

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE XIX. 11–27.

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

THE occasion of our Lord speaking the parable before us is clear and plain. It was intended to correct the false expectations of the disciples on the subject of Christ's kingdom. It was a prophetic sketch of things present and things to come, which ought to raise solemn thoughts in the minds of all professing Christians.

We see, for one thing, in this parable, *the present position of our Lord Jesus Christ*. He is compared to "a certain nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return."

When the Lord Jesus left the world He ascended up into heaven as a conqueror, leading captivity captive. He is there sitting at the right hand of God, doing the work of a High Priest for His believing people, and ever making intercession for them. But He will not sit there always; He will come forth from the holy of holies to bless His people; He will come again with power and glory, to put down every enemy under His feet and to set up His universal kingdom on earth. At present "we see not all things put under Him:" the devil is the "prince of this world." (Heb. ii. 8; John xiv. 30.) But the present state of things shall be changed one day. When Christ returns, the kingdoms of the world shall become His.

Let these things sink down into our minds. In all our thoughts about Christ, let us never forget His second advent. It is well to know that He lived for us, and died for us, and rose again for us, and intercedes for us. But it is also well to know that He is soon coming again.

We see, for another thing, in this parable, *the present position of all professing Christians*. Our Lord compares them to servants who have been left in charge of money by an absent master, with strict directions to use that money well. They are to “occupy till he comes.”

The countless privileges which Christians enjoy, compared to the heathen, are “pounds” given to them by Christ, for which they must one day give account. We shall not stand side by side in the judgment day with the African and Chinese, who never heard of the Bible, the Trinity, and the crucifixion. The most of us, it may be feared, have little idea of the extent of our responsibility. To whomsoever much is given, of them much will be required.

Are we “occupying”? Are we living like men who know to whom they are indebted, and to whom they must one day give account? This is the only life which is worthy of a reasonable being. The best answer we can give to those who invite us to plunge into worldliness and frivolity, is the Master’s commandment which is before us: let us tell them that we cannot consent, because we look for the coming of the Lord. We would fain be found “occupying” when He comes.

We see, for another thing, in this parable, *the certain reckoning which awaits all professing Christians*. We are told that when the Master returned, he “commanded his servants to be called, that he might know how much every man had gained.”

There is a day coming when the Lord Jesus Christ shall judge His people, and give to everyone according to His works. The course of this world shall not always go on as it does now. Disorder, confusion, false profession, and unpunished sin, shall not always cover the face of the earth: the great white throne shall be set up; the Judge of all shall sit upon it; the dead shall be raised from their graves; the living shall all be summoned to the bar; the books shall be opened. High and low, rich and poor, gentle and simple, all shall at length give account to God, and all shall receive an eternal sentence.

Let the thought of this judgment exercise an influence on our hearts and lives; let us wait patiently when we see wickedness triumphing in the earth. The time is short; there is One who sees and notes down all that the ungodly are doing: “There be higher than they.” (Eccles. v. 8.) Above all, let us live under an abiding sense that we shall stand one day at the judgment seat of Christ. Let us “judge ourselves,” that we be not condemned of the Lord. It is a weighty saying of St. James: “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” (1 Cor. xi. 31; James ii. 12.)

We see, for another thing, in this parable, *the certain reward of all true Christians*. Our Lord tells us that those who are found to have been faithful servants shall receive honour and dignity. Each shall receive a reward proportioned to his diligence: one shall be placed “over ten cities,” and another “over five.”

The people of God receive little apparent recompense in this present time: their names are often cast out as evil; they enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation; their good things are not in this world. The gain of godliness does not consist in earthly rewards, but in inward peace, and hope, and joy in believing. But they shall have an abundant recompense one day: they shall receive wages far exceeding anything they have done for Christ. They shall find, to their amazement, that for everything they have done and borne for their Master, their Master will pay them a hundred-fold.

Let us often look forward to the good things which are yet to come. The “sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.” (Rom. viii. 18.) Let the thought of that glory cheer us in every time of need, and sustain us in every dark hour. Many, no doubt, are “the afflictions of the righteous.” One great receipt for bearing them patiently is to “have respect, like Moses, to the recompense of the reward.” (Psalm xxxiv. 19; Heb. xi. 26.)

We see, lastly, in this parable, *the certain exposure of all unfaithful Christians at the last day*. We are told of one servant who had done nothing with his lord’s money, but had “laid it up in a napkin.”—We are told of his useless arguments in his own defence, and of his final ruin, for not using the knowledge which he confessedly possessed. There can be no mistake as to the persons he represents: he represents the whole company of the ungodly; and his ruin represents their miserable end in the judgment day.

Let us never forget the end to which all ungodly people are coming. Sooner or later, the unbeliever and the impenitent will be put to shame before the whole world, stripped of the means of grace and hope of glory, and cast down to hell. There will be no escape at the last day: false profession and formality will fail to abide the fire of God’s judgment; grace, and grace only, shall stand. Men will discover at last, that there is such a thing as “the wrath of the Lamb.” The excuses with which so many content their consciences now shall prove unavailing at the bar of Christ; the most ignorant shall find that they had knowledge enough to be their condemnation. The possessors of buried talents and misused privileges will discover at last that it would have been good for them never to have been born.

These are solemn things. Who shall stand in the great day when the Master requires an account of “His pounds”? The words of St. Peter will form a fitting conclusion to the whole parable: “Seeing that ye look for such things,

be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” (2 Pet. iii. 14.)

NOTES. LUKE XIX. 11–27.

- 11.—[*As they heard these things.*] Our Lord’s hearers had just heard Him speaking of Himself as one who had come into the world for a great end, to seek and save that which was lost. Their minds were probably full of the idea that He was come to restore the kingdom to Israel, and save the Jews from the power of Rome. He proceeds to check their error.

[*Spake a parable.*] There is great resemblance between this parable and that of the talents, in Matthew. Yet they are not the same. They were evidently spoken at different times, and differ in one important respect, namely, the sums given to the servants. In Matthew the servants receive different sums. In Luke all receive the same.

[*Nigh Jerusalem...kingdom...appear.*] The disciples evidently expected that our Lord was about to be proclaimed King as soon as He arrived at Jerusalem, and to wind up His miracles by reigning on earth.

Our Lord undeceives them by showing in the parable of the pounds, the true nature of the position He was about to take up, and of the position which His disciples would soon have to fill. As for Himself, He was going away from them, to receive a kingdom, and would not return for a long time. As for them, they would be left behind in charge of great privileges, and upon their faithfulness in the use of them, their place in the final glorious kingdom would depend. There would be a kingdom one day in which He would be a King upon earth. But there was much to be done and borne by His people before that time came. He would have them think of their present duty rather than waste time in looking for a kingdom which was yet far distant.

- 12.—[*A certain nobleman.*] This clearly represents Jesus Christ Himself.

[*Went into a far country.*] Augustine thinks this means that Christ left the Jews and went to the Gentiles. I prefer the opinion of Theophylact and Euthymius, that it means Christ’s ascension into heaven.

[*To receive a kingdom.*] Most commentators agree in thinking that this part of the parable refers to a well-known custom in Eastern countries, in the time when our Lord was upon earth. The princes and kings of petty territories under the protection and supremacy of Rome, made journeys to Rome, in order to be invested with kingly authority at the hands of the Roman Emperor. Josephus, for example, mentions that Archelaus, one of Herod’s family, did so, and that the Jews sent after him a protest against his receiving the kingdom, to which Augustus would not listen. Alford observes that the place where our Lord spoke this parable, made this circumstance singularly appropriate. It was spoken at Jericho, where this very Archelaus had built himself a royal palace of great magnificence.

- 13.—[*Ten servants.*] Chemnitius and others think that the “servants” in this parable mean only the ministers of the Gospel. I cannot take so narrow a view of the parable. I think that the expression means all who profess and call themselves Christians. By baptism they all profess to be Christ’s soldiers and servants.

[*Ten pounds.*] The word translated “pound,” means a sum much larger than an English pound. It was worth about £4 1s. 3d. of our money. In the kindred parable of the talents, in Matthew, it should be noted, the servants receive much more. The talent was worth £243 15s.

[*Occupy.*] The Greek word so translated is only found here. It means literally, “employ in business, or trading.” A substantive formed from it is found in 2 Tim. ii. 4, and is rendered “the affairs” of this life.

14.—[*His citizens hated him, &c.*] There can be no doubt that this verse describes the conduct of the Jews towards Christ, both while He was among them and after He had ascended into heaven. It is a lively emblem of their bitter hatred and obstinate unbelief.

[*We will not have this man, &c.*] Theophylact remarks the striking resemblance between this part of the parable and the cry of the Jews when Christ was before Pilate. They were asked, “Shall I crucify your King?” They answered, “We have no king but Cæsar.” They said, “Away with him!” “Crucify him.”

15.—[*When he was returned...kingdom.*] This part of the parable describes the second advent of Jesus Christ. The kingdom for which we pray in the Lord’s prayer is not yet come.

[*Commanded...servants...called.*] These words describe the judgment of all professing Christians, when Christ comes the second time. He will take account of every man’s works.

16.—[*Thy pound.*] The humility of a true Christian is indicated in this expression. The servant does not say, “By my skill I have gained,” but, “*thy pound hath gained.*” We have nothing to boast of. All that we have we have received.

17.—[*Faithful in a very little.*] The sum given to each servant was undoubtedly very small. But our Lord would have us learn that however small a man’s gifts and opportunities he is as much accountable for using them rightly as if they were very great. And he would have us know that the poorest and the humblest Christian, if he uses his one pound well, shall be as carefully noticed and rewarded as the mightiest king. Faithfulness in the use of what we have, however little, is what Christ requires at our hands.

[*Over ten cities.*] Let it be noted that the servant who had turned one pound into ten was set over ten cities, and the servant who had turned one into five was set over five cities: each was rewarded according to his diligence. The doctrine of reward according to works seems to stand out here as well as in other places of Scripture. Our title to heaven is all of grace. Our degree of glory in heaven will be proportioned to our works. “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.”

Henry remarks, “There are degrees of glory in heaven. Every vessel will be alike full, but not alike large. And the degree of glory there will be according to the degrees of usefulness here.” (1 Cor. iii. 8.)

20.—[*I have kept...napkin.*] The ingenuity of commentators has discovered allegorical meanings here. Some have thought that as napkins were used for tying round the faces of dead persons, the whole expression represents a sleeping conscience and a dead soul. I am unable to see that there is anything more in the expression than a circumstance of the parable.

21.—[*I feared thee...austere man.*] The heart of the unconverted man is figured in a very striking manner in this expression. Like Adam and Eve, when they had eaten the forbidden fruit, he is afraid of his Master in heaven, and does not love Him. Like the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, he finds fault with God’s appointments and dealings, and charges Him with hardness and injustice.

Hard thoughts of God are a common mark of all unconverted people. They first misrepresent Him, and then try to excuse themselves for not loving and serving Him.

22, 23.—[*Out of thine own mouth, &c*] The particular expressions in the concluding portion of the parable must not be pressed too closely. We are reading a story of an earthly lord’s dealings with his servants, which illustrates Christ’s dealings with men, and justifies His final condemnation of the wicked. We are not reading an exact account of what will be said and done in the day of judgment.

The turning point of the king’s address to the unfaithful servant is the expression “Thou knewest.” It is meant to teach us that those who are condemned at the last day will be found

to have “known” enough to guide them to salvation if they would have used their knowledge.

24.—[*Take from him....give it.*] It should be observed that we have no mention here of any positive punishment inflicted on the unfaithful servant, such as we find inflicted on the man who buried his talent. But we may not therefore suppose that unfaithful Christians will not be condemned to punishment at the last day. The privation of all privileges, and taking away of all gifts, described in the parable before us, evidently implies that unfaithful Christians will be cast out for ever from Christ’s presence. We must once more remember that we are reading a parable, and not a history of the last day. The punishment of unfaithful Christians will doubtless answer to the punishment which a king will inflict on unfaithful servants.

25.—[*They said unto him, &c.*] This parenthetical expression is remarkable. It was either spoken by those at Jericho, who heard our Lord deliver this parable (such an interruption by interested hearers would not be extraordinary in Eastern countries), or else it forms part of the parable itself, and was spoken by our Lord’s own mouth. In either case the lesson is the same. It shows that the honour placed on faithful Christians, at the last day, will be so great as to surprise and amaze all who behold it.

Some have thought that it means the angels, who will be the standers-by and ministering agents in all the proceedings of the last day. This, however, seems very improbable.

26.—[*Hath...hath not.*] It is evident that these two expressions are elliptical. “Every one which hath,” signifies every Christian who not only has privileges, but improves them and turns them to good account. “He that hath not,” signifies the professing Christian who is content with the idle possession of Christianity, and makes no effort to use it for his soul’s good or the glory of God.

The Gentile Christians who have not made a good use of the Gospel, are very probably included prophetically in the latter part of the verse.

27.—[*Those mine enemies...slay...before me.*] The meaning of this verse appears to be, that the Jews, who persisted in unbelief when Christ came among them, and died in unbelief, will be fearfully punished in the last day. They will be raised and brought before the bar of Christ, and receive a punishment proportioned to their enormous sin in killing the Lord of glory. Though triumphing apparently in the day of our Lord’s crucifixion, Christ foretells in this parable, that there will be a reckoning day. Annas and Caiaphas and their companions will yet be brought before Jesus of Nazareth and punished.

In leaving the parable let us not forget that it shows us three sorts of people.

Firstly, there are open opposers of Christ and the Gospel. Such were the Jews who refused to receive our Lord. Such are all infidels in the present day.

Secondly, there are faithful Christians. Such are all they who make a good use of the Gospel, for their own good and for God’s glory.

Thirdly, there are unfaithful, formal Christians, who have Christianity, but make no real use of it. Of these it should be always noted that the parable does not charge them with being open enemies of Christ, or open breakers of God’s commandments. But they “hide their pound in a napkin.” They have a mighty gift from God, and make no use of it. This will prove at last their eternal ruin.