

**Week 4**  
**23/7/17: "A Great Gulf Fixed"**

**Verses:** Luke 16:19-31; Matt 6:21; Titus 2:11-12

How many times has each of us used the phrase "I will do it tomorrow" and how often have we completed that task "tomorrow." This was my first thought as I read this chapter and then I saw there was so much more to this powerful illustration. The rich man whilst allowing the beggar to live under his roof was still selfishly indifferent to the needs of his suffering brother. What Christ was emphasizing through this illustration was that we are all responsible and accountable for the use of everything we possess. Stewardship extends beyond just currency, it includes time, thought and even our intentions, we are even accountable for our actions towards anyone who enters our sphere of influence. God's mercy towards man is beyond our comprehension to the rich man he bares so patiently and the poor man he provides so abundantly. Scripture tells us plainly there will come a time when the account must be settled, our deeds will bare completely the fruit of what we have sown. This is truly mercy when sin is finally taken into account and destroyed for good, what we have treasured will be our downfall or victory in that day.

*There are today close beside us many who are hungry, naked, and homeless. A neglect to impart of our means to these needy, suffering one's places upon us a burden of guilt which we shall one day fear to meet. All covetousness is condemned as idolatry. All selfish indulgence is an offense in God's sight. {COL 261.3}*

*The time came when a change took place in the condition of the two men. The poor man had suffered day by day, but he had patiently and quietly endured. In the course of time he died and was buried. There was no one to mourn for him; but by his patience in suffering he had witnessed for Christ, he had endured the test of his faith, and at his death he is represented as being carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. {COL 262.1}*

**Reflection:** Are we focusing on Christ or our earthly treasure? Where do you want your treasure to be hidden? Ask God to show you the intentions of your heart and to help you give all to Him for we cannot of ourselves be faithful but only through Him.

**Further Reading:** Christ's Object Lessons p260-271

## 24/7/17: Saying and Doing

**Verses:** Matt 21:23-32; Matt 7:21; John 1:29

We tend to beat up on ourselves for what we haven't or should have done, what is so encouraging about this parable is the fact that whilst the first son said no, he relented of this position and went to work in the vineyard. Repentant hearts are winning hearts, Scripture tells us all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. What makes the difference is that some recognise their deplorable condition and repent, while others repeatedly reject the light of truth and become hard hearted. Christ stands as our propitiation (To gain or regain favour, to appease) and righteousness, through his death and resurrection we no longer have any excuse to reject the gospel message. The cross shows us that sin is not something to be taken lightly, we are all affected by its influence. Repentance is recognising we are sinners and running to the one who can save us.

*"There is more hope for publicans and sinners than for those who know the word of God but refuse to obey it. He who sees himself a sinner with no cloak for his sin, who knows that he is corrupting soul, body, and spirit before God, becomes alarmed lest he be eternally separated from the kingdom of heaven. He realizes his diseased condition, and seeks healing from the great Physician who has said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. These souls the Lord can use as workers in His vineyard." {COL 280.3}*

**Reflection:** We all suffer at the hand of sin and no one is immune, Christ came to give hope to the hopeless, determine in your heart today to not let pride keep you from the saving light of the gospel truth.

**Further Reading:** Christ's Object Lessons p272-283

## 25/7/17: The Lord's Vineyard

**Verses:** Matt 21:33-44; Matt 28:18-20; Rev 14

Called to represent the character of God and to bring hope to the surrounding nations, this was the purpose of the Jewish nation. God had placed them, even amidst their iniquity in places where they could represent God, whether through his blessings or the witness of His mercy. What happened instead was that they succumbed to the influence of the surrounding nations, straying from their original purpose they progressively hardened their hearts. God's purpose for His church hasn't changed, any that professes the name of Christ stand in the same position that the Jewish nation had 2000 years ago, in fact this reaches back as far as Adam and Eve. You have been called out of the world and its vices, set apart for a sacred duty.

*Through disobedience to God, Adam and Eve had lost Eden, and because of sin the whole earth was cursed. But if God's people followed His instruction, their land would be restored to fertility and beauty. God Himself gave them directions in regard to the culture of the soil, and they were to co-operate with Him in its restoration. Thus the whole land, under God's control, would become an object lesson of spiritual truth. As in obedience to His natural laws the earth should produce its treasures, so in obedience to His moral law the hearts of the people were to reflect the attributes of His character. Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God. {COL 289.2}*

**Reflection:** Christ is coming back to gather His harvest from this earth and put an end to sin, open your hearts to the leading of the Holy Spirit in your lives today for God has called each of you.

**Further Reading:** Christ's Object Lessons p284-306

## 26/7/17: Without a Wedding Garment

**Verses:** Matt 22:1-14; Matt 7:13,14; Rev 3:18

Judgment had been made upon the Jewish nation, the disciples had been sent to warn them and after Christ's death and resurrection we see the result of a nation that had gone too far. The persecution that was meted out by the Jewish leaders on the first Christians was horrendous, starting with the stoning of Stephen. God's mercy indeed has no limit, the message of this parable shows however that we can go too far when we willingly walk away. What happened that made this nation fall so far from grace and what can we learn from it? The simple fact was they had attempted to cover themselves as Adam and Eve had done in the beginning, unlike Adam and Eve they let pride and reliance on self, become their god. They were unwilling to submit to the healing gospel that had been presented to them, unwilling to wear the garment that Christ paid so dearly to secure for each repentant sinner.

*When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. {COL 311.4}*

**Reflection:** We must be covered by Christ's righteousness, why do you think this is so hard for us to do? We cannot of ourselves do anything to merit righteousness, we are righteous on Christ's merit alone and we accept this through faith in Him.

**Further Reading:** Christ's Object Lessons p307-324

## 27/7/17: Talents (Part 1)

When you can be trusted with little you can be trusted with so much more

**Verses:** Matt 25:13-30

In this parable, the man represents Christ and His soon return to heaven, the servants being each that profess the name of Christ, to each is given talents according to their abilities. The good and faithful servants used their talents to bring a return, the well-meaning servant with the one talent did what he thought was appropriate, whilst he didn't squander his talent he did show a lack of faith and discipline. The disciples received the gifts of the Spirit after the ascension of Christ into heaven, they received these only after they had completely surrendered in prayer and faith to Christ. Through Christ we can achieve such incredible things but it comes back to our willingness to push out the less favourable things in our life, this requires some self-discipline. God requires us to step out in faith and let Christ lead us, we live in the strength of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit our will needs to be submitted to Christ. There are no over-burdensome tasks involved and we may have to sacrifice something which may cause us some degree of pain, we must remember however it is not something out of the bounds of our abilities.

*Before He left His disciples, Christ "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John 20:22. Again He said, "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you." Luke 24:49. But not until after the ascension was the gift received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Ephesians 4:8. "Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ," the Spirit "dividing to every man severally as He will." Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:11. The gifts are already ours in Christ, but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God. {COL 327.2}*

**Reflection:** We have been untrusted with something of immense value and the bible promises are sure, Christ overcame through the same power that we have available to us and we can now have confidence in and through Christ.,

**Further Reading:** Christ's Object Lessons p325-332

## 28/7/17: Talents (Part 2)

***“Be determined to become as useful and efficient as God calls you to be. Be thorough and faithful in whatever you undertake.” COL 334.1***

**Verses:** Matt 25:13-30; 1 Cor 6:18,19; Matt 6:22-34

Everything we do and say has an impact and a flow on effect, our attitudes, our responses and the use of every faculty is to be cultivated for good not evil. Diligent painstaking effort is required through self-discipline, sacrifice and submission to Christ. Every act and deed produces a harvest, no matter what spirit it has been performed in, positive or negative will produce likewise fruitage. We cannot say that it doesn't matter what we do nor can we make an excuse for a moment of weakness. It's a somewhat sobering thought that our influence can not only harm our soul but that of others lost through our influence. We have a responsibility to be faithful stewards of every aspect of our lives, our effort does nothing unless it is born from the influence of Christ and His Holy Spirit in our lives. It is Christ that works in us we must let Him work, our responsibility is to keep our lives as uncluttered as possible through proper health and use of the means that we have been given.

*Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own—an atmosphere, it may be, charged with the life-giving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of cherished sin. By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected. {COL 339.3}*

**Reflection:** Consider your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, what would you do or not do differently?

**Further Reading:** Christ's Object Lessons p333-352

## 29/7/17: Talents (Part 3)

**“Talents used are talents multiplied. Success is not the result of chance or of destiny”** COL 353.1

**Verses:** Matt 25:13-30

Having the least does not mean your contribution is any less important, the raw truth is that the character of the servant responsible for the least was such that he would have buried the five talents as he did his one. Spiritual growth happens one small step at a time seldom in big leaps and bounds, the one who was given the five had already proved himself responsible to the master with a much smaller amount. Whole hearted service and faithful use of the talents God has endowed us with, work in us a victory on many levels, we will receive more of Gods power and we will more easily deny the “old inclinations.” Scripture is full of examples of great men who faithfully used their God given talents and skills: Joseph, Daniel and not to overlook the humble Zacchaeus and the thief on the cross. All these prove one valuable point no matter where you are spiritually you can use what is right within your grasp.

*“Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities. God brought Daniel and his fellows into connection with the great men of Babylon, that these heathen men might become acquainted with the principles of true religion. In the midst of a nation of idolaters, Daniel was to represent the character of God. How did he become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? It was his faithfulness in the little things that gave complexion to his whole life. He honored God in the smallest duties, and the Lord co-operated with him. To Daniel and his companions God, gave “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Daniel 1:17. {COL 356.3}*

**Reflection:** Do you believe God has a purpose for your life, if you’re not sure what that is spend some time with Him in prayer ask Him what He would have you do. Talk to a friend who knows you well and ask them what they know your good at.

**Further Reading:** Christ’s Object Lessons p353-365