

DAY BY DAY

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

4.03: MORE PARABLES B

1. THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

“And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.” Mark 12:1-9.

“In the parable the householder represented God, the vineyard the Jewish nation, the hedge the divine law which was their protection. The tower was a symbol of the temple. The lord of the vineyard had done everything needful for its prosperity. “What could have been done more to My vineyard,” He says, “that I have not done in it?” Thus was represented God's unwearied care for Israel. And as the husbandmen were to return to the lord a due proportion of the fruits of the vineyard, so God's people were to honor Him by a life corresponding to their sacred privileges.

“But as the husbandmen had killed the servants whom the master sent to them for fruit, so the Jews had put to death the prophets whom God sent to call them to repentance. Messenger after messenger had been slain. Thus far the application of the parable could not be questioned, and in what followed it was not less evident. In the beloved son whom the lord of the vineyard finally sent to his disobedient servants, and whom they seized and slew, the priests and rulers saw a distinct picture of Jesus and His impending fate. Already they were planning to slay Him whom the Father had sent to them as a last appeal. In the retribution inflicted upon the ungrateful husbandmen was portrayed the doom of those who should put Christ to death.” *Desire of Ages*, 596, 597.

“In an English school years ago the master had made it a rule that if any one told a lie he must be punished with six strokes on the hand with a strap. A little girl told a lie one day, and the master called her up for punishment. She was a poor little thing, and he hated to punish her, but the rule must be enforced. She cried so hard after the first stroke that he felt he could not go on. But the lie could not be passed over unless there was one of them who would be willing to take the punishment instead of the little girl.

“In response, one little fellow said, “I will sir.” He came forward, put out his hand, and without a word took the punishment that belonged to her. The master's eyes filled with tears as he whipped the little fellow. When it was over, he gathered the children about him, and told them the story of Him who bore the punishment that ought to have been ours.” *The Presbyterian*.

2. THE FIG TREE

“And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.” Luke 21:29-32.

“The Savior Himself has given signs of His coming, and He says, “When you see these things come to pass, know you that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” “Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

“We have reached the period foretold in these Scriptures. The time of the end is come, the visions of the prophets are unsealed, and their solemn warnings point us to our Lord's coming in glory as near at hand.

“The Jews misinterpreted and misapplied the word of God, and they knew not the time of their visitation. The years of the ministry of Christ and His apostles, the precious last years of grace to the chosen people, -they spent in plotting the destruction of the Lord's messengers. Earthly ambitions absorbed them, and the offer of the spiritual kingdom came to them in vain. So today the kingdom of this world absorbs men's thoughts, and they take no note of the rapidly fulfilling prophecies, and the tokens of the swift coming kingdom of God.

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” While we are not to know the hour of our Lord's return, we may know when it is near. “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” Desire of Ages, 234, 235.

“Are we to wait until the fulfillment of the prophecies of the end before we say anything concerning them? Of what value will our words be then? Shall we wait until God's judgments fall upon the transgressor before we tell him how to avoid them? Where is our faith in the word of God? Must we see things foretold come to pass before we will believe what He has said? In clear, distinct rays light has come to us, showing us that the great day of the Lord is near at hand, “even at the door.” Testimonies 9, 20.

“Cares cannot fret me if my smile is dwelling,
In the still air of faith's untroubled day;
Grief cannot shake me if I walk beside Thee,
My hand in Yours along the darkening way.”

3. THE KING GOING TO WAR

“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:28-33.

“He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be

ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke 9:23-26.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:24-27.

"I have seen a device representing a bullock standing between a plow and an altar, with the inscription, "Ready for either," willing to swelter in the weary furrow or to bleed on the altar of sacrifice. This is the position the child of God should ever be in, willing to go where duty calls, to deny self, and to sacrifice for the cause of truth. The Christian church was founded upon the principle of sacrifice. If any man will come after Me, says Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." He requires the whole heart, the entire affections. The exhibitions of zeal, earnestness, and unselfish labor which His devoted followers have given to the world, should kindle our ardor and lead us to emulate their example. Genuine religion gives an earnestness and fixedness of purpose which molds the character to the divine image, and enables us to count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ. This singleness of purpose will prove an element of tremendous power." Testimonies 5, 307.

4. THE TARES

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 13:36-43.

"The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan....

"Notwithstanding Christ's warning, men have sought to uproot the tares. To punish those who were supposed to be evildoers, the church has had recourse to the civil power. Those who differed from the established doctrines have been imprisoned, put to torture and to death, at the instigation of men who claimed to be acting under the sanction of Christ. But it is the spirit of Satan, not the spirit of Christ, that inspires such acts. This is Satan's own method of bringing the world under his dominion. God has been misrepresented through the church by this way of dealing with those supposed to be heretics.

"Not judgment and condemnation of others, but humility and distrust of self, is the teaching of Christ's parable. Not all that is sown in the field is good grain. The fact that men are in the church does not prove them Christians. . . .

"The tares are permitted to grow among the wheat, to have all the advantage of sun and shower; but in the time of harvest you shall "return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." Christ Himself will decide who are worthy to dwell with the family of heaven. He will judge every man according to his words and his works. Profession is as nothing in the scale. It is character that decides destiny." Christ's Object Lessons, 72-74.

5. THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” Matthew 13:44-46.

“This parable illustrates the value of the heavenly treasure, and the effort that should be made to secure it. The finder of the treasure in the field was ready to part with all that he had, ready to put forth untiring labor, in order to secure the hidden riches. So the finder of heavenly treasure will count no labor too great and no sacrifice too dear, in order to gain the treasures of truth.

“In the parable the field containing the treasure represents the Holy Scriptures. And the gospel is the treasure. The earth itself is not so interlaced with golden veins and filled with precious things as is the word of God.” Christ's Object Lessons, 104.

“The blessings of redeeming love our Savior compared to a precious pearl. He illustrated His lesson by the parable of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, “who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” Christ Himself is the pearl of great price. In Him is gathered all the glory of the Father, the fullness of the Godhead. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. The glory of the attributes of God is expressed in His character.

“Every page of the Holy Scriptures shines with His light. The righteousness of Christ, as a pure, white pearl, has no defect, no stain. No work of man can improve the great and precious gift of God.” Christ's Object Lessons, 115.

“The word of God is to be our study. We are to educate our children in the truths found therein. It is an inexhaustible treasure; but men fail to find this treasure, because they do not search until it is within their possession. Very many are content with a supposition in regard to the truth. They are content with a surface work, taking for granted that they have all that is essential. They take the sayings of others for truth, being too indolent to put themselves to diligent, earnest labor, represented in the word as digging for hidden treasure. But man's inventions are not only unreliable, they are dangerous; for they place man where God should be. They place the sayings of men where a “Thus says the Lord” should be.

“Christ is the truth. His words are truth, and they have a deeper significance than appears on the surface. All the sayings of Christ have a value beyond their unpretending appearance. Minds that are quickened by the Holy Spirit will discern the value of these sayings. They will discern the precious gems of truth, though these may be buried treasures.

“Our salvation depends on a knowledge of the truth contained in the Scriptures. It is God's will that we should possess this. Search, O search the precious Bible with hungry hearts. Explore God's word as the miner explores the earth to find veins of gold. Never give up the search until you have ascertained your relation to God and His will in regard to you.” Christ's Object Lessons, 109-111.

6. THE FISH NET

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Matthew 13:47-50.

“The casting of the net is the preaching of the gospel. This gathers both good and evil into the church. When the mission of the gospel is completed, the judgment will accomplish the work of separation. Christ saw how the existence of false brethren in the church would cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. The world would revile the gospel because of the inconsistent lives of false professors. Even Christians would be caused to stumble as they saw that many who bore Christ's name were not controlled by His Spirit. Because these sinners were in the church, men would be in danger of thinking that God excused their sins. Therefore Christ lifts the veil from the future, and bids all to behold that it is character, not position, which decides man's destiny.

“Both the parable of the tares and that of the net plainly teach that there is no time when all the wicked will turn to God. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest. The good and the bad fish are together drawn ashore for a final separation.

“Again, these parables teach that there is to be no probation after the judgment. When the work of the gospel is completed, there immediately follows the separation between the good and the evil, and the destiny of each class is forever fixed.” Christ's Object Lessons, 123, 124.

“The gospel net is to be cast into the sea; and it draws both good and bad. But because this is so, shall men and women ignore the efforts made to save those who will believe, and who will unite in reaching that class of whom Christ spoke in His rebuke to the Pharisees? “Sinners and harlots. “ He said, “go into the kingdom of God before you.” Will you not see that even in the church there are those who have no connection with God? But Christ says, “Let the tares and the wheat grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into My barn.”

“When the Lord moves upon the churches, bidding them do a certain work, and they refuse to do that work; and when some, their human efforts united with the divine, endeavor to reach to the very depths of human woe and misery, God's blessing will rest richly upon them. Even though but few accept the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, their work will not be in vain; for one soul is precious, very precious, in the sight of God. Christ would have died for one soul, in order that that one might live through the eternal ages.” Testimonies 8, 72, 73.

7. THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

“But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

“So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” Matthew 18:23-35.

“This parable is designed to show the spirit of tenderness and compassion which man should manifest for his fellow man. The pardon of this king represents a pardon that is supernatural - a divine forgiveness of all sin. Christ is represented by the king who, moved with compassion, forgave the debt of his servant. Man was under the condemnation of the broken law. He could not save himself; and for this reason, Christ came to this world, clothed His divinity with humanity, and gave His life, the just for the unjust. He desired to give in His own life an example of the forbearance that man should exercise toward his fellow man.

“When the debtor pleaded for delay, with the promise, “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,” the sentence was revoked; the whole debt was canceled; and he was soon given an opportunity to pattern after the master who had forgiven him. Going out, he met a fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence. But he who had been so mercifully treated dealt with his fellow laborer in an altogether different manner. His debtor made an appeal similar to that which he himself had made to the king, but without a similar result. He who had so recently been forgiven was not kind, and tenderhearted, and pitiful. The goodness, mercy, and love shown to him he did not exercise in dealing with his fellow servant. He heeded not the request to be patient. The goodness shown to him only hardened his heart. The small sum owed him was all that the ungrateful servant could keep in mind. . . .

“The lesson to be learned is that we must have the spirit of true forgiveness, even as Christ forgives the sinner, who can in no case pay his enormous debt. We are to bear in mind that Christ has paid an infinite price for the souls of men, and we are to treat them as Christ's purchased possession.” Review and Herald, Jan. 3, 1899.

SPEAK GENTLY.

1. Speak gently; it is better far

To rule by love than fear:

Speak gently; let no harsh words mar

The good we might do here.

2. Speak gently to the little child;

Its love be sure to gain;

Teach it in accents soft and mild;

It may not long remain.

3. Speak gently to the aged one;

Grieve not the careworn heart:

The sands of life are nearly run;

Let such in peace depart.

4. Speak gently, kindly, to the poor;

Let no harsh tone be heard;

They have enough they must endure,

Without an unkind word.

5. Speak gently to the erring; know

They must have toiled in vain;

Perhaps unkindness made them so;

Oh, win them back again.