

December 11, 2016

Occupy

Those active in this church often hear us talk about occupying until the Lord returns. In an effort to put a little meat on that bone, it might be help to delve into the topic.

The text is found at Luke chapter 19 where we find set forth what is commonly called the “Parable of the Pounds”, as follows:

19 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

² And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

³ And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

⁴ And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

⁶ And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

⁷ And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

⁸ And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

⁹ And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

¹⁰ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

¹¹ 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.

¹² He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

¹³ And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

¹⁷ And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

¹⁸ And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

¹⁹ And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

²⁰ And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

²¹ 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.

²² 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:

²³ Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

²⁴ And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

²⁵ (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

There are some parables of which Matthew Henry says “the key hangs beside the door.” The Holy Ghost himself interprets them. There is no room left for doubt as to the purpose for which they were spoken, and this parable is an example of such. Our brother Luke tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke this parable because he was soon to arrive at Jerusalem and because his disciples thought that the kingdom of God “should immediately appear.” (Verse 11).

Now before proceeding further, let us preliminarily look at that word “occupy”, which is quite interesting in that it has several definitions; some of those

definitions are set out below, highlighting (by underline) those which fairly can be said to have application in this context:

verb (used with object), **occupied, occupying.**

1.

to take or fill up (space, time, etc.):

I occupied my evenings reading novels.

2.

to engage or employ the mind, energy, or attention of:

Occupy the children with a game while I prepare dinner.

3.

to be a resident or tenant of; dwell in:

We occupied the same house for 20 years.

4.

to hold (a position, office, etc.).

5.

to take possession and control of (a place), as by military invasion.

6.

3 to participate in a protest about (a social or political issue), as by taking possession or control of buildings or public places that are symbolic of the issue: *Let's Occupy our voting rights!*

The Occupy Wall Street movement of late 2011 was a protest against economic inequality.

verb (used without object), **occupied, occupying.**

7.

to take or hold possession.

8.

to participate in a protest about a social or political issue.

Did the Lord's disciples get it wrong, in part? Why yes, it appears they did!

At verse 11 of our text, we see that the disciples of Jesus Christ, who were directly in his presence on a regular basis and were thus intimately near the fountainhead of truth, got it wrong – they thought “the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” It seems they thought they were going to walk right in to Jerusalem and God’s kingdom would start forthwith.

Did the Lord's disciples have it wrong on such an important matter or prophecy? And, if so, what are we to make of it?

These disciples believed rightly that Jesus was the Messiah. But they seemed also to believe that the Old Testament promises of Messiah's visible kingdom and glory were about to be "immediately" fulfilled. They appear to have concluded that

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- Now was the day and now was the hour when the Redeemer would **build up Zion (and) . . . appear in His glory** (Psalm 102:16); and,
- Now was the time He would **smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of His lips (and) slay the wicked** (Isaiah 11:4); and,
- Now was the occasion He would **assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth** (Isaiah 11:12); and,
- Now was the event when He would take the **heathen for (His) inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for (His) possession** and break his enemies **with a rod of iron, (and) dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel** (Psalm 2:8, 9); and,
- Now was the very day when He would **reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously** (Isaiah 24:23); and, finally,
- Now was the time when **the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, (would) be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.** (Daniel 7:27).

4

This was the significant error into which the disciples had fallen at the time when Jesus spoke this parable. Again, they correctly saw Jesus as the promised Messiah. But they erred when believing His Kingdom was imminent. And they erred yet again in apparently completely missing the prophecies concerning the sufferings and killing of Jesus and the long period of time that would follow before the second advent of Christ in glory. As one author describes it:

(These disciples) did not comprehend that before the glory Christ must be crucified, and an elect people gathered out from among the Gentiles by the preaching of the Gospel. All these were dark things to them. They grasped part of the prophetic word, but not all. They saw that Christ was to have a kingdom, but they did not see that He was to be wounded and bruised, and be an offering for sin. They understood the end of the second Psalm, and the whole of the ninety-seventh and ninety-eighth, but not the beginning of the twenty-second. They understood the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, but not the fifty-third. They understood the dispensation of the crown and the glory, but not the dispensation of the cross and the shame. Such was their mistake.

5 What can we glean from this? When we confess confusion and little light on certain portions of the Scriptures are we in good company? After all, we have here in this faithfully-recorded story fully-committed followers and disciples of the Savior, regularly in his very presence, conversing with him daily, spending quality time with their Lord, and yet they looked to be clueless on major matters of prophecy. Do we learn that in reading prophetic Scriptures we should do so in the light of the two pole stars – the first and second advents of Jesus Christ? Bind up with the first advent the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles and the preaching of the Gospel. Bind up with the second the restoration of some Jews, the pouring out of judgment on the unbelieving and the establishment of Christ's kingdom. And do we learn that, on occasion, we might err, particularly in prophetic topics? Perhaps we misread, misunderstand, misapply, miscomprehend or just plain miss something. At a minimum, we ought to regard these mistakes of our Lord's disciples with great tenderness, understanding and consideration. And we should note this passage suggests no upbraiding by Christ for these shortcomings.

What does this parable teach us about the present position or station of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Verse 12 helps answer this: **A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.** The nobleman represents the Lord Jesus Christ in at least two respects.

First, like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus is gone into a far country – i.e. the heaven of heavens – to receive for himself a kingdom. Now true enough, in some respects, he has a spiritual kingdom presently. He is king over the hearts of his people and they are all his faithful subjects. And without doubt, he has controlling power over the world: He is at this very moment King of kings and Lord of lords. But his real, literal, visible, complete kingdom the Lord Jesus has not yet received. So we read in Hebrews 2:8, **Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.** And find accord at Psalm 110:1: **The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.**

6

The Lord Jesus during this present or intervening dispensation is like David between the time of his anointing and Saul's death – time spent in the **cave Adullam**. (1 Samuel 22:1, 2). He has the promise of the kingdom, but he has not yet received the crown and throne. This is yet another way David is a type of Christ. Consider these similarities: Jesus is followed by a few, and those often are neither great nor wise, but they are faithful. Jesus is persecuted, disliked, abused and often driven into the wilderness, and yet his party is never destroyed. He has none of the visible signs of the kingdom at present: no earthly glory, majesty, greatness, obedience. The vast majority of mankind sees no beauty in him and they simply will not have this man to reign over them. He is biding his time for greater things.

Second, like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus intends to – and will – return one day. So we are told in many places, such as Acts 1:11: **Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.** It was a literal going; it will be a literal return. As he came personally the first time with a body, so he shall come personally the second time with a body. As he came visibly

to this earth and visibly went away, so when he comes the second time he shall visibly return. And there won't be any misconstruing who he is.

At that time, the 97th Psalm will be fulfilled, for that Psalm starts off proclaiming its subject: **The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.** (Psalm 97:1). Then and there King Jesus will fulfill many prophecies, including those of Enoch, John the Baptist and Paul the Apostle: to execute judgment upon all the ungodly, to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire and in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel. (Jude 15; Matthew 3:12; and, 2 Thessalonians 1:8).

And also at that time, the Mighty Savior will raise his dead saints and gather the living ones, will collect his chosen ones from the scattered tribes of Israel and will establish an empire on earth in which every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess that Christ is Lord.

7

And while we certainly do not know the date, time, year or even the season of this exciting return, we are given strong clues of how things will be at that time. **But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat (gluttony), they drank (alcoholism and other addictions), they married wives (divorce/remarriage), they were given in marriage (SSM), until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded (unprecedented economic growth and money being spent – \$20 trillion national debt – the so-called “Trump Bump” in the stock market); but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.** (Luke 17:25-30).

So I say, Christ is presently away in a far country, but he will doubtless soon return for the promised **times of refreshing** and **manifestation of the sons of God.** (Acts 3:19; Romans 8:19).

What is the present duty of Christ's professing children?

Here, we get into the heart of that admonition: "Occupy till I come." That is to say, it is at this juncture that we hope to put a bit of meat on the "occupy" bone.

Initially, it seems the text itself gives us some good ideas for answering this inquiry. There is "trading" involved (verse 15) -- energetic activity amongst your fellow humans. There is risk involved; only by risky investments does one profit 100% -- i.e. doubling 10 pounds to 20 pounds (verse 16). There is an expectation of increase resulting from slovenly behavior of others (verse 24).

Looking back at verse 13, Christ called his "ten servants" (a very finite, relatively small and specific number of servants) and "delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come." So we see immediately that this situation involves being called by the Lord and being vested with certain assets provided by the Lord. Does that not well-describe each member of this church; called by Jesus and endowed with certain skills, properties, abilities, capacities, and the like?

8

When the Lord Jesus tells us to "occupy" he is telling us to be a doer and not merely a professor or hearer. He is adjuring us: **Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.** (Matthew 5:16). We are to be a **peculiar people, zealous of good works.** (Titus 2:14).

But those passages still are somewhat abstract. We pine for more concrete, on-the-ground understanding of this duty to "occupy", especially in the context of the pounds. Consider this: Your bodily health and strength, your mental gifts and capacities, your money and your earthly possessions, your rank and position in life, your example and influence with others, your liberty to read the Bible (and otherwise), your interpersonal skills, your spiritual wisdom – all these, and more, make up the "pounds" God has blessed you with. All these are to be used and employed, as much as lies within us, with a continual reference to and an eye on the glory of Christ. All these come directly from your Creator, his gracious gifts to his chosen people. Never forget **(b)oth riches and honour come of thee**, our Lord. (1 Chronicles 29:12). **The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of**

hosts. (Haggai 2:8). **For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.** (1 Corinthians 6:20). The Lord gives to **all life, and breath, and all things; (and has) determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.** (Acts 17:25, 26). All of this to say that everything we have is given to us from our kind Father and it is our duty to use it in a way pleasing to God.

And we are to do this occupying until our Lord comes which is to say that we are to do this work and wisely utilize these resources while all the while keeping an eye open for his return. A servant who knows his Lord will return, but not the precise date and time, strives to be in an ongoing state of readiness and always prepared. Such a servant desires to be ready at any time to give an account. When you arise in the morning, realize you could meet Christ that noon. When you go to sleep at night, understand you could be awakened by that Great Return. Such a mindset is what is meant by occupying "till I come." (Verse 13). Clearly, that mindset will influence how you spend your time and resources.

9

So let me reference a few more passages that might further enlighten this concept: **I have shown you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.** (Acts 20:35). And this: **Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts.** (Luke 12:33).

Let's stop briefly and look closer at that last verse, and especially the reference to "bags", that is, purses. Haggai spoke of **he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.** (Haggai 1:6). Dr. Gill describes it this way:

their bag is, , "a bag pierced through", or that has a hole in it, which lets the money out as it is put in . . . and which the Targum renders by, "for a curse"; as money hoarded up in bags by covetous persons generally is: Christ would have his followers put their money up in other bags; not in such which rot through age, or are worn out, and are full of holes through use; but into the hands and bellies of the poor (elect), the fruit and reward of which will always abide(.)

And Barnes adds this light:

By bags which wax not old Jesus means that we should lay up treasure in heaven; that our aim should be to be prepared to enter there, where all our wants will be forever provided for. Purses, here, grow old and useless. Wealth takes to itself wings. Riches are easily scattered, or we must soon leave them; but that wealth which is in heaven abides forever. It never is corrupted; never flies away; never is to be left.

Please also note that the Lord gave different amounts of pounds to different servants; the servants started with unequal amounts according to their ability. This, of course, is most compatible with our experience.

In closing on this issue, let me set out some good words from commentators. Benson says:

Till I return to take an account of the use you have made of what has been intrusted to your management. The spiritual sense is, Use your endowments, gifts, and graces, with all your privileges and advantages, for the good of your fellow-creatures, and the glory of God, till I come to visit the nation; to destroy Jerusalem; to execute judgment on my enemies, and on those of my people in successive ages; to require your souls of you by death, and to judge mankind in the day of final accounts.

10

And Barnes has these most helpful comments:

Occupy till I come - The word "occupy" here means not merely to "possess," as it often does in our language, but to "improve," to employ "in business," for the purpose of increasing it or of making "profit" on it. The direction was to use this money so as to gain "more" against his return. So Jesus commands his disciples to "improve" their talents; to make the most of them; to increase their capability of doing good, and to do it "until" he comes to call us hence, by death, to meet him.

And, finally, Dr. Gill:

and said unto him, occupy; negotiate, or trade, that is, with the pounds; make use of the ministerial gifts, exercise them, lay them out, and trade with them: the ministry is a trade and merchandise, to be carried on, not in the name of the ministers of Christ, nor on their own stock, nor for themselves, but for Christ, and for the good of souls; which shows, that they must not be slothful, but laborious and diligent.

I love you. Amen!