

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH, 1871.
The Talents.—Matt. xxv. 14-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Rom. ii. 6.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Rom. ii. 1-16; Rev. 3.

SUMMARY.—The fidelity of each to his own trust is a law of Christian discipleship, according to which glory or shame shall be awarded.

ANALYSIS.—I. *The Distribution.* vs. 13, 15.

II. *The Use.* vs. 16, 18.

III. *The Reckoning.* vs. 19, 20. (a) The faithful two. (b) The faithless one.

EXPOSITION.—This parable is not the same with that recorded in Luke xix. 27. Each is distinguished from the other by the time and place of delivery, and by its aim and general character. There is, however, a striking resemblance between the two, and they may well be studied together.

This parable of the ten virgins is addressed to the professed disciples of the Saviour. See ch. xxiv. 1. Its lesson, however, is for all, since Christ is Lord of all men, and all ought to be both the professed and true disciples of Christ.

The parable aims to give the law of responsibility to Christ in a practical form, and with the direct purpose to stir us up to faithfulness, when most strongly tempted to unfaithfulness.

The Saviour indicates the relation of the parties. He himself is Lord and Master, and the disciple is a "servant," or slave, for such is the meaning of the Greek word, vs. 14. All men are Christ's, and true freedom is full and free consent to this divine servitude. What we have is not ours, but our Lord's, committed to us on trust for use in his interest. "Usury," vs. 27, means simply lawful interest, or increase. We are Christ's by creation, preservation, especially redemption.

No other being has upon us counter-claims. His is an exclusive claim. See this point more fully presented in Luke xiv. 26-33. The responsibility in every case is very great, immense. There is mention of nothing less than talents, and the talent was for that time a vast sum. Such is its use here, a vast sum. The least saint is loaded with a great weight of responsibility. Christ entrusts to each one a fortune for his care and improvement. He calls upon each to prize himself, his position, his opportunities, his influence. See also ch. x. 28-33. Responsibility is not the same with all. There are various degrees. Some have one talent, some more. This agrees with the common judgement of mankind. There is a divine adjustment of that which one has to that which he is. "To every man, according to his several ability," vs. 15. Gifts or trusts may seem to be arbitrarily and capriciously dispensed, but really a divine wisdom secures a perfect correspondence. Herein is a lesson of humility to some, of encouragement to others, of trust to all. We are to let God direct us in all our ways. Responsibility corresponds to ability.

Christ's disciples both are and feel responsible. In his absence there is more temptation to forget obligation, and more danger of forgetting it. This absence refers primarily to the time between the first and the second appearing, but not exclusively. Perpetual obligation to Jesus, year in, year out, on and on, with no break, no vacation. It is a great point gained to get and carry a sense of this truth. This parable is joined to the command to watch (vs. 13), by the word "for" (vs. 14).

The judgment.—(1) It is universal, inevitable. Every one comes to it, will he or will he not. Three servants only are mentioned, but they are mentioned as specimens of all. Each of all the Lord's servants, are "reckoned with" verse 19 at the appointed time. "Every one of us must give account of himself to God." We may forget the Lord; he will never forget us. (2) The judgment was long deferred. "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh." The practical lesson is that however the time of service may extend, we are not to lose our fidelity and become weary of service. (3) It is to be dreaded only by the faithless.

The results.—The necessity of a choice between opposite courses is involved in responsibility. Every man must "make up

his mind" what to do with the Saviour. It is of no use to retreat, as many do, behind any other doctrine. Every excuse is idle, utterly idle. Some use and some abuse their trust. The two who had most committed to them are in the parable the faithful, not, however, as teaching that those most responsible are as a rule most faithful, but perhaps to guard against the very prevalent temptation to neglect duty because of the feeling that we can do but little. "If I had the power of A. B. or C. I would try to do something." Such an excuse is very common, but very foolish and wicked. The question of much or little is as nothing beside the question of fidelity or neglect, obedience or disobedience. Righteousness and unrighteousness are the same whether in the least or the much. Fidelity is rewarded. The reward exceeds the service. For the Christian eternal fellowship with the Redeemer, the joys of heaven. Our talents are small beside the "weight of glory." A very beautiful and forcible phrase for heaven, "the joy of thy Lord." Betrayal of trust is punished.

At the last day, we shall have for neglect of duty no excuse which will stand. We shall be judged out of our own mouth. First, a deprivation; all previous blessing and privilege forever taken away. Second, an infliction; "cast into outer darkness," where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." A most vivid exhibition of torment, positive anguish. The contrast is here drawn between the light and joy of the feast within the mansion, and the darkness and misery of those who are cast out for punishment. This punishment is described in verse 46 as everlasting. Judgment begins on earth, but the full realization will be hereafter. See Revelation, chapters ii. and iii.

"A far country," vs. 14. No reference in the original to distance. The Saviour is really present always, though seemingly away. See chap. xxviii. 20; absent in one sense, present in another. The unfaithful servants' excuse was "fear." The real fault was wickedness and sloth. But fear should have driven him to just the opposite course from that pursued. The principle of verse 29 is one of universal application and great importance. The more we do for our Lord, the more we can do, while by neglect we lose power and opportunity.

Is the parable in Luke xix. 12-27, the same with this? Wherein does it differ? To whom was this parable spoken? Ch. xxiv. 1. Does it show the duty of any except professed disciples?

What is the main lesson of the parable? Who is represented by the "man traveling into a far country"? Who by the "servants"? vs. 14. What by the talents? Why was it the duty of these servants to use their talents for the master's interest? Who ought to serve Christ? In what should we serve Christ? Are all men equally able to serve him? vs. 15. Are all equally responsible? What does the word "talent" imply as to the extent of our obligation? What is taught by the words "to every man according to his several ability"? Are we always responsible? What is meant by the "long time" in vs. 19? What by the "coming" and "reckoning"? Were all the servants called to account? Must every man be judged by Christ? Do men deceive themselves because the day is deferred?

Could the servants who received their master's property avoid responsibility? Must not every one either choose or refuse to serve Jesus? Is not neglect a real refusal? Did all the servants prove faithful? vs. 21-24. Why is it said that two were faithful and one unfaithful? Is ability to do but little an excuse for doing nothing? What excuse did the unfaithful servant give? vs. 24, 25. What was the Lord's answer? vs. 26, 27. What is meant by the joy of the Lord?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.
Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 351, 352.

DO WHAT YOU CAN.

Don't think there is nothing
For children to do,
Because they can't work like a man;
The harvest is great,
And the laborers few,
Then, children, do all that you can.
You think, if great riches
You had at command,
Your zeal should no weariness know;
You'd scatter your wealth
With a liberal hand,
And succor the children of woe.
But what if you've naught
But a penny to give?
Then give it, though scanty your store:
For those who give nothing
When little they have,
When wealthy will do little more.
It was not the offering
Of pomp and of power,
It was not the golden bequest—
Ah no! 'twas the mite
From the hand of the poor
That Jesus applauded and bless'd.
Then don't be a sluggard
And live at your ease,
And life with vain pleasures beguile;
But ever be active
And busy as bees,
And God on your labors will smile.

THE NAUGHTY HAND.

"Father," said Lucy, coming to him with a stick in her hand, "father, will you whip my hand! It is a naughty, wicked hand, and deserves a whipping."
"What has this small fat hand done?" asked father, taking the stick; "it does not look wicked."

"It is," said Lucy, in a very positive tone. "It is a stealing hand. Whip it, father." He gave it a little strike. "Whip it harder, father; whip it harder," said Lucy; "it must hurt."

Father did as Lucy told, and it did hurt. She covered her eyes, but held her hand bravely out to receive the blows.

"That is enough, I think," he said.

The child drew it away, and looked into the red open palm. "Are you very sorry?" she asked in a little sorry tone, "and will you never, never do such a mean thing again?"

"I sorry, so sorry," squeaked a small make-believe voice, just as if it was the poor little hand speaking. "I never will do so again—no, never."

"That's right," said Lucy, "because sorry is not enough; you must mean to do right next time."

"And I think it will," she said, looking up to her father's face. "I think that poor hand will never steal again, never, never!"

"I hope not," cried father; "but what did it steal?"

"Oh, I must not tell," said the little girl, "because you know the Bible says we must not let our left hand know what our right hand does, and it would hear."

"Very well," said father; "we do not want bad stories or bad examples to go any farther than we can help."

Then Lucy skipped away. And what the little hands next got into I cannot tell, only I do know that little hands do not get into mischief of themselves; there is a little head and a little heart that go with them. Is not that so?—*Child's Paper.*

THE MILLER'S STORY.

"When I was fourteen years of age, my uncle, with whom I lived, had a hired man who took my part, so that I had a very comfortable summer. He was a very strong young man, and could do more work than any man I ever saw. My uncle was glad to hire him. I heard my uncle say, 'I expect to get as much work out of him as I could get out of any two men I could hire.' Mr. Paddock, for that was his name, was a Christian man. Once we were in the field at work, and something went wrong, and my uncle began to swear—a very common thing with him. Mr. Paddock stopped working and said:

"I say, I'm getting more than I bargained for. I agreed to work for you for sixteen dollars a month. I was hired to work for you—not to hear you swear. Now either the working or the swearing has got to be stopped."

"I never heard my uncle swear after that when Paddock was present. At another time when my uncle had been treating me unkindly he said, looking him full in the eye, 'You don't treat that boy right, you don't do as you would be done by.'

"He don't belong to you," said my uncle, who was very angry.

"That is true, but he belongs to the Lord, and as I am in the Lord's service, I must see that his property is not abused. God says, 'All souls are mine.'"

"My uncle didn't say anything for he was afraid Paddock would leave him."

"That evening as we were on our way home, he said to me, 'You need to have a father to take care of you.' He spoke so kindly and I felt the need of one to take care of me so keenly, that I burst out crying. 'I wish I had a father to take care of me,' said I.

"You might have had one all along, if you hadn't run away from him."

"I never ran away from my father," said I, "my father died when I was young."

"One father died then. The other is still living."

"I know then what he meant, but I didn't say anything."

"You have a Father in heaven from whom you have wandered, who loves you more than your earthly father did, and is more able to help you than he was. You had better go to him and let him help you."

"How shall I go to him?"

"Go away by yourself and pray to him. Tell him that you are a poor, friendless boy, and that you want him to take care of you. Tell him that you are a great sinner, and that you want him to forgive you, and to give you a heart to love and serve him. Be in earnest, and he will hear you."

"That night I went to the barn and tried to do as Paddock told me to. I wasn't used to praying, and didn't succeed very well at first. Paddock continued to tell me what to do, and was the means of bringing me back to my Father. I came just as the Prodigal son came, and I was received in pretty much the same manner. You have a kind earthly father, but still need the care of your Heavenly Father."—*Bright Side.*

LOVE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.

"O, it's just as different as can be!" said one of my young friends.

"What is?" I asked.

"Why, being a Christian. Everything is so different from what I expected."

"What did you expect?"

"When you used to talk with me about being a Christian, I used to say to myself, 'No, I can't now, for I shall have to do so many hard things, and I never can do them.'"

"What hard things?"

"O, I used to think, 'Now, if I become a Christian, I shall have to walk just so; shall have to go to church and prayer-meeting; shall have to pray and read the Bible.' It is so different from what I thought."

"Why James, what do you mean?" I exclaimed. "You do go to church and to prayer-meeting; you do read your Bible and pray; you do try to walk just right, do you not?"

"O, yes," answered James, looking up, with a bright smile, "but then I love to do them. That makes all the difference. I love Jesus, and love to do as he wishes me to."

"Yes, love makes all the difference. Love is the fulfilling of the law."—*S. S. Times.*

AUNT BETSEY'S CHILDREN.

Some time ago a lady in London was trying to get a girl, to help her in doing house work. Her name was Mrs. Levy. One day while walking in the street she met a friend and asked her if she knew of any good girl that she could get. Said her friend, "Why don't you get one of Aunt Betsey's children?" "Aunt Betsey's children? Pray who is aunt Betsey?" "She is an old Scotch woman who lives in Bird's Alley. She adopts poor homeless, motherless children; teaches them, takes care of them, gets them into good habits, and then puts them out in good places. I have had one of her children for a good while, and she is the best girl I ever had." "That is very singular," said Mrs. L. "This woman must be a curiosity. I would like to see her for her own sake. I'll go."

The next day Mrs. Levy went to Bird's Alley to find Aunt Betsey's home. As soon as she entered it she saw a large tidy looking room. The floor was as clean as hands could make it. She saw eight or nine girls, from three years old to fifteen. They were all busy. Some of the oldest were ironing clothes, others were sewing or knitting, and the youngest were twisting up slips of paper to make lamp lighter.

While she was looking at them an elderly Scotch woman came in. She wore a plain gingham dress, with a white apron, and a large broad frilled cap. She made a courtesy to the lady, and her face lighted up with a smile that made it look quite beautiful. "I am looking for a girl, my friend," said Mrs. Levy, "and your home has been recommended to me as a good place to get one. Are these your own children?"

"O, no! ma'm, I'm not so rich as that. But let me see, there's Lizzie, she's been here long enough for a recommend. She's strong hearty girl, ma'm, and never will trouble you with any mean, low ways. Come here Lizzie. Now look in her face ma'm. That's how I choose my children."

"Then are none of them yours?"

"Never had one in my life, ma'm," said Aunt Betsey, with a smile.

"You are paid, then, for taking care of these children, and providing them with a home."

"Not a stiver, ma'm; who's to pay me? They are all poor orphans, not one of them has a father or mother except me, and I am both to them, they think," she said, as she looked around affectionately at them.

"Sometimes I feel half sorry that I took the wee things, but what could I do? They'd honest parents as was taken off with heavy sickness, and I couldn't see them left to suffer. True it's but little I can do, for there is thousands of such poor creatures in the world; but I'll do all I can. I've put thirty-one into good places."

"What!" cried Mrs. Levy; "do you mean to say that you have taken care of and provided for thirty-one children besides these that are here now?"

"Yes'm, and the Lord's blessed me to do it with my own hands, for more than fifteen years back. I've never wanted, neither have they; and whether its knack in me, or goodness in them, I don't know, but they'll all mind me, that they will ma'm, with lifting up a finger."

What a beautiful sheltering cloud Aunt Betsey was! She was working for Jesus, all alone in that little alley, while nobody in the busy world knew what she was doing. But God knew it all. Without husband, or children of her own, without any church or committee to help her, without any means but what she earned with her own hands, she had been a bright sheltering cloud to thirty-one poor children, besides the eight or nine then in her house. She had clothed them, and fed them, and taught them the best she knew how, and then had found good homes for them where they could be useful and happy.

The example of this good woman shows us what it is to be a Christian, and how those who love Jesus can make themselves useful. They can praise God, as the clouds do, by giving pleasant shade or shelter.—*S. S. World.*

THE ACCURATE BOY.

There was a young man once in the office of a Western railway superintendent. He was occupying a position that four hundred boys in that city would have wished to get. It was honorable, and "it paid well," besides being in the line of promotion. How did he get it? Not by having a rich father, for he was the son of a laborer. The secret was his beautiful accuracy. He began as an errand boy, and did his work accurately. His leisure time he used in perfecting his writing and arithmetic. After a while he learned to telegraph. At each step his employer commended his accuracy, and relied on what he did because he was just right.

And it is thus with every occupation. The accurate boy is the favored one. Those who employ men, do not wish to be on the constant lookout as though they were rogues or fools. If a carpenter must stand at his journeyman's elbow to be sure that his work is right, or if a cashier must run over his book-keeper's column, he might as well do the work himself as employ another to do it in that way; and it is very certain that the employer will get rid of such an inaccurate workman as soon as he can.

"I CANNOT, SIR."

A young man—we will call him honest Frank—who loved truth, was a clerk in the office of a rich merchant. One day a letter came, recalling an order for goods which had been received the day before. The merchant handed it to honest Frank, and, with a persuasive smile, said:

"Frank, reply to this note. Say that the goods were shipped before the receipt of the letter countermanding the order."

Frank looked into his employer's face with a sad but firm glance, and replied, "I cannot, sir."

"Why not, sir?" asked the merchant, angrily.

"Because the goods are new in the yard, and it would be a lie, sir."

"I hope you will always be so particular," replied the merchant, turning upon his heel and going away.

Honest Frank did a bold as well as a right thing. What do you suppose happened to him? Did he lose his place? No; quite different. The merchant was too shrewd to turn away one who would not write a lying letter. He knew the untold value of such a youth, and at once made him his confidential clerk.—*Observer.*

A LITTLE HEROINE.—It is but seldom that the beautiful deeds of unselfish childhood find a place in our daily newspapers. Records of patriotism, of philanthropy, of variety and of crime are heralded with elaborate carefulness. Quite recently the *Providence Journal* reported a touching incident of a little girl, only eleven years of age, who applied to the superintendent of a Rhode Island cotton mill for work. She pleaded for employment that she might aid her sick father. She had been in the mill but a few days when her hand was caught in the machinery and so severely injured as to lose several of her fingers. On being released by the stopping of the machinery, instead of indulging in cries, the little heroine eagerly asked, "Will this stop my working for my sick father?"