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

**44. THE POUNDS**

*"As they heard these things, he went on and told a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that God's Kingdom would be revealed immediately. He said therefore, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. He called ten servants of his and gave them ten mina coins, and told them, 'Conduct business until I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent an envoy after him, saying, 'We don't want this man to reign over us.' "When he had come back again, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by conducting business. The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten more minas.' "He said to him, 'Well done, you good servant! Because you were found faithful with very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' "The second came, saying, 'Your mina, Lord, has made five minas.' "So he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Another came, saying, 'Lord, behold, your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief, for I feared you, because you are an exacting man. You take up that which you didn't lay down, and reap that which you didn't sow.' "He said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant! You knew that I am an exacting man, taking up that which I didn't lay down, and reaping that which I didn't sow. Then why didn't you deposit my money in the bank, and at my coming, I might have earned interest on it?' He said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to him who has the ten minas.' "They said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' 'For I tell you that to everyone who has, will more be given; but from him who doesn't have, even that which he has will be taken away from him. But bring those enemies of mine who didn't want me to reign over them here, and kill them before me.' " Having said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem."*

*Luke 19:11-28*

THE OPENING verse of the paragraph marks the occasion upon which this parable was uttered. "And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear." That introduces us not only to the occasion of the parable, but also to the intention of our Lord in its utterance.

Luke said, "As they heard these things." What things? Luke was continuing his narrative. Jesus and His disciples were in Jericho, and they had heard what had happened in connection with Zacchaeus, that Jesus had invited Himself to his house. They had seen Him go in, and had waited while He was inside in that private interview. How long it lasted no one can tell. They had seen Zacchaeus come forth from that guest chamber with Jesus, and had heard Zacchaeus declare the result of the interview as he said he gave to the poor, and restored fourfold what he had exacted wrongfully. Then they had heard Jesus say, "To-day is salvation come to this house … For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." They heard these things, and He went on, and added something, spoke another parable. Those are the things referred to, especially the last sentence, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Luke tells us the reason for this parable. He was nigh to Jerusalem. We are in the last period of the ministry of our Lord. "His face was steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem." He was travelling nearer to the city of the great King, as He Himself called it, coming near to the centre of the national life, and to all the things that were to happen to Him, about which He had been talking repeatedly to His disciples since Caesarea Philippi. Evidently there was a strong feeling among His disciples that something was going to happen because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and they expected the Kingdom of God immediately to appear, so He spake this parable.

What then was the subject He intended to illustrate? The complete eleventh verse gives us the reason of its uttering. "He was nigh unto Jerusalem," and the time of year was near to Passover. There were larger crowds then in Jerusalem than at any other time. Josephus tells us that two million people more than the average and ordinary population came to the city. Jesus was coming up to the city, and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear. It is open to question whether the "they" referred to the disciples or to the multitudes. I think it may refer to both. These were the closing days in the life of our Lord, and there was a spirit of expectation everywhere. There were multitudes that were friendly, and many that were hostile. Yet there was this feeling that a crisis was approaching. Jesus had been up and down in their land, in Judaea, and in Galilee; and now for a long period, nearly six months in Peraea, going here and there, He had been preaching the Kingdom of God; and everyone felt the time was ripe for something to happen. What did they suppose? What did they think? Luke says they "supposed." Take that word and express it by another phrase. It seemed to them, observing the signs of the times, having watched His ministry, and listened to Him, noticing that He would appear in the midst of the multitudes; and by these gathered multitudes it seemed to them that the Kingdom of God was immediately to appear.

How should we understand that? The word for "appear" there is a strong one. It means coming into clear, outward, open manifestation, and there is no doubt that in the thinking of the multitudes, and of His disciples too, when they thought, or supposed that the Kingdom of God was about to appear, they imagined that in this visit to Jerusalem He would do something to assert His authority, take the reins of government into His own hands, fulfil the common expectation of the Jewish nation about Messiah and the Kingdom of God. To them the coming of the Kingdom would be the breaking of the yoke of Rome, the setting of the nation free from oppression, and the bringing into outward and manifest form that which Jesus had been preaching from the beginning of His ministry, the Kingdom of God. They supposed the Kingdom of God, as they interpreted it, and as they desired it, was at the doors, that the moment had come. The "they" of verse eleven surely referred to the disciples and the multitudes. I am quite sure reference was to the disciples, because even after His resurrection they still had that view, when they came to Him and asked Him, "Dost Thou at this time restore the Kingdom of Israel?" Theirs was a material outlook, and their expectation was of the immediate manifestation of the Kingdom of God in power. They did not understand the nature of the Kingdom of God. He had preached and declared it, and had affirmed its reality. He had announced its nearness, enunciated its ethic; and they were still waiting for something material. As George Macdonald put it,

"They all were looking for a King,

To slay their foes, and lift them high.

He came a little baby thing,

That made a woman cry."

Even now the same thing is apparent. They were mistaken in their ideals. They felt He was there for the purpose of setting up that Kingdom. Because of that, Luke declares clearly that He uttered the parable of the pounds.

What was the figure He used. In the course of our studies we have seen a wonderful variety of methods of illustration. He took things near at hand, and persons too, historic incidents. Here is the figure of a man going away to receive a kingdom, and leaving his interests in the charge of his bond-slaves; a man who, when he had started out on his journey to receive the kingdom, was followed by a deputation of his citizens, declaring that they would not have him as king. That idea was familiar then in their current life. Archelaus, Herod the Great, and Antipas, each in turn had gone to Rome to receive a kingdom. They were tetrarchs. Everyone wanted the title of king, and had to go to Rome to get permission for it. Herod went, and he gained that title. It was an empty title, but he gained it.

But the immediate historic background was not Herod, but Archelaus, whose palace was at Jericho. He had gone to Rome, leaving his palace, and the interests of his tetrarchy, or his kingdom as he wished it to be called, to his bond-slaves. He left Philippus in charge, with money to trade for the maintenance of revenue while he was away. While away, a deputation of fifty Jews was sent after him, to make a protest against his becoming king. When they arrived in Rome they were received by a company of eight thousand Jews, and they made their protest, and were so successful that Archelaus never received that title; and afterwards he was deposed from the tetrarchy, and he did not go back there.

Our Lord therefore took a common incident, and used it, of someone going away to receive a kingdom, and that coming of his citizens saying they would not have him. Of course this does not mean that Jesus went away to receive a Kingdom, and did not gain it. When Archelaus came back, he called for an account undoubtedly, and our Lord enlarged upon that. But that is the figure behind the parable. Taking this incident, our Lord applied it in a remarkable way to Himself to show that what they were expecting, would not then take place. He was then going to Jerusalem, and they thought He was going to establish a Kingdom according to their ideas. He wanted them to see it would not be. He was going away to receive a Kingdom, and He was leaving responsibility with His servants for the period of His absence. That was the place of the parable and the figure employed; and that was the purpose for which He uttered the parable. It was to teach them that they were wrong in expecting the Kingdom of God immediately to appear.

What are we to learn from this parable? Some people are expecting the Kingdom of God immediately to appear. I am not entering into any argument as to when He will return. I only declare, we do not know when, and there is no sign of proof that His return is near; at least there is no sign that has not been granted through all the ages. We want to be ready if He comes; and to say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus," and to be led into the patient waiting for Christ, not the impatient waiting, which characterizes so many people. Wherever that impatience is manifested, it is due to a wrong conception of what the setting up of that Kingdom will be.

What then did that parable teach those men, and what is it intended to teach us? Three things: the fact of postponement; a period of waiting, and how it should be occupied; and finally, the certain fact of His return, and a revelation then of His action, on His return.

Postponement of His Kingship? Certainly not, but of its manifestation in full power and authority and ultimate victory. That is what was and is postponed, and it is still postponed. The life of our Lord did not begin when He was born a Baby. It stretches out to the past eternity, and on through all the infinite ages. Therefore it is difficult to speak of the life of our Lord in the terms of our calendars and almanacs. He is not going to be crowned. He is crowned. That coronation took place when He ascended on high, after His resurrection. He emptied Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross; "wherefore God highly exalted Him, and gave Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow … and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In that magnificent passage in Corinthians, Paul says, "He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet." The reign is not postponed until the hour of ultimate victory. He is reigning now, and the time of His coronation was at His ascension.

But He wanted these disciples to see that what they were looking for, which they did not understand, was that the visible and outward victory was postponed; that He was going away to receive a Kingdom, He received it when He was received up, and God set Him at His own right hand, upon His holy hill of Zion, His anointed King.

Then there is a period of waiting, between His receiving the Kingdom in the high court of heaven, and His coming finally to establish it visibly on earth. Here is the heart and centre of our parable. When the king was gone, he gave to his servants; ten of them being named. That is a symbolic reference, and covers the whole ground. He gave ten pounds to ten servants, a pound to each. This parable of the pounds must not be confused with the parable of the talents, recorded by Matthew. The significance of the talents was the varying gifts that may be bestowed. Here in this parable it is equal opportunity. The pound is a deposit, intended to be used in the interest of the passing hour. They were to trade with it. The word used is a beautiful one; occupy, in the sense of trading. The business of those left behind was that they were to take the common deposit, and use it in the interest of the business of the King. They were responsible to trade with His pound; his servants, and his business. Paul in the Ephesian letter urged those to whom he wrote that they "redeem the time, because the days are evil." The marginal reading for "redeeming the time" is a word that marks the activity of the merchants and the market place, "buying up the opportunity." This is not the usual word for redeeming, or for time. The meaning is the opportunity. Our business then, according to Paul, is to buy up the opportunity, to prosecute the commerce of the Kingdom of God with such diligence as characterizes the success of the merchant-men in the market places of the world. That is the idea.

There is no Christian man or woman without that pound. We may say we have not ten talents, but that is another matter. The pound is something other than the gift. The pound is a deposit, and is the Gospel of the grace of God. We are witnesses to that Gospel. Our business in this world, whether men are saying still, We will not have this Man to reign over us, is to do business with that deposit; so to make use of it that gains other. That is the deposit. That is the pound.

Our Lord says there are different ways of exercising it. One is full and complete. One man at the reckoning said, "Thy pound hath made ten pounds more." Notice he did not say, I have been very successful and persistent, and managed to make thy pound into ten. The pound did it itself. But he had simply fulfilled the responsibility of trading with it, and there were ten.

Another man had not so full, but a partial result - five. Then that other man who had the deposit, did not use it, but took care of it, wrapped it up in a napkin, did not trade with it; and the reason he gave was that he knew his lord was stern, and that he reaped where he did not sow.

The citizens outside that group of servants were in revolt. "We will not have this man to reign over us." They still are. These are the facts. That is what the world is still saying. It is still saying it in its governments, and especially in those which have in past history acknowledged our Christ, where He has been known and presented, and is now dismissed. "We will not have this Man to reign over us."

But He is coming back. About that there is no question. When He comes again He will come as King; not to be made King. Then the Kingdom of God will appear according to this parable. The first activity of His reappearing will be the investigation of what His servants have done with His pound. Where there has been full fidelity there will be fuller responsibility; ten cities to be ruled over. Where there has been partial success, still increased responsibility; five cities. But what about this man who refused to trade? On his own confession our Lord said He would judge him out of his own words, and He quoted them, not to affirm the truth of it, but to show what he thought himself. It was an entirely wrong conception of his lord, and based upon that wrong conception he had hidden His pound and wrapped it in a napkin, and taken care of it. Our Lord asked him why he had not put it in the bank, so that He could have had it with interest; a question saturated with satire. What happened to him? Nothing, except that he lost his pound. It was taken from him, and given to the man most successful. He was deprived of that opportunity. He had missed it. He did not buy it up, and now his own action was unavailing. I do not think it suggests he was cast out himself. He was saved, so as by fire, and there one leaves him.

As to the citizens who had been in open revolt; when He establishes the Kingdom they must be slain and swept out. There comes the hour when Jesus will return and govern the world, and give it its chance. He has great patience, and His long-suffering is due to His patience; but there is the moment of limitation.

We have all got the pound. What are we doing with it? Are we trading with it? Oh, my masters, the pounds that are wrapped up in napkins, which if they were used, might increase the glory of the Kingdom of our Lord.

The twenty-eighth verse is significant in the light of this parable. He was going up to Jerusalem, and because He was near, they thought the Kingdom was coming. He told them these things, and the twenty-eighth verse said, "He went on before" alone. He was still going. But He was "going up." Geographically it was uphill the road that led from Jericho to Jerusalem; but there is more in it than that. Presently He would be received up, and He would receive His Kingdom. And we are left. We have the pound. How are we using it?