

***Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.
(Lev 20:7)***

If you have paid any attention to media over the last couple of months, you'll have noticed a small phenomenon occurring that we've not often seen – people actually objecting to this mandatory worship of #Pride. While not significant enough to turn this tide – there is no turning of the tide, friends – it has made noise. There are many in the “conservative media” that have declared “victory” because Anheuser-Busch, Target and Disney have reportedly lost money due to their affiliation with the alphabet perversion soup (LGBTQIA+).

The lead voices at Fox News, Daily Wire, Prager U and other so-called “conservative outlets” have all been patting themselves on the back the last few weeks as boycotts have reportedly cost some of these companies financially. They are heralding the success of their “go woke, go broke” campaigns. Declarations that these events herald a new wave of change that will return America to her former glory; demands that we all agree not to buy products from so-called “woke” companies and reverse the moral decay of the nation are made with great bravado and desk thumping.

The pulpits promote this miniscule mouse peep of objection as a great victory of “good over evil”. There is a narrative being pushed that there is this ongoing battle between The Good and The Evil and woo hoo! look at how The Good is now winning.

They proclaim loudly that with just a few more strategic tweets, a few less dollars spent on some particular brand and a few more people refusing to patronize films or establishments pushing “woke agendas”, all will return to the idyllic state it was in just before “transgender” became a word on everyone's lips. Pure delusion.

The – at best – naivete of this narrative is a multi-faceted trap. It starts from a place that is not scriptural; this notion that there is this uncertain war being fought between good and evil. These just-found-a-voice pundits can be very dangerous for us, as I've said previously, because on the surface they are in agreement with our position. But their rock is not our Rock (Deu 32:31). It is important that we are grounded in this, not thrashing about walking and talking in the flesh and mingling that with God's Truth.

There is no ongoing battle between good and evil, not in the sense that is being pitched. Let's understand this thoroughly. There is a war and we are in it. If you who are sitting here today do not feel like a soldier bivouacked in a foreign land, you are missing something. If you are not uncomfortable in the world, you should be asking yourself ‘why’. If you do not feel out of place and at war with everything in the world around you, you should be seriously assessing your situation.

See this clearly – we are engaged in fighting, but we are not “marching as to war” as the hymn says. That hymn gets it wrong – like **really wrong** – by painting an incorrect

picture. We are not “marching **as** to war”. We are **AT WAR!** We are already in the battle zone, behind enemy lines. True Christians are not citizens of this place where we fight – we’re not leaving home to go to the war. We aren’t heading to or searching for some mythical battlefield where “the battle of good vs. evil” is taking place. Christ’s church is in the field **doing** battle. If we are to sanctify God we have to come from the right starting point, and that’s not “make america great again”. I only use the hymn as an example of how easily the perspective gets skewed even when sounding “right”. It’s sneaky.

Christians are engaged in war from the time of their calling to the end of their mission. That involves hardship, it involves suffering, it involves living a life being out of place because you serve a King who is Himself away securing the mansions He promised, while you occupy a place that is fully foreign.

False preachers love the pop-culture notion of “good vs. evil” because it fits their free-will stage play and so they gladly promote it. If there is a battle that is in doubt as to its outcome, then your action could tip the scales. If you don’t buy Bud Light and instead give your money to the “church”, if Target loses a couple of points of market share from our boycott, you “score one for the good guys”. Here is the truth – there is no score in this sense. The notion is fleshly. It’s pride. It’s arrogance. Don’t get caught up in that.

You don’t want to buy a product because you don’t like what the company says? Fine, that’s great, but don’t chalk it up to you actually scoring a point for “good”. Don’t tout it as some great spiritual maturity and leadership. Instead of screaming about how you aren’t buying Bud Light, maybe just stop buying beer and quietly back away from your drunkenness – that might actually do some good. I personally don’t buy products from some companies because I just can’t stand the way they operate and the things they publicly say. I don’t think for one second that Ben and Jerry’s gives two hoots at how much their fag and dyke filled ads make me want to vomit, and I don’t delude myself that they are missing the dollars I’m not spending. It doesn’t make me a good person to not buy their ice cream, and if I convinced every human on the planet not to, it wouldn’t really matter. It makes me feel a little better in the flesh to not give them my money. Yay. God’s truth isn’t advanced by my spending habits. And you can easily start talking about it the wrong way and do despite to the Gospel!

Here’s the news flash – no company that makes any product out there is glorifying God (that I can see). So unless you’re making your own clothes, and building your own tools, and growing all your own food, and making your own candy, and your kids only play with rocks and sticks, etc., etc., you’re giving money to companies that in some way or another blaspheme God.

But boycotting isn’t doing anything to “win against evil” because the war is won already, and our localized battle in our generation has nothing more to do with winning its outcome than did Abraham’s, or Moses’ or Paul’s. Here it is:

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.” (Rev 19:19-21)

Yes, this depicts a future event. But for the victor Jesus Christ it is accomplished! It's won! God's will has been revealed to us here and that will does not change. Blessed assurance! There is no “scoring one for the good guys” that then contributes to this. Our actions have no bearing on this outcome. There is no score board tallying up all the “wins” with all of heaven waiting with bated breath to see if we get enough “wins” to overcome Satan. Everyone – including Satan – knows the outcome is already decided!! This truth destroys the free will narrative, and fake Christians despise that. If giving your money to the religious industrial complex doesn't actually do something to win your salvation and “overcome evil”, then those collection plates come back empty. So preachers promote and feast on this false idea, which in turn gives it endorsement and then more steam with people. Like all lies, it is pernicious

Let me get out in front of an objection – if our battling doesn't impact the war, then why are we doing it? Well, that's part of the point of this sermon – because we've been told to, and it both pleases and glorifies our King to obey! We'll dig in a bit more on this later.

Another objection to consider – don't confuse the angelic struggles we have some small insight into as evidence of this “good vs. evil showdown”. This frequently gets warped and misused, especially by the entertainment industry. I have no doubt there are conflicts between angelic entities. We have scripture to support the idea, after all

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.” (Dan 10:13)

That “prince of the kingdom of Persia” isn't a man, it is a spiritual adversary. Also,

“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” (Zec 3:1-2)

These describe the engagements of a creature taken up with tasks and assignments different from ours. So drawing some parallel between **our** engagements and those of the angelic race is a slippery slope. Stay in our lane, looking to our orders and it's harder to go wandering off the path creating narratives that don't align to Scripture.

We do not have orders to stand before the throne and dispute with Satan. We do not have orders to physically go to battle with men. We do have orders to be a force of occupation. And we are already on that battlefield. The Elect have been on that battlefield since the Fall set the rebellion in motion. The question to ask yourself today is are you in the war, or are you standing by watching others do the fighting?

As proof of this idea we are going to look at a chunk of Luke 19, what in some Bibles is captioned "The Parable of the Pounds". Some study Bibles make this a parallel parable to "The parable of the Talents" in Matthew 25. I don't think this is accurate. My purpose isn't to do a deep analysis of these differences, I only raise it for awareness. There are parallels and common themes, but there are enough differences between them that I believe Jesus is delivering different messages with each. Let us read Luke 19:11-28:

*"And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And **he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.** But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. **But those mine enemies, which would not that I should***

reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.” (Luk 19:11-28)

Unlike in Matthew, here in Luke the master distributes the pounds evenly – one per each of the 10 servants – and delivers a specific command to them about what to do in his absence.

The command given the servants is

“Occupy till I come”

This is a vital element of Christ’s message. This Greek word translated “occupy” is Strong’s 4231, *pragmateuomai* and means primarily “to be occupied in anything”. So simply put, the master delivered resources for them to be occupied with, and he has a very real expectation they will do so. An argument can be made that they have an obligation to occupy themselves with these resources on his behalf.

We see that the servants aren’t the only players involved, though:

“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.”

These are distinct groups of people, the servants and citizens. The hostility of the citizenry didn’t alter the commandment given or the expectation that the servants would use the resources to further the master’s ends. The message is that even in the midst of a hostile citizenry the servants of Christ must use the resources they have been afforded to operate on His behalf until He returns. In other words, they “occupy”.

The distinction between the servants and the citizens is informative, and is easily connected to these verses:

*“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as **strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”* (1Pe 2:11)

*“For our **conversation is in heaven**; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”* (Php 3:20)

The word “conversation” is translated other places “citizenship”. The truth is that Christ’s servants are not citizens of the world. It can’t be any simpler. They are here to occupy this foreign land in His stead and want no part of what the world has on offer.

This is such a simple truth – either you are a world citizen, or you are a stranger. There is no middle ground, this is light and dark – totally separate. There is no dual citizenship. This is why the warning against conforming to the world exists.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Rom 12:2)

As occupiers of a foreign land, the danger we face hourly is that the flesh is weak and seeks comfort and ease. If you live as a stranger in a place long enough you seek to fit in, you want to stop being looked at like a stranger! So, you conform, you change your garb, your language, your approach, because the flesh doesn't want to feel like every day it is being dragged across a giant cheese grater. With every day that you occupy, you find it harder and harder to ignore the cross-wise looks from your school mates or co-workers, to not hear and react to every comment made under their breath or openly about you, you are more easily drawn to every shiny object or fleshly lust you denied yourself yesterday; these things make it hard in the flesh to not seek the warm embrace of conformity. These things pull at you to reject the life of the soldier you have been called to with its uncomfortable armor and replace it with some nice soft stylish clothes. The longer the Lord tarries, the more diligence is required to avoid this reality.

I have heard and read preachers make the argument that this “occupy” is winning souls to Jesus (since there is “gain” made by the servants), and I've heard the argument made that it is precisely what I'm saying it is not – defeating evil in the world. We certainly war against sin in this foreign land, but Scripture has to align to Scripture. I've spoken many times about the idea of “winning souls for/to Jesus” and how that does not align to Scripture, and I don't intend to dive deep into that again. But the gain is not servants hired, but more pounds, which I think eliminates that idea from this parable.

To address the idea that our occupation is in fact about scoring victories over evil, I would ask that you carefully examine the language. The master knew of the rebellion, because the rebels were brazen enough to send a message after him! He could have sent a message back to his servants providing new instructions, to prepare for direct battle, to put down the rebellion – but he did not. The standing orders didn't change, and that is so important to setting our feet on the right path. He will put down the rebellion, that's not the servants' job. Consider carefully the outcome

“But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me”

We're on a war footing as occupiers but we aren't the enforcement and execution arm against the rebellion. He has promised to deal with that upon His return. This comports and aligns with other Scripture. Carnally overcoming this rebellion is not given to us to do, and therefore our weapons are not of the sort required to accomplish that

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)” (2Co 10:4)

What then about this “pulling down of strong holds” – that sounds like fighting and winning against evil! Consider some of the larger context of this verse and I think the answer is found to this objection

“Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;” (2Co 10:1-5)

Paul is doing battle here even while he is speaking about the type of battle we fight. He was being slandered, and there were false teachers in the church at Corinth who were working to subvert the teachings of Christ. He makes it plain here that we are engaging in a spiritual battle, not one according to the flesh. We don't walk according to the flesh, worrying about the things of the flesh like “winning against evil” because we walk according to the Spirit, and we have been given assurance through faith that the battle is already won!

Our war is against “every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God”. The prince of this world has taken full advantage of our King being away to exalt his lies against the knowledge of God. It is him we fight, yes, but not with boycotts and stock prices and carnal things of the world! We fight by “casting down imaginations” with the Truth! By using the resources provided to us – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith and all the adjacent gifts – to challenge the vain imaginations of Satan that men exalt against the knowledge of God.

So what is the work that the servants do that pleases their master so much? The passage tells us that it was “trading”. What is that exactly? In the English, “trading” might seem rather specific – they were out buying and selling goods on their master's behalf, buying low, selling high, doing things with the money besides dropping it in a high yield savings account. We know that it was something that required activity and work because the master essentially told the slothful servant it would have been better if he **had** just put it in a high yield interest-bearing account and earned some interest. There is therefore something more than just “gain”; there is a “doing” and if you look at the Greek, I think you see it.

The word for “occupy” is one of the two roots that make up “trading”; it is Strong’s G1281 *diapragmateuomai*, and basically puts a primary preposition *dia* onto our original word *pragmateuomai* to – get this – make it more emphatic. So if *pragmateuomai* means to busy oneself, *diapragmateuomai* means to **thoroughly** busy oneself for the purpose of gain.

So the servants not only occupied, they **thoroughly** occupied. All they did was occupy. They put themselves into their **master’s** business, and they did it with a purpose – not gain for themselves but gain for their master.

All except the one sad miserly fellow who thought he was clever and obeyed essentially out of spite. He did not openly reject the rule of his master, but his obedience was not with fervency or out of love, it was with bare minimum engagement out of fleshly obligation. Make careful note of this – he didn’t spend the money on himself. He wasn’t wasteful with it, *per se*. He was slothful, legalistically obeying, and then he tried to place accountability for his sloth **back on the master himself!** Listen again to the words

“For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.”

He is despising the gain that the other servants brought to their master through their hard work, claiming the master did not earn it! He is willing that the man should rule over him as long as it is passive and requires nothing from him – a fair-weather Christian. He disregards that the gain was from the master’s own resources! The arrogance of this has always astounded me, but do we not see this even in ourselves rise up from time to time? I confess I do. If I am not actually staving off sin, rebuilding the dam, plugging the holes, what is the point? Where is the gain? Why do I keep putting in the hours? Do we not become outcome oriented from time to time, losing sight of the blessed fact the end is assured, maybe seeing this “gain” as something we should be measuring in outcomes? The truth is that our work, though not designed to derive a battle outcome, is part of what the King requires because it pleases Him to have us do it. Should it not be enough to please the King?

Note this. The faithful servants aren’t called out for their cleverness, their wisdom, their ingenuity, their intelligence, their talent, their shrewdness in business. They are simply called out for their faithfulness. Look again at the language:

*“**Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.** And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, **Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.** And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.”*

Look at it and consider it with a full consideration. “Lord, ***thy pound*** hath gained”. Not, “Lord, I have gained”. Not my excellent trading has gained. Not the markets were good and granted me fortune. No, “thy pound hath gained”. Our Master gives the pound and rewards our faithfulness, our industry and our endeavor, not directly the end result.

Just claiming you’re Christian isn’t “occupying”. There has to be purpose, an active point to it. Just showing up someplace and standing on a soap box reading out of your Bible is not occupying. Handing out Bibles or standing on a street corner yelling “Jesus saves” is not industrious use of the resources the King has provided or a full declaration of His holiness. Staying in your four walls to talk about the glorious resurrection of Christ isn’t enough. You’re not faithfully doing something with the pounds. The doing matters.

Occupying requires awareness of the situation around us and discernment of the signs of the times. It requires a burning desire not to obey out of obligation, but rather out of love for the King. A sincere desire to cast down the strongholds of these vain imaginations by the simple declaration of His Truth – because especially in our day those who profess to be His followers are almost entirely busy declaring “their own personal truth” and embracing the world.

So the question that we each must every day ask ourselves is – “am I ready to go to war today”? At the end of every day, you must ask yourself, “did I go to war today”? Right now, you must ask yourself “am I engaged in the war”?

You have to ask this question because to occupy for Christ **requires it**.

“And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” (Jos 3:5)

Before going to war it is necessary to sanctify oneself. We don’t sanctify ourselves with censers of incense and muttering prayers or with funny hats or silly clothes. To sanctify ourselves means to empty our hearts of all love and desire for anything not God and replace it with love and desire for God’s holiness to be known. Every day we must sanctify ourselves because every day the LORD does wonders among us. We must simultaneously sanctify God in our hearts:

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1Pe 3:15)

We sanctify God in our hearts by submitting our innermost selves fully to Him. To sanctify God in our hearts doesn’t mean we *make* Him holy, but that we fully acknowledge His holiness, as the angels in His presence do:

“And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isa 6:3)

By declaring His holiness, we are submitting to His sovereign authority, giving thanks for what He has given, and being content with it, for nothing He does is unholy. We must sanctify God inwardly first, that we may appear outwardly sanctified with our holy conversation.

*“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,**” (2Pe 3:10-11)*

Sanctification is an active undertaking that requires focus and diligence. It requires study and prayer. It requires acknowledging its necessity and that we can't do anything if we don't have God's holiness in our life. It is how we occupy.

And what if we don't? Well, that which has been given can just as easily be taken away! Consider that part of the parable:

“Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.”

By this is not meant I believe the salvation of the “wicked” servant, for he is still called a servant, and not cast out; but consider the pound taken from him. If you aren't going to use the resources, they aren't going to be left in your possession, and those precious gifts will be given to those who will make use of them in the service of the King. There is mystery here I believe, but it is apparent that the Lord is not required to leave in our possession His resources. They are His to do with as He pleases, even to the amazement of His other faithful servants, who were shocked that He should give another pound to the soul who had ten. This requires more study I believe, but the simple message is clear – don't take for granted what you've been given.

Let us sanctify ourselves before our God this day, putting on His armor and say as the Psalmist

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.” (Psa 51:10-11)