type, what becomes of it? Show that many of the Christians in Galatia were of this type. What results followed this sowing?
 6. Describe the thorny ground. What kind of hearers does it represent? When the word is spoken to hearers of this type, what becomes of it? Name the different influences that sap the life of such Christians. Read 1 Corinthians and take note that they were thorny ground hearers. What results follow this sowing?
 7. Describe the good ground. What kind of hearts or hearers does it represent? Where did the seed fall? How was it received? How was it cultivated? Can you recall Biblical hearers of this type? What about the disciples in the city of Beroea? (See Acts 17: 10-12.) What happy results follow this sowing?
 8. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE TARES

Matt. 13: 24-30, 36-43

In this parable Jesus warns the disciples against the expectation of finding in this present world an unmixed good state of society. The kingdom of God will have universal sway, but that will be in the age to come.

In the narrative we have:

- I. *The sowing.* (Verses 24, 25, 37-39.) At first the field had no seed in it, and could not produce seed. Neither good nor evil is native to the field of humanity. Both have to be planted.
 1. Of the good seed.
 - (a) The sower: "The Son of man," the origin of all that is good.
 - (b) The field: "The world." Christ, the rightful owner. (See Psalm 2: 8.)
 - (c) The good seed: "The children of the kingdom." In the parable of the sower "the word is the seed," but

in the parable of the tares the word had already been received and obeyed.

2. Of the evil seed.

- (a) The sower: "The devil," an enemy of the Son of man, yea, of all mankind. He is a silent, unseen sower, moving in the dark.
- (b) What he sows: "Tares," a plant resembling wheat, representing "sons of the devil." Satan wants his sons to resemble the sons of God enough to deceive and to be deceived, yet evil enough to be damned.
- (c) Where he sows: In the same field, a common device in these days for wreaking vengeance; "among the wheat"—near enough to entangle, to sap the life.

II. *The growing.* (Verses 26-30a.) Only after a period of growth did the difference between the wheat and the tares become manifest. It was in this connection that the servants appeared. We note:

1. Their surprise. (Verse 27.) After all of our efforts to do good in the world, evil men are still in abundance.
2. Their proposal. (Verse 28.) A manifestation of zeal; but this zeal was without understanding. (See Rom. 10: 1, 2.)
3. The restraint imposed. (Verses 29, 30a.) For three reasons their proposal was rejected:
 - (a) It was rash—destructive in nature. (See Matt. 26: 51, 52; Luke 9: 54ff; Jas. 1: 20.)
 - (b) It was presumptuous—the servants were not the reapers.
 - (c) It was premature. The time was not ripe. "Let them grow together until the harvest."

III. *The reaping.* (Verses 30, 39-43.) The sowing and growing is followed by the reaping. Here we see:

1. The reapers: "His angels," the avengers of God's wrath and ministers of his mercy.
2. Time of the reaping: "The harvest" or "the end of the world," when the tares are ripe for destruction and the wheat for salvation. (See Rev. 14: 14ff.)

3. The separation.

- (a) The tares burned and bundled. (Verses 41, 42.)
"Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them."
- (b) The wheat gathered into the barn. (Verse 43.)
During the present association with the ungodly, the righteous are under a cloud; their light is, in a measure, obscured; but when the cloud is removed they shall shine unhindered.

MEMORY SELECTION

"Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matt. 13: 30.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In this parable, what warning does the Master give the disciples? Will there be a mixture of good men and bad men as long as the world stands? Will there be a separation? If, so, when?
2. Discuss the sowing. First, of the good seed. Who is he sower? What is the field? What is the seed? Second, of the evil seed. Who is he sower? What does he sow? Where does he sow? Why?
3. Note the growing. After a period of growth, what difference came to light? Were the servants surprised? What was their proposal? What restraint was imposed? And why?
4. Let us study the reaping. Who are the reapers? When shall they reap? What separation will then be made? What will become of the tares, or the wicked? the wheat, or the righteous?
5. Quote the Memory Selection, and show that it is the key verse of the parable.

THE MUSTARD SEED**Matt. 13: 31, 32**

The kingdom of heaven is like—

- I. *A seed*—a germ of life. The Master did not talk about dead things. He talked about life, actual and potential: Grass, trees, lilies, birds, people, birth, the abundant life, etc. Being “the Prince of life,” how could he do otherwise?
- II. *A small seed*: “A grain of mustard seed . . . which is indeed less than all seeds.” In the eyes of men, the beginning of the kingdom was insignificant:
 1. An infant in a manger (Luke 2: 7); a baby in Simeon’s arms (Luke 2: 25-35). What is more helpless than a babe?
 2. Like a normal boy, he grew to manhood in Nazareth, an obscure village in the province of Galilee.
 3. His public ministry, which at first was attended with popular acclaim, ended in the world’s greatest tragedy. Jewish leaders opposed him. His disciples deserted him. Judas betrayed him. Peter denied him. On the cross he was a lonely figure, forsaken by man, forsaken by God. (See Matt. 27: 26.)
- III. *A planted seed*: “Which a man took, and sowed in his field.” The planting precedes the growth. Evangelization goes before the development of God’s kingdom. Jesus taught his disciples; the disciples taught the nations. (See Mark 16: 15, 16, 20; Acts 8: 4.) In the execution of the great commission, we have the sowing of the seed, the dissemination of Christ’s doctrine.
- IV. *A large plant which springs from the seed*: “When it is grown, it is greater than all herbs,” etc. One man said, “I have seen this plant on the rich plain of Akkar as tall as the horse and his rider.” Another, “There are traditions in the country of such so large that a man could climb into them.” In the unusual growth of this plant we have a representation of the outward growth of the kingdom. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), three thousand became obedient. While the apostles lived, tens of thousands were added. Since

their day, tens of millions have been added. Like the mustard tree—

1. The kingdom is vital. (See Heb. 12: 28.)
2. It is a blessing: Men find refuge therein.
3. It is universal: Its beneficent branches extend to the nations of earth.

That which is true of the kingdom universally is also true of the kingdom locally. The kingdom in a given community is insignificant in its origin. When the subjects are loyal and true to their King, the kingdom expands, it embraces numberless others, it spreads forth its beneficent branches to countless lives.

MEMORY SELECTION

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6: 7.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Tell the story of the mustard seed.
2. During the days of his ministry, did Jesus talk about dead things or living things? Give some instances.
3. What can you say of the size of a grain of mustard seed? In the eyes of men, was the kingdom of heaven small in its beginning? Discuss.
4. Does a seed have to be planted before the plant will grow? Must the word of God be planted in the hearts of men before the kingdom will grow and develop?
5. What can you say of the size of the mustard plant or tree in the fertile fields of Palestine? What can you say of the outward growth of God's kingdom from its beginning on Pentecost until now?
6. Quote the Memory Selection.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE**Matt. 13: 44**

The purpose of this little parable, and the one following, is to exhibit the incomparable value of the kingdom of heaven.

In it we see—

- I. *The treasure.* A pot of gold; a collection of rare jewels. Christ, or his gospel is a treasure of joy, of true satisfaction. (See John 4: 13, 14.) The Bible speaks of true riches:
 1. The riches of God's goodness. (Rom. 2: 4; Eph. 1: 7.)
 2. The riches of his glory. (Rom. 9: 23.)
 3. The unsearchable riches of Christ. (Eph. 3: 8.)
 4. The treasure of wisdom and knowledge which is hid in Christ Jesus. (Col. 2: 3.)
- II. *The treasure hidden.* In the absence of banks and other trust repositories in that day, men hid their treasures the best way they could—often in a field.
 1. The field in which Christ, the treasure, is buried is the holy scriptures. As marrow in the bone, as honey in the honey-comb, as manna in the dew, as water in the earth. (See Isa. 12: 3.)
 2. In no other has he been placed. In no other can he be found. Of greater value is the treasure than the field itself.
- III. *The treasure found.*
 1. By an unexpected man. While working for things less precious. While other thoughts and purposes were in mind. (See Rom. 10: 20; John 1: 45ff; 4: 1ff; Acts 16: 19ff.)
 2. By a discerning man. Recognizing at once the value of the treasure, he hid it. Having found the kingdom, men should hide it, "not lest another should find it, but lest he himself should lose it." (See Psalm 119: 11.)
- IV. *The treasure purchased.*
 1. Voluntarily. No one urged it upon him. He "goeth" eagerly, unhesitatingly.
 2. Joyfully. He did not go as to a funeral, as a man condemned to die. But "in his joy" he went.

3. At a great price. "He selleth all that he hath," etc. Renounces sin, abandons evil companions, relinquishes worldly pursuits—ceases to dig, to plow. (See Matt. 16: 24; Luke 14: 33.)

4. At a great profit. Though he parted with everything that he had, he did not lose. He gained a hundredfold. (See Rom. 8: 18; 2 Cor. 4: 17; Matt. 19: 29.)

Having found the divine treasure, as revealed in the Bible, men should turn from their sins and be baptized in the name of Christ, and by so doing receive the riches of the Lord. (See Acts 2: 38.)

MEMORY SELECTION

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16: 24.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Where was the parable of the hidden treasure spoken? To whom? For what purpose?
2. To the lost soul, what is the treasure of all treasures? Of what true riches does the Bible speak?
3. In those days, where did men hide their treasures? In what field is the Christ or his kingdom or his gospel found? Can we find this precious treasure in any other field?
4. By whom was this treasure found? Was the man expecting to find it? Is Christ often found by people who are not expecting to find him? Discuss. Was the man of the parable a discerning man? Is the man who finds the Christ and accepts him a discerning man? Discuss.
5. Was the treasure purchased voluntarily? Joyfully? At a great price? At a great profit? Discuss.
6. Having found the Christ, how may men make him their own?
7. Quote the Memory Selection, pointing out its relation to the lesson in hand.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE**Matt. 13: 45, 46**

Like the parable of the hidden treasure, this little parable lays emphasis on the value of the kingdom of heaven; but there is this difference: In the former the man found the treasure without seeking for it; in the latter the man found the treasure because he sought it.

Let us note:

- I. *The seeker*: "A merchant." A wide-awake man, a discerning man, a man on the alert for values. Like the merchant, every man should be a seeker for true values. (See Matt. 6: 33; 7: 7, 8.)
- II. *The treasure sought*: "Goodly pearls." Pearls are of rare value. The man set his heart on the higher values. Every man should seek "godly pearls"—the moral and spiritual values, the things that make for happiness in time and in eternity.
- III. *The treasure found*: "One pearl of great price." In search for "goodly pearls," he found the best. He who sets his soul on the good things will discover the supreme thing. This was the experience of the Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8), also of the Roman centurion (Acts 10). When we find life's supreme value, the lesser values will be added: "All these things shall be added unto you."
- IV. *The treasure purchased*.
 1. Voluntary. He bought it of his own accord.
 2. At the supreme price: "Sold all that he had"—all other merchandise. He who would possess the joy of salvation, must give up all and obey. (See Matt. 7: 21; Acts 17: 30; Heb. 5: 8, 9.)
 3. At a bargain. He gained by the transaction. In giving up the world for the Lord's sake, he will bless us abundantly.

MEMORY SELECTION

"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6: 33.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Point out the similarity between the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl of great price; also the dissimilarity.
2. In this parable, who is the seeker? How shall we describe him?
3. For what did he seek? For what "goodly pearls" should we be seeking?
4. What treasure did he find? Do you think that the man who is always alert for good things, will find the best? Was the Ethiopian nobleman seeking for good things when he found the best? And what about the Roman centurion?
5. Having found the "one pearl of great price," did the merchant purchase it? Voluntarily? At the supreme price? At a bargain? Discuss. In the spiritual realm, what is the "one pearl of great price?" What must lost men do in order to purchase it?
6. Quote the Memory Selection.

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THE DRAG-NET

Matt. 13: 47-50

In this parable, one central truth is presented—the final separation of the good from the bad; but, in turning the light on that truth, we incidentally get a vision of other interesting things.

We notice:

- I. *That the net is cast into the sea.* This is a drag-net, large and long. Into the sea of lost humanity the net of the kingdom is cast. Unto sinful men all over the world the gospel is preached. (See Matt. 28: 19, 20; Rom. 1: 16.)
- II. *That the net gathers of every kind.*
 1. In it may be found a variety of fish: Large and small, wholesome and unwholesome, living and dead. Fishermen cannot be certain of results until the net is brought to shore.
 2. In the gospel net a variety of people may be found: Good and bad, living and dead (1 Tim. 5: 6), wholesome and unwholesome. (1 Cor. 5: 1, 6.)

3. We frequently speak of the success of the gospel; the truth is, we know very little of its success. We judge by the weight of the net, forgetting the dead weight (mere professors) within.

III. *That the net, with its contents, is drawn to the beach.*

1. While the net is wide and far from shore, the fish have freedom of action; but as the net closes in behind them, their freedom of action is taken. They find retreat impossible.
2. During this life, we have power of choice—especially while we are young. (See Deut. 30: 19; Josh. 24: 15.) But as we are forced along by the pressure of time, we gradually lose this power. The net draws us on to the final consummation. The time is coming when, whatever we are, that we shall forever be. Ere long we shall be in the grip of eternity. (See Rev. 22: 11.)

IV. *That, on the beach, the fish are sifted and sorted.* The present state of mixed society is temporary. There will be a general separation, as taught in the judgment scene (Matt. 25: 31-46). There will also be a separation within the church, as taught in the parable of the drag-net.

V. *That, after the sifting and sorting, final disposition will be made.*

1. Preservation: "The good are gathered into vessels." God will preserve his own, placing them in vessels of eternal security.
2. Rejection: "The bad they cast away." The unfit shall not survive the judgment.

Let us "be not content with being enclosed within the gospel-net." To be in the kingdom is not enough; some of those within shall be cast out. Let us supply the Christian graces; by so doing we shall be granted an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom. (See 2 Peter 1: 5-11.)

MEMORY SELECTION

"So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Verses 49, 50.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What is the central truth presented in the parable of the drag-net?
2. Describe the drag-net. (See Bible dictionary.) In our story, what does the drag-net represent?
3. What is the sea into which the net of the kingdom is cast?
4. Describe the fish that are caught by the drag-net? Are all of them wholesome? Does the gospel net gather a variety of people? Are all of the members of the church wholesome in character? Are some sincere? Are some insincere?
5. When the net is drawn to the beach, what disposition is made of the fish therein? When the gospel net, or the church is drawn to the shore of eternity, what disposition will be made of the people therein? Discuss: The general separation; also the separation within the church.
6. Discuss the admonition of the apostle Peter, mentioned in the latter part of this lesson.
7. Quote the memory of selection.



THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Matt. 18: 21-35

In the first two verses we have the occasion of this parable. Peter said unto him, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him"? Because of his impetuosity, Peter was likely to bring down a lot of criticism on his head, and become involved in arguments and disputes with his fellow-disciples. He was hard hit by the Master's plain teaching on the subject of forgiveness. "How long must I keep this thing up?" he anxiously asked. "Until seven times?" Since the rabbis required only a thrice-repeated forgiveness, basing their requirement on Job

33: 29 and Amos 2: 4, perhaps Peter thought that seven times would be sufficiently liberal—more than twice as liberal as the teachers of the law.

“Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” Jesus did not mean for us to literalize this expression and forgive our brother exactly four-hundred-ninety times, but an indefinite number of times. Forgiveness “is not a matter of arithmetic or of book-keeping, but of love; and love has no limits.”

In order to clarify and animate the great lesson of truth just spoken—a lesson of forgiveness—Jesus related the story of the unmerciful servant.

And from this story we learn:

- I. That man is a debtor to God. His sins have made him so.
- II. That the immensity of the debt makes payment impossible.
- III. That God shows mercy toward the humble penitent and cancels the debt of sin in its entirety. The immensity of the debt does not hinder the fulness and freeness of divine forgiveness. (See Isa. 1: 18; 55: 7.)
- IV. That the man who receives pardon should give pardon. We are saved not merely by receiving mercy, but also by giving mercy. “We do pray for mercy; and that same prayer doth teach us to render deeds of mercy.” (Shakespeare.) And our forgiveness, to be real, must be “from the heart,” not mere lip-forgiveness.
- V. That God forgives more freely than man forgives. We are so unlike our heavenly Father! This is the most uncomplimentary remark that we can make concerning ourselves. Let us forgive each other as God has forgiven us. (Eph. 4: 31, 32.)
- VI. That the finest evidence that God holds nothing against us is the fact that we hold nothing against our fellowman. (See Matt. 6: 14, 15.)

“ ’Tis not enough to weep my sins,
 ’Tis but one step to heaven;
 When I am kind to others, then
 I know myself forgiven.”

VII. That there are two very bad things about the unforgiving man:

1. He is downright mean; he is "wicked." Instead of being softened by the experience of mercy, some grow more exacting, more harsh.
2. He is on the way to torment. While the Lord is merciful toward the humble beggar, he is severe with the unmerciful; the unmerciful man shall be delivered to the tormentors.

MEMORY SELECTION

"Then came Peter and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." (Verses 21, 22.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What is the title of this parable? What were the circumstances that brought forth the parable from the lips of the Master?
2. Tell the story of the unmerciful servant.
3. Point out the contrast between the treatment received and the treatment given by this servant.
4. What fate befell this servant?
5. What practical lessons have you learned from the parable?
6. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10: 1-18

The occasion of this parable is found in the preceding chapter. Jesus had healed the blind man, who, naturally, become a follower. According to a decision already made, the man was excommunicated. (John 9: 22, 34.) When Jesus learned of this unkind treatment, he found the man and spoke this tender parable for his encouragement.

In the parable he said of himself, "I am the good shepherd."

He then went on to point out his right to shepherd God's people by six particulars. Unto these particulars we shall give attention.

- I. *He enters by the door*, the legitimate means of access to the sheep. (Verses 1-3.) "To him the porter (or under-shepherd) openeth." Who is this porter? The figure includes every witness that introduced the Savior to the people of God: The old Testament Scriptures, the testimony of John, Jesus' life, teaching, miracles, etc. (See John 5: 30-40.)
- II. *He leads the sheep*. (Verses 4-6.) He does not drive them. He sets the example or pattern of life and calls upon them to follow. "A stranger," he said, "will they not follow." A man once changed garments with a Palestine shepherd, but the sheep followed the shepherd, not his garments.
- III. *He protects the sheep*. (Verses 7-13.) In verse 7 Jesus asserts, "I am the door of the sheep." But how can he be both "the door" and "the shepherd" of the sheep? The good shepherd is the door—he stands or lies at the door. "When the light has gone," said an eastern shepherd, "and all the sheep are in the fold, I lie in that open space (entrance), and no sheep ever goes out but across my body, and no wolf comes in unless he crosses my body; I am the door." So, he is at the same time the good shepherd and the door.
 1. Unlike the thief, he comes not to take life, but to give life. False religious teachers seek their own good at the expense of God's people. But Jesus seeks the good of God's people at his own expense, even to his hurt.
 2. Unlike the hireling, he does not flee when danger arises. The good shepherd works not for the sake of wages, but for the sake of his sheep. He stands between the flock and the beast of prey.
- IV. *The mutual understanding*. (Verses 14, 15.) The intimacy between Jesus and the disciples has only one parallel: The intimacy that exists between Jesus and the Father.
 1. "I know mine own." (See 2 Tim. 2: 19.) Time was when the thought that God knew you filled your heart with terror; but now it fills your heart with solace. It is a child's comfort and protection for it to be known by the father.

2. "Mine own know me." Intimate association gives this acquaintance. With the voice and the habits of the good shepherd, the sheep are familiar.

V. *He gathers his sheep.* (Verse 16.) These words remind us:

1. Of the Shepherd's prophetic vision: "Other sheep I have which are not of this (Jewish) fold." He saw the bringing in of the Gentiles. (See Matt. 28: 19; Acts 10.)
2. Of the power of love: "Them also must I bring." His love, revealed in the gospel, reaches out to the nations, bringing them into the fold. (See John 12: 32.)
3. Of the unity of the flock: "They shall be one flock, one shepherd."

VI. *He gives his life for the sheep.* (Verses 17, 18.)

1. He does this willingly, making his sacrificial death all the more beautiful. For this cause the Father loves him.
2. He takes up his life again. This is a prediction of his glorious resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father.

MEMORY SELECTION

"The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." (Verse 10.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Give the occasion of this parable, as found in John 9.
2. To whom was the parable primarily spoken?
3. Did Jesus claim to be "the good shepherd?"
4. By how many particulars did he claim the right to shepherd God's people. Name them.
5. Explain: He enters by the door. What is the door? Who is the porter? What does he represent?
6. How does Jesus lead the sheep, or his disciples?
7. Discuss the protection that Jesus gives his disciples. How is he unlike the thief? the hireling?

8. What can you say of the mutual understanding between Jesus and his disciples?
9. Give the meaning of verse 16.
10. Discuss fully verses 17 and 18.
11. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10: 25-37

In verses 25-29 we have the occasion of this parable, so full of pathos and power. Our attention is arrested by the lawyer's two questions:

The first. (Verse 25.) The question was good, but the motive was evil. He was forced to answer his own question. "This do and thou shalt live," said Jesus. From this reply we learn: That obedience leads to life; that love and life are inseparable.

The second. (Verse 29.) The first question was asked to entrap Jesus, the second to justify himself. In response to the second. Jesus spoke the parable, the design of which was to explain the word "neighbor."

In the story we note:

I. *The ruthless robbers.*

1. The Jericho road was rugged, robber-infested. Because travelers had been attacked so often on this road, it became known as "the bloody way."
2. On the highway of life thieves and robbers lurk. They know no god but their own desires. They say that "might makes right." They care not for a fellowman—his rights, his good name, his character, his physical well-being.

II. *The pitiful victim.* (Verse 30.) The world is full of people like him. Men and women are stripped of righteousness, robbed of life's necessities, broken in body, wounded in spirit. Before they come to a full understanding of life, youth is taught false doctrines and robbed of purity.

III. *The selfish passers-by.* (Verses 31, 32.) The priest and Levite were heedless men, representatives of a degenerate religion. They were unmoved by the pain and sorrow of

another. They mistook formalism for the religion of the Lord. They acted on the principle, "What is mine I will keep." The law under which they lived required better treatment of a beast (Deut. 22: 4), yea, of an enemy's beast. (Ex. 23: 4, 5.)

- IV. *The compassionate helper.* (Verses 33-35.) A man of another race, of another religion. In him we find a tender heart, a helping hand, a willing foot, and open purse, an assuring voice. He acted on the principle, "what is mine is thine, and I will share it." He is Christ's ideal man. He translated religion into life. (See Matt. 7: 16; 1 John 3: 17, 18.)

The lawyer was made to answer his own question. (Verses 36, 37.) Every one who helps me or who needs my help is my neighbor. "Go, and do thou likewise"—show mercy on the unfortunate. He cannot survive without it; neither can you.

MEMORY SELECTION

"Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." (Verses 36, 37.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the occasion of this parable. Note the lawyer's two questions. Why did he ask his first question? the second?
2. What was the design of the parable?
3. Tell the story of the good Samaritan.
4. Discuss the work of the ruthless robbers.
5. What was the condition of the unfortunate man when the robbers left him? Of what people does this pitiful victim remind you? Do we find them along the highway of life?
6. Who were the two selfish passers-by? Describe their action.
7. Who was the compassionate helper? Tell of the service he rendered.

8. On what principle did the robbers act? the priest and Levite? the good Samaritan?
9. Was the lawyer forced to answer his own question? Discuss.
10. Who is your neighbor?
11. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE RICH FOOL

Luke 12: 13-21

The occasion of this parable was a blunt exhibition of worldliness. Making the most of it, the Master gave utterance to a most timely admonition. (Verses 13-15.) This admonition he enforced by the story of a rich man. (Verses 16-21.) This man is not exceptional—Jesus did not talk about exceptional people, but the typical.

Let us consider :

- I. *His good traits.* He was a "rich man," but this should not be held against him. Not the possession of wealth, but the love of it is sinful. (1 Tim. 6: 10.) When in righteous hands, money is a blessing.
 1. He accumulated his goods honestly. The ground "brought forth." No man lost by this man's gain.
 2. He was successful. The ground brought forth "plentifully." He was a good producer. He must have been industrious. God wants us to produce all we can.
- II. *His blunders.* A sudden alteration of circumstances in the best revealer of what a person really is. A change in this man's circumstances brought to light the weakness of his character. "He reasoned within himself"—did not take God into counsel—and behold the fruit of human wisdom!
 1. Blindness. He did not recognize the source of his blessing. The ground produced; God's power was behind it all; yet he talked about "my grain," "my goods," etc.
 2. Indecision. Hungry children were around him, yet he did not know what to do with his surplus. "What shall I do?"
 3. Selfishness. Instead of filling empty stomachs, he de-

cided to fill empty barns. He was self-centered. He used "I" six times, "my" five times.

4. Boastfulness. He boasted of the future. "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Five times he said, "I will." (See Prov. 27: 1; James 4: 13-17.)

III. *His fall.* He was severely rebuked: "Thou foolish one." The word "fool" in this place means a person who does not see the things that pass before his eyes. Golden opportunities had passed before him, yet he did not recognize these opportunities. He could have been a dispenser of God's bounty to the poor and thereby gained for himself friends on earth and in heaven.

1. His soul was required. He had said, "my soul," but the Lord took it. Death came at the unexpected, the unwelcome, the unsuitable hour.
2. His goods were scattered. He had said, "my goods," but death showed him to the contrary. Death separated him from his goods. He went one way, his goods another.

Lessons to Learn:

1. Greatness of life depends not on the possession of things. Men may be pigmies with them, or giants without them. (Verses 15.)
2. The distribution as well as the production of goods should be a serious concern. Produce, produce, in God's name produce! Also, distribute, distribute, in God's name distribute! (See 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.)
3. The man who gives God no credit for the gain, seldom uses the gain as God would have him. He who says, "I made it," will also say, "I will keep it, or spend it on myself."
4. The man who leaves God out of his plan will see his plan fail. Note what the man said to himself, also what God said to him.
5. A man and his goods are distinct. They cannot be identified. At death, he goes one way, they another. (See 1

Tim. 6: 7.) This parable should settle forever the question of ownership. (See 1 Cor. 10: 26.)

6. He who gives his soul for the world must in the end lose both the price and the purchase. It is better by far to be rich toward God. (Verse 21.)

MEMORY SELECTION

“Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” (Verse 15.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Give the occasion of this parable.
2. To what timely admonition did Jesus give utterance?
3. How did he enforce this admonition?
4. Is the man of this parable exceptional, or typical?
5. Tell the story of the rich man.
6. What good traits of character does he exhibit? Is it the possession of wealth or is it the love of wealth that is sinful? Give a reason for your answer.
7. Enumerate the blunders that he made. Discuss: His blindness, his indecision, his selfishness, his boastfulness.
8. Tell the story of his fall. What does the word “fool” mean in this place? What became of this man’s soul? his goods?
9. Discuss the lessons that are suggested by the parable.
10. What is the outstanding lesson of the parable, as given in the Memory Selection? Quote the Memory Selection.



CUMBERERS OF THE GROUND

Luke 13: 6-9

This is one of the briefest, yet one of the most meaningful of the parables to which the Master gave utterance. Spoken primarily to the Jewish nation, it also bears a lesson to the church and to the individual Christian.

In the story we see:

- I. *Care*: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard." A favored spot. When a man believes and is baptized, he is planted in the Lord's vineyard. (See Mark 16: 15, 16.) He becomes a subject of God's loving care. God thinks of him, works for him. He is enriched, protected and cultivated by the Divine hand.
- II. *Expectation*: "And he came seeking fruit thereon." Recalling what he had done for the tree, we conclude that he had a right to expect it to bear fruit. Since God has been so good to us, has he not the right to expect us to be fruitful in life? Let us remember that his interest is in the fruit, not the leaves—profession. (See Mark 11: 12ff.) What does he mean by "fruit"?
 1. Something visible—product of life.
 2. Something beautiful. (See Gal. 5: 22, 23.)
 3. Something wholesome. (See Jas. 3: 18.)
 4. Something useful. (See Phil. 1: 22.)
 5. Something that honors the owner of the vineyard. (See John 15: 8; Heb. 13: 15.)
- III. *Disappointment*: "And found none." The soil was fertile, the culture excellent, the environment good; but the tree was barren. The fault was in the tree. It is sad to think of the people who receive gospel privileges, yet are barren in life. At this God is grieved.
- IV. *Anger*. This found expression in two things:
 1. A complaint: "And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and found none." An example of God's longsuffering. (2 Peter 3: 9.)
 2. A curse: "Cut it down."
 - (a) Because it was barren. That which bears no fruit has no right to live. (See Matt. 3: 10; Heb. 6: 7, 8.)
 - (b) Because it cumbered the ground: "Why doth it also cumber the ground?" It was worse than barren: It was a nuisance.

V. *Intercession.* (Verses 8, 9.)

1. Justice demands that the barren should perish, but the merciful Savior intercedes—for the Jewish nation, for the barren Christian. (See Rom. 8: 34.)
2. He bestows additional blessings, seeking to fructify our lives.
3. But mercy itself is powerless to save if, in the end, we do not respond to loving culture. Though the Jewish nation was spared for a time, it fell when it failed to turn to God.

MEMORY SELECTION

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.” (Gal. 5: 22, 23.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. This parable is known as the “parable of the barren fig tree”. To whom was it primarily spoken? Does it contain a lesson for the church also? for the individual Christian?
2. When is a man planted in the Lord’s vineyard, the church? What special care does the Lord give to a Christian?
3. Since God has loved us and cared for us, does he not have a right to expect us to bear fruit? What do we mean by “fruit” of a Christian life?
4. In spite of divine love and culture, some lives fail to produce fruit—they are barren. What is the cause of barrenness in life?
5. Discuss: Divine anger. Is God angry at barrenness? Does the life that bears no fruit have a right to live?
6. Who is the great Intercessor? For whom does he intercede? If, in spite of the mercy of the Savior, we fail to respond to Divine culture, what will become of us? What became of the Jewish nation?
7. Quote the Memory Selection.
8. What practical lesson do you gain from this parable?

THE NARROW DOOR

Luke 13: 22-30

On the way to Jerusalem, one of the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, are they few that are saved"? He answered with an admonition and a warning. The admonition: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." (The kingdom of heaven is conceived of as a house.) The warning: "For many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

The Master enforced his answer with a parable. In this parable we see a door, a narrow door, a closed door.

I. *A door.*

1. It is a door of escape. Those who enter shut themselves off from the evils of the past—all the sins which hound them. (Ex. 14: 14.) Jesus is the door. (John 10: 9; Acts 4: 12.)
2. It is also a door of advancement. It is a passage into the abundant life. (John 10: 10.) In this beautiful house patriarchs and prophets feast. (Verses 28, 29; Luke 14: 15.)

II. *A narrow door.* It is called "narrow" because it excludes so "many." While it is wide enough to admit the obedient, it is too narrow to admit the disobedient. Every sin must be laid aside, else entrance is impossible. Let us take a look at the people who are excluded:

1. The indolent. Only those who "strive" can enter. (Verse 24.)
2. The mere professors of the Lord. (Matt. 7: 21; Luke 6: 46.)
3. The self-righteous. (Matt. 5: 20; Rom. 10: 1-3.)
4. The morally unclean. (Gal. 5: 19-21.)
5. The ambitious. (Matt. 18: 1-3.)
6. The idol worshipper. (Matt. 19: 24.)
7. The unborn. (John 3: 1-5.)

III. *The closed door.* Some day the master of the house will rise up and shut the door. This points to the death of the individual (Heb. 9: 27), or to the second coming of Christ (Matt. 25: 1-13). The closing of the door does not mean the same

thing to all men. To those on the outside, it means one thing; to those on the inside, it means something entirely different.

1. To the wicked (the ones on the outside) this will mean hopeless exclusion. In spite of their profession and anguish of heart, they will be excluded. (Verses 25-28.)
2. To the righteous (the ones on the inside) this will mean security against evil intrusions, the darkness and danger of the outside. (Verses 28-30.) All spiritual blessings are in Christ. (Eph. 1: 3.)

The door stands before you, my friend, as the way of escape, as an invitation to the higher life. We conclude with the Savior's admonition: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door."

MEMORY SELECTION

"And behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last." (Verse 30.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In verses 22 and 23, note the occasion of this parable. What was the question of the disciple?
2. How did Jesus answer this question? What was his admonition? his warning?
3. Tell the story of the parable, by which he enforced the admonition and the warning.
4. What can you say of the door? What twofold blessing does it hold for those who enter? What does Jesus say about the door in John 10: 9?
5. Why is the door called narrow? Is it too narrow for the obedient? for the disobedient? Note the different personalities that are excluded by reason of the narrowness of the door.
6. What is the significance of the closed door? When is the door of hope closed against man?
7. Will the closing of the door mean the same thing to all people? What will it mean to the ones on the outside? the ones on the inside?
8. Quote the Memory Selection.

THE SLIGHTED INVITATION**Luke 14: 15-24**

The occasion: Jesus was in the home of a Pharisee; this parable was a dinner-table talk.

We note:

- I. *The feast.* The gospel of the Lord is a feast for hungry souls. In more ways than one is this true.
 1. In the quality of the provisions—food for the soul, the inner man.
 2. In the abundance of the provisions—inexhaustible.
 3. In the fellowship it affords—it becomes our privilege to sit down by the Master and our brethren.
 4. In the joy it gives. A feast is a symbol of joy. The gospel gives joy unspeakable.
- II. *The invited guests:* "He bade many." Though the invitation was given through the instrumentality of a servant, it was not to be despised on that account: for it came from God.
 1. Those "that were bidden." (Verse 17.) These were the Jews, the people with superior advantages. But "with one consent" the invitation was rejected. Notice the excuses offered:
 - (a) By the first. (Verse 18.) Some allow the "cares of this world" to stand between them and the feast. The sin of misplaced emphasis.
 - (b) By the second. (Verse 19.) Some are blinded by "the deceitfulness of riches" and reject the gospel invitation.
 - (c) By the third. (Verse 20.) This man represents the pleasure seekers—those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. (2 Tim. 3: 4b.)
 2. Those in the "streets and lanes." (Verse 21.) The publicans, the harlots, the Samaritans—the people with fewer advantages. And the gracious invitation was accepted. (Verse 22.) Many were brought in, and yet there was room?
 - (a) Where? In the Father's heart. (1 Tim. 2: 4.) In

Christ's covenant. (2 Cor. 5: 14.) In the Father's house. (John 14: 1.)

- (b) For whom? For the indifferent. (Verses 19-20.)
 For the indigent. (Verse 21.) For the outcast, the abandoned of men. (Verse 23.) (See Matt. 8: 11.)
3. Those in the "highways and hedges." (Verse 23.) The Gentiles. (Rom. 11: 11.) Those without opportunities.

III. *The lessons taught:*

1. Those who decline the invitation shall be forever excluded from the feast. (Verse 24.) The rejectors of the Lord will be rejected by the Lord. (Prov. 1: 24-26.)
2. The stubbornness of man shall not hinder the purpose of God—his feast shall be filled. (See Matt. 22: 10.)

MEMORY SELECTION

"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 8: 11, 12.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What was the occasion of the parable of the slighted invitation?
2. Of what is a feast a symbol? In how many ways? Enumerate them.
3. Who are the invited guests? Though the gospel invitation comes through human instrumentality, should it be slighted on that account? Who are the ones "that were bidden"? Did they accept? What excuses did they offer? Who are the ones in the "streets and lanes"? Did they accept? What is the significance of the statement, "Yet there is room?" Where is there room? and for whom is there room? Who are the ones in the "highways and hedges?"
4. What shall become of those people who decline the Lord's gracious invitation? Will the rejectors of the Lord be rejected by the Lord? Read a Biblical passage in support of your answer.

5. Will the stubbornness of man hinder the great purpose of God? Will his feast be filled with happy guests?
6. Quote the Memory Selection.

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THE EMPTY HOUSE

Luke 11: 24-26

Though this parabolic utterance had a direct and immediate application to the people of that generation, it gives expression to a principle which is true for all generations.

In the story we see:

I. *The house.*

1. It is prepared for a dwelling place. Its mission is fulfilled only when occupied by a good tenant.
2. Like a house, the soul of man is made for a dwelling place—made to be occupied. Its true and rightful occupant is the Spirit of God. (See John 14: 23; 1 Cor. 3: 16.)

II. *The house and its evil tenant.*

1. By some foul or unfair means, an undesirable tenant has entered the house and worked havoc with it.
2. The evil tenant of sin enters man; it occupies the dwelling place which God alone should occupy; it works havoc with man—with his soul, his body, his spirit. Sin is a destructive agency.

III. *The empty house.*

1. Because of the mischief he works, the undesirable tenant is evicted; the house is "swept and garnished," but a good tenant is not secured.
2. Because of the mischief that sin works in a man's life, so evident to man himself, it is evicted. The primary principles of the gospel are obeyed. The soul is "swept and garnished," but the good tenant is not secured—the graces are not supplied, service is not rendered, the Lord's work is sadly neglected.

IV. *The house and its evil tenants.*

1. An empty house does not remain empty many days. It

invites stray and strange guests—the owls, the bats, the tramps. If a good tenant is not secured, the evil tenant with multiplied power will re-enter. This is what actually happened in our story.

2. Because the soul is not occupied with God, sin re-enters. An empty soul does not remain empty very long; the vacuum will be filled. “And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first.” (See Prov. 24: 30-34; 2 Peter 1: 5-9; 2: 20-22.)

Keep your heart filled with good thoughts; keep your hands employed in good works; keep your feet busy in running errands of mercy; keep your eyes turned toward things that are beautiful; let your ears be open always to wholesome words. Else, the evil tenant of sin will re-enter your life and your last state will be worse than the first.

MEMORY SELECTION

“For if, after they have escaped the defilement of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire.” (2 Peter 2: 20-22.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What does the house of the parable represent?
2. Who is the true and rightful occupant of the house of the soul? Answer with Biblical quotations.
3. What evil tenant often enters the house of the soul? What destruction does he work to man?
4. How may the evil tenant in the soul of man be evicted?
5. When the evil tenant of sin is evicted from the soul of man, what should be done? Should the house be left “swept and and garnished,” or should the good occupant be secured?

6. When the good tenant is not secured for the house of man's soul, what happens? Describe the last state of this man.
7. How may we keep the evil tenant of sin from re-entering our lives? Discuss.
8. Quote the Memory Selection, pointing out its relation to the parable in hand.



PARABLES OF GRACE

Luke 15: 1-24

The first of these parables is taken from pastoral life—a story of a shepherd and his sheep; the second from domestic life—the woman and her coin; and the third from family life—the father and his son. Broadly speaking, the purpose of each is the same, namely, To teach the Pharisees of that age and of every age the attitude of God toward the sinner. (Verses 1, 2.) And let us be here reminded that the attitude of God toward the lost should be the attitude of God's children toward the lost.

In these beautiful stories, four scenes are presented:

- I. *The lost soul.* The sheep, the coin, the son—each was lost. When away from the shepherd and the fold, the sheep was lost; when separated from the woman, the coin was lost; when away from father and home, the son was lost. When separated from God and God's people, a man is lost. And the loss is twofold: First, God loses man, his creature; second, man loses God, his Creator. But in each case the reason for loss is different.
 1. The sheep lost itself through stupidity. "Away on the mountain, wild and bare," it was painfully aware of its lost condition, but unable to make its way back to the fold. The lost sheep represents the careless, the bewildered sinner. Some men are lost not through rebellion, but carelessness. Step by step, they drift away from God.
 2. The coin was lost through the carelessness of another. Through some unfortunate circumstances it became separated from its owner. It was unaware of its lost condition. Through no fault of their own, millions of people are lost. The time and place of their birth seem to be

against them. Poor heathens in a benighted land have never heard of God, of God's Son, of God's Book. Though lost, they know it not.

3. The son was lost through self-will. He left the father's house and made his way into another country. There he was in a state of isolation, of wastefulness, of starvation, of humiliation. He represents the voluntary sinner—the person who, by deliberate choice, sins against light and love. The person who sins in full knowledge of the divine will and compassion goes fartherest from God—into a “far country.”

II. *The grief of the loser.* In this picture bowed heads are seen, and sighs are heard. The shepherd, the woman, the father, all are overwhelmed and deeply grieved.

1. The shepherd grieves the loss of the sheep. His grief must be due to pity, for the sheep is of little value—only one of a hundred and it can be soon replaced. Oh, the pity and compassion of the Good Shepherd for lost souls!
2. The woman grieves the loss of a coin. Her sorrow is not due to pity—for who would pity a senseless coin?—but to self-interest. She wants the coin for herself. Man is a part of God, and God wants man for himself. In this case the loss is greater—not one of a hundred, but one of ten, and it cannot be easily replaced.
3. The father grieves not the loss of sheep or of a coin, but a son—not one of a hundred, not one of ten, but one of two. In this the sorrow of the loser reaches a touching climax—it is a bereavement. No grief is comparable for one moment to the grief caused by the loss of a child. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel?” God laments the obduracy of sinners. (Psa. 81: 13, 14; Isa. 48: 18.)

III. *The search.* Though lost, the sheep still belongs to the shepherd, the coin to the woman, the son to the father. Though lost in sin, man still belongs to God. God does not call new things into existence to take the place of those who stray; he seeks to recover, to reclaim. We shall now observe the search.

1. By the shepherd. Leaving the ninety and nine, he penetrates the thickets, crosses swollen streams, climbs rugged mountains. He goes not as a hireling, or as a slave driven to his task, but of his own accord. Love is the sublime motive. Very persistent is he, for he searches until he finds. (See Luke 19: 10.) God wants the knowledge of his love and his will to reach men. His people, therefore, are commanded to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16: 15, 16.)
 2. By the woman. She lights the candle; she sweeps; she seeks diligently; she finds. For at least two reasons she searches: The coin belongs to her; it is useless while lost. For at least two reasons God seeks the lost man: Man belongs to God; he is useless while lost. So, God lights the candle of inspiration and sends forth light-bearers into the dark places of earth.
 3. By the father. Here we have a striking difference. The son had departed of his own accord, in the light of the father's love and will; he knew the way home. Therefore, the father does not go out in search for him; he must discover himself and return. Those who leave God in the light of his word, must return in the light of the same **word**.
- IV. *The joy of restoration.* In this scene, grief is turned into gladness, sighs into a song, heaviness of heart into happiness. There is joy in the soul of the one saved, but greater joy in the soul of the Savior. No joy is comparable with the joy of successful love.
1. Having found the sheep, the shepherd "layeth it on his shoulders." Far from being oppressed by the burden, he rejoices when he feels the weight. No harsh word is heard. No stroke is seen. All is tenderness.
 2. The woman, like the shepherd, is overcome with joy, which is multiplied when she shares it with her friends.
 3. The father receives the son. Through days of sorrow he has been longing for his son, looking for his son, At last he saw him. Forgetting the dignity of the years, he ran to meet him. Upon the penitent son he bestowed honor,

authority, and freedom. Then came the merrymaking, festive joy in the father's house. The sound of music and dancing was heard. Not a sheep, not a coin, but a son is found. In this, the joy of the finder reaches a climax. In the first recovery—that of the sheep by the shepherd—there is joy in heaven; in the second, the joy comes nearer the throne—it is heard among angels; in the third the joy reaches the throne—the Father is touched.

MEMORY SELECTION

"I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance." (Verse 7.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What three parables are included in the lesson? From what phase of life was the first taken? the second? the third?
2. What was the Master's purpose in giving utterance to these parables?
3. What four scenes are presented in the parables?
4. When was the sheep lost? the coin? the son? When is a man lost? Account for the loss of the sheep, the coin, the son.
5. Why does the shepherd grieve the loss of the sheep? the woman the loss of the coin? the father the loss of the son?
6. Discuss: The search by the shepherd, by the woman, by the father.
7. Tell of the joy of restoration: First, by the shepherd; second, by the woman; third, by the father.
8. In these parables, do we have the attitude of God toward the lost? Should the attitude of God toward the people who are lost be our attitude toward them? Discuss.
9. Quote the Memory Selection.

THE LOST SHEEP

Luke 15: 1-7

The occasion of this little parable, so full of beauty and pathos, is seen in the first two verses.

We note:

I. *The Sheep.* (See Psa. 100: 3.) Let us describe it.

1. A wandering sheep. It is its nature to wander. Carelessness seems to be an innocent thing; but through carelessness people are lost. (Heb. 2: 3.)
2. A lost sheep. Away from the shepherd and the fold. In the wilderness, on a mountain. A lost person is one who is away from God. (See Isa. 59: 1, 2.)
3. A lonely sheep. The lost are always lonely. In Ephesians 2: 11 and 12 we have a picture of the loneliness of a sinner: He is Christless, homeless, hopeless, Godless.
4. A helpless sheep. Of all creatures, a sheep is perhaps the most helpless, defenseless. The lost sheep is bewildered, conscious of its lost condition, but unable to make its way back to the fold. So, the sinner.

"There were ninety and nine, that safely lay

In the shelter of the fold,

But one was out on the hills away,

Far off from the gates of gold—

Away on the mountain wild and bare,

Away from the tender Shepherd's care."

II. *The Shepherd.* (See Psa. 23: 1-4.) Let us now describe him.

1. A watchful Shepherd. Ever mindful of the fold. Takes note of the individual. When only one is missing, he knows it. (See John 10: 14.)
2. A sorrowful Shepherd. His grief is due to two things:
 - (a) Self-interest. Though the sheep is gone, it is still his. And he grieves the loss. (See Hos. 11: 8.)
 - (b) Pity. He knows the plight of the lonely sheep in the wilderness. (See Psa. 103: 13; Matt. 9: 36.)
3. A seeking Shepherd. Leaving the ninety and nine, he goes

"after that which is lost." He seeks to recover. (See Luke 19: 10.)

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?
But the Shepherd made answer: This of mine
Has wandered away from me,
And, although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep."

4. Note how he seeks:

(a) Spontaneously. He does not go as a hireling, or as a slave driven to the task, but freely.

(b) Persistently: "Until he find it." He goes the limit. The incarnation. The atoning death. He stood between the sheep and the beast of sin. (John 10: 11.)

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain track?
They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.
Lord, whence are Thy hands to rent and torn?
They are pierced by many a thorn."

5. A successful Shepherd. Though he recovers only one, he considers his efforts well spent. (See Matt. 16: 26.) In the recovery we see:

(a) Tenderness: "He layeth it on his shoulders." He did not drive it. He carried it. There is no harshness. All is tenderness. (See Isa. 40: 11.)

(b) Joy. Far from being oppressed by the burden, he is happy when he feels the weight of the sheep on his shoulders. This joy was greatly increased when he shared it. (Verse 7.)

"But all through the mountain, thunder-riv'n,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry from the gates of heav'n,
Rejoice! I have found my sheep!
And the angels echoed around the throne!
Rejoice! for the Lord brings back his own."

MEMORY SELECTION

"I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance." (Verse 7.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In what two verses do we find the occasion of this parable?
2. Tell the story of the parable. Read it aloud.
3. Quote Psa. 100: 3.
4. Describe the sheep. Are some people like the sheep? Discuss.
5. Read Psa. 23: 1-4.
6. Describe the Shepherd. Is he watchful? Is he interested in the security of the sheep? Is the Lord interested in our security? Does he seek the sheep? and how? When he finds only one sheep, does he consider his effort well spent? Why do you answer as you do?
7. Quote the Memory Selection. Does this verse contain the great lesson of the parable?



THE LOST COIN

Luke 15: 8-10

Note:

- I. *The coin.*
 1. Not base but precious metal. Moulded and minted into money. Bearing the image of the king. (See Luke 20: 24, 25.)
 2. Reminding us of a man. He is precious. Mounded into the image and likeness of God. (Gen. 1: 27; 2: 7; Acts 17: 28; Eph. 4: 24.)
- II. *The lost coin.*
 1. It was lost by the owner, from the owner. While lost it was out of circulation, therefore worthless. While lost, the image was defaced, therefore without beauty.
 2. A man is lost by the church, from the church. While lost he is out of circulation, or service. Though precious,

he is worthless while lost—out of service. While lost, the Divine image is defaced, therefore, he is without moral or spiritual beauty.

III. *The anxiety over the coin.* Being anxious about the lost coin, she forgets the nine safe ones. Her anxiety excited an action of an intense kind—she searched for the coin.

1. An earnest search. All available means—broom, candle, members of her body—were employed. Consider the means God uses in redeeming man: The warmth of his love, the light of his word (Psa. 119: 105), the efforts of his own people.
2. A diligent search: “Until she find it.” God does not give man up so easily. (Jer. 31: 3.) The church should not give man up.

IV. *The recovery of the coin.*

1. Finding the coin resulted in joy to the finder. There is no joy comparable to the joy of a successful search. Her joy was multiplied when she shared it with her neighbors.
2. When the church finds the lost member, she rejoices. When the church rejoices, angels in heaven rejoice.

We Learn:

1. That a man is lost while out of circulation or service.
2. That a man may be lost through carelessness. Like the sheep, he may be lost through his own carelessness; like the coin, he may be lost through the carelessness of another—the church.
3. That the lost can be recovered. Divine guidance will reveal the way to his heart.
4. That the lost should be recovered. He is worth it. The Lord has laid upon us this obligation. When fulfilled, it will give great joy.

MEMORY SELECTION

“Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Verse 10.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Read aloud the little parable.
2. Describe the coin. Of what does the coin remind us?
3. Did the coin lose itself? Or was it lost by the carelessness of another? Are some people lost through the carelessness of the church, or some members of the church?
4. Describe the woman's anxiety over the coin. What action did her intense anxiety excite? Should the church become anxious about the lost? And what should the church do about lost souls?
5. Discuss the recovery of the coin and the joy resulting. Are we made happy when we find a lost person?
6. What lessons do we learn? What is the chief lesson?
7. Quote the Memory Selection.

◆ ◆ ◆
THE LOST SON**Luke 15:11-24**

This has been called "the pearl of the parables." It is the last of the three "parables of grace" spoken by our Lord in the land of Perea. The purpose of it was to set forth God's love toward the penitent. The narrative, which has been called "the most beautiful story ever told," presents four views of a wayward son. We see the son in his departure, in the "far country," in his return, and in his reception at the old home.

- I. *In his departure.* (Verses 11-13a.) Becoming weary of home restraint, the son desired to go where his passions would have free reign, where every impulse would find an avenue of expression. We see here—
 1. His request: "Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me." His mistakes are obvious. He wanted his father's goods, but not his presence. He mistook license for liberty. He had the highest type of liberty—that of a son; yet he did not appreciate it. He thought all the good things were in another country; he was blind to the blessings at hand.
 2. The father's response: "And he divided unto them (his two sons) his living." The father was generous and gave

to the son his portion. This reminds us that God gives us our portion, he tells us how to use it, but does not hinder the freedom of will.

3. The journey: "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country." We note that he left unhindered. The father with his servants could have held him by force; but that would have been treating him as a slave, not a son. Compulsion would not have changed his heart. He also left unattended, or alone. Though the father loved him, he did not follow him. Though God the Father loves all men, he follows no man into sin. All who take the journey into the forbidden country, must go without God.
4. The destination: "A far country." The land of license or unrestrained passions is far from God, far from home, far from plenty. No two things are farther apart than sin and righteousness.

II. *In the "far country."* (Verses 13b-16.) These verses give us the experience of the young man while away from father, away from home, away from tenderest ties, in the far country of lust and unbridled desires. We see here—

1. Wastefulness: "There he wasted his substance with riotous living." He spent all—his money, his strength, his fine manhood. Sin is a state of wastefulness. Sin saps a man's vitality, destroys his powers. (Jas. 1: 15.)
2. "A mighty famine." The country came under the grip of a famine, not an ordinary famine, but "a mighty" one. Lust allured him, then mocked him. There is always a famine in Satan's kingdom, where nothing is produced but husks—food fit only for swine.
3. Starvation: "He began to be in want." He who wastes his moral and physical strength in sin will eventually come to want. Away from God and God's people, the soul starves. Jesus said unto Satan: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4: 4.)
4. Humiliation: "And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his

field to feed swine." We observe that the citizen did not hire him—this was no time to hire hands, while the country was in the grip of a famine. The young man "joined himself" to the citizen, i.e., all but forced himself upon the citizen. From the standpoint of the Jew, he engaged in the vilest occupation—feeding swine. He lost his self-respect. His experience had disqualified him for nobler things. Sin leads to shame and humiliation.

5. Loneliness: "No man gave unto him." Neither food nor love abounded there. The devil has no pity for the victim he helps to crush. (See Matt. 27 : 3, 4.)

III. *In his return.* (Verses 17-20a.) This young man did five things necessary for any person to do who makes the upward journey toward God and heaven:

1. He made a discovery: "He came to himself." This implies that he had been beside himself. This explains why he had left home. Sin is an abnormal state. We are beside ourselves when we waste our powers. The penitent is the real man. When a sinner repents, he comes to himself.
2. He reflected: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger." It has been said that "memory is the lever of repentance." When the memory of brighter and better days is awakened in the soul, repentance begins its fine work.
3. He made a determination: "I will arise and go to my father." "I will arise," for he had been groveling in the dust. "And go," for he was far from home. "To my father," for he was now with the swine. Before he can again enter the father's house, the will or the executive faculty of the mind must be brought into play.
4. He surrendered his pride. This is seen in his confession. He determined to say: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Only one who has surrendered his pride can or will make such a confession.

5. He translated his determination into action: "He arose, and came." The will of the mind found expression in the body. We can drift away from God, but a resolute effort is necessary to return.

IV. *In his reception.* (Verses 20b-24.) The scene is not in the desolation of the far country, but in the familiar places around the old home—a place of love and plenty.

1. The father saw him. While "afar off" the father saw him, indicating that he had been looking for him. God is quick to recognize the first sign of repentance and to mark the first homeward step.
2. The father met him. He didn't wait for the son to come all the way. In his eagerness, he ran. God is eager to meet the penitent child.
3. The father embraced him. This, also, was unusual. The son's ragged, half-starved condition made no difference. Jesus said: "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6: 37.) And the apostle Paul said: "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly." (Rom. 5: 20.)
4. The father restored him. Said he to the servants: "Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Give him the "best robe" of honor for rags of dishonor; "a ring" of authority for weakness; and "shoes" of freedom for barefeet of slavery. Only free men wore shoes in those days.
5. The father made him glad. The father continued: "Bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." There is joy in the presence of Christians, in the presence of angels, in the presence of the Father himself over one sinner that repents.

In the parable we have—

1. A warning for the innocent. The sinner must suffer for his sins. This is one of the inevitables of life.
2. An example for the sinner. All who sin like the prodigal should also repent like the prodigal.

3. An encouragement to the penitent. God received the penitent. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55: 7.)

MEMORY SELECTION

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3: 9.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What was the Lord's purpose in speaking this parable?
2. In the story, how many views of the younger son do we have? Name them.
3. Why did the son desire to leave home? Note: His request; the father's response; the journey; and the destination.
4. Relate his experience in the "far country." Discuss: His wastefulness; the famine; starvation; humiliation; loneliness.
5. Tell the story of his return to the father's house. What five things did he do in this connection?
6. Discuss the loving reception accorded him by his father.
7. In the story, what warning do we have for the innocent? what example for the sinner? what encouragement for the penitent?
8. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE ELDER SON

Luke 15: 25-32

This chapter relates the story of two sons. One represents the sin of the body, the other the sin of the disposition. One was lost in a "far country," the other was lost at home.

The younger son: Disobedient—left home against the father's will; wasteful—he "spent all"; immoral—"devoured his living

with harlots"; not until the last did he manifest any strength of character.

The elder son: Obedient; hard-working—was "in the field" when his brother returned; moral—had opportunity to "sow wild oats," but he didn't—the father divided "unto them his living"; not until the last was the weakness of his character brought to light.

- I. *The sin.* The elder son was morally clean, but his disposition was evil. The occasion of his sin was the return of his brother. Let us analyze his sin:
 1. Suspicion: "He called . . . and enquired," etc. Evil surmizing.
 2. Anger: "He was angry," temporarily insane.
 3. Sulkiness: "Would not go in."
 4. Self-righteousness: "I never transgressed," etc. (See Luke 18: 11, 12.)
 5. Self-pity: "Thou never gavest me a kid."
 6. Envy: "Thou killedst for him the fatted calf." (See 1 Cor. 12: 26; 13: 4.)
 7. Contempt: "When this, thy son," etc. Wouldn't call him "my brother." He confessed the sin of his brother, not his own.
 8. Malice: The father forgave, but he did not.
- II. *The suffering.* On the trail of human experience, suffering follows sin.
 1. Of the penitent. The elder son should have loved him and welcomed him home; instead, he made him unhappy. Brotherly love would have saved him from suffering.
 2. Of the father. His joy was interrupted, his love wounded. Love is God's nature: "God is love." The commandment to love is his supreme commandment. (Matt. 22: 34ff.) He who violates a great law commits a great sin.
 3. Of the family. The family was made unhappy. The sound of merrymaking was heard no more. Festive joy cannot survive in the presence of an evil disposition.
 4. Of the elder son. His disposition estranged him—cut him off from love, joy, fellowship. He made himself miserable.

III. *The entreaty.* The father had run to embrace the returning prodigal; he went out and "entreated" the elder son. He went to the son's heart and spoke in tenderness. Note here:

1. What he called him: Not "servant" or "slave," but "son," an appellation most endearing. (See 1 John 3: 2.)
2. What he promised him:
 - (a) Perpetual fellowship: "Thou art ever with me."
 - (b) His treasures: "All that is mine is thine." (See 1 Cor. 3: 21, 22.)
3. The appeal to his reason. (Verse 32.) He sought to reunite brother to brother—"This thy brother."

Did the father accomplish his purpose? Did the elder son enter the home? Did he forgive his brother? We cannot say. The curtain of the narrative falls with the younger son on the inside, the elder son on the outside. The father's love was his only power. If love failed, there was no other means to be used. The evil disposition, though possessed by one who is morally correct, will shut him out of heaven. Jesus said unto the Pharisees, the separatists or "Puritans" of that day, "The publican's and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." In order to be saved, man must be morally right; he must also have a loving disposition. One is just as essential as the other.

The parable of the sheep reminds us that a person may be lost through carelessness of his own; the coin, that a person may be lost through the carelessness of another; the prodigal son, that a person may be lost through rebellion or immorality; and the elder son, that one may be lost through an evil disposition.

MEMORY SELECTION

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4: 31, 32.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Of what two sons do we learn in Luke 15? What sin does the first son represent? the second?
2. Give a character delineation of the younger son? of the elder?
3. Give an analysis of the sin of disposition, as manifested by the elder son. What was the occasion of his sin?
4. What suffering followed his sin? Tell of the suffering of the penitent; of the father; of the family; of the elder son himself.
5. How did the father deal with the sin of disposition? Did he rebuke the elder son? Tell of his "entreaty." What did the father call him? What did he promise him? What appeal did he make to reason?
6. Did the father accomplish his purpose? When the curtain of the narrative falls, where do we find the younger son? the elder son?
7. Discuss: The Sinfulness of an Evil Disposition.
8. Quote the Memory Selection.
9. Point out the different ways that people may be lost, as suggested in the last paragraph of our outline.

**THE UNJUST STEWARD****Luke 16: 1-14**

We shall study:

- I. *The story.* (Verses 1-8a.) In it we have—
 1. The steward, an agent or business manager of the rich man. The tenants were responsible to him; he was responsible to his landlord.
 2. The steward's dismissal. (Verses 1, 2.) He was dismissed on the charge of extravagance.
 3. The steward's perplexity. (Verse 3.) Seeing the end of his position at hand, the question came, "What shall I do when discharged?" Luxury had unfitted him for hard work; he was too proud to beg.
 4. The steward's prudence. (Verses 4-7.) He won for himself a home with his tenants by reducing their bills.

5. The steward commended. (Verse 8a.) Not for his extravagance or injustice, but for his prudence was he commended. (For instance, we do not admire David's deception at Gath, but we do admire his shrewdness. See 1 Sam. 21: 10ff.)

II. *The application of the story.* (Verses 8b-13.) In these verses the Master points out:

1. A contrast. (Verse 8a.) "The sons of this world" use more wisdom and diligence in attaining their objective than do the "sons of light" in attaining their objective—the glories of heaven.

2. An admonition. (Verse 9.) "Mammon," the Syriac word for money. It is called "unrighteous," not that the material of which it is made is corrupt, but because it is often used for unrighteous purposes.

(a) There are three possible uses to make of it: Like the prodigal son (Luke 15), we may waste it; like the rich fool (Luke 12), we may hoard it; or like the steward of this lesson, we may with it gain a wonderful home.

(b) Knowing that our stewardship will soon end, let us use our money in gaining heaven.

3. A character-test. (Verse 10.) It is fidelity to principles, not the ostentatious thing we do, that really counts. God tests us by placing in our hands little things—money and other things.

(a) If we misuse earthly treasures, heavenly treasures will be denied us. (Verse 11.)

(b) If we misuse the things of God, how shall we expect him to give us our own? (Verse 12.) We are God's hired hands, working with his goods. (1 Cor. 10: 26.) We are serving our apprenticeship. If we make good, he will entrust us with riches of our own. (See Rom. 8: 17; Rev. 21: 7.)

4. An axiomatic truth. (Verse 13.) A Christian who misuses his means, either by wasting it or by hoarding it, is a failure. In verse 14, notice the effect of his parable on

the Pharisees. No one scoffs at a scriptural lesson on giving but the lover of money.

The lesson is obvious. Let us not misuse our material goods by wasting them, or by hoarding them. Let us use them as a means of gaining for ourselves a beautiful home in heaven when our stewardship here comes to an end.

MEMORY SELECTION

“Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into eternal tabernacles.” (Verse 9.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Tell the story of the unjust steward.
2. What is a steward? Who was responsible to him? To whom was he responsible?
3. Why was this steward dismissed?
4. What then was his perplexity?
5. How did he manifest wisdom?
6. In verse 8, what contrast does the Master draw?
7. What admonition is contained in verse 9? How can we make to ourselves friends by means of money? What are the three possible uses we may make of money?
8. What character-test is contained in verse 10?
9. What is the prominent lesson of the parable?
10. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16: 19-31

This story is either history or a parable. If history, it has happened; if a parable, it may happen. In either case the lesson is the same, and the lesson is paramount. Always, when we open the Book, we should look for the lesson. The story is built around two men, who present a contrast.

- I. *The men in life.* (Verses 19-21.) One was a “rich man” (Dives), the other (Lazarus) was a beggar, depending on

the hospitality of a cold world for his existence in it. Dives was "clothed in purple and fine linen;" Lazarus did not have enough clothing to hide his sores, for the dogs licked them. Dives fared "sumptuously every day;" Lazarus hungered for the crumbs that fell from Dives' table, and it seems that the crumbs were denied him. Dives, presumably, was in good health; Lazarus was "full of sores"—not scars, but "sores," open and unbound. Dives lived in a home of comfort; Lazarus was homeless—"laid at his gate." Dives, like all rich men, must have had friends and admirers; Lazarus' only associates were the dogs. The pity of brute animals came in where human sympathy had failed. Though they lived in the same world and in the same community, the men were separated—separated by a gulf which the rich man made. The same gulf, as we shall see, was grimly perpetuated in eternity.

II. *The men in death.* (Verse 22.) Lazarus "the beggar died." Dives also died. In the experience of death they strike a common level for the first and the last time. Lazarus' burial is not mentioned. Perhaps, the neglect that allowed him to die left him unburied. Dives was buried. In all probability the burial was an elaborate affair. It may be that flowers were brought and words of eulogy spoken. Beautiful angels came for Lazarus and bore him upward to a place of repose. Angels did not come for Dives.

III. *The men in eternity.* (Verses 23-31.) Both are now in the unseen world (Hades), but in different departments. There is still a contrast between them, but their positions are strangely reversed. Death changed the fortunes of both. Lazarus becomes the rich man, Dives the poor man. As Lazarus had been a beggar at Dives' gate, so Dives became a beggar at Lazarus' gate. Lazarus has worthy friends—Abraham and the angels who had come for him; but Dives is friendless—in a state of loneliness. Lazarus is reposing in the bosom of Abraham; Dives is homeless—beyond the gate of mercy. Lazarus is comforted—no longer is he "full of sores;" Dives is in tormenting flames, worse than Lazarus' sores. In his misery he prays:

(a) For himself, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me."

How unbecoming for him to pray for mercy, the very thing that he had refused or neglected to give. "And send Lazarus," the pitiful victim of his neglect, "that he may dip the tip of his fingers in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame." He did not pray for salvation, which he knew he could not obtain, but for the smallest favor with a dim hope of receiving it. But this petition was denied for two reasons: He had been too selfish with his means; "a great fixed gulf" existed between them—"a great gulf," which could not be crossed or outflanked; a "fixed gulf," not a temporary chasm but a permanent one.

- (b) Abandoning all hope for himself, he interceded for his brethren. But this intercession was also denied for two reasons: The Lord had spokesmen on the earth; and a resurrection-miracle would not change them. If words of truth do not change the heart, the heart will not be changed at all.

Let us Learn:

1. That the sin of Dives was not cruelty or immorality, in the commonly accepted meaning of these words, but the misuse of earthly goods. The hoarding of wealth in a world of pain and hunger is no less sinful than stealing, than drunkenness, than fornication.
2. That we should not live in luxury while Lazarus is begging at our gate. If we allow a gulf to exist between us and Lazarus now, "a great fixed gulf" will separate us from mercy hereafter. The selfish use of wealth is fatal and will bring torment beyond the grave. This is the lesson of the story. However, in turning the light on that great lesson, the Master makes other lessons luminous.
3. That death is not a sudden stop of man's existence. The passing from time to eternity is without a break, like the passing of day into night, or night into day.
4. That memory will not be obliterated by death. "Son, remember!" In eternity, memory will be a source of consolation or misery, depending on the way we live in this present world.

Hell is a place of revived memories—memories that torture, that terrify, that horrify.

5. That if the ordinary means of grace do not change us, we need not expect the extraordinary, the miraculous. If God's word does not awaken us, convert us, miracles would fail also.

MEMORY SELECTION

“But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.” (1 John 3: 17, 18.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Is this story a matter of history, or is it a parable? Whether it is history or a parable, does it make any difference as far as the lesson is concerned?
2. Note the two men in life. How many points of contrast do you see between them? Discuss each point of contrast separately.
3. Note the two men in death. Do we find a contrast in them in the moment of death?
4. Note the two men in eternity. How many points of contrast do you see between them in eternity? Discuss each point separately. Repeat the prayer of Dives. For whom does he pray? What petition did he offer for himself? For what two reasons was this petition denied him? What petition did he offer for his brethren? For what two reasons was this petition rejected?
5. What is the great lesson of the story? What other lessons are suggested?
6. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE UNJUST JUDGE

Luke 18: 1-8

The key to this parable is found in the first verse. As an eminent Bible scholar said, it is “hung up on the front door.”

God's children are often weak in prayer; there are many things around them and on the inside of them that cause them to "faint."

In the narrative we see:

- I. *The judge.* As a public official, he was unjust. As a man, he had neither piety toward God nor pity toward his fellow-man. He boasted of this attitude. (Verse 4.) By way of contrast, the judge represents God. God is just; in him is found mercy and compassion for the sons of men. (Luke 12: 6, 7; John 3: 16; Heb. 2: 6.)
- II. *The widow.* She was poor, defenseless, helpless. The widow has always been an object of pity, especially in those days when Jesus lived in the flesh. In the parable she represents God's "elect." Like the widow, we are poor, defenseless, helpless. We are obliged to look upward to God for life, for energy, yea, for our very existence. (See Acts 17: 28.) Apart from him we cannot survive. As a branch depends on the vine (John 15: 5) or the limb on the body (Eph. 5: 30), so we are dependent upon our heavenly Father.
- III. *The widow's petition.* Because she was defenseless, she became a victim of cruelty. It seems that her weakness invited oppression. In her desire for justice, she appealed to the judge. Note the method she employed:
 1. She did not try to bribe him. She was too poor for this.
 2. She did not threaten him. She did not have power to frighten him.
 3. She did not appeal by proxy. She had no one to take her part.
 4. She went to him in person.
 5. She made known her desires. She refused to allow a judge of his character to intimidate her. In this she was bold.
 6. She appealed "often unto him." Failing in the first attempt, she did not give up or "faint."
- IV. *The judge's response.*
 1. The answer was delayed. (Verse 4a.) His delay in granting the widow's petition came from his own incon-

venience. This judge is intended to be as much unlike our Judge as can be conceived.

2. The petition was finally granted. (Verses 4b, 5.) The reason for his final yielding came from the same motive of his delay, namely, his own inconvenience. "It was troublesome to do as she wished, but when it became troublesome not to do so, he did it."—Maclaren.

Let us Learn:

1. That God's child is a victim of cruelty—he is tempted, tried, persecuted. (John 15: 20; 1 Tim. 3: 12.)
2. That, in his distress, he should appeal to God. He should go to him in person and make known his desires. (Phil. 4: 6.)
3. That he should be persistent in prayer, go "oft unto him." He should "wear God out" with his petition. (Matt. 26: 36-44; Luke 22: 43.) Unlike the unjust judge, God is merciful unto his unfortunate children and will answer.

MEMORY SELECTION

"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4: 6.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Where do we find the key to this parable? Enumerate some experiences in life that cause us to become discouraged and to "faint."
2. Tell the story of this parable.
3. Describe the judge. Does he represent God? If so, in what way? By his likeness to God, or by his unlikeness to God?
4. Describe the widow. Whom does she represent? In what way?
5. What petition did the widow present to the judge? What method did she employ?
6. What can you say of the judge's response to her petition? What motive caused him to grant her petition? Show that he is very unlike our heavenly Father in this.

7. Discuss: Verses 7 and 8. What is the lesson?
8. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Luke 18: 9-14

The purpose of this trenchant parable is set forth in verse 9. It was leveled at those people who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set all others (or, the rest) at nought."

The Master began: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican." And it was in these prayers that the character of each man was brought to light.

We shall study:

- I. *The prayer of the Pharisee.* It is marked by three characteristics, namely:
 1. Secrecy. He "stood and prayed thus with himself." It was, therefore, an expression of his true feeling. Doubtless, he would not have prayed thus in public.
 2. Self-trust. He trusted in himself that he was righteous. He acknowledged no sin, expressed no desire, offered no petition. His object was to inform God of his own goodness! He employed the personal pronoun "I" five times.
 3. Contempt. He set all others at nought. He classified the sons of men, including himself; he placed himself in one class, the rest in another class. He thought of himself as good, the rest as bad. He compared himself with others and preferred himself to them. (See Isa. 65: 5; 2 Cor. 10: 12.)
- II. *The prayer of the publican.* Let us take note of its characteristics.
 1. Reverence. He stood "afar off" in reverent awe, not presuming to draw nearer the holy place.
 2. Humility. This is seen in three counts:
 - (a) In the downward look.
 - (b) In the smiting of his breast—a sign of self-accusation and grief.
 - (c) In what he called himself: "The sinner." He felt as

though he was the only sinner. He despised no man; he set no man at nought but himself.

3. A sense of utter helplessness. He did not feel that God was under any obligation to him. "Mercy" was the only divine attribute to which he thought of appealing.
4. Brevity. The Pharisee's prayer is composed of thirty-five words, that of the publican only eight. (American Revised Version.) The deeper the feeling, the fewer the words. (See Matt. 8: 2; 9: 27; Luke 17: 13.)

The humble publican went down to his house "justified rather than the other," in the eyes of the Lord.

The parable fitly closes with a weighty saying: "For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

MEMORY SELECTION

"For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled;
but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Verse 14b.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. State the purpose of this parable.
2. Toward what people was it leveled? Is there danger that we may trust in ourselves that we are righteous and set others at nought? Discuss.
3. Repeat the prayer of the Pharisee. Point out its three characteristics. What indicates its secrecy? his self-trust? his contempt for others? What pronoun does he use five times?
4. Repeat the publican's prayer. Is it marked by the spirit of reverence? Why do you answer as you do? Is it marked by humility? by a sense of utter helplessness? Discuss the brevity of his prayer, in comparison with the prayer of the Pharisee.
5. Give the Master's evaluation of the two men and their prayers.
6. With what weighty saying does the Master close the parable. Quote it by memory.

7. Discuss the master's answer.
8. What lessons do we learn from this parable? Point out the great lesson intended.
9. Quote the Memory Selection.



THE POUNDS

Luke 19: 11-27

The occasion of this parable is seen in verse 11. The disciples were expecting the Lord to restore the literal throne of David and to make them members of his cabinet. The Lord's purpose in the parable was to correct this false conception.

We shall now look into the story and make a few explanations. The nobleman is the Lord Jesus; the far country is heaven whence he went to receive the kingdom; the pound is the common blessing of the gospel; the return of the nobleman represents the second coming of Christ, at which time he will make a full settlement with all men.

Let us note:

- I. *The capital.* (Verses 12, 13a.) The pound was a sum of money, used here to symbolize the gospel or the word of God which unto us has been so generously entrusted. As each servant was given a pound, so the gospel is a common possession of God's people. (See Jude 3.)
- II. *The business.* (Verses 13b, 14.) The pound was not given unto them to hoard, but to use—"trade ye herewith till I come." The gospel was not given unto us to keep or to hoard, but to use or to distribute. The end contemplated by the Lord was not money-making, but character-building. The little expression—"till I come"—suggests two things: First, the length of time the trading should continue; second, that the probation will end at his coming.
- III. *The audit.* (Verses 15-27.) At his return, the nobleman made a reckoning with all. At his return, the Lord Jesus shall deal with all men. (Rev. 20: 11, 12; 22: 12.)
 1. With his servants. (See 1 Peter 4: 17.) There are three kinds of servants or Christians:

one man as representative of the complainers and spoke to him: "Friend." He pointed out:

1. The justice of the settlement. (Verse 13.)
2. The basis of the settlement. (Verses 14, 15a.)
3. The cause of the complaint: The "evil eye." The "evil eye" in this instance was the envious eye. The murmur did not arise from the amount of pay they had received, but from the amount their fellow workers had received.

Let us Learn:

1. That we should work.
2. That we should work in the Lord's vineyard.
3. That we should go to work at the first opportunity. The parable gives no encouragement to late entrance into the Lord's service. Those who entered at the eleventh hour, entered at the first opportunity.
4. That our service should be motivated by the right spirit—love and trust. (See Gal. 5: 6.)
5. That it is the trustful spirit of the worker, not necessarily the amount of work done, that pleases the Lord. One hour of trusting, loving service is more precious to God than twelve hours of selfish service.

MEMORY SELECTION

"But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last." (Matt. 19: 30.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Give the occasion of this parable.
2. What was the Master's object in speaking this parable?
3. Tell the story of the parable.
4. At what hours were the laborers hired? Classify the laborers hired.
5. What can you say of the evening settlement? In what order were the laborers rewarded? What did they receive?
6. What complaint arose? What did the complaint reveal?

7. Discuss the master's answer.
8. What lessons do we learn from this parable? Point out the great lesson intended.
9. Quote the Memory Selection.



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 1. With his servants. (See 1 Peter 4: 17.) There are three kinds of servants or Christians:

- (a) The faithful Christian. (Verses 16, 17.) He was humble in attitude and devoted to his trust. Therefore, he was commended and rewarded. Those who give "all diligence" shall have "richly supplied" unto them an "entrance into the eternal kingdom." (2 Peter 1: 5-11.)
- (b) The average Christian. (Verses 18, 19.) He is a true servant, but rather easy-going. Unlike the faithful Christian, he shall receive no word of commendation. He "shall be saved; yet so as through fire." (1 Cor. 3: 15.) An illustration: Acts 27: 43, 44.
- (c) The idler. (Verses 20-26.) The lukewarm. He had neglected his opportunity. He thought it was enough to do no harm. He did no evil; but he did no good. He was rebuked and deprived of his talent. (Note the descending scale: To the first servant the nobleman had a word of commendation; to the second he was silent; to the third he administered a rebuke.) The gospel, with its many privileges, shall be taken from the idlers. (See Heb. 2: 3; Rev. 3: 15, 16.)
2. With his citizens. (Verse 27.) Primarily, these were the Jews. (See John 19: 15.) They stand for all who hear the gospel and reject it. They shall be eternally lost. (2 Thess. 1: 7-9.)
- Servant, a pound has been entrusted into your keeping. What are you doing with it? Citizen, we beg you to let "this man" reign over you that you may, in the hereafter, reign with him. (2 Tim. 2: 12.)

MEMORY SELECTION

"I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him." (Verse 26.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. When and where was this parable spoken?
2. What was the occasion of it?

3. What false conception was the Master seeking to correct?
4. Who is the nobleman? What is the far country? the pound?
What does the return of the nobleman represent?
5. Discuss fully: The capital; the business; the audit.
6. Who are the servants? What three kinds are depicted?
7. Who are the citizens?
8. What lesson do we find for ourselves in the parable?
9. Quote the Memory Selection and give the meaning of it.



THE TWO SONS

Matt. 21: 28-31

Let us study:

I. *The simple story.* We note:

1. The father's request.

- (a) A rightful request—he was their father.
- (b) A specific request. He told them what to do—"go work"; when to work—"today"; and where to work—"in the vineyard."
- (c) A universal request—the same to both sons.
- (d) A personal request—he spoke to each son.

2. The two opposite replies.

- (a) "I will not," said the first. In this we have the spirit of rebellion, bold and unblushing.
- (b) "I go, sir," said the other. In this we have a courteous, pretentious reply.

3. The two opposite acts.

- (a) The first son "afterwards repented himself, and went." That is, he changed his will, his purpose. We note that his repentance was delayed—"afterwards." Perhaps, after reflecting on his curt reply, on the father's love, on the reward of work. (See Rom. 2: 4; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8; Rev. 2: 10.) We also note that his repentance was followed by works: for "he went." (See Matt. 3: 8.)
- (b) The second son "went not." He proved to be only a pretender, a make-believe.

II. *The application of the story.*

1. In Jesus' day. (Verses 31, 32.)

- (a) The publicans and harlots were those who were saying, "I will not." In them the Master found ungodliness bold and unashamed. However, many of them turned to the Lord.
- (b) The Pharisees were those who were saying, "I go, sir." But they went not. They were not responsive to the call of Christ. (See Matt. 23 : 3 ; Luke 6 : 46.)

2. In our day.

- (a) The spirit of unrestrained immorality and rebellion are in the world ; people are saying to the request of Christ, "I will not." But many of them repent and enter the kingdom.
- (b) The spirit of religious pretense is found in the church. Church members are saying, "I go, sir." But they do not. They omit the essentials. They never make a change, trusting in the false arm of formality. (See 2 Tim. 3 : 5.)

The true son is not the one who professes great respect for Divine authority, while he does only what pleases himself ; but he who does the Father's bidding, even though he at first disowned his authority.

"This parable," says Marcus Dods, "shows us how God is served by men, and shows us especially that though there are greater and less degrees of disobedience and impenitence, there is no such thing as consistent uniform obedience. The best that God gets from earth is the obedience of repentance."

MEMORY SELECTION

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6 : 46.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Tell the simple story of the parable.
2. Discuss the father's request.
3. What were the two opposite replies? the two opposite acts?

4. Do we, from this parable, learn the meaning of the word "repent"? Discuss the meaning of repentance.
5. Give the application of the story in Jesus' day. What people were saying, "I will not"? What people were saying, "I go, sir"? Who changed their minds or repented?
6. Give an application of the story in our day. Do people who have been immoral and rebellious often repent and turn to the Lord? Do people who make pretensions often omit the essentials and rely upon the false arm of formality?
7. Quote the Memory Selection.
8. What is the important lesson in the parable for us?



THE MARRIAGE FEAST

Matt. 22: 1-14

The king prepares a great feast. The occasion is the marriage of his son. (Verses 1, 2.) But the feast is a failure unless it is filled with happy guests. So, the king sends out invitations.

- I. *By some the invitation was rejected.* (Verses 3-7.) The people who were "bidden" were the Jews, God's ancient people. The first invitation was extended by Old Testament messengers. (See Isa. 55: 1.) But it was rejected. The second invitation was extended by New Testament messengers; but the call of mercy was treated with indifference, even hostility. (Verses 5, 6.) The attitude of these people kindled the king's anger. God is very gracious to his creatures, but when his mercy is spurned his anger is kindled. Roman armies were "his" armies, the rod of his wrath. (See Isa. 10: 5; 1 Thess. 2: 15, 16.)
- II. *By others the invitation was accepted.* (Verses 8-10.) God is so good that even his wrath toward his foes turns out for the good of others. (See Acts 13: 46.) The invitation was extended to all, regardless of race, of social position, of previous moral standing. And the response was hearty: "The wedding was filled." On Pentecost and the days that followed, multitudes became obedient to the faith of the gospel.
- III. *The intruder at the feast.* (Verses 11-13.) At such a feast the king provided each guest with a garment designed for the

occasion—a radiant robe, a mark of royal favor. The guest found without it was considered an intruder and treated accordingly. The Lord's righteousness is our garment. (Isa. 61: 10.) When we accept his call we are expected to put it on. (Gal. 3: 26, 27.) Else, we shall be treated as an intruder. In the story we observe:

1. A visit: "The king came in." Reminding us of the coming of the Lord. (See Rev. 1: 7; 22: 12.)
2. An inspection: "He saw there a man who had not on a wedding-garment." By this we are reminded—
 - (a) That God sees: "He saw." (See Prov. 15: 3; Rev. 2: 2a.)
 - (b) That God deals with the individual: "A man."
 - (c) That God's chief interest is in the robe of a man's character: "Who had not on the wedding-garment."
3. A question: "Friend, how camest thou in thither not having a wedding-garment"? Only one question. Only one regulation—putting on the Christ. Why did he not comply?
 - (a) Not that he did not know of the regulation.
 - (b) Not that he was expected to buy the garment: for it was the king's gracious gift.
 - (c) Likely, he was satisfied with his own garment—righteousness. (See Rom. 10: 1-3.)
4. Conviction: "He was speechless." He was self-condemned. Sin is indefensible. Self-righteousness will not justify. (See Job 5: 16.) Those who reject the Lord's righteousness will find themselves without excuse.
5. Bondage: "Bind him hand and foot." Render him powerless to resist, to return. Having failed to comply with the gracious regulation, his liberty was taken. Freedom of choice is a marvelous power, but the abuse of it leads to bondage. It is your privilege to make a choice, but woe be unto you if you make the wrong choice!
6. Exclusion: "Cast him into the outer darkness." Because he was unrobed, he was unfit to sit at the feast. On the basis of our own righteousness, we cannot enter heaven. (See Rev. 22: 14, 15.)

7. Torment: "There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." This describes the condition of one who is turned out of a warm banqueting-hall into the chill, dark, winter's night, clad only in light clothing. The essential lesson: Sin is followed by misery, as night follows the day.

MEMORY SELECTION

"For many are called, but few chosen." (Verse 14.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What is the title of this parable? What was the occasion of the feast? Were invitations extended?
2. By whom was the invitation rejected? By whom was the first invitation extended? And was it rejected? By whom was the second invitation extended? How was this invitation treated? What emotion in the heart of the king was aroused when this invitation was spurned? Is God's anger aroused when people spurn his gracious call? Discuss.
3. By whom was the invitation accepted? Tell of the reception of the gospel in the early days of the church, as recorded in Acts of the Apostles.
4. Tell of the presence of the intruder at the feast. Why was he considered as an intruder? Of what was the robe a symbol? When do people put on Christ, who is our righteousness? Tell of the rejection of the intruder and the misery that followed? Can we abide in the Lord's presence on the basis of our own righteousness? Can the man who is robed in sin abide in the Lord's presence?
5. Quote the Memory Selection.
6. What is the chief lesson of the parable?



THE TEN VIRGINS

Matt. 25: 1-13

The Master's lesson is couched in the last verse: "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour." And this important lesson is animated by a parable.

From the parable we learn:

- I. *That Christ is coming.* He is the bridegroom whom we have gone forth to meet. He will come at mid-night—an inconvenient, an unexpected hour. (1 Thess. 5: 1-3.) But he tarries. This he does for two reasons:
 1. That all may be ready. (2 Peter 3: 9.)
 2. For the restoration of all things. (Acts 3: 21.)
- II. *That we should "watch."* This does not mean for us to become sky-gazers (Acts 1: 10-12); or to cease our lawful labors and give over to excitement (2 Thess. 2: 1, 2); but for us to prepare, to hold ourselves in readiness. This preparation should be twofold:
 1. Inward—"oil." Of what use are vessels and lamps without it? "Oil" represents that faith or reserve force of character which can meet any contingency. (Mark 11: 22; Heb. 11: 6.)
 2. Outward—"vessels with their lamps." Of what value is oil without them? The Christian life is a life of expression. (Gal. 5: 6; Jas. 2: 17.)
- III. *Why we should "watch."*
 1. We "know not the day nor the hour." He may come later than some expect, or earlier than others expect. Beware of all calculations!
 2. His coming will reveal character. It is revealed by the crisis, the surprises, the sudden things. Until he arrived, all ten looked alike—all were virgins, all had lamps and vessels, all were in a state of expectancy. Not until he came did the difference appear. (See 1 Cor. 4: 5.)
 3. Character is non-transferable—the wise could not help the foolish. It is a personal possession and cannot be passed from one to another, like a medium of exchange.
 4. After he arrives no preparation can be made. There comes a period in life after which a change is impossible. The door will be shut. Let us consider:
 - (a) How the door may be shut: By death; by hardness of heart while men are living in the flesh; by the Lord's coming. The parable refers to the last event.

- (b) The twofold significance of the closed door: To the wise, it means security and peace; to the foolish, misery and despair.

MEMORY SELECTION

"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13: 37.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In what verse of this parable is the Master's lesson couched? Quote it.
2. By what means did the Master animate this important lesson of life?
3. Tell the story of the ten virgins.
4. Does the parable teach that Christ is coming? What is the significance of the expression "at mid-night"? Why has our Bridegroom been waiting all of these centuries?
5. While we are waiting for his coming, what should we do? What does Jesus mean by "watch"? What twofold preparation should we make? Why do you answer as you do?
6. Give at least four reasons why we should "watch."
7. How may the door be closed for the sons of men?
8. Will the closing of the door mean the same thing to all people? What will it mean to the ones on the inside—the ones who are prepared? What will it mean to the ones on the outside—the ones who are unprepared?



THE TALENTS

Matt. 25: 14-30

A talent was a certain sum of money, variously estimated. In the parable it represents an opportunity—an opportunity to serve, to improve our own station, to move upward into the joy of our Lord.

In the story we see:

- I. *The talents given.* (Verses 14, 15.)
 1. Generously: The Lord "delivered unto them *his* goods."

2. Universally: "To each" servant he gave, overlooking none.
 3. Impartially: "To each according to his several ability." The Lord recognized the inequality of ability, but manifested no partiality.
 4. Trustingly: "He went on his journey," leaving his money in the hands of his servants. (See Mark 16: 15-19.)
- II. *The management of the talents.* (Verses 16-18.) These verses embrace the entire period of time from the ascension of Christ until his return.
1. By the first servant. He served his Lord promptly, faithfully and successfully.
 2. By the second. He also served his Lord promptly, faithfully and successfully.
 3. By the third. He did not embezzle or squander the talent, but buried it; in burying it, he preserved it. Why did he bury it? He said, "I was afraid." This fear was begotten by a misconception of his Lord's character and requirement. (See verses 24, 25.)
- III. *The reckoning.* (Verses 19-30.) In these verses the story comes to a dramatic close.
1. With the first servant.
 - (a) He was commended.
 - (b) He was promoted. Having served well his apprenticeship, he was given a higher position. He passed from service unto joy.
 - (c) The ground of promotion. He was able, successful and faithful; but he was rewarded because of his faithfulness.
 2. With the second. He received the same blessing, showing that the mediocre can receive the same reward as the ablest man.
 3. With the third servant.
 - (a) Forecasting his Lord's displeasure, he came forward with a defense. (Verses 24, 25.) Lack of action on his part called for a multiplicity of words.
 - (b) The retribution: He was rebuked; his talent was taken; he was cast into dismal darkness.

- (c) The ground of the retribution: He was incapable, unsuccessful and unfaithful; but he was cursed because of unfaithfulness.

Let us Learn:

1. That the Lord is the giver of opportunities—opportunities to evangelize (2 Cor. 2: 12), to serve, to develop our powers, to advance to the golden gate.
2. That opportunities used bring heaven's commendation. Opportunities used are greatly increased. Opportunities used admit the sons of men into the house of joy.
3. That an opportunity buried brings heaven's condemnation. An opportunity buried is lost—that which men do not use is taken from them. An opportunity buried brings a curse—the dismal darkness of the outside.

MEMORY SELECTION

“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even at which he hath shall be taken away.” (Verse 29.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. What was a talent? In the parable before us, what does a talent represent?
2. In verses 14 and 15, note the distribution of the talents. How were they given? After they were given, what did the lord do? After our Lord gave his great commission, what did he do?
3. Discuss the management of the talents. What period of time is included in verses 16-18? Discuss the management of the first servant, of the second, of the third.
4. In verses 19-30, note the return of the lord and the reckoning with his servants. When Jesus comes again, will he make a reckoning with his servants? Discuss the reckoning with the first servant, with the second, with the third.
5. Discuss at least three lessons suggested by the parable.
6. Quote the Memory Selection.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

John 15: 1-11

This parable constitutes a portion of the Master's farewell discourse, which was spoken in "the upper room" to the eleven, Judas having departed into the darkness.

He had already told them good-bye (John 13: 33), and they felt that the sorrow of separation was upon them. The parable teaches to the contrary. Though separated bodily, there is a spiritual connection between Jesus and his disciples. And this connection is a vital one—each is a part of the other. The disciple is in Christ; and Christ is in the disciple. Jesus is the vine; the disciples are the branches; and the Father, whose anxious care is over all, is the husbandman. (Verses 1, 2.)

In the parable, we see in clearness four things:

I. *Without the vine, the branches can do nothing.*

1. They cannot live and grow.
2. They cannot cleanse themselves. (Verse 3.)
3. They cannot bear fruit. (Verses 4, 5, 11.) And if they are barren, the branches are severed from the vine and burned. (Verse 6.)
4. They cannot find satisfaction for their hunger and thirst. (Verse 7.)

II. *Without the branches, the vine can do nothing.* Though the vine is prominent and of prime importance, it can accomplish nothing in the vineyard apart from the growing, thriving branches. The Master had been working for his cause in person until this time; but now, at his departure, he must look to the disciples. Without the branches—

1. The vine cannot beautify the vineyard. The responsibility of evangelizing the nations and of adorning the church falls upon the disciples.
2. The vine cannot bear fruit. (Verses 8, 9.) If the disciples are barren, the Father is not glorified; the vineyard of the Lord is fruitless.

III. *Everything that the vine possesses belongs to the branches.* The sap, the nourishment, yea the very life of the vine belongs to the branches. All that it receives, it gives to them. All

that Jesus is and has is at the disposal of the disciples—his word, his prayers, his beautiful example, yea his very life. They are “joint heirs” with him. (Rom. 8: 17.)

- IV. *Everything that the branches possess belongs to the vine.* If the vine places everything at the disposal of the branches, the branches should reciprocate. If the branches depend upon the vine, they should place everything—their life, their possessions—at the disposal of the vine. (See Rom. 12: 1.)

The concluding verse points out the reason why the Master spoke the parable: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

MEMORY SELECTION

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples. Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide in my love.” (Verses 8, 9.)

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. When and where was the parable of the vine and the branches spoken?
2. Why was it spoken at this time?
3. Who is the vine? Who are the branches? Who is the husbandman?
4. Though Jesus was about to leave the disciples, would the connection between him and them be broken? Discuss.
5. Like a branch is in the vine, is the disciple in Christ? Like a vine is in the branch, is Christ in the disciple?
6. Without the vine, what can the branches do? Can they live and grow? cleanse themselves? bear fruit? find satisfaction for their hunger and thirst? What becomes of the barren branch? the barren disciple?
7. Without the branches, what can the vine do? Is Christ depending on his disciples to beautify the church? to bear fruit for him in the world?

8. Does everything that the vine possesses belong to the branches?
What things does Christ place at the disposal of the disciples?
9. Should everything that the disciples possess be placed at the disposal of Christ, the vine? Discuss.
10. Quote the Memory Selection.

