

→‡OUR BANNER.‡←

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THE MODERATOR'S SERMON.*

Christ requires diligence in the performance of duty. Christians are not merely servants; they are also stewards of the things that they possess, and need to be reminded that fidelity and diligence are qualifications indispensable to the right performance of duty.

Christ, in two of His parables, teaches His disciples the gains and rewards of the diligent, and the loss and punishment of the slothful. The parable of the talents supposes a case in which unequal gifts are employed with equal fidelity; the approval is equal when the Master comes. The parable of the pounds supposes a case in which equal gifts are bestowed, and yet the gains made by servants who are faithful may be very different in amount. In some cases the gain may be tenfold and in others fivefold.

Jesus was now on His way to Jerusalem. It was His last journey. His thoughts and those of His followers were altogether different. A general expectation was entertained by the multitude that followed Him that some great event would follow His entrance into Jerusalem. They hoped for the immediate appearance of the kingdom of God.

His own disciples had imbibed the sentiments of the multitude. They entertained the hope that he would proclaim himself a king and ascend the throne of David. In this parable Christ corrects this mistaken view of His mission. He teaches them that His inauguration is to take place in heaven and not in Jerusalem; and that it becomes them, as His servants, to be diligent in the employment of all the gifts he bestows until he returns to them.

The nobleman of the parable is Christ himself. The far country is heaven. His inauguration is by His Father. The kingdom he receives is mediatorial, as the reward of His sufferings. His exaltation

*By Rev. David McKee, preached on Wednesday evening, June 2d, 1886, at Rochester, N. Y.

TEXT: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."—Luke xix., 13.

begins at Joseph's sepulchre. His way to the throne is by the cross. Because He humbled himself, God also hath highly exalted Him.

This nobleman leaves two classes behind Him; one class are citizens in a state of rebellion, the other class are servants or professed friends. To the latter class He leaves His property, and commands them to occupy—or trade—till I (He) come. These servants are sent to trade in a rebel country. The gifts the Master bestows are wisely adapted to fit them for their work. They are to use them to advance His interest; to subdue rebellion against His authority, and bring all the citizens of His kingdom into loyal subjection.

The pounds the nobleman gives His servants are usually explained to mean mere personal qualifications for service. We understand them to embrace all the means His infinite wisdom judged to be necessary to enable His servants to successfully accomplish the work assigned them. "Ten," the symbol of completeness, implies that Christ has furnished them with everything that is necessary to enable them to maintain and defend His interests in the world until He comes again.

The theme of the text is: That Christ requires His church, especially the ministry of the church, to faithfully use all His gifts in view of the solemn account to be given when He comes. The following is the order of discussion:—

I. The pounds, or the means Christ has given His servants.

II. The use they are to make of them.

III. The account that is taken of them when the Master comes.

I. The pounds, or the means Christ has given His servants.

1. The gospel. The rebellious principle they are sent to remove has its seat in the hearts of individuals. Their first message to the enemies of Christ is one of peace and good-will. "Behold we bring to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." Christ commanded His disciples to go into all the world, "and preach the gospel to every creature." The gospel is the means the Spirit uses in converting men, and building them up in faith in Jesus. The exhibition of the gospel is the main work of the church. She is the pillar and ground of the truth. She is the Master's lighthouse, on the shore of time, to reflect His light over the troubled sea of this world, and guide the weary mariner to a haven of rest. Satan's kingdom is one of darkness. He excites and perpetuates a spirit of rebellion against Christ by keeping men ignorant of the person, work and exaltation of Jesus. The gospel is the only light that can penetrate this dark kingdom of Satan, and discover its moral gloom to the spiritually-enlightened mind. Science cannot do it. Philosophy cannot do it. The world had been making experiments for thousands of years to discover some light to dispel its darkness, but utterly failed in the attempt. But that which is impossible with men is possible with God. Through the tender mercies of our God, the day-spring from on

high hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

2. A testimony for truth. Opposition to the inauguration of Christ manifests itself in society as well as in the hearts of men. These citizens unite in sending one common message to the appointing power declaring in the most defiant manner, "We will not have this man to reign over us." "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed." A faithful testimony is the best means of meeting this form of disloyalty to Christ. Jesus prepares his servants for this work.

Soon after Christ entered on his public ministry, he chose twelve disciples. He admitted them to the closest intimacy with himself. They heard His doctrine; saw His miracles; beheld Him crucified; conversed with Him after His resurrection, and witnessed His ascent to heaven. In the early part of His ministry, He informed them of His design in calling them, and the work He was training them for in the world. In John's gospel, 15th chapter and 27th verse, after informing them of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in regard to himself, He says to His disciples, "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Peter could say, in the name of all the Apostles, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of His majesty." John, in the beginning of His first epistle, writes: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life," "declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us." Near the close of His gospel, He declares His design in writing it: "These were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing ye might have life through His name."

Witness-bearing has always been a main part of the church's work. The citizens in a state of rebellion against Christ have always outnumbered His faithful servants. If the claims of Christ to reign are to be decided by the popular vote, His enemies will be victorious. The witnesses have generally been a small but competent number. Noah was a witness against the depravity of the old world; Lot against the lewdness of Sodom; Israel against the idolatry of the surrounding nations, and the two witnesses against the corruption and usurpations of the man of sin.

Though the testimony of the faithful witnesses for Christ has been generally disregarded by men, yet it has vindicated the righteous government of God, who warned His enemies of His judgments, before they have been inflicted on impenitent nations and individuals. It has served to strengthen the faith of the pious, that the wrong should

not always triumph over the right, but when the last vial has exhausted itself, victory shall be proclaimed in favor of truth and righteousness.

3. Suitable qualifications for their work. To make an accomplished trader, two things are essentially necessary. First, a knowledge of the value of the article he proposes to dispose of, and second, a correct estimate of the value of the article he seeks to acquire. This knowledge is absolutely necessary for all who would use Christ's gifts to advantage. The servant who underestimates the power of the Gospel as Christ's appointed means of leading sinners to himself, who has no faith in an honest and consistent testimony for truth, will do little in his Master's service. He needs the spirit of a Paul to stand before the sneering skepticism of the world and declare, fearless of all their ridicule, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." He needs the spirit of Peter, to say to those who reject his Messiahship, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." To all civil rulers, who are trying to free themselves from all obligation to God's law or subjection to the Messiah, he needs the wisdom of David to say: "Be wise; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."

A knowledge of what we aim to gain by the use of our Lord's money is also necessary. The gain we seek is the glory of God, in the salvation of men, through Christ. A right conception of the priceless worth of immortal souls will make us feel as Paul felt, when he said: "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some," 1 Cor. ix., 22. The honor of the Father is inseparably connected with the submission given by men, in every relation, to his Son. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, who has sent Him. We seek the glory of God in the full realization in the world of that happy era, "When all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governor among the nations."

Christ, by the gift of the Spirit, qualifies His servants for their work. He commanded them to tarry at Jerusalem until they received power from on high. This divine power has never been withdrawn from the church. United prayer on her part is the key that opens heaven's doors for its copious effusion. The church is now in the possession of the fruits of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. That same Spirit that taught the disciples and brought to their remembrance what Christ had said and done, inspired them to commit them to writing for the use of the church in after ages. The evangelists as inspired writers record the doctrine which, as inspired teachers, they preached to the world. They were as dependent on the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit to make their ministry effectual in the hearts of men as ministers are now. They were sensible that "Paul might plant and

Apollos water, but God alone can give the increase." The church, through the many translations of the Scriptures, can speak to men in more languages than were spoken by the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

II. The use they are to make of them. "Occupy," or trade with them.

1. They must use only the capital Christ gives them. The ministry of the church have not always been careful to observe this direction. Soon after the establishment of the church, false teachers appeared who desired to unite Rabbinical teaching and Greek philosophy with the gospel of Christ. The gospel appeared to them to be too simple an agent to convert the world. They overlooked the fact that Jesus appointed all the means that infinite wisdom saw to be necessary to accomplish the end designed. "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Satan has always been ready to supply Christ's servants with additional capital. And like all deceivers, he highly commends his spurious coin. He insists that the gospel is too simple, the ordinances are not sufficiently attractive to please the refined taste of men or gain the attention of the world. A faithful testimony for Christ against citizens in a state of rebellion only tends to irritate and torment them, instead of bringing them into subjection. By persuading men to credit his teaching, he succeeded in making the church a synagogue of Satan. Christ's servants must never overlook the nature and limitations of their commission. They are sent to teach men only the things that Christ has commanded them. And whenever they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, their teaching is vain. How few can unite Paul's declaration, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," Acts xx. 27, with the one equally important, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. Jesus has not commissioned His servants to be expounders of philosophy or teachers of science, but ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. iv. 1. It is the skilful use of the nobleman's pound that gains the five or the ten pounds and secures his commendation: "Well done, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."

2. To increase their ability to serve Christ. The merchant or trader increases his knowledge by his trading. Those who have been distinguished in the commercial world did not attain perfection at once. They carefully noted the opportunities they have misimproved, and the advantages that have been taken of them by competitors in trade. Their knowledge increased with their years, and their ability to accumulate advanced with the increase of their capital. This is equally true of those who would use their Lord's money to advantage.

It required more skill on the part of the servant to manage his Lord's capital when it amounted to ten pounds than when it was only one. Success in the service of Christ increases our responsibility. To meet this increased responsibility, there must be a corresponding increase in fitness for the work. The servant who remains stationary is soon left behind.

The responsibility of the church for the evangelization of the world is, at present, vastly augmented. The way is opened up to the heathen as it has never been before. Reforms on all sides are pressing on the church, each one calling to her for help. The ears of men are opened to listen to the advocacy of the rights of God and the claims of Christ as they have not been in times past. Great wisdom is necessary to guide the ministry of the church in meeting all these demands. The work at present needs men who have understanding of the times to know what the church ought to do. Aid may be obtained by a careful study of the past history of the church. This discovers the danger of lukewarmness in the church and the way in which error in doctrine and corruption in worship have gained access into her communion. But the careful and prayerful study of the Scriptures is the best means of preparation. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

3. Use them under a deep sense of the solemn account to be given when the Nobleman returns,—*"Occupy till I come."* Though Christ's bodily presence is no longer with His church, yet He is always spiritually present. His promise is, "Lo, I am with you." It is unwise for any servant to say, my Lord delayeth His coming, and become careless and slothful. Jesus takes an account now of every misimproved opportunity of advancing the interest of His kingdom in the world. He who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks can say to all His servants, "I know thy works, I know thy labor and thy patience, or, I know that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead." Christ comes to all at death. To some of His servants He comes in the morning of life, when they appeared to have only begun their work. To others He comes in the noon of usefulness, and to others at the close of the day. We cannot estimate the amount of the gains by the time of labor. The servant first called to his account had made the largest gain. But it is certainly true of the aged servant of Christ, who has become old in his Master's service, "The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness." But at whatever time of life He comes to call for an account, each one should be prepared to say with Paul, "I am now ready." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day."

III. The account taken.

This account is taken when the Nobleman returns, after he has received the kingdom. The servants are all called. Every one must give in his account. Jesus describes the conduct of three of the servants; each one is a type of the classes into which the ten may be divided.

1. Those who have been eminently successful. Some, like Paul, are eminently blessed with a large increase. Their gain is tenfold, whilst others, though faithful, have to report only a fivefold increase. But both receive the Master's commendation.

We are not to confound real success with outward show. When we speak of a successful ministry we too often think of large congregations or popular churches filled with the rich and educated classes. A large congregation is not to be despised. We must gain the attention of men if we would do them good. But a ministry may fall short of this and yet, in a high degree, be a successful ministry. When Christ expired on the cross, His enemies would have written His life a failure. Yet that which appeared to the world to be a failure was a glorious success. In the estimation of Christ a successful minister is one that preaches the whole gospel; that can stand before his hearers as Paul before the elders of Ephesus and say truthfully, "I have kept back nothing that was needful for you." The influences that operate with the greatest force in the world often work long unseen by men. The anti-slavery influence operated in leavening the minds of the masses and prepared them for accepting the emancipation proclamation. The testimony of the witness, though during the reign of the man of sin, may appear only to torment the men who dwell on the earth, yet it will be a main influence in preparing the masses of society for accepting the announcement, "The kingdoms of this world have become kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ."

It is sometimes said there is danger that, notwithstanding all the past sufferings of the witnesses for Christ, they will be cast aside and others receive the reward. This is not in harmony with God's method in treating His servants. His own declaration is, "Them that honor me I will honor"; "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne," Rev. iii. 21. It is the witnesses that prophesied in sackcloth and suffered for Christ that are to be exalted in those who maintain the same truths for which they suffered.

2. Those whose labors are not followed with so manifest results. They have been faithful, they have improved their time and talents, they have used the money in their Master's service, yet their gains have been small compared with the former.

The efficiency of a minister can never be measured by visible results, much less by his popularity with the world. If he is faithful he is not likely to be popular with those who reject the gospel. Many

of those who followed Christ, near the close of His ministry left Him. They said of His doctrine, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" They went back and walked no more with Him.

Christ judges his servants by their faithfulness, and rewards them accordingly. The servant who can say at the time the Nobleman takes account, "Lord, thy pound has gained five pounds," will hear also the "Well done" of the Master; "Be thou over five cities."

3. The slothful. Our Saviour describes the conduct of this servant more fully than the conduct of the faithful servants. There is a reason for this. A mistake in regard to his character is dangerous. He is the type of all who neglect to use the means Christ has appointed to advance the interest of His kingdom in the world. It is worthy of remark that the faithful servants, when they tell the nobleman the gains his money had made, made no offer to return it to him. This servant proposes to return all he had received. He was afraid to use it in his absence, and now he offers to return it.

The conduct of this servant finds its counterpart too extensively in the church. They hide the means Christ has appointed to subdue all things to himself. A hidden gospel, however beautifully it may be covered, will never lead sinners to the Saviour. A testimony for truth, feebly uttered, will never overcome the world. The labor of the honest servants of Christ is often hindered by the untruthful representations of the Master made by the unfaithful,—those who declare that all demands made on nations to submit to Christ are austere demands. A great hindrance at the present time to the recognition of Christ's authority over the nations comes from this class of professed servants. They either hide His gospel in their napkin by concealing from men the truth that Jesus is now by the appointment of the Father, King of kings and Lord of lords; or to those who demand the subjection of nations to Christ, they say you are making austere demands; you are claiming honors for Him to which, as Mediator, he has no valid claims. They have entertained erroneous views of the rights of the Nobleman. They regard His claims to be unfounded. They would rather return Him his pound than use it to secure to Him honors which they think are not merited. It only requires another step to go over to the ranks of His haters and say, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

1st. Let us prayerfully use all the means Jesus has appointed for building up His kingdom in the world.

When we take a view of the magnitude of the work and the combined opposition it has to encounter, we may properly say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" To discharge duty aright we must cultivate the spirit of Christ, we must work as He worked. His record is: "He went about continually doing good." Every occasion with Him was a great occasion. We need His humility. We need His love for souls. We need His constant regard to the glory of his Father. As

He "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God," so "let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

2d. Guard against that pusillanimous fear that is the parent of slothfulness

Faith works by love. Perfect love casteth out fear and leads to boldness in the service of Christ. The converse is true. Perfect fear casteth out love to Christ and His service. The men who have moved the world have been bold and fearless advocates of the right. The fear, not of Christ but of men, often causes ministers to hide the means He has intrusted them with in a napkin. Instead of reproving they excuse and often defend those who oppose the rightful claims of Christ. The witness must reprove sin in high places as well as low. Whenever any sin gets so high above a minister's pulpit that he is afraid to reprove it, he ought to step down from it and pray for an Elijah or a John the Baptist to take his place.

3d. Let us rejoice in the special work assigned us as witnesses for Christ.

There is sometimes a tendency in members of the church to look only on the dark side of the picture. They complain of the sacrifices that must be made in maintaining the testimony of the church. Those who do so need to imbibe more of the spirit of the Apostles who rejoiced in being counted worthy to suffer for Christ. Paul, amidst all his trials and sufferings for Christ, is lost in admiration of the amazing riches of that grace that counted him worthy of being an apostle of Jesus Christ. The saints of God in past ages took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, animated by the hope of a glorious reward for all the afflictions of the present life.

When John saw the faithful witness standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, he records the fact that they stood there singing. The theme of their new song is the worthiness of the Lamb to administer the moral government of Jehovah. In the fifth chapter and 9th and 10th verses of Revelation he records their song. "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."

Those who would give the sealed book into the hand of antichrist whether he appears in the person of pope, or emperor, or king, or "we, the people," and claim for him the right to occupy the throne that rightfully belongs to our exalted Mediator, can never learn nor sing this new song.

Let us be faithful in maintaining past attainments. Let us be hopeful that in due time we shall reap if we do not faint. The signs

of the times indicate the coming of Christ to introduce the millennial glory of the church. The gospel is preached in all lands. The ablest and most pious in other churches are claiming that the royal diadem shall be placed on the brow of its rightful owner, and that in the State as in the Church He shall be crowned Lord of all. Isaiah's seraphic prophecy shall soon be fully accomplished. Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously. The faithful servants shall be rewarded. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

WOMEN AND TEMPERANCE WORK.

BY MRS. J. R. DAY, RUSHSVLVANIA, OHIO.

Some months since I read in Secretary Leiper's report of National Reform work the following extract: Speaking of the George family reunion at Mooretown, he says, "Among them have been and are found influential men, generally to be seen leading the van in the great reforms of their several generations. They were brought up generation after generation on the Westminster Catechism and the Bible Psalms. They are a covenant people. A man would be poor material if all that fails to make a man out of him."

This thought came to me: What of the women who have been brought up and fed on the same food? Where are the descendants of Knox, Cameron, Cargill, Renwick, and the Ladies of the Covenant, who, besides being brought up on the Catechism and Bible Psalms, have had the story of the sufferings of our martyred forefathers, who suffered and died contending for the crown rights and royal prerogatives of King Jesus, rehearsed to them from their earliest infancy? We do not find them in the first ranks of that grand army of reformers which is marching on to take this sin-cursed world and wheel it into line under subjection to King Jesus. Our Frances Willard, Mary A. Woodbridge, Mary Lathrap, Mary Clemmett Leavitt the world's W. C. T. U. missionary, who is belting the globe with the emblem of our union, the white ribbon, do not come from the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Mrs. McCabe, who wrote the words of the memorable Temperance 'Credo,' which sounds in the ears of the present age as did the theses of Martin Luther nailed to the church door of Wittemberg, is a member of the M. E. Church. In the list of vice-presidents of the National Reform Association there are the names of several worthy ladies; but I do not find the name of any one of my own church.

Why is it, my dear sisters? Are we not selling for a mess of pottage, idleness and indifference. our blood-bought birthright? Are we not the daughters of reformers? Why are so many indifferent to the cause of reform, and at ease when the enemy is coming into our