**WESTMINSTER BIBLE SCHOOL; THE PARABLES AND METAPHORS OF OUR LORD - THE TEACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**12. THE TREASURE HIDDEN**

*"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in the field, which a man found, and hid. In his joy, he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field."*

*Matthew 13:44*

THE PARABLE contained in this verse is the first of those spoken to the disciples alone. In verse thirty-six we read, "Then He left The multitudes, and went into the house." Then the disciples asked Him to explain the parable of the darnel. He did so, and then uttered four more parables to them privately.

These four also deal with the Kingdom in this age. Our Lord was surveying an age which began with His own coming and ministry, and will conclude, as He taught in two of the parables, with the consummation of the age. These parables then have to do with this age in which we are living. In the economy of God other ages stretch out beyond.

It should be borne in mind that the viewpoint is changed in the four parables now to be considered. Having spoken to men of sight, Jesus now spoke to men of faith. That necessarily creates a difference in outlook. He had spoken to men of sight, and therefore had dwelt upon aspects of the Kingdom which would be patent to such and self-evident as the age unfolded. He had foreshadowed that there would be the sowing of seed, with different results, dependent upon the quality of the seed. In the next He had shown how during this age, side by side with the sowing of the good seed, there would be the work of an enemy sowing darnel, imitations of the good seed. He had shown then how during this period there would be unnatural development of a mustard seed to a great tree. Finally He had shown how during the age there would be a process of degeneration in the Kingdom under the figure of the leavened meal. Look back over the age from the word of our Lord while here until this time, and it will be seen how all the things that He foretold have been manifest. The seed has been sown with differing results. The enemy has been sowing the darnel, perplexing even the elect. The Church has been cursed by organizations that have been harboured in her very life, and there has been a breaking down of her testimony, making her fellowship ineffective, and her testimony to men equally ineffective.

Now the Lord spoke to His disciples, to those men of faith who already believed in Him, who would go out to live on the principle of faith, even though everything appeared to be against them. He now gave them four parables, and these have to do with the age, revealing the Divine thought and method, and purpose in it. These are not patent to sight. They constitute the secrets of God, but they are revealed to men of faith, knowing which, and understanding which, they will be strengthened and heartened and equipped for all their service. That is the character of the four parables to which we now come, the first of which we survey in this chapter.

To summarize briefly on the four. In the first He showed the purpose of God for the whole world, "He buyeth the field." In the second, in many ways the most wonderful of them all, He showed the relation to other ages and other spheres of what is now being done, as the pearl is being purchased. The third declared the method of the age in the economy of God, a great drag-net flung out into the sea, enclosing all manner of fish. The last showed the responsibility of those who are His scribes in the new Kingdom.

Turn now to the first. We follow our custom of attempting to see the picture, and then deduce the teaching.

There are parts of this picture with which we are familiar. Our Lord had already used two figures in the earlier parables, which He explained. So there is no difficulty about them, First, "the field," "The Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hidden in the field." We have seen that "the field is the world."

Then, again, a man buys the field. We have seen that the man is the Son of man, so named in the earlier parables. Here then is a picture of the world, and the relation of Christ to it. Those two facts of the general picture are quite clear, because of previous explanation.

Then two new ideas are introduced here; treasure, and purchase at cost. The man is seen discovering treasure in the field, as selling all that he had in order to buy that field, and secure that treasure. The treasure is there, but it is hidden. Someone finds it, knows it is there, and realizes it. Others do not know it is there. Then in order to possess that treasure this man sells everything that he has to buy that field.

That brief statement of what the picture presents will enable us to begin our study, as it relieves us from speculation on two points, the field, and the Man; and leaves us free to discuss the two new figures in relation to the other two.

What is the relation of this treasure to the whole world? "The field is the world." He sees that treasure in that field, He has discovered it. What was the treasure that He saw, as He looked out upon the world? Unquestionably it was the Kingdom of God hidden in the world, the Divine government, in its principles, its order, and its exceeding beauty. It is a remarkable thing that we are told that this was hidden in the field. He saw the world as made for the display of the glory of God. He saw the vicegerent of the world in rebellion against God, and therefore unable to realize the possibilities of the cosmos. He saw the whole territory waste and void, as the result of misgovernment; but the potentialities were there, and He saw in the world what has well been described as "imprisoned splendour."

I am using the word "world " in the fullest sense, as when our Lord used it, according to Mark and said we were to go out into all the cosmos, the whole order of the material, mental, and spiritual; the cosmic order which had been broken in upon and destroyed. But our Lord saw the possibilities of this world; and His work in life was that of exhibiting those hidden splendours and glories in strange and unexpected ways, and declaring all the time the glory of the Kingdom of God, How the glory of the world is constantly revealed to us. Flowers? Yes, He said God clothed them. Birds? Yes, God takes care of them, and feeds them, and is with them when they die. Children? Their angels do always behold the face of the Father. Men? The highest thing man can do is to seek the Kingdom of God. "Imprisoned splendour," He saw it everywhere. He looked and saw the treasure hidden in a ruined world.

What did He do? He purchased it, and when He purchased it, He hid it. That is the point of mystery, the point at which we must halt. We wonder what it means. It was hidden. He brought it into visibility, and hid it. In the world order we have a revelation of the ultimate, the Kingdom ministry of Jesus while here in the world; not the ultimate limit of it, but the ultimate of it during His own mission. He came to discover and to reveal it. The eyes that could see this splendour that was imprisoned, He made it flash and flame forth. There were those who saw, and gathered round about it. But it was rejected, and He rejected the nation that had been the depository of the Kingdom of God in the solemn words recorded by Matthew, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." He postponed the full manifestation to a future age when the Son of man should come in His glory, and the holy angels with Him.

He then turned His face to a larger work, apart from which the splendours hidden could never come to full and final realization. All that is expressed in that simple sentence, "He sold all that He hath, and buyeth that field." Everything is there. It is a complete revelation of the ultimate in the work of Jesus in the world, and for the world. Notice how it begins. "In His joy, He goeth and selleth all that He hath." We interpret that as imprisoned splendour, hidden glories that are not manifest. He revealed them in measure, and yet they were not seen by the vast masses. They were hidden, and yet in His joy He was going to do something that should make possible the realization of the ultimate meaning of that great cosmic order in the Kingdom of God. "In His joy."

Tarry there for a moment. What He did we will also look at. What was the joy of Jesus? In the great prophetic word uttered concerning Him long before He came, and perfectly fulfilled in all the story of His life, it was written:

"Lo … in the volume of the book it is written of Me;

I delight to do Thy will, O My God."

"I delight." The joy of His heart was the will of God. He knew its goodness. He knew its acceptability. He knew its perfection. He knew that within that will of God the wilderness would blossom as the rose, and the desert become as pools of glorious, fertilizing water. He knew, and the joy that filled Him was the contemplation of the realization of the will of God in the world. That was the joy that was set before Him. To quote once more from the Hebrew letter, "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame." What was the joy set before Him? God forgive us, we have often been so narrow in interpreting it. Was it the joy of going back to God, and to love and rest and peace with God that filled Him? The joy was the joy of the certainty that at last, as Browning has it,

"Though a wide compass round be fetched;

That what began best, can't end worst,

Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."

The joy of the Lord was His strength. The joy of the Lord was the delight of His will. The joy of the Lord was the secret power that enabled Him to endure the Cross.

In the parable He has told us what He did. "He selleth all that He hath." Where shall we find an adequate commentary on that? "He emptied Himself," sold all that He had. Silence is the best commentary possible in pondering that. Fill the gap with thinking; "all that He hath." And mark, that was His estimate of the worth of the treasure that He saw hidden in the field of the world. That includes everything in the cosmos, everything in the earthly order, all life as it is, and as it passes, and as it will be; but supremely man, and the infinite and glorious possibilities of humanity, in which He saw this imprisoned splendor. His estimate of its worth, who shall put on it a measure? Think of all that He had, and all that "He selleth." What for? To buy the field, the world, the whole creation. He redeemed it that it might be held waiting for the time of perfect realization of His ultimate purpose, and that it might be claimed ultimately, and filled with the glory of God. The whole earth is filled with the Divine glory. The prophet said there should come a time when all flesh should see it together. In order that that might be so, He purchased the world.

It is important to remember that the word "buyeth" must not be interpreted here commercially. That word "buyeth" may be used in other senses, where there is no commercial transaction. There has been a good deal of expository controversy over this. There are not wanting old and devout expositors who say that He bought the world back from Satan. Never! He never recognized the right of Satan to this world at all. That is what Satan wanted Him to do, and he offered it to Him at a very cheap price comparatively, when he said, Give me a moment's homage, and the kingdoms shall all be Thine. But He never recognized the right of Satan anywhere. He was not buying it from Satan.

Then equally devout expositors say He was purchasing it from God. But that is to divide God, and God is not divided. He was God, He was God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. It was God in Christ Who purchased. Often the word is used in another way. A man says he will sell his life dearly. It does not mean he is going to offer it at a price. He is going to suffer in order to hold it. A mother will purchase the health of her child by long vigils. She is not paying the price to anyone. He purchased the field, which simply emphasizes the giving up of all things in the richest sense of that word.

Stand back then from this picture, given to the disciples. It was not given to the men of the world. The outside crowd did not understand it any more than some to-day can understand. It can be understood only by men of living faith, faith in the unseen, believing in the reality of the unseen, and seeing things from that viewpoint. The man of faith in this age will be conscious of all that the man of sight sees, of everything that is named in those first four parables. Men of faith see all the facts of the case as Jesus saw them, with such clarity as those saw when He uttered these parables. Jesus was not deceived. He suffered from no delusion. He knew the delusion that so often has fallen upon the Christian Church, and holds many of those dear and loved members in thrall to-day in the view that we are to go on preaching the Gospel until all the world is converted. That will not be. He saw the facts, and nineteen hundred years bear witness to the accuracy of His outlook. The men of faith can see that which is not seen by the men of sight; but what the man of faith sees will never make him hopeless, because he also has this parable, and the one following.

Once more, this parable is not final. Nothing here is said of future ages and methods of God in the history of the world. But it does say enough to steady the heart, and strengthen endeavour in the midst of our service.

This parable then first reveals Christ's estimate of the possibility of the world, treasure hidden, but treasure still. The glory of everything in the government of God, in the Kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom of the rule of God, He saw it, the possibility. If we do not see that possibility, what wonder that we lose heart, that our hands hang down, and our knees become feeble, and we cease our efforts. He saw that possibility.

But He saw more, that there was only one way of possessing that treasure, of bringing at last into full and final manifestation and glory and that was the way of complete self-denial. "He selleth all that He hath." He held back nothing. As a good friend of mine said one Christmas morning, speaking of the love of God, that we do not distinguish between the love of God and the love of Christ, and that in order to rescue the race, "He pauperized heaven for a season." That may be a superlative way of putting it, but it pays for close investigation, having an element of truth. He pauperized Himself.

Yet is there not behind it the warrant of inspired writing? "Who though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor." Never forget that whatever the price, true it is that,

"None of the ransomed ever knew,

How deep were the waters crossed,

Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through

Ere He found the sheep that was lost."

The price was beyond all our computation. "Not with silver and gold " - that is commercialism -"but with the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb, without spot." That is the mystery of the Deity in agony, Do not forget, although the price was paid, although it was as great as that, He procured the world. He bought the field. It became His property. It is His property now.

The parable does not end all the story. It does not tell of other processes through which the world will pass but it does tell the Hand that holds the fee simple to the world, and it is the pierced Hand of Jesus. He bought the whole world, and that in itself is a guarantee of the ultimate realization of all the glory hidden and imprisoned.

The human heart may be inclined to say, Why hide it? Why hinder it? The necessary Why to the making of any such enquiry be the fact He did so proves it was necessary, and proves it was right. It takes ages to grow an oak tree. A ladder can be made in a day. God's way appears the slow way, but He is growing the ultimate harvest of the world. May we get His vision, so we shall be prepared to render our service.