

THE SLOTHFUL SERVANT .

Matthew 25:14-30.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." These were very precious goods. There are no earthly values worthy of comparison with these priceless possessions. What confidence the Lord expresses to place in our hands such wonderful values! Where is there an earthly prince that would trust his most tried and faithful counselor with such power as the Creator gave to Voltaire and Lord Byron? If an earthly prince should bestow upon his most faithful follower a small estate of land he would consider that he had a just cause to hang him, if he found him giving refuge to an enemy, or using the income of the estate to support a foreign foe. Such a man would have no claim to mercy if an armed force of his lord's enemies were found in his house. If he should conceal such a force and turn them loose at night to prey upon his lord's goods how great would be his treachery in the eyes of all men. If such a traitor were taken in his treason it is doubtful if he could find in all the world an advocate to plead his cause. But what is the value of the greatest estate in all the world to the priceless talents God has placed in our hands!

If it be treason to use our patron's goods to destroy his government or his people, how much greater crime it is to use the precious talents God has given us against

Him? We have no patience with a dog that bites the hand that feeds it. Treason against a kind benefactor has always been considered the basest crime that man could commit. It is said the Benedict Arnold's sisters used to wrap a shawl about their faces when a neighbor passed the house where they lived, in shame for their brother's treachery. Perhaps men could have more easily forgiven Arnold's crime if it had not been for the trust Washington had reposed in him. Even a traitor's crime can be aggravated by the faith he has broken. When those men and women who have used the precious talents God has given them to destroy His kingdom and His people, stand face to face with their Great Benefactor, and read in His noble countenance the trust and confidence they have betrayed, how great will be their shame and confusion!

"Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two." There is nothing spectacular in the lives of these two men. As much as we would like to do it we can find no marvelous accomplishmen in their lives. There is nothing to indicate that either of them was hailed by the world as a prodigy. Perhaps they were just plain common folks, with no honors except among a small circle of intimate friends. But this one thing marked their lives, they were faithful to a trust. They accepted His bounty with gratitude and used it to further His noble cause.

No doubt their contribution often looked small to them. They were often discouraged by the pitifully small amount

they were able to do for His cause. Gains come slow when we gain only two talents or five talents in a life time. But It was not eh amount of gains that counted with their Lord. It was the men themselves thier Lord was interested in. God cared a great deal more for the man than he did for the gains. If we consider the infinite pains God gakes to build a great life He must think this the greatest work He ever undertook.

"But he that had received on, went and digged in the earth and hid his lord's money." His care in hiding it shows that he had some sende of its priceless value. Ignorant as he was, he knew that this estate must be rendered back to God who gave it. Though he would put it to no use he dreaded the loss of the treasure as if it had been his very life.

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and redkoneth with them. What a day to a life of wasted opportunities! What a day this will be for the traitor and the slothful servant!

"Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." There is no boasting in this, for he had done no more than his duty. It was a plain rendering of an honest account. It is only the generosity of the Lord that fills our heart with joy. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." How this refutes the charge of the slothful servant that his lord was a hard man! Tell me, does this sound like a hard and

gripping master? Nont only the original loan, but all the increase is made sure to the servant forever. But even this is not enough for a Lord like that. No, he must invite him into a large share of the riches, the eternal riches of His own kingdom.

"Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed." Did he know his lord? About as well as an old stray sheep knows the shepherd. He stays over in the back side of the pasture, and will not come when he is called. "Yes, I know that man," says the wayward sheep, "He only wants to shear me and sell my wool, and when he gets me fat he will skin me and sell my hide. " And all the time his ribs and hip bones are almost sticking through his skin, and his back so full of sores that wool will not grow on it. The shepherd wants to feed him, anoint his sores, and shelter him from the wolves and coyotes, but he will not trust him. And he thinks he knows the shepherd!

"And I was afraid, and went, and hid thy talent in the eart; lo, thou hast that is thine." Afraid of what? Afraid to spend his lord's money lest he lose it? That was the thing he needed to fear the least. His lord had provided the soundest safeguards for his money that could be had before he gave it to him.

The Lord loves venturesome men and women. He loves prodigious spenders. He commends the man who, finding a great treasure hid in a field, went and sold all that he had and bought that field. He loves the man, who, finding a pearl that was better than all other pearls, laid out all the he had on the one jewel.

He loves a shepherd lad who takes six smooth stones and goes forth to meet a giant. Do you think he was risking too much? It was a very precious life he was putting in jeopardy. What if the stone should miss its mark? What if the string should break? But David's trust was not in the sling or the stone. It was in the God of battles!

The Lord loves a maiden who is willing to leave her father and mother, her native land, and her gods, to go with a poor old woman into a land of strangers. What if the mother-in-law should sell her for a slave when she reached her own home? Or suppose she should die and leave her alone among strangers? Do you think she took too much risk? She was trusting in Maomi's God!

Even a harlot found grace with God because she was willing to trust her life, her family, and her soul to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But He wants wise spenders. He wants men and women who are willing to lay out every penny they possess. But you must buy sound securities with your money if you would enjoy its fruits. How shall we know which securities to buy? Here in this land of Vanity Fair so many things are

offered for sale So many voices are calling to us to buy of their wares. Silver Demas calls for us to come and dig for treasure in his mone. Mr. Worldly-wise-man wants us to settle in the tow of Carnal Policy. Mr. Byends wants to convert us to his religion. Among so many voices how shall we know which to follow?

When they call to you to take this way or that, look and see if it is marked with the footprints of the Son of God? If it is you can stake all that you have and your very life on that way. The mark of the bank of heaven is a wooden cross with blood stains on the border. All securitties marked in this way are good. All others are wild cat stocks. Do not buy those!