THE SERVANTS AND THE POUNDS

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A SERMON
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"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."
Luke 19:12-13

WE are told the reason for the Savior's delivering this parable at this particular time. He was going up to Jerusalem, and the ignorant and enthusiastic crowd hoped that He might now set up a temporal sovereignty. "They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Their minds were crowded with mistakes, and the Savior would set them right upon this matter. To banish from their minds the idea of a Jewish empire, in which every Hebrew would be a prince, our Lord told them this story—I use the word advisedly, for his parable was also a fact.

He would show them that as yet they were not to be partakers in a kingdom, but were soon to be waiters for an absent Lord who had gone to receive a kingdom, and to return. In His absence His disciples were to be in the position of servants put in trust with property while their Master was gone far away to receive a kingdom, and then to come again.

He was now like a nobleman, who may be one among many citizens, but He was going away to a court where He would be invested with royal authority, and He would come back a king. They were to be put in trust with certain pounds till He should return.

I confess I never thoroughly saw the meaning of this parable till I was directed by an eminent expositor to a passage in Josephus, which, if it be not the key of it, is a wonderfully close example of a class of facts which, no doubt, often occurred in the Roman Empire in our Savior's day.

Herod, you know, was king over Judea, but he was only a subordinate king under the Roman emperor. Caesar at Rome made and unmade kings at his pleasure. When Herod died he was followed by his son Archelaus, of whom we read in Matthew's account of our Lord's infancy that when Joseph heard that Archelaus was king in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither.

This Archelaus had no right to the throne till he obtained the sanction of Caesar, and therefore he took a ship with certain attendants, and went to Rome, which in those days was a far country, that he might receive the kingdom and return. While he was on the way his citizens, who hated him, sent an ambassage after him, so has the Revised Version correctly worded it. And this ambassador bore this message to Caesar—"We will not that this man reign over us."

The messengers represented to Caesar that Archelaus was not fit to be king of the Jews. Certain of the pleadings are recorded in Josephus, and they show that barristers nineteen hundred years ago pleaded in much the same style as their brethren of today. The people were weary of the Herods, and preferred anything to their cruel rule. They even asked that Judea might become a Roman province, and be joined to Syria, rather than they should remain under the hated yoke of the Idumaean tyrants.

It is evident that in the case of Archelaus his citizens hated him, and said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It pleased Caesar to divide the kingdom, and to put Archelaus on the throne as ethnarch, or a ruler with less power than a king. When Archelaus returned, he took fierce revenge upon those who had opposed him, and rewarded his faithful adherents most liberally. This story of what had been done thirty years before would, no doubt, rise up in the recollection of the people when Jesus

spoke, for Archelaus had built a palace for himself very near to Jericho, and it may be that under the walls of that palace the Savior used the event as the basis of His parable.

Those who lived in our Lord's day must have understood His allusions to current facts much better than we do who live nineteen centuries later. The providence of God provided that observant Jew, Josephus, to store up much valuable information for us. Read the passage in his history, and you will see that even the details tally with this parable. There is the story.

The Savior, without excusing Archelaus or commending him in the least degree, simply makes his going to Rome an illustration. Here is a noble personage who is to be a king, but to obtain the throne he must journey to the distant court of a superior power. While he is going, his citizens so hate him that they send an ambassage to oppose his claims, for they will not have him for their king.

However, he receives the kingdom, and returns to rule it. When he does so, he rewards those who have been faithful to him, and he punishes with overwhelming destruction those who have tried to prevent his reigning. There is the story—let me further interpret it.

The Savior likens Himself to a nobleman. He was here on earth a man among men, and truly a nobleman in the midst of His fellow citizens. It was His to become king, king of all the earth. Indeed, He is such by nature and by right, but He must first go, by death, resurrection, and ascension, away to the highest courts, and there from the great Lord of all He must receive for Himself a kingdom.

It is written, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," and therefore Jesus must plead His claims before the King, and win His suit. The day is coming when He will return, clothed with glory and honor, to take unto Himself His great power and reign, for He must reign till all enemies are put under His feet. When He comes His enemies will be destroyed, and His faithful servants will be abundantly rewarded.

Let us now draw near to this feast of divine teaching. May the Spirit of God help us to gather practical lessons from this parable!

I. First, I invite you to notice that THERE ARE HERE TWO SETS OF PERSONS.

We see the enemies who would not have this man to reign over them, and the servants who had to trade with his money. There are many divisions among men into nationalities, ranks, offices, and characters, but after all, the deep divisions will always be two—the enemies and the servants of Christ Jesus. You that are not servants are enemies. You that are not enemies must take care that you are servants. I find no class of persons mentioned in the parable but these two, and I feel certain that there are no others on the face of the earth. You are all either enemies or servants of Jesus.

Consider *the enemies*! The person hated was a nobleman. He was a man, but a noble man. What a man is the Lord Jesus! Forgetting His Godhead for the moment, regard Him only as the man Christ Jesus, and what a man! I need not dwell upon the nobility of His birth, of the seed of David, but I would remind you of the nobility of His character, for that is where true nobility resides.

In this respect, where is there nobility to be compared to His? Brothers, it would be difficult to find a second to the man Christ within measurable distance of Him. Even those who copy Him most nearly confess, regretfully, that in many things they fall short of His glory. There was nothing petty, mean, or selfish about Jesus of Nazareth. He was altogether the noble man.

He deigned, for gracious purposes, to become a citizen amongst others, for since we read of His being anointed above His fellows, it is implied that some were His fellows. He was a man among men. He was of the society of carpenters. He was also free of the company of itinerant preachers. He associated with men of the sea, with men that handled the net and the oar.

He went in and out among the peasantry, and in His dress and style of living there was nothing to distinguish Him from the rest of the citizens. Truly, He was separate from them by His holier character, but the separation was not caused by His unwillingness to come down to them, but by their inability to go up to Him.

The citizens hated Him, but they hated Him without cause. There is always some cause for dislike in us, but there was none in Him. In tone, or manner, or spirit, the best give some cause of offense, but in Him there was nothing which could excuse their hate. It was a wanton rejection of the fittest to reign.

As He claimed to be the King of the Jews, they especially hated His royalty, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," and again, "We have no king but Caesar." "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Yet, my brethren, merely regarding Jesus as a man, if we wanted a king, He ought to be elected by the universal suffrages of mankind, openly given by uplifted hands and joyful acclamations, *Io triumphe!* Mighty Conqueror, reign forever! Prince of the kings of the earth, lover of the sons of men, who did for our sake pour out Your precious blood, You deserve to be king of all!

The most kingly of men should be king of men. Yet they hated His royal claims, and this also without cause. Which of them had He oppressed? What revenue did He extort from the people? What law of His was hard or cruel? In what case did He ever judge unrighteously? Yet His citizens hated Him.

There is that same hate of Christ in the world today. Do any of you hate Him? "No," say you. Yet are not some of you who do not oppose Him treating Him with greater contempt than if you did oppose Him? You pass Him by altogether, He is not in all your thoughts. You act as if He were not worthy even to be opposed. You make nothing of Him. He is not among the objects for which you live. Sometimes you may speak with a partial admiration of His character, but earnest admiration leads to imitation. If Jesus be a Savior, what worse can you do to Him than to refuse to be saved by Him?

I charge you indifferent ones with being, in the core of your hearts, His worst enemies. Oh that you would repent of this, and turn unto Him, for He is coming again. And when He comes He will say, "As for these mine enemies, slay them before mine eyes." The expression is full of terror. To be slain before the eyes of injured love is doubly death. The Lord by His grace deliver us from so dread a doom!

The other set of persons in the parable were *his servants.* The original would justify the translation, his bond-servants. Those who were not his enemies were his faithful servants. I suppose that the nobleman had bought them with his money, or that they had been born in his house, or that they had willingly bound themselves by indentures to him.

When I said that these were only his slaves you inwardly said, "Then you that believe in Jesus are His bond-servants." Spare us not even the harsher word "slaves." We were never free till we came under bonds to Jesus, and we grow in freedom as we yield to Him.

Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if the hot iron of affliction had branded him with the name of Christ. Yes, we are the property of the Lord Jesus, and not our own. We cannot somehow find words which will in all its fullness express our belonging to Jesus. We wish to sink into Christ, and to become as nothing for His sake.

Truly He has called us friends, but we call ourselves His servants. We take a great delight in owning Him as Master—like David, who said, "I am thy servant," and then again, "I am thy servant," and then again, "and the son of thine handmaid." He was born a servant, born of a mother who was also herself a servant. After all this he added, "Thou hast loosed my bonds."

Servitude to Christ is perfect freedom, and in every respect we have found it so. We never expect to know perfect freedom until He has brought every thought, every conception, imagination, desire, into captivity to Himself. We have been bought with His money, and we cost Him dear. We have also been born in His house by a second birth, and we are bound to Him by indentures which we have gladly signed and sealed, and are ready to sign and seal again.

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renew'd shall daily hear:
Till in life's latest hour we bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

We are truly thus on the opposite side of His enemies, for we are willingly His servants.

I have thus introduced to you the two classes. Before we go any further, may the Holy Spirit operate upon us, to make us discern to which of these two we belong! If we are enemies, may we become servants from this time forth!

II. We now advance a step further, and notice THE ENGAGEMENTS OF THESE SERVANTS.

Their lord was going away, and he left his ten servants in charge with a little capital, with which they were to trade for him till he returned. He did not tell them how long he would be away, perhaps he did not know himself—I mean the king in the story—even our Master says, "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven."

"I am going away," he said, "you are my servants, and I leave you as my servants in the midst of my enemies. Be loyal to me, and to prove your faithfulness, continue to trade in my name. I shall entrust to each of you a very small sum of money, but it will keep you occupied, and your trading on my account will be your daily protest that you are loyal to me, whatever others may be."

Notice, first, that *this was honorable work*. They were not entrusted with large funds, but the amount was enough to serve as a test. It put them upon their honor. If they were really attached to their master they would feel that he had placed a confidence in them which they must justify. Slaves are not always to be entrusted with money—in fact, the tendency of bondage has always been to take away from men the quality of trustworthiness. Our bondage to Christ has the opposite effect, because it is no bondage at all.

These servants of the master were treated in some respect as partners, they were to have fellowship with him in his property. They were his confidants and trustees. His eye was not watching them, for he had gone into a far country, and he trusted them to be a law unto themselves. They were not to render a daily account, but to be left alone until he returned.

Now that is just how the Master has treated us. He has put us in trust with the Gospel, and He relies upon our honor. He does not call us at once to an audit, for He is not here. I do not think that systems of church government which involve a measure of the spy system are at all after our Lord's mind. If Christians are what they ought to be, they can be trusted. They are a law unto themselves.

The Lord puts you not under certain rules and regulations so as to ordain that you shall give a tenth, though I wish you did give as much at least. He does not say, "You shall subscribe so much at such a time, and work in such a way." No, you are not under law, but under grace. If you love your Master you will soon discover what to do for Him, and you will do it with delight.

The Lord does not lay down rigid rules, and order that at such an hour in the morning you must begin work, and that you must work on for so many hours. No, He says, "Take my pound, and trade therewith." Our version, "Occupy till I come," is a lumbering Latin way of saying, "Trade therewith till I come."

The Lord has put us on the footing of confidence, appealing to our honor and love. He will not come and look after us today or tomorrow, though He will ultimately have a strict reckoning with us. Meanwhile He has gone, but He has left us here in the midst of His enemies, to show His enemies that He has some friends, and that He must be a good Master, since even those who own themselves to be His vassals rejoice to spend their whole lives in His service. I say He gave them honorable work, and was it not so?

It was work for which he gave them capital. He gave to each of them a pound. "Not much," you will say. No, he did not intend it to be much. They were not capable of managing very much. If he found them faithful in "a very little" he could then raise them to a higher responsibility. I do not read that any of them complained of the smallness of his capital, or wished to have it doubled.

Brothers, we need not ask for more talents, we have quite as many as we shall be able to answer for. Preachers need not seek for larger spheres. Let them be faithful in those which they now occupy. A brother said to me, "I cannot do much with a hundred hearers," and I replied, "You will find it hard work to give in a good account for even a hundred people."

I confess it very quietly, but I have often wished that I had a little congregation, that I might watch over every soul in it. But now I am doomed to an everlasting dissatisfaction with my work, for what am I among so many? I can only feel that I have not even begun to do the hundredth part of what needs to be done in such a church as this.

Each one had a pound in his hand, and his lord only said, "Trade therewith." He did not expect them to do a wholesale business on so small a stock, but they were to trade as the market would allow. He did not expect them to make more than the pound would fairly bring in—for, after all, he was not "an austere man."

"Take that pound," he said, "and do your best. I know the times are bad, for you have to trade among enemies. You could not, perhaps, manage to put out twenty pounds under such circumstances, but you can turn over a pound, and use every shilling of it." Thus he gave them a sufficient capital for his purpose.

My friend, have you that pound anywhere about you? "Alas!" says one, "I have no abilities at all." How is that? Your Lord gave you a pound, what has become of it? You are one of His servants, and if you are doing nothing you are in an evil case, and ought to be ashamed. What have you done with that pound?

Put your hand in your pocket again. It is not there. Is it in the napkin?—that napkin with which you ought to have wiped the sweat of labor from your brow! Have you got that pound? You say, "It is not much." The Master did not say it was much, on the contrary, He called it "very little"—but have you used that very little? This should go home to your consciences. You have been treated as confidential servants, and yet you are not true to your Lord. How is this?

*What they had to do with the pound was prescribed in general term*s. They were to trade with it, not to play with it. I dare say they were inclined to argue, "Our master's cause is assailed, let us fight for him," yet he did not say, "fight," but *trade*. Peter drew his sword. Oh, yes, we are eager combatants, but slow merchants. Many manifest a defiant spirit, and are never more satisfied than when they are in noise and strife.

The servants in this parable were not to fight, but to trade, which is a much more cool-blooded and ignoble thing in common esteem. We may leave our Lord's enemies to Himself. He will end their rebellions one of these days. We are to follow a much lowlier line of things.

No doubt certain of them might have thought that the pound would be useful to purchase them comforts, or even luxuries. One would buy a new coat, and another would bring home a piece of furniture for his house, and others would solemnly say, "We have our families to think of." Yes, but their lord did not say so. The master said, "Trade therewith until I come." They were neither to fight with it, nor hoard it, nor spend it, nor waste it, but to trade with it for him.

The pound was not put into their hands for display. They were not to glory over others who had not so much as a penny to bless themselves with—for though they were little capitalists, that capital was their lord's. It is a pity when graces or talents are boasted of as if they were our own. A tradesman who is prospering seldom has much money to show. It is all wanted in his business. Sometimes he can scarcely put his hand upon a five-pound note, because his cash is all absorbed. His golden grain is all sown in the field of his trade.

Speaking for myself, I cannot find any room for glorying in myself, for if I have either grace or strength, I certainly have none to spare. I have barely enough for the work in hand, and not enough for the service in prospect. Our pound is not to be hung on our watch-chain, but to be traded with.

Trading represents a life which may be called commonplace, but it is eminently practical, and it has an exceedingly practical effect upon the person engaged in it. This is owing in part to the fact that it is an occupation in which there is great *scope for judgment*. They were not tied down to a special kind of trade. The man who made his one pound into ten chose the best form of business. He sought not that which was most pleasant, but that which was most profitable.

So you are left, dear friends, to choose your own line of service for your Master, only you must trade for Him, and for Him everything must be done well. At the present time no trading pays better than the mission to the Congo, or to the hill-tribes of India. Large dividends come also from dealings with the poorest of the poor in the slums, and as much from widows and orphans who are in extreme destitution. When men have to lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus, after a life languished away with fever, the returns are amazing.

Where the need is greatest our Lord receives most glory. It is left to you to judge what you can do, how you can do it, and where you will do it. Do that which will most surely win souls, and that which will best establish your Lord's kingdom. Exercise your very best judgment, and get into that line of holy service in which you can bring in the largest revenue for your glorious Master.

The work which he prescribed was *one that would bring them out*. The man who never succeeds in trade, do you know him? I know him. He complains that he has a small head, and usually the complaint is founded on fact. He needs to follow a business in which the bread and butter will be brought to his door ready spread, and even then, unless it is cut up into dice pieces on his plate, he will get no breakfast.

The man that is to succeed in trade in these times must have confidence, look alive, keep his eyes open, and be all there. Our times are hard, but not as hard as those described in the parable when the faithful servants were trading in the midst of traitors—they had need of sharp wits.

Trade develops a man's perseverance, patience, and courage. It tests honesty, truthfulness, and firmness. It is a singularly excellent discipline for character. When this nobleman gave his servant the pound, it was that he might see what stuff he was made of. Trade with small capital means personal work and drudgery, long hours and few holidays, plenty of disappointment and small gains. It means working with might and main, and doing the thing with all your heart and mind. In such a manner are we to serve Christ.

The word "trade" has a world of meaning in it. I cannot bring it out this morning, but there is no need, for the most of you know more about trade than I do, and you can instruct yourselves. You are to trade for the Lord Jesus Christ in a higher, and yet more emphatic sense than that in which you have traded for yourselves.

With your physical strength, your mental faculties, your substance, your family, with everything—you are to bring glory to God, and honor to the name of Jesus. It is to be your life-business to work *for* Jesus, and *with* Jesus.

Trading, if it be successfully carried on, is *an engrossing concern,* calling out the whole man. It is a continuous toil, a varied trial, a remarkable test, a valuable discipline, and this is why the nobleman put his bondsmen to it, that he might afterwards use them in still higher service. Brethren, learn what is meant by trading, and then carry on a spiritual trade with all your heart.

At the same time, let us notice that *it was work suitable to their capacity*. Small as the capital was, it was enough for them, for they were no more than bondsmen, not of a high grade of rank or education. Their master gave them only a pound, which did not mean more than £3 10s of our money. One would not get a large shop, or even a decent stock, with that small amount. They could not complain that they were placed in a business which was too heavy for them to manage. They could any of them buy a few goods, and hawk them.

The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to do more than you can do. He does not break you down with cares beyond your capacity. We have not yet reached the limit of our powers—we can yet do more. Jesus is no exacting master. It is only a false and lying servant who will call Him "an austere man, reaping where he has not sowed." Nothing of the kind.

He has given us a light business—our work for Him is suited to our limited powers, and He is ready, by His Holy Spirit, to assist us. Let us use well our single pound. Let it be our ambition to make ten of it at the very least, and may the Lord graciously prosper our endeavors, that we may have large interest to present to Him when He shall come!

Did you inquire as to how these men were to be supported? Their master did not tell them to live out of his pound. No, they were his servants, and so they lived under his roof, and he provided for all their needs. He had gone on a journey, but his establishment was not given up, the table was still spread, and the children and the servants had bread enough and to spare.

"Oh," says one, "that alters the case." Just so, but it does not make it different from yours, or if it does, I am sorry for you. Are you your own provider? Do you cry, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink?" Do you not know that all these things do the nations of the earth seek after? Whereas Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

As I understand my life, I am to do my Lord's work, and He is to provide for me. He may do this through my own industry, but still it is *His* work to do it, and not mine. If the providence of God is not sufficient to provide for us, then I am sure we cannot provide for ourselves. And if it be sufficient, we shall be wise to cast all our care on the Lord, and live undividedly for His praise.

Remember that text, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." You, as a servant, are not to be entangled with carking cares about your own interests, but you are to give your whole thought and life to your Master's service. He will take care of you now, and reward you when He shall come.

III. Thirdly, to understand this parable, we must remember THE EXPECTANCY WHICH WAS ALWAYS TO INFLUENCE THEM.

They were left as trusted servants till *he would return*, and that return was a main item in the matter.

They were to believe that *he would return,* and that he would return a king. The citizens did not believe it. They hoped that Caesar would refuse him the throne, but we are to be sure that our noble Master will receive the kingdom. This rebel world does not believe that Jesus ever will be king.

The other day we read of the "Eclipse of Christianity." Constantly we see His dominion assailed. They say that it is practically disproved by facts. Is it? Sirs, excuse me, I am desperately prejudiced, for I am His servant. I owe Him my life, my all.

I am persuaded that He is and must be King of kings. I know Him so well that I am sure that He will prevail at the court to which He has gone. He is in very high favor there. The last time I saw the face of the great King, I obtained that favor through the use of His name. I receive anything I ask for when I mention His name, and so I am sure that He is in wonderful high repute above.

Why, His Father is the sovereign! I am sure He will not deny the kingdom to His only begotten Son. Jesus will come in His kingdom. I am sure of it. Let us work in the full conviction that our absent Lord will soon be here again, with a glorious diadem upon His brow. When He went away He took with Him the scars of one who died a felon's death, and He will come again with them, but the nail prints will be no memorials of His shame—they will be as jewels to His hands.

His servants were to regard their absent master as *already king*, and they were so to trade among his enemies that they should never compromise their own loyalty. They were of the king's party, and of no other. It is a very awkward position to be in, to trade among people that are enemies to your king. You need in such a case to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

This is precisely our position. We have to bring glory to God out of men who hate Him. We have to magnify our Lord among men who would, if they could, again crucify Him. We have to go in and out among them in such a manner that they can never say that we side with them in their rebellion, or wink at their disloyalty. We cannot be "Hail fellow: well met!" with those whose life is a practical insult to the crown rights of King Jesus. We must above all things prove ourselves loyal to our absent Lord, lest He appoint us our portion among His enemies.

I find that the original would suggest to anyone carefully reading it that they were to regard their master as *already returning*. This should be our view of our Lord's advent. He is even now on His way hither. No sooner had He risen from the grave than, practically, our Lord was coming back. Strange paradox! But His ascension into heaven was, in a certain sense, part of His coming back to us—for the way for Him, from the cross on earth to the crown of the whole earth, was *via* the New Jerusalem.

He is coming now as fast as wisdom judges it to be right. I am sure our Savior will not delay a moment beyond what is absolutely needful, for He loves the church which is His bride, and as her Bridegroom He will not delay the long-expected hour of their meeting, never to part again.

He is ready—it is the bride that needs to make herself ready. Jesus desires to come. His heart is responsive to our cry when we say, "Come quickly!" He will come sooner than we think. We are bound to feel that He is at this moment on the road, and we are to live as if He might arrive at any moment.

We must trade on till our Lord has come. There must be no retiring from His business, even if we retire from our own. There must be no ceasing because we fancy we have done enough. Our rest will be when He comes, but till then we must trade on.

Let us labor as in His actual presence. How would you act with Jesus at your elbow? Act just so. He sees us as clearly as if His bodily presence were in our midst. Be awakened and inspired by the Redeemer's eye. Thus you will live in this trial state after the best possible manner.

IV. Now comes the sweet part of the subject. Note well THE SECRET DESIGN OF THE LORD.

Did it ever strike you that this nobleman had a very kindly design towards his servants? Did this nobleman give these men one pound each with the sole design that they should make money for him? It would be absurd to think so. A few pounds would be no item to one who was made a king. No, no! It was as Mr. Bruce says, "He was not money-making, but character-making." His design was not to gain by them, but to educate them.

First, their being entrusted with a pound each was *a test*. This nobleman said to himself, "When I am a king I must have faithful servants in power around me. My going away gives me an opportunity of seeing what my servants are made of. I shall thus test their capacity and their industry, their honesty and their zeal. If they prove faithful over a few things, they will be fit to be trusted with greater matters."

The test was only a pound, and they could not make much mischief out of that, but it would be quite sufficient to try their capacity and fidelity, for he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in much. They did not all endure the test, but by its means he revealed their characters.

It was also a *preparation* of them for future service. He would lift them up from being servants to become rulers. They were, therefore, to be put in a place of measurable responsibility, and to be made men of thereby. They were to be rulers over a very little—say a pound, and that which came of it, and this would be an education for them.

In the process of trading they would be in training to rule. The best way to learn to be a master is to be first a servant, and the reason why some masters are hard and tyrannical is because they do not know the heart of a servant by experience. They know nothing of service, and so they have not the wisdom, the generosity, and the tenderness, which masters should show towards servants. So this nobleman was wise, he was at the same time testing and training his men.

Besides this, I think he was giving them a little *anticipation* of their future honors. He was about to make them rulers over cities, and so he first made them rulers over pounds. They had been servants, and taken orders from him every morning—but now they have no master to go to, and must use their own discretion.

They were in effect, in a small sphere, made into little kings. In all that country the citizens had rebelled, but there was a little kingdom of the nobleman's own servants, and these obeyed him, and did their best to maintain his interest in their little way. They were already made free, placed in a measure of authority, and made to know the sweets and the burdens of personal responsibility.

Oh, you that work for God, when you are overseers of others for Him, when you win souls for Him, and when you conquer adversaries in His name you are already anticipating your eternal reward. We are fashioning our future position upon the anvil of our lives. For heaven, though it be a state and a place prepared for us by the Lord Jesus, lies also mainly in character.

The man is more the source of joy than the streets of gold in which he will walk. If you hide your pound and neglect your Master's service here you are making for yourselves a dim and hazy future in that grand millennial reign of His. You that addict yourselves to your holy trade, and consecrate

yourselves entirely to your Lord, shall have large honors when He comes to reign among His ancients gloriously.

For see, when he came to the man who had earned ten pounds, he gave him ten cities. Think of that! There is no proportion between the poor service and the rich reward. A pound is rewarded with a city. The rewards of the millennium will evidently be all of grace, because they are so incomparably beyond anything which the servants' earnings could have deserved. Their Lord was not bound to pay them anything. They were his bond-servants, but what he gave them was of his overflowing grace.

I do not think that he who brought five pounds was in the least blamed. He may have been just as diligent as the other, but he had less capacity. But how he must have opened his eyes when his master gave him five *cities*. Perhaps he wondered more than the first. Fancy if any one of us had been put to trade with a pound upon commission, and had received five cities for reward. The money earned would not buy the smallest house, and yet it brings in to the worker five cities!

What surprise filled the heart of the recipient of such bounty! It never entered into his heart to envy the brother who had ten cities, for the five were so vast a recompense. He must have been carried away with rapture with the prospect before him. Though there may be degrees of glory, the only difference will be in the capacity of the blessed to contain it.

All the vessels will be full, but they will not be all equally large. The man of the ten pounds will simply be a larger vessel, full to the brim. And the man with the five will be less capacious, but quite as full, to his own glad amazement and joyful bewilderment. However, let us go in for winning the ten pounds if we can. For our Lord's sake let us trade in spiritual things with all our hearts.

"But," says one, "where and what will these cities be?" It may be that all this will literally happen during the millennial period, but I do not know. When Christ shall come, the dead in Christ will rise first, and we read that "the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." There may be space during that era for all the special rewards of the Gospel dispensation.

It may also be, but I do not know, and so I cannot tell you, that we are in future dispensations to fill unto other worlds much the same office as angels fill to ours. Jesus has made us kings and priests, and we are in training for our thrones.

What if in this congregation I am learning to proclaim my Master's glory to myriads of worlds! Possibly the preacher who is faithful here may yet be made to tell forth His Lord's glory to constellations at a time. What if one might stand upon a central star and preach Christ to worlds on worlds instead of preaching Him to these two galleries and to this area! Why not? At any rate, if I should ever gain a voice loud enough to be heard for millions of miles, I would speak none other than those glorious truths which the Lord has revealed in Christ Jesus.

If we are faithful here, we may expect our Master to entrust us with higher service hereafter. Only let us see to it that we are able to endure the test, and that we profit by the training. As our account comes out in the very little, so will it be with us on the grand scale of eternity. This puts another face upon the work of this lower sphere.

Rulers over ten cities! Rulers over five cities! Brothers, you are not fit for such dignities if you cannot serve your Lord well in this world with the little He has entrusted to you. If you live wholly to Him here, you will be prepared for the glories unspeakable which await all consecrated souls. Let us go in for a devoted life at once!

Time is so short, and the things we deal with are comparatively so small! We are soon coming out of the eggshell of time, and when we break loose into eternity, and see the vastness of the divine purposes, we shall be altogether amazed at the service bestowed, which will be the reward of service done. O Lord, make us faithful! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 19:1-38

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—347, 356, 342

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.