No. 135.

On the parable of the talents.
Matth., xxv. 14-31. - Parable of the talents.

The original design of this parable was to encourage the disciples the duty of fidelity in their service, & to sanction this duty by the most solemn motives in the most impressive manner. By the parable of the ten virgins, as I have already explained, they were taught to be watchful; by the parable of the talents they were taught to be faithful. This latter bears a strong resemblance to that recorded by St. Luke in the 19th chapter of his gospel, & they may both be considered together, the same object & teaching the same truths. By the parable of the man who travelled into a far country & delivered his estate into his servants' hands, & in some measure representing either himself or his Father in Heaven, & it is here of no importance which we understand by it, as either sense may be considered as having confessed the talents. By this, that...
the sedentary are meant the disciples: in immediate followers of Christ. By the talents are we to understand the gifts of power, qualifications which were conferred on the disciples: the time when the head of these servants came. And the one verse which refers to the final judgment is the sentence of condemnation pronounced on the faithful servants designated the reward of the faithful servant. The sentence of condemnation after the stately servant was a solemn warning. Becoming of the punishment of indolence incurred by unservant men. Such is the outline of this parable, such was its purpose, & such the manner in which its instruction is conveyed. It was a most beautiful & happy mode of urging the duties of fidelity in the disciples. And the situation in heaven could be more instructive to them. The highest degree of reward, blessing, honor, & love, is to be reserved from the standard of faithful service would have been an avowal of our service of self-torment. It seems to me as disgraceful criminal, in common cases, to be false to one's trust, how much more was it to be deprecated & reprehended. In this case, if there be contracted with earthly treasures no requirement to be faithful & honest, how could they qualify not be required in a still higher degree of those who were committed heavenly treasures. One had hoped to see the men be agents & instruments of the work of defending the truth & spreading the triumphs of the gospel. But the temptation to desert the cause at least the neglect of the thing is powerful. Still that timidity & reluctance, a sense of even the value of personal sacrifice would suggest were against it. Contempt & persecution and self-hatred, a cruel & ignominious death were the only earthly sources it could expect. With these things they must lay this in account, I must take these for their portion. But more than nothing that is laid, when he fails through the great importance of the service, he has about to commit to his disciples, yet foresee what obstacles would be in his mightiest to alluring them away from fidelity to this great office, can even thing.render that he should not set before them anything which might prevent the advancement of the immense importance of fidelity to the interests of his kingdom; &
he should have taught them that to their change were committed most precious and valuable talents, talents, the use improvement of which would divine with that certainty of be so only welcome; well done, good and faithful servant, enter into joy of thy lord." If the abuse is neglect of any modern receive for its consequence that shall damaging command, and the unprofitable servant into outer darkness!" And said, then designed this humble of the talents for the instruction and admonition of his disciples. But only for the action, conveyed by this fine fiction may be transferred to us. The duty of faithful improvement is as important and obliging now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, and will continue equally so through eternity. We, it is true, are not called to fill such offices, or to discharge such trusts, as those of the first stage; God has not called us to such wide and vast systems of solemn responsibilities, as furnished us with such exalted powers and great resources; but he has given us our station of life to act in part well in them. He has given us power and ability to use them. He has furnished the means, it remains for us the use of them to accomplish the end of our being. To us, then, he will ask to there, as first heard it, the parable of the talents is addressed. Let us see what instruction it furnishes.

1. We observe that according to the representation in the parable, the talents bestowed upon us are very various in kind and degree. Surely can you find any two persons whose qualifications are equal, or even comparable, to any consideration to above, for God has distributed his gifts with an almost infinite variety; and how, through the world! One has five talents, and another two; and another one. The face of the earth is not more diverse from its appearance, nor the circumstances of men, scarcely more different, than are the talents of means of doing becoming God.

2. Variety in this respect seems to be the law of God, and reaches to almost everything that concerns us. For under the name of talents, we are to include not only the gifts of the mind, but all those circumstances in our condition, all those means, of doing good and creating an influence, and to make up our character is designate the circle on which we are to move. And when we take all these things into view, we shall find scarcely any two alike. One man lives always on the smile of prosperity, another on wealth, another on the good things of life,
in abundance, y this is his talent. And this is distin-

tute of all the outward means of riches and honi, if

possesses them but in a very partial degree. His talent must

most principally in something else. Someone gifted

with strong of powerful mind, with a reach of thoughts

of a faculty of acquisition, oh just at the command all

the stores of wisdom, y place them among the instructing

manhanded. To others much strength. Just that by unde-

mental resources seem to have been denied, but they

have something else to compensate for the want of

them. Whatever else they can improve of them into a

talent to be accountable for. One has received all the

blessing influences of a good education has grown up in

while under the case of pains lawful; good, he has been

been early instilled in his mind. He has been taught that

he has a great work to do in this life, yes to regain him-

self going through a process of formation for a higher

things, the messages of God's grace were made deaf

ears, y he has been accustomed to books to his God has a

treasure of heavenly instruction, of animating consolation,

of bright y glorious promises of hope. And this burden

from his earliest days thrown amidst bad influences.

Belligerent companions y Queens office, have ever been on

him y before him, y have been continually bearing the bill

times of their effects, on his mind y heart. Some have al-

ways enjoyed. The vigour of health y strength, which to

others life has been one long felt of sickness. One has

strong sedentary bearing to enter y with y unbelief: and

so constitute it mildly y gentle. To some the means of

doing good are large y abundant; y they are obliged to

plant in secret for what they cannot attempt to make

will work it out of their powers to do much. There

is thousand other varieties are found to contrive with so

good to the talents bestowed on mankankind. And in a

wise education of providence, that there are endearmc-

ties, corresponding to the various wants of society. If the

talents of all were alike, how much would be left un-

done, that is now accomplished. y how much many more

would be lost. Society would become almost a mere

almsman: whereas, this variety of gifts is adapted to

produce
makes it like a well constructed machine, in which each wheel is fitted to supply its own place, and no other could supply it. Each man is connected with others, both in his business and his life; and the smallest is important and necessary. In this way, the structure of society becomes so fully comprehensive. What you cannot do or attain, another can; what you can furnish another cannot. This teaches us to feel our mutual dependence, and to promote the spirit of mutual kindness, the sense of gratitude. In the concerns of traffic, one man has that to sell which another wants to purchase; no man can possess all things, for some he must depend on. In his neighborhood is his fellow citizen, and not until he respects him as a fellow person, as he has something peculiar to himself to supply, and no one else can supply; if there be a demand created for all the various kinds of talents in society, if no man's station is so low as his gifts or good, but he can out his part in the great machine of society better than any other and no one else in this place. This each one is dependent on every other one; all are connected together, as in

by mutual necessities of mutual abilities. If each man was faithful to his trust, the whole would be harmonious, consistent, and beautiful a system.

2. The possible incisiveness upon each one the duty of using and his talents, be they what they may, in the utmost to the best of his understanding, that he had received the five talents went & traded with the same, made them other five talents; if otherwise, be that he received two he also gained the other two. This is the grand point of the whole - improvement, stemming, unceasing, vigorous improvement is the great duty of each. This is what God desires of us; He did not make that, but as abundant and means of progress, if getting good should not be in us, employed. We are placed in the vineyard, not that we should be consumers of the ground, but that we should bring forth fruit every thing on the earth every thing around us speaks to us this must be in motion. Man is so made, that he would be miserable to stand still, if it were not his duty to improve himself. If a person who had never seen a time piece before, were to examine a watch, observe the different structure, how finely its various wheels is going, were fitted to act upon each other, he would pronounce not one without knowing its objects, that it was made

from

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time was constructed with reference to the accomplishment of some definite purpose. So when we observe the wonderful powers of the advantageous opportunities conferred on man, and mark how well the different parts of society are adapted to each other, we cannot but perceive that we are made for diligent and tireless effort. Adam saw in the great laws of God's government, something in the universe is to be made to affect something. The planets are ever wheeling along their courses through the void immense, mutually moving and hourly exposing their surfaces to the influences of the centre of heat. The elements are in constant and secret agitation, to accomplish the purposes for which God destined them. Time, since began, did the sea ever stand still? Was it not always flowing, as unceasingly as the days of years have since their source? The nutritive powers of plants, animals are ever in active motion, the vegetable world in constant, though unseen paths, life. And amidst all this else, activity shall man with all his capacities of ordnance be idle? Does not allowance, as of the scene of God, proclaim the human race cumbrous the talents committed to your charge? Yes, this is a wise, benevolent that of Rapture, to come to the master, in the use of his privileges and opportunities, well done, good and faithful servant. Enters them into the joy of their lord, who addresses the sluggards in admonition in these words, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, shouldst thou have proved this sentence. Therefore, as talents, there is the great and manly duty before us. And here we should remember that the productivity of land depends not on the number, but in the use of the talents. The same man who had but two cows, the same man was commending himself of services, as he who had five. This shows that it is not the quantity of ability of our powers of privilege and opportunities that God regards, but the improvement of them. There may be equality in possessions, where there are unequal advantages. And the consideration thereof serve at once, as a rebuke to those, who wish to make their pretended insignificance an excuse for idleness, as an encouragement to such as are right, to defend, to imagine that they can do nothing, because they are placed in that humble situation, or forget them to do a great deal. When you urge a person to feel the duty of doing good in their day, generation, still tell them that diligent servants they should be.
in enforcing this privilege of power, they always meet you with that obdurate answer, that as for their parts, they have into the means of doing something—thou art rich, art powerful, art have great gifts of mind and body to be sure ought to excel themselves in the good of mankind; but it is not so with them, God has not seen fit thus nobly to endow them; therefore doubts be well excuse them from making any exertion, as it is quite as much as they can do to take care of themselves. When you talk to others of the duty of improving their talents, they will reply with unconcealed disdain, the way with they could do something, but are afraid that the multitude can contribute not; God has not thus designed—do think it is better to do nothing than to do evil. Of these plans, the former is the plan of selfish indulgence, the latter that of a true love of mankind. But neither of these are of the least weight being founded on an assumption wholly wrong. The point is: the supposition, that it is our duty, no, our only thing to be from great actions, splendid achievements, that undeclare them in the silent goodness are of little value. Nothing can be more false than such an estimate, for God has determined, that the talents with his blessings shall be scattered in the understanding among all ranks and conditions. No one can claim that he is left entirely without the means of effecting some good. Each individual has something. The due improvement of which, he may fill well his station, leave his name brightened at least by the testimonial of the few who knew him and felt his goodness. It is not to the great deeds are recorded with a blaze of light in the pages of the historian, that God will most often regard. It is to the man who the work, and others names on the spires of heaven, that will be connected with the welcome, well done, good and faithful servant. The greatest benefactors to mankind are not always those, whose deeds are from faith with trumpets at the center of the streets. Nay, Where should I find the greatest quantity of good men, is the greatest number of faithful servants, are to be found in that common condition of life, where comes from the extremes, who admits of no show or parade in the discharge of its duties. The des faiths silently understood, upon the earth, and its inner movements and the vegetable world; in it, is with these gentle sentiments
acts of goodness, I have recorded nowhere; but in the book of God’s remembrance. These happy effects are felt, though not perceived. Therefore, let no one complain that they have no talents to improve; for it is not true. None is so poor as in so low a condition, that he cannot do something of the voice of reason, or of God bid him do it. You do not think it true, stand on an eminence, from whence you may throw down blessings on all beneath you. You cannot do those grand institutions, you cannot erect hospitals, you cannot multitudes with bread; you cannot provide care great of public affairs, you cannot manage the complicated machinery of government; you cannot guide or instruct the minds of the community; nor pray, light in difficult and dark questions; you cannot fill the vacancy recommending ten thousand duties, that forenoon every which shall captivate the attention; these things you cannot do. But what, then? To do these is not your talent, that talent is entrusted to others. But in the mean time, do not imagine that you have nothing to be accountable for. When the Lord of the servants entrusts you with them, he will not require at your hand
or to do it decently or well. Having discovered what your talent is, the next thing is toilsome improvement. Look at the character of the unprofitable servant in the parable: "there is faith in this man was not in the charge or possession of his talent, but in the neglect of it. He suffered it to melt away in uselessness, instead of increasing its intrinsic value. Yea, the Lord account came he had just as much to return to his Master as he had received, if no more. But the good, faithful servant is not this story is that less in his service. It goes faith to the business of the trials of life,render. He employs every capacity and servant. every gift of providence every blessing of the gospel, to the glory of him who tenderly, to the benefit of others, to the elevation of his own soul. If he has become it is not ness to the trifles, vanity is in the sight of disempowerment, but filled up with those wants or essential wants, not the way back, but with a blackness, the darkness to cherish the love of that God, for more no longer he had formed, while the means of grace the hope of glory; and the fear of even his death, he does to love of heaven and earth, the He has in his apprehension resources of good, if he strives to increase these resources that he may do more good. If the clay he has strength and his virtues prominent; will be sharply in his own the resolutions of holy obedience, tomorrow he will want to give them a stronger hold. A mere form of a story. If this year he has done well, if any more, next year he will strive to do better and more. "The earth of the just, says Solomon, is like the shining lights. as the sun, the sun's brightness more is more unto the perfect day." The faithful servant of the Lord, who has more in the same time than the unprofitable servant, for he is fervent in operation, "knowing that there is a mighty current, the hand that is not busy with meditations, nothing in a bone, or the heart, new worse, beating with life will lay her in the dust. Observe the progress of the storm, what first is but a small stream, will moderate, mosting its course only by the shades of moisture, with which it is bordered; but gradually widening its bath of
deepening its waters, till itswells into the sea? majestic sides, pouring fertility along its shores, giving beauty to the scenery through all its slopes. So it is with the life of the faithful servant, who improves his talents. At first perhaps his opportu

nities are few, his talents small. But there he perseveres; with industry, but every day adds something to his means of usefulness; so that, opportunities for serving his Maker, till at last he becomes the generous benefactor of man, if the persevering, affectionate follower of his Savior.

Such, truly, is the great duty, improvement, used upon us by the promise of the talents, that the manroe in whi this duty should be performed. The remain

der of the promise will be considered another and the opportu

nity. And may God give us the grace ever to keep in view from what He has placed us here, so that we may come this saek beneath with us, our account may be ja

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