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The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter Lesson 5, Nov. 4, 1900

THE UNJUST STEWARD.—
Luke 16: 1-13.

Read Luke 16: 1-13.
Commit Verses 10-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.—Luke 16: 13

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time—January, A. D. 30, immediately after the last lesson.

Place.—Perea, at house of a Pharisee, as in the last lesson.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES.—V. 1. *And he said also unto his disciples.* This also implies that these words were spoken at the same gathering at the Pharisee's table, where Jesus had spoken the three parables of the last chapter. The first and second were spoken to the Pharisees; the third to both publicans and Pharisees; the one in this lesson to the publicans; the one in the next lesson with special reference to the Pharisees.

The publicans were many of them rich, and had gained no small part of their wealth by fraud and extortion. Their case presented some needed lessons to the disciples. The Pharisees also had misused the privileges, and blessings, and powers God had entrusted to them, and so illustrated the application of the parable as a warning to the disciples.

THE PARABLE.—Vs. 1-8. *A certain rich man.* The parable is rather an illustrative narrative, and we are to look upon the rich man and the steward as necessary parts of the setting of the great truth to be taught. *Which had a steward.* An agent, the messenger of his estates. *The same was accused unto him that he had wasted.* (R. V., "was wasting") his goods. He wasted his lord's money in extravagant living. This accounts for the fact that when put out of his office he had nothing to fall back upon. *How is it that I hear.* Is it true? *Give an account.* Make your statement, and show whether the accusation is true. *Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do?* He did not repent, but only sought the shrewdest way of escaping out of the trap. *I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.* Like many another man, was less ashamed of the meanest fraud than of asking or begging. *I am resolved.* I have found out; as if the bright idea had just struck him. *That...* (his lord's debtors) may receive me into their houses. And out of gratitude, or from fear of exposure, give him a home, or provide out of the dishonest gains he had enabled them to acquire. *So he called every one.* Probably each one by himself, so that the others would not know what he did for any one. *How much owest thou.* How much is your unsettled account? Rent is almost invariably, in the East, paid in produce. *An hundred measures (baths) of oil.* Olive oil from the olive orchards. A "bath" is about nine gallons, and worth about \$50. *Take thy bill.* The document in the steward's hands, showing the obligation. *Quickly.* Lest some one come in and detect the fraud. Lest the man have time to think, and refuse to be partaker of the fraud. *And writes fifty.* The steward, having done the business before, would apparently have the right to change the bill. And the steward's voucher was in law binding on the Lord. *An hundred measures of wheat.* Measures here is not the same word as in v. 6, but is the "homer," equal to 10 baths, of 35 quarts each, s. e., 350 quarts, or 11 bushels, so that the whole debt was about 1,100 bushels of wheat, worth \$500 to \$600. *Take thy bill, and write fourscore.* He deducted 20 measures, or 220 bushels. *And the (his) lord.* The lord whose steward this man was. *Commended the unjust (unrighteous) steward, because he had done wisely.* Shrewdly, prudently. The lord had expected that his steward would be dishonest; now he is amused at the cleverness which the man shows in escaping from his difficulty.

OUR LORD'S LESSONS FROM THIS PARABLE.—V. 8-13. *For the children of this world.* This is the comment of Jesus upon the action of the steward and the praise of his master. He was saying "I cite this example of shrewdness." *Are in their generation wiser.* Worldly people are far sighted and ready in their transactions with one another for temporal objects. They are not really wiser, for they lack the greatest element of wisdom, the choice of the best objects; but they are wiser in attaining their inferior ends, shrewder in their dealings than the children of light. Goodness is wisdom, and sin is folly; but sometimes good people use less skill and ingenuity in attaining the ends of goodness than bad men in committing the folly of sin.

Examples of this state of things can be seen on every side. Take,

for example, the audience rooms of theaters and opera houses as adapted to hearing and seeing compared with many of our churches, built more to look at than to serve as the best places for preaching the gospel of Jesus. Compare the slowness with which many churches adopt the best Sunday-school rooms, and the many appliances for better teaching and better success for the children, with the swiftness with which manufacturers put out old machinery and adopt the new to keep up with the time. Compare the methods of carrying on missions, the small numbers, the old-fashioned equipments, the poor support, with the war ships and army equipments for conquering other nations.

Never before was the church so eager as now to learn the lessons Christ teaches through this parable. Not a little perplexity has arisen in many minds because our Lord selects such an objectionable and immoral character as the vehicle for his instruction. (1) In order to teach the lesson he desired it was necessary that there should be some natural reason for the situation that taught the lesson. Publicans and Pharisees were misusing their worldly gains. There was sure to come a time when they must give an account. They were really unjust stewards of things God had entrusted to them. A steward, therefore, was naturally the central figure of the parable. He must be unjust to represent these hearers. He could teach a lesson from the ingenuity of the man who looked out for the future. (2) It is natural and right to select some one quality for imitation without in any wise approving of the other qualities by which it is accompanied. Jesus had before this commanded his disciples to be wise as serpents, but he did not thereby advise them to use any other qualities of the serpent. Even Satan has been used to each zeal and perseverance. *Make to yourself friends (by means) of the mammon of unrighteousness.* Mammon in the Syriac means money. It represents wealth, gains. It is called the mammon of unrighteousness, either because it refers to wealth even when gained unrighteously, as was the case with many of his hearers; and because it tempts to unrighteousness, is full of danger.

How Can We Make Friends by Means of Mammon? By giving it a way in benevolence; by using it to help men; by supplying the wants of the poor; by sending the gospel around the world; by advancing every good work. *That, when ye fail die and can no longer use your wealth, or when you lose what you have gained.* They may receive you into everlasting habitation. Those whom you have helped will welcome you. Heaven will be the sweeter, happier to you. Even in this world, giving to them brings you into the spirit of heaven. It enlarges the capacity for enjoyment. *He that is faithful in that which is least.* Lest it should seem strange that so much importance is attached to the proper use of perishing and unrighteous wealth, remember the great principle: "He that is faithful," etc. Least refers to worldly possession and opportunities. *Is faithful also in much.* Faithfulness runs through everything. This is illustrated in the parable of the pounds, where those who used faithfully their five and ten pound were given authority over five and ten cities. The least was the test and the preparation for the greater. *He that is unjust, etc.* This is the reverse of the other picture. They are the ones that did not stand the test. *If therefore.* Here Jesus makes an application of the principle just stated. *Faithful in the unrighteous mammon.* The riches of this world. *Who will commit to your trust the true riches?* Of spiritual and heavenly things, either in this world or the next. He that cannot use even money aright to make the world better, how can he be trusted with the care of souls, the truths of the gospel, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the graces of character? *Faithful in that which is another man's.* The worldly things God has entrusted to you as stewards. *Who shall give you that which is your own?* The true riches, which are a part of your being, enlarged talents, noble character, the graces of life.

The steward of the parable had tried to serve two masters, his lord and himself. But he tried to do the impossible, for (v. 13) *no servant can serve two masters.* For they are distinct and opposite in character and demands. To serve two such masters is simply as impossible in the nature of things as going in opposite directions at the same time. *Either he will hate the one, and love the other.* Because they are diametrically opposed to one another. If one loves truth, he must hate lying. If one loves goodness, he must hate evil. *And despise the other.* By refusing to obey his commands or carry out his principles. *Ye cannot serve God and mammon, or riches.* One or the other must be supreme. There

are many things which may be used for either master. A knife may be used by a surgeon or a murderer. Money may be gained righteously or dishonestly, and may be used selfishly or for the kingdom of God. The real test comes when we must choose between right and wrong, between riches and character, between honest poverty and selfish wealth. It is not a question of the amount of riches, out of the way it is obtained, and of the use of what we have dishonestly gained.

Converted Christians.

How great would be the result if converted teachers should speak to their scholars about their souls! In Mr. D. L. Moody's mission Sunday school in Chicago there was a class of young ladies who were Mr. Moody said, without exception the most frivolous girls he ever met. He tried to teach them one Sunday, and they laughed in his face. Their teacher was a delicate young man who was slowly dying with consumption. One day he called on Mr. Moody and told him that he had had another hemorrhage, and that he was going home to New York State to die. He seemed greatly troubled, and when Mr. Moody asked the reason, he replied: Well, I have never led any of my class to Christ. I really believe I have done the girls more harm than good. Mr. Moody had never heard of a teacher manifest such concern for the soul of his scholars, and he suggested that the teacher visit his scholars and tell them how he felt. During the next ten days Mr. Moody and the teacher visited each scholar at her home. At the end of ten days the young man entered Mr. Moody's store, his face shining. Mr. Moody, he said, the last one of my class has yielded herself to Christ. Mr. Moody thus relates what followed:

I tell you we had a time of rejoicing. He had to leave the next night, so I called the class together that night for a prayer-meeting, and there God kindled a fire in my soul that has never gone out. The height of my ambition had been to be a successful merchant, and I had known that meeting was going to take that ambition out of me I might not have gone. But how many times have I thanked God since for that meeting! The dying teacher sat in the midst of his class and talked with them and read the fourteenth chapter of John. We tried to sing Bessie but the tie that binds, after which we knelt down to prayer. I was just rising from my knees when one of the class began to pray for her dying teacher. Another prayed, and another, and before we rose the whole class had prayed. As I went out I said to myself, O God, let me die rather than lose the blessing I have received to-night! The next evening I went to the depot to say good by to that teacher. Just before the train started one of the class came, and before long, without any prearrangement, they were all there. What a meeting that was! We tried to sing, but we broke down. The last we saw of that dying teacher he was stading on the platform of the car, his finger pointing upward, telling that class to meet him in heaven.

That incident changed the whole tenor of Mr. Moody's life, and gave to the Christian world its greatest lay evangelist. After relating the story of the dying teacher's successful effort to secure the conversion of his scholars and the farewell scene, Mr. Moody adds: I didn't know what this was going to cost me, I was disqualified for business. It had become distasteful to me. I had got a taste of another world, and cared no more for making money. For some days after, the greatest struggle of my life took place. Should I give up business and give myself to Christian work, or should I not? I have never regretted my choice. Oh, the luxury of leading some one out of the darkness of this world into the glorious light and liberty of the gospel!

Sunday-school teacher, would you have that delightful experience? Lead your scholars to Christ, and you will.—North Western Advocate.

Coddling Children.

Why is it, asks Medical Talk, that people who are most exposed to cold by outdoor employment are the people who are least subject to colds? Simply because, it answers, no one catches cold by exposing the whole body to cold. Those people catch cold who try to coddle themselves and keep themselves away from cold. A person catches cold when a portion of the body is exposed to cold, while the other portion is kept warm by artificial heat. One is more apt to catch cold sitting by a stove in an unventilated room than by facing a blizzard in the open air.

Nansen and his men, when in the Arctic regions, were exposed to cold of every description, and it is stated that they never once suffered from colds. But to coddle them they returned to their native land than they one and all caught severe colds. The reason for this is probably because they were again warmly housed and spent a portion of their time in unventilated rooms, sleeping in stuffy bed-rooms. The more children are coddled to keep them from catching cold the more apt they are to catch cold. The proper course to take is to clothe the children warmly, provide good, stout shoes, and turn them loose in the open air. Let them go, rain or shine, cold or warm; let them have the open air every day. Such children are far less liable to catch cold. And their bedroom window should be open every night, winter and summer, in such a way as to avoid a direct draught upon them while they are sleeping.

Welcome Sympathy.

Sympathy with bereavement or calamity is commonly expressed by saying something better left unsaid, or by sitting down and weeping with the sufferer. An electric, if rough specific for grief, to be commended, because it placed the afflicted one in instant communication with his normal self, is found in the following story of two boys, printed in Pearson's weekly:

A fourteen-year-old boy went into his mother's presence recently, with a black eye, swollen lips, a ragged scratch across his face, and torn coat sleeves.

Jack, cried the mother, as he came in, have you been fighting again? No, rather sullenly.

Then what is the matter with your face?

Jim Green's ma is dead, he replied.

What has that to do with your disfigured face?

I saw Jim just now, and he looked awfully sad and lonely.

Well?

I didn't know what to do to make him happy again, and feeling sorry for him, I just went up to him and let him hit me five times.

Did it help him? asked the mother.

Help him! echoed the boy, in a surprised tone. Of course it did! Don't you think it would make me feel better to whack a fellow who had licked me every week for a year?—American Friend.

Be Greater than Your Position.

Barton M. Barch, in Success, gives the following sound advice to young men:

A distinguished professor once said, If I had a son, I should tell him many times a day to make himself as big a man on the inside as possible.

Young men too often want to be big men on the outside; to occupy positions which fit them as a turtle's shell fits a clam.

Never mind your position, young man. Whatever it may be, try to fill it. The duties which you have to perform may seem trivial; but because it is a small position is no reason why you should be a small man. You may be big inside, you know, if you are small outside.

The young man who applies himself to internal growth, as it were, is bound in time to find a place where he will be able to use every power he possesses.

At any rate, better be a big man in a small place than the opposite. A pinch of powder in a small cartridge can make a deal of noise and drive a bullet a long way. What can it do in a Krupp gun?

Here is one for the mathematicians. A wall is 20 feet high. A snail wishes to get over it as soon as possible. It climbs up 3 feet per day, and while asleep slips down 2 feet per night. Immediately on reaching the top it starts down on the other side. If it exerts the same energy throughout, how long does it take to reach the ground on the other side?

Fortune may render a man unhappy, it is only himself who can make himself despicable.—Carlyle.

To recognize an old blessing is much better than to get a new one.

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