

International Sunday School Lesson, Sunday, May 10, 1931

THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

Printed Verses—Luke 19:11-26.

Golden Text—It Is Required in Stewards, That a Man Be Found Faithful.—1st Corinthians, 4:2.

The Lesson

And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore: A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them: "Trade ye herewith until I return." But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassador after him, saying: "We will not that this man reign over us." And it came to pass, when he was come back again, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. And when the first came before him, saying: "Lord, thy pound hath made ten pounds more." And he said unto him, "Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying: "Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds." And he said unto him: "Be thou also over five cities." And another came, saying: "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou

takest up that which thou layest not down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow." He saith unto him: "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up that which I laid not down, and reaping that which I did not sow; the wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?" And he said unto them that stood by: "Take away from him the pound, and give it unto him that hath ten pounds." And they said unto him, "Lord, he hath ten pounds." "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."

Comments on The Lesson
As this lesson opens, Jesus is still in the house of the publican who had gained eternal life, as we learned in last Sunday's lesson. The crowds had followed and were about the home of Zacchaeus. Jesus had, immediately preceding the opening verse in this lesson, said that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. And because he was nigh unto Jerusalem, that is, just about fifteen miles from his destination, and because the people supposed the kingdom of God was immediately to appear, He spake a parable. He knew

that the people believed the kingdom was to be established in Jerusalem, and that the Jews would then be freed from the Roman rule. They believed that it was to be an earthly kingdom, a temporal power, with the king enthroned as in the days of old. This parable was necessary in giving further light to those who had followed Him and heard Him. They were not as yet recovered from the shock which came to them when Jesus went into the house of Zacchaeus, the hated publican, to dine with him. They were asking themselves and one another: "Is this Jesus, the King, to have such ruffian as this despised tax collector in the kingdom? Is this kingdom to be made up of such trash as this?"

Hence the parable which Jesus spake. This is the parable of the pounds, and is, in most part, parallel with the parable of the talents as recorded in the 25th Chapter of Matthew. In the parable of the talents, all those connected with it were men with qualifications. In this parable of the pounds, the average man is brought into play. A nobleman was going into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and he soon was to return. And he called servants to him, and gave each one a pound, ordering them to use it and make the most of it until the nobleman's return. Upon his return, the nobleman called the ten servants before Him to give account of their stewardship. The first came, and said: Master, the pound which you left with me has made you ten pounds. The nobleman praised the servant, because of his fidelity to his trust, and made him ruler over ten cities.

The second came, and he had done only half as much as the first. The nobleman gave him no words of praise for making five pounds from the one left in his charge, but rewarded him by making him ruler over cities. Then came the third, and made report. He told the nobleman that he had kept the pound intact, by keeping it carefully wrapped up in a napkin, which, to us, would be a handkerchief. To excuse himself for the failure to make good with the pound, the fellow continued by saying: "I was afraid to do anything with the pound. I know you, Master, and I know that you are an austere man, and that you take up where you did not lay down, that you reaped where you do not sow." The nobleman was incensed not only because of the failure of the man to make anything for him, but for the further reason that the fellow tried to blame the master for this failure. In other words, the man made a great mistake in offerings excuses for his lack of achievements.

The nobleman displayed his displeasure, and asserted that the excuse-maker had damned himself by his own words. "Why didn't you place the money with the money-changers, so that there would be an increase for me upon my return? That is what I told you to do, and you have done nothing." Turning to other servants standing nearby, the nobleman said: "Take away from him the pound, and give it to the man who has ten pounds." Then it was that the group standing about said: "But, Nobleman, that man already has ten pounds." The nobleman once again addressed the servants and said: "I say unto you, that unto every one that hath more shall be given, but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him."

There is a beautiful lesson here in connection with the nobleman as used by Jesus in speaking this parable. He was the nobleman, and his mission was the establishment of a kingdom. But we are more concerned with the problem of our stewardship than in any other phase of the lesson. Jesus Christ, the Nobleman, has given each of us certain capital with which to increase the wealth of His kingdom. To some He has given talents, as told in the Matthew version of the parable on talents; to other, to the great masses, to you and to me, he has given the capital represented by the pound in this parable. Our concern ought to be the manner in which we are working that capital for the time when Jesus shall call upon us for an accounting.

In other words, what kind of stewards are we, anyway? We have been given a great land of freedom in which to live our lives, a freedom that was purchased for us by others who paid dearly that we might live in a land like this. What are we doing to keep it a fit place in which to live? What kind of stewards are we, when it comes to our citizenship? Let's think it over.

We have certain possessions, lands, houses, business, necessities of life and luxuries to enjoy. Are we being honest with the nobleman, with the Master, in our stewardship of these possessions? There is no such a thing as a Christian spirit unless it is also a missionary spirit. To be a Christian, is to be Christ-like, and Christ was a missionary in every sense of the word, and He left strict injunctions to all who would follow Him to become missionaries, and go out into the highways and byways and preach the gospel to every creature in every nation. Are we returning to Him tenfold for the possessions left with us, or five-fold, or even returning the one pound that He entrusted to us? He will bless those of us who make good returns on His investment in our hands; He will reward those who, like man in the parable returning the five pounds, make a fair return on the investment.

THE PRAYER CORNER

JESUS' JOYOUSNESS

At first, this representation of the Master may seem to deny one of the most Fundamental Truths about Him, that "He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." The interpretation of Jesus' character in art and in ordinary thought has depended largely on His cries of agony, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say" (John 12:27). "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death" (Mark 14:34). There is, however, no conflict between Jesus the Man of Sorrows and Jesus the Man

of Joy. Joy and sorrow are not alien and antagonistic; they both come from the same capacity for feeling, the same breadth of sensitive surface which the soul exposes to the Touch of God and of the world.

"He who lives more lives than one, More deaths than one must die."

The ocean has sweep and depth in it for seagoing tempests, has room for calms also, with a verge and horizon to their peace that no pool can know. The place where great storms arise is the place where great calms fall. The same capacity is required by both. A man of deep sorrows and deep joys must always be the same man—with what a range of feeling! Jesus is so glad in Communion with His Father that on a mountain top His very face is transfigured. And He is so broken hearted in Gethsemane that His brow sweats blood. When He is sorrowful, no sorrow is like His, and when He is joyful, what a sweep of water and depth of sky for His gladness.

He will take from us what little we have, if we fail Him completely, as did the third man in parable.

We say we are not able to give to the church. Give what? What have we to give? What do we possess? All that we have belongs to God—every possession. Then, can we not, like the first men of the parable, make some return on His investment in us? We say that we are not able to spare any more to the poor, the sick, the unfortunate. Spare what? If we have health with which to work for and wait upon others, from whence did that health come? Direct from God as His blessing, and whatever we fail to give to others who need it, just in that far are we failing and refusing to give back to God the pounds entrusted to our care and stewardship.

Is it, then, any stretch of the imagination for us to see that God will take from us that little which we have, and give to those who have served Him well, and already an abundance of His blessings? This section of the State has witnessed in recent months many illustrations of the unfaithful steward. We have seen banks go down, one after another, and it is directly traceable to the unfaithful steward some where along the line. Some banks have failed, when the men in those banks are not at fault in the least, but these were banks so dependent upon larger institutions that when the bigger places fell, the smaller ones also went down. But in each and every instance, the first and direct cause of all this human misery brought about through failure of banks is due to the unfaithful steward, in whose care and keeping the people had placed their money. If unfaithful stewardship in matters of money bring such harmful results, then how much greater is the suffering when we are unfaithful to God in the way and manner of handling the blessings which He placed in our hands.

Whatever we have—we have it simply because of God's goodness.

Just as the men in this parable received the pound direct from the hand of the nobleman. Whatever we have, therefore, belongs to God, and our stewardship is, indeed, a great responsibility. How shall we handle it? Jesus says: "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Indeed the impression of Jesus' joyousness is greater because of His sorrows. Jesus had been the real encourager of men, because His joy sustained the shock of cruel circumstance, and agonizing struggle, and came off victorious. Like a rainbow His gladness often gets part of its effect because it is built on the clouds of preceding storm. When His trouble was at its climax in the Upper Room at the Last Supper His joy was unquenched. "Be of good cheer," He said, "I have overcome the world."

The men who have most cheered their fellows are not the men of untroubled lives, but those whose spirits were too glad to be submerged by sorrow. Men like Robert Louis Stevenson who, exiled to Samoa for his health, and sure to die there soon, prayed, "Give us to awaken with smiles, give us to labor smiling, and as the sun lightens the world, so let our loving kindness make bright this house of our habitation." Such men have been the joy bringers of the race, and Jesus is the Master of them. This is the most significant fact about Jesus' joy, that the sources of it were not at the mercy of men and circumstances. There were sources of joy in Jesus life which were dependent on the good will of men. His satisfaction in the creature comforts of life, His delight in the free and unimpeded teaching of the people, His confidence in His Disciples, including Judas—these, and other doors of joy in the Master's experience, were at the mercy of men. And they closed them all through the final months of His ministry. You can hear the click of closing doors around His life, until at last they shut Him into the Upper Room to face a terrible tomorrow. Every door which the hand of man could reach was closed. Then that wonderful thing happened which is the mark of all exalted souls and supremely of the Master's. He fell back

on resources which the hand of man could not touch. "My joy I give unto you," He said, "and your joy no man can take from you."

Jesus' blessedness was not like a brook that flows from melting snows which can be made to vanish by the sun, but like a stream that has exhaustless springs to draw from. He could stand anything that men or circumstances could do to Him, and still have resources of joy. He was an unconquerable soul. He even told His disciples that when they were persecuted they could still "rejoice and be exceedingly glad." Whatever else may be true of Jesus, He was no "pale Galilean." The first impression which He makes is one of overflowing radiance and gladness.

I repeat the prayer with which I began The Prayer Corner of the past three or four weeks on Joyfulness:

A PRAYER FOR THE MASTER'S JOY

Our Father, help us to find The Secret of the Master's Joy, that we may no longer dwell in the outer crowds, where our happiness comes and goes as the flowers bloom and fade. May we enter into the secret places of the Most High, where He lived, until our joy like His, cannot be taken away from us.

Teach us the joy of discovering the tokens of Thy Presence always in the song of birds, the fragrance of flowers, the sunset, but more in the ringing laughter and plaintive cry of little children, in the deep hunger in the hearts of our brothers and sisters, and in our own souls, so that we are never alone.

Teach us the joy of friendship, that leaves no hurt or sting. Help us to enter into the deep joy of sympathy with our brothers and sisters need, the sympathy that gives insight and knits heart to heart until we are able to receive help when it is offered.

Lord Jesus, help us to make Religion a thing so beautiful and joyous that all men may be won to surrender to its sweetness and excellency and joy, its free and ennobling spirit. Forbid that we should go up and down the world with melancholy looks and dejected visage, lest we should repel men and women from entering Thy Kingdom. Rather may we walk in the freedom and joy of faith, and with "Thy new song" in our mouths, so that men, looking on us, may learn to trust and love Thee.

All this we ask in Thy Blessed Name, more clear and precious than ever. Amen.

—C. D. C.

THE RIGHT WAY TO TRAVEL is by train. The safest. Most comfortable. Most reliable. Costs less. Inquire of Ticket Agents regarding greatly reduced fares for short trips. SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

6 6 6

LIQUID or TABLETS Cures Colds, Headaches, Fever 6 6 6 SALVE CURES BABY'S COLD

FORD BRAKES ARE UNUSUALLY EFFECTIVE

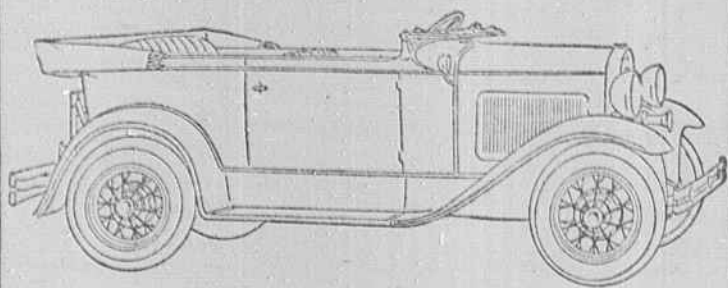
Reliability and safety due to simple design and careful construction

ONE OF the first things you will notice when you drive the Ford is the quick, effective action of its four-wheel brakes.

They are unusually safe and reliable because they are mechanical, internal expanding, with all braking surfaces fully enclosed. This prevents mud, water, sand, etc., from getting between the band and drum and interfering with brake action.

Other outstanding features of the Ford are the Triplex shatter-proof glass windshield, four Houdaille double-acting hydraulic shock absorbers, aluminum pistons, torque-tube drive, more than twenty ball and roller bearings, Rustless Steel, reliability, economy, and long life.

You save when you buy the Ford and you save every mile you drive.



THE FORD DE LUXE PHAETON

THIRTEEN BODY TYPES

\$430 to \$630

(F. o. b. Detroit, plus freight and delivery. Bumpers and spare tire extra at low cost. You can purchase a Ford on economical terms through the Authorized Ford Finance Plans of the Universal Credit Company.)



Don't Spend Six Ten-Hour Days a Year Scouring Smoky Sooty Pots and Pans.

Moving Up The Street

Just to inform our friends and customers that we are now moving into larger quarters up the street, into the

J. B. PICKELSIMER BUILDING

NEXT DOOR TO

The Pickelsimer Drug Store

Where we have more room for our work shop, and better equipment than ever with which to do your

Plumbing and Steam Fitting Work

We appreciate every job that has been given us to do in the past, and we shall appreciate every bit of work entrusted to us in the future. Please call in and see our new location, and remember, when you need Plumbing work and Steam-fitting, repair and rush jobs, to call

Brevard Plumbing Co.

New Location:

THE J. B. PICKELSIMER BUILDING

Next Door to

THE PICKELSIMER DRUG STORE

Telephone 125

MILAN NICHOLSON Proprietors O. DUCLOS