

The Life of Christ, for Family Devotions - August

by F. L. Mortimer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of gratitude, faith, and obedience in preparation for Christ's second coming.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 9:10, Matthew 25:14, Luke 19:26, 1 Corinthians 4:2, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "Faithful Service", "Stewardship"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches on the importance of faithful service and the need to use the opportunities given by God to glorify Him. Through the parable of the ten pounds, he emphasizes the responsibility of believers to serve diligently and not to neglect the gifts and opportunities provided by the Lord. The parable serves as a warning against laziness and unfaithfulness in serving God, highlighting the importance of using our talents and resources for His glory.

Transcript

A Devotional Commentary on the Gospels

Arranged for family devotions, for every day in the year.

By Favell Lee Mortimer (1802--1878)

AUGUST 1

Luke 17:11-19. The ten Lepers.

How touching are the words, "Where are the nine?" The Lord keeps an account of the number that he blesses, and he expects to see them at his feet, giving him thanks. He knows how many he has lifted up from the gates of death since the last setting sun. Some called on him yesterday out of the depths of distress; he heard them, and today disease is subdued, and danger is averted. Parents who feared yesterday that their absent children had met with some fatal accident, have heard today that they are safe. People plunged in deep poverty, who feared that they should soon perish with famine, or pine in a prison, have received gifts today that have extricated them from all their troubles. Are those people today pouring forth their thanks at their Redeemer's feet? It is to be feared that the Lord still says, "Where are the nine; the nine hundred, the nine thousand, the nine million, that I have delivered from distress?"

We are astonished at the ingratitude of the lepers; but no doubt they had some plausible excuses to make for their conduct. The Lord had said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." As they were going they were cleansed. They still followed the direction that had been given them, and pursued their way. But gratitude ought to have turned their steps back again. If they delayed to go to Jesus, they might never enjoy another opportunity of thanking him; for he was on his way, and would soon be gone. One, however, followed not the example of his companions. When he felt the glow of health in his veins, and saw the hue of health upon his hands, he did not hesitate how to act--he returned alone, and with a loud voice and in an humble attitude, glorified God. And this man was a Samaritan! He belonged to an ignorant nation, to a nation whom the Jews despised, and whose religion the Lord disapproved. This instance shows that among the most ignorant there are some whose hearts God has prepared to love him. Those who visit the abodes of misery in crowded cities find some of the poor outcasts ready to receive the truth. Missionaries find some in heathen lands who, as soon as they hear the Gospel, embrace it. But there are only a few in this state. The mass of mankind in all countries care for the gifts, and not at all for the giver. The human heart is naturally ungrateful. Men are disposed to be ungrateful to their fellow-creatures. They feel humbled under the weight of great obligations, and seek an excuse for not being thankful. But they are far more ungrateful to God than they are to any other being. His mercies are considered matters of course. People like to imagine that all things happen by chance, and that God does not trouble himself with their little concerns. By these ideas, they relieve themselves from the burden of gratitude.

There is a charge that will be brought against sinners hereafter, which will involve them in the deepest guilt. It is this--they knew that the Father had given his only Son to die for them, and they were not thankful. Even devils will not have this black crime to answer for. Are there as many as one in ten in this Christian land who have heartily thanked God for the gift of his Son? who have thanked him as heartily for it, as they would thank a fellow-creature who had saved their lives at the risk of his own? or even as heartily as they would a friend for showing them common kindness and hospitality?

August 2

Luke 17:20-24. Christ prepares his disciples for his absence.

When the Pharisees asked questions the Lord disappointed them by his replies. They made inquiries in the hope of entangling him, but they themselves were confounded by the answers they received. They asked when the kingdom of God should come. The Lord, instead of acquainting them with that great secret, taught a more important truth. Jesus will one day be declared "King over all the earth;" but even now he reigns in the hearts of true believers; therefore he said to the Pharisees, "The kingdom of God is within you." It was useless for them to be looking for the appearance of the Lord in his glory, while they had not received him into their hearts.

The Lord would not converse on this subject with his enemies; but he turned to his disciples, and gave them much instruction concerning his second coming. He said, "The days will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you shall not see it." What did he mean by one of the days of the Son of man? Was not the day in which he was speaking one of the days, and is not the day in which he will come again another of the days? The Lord prepared his disciples for his approaching departure, and foretold that when he was gone away they should long to see him again--that is, they should desire to see one of his days. Were not these words fulfilled? How earnestly John, when banished to the Isle of Patmos, desired to see the glorious day of the Son of man! Almost the last words he wrote were these--"Come, Lord Jesus." And do not all the disciples of the Lord long to see his day of glory? This is

one of the marks by which they are distinguished--they "love his appearing." (1 Tim. 4:8.) They pray for it constantly in the words, "Your kingdom come."

But though they do not know when it will come, they do know how--for Jesus has told them that "as the lightning that lights out of one part under heaven, shines unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." This promise is a great comfort to all his disciples. It would have disturbed their minds, if they had thought it possible that their Lord might return to the earth without their knowing it. They would have been interrupted in their holy pursuits by the idea, "He may now be at Jerusalem, or in the desert, or in some hidden chamber, or in some retired spot." But they now feel sure that when he comes, they shall see him, wherever they may be, or whatever they may be doing. Only a few disciples saw him ascend in the clouds from the Mount of Olives--but every eye shall behold him when he comes again. How exceedingly great will be the brightness of that day! When the Lord Jesus appeared to the persecuting Saul, the light was beyond the brightness of the sun at noonday, and its dazzling splendor blinded the eyes of the astonished man. (Acts 26:13.) But when he comes again, the light will spread over the whole world; saints will be strengthened to gaze upon the scene, and will be changed into the image of their Lord; while impenitent sinners will find the day of brightness a day of darkness to them. How striking are the words of the prophet Amos on this subject! Amos 5:18-20--"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord--to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"

August 3

Luke 17:25 to end. Christ prepares his disciples for his sudden return.

Though the Lord did not inform his disciples when his kingdom should come, he told them of one event that must happen before that glorious day arrived--that event was his own death. "But first he must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." His disciples also would suffer many things, and be rejected by generation after generation. The history of their sufferings to the end of time is to be found in the Revelation. That book is a book of warnings (as well as promises) to the church of God. It prepares them for enduring much tribulation before their Savior appears to their comfort, and to the joy of their enemies.

But the Lord has concealed both the time and the place of his second appearing. When the disciples inquired, "Where, Lord?" he replied by a proverb, "Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together." We need not seek to know the place, for we shall be gathered to that place, whenever the time arrives.

There is another most important circumstance which the Lord has not concealed. In what state will the world be when Jesus comes again? In the same state as it was before the flood. The book of Genesis, as well as the book of Revelation, is a book of warnings; for though it reveals events long past, they are types of events yet to come. The flood, and the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, are types of the destruction of the wicked when Jesus comes again. One family only was saved when the flood came, and one family only was saved when the cities were burnt; and one family only will be saved when Jesus comes again. It is his own family, the people that he has chosen, and called to be his children. But in that one family, who were saved when Sodom was destroyed, there was a person who is held up as a warning to all who profess to belong to Christ. "Remember Lot's wife." She was almost saved--but yet--she was lost. And

why? Because her heart still clung to the possessions she had left in Sodom. The Lord bids us beware of hankering after worldly goods. "In that day he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away." This direction was literally observed by the disciples when Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans, but it is to be spiritually observed to the end of time. Occasions will arise when the people of God must sacrifice all they possess rather than be false to their Master's cause. "Whoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

It was painful to Lot to leave his wife a pillar of salt upon the plain of Sodom. Such separations as Lot then endured will take place when Christ comes again. Some who are living in the closest intimacy will be forever separated. The believer will be taken away from the side of his unbelieving brother, and transported into the presence of his Lord. None can imagine the despair of those who shall be left, or the horrors that will await them. Who is there who has not a believing relation? How could we bear the idea of seeing that holy person soaring away, and leaving us behind? Now he often invites us to walk with him in the ways of God--sometimes he prays with us, and more frequently still FOR US. It may seem impossible that an affectionate father, or a tender mother, should leave a child behind to be consumed by the ungodly; but when the righteous are borne by angels into the presence of God, none will be able to mount their fiery chariots, but those for whom they are sent. God is willing to save all of us. The way is open, and the invitation is free. "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17.)

August 4

Luke 18:1-8. The parable of the unjust judge.

This parable has been a great comfort to Christians while waiting for the second coming of the Son of man. The Lord had told his disciples that he would soon be absent from them. Eighteen hundred years have rolled away, and still the church is as a widow, and still Satan, her great adversary, is permitted to harass her. But has God been like an unjust judge? No, but he has appeared as if he did not hear his people's prayers for deliverance from their enemies. His widowed church has cried day and night to him, saying, "Avenge me of my adversary," but God has not yet answered this prayer. He has not yet bound Satan with a great chain, and shut him up in the bottomless pit. Still our adversary goes about seeking whom he may devour; still he endeavors by various wiles and devices to destroy the people of God. And shall he always be permitted to do this? No! the day appointed for deliverance shall come. God will not say, like this unjust judge, "My church troubles me; I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." The Lord is never wearied by the supplications of his people, for he has said, "The prayer of the upright is his delight." He will say, "I will now avenge my own elect, which cry day and night unto me, though I have borne long with them." Then He will send his Son from heaven to deliver his people, and to consume their enemies.

"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" Shall he find that his people have believed that he was coming? Will it not be as it was in the day of the resurrection, that even those who loved the Lord remembered not his promise? The angels said to the woman, "He is risen, as he said." Then, and not until then, those women remembered his words. Before Christ comes again many will be inclined to say, (like the two disciples going to Emmaus,) "We trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

While waiting for that day, we may go to our God in every hour of distress. He can bring to nothing (as it is expressed in the Liturgy) all the devices which the craft or subtlety of the devil or man works against us.

We always shall find that in the end He will say, "Shall I not hear my afflicted child who cries day and night unto me?" This is one of the comforts of his children, that they have a God to whom they can go in time of trouble. He is on their side; He takes their part. Whether it is disease or death that threatens them, or whether it is the persecutions of wicked men, or the temptations of Satan that harass them, the Lord is greater than their enemies, and is able to subdue them. He would hear his children at first, only he knows that waiting will exercise their faith. Therefore he bears long with them. Why did he return answers that appeared severe to the woman of Canaan? Why did he not heed the first summons of the sisters of Lazarus? Why did he permit Job to pine with long sickness and sorrow? Was it not that he designed to teach his beloved this hard lesson, even that he hears them when he seems to disregard?

This is a lesson that is not understood by the little ones in Christ's school; they cannot bear delays, and think they are denials; but as their love increases, they can bear apparent neglect, and even repulses, without suspecting the loving-kindness of their heavenly Father. They know that God is love, and they can reason upon his love, and say, "He who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will he not with him also freely give us all things?"

August 5

Luke 18:9-14. The Prayers of the Pharisee and of the Tax-collector.

There are thousands of prayers offered up to God every day; there have been thousands offered up this day. Have they all been accepted? No! there are prayers which are not accepted. Are we anxious to know whether the prayer we offered up alone this morning was accepted or not?--or did we offer none?

What was that made the Pharisee's prayer so hateful to God? It was the pride of his heart. His prayer was in truth no prayer at all. He boasted, instead of praying; but he deceived his own heart by putting his boast in the form of a thanksgiving. He did not feel thankful when he said, "God, I thank you I am not as other men." Had he felt thankful, he would not have despised the poor tax-collector. How different were the feelings of Paul, when he said, "By the grace of God I am what I am!" When we are thankful, we are filled with compassion (not with contempt) for those who are less blessed than ourselves.

How many offer prayers like the Pharisee's, while they use the words of the tax-collector! It is possible with all the pride of a Pharisee to smite upon the heart and to say, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!" But the tax-collector felt what he said. He thought himself unworthy to lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven. He stood afar off from the Holy of holies, as unfit to enter the presence of God. He knew not what we know of a Savior's love; but he must have trusted in the promises of pardon to penitent sinners through an atonement, or he could not have offered up this humble prayer. With what joy penitent sinners like this tax-collector receive the tidings of a Savior! There were such publicans in the Savior's days, and they came to Jesus, and heard his word with thankfulness.

In what different states the Pharisee and the tax-collector returned from the temple to their own houses! The tax-collector went down a pardoned sinner, accepted for the sake of Christ. The Pharisee returned with the guilt of his sins upon his head, and that of the proud prayer he had offered, added to his former guilt. Pride is the most flagrant sin in God's sight. It has ruined multitudes of our fallen race, and it has even sunk angels into the bottomless abyss. In what state did we come down from our chambers this morning? Did we come down justified, or not? Have we ever made such humble, fervent supplications to God as the tax-collector did? Are we ashamed of ourselves and of our sins? Have we earnestly implored the infinite mercy of God in Christ? It is a dreadful thing to be unjustified or unpardoned. To rise up

unjustified, to lie down unjustified--to go out--to come in--unjustified! To be exposed to death every moment, and yet--to be unjustified! But this is the state of everyone who has not repented of his sins, and obtained pardon through the merits of his Savior.

August 6

Mark 10:17-22. The rich young ruler.

It is impossible not to feel interested in this young inquirer. The respect he paid to the Lord was rare in a man of rank and property. "He kneeled to him, and said, Good master." It is pleasing to see a young person anxious to learn the way of salvation. This youth came running to inquire what he should do to inherit eternal life. Though multitudes applied to the Savior for the cure of their diseases, few inquired how they should obtain salvation for their souls. This young man's course of life appears to have been correct, and his disposition amiable. We are already disposed to love him, when we read, "The Lord beholding him, loved him." Though no doubt Jesus loved all his disciples, and though we know that he loves even sinners, yet this expression is scarcely used on any other occasion. There was a disciple of whom it is said that Jesus loved him, and there was a family at Bethany concerning whom the same is recorded. But they were his devoted followers, while this youth was not even a believer. Yet as the Lord was man, as well as God, he may have loved those qualities that attract our regard, and are called "amiable." Nothing is more amiable in youth than a teachable disposition, a respectful demeanor, frankness of manner, and earnestness of spirit. All these the youth possessed. Even when he received a command that he would not obey, he still behaved in an amiable manner, and showed no angry resentment, but only deep sorrow. No doubt the Savior was touched by his grief; but he spoke not a word of consolation. He, who comforted all who were cast down, saying, "Weep not," permitted this mourner to go away un comforted. And why? Because there was no comfort for his sorrow. He grieved because the gate was too strait, and the way too narrow, that leads to eternal life. There can be no consolation for this grief, either in time or in eternity.

This young ruler did not know he was a sinner, and he did not feel his need of a Savior. Neither did he look upon Jesus as a Savior, but only as a teacher. When the Lord said, "Why do you call me good? there is none good but God," the young man ought to have replied, "You are the Son of God." But he believed not in Jesus. He wished to find out a way by which he might save himself. Therefore the Lord showed him his own heart by giving him a commandment that he would not choose to obey. He said to him, "Sell all that you have, and give to the poor." This commandment was given as a test whereby to try the youth, to see whether he would do all the Lord required. Once God tried Abraham, by commanding him to offer up his only son Isaac. Abraham stood the test, and proved that he loved the Lord above all. The young man did not stand the test. He might have stood an easier test; he might have been willing to part with half his possessions; he might have been willing to part with all, had his possessions not been so great--but to part with all his great possessions was more than he could bear to do. Some may feel inclined to wonder why the Lord imposed so hard a condition upon a young inquirer. They may say, "Is it not written that he does not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed?" This is true. When an afflicted father said with tears, "Help my unbelief," the Lord did not discourage him, for he was as smoking flax. When a sinful woman washed his feet with tears, he did not repulse her--for she was as a bruised reed. But this young man was not as smoking flax, or as a bruised reed. He had no love for Christ--no sorrow for sin--no desire for pardon. The most open transgressor, who is conscious that he deserves to be condemned, is nearer salvation than such a self-righteous character as this young ruler was.

It may be that some of us, like this youth, desire to go to heaven. We think we are sincere. God may cause some event to happen that shall try our hearts, and prove whether we are ready to give up all beside, rather than relinquish our hope in Christ. What the trial may be cannot be foretold. It will be suited to our particular state. Orpah, as well as Ruth, professed great attachment to Naomi, her mother-in-law; but only Ruth clung to her, and to her God, in the midst of poverty and desolation. Many say to Christ, "Lord, Lord," who would not follow him to prison or to death. Those who have not felt their need of his blood to cleanse their sinful souls, may think that silver or gold, or friends, or fame, is more precious than Christ.

August 7

Mark 10:23-27. Christ declares the danger of possessing riches.

Is it indeed so very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, and yet are men so anxious to become rich, and so much disposed to envy the rich, and to count them happy? Are parents so desirous to heap up treasures to leave to their children, and to see them occupy a higher station than themselves? Surely men do not believe this declaration of our Savior. Even the disciples were exceedingly astonished at it. Jesus then explained what he had said, and declared that it was those who trusted in riches who could not enter heaven. But how hard it is to possess them, and not to trust in them!

Let us inquire what it is to trust in riches. It is to feel them to be our own, and not the gift of God. Whether we have earned them by our industry, or inherited them from our parents, they are not our own, but only lent to us, and therefore they ought to be used in promoting God's glory. But the rich are apt to be proud, and to forget who gave them all they possess.

To trust in riches is to look to them for happiness. The favor of God alone can make us really happy. Outward things cannot do it,--neither friends, nor children, nor houses, nor lands--nor all the pleasures, comforts, and honors in the world. Even a child has been heard to say, "Things cannot make people happy." And how do saints now in glory estimate those possessions on which men set their hearts? Do they not regard them as rocks upon which souls are shipwrecked--as snares in which they are taken, and pierced through with many sorrows? It is true that riches might be converted into blessings. But how much grace does it require to use them aright! And how much more grace to feel aright when conscious of having great possessions! Great riches make people forget that they are great sinners, and lead them to neglect the great Savior. The rich have many friends, and often they do not feel the need of a heavenly and almighty Friend. They have great possessions below, and often they are satisfied without an inheritance above. A rich gentleman once said to a day-laborer, "Do you know to whom those estates belong on the borders of the lake?" "No," replied the laborer. "They belong to me," said the rich man. "And the wood and the cattle--do you know whose they are?" "No." "They are mine also," continued the rich man; "yes, all, all that you can see is mine." The peasant stood still a moment, then pointed to heaven, and in a solemn tone asked, "Is that also yours?"

How apt the rich are to forget to look upwards, and to ask, "Is heaven mine?" Silver and gold cannot purchase it; nothing but a Savior's precious blood. If an angel were commissioned to preach on earth, would he not rather speak to peasants than to princes--for angels must know that they are seldom called to rejoice over a penitent clothed in purple and fine linen. When the Gospel is proclaimed in hovels, and even in prisons, it has far greater success than when it is spoken in courts. A few indeed in the highest stations have been subdued by the power of divine grace; a few honorable counselors, such as Joseph and Nicodemus, have believed; a few honorable women, such as the Viscountess Glenorchy, and the

celebrated Countess of Huntingdon, have devoted themselves to the service of God; a few mighty sovereigns, such as our wise Alfred, and our youthful Edward, have honored the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; but the greater part of those who have possessed lands, and riches, who have worn crowns, or coronets, have been satisfied with an earthly portion, and have not sought to obtain a crown of life, and an inheritance that fades not away.

August 8

Matthew 19:27 to end. Christ promises rewards to his faithful followers.

Had Peter spoken in pride when he said, "We have forsaken all," he would have received rebuke instead of encouragement. He had seen the rich young man go away grieved--he had heard the Lord's declaration respecting the danger of riches--and his mind reverted to the period when he had been called, and had obeyed the call. What occasion was there for gratitude when the disciples thought of the time when they first resolved to give up all, and to follow Jesus! There is no season in life upon which the believer looks back with such joy, as on that season when he first determined to engage in his Redeemer's service. Whether he gave up much or little, he knows that in heart he gave up all. He felt willing to give up all whenever duty required the sacrifice; and he actually gave up what is dearer than possessions--doing his own will, and trusting in his own righteousness.

The Lord's reply to Peter contains two glorious promises. The first was addressed to the apostles only; the second to everyone who had acted as they had done. The apostles had left fishing-boats, and they were promised thrones. Such is the gracious and astonishing manner in which God rewards! When was this promise to be fulfilled? In the regeneration, or the new birth of the world. That time is spoken of in Rev. 21:1, where the apostle John declares, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." This glorious time is called in Acts 3:21, "the time of the restitution (or restoring) of all things." It appears that the apostles will then be distinguished by peculiar honors, and that they will be appointed to judge or rule over the tribes of Israel and the saints. But though we speak of these things, we understand them very dimly, because we see "through a glass, darkly."

The second promise that Jesus made is addressed to all who forsake any worldly good for his sake. Multitudes have lost their possessions, and have been separated from their families, because they chose to obey God rather than men. And how has God rewarded them? Has he given them the very things they renounced? No, not always; but he has given them more happiness, even in this life, than earth could have afforded them. They have indeed suffered "persecutions," but their joys have been greater than their sorrows. (Mark 10:30.)

Worldly things are only desired, because it is supposed that they can confer happiness. If any person were convinced that greater happiness could be obtained by any other means, surely he would not lament the loss of worldly comforts. How many saints have witnessed, that in the hour of outward sorrow they have tasted the purest inward joy! Such was the experience of Rutherford, when imprisoned in Aberdeen. In his letters he declared that since he had been in prison, he had discovered a sweetness in Christ that he had never conceived before. Such was the experience of Dr. Payson. When racked with pain in his last illness, he asserted that he felt more satisfaction than he had ever known in health. He said, "God has used a strange method to make me happy. I could not have believed, a little while ago, that in order to render me happy, He would deprive me of the use of my limbs, and fill my body with pain. But he has taken away everything else, that he might give me HIMSELF." And the apostles bore the same testimony when they

said, "As the SUFFERINGS of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ." (2 Cor. 1:5.)

Are there any here who have never yet found happiness? Are you willing to try the experiment, and to see whether God can make you happy? Sin has its pleasures, but they are for a season, and they leave a sting behind. Have you not experienced this? But God bestows on his children a calm, a deep, a settled, an abiding joy, which is called PEACE. It cannot be described, for it is not only unspeakable, but it passes all understanding.

August 9

Matthew 20:1-16. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

Our Savior himself tells us what is the meaning of this parable. This is the explanation he gave--"The last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few chosen." Those who are first in their own eyes, will be last in the great day of reckoning; and those who are last in their own eyes, will then be first. This seems to be the meaning of the parable. We have no reason to believe that all will have an equal reward in the last day--the parable of the talents seems to prove that there will be different degrees of glory in the world to come.

In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, there is a representation of the feelings of self-righteous Pharisees toward penitent publicans. They were enraged at the idea of open sinners partaking with them of heavenly bliss. Self-righteous people, who have led a correct life, imagine that they are better than those who turn to God late in life. They think they deserve great reward for their self-denial. How much will they be astonished at the decisions of the last day! Then they will see open sinners, who have repented, admitted into God's presence, and they themselves thrust out! Little do they think that even a murderer, who truly repents in his last hour, is loved of God, while professors of religion, who have never repented, are hateful in his sight! Such impenitent people will not be received into heaven. But they will have the torment of beholding those whom they despised, welcomed by saints and angels, arrayed in white robes, and adorned with golden crowns. How much more exasperated will they be at this sight than the envious laborers were at the sight of the wages given to those who had worked but one hour! When they see penitent sinners received and rewarded, they will expect to be still more favored and still more honored. But they will be bitterly disappointed. They will then find that there is no mansion prepared for them in the celestial city.

The Lord's true servants are not like the murmuring laborers. If called early to work in his vineyard, they rejoice the more. They are not proud of having spent their youth in the service of God, but thankful for the great mercy shown to them. They pity those who were groaning under the bondage of Satan, while they were rejoicing in the liberty of Christ. How different from theirs was the spirit of those laborers who said, they had borne the burden and heat of the day! Those who do not love God, find his commandments grievous; but those who have experienced his pardoning mercy, call his yoke easy and his burden light. Do we think those the happiest who spend their lives in sin, and who, like the dying thief, are pardoned in their expiring moments? Or do we esteem those happiest who serve the Lord, like Joseph, from their youth, or like Samuel, from early childhood?

August 10

John 11:1-6. Christ receives a message from Martha and Mary

The conduct of our blessed Redeemer towards the beloved family at Bethany, sheds light upon his dealings with his saints now upon earth. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, were firmly attached to their Lord, and they could stand trials that weaker saints could not have endured.

The Lord did not delay to heal the nobleman's son, nor Jairus' daughter, but he delayed to speak the word on behalf of Mary's brother. What was the reason for this difference? Mary and her sister knew their Lord well; they had experienced his faithfulness in times past; they could trust his love, even in the midst of apparent neglect.

When Lazarus was taken ill, his sisters deeply regretted the absence of their Lord, but they knew where he was, and they sent a messenger to acquaint him with their grief. The words of the message were few and touching, "Behold he whom you love is sick." The sisters did not request that Jesus would come; they laid their case before him, and left it to his never-failing love to act as he saw fit. Here is an example for our prayers. It is a comfort in distress to spread our wants and woes before the Lord; but it is best to leave it to his wisdom to decide how to relieve us.

The answer Jesus gave to the message was very encouraging. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Yet it seems probable that Lazarus died before the message could be delivered to the weeping sisters. It must have come too late to give them comfort.

But the dying chamber, the funeral scene, the days of mourning, were all appointed "for the glory of God." We naturally imagine that God is most glorified by preventing evil; but we know from his own declarations that he is more glorified by redeeming from evil. The fall of angels and of man will in the end bring more glory to God than would have arisen had these evils been prevented; for then the wonders of redemption could never have been displayed. It is a delight to the righteous to promote the glory of their heavenly Father. They would willingly endure sufferings for this purpose. We heard a little while ago of a man who was born blind, that the works of God might be made manifest in him--we now hear of one who died for the same end. Believers even now die, not as a punishment for sin, but in order to promote the glory of God. Christ has suffered for their sins, and borne all their punishment, but he appoints that they should die, that at the last day he may raise them all for his own glory. When he shall say, "Come up here," then great fear will fall on those who behold them ascending in a cloud to meet their Lord in the air.

Theirs will be a more glorious resurrection than that of Lazarus, for he rose to die again; but those who are made alive at the last day will die no more.

August 11

John 11:7-16. Christ sets out for Bethany.

It seems amazing that though the disciples had lived with the Lord three years, they continued to misunderstand his words. They supposed that his motive for not going to heal the afflicted Lazarus, was fear of the Jews. For when he said, "Let us go into Judea again," they expressed their surprise. He replied by a short parable. He compared himself to a man who walked in the day, and who walked safely, because he enjoyed the light of the sun. He himself was light, and therefore could never fall into unforeseen danger. He knew that his hour was come, and that it was time to work his most stupendous miracle. When his hour was not come, he took pains to conceal his glorious works, that he might not too soon exasperate his enemies; but now he desired to fall into their cruel hands, that he might finish the

work his Father had given him to do.

We do not possess foreknowledge; we do not know what things will happen to us in any place to which we are going; yet if we follow Jesus, we do not walk in darkness. It is true we are blind, but our guide is not; therefore we are as safe as if we ourselves possessed eye-sight. When we are going to take a step in life, if we find that the word of God pronounces it to be right, and that the providence of God opens the way, we need not fear evil. How safe were the disciples while conducted by their Master from place to place! Yet they knew not their own security. Thomas seems to have said with a wavering faith, and a fearful heart, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

How was it the disciples did not comprehend their Master when he said, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps?" He taught them by this figurative language many sacred truths. He showed them that the commonest actions (such as sleeping) represent spiritual truths. Jesus was patient with his dull scholars, and explained his meaning, saying, "Lazarus is dead." These words could not be misunderstood--but those that followed were mysterious. "I was glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe." The raising of Lazarus was to effect more than one purpose. It was intended not only to convince unbelievers, but also to strengthen the faith of believers. The disciples were on the brink of an event that would call for the exercise of the strongest faith. Soon they would see their own Lord lying in his tomb. Never since the beginning of the world were the people of God exposed to so great a trial of faith, as the disciples then endured. To see Him on whom all their hopes for eternity depended, to see Him a breathless corpse--was there ever any trial to be compared to this? Therefore, before the trial came, the Lord by every method sought to strengthen the faith of his poor weak disciples.

He foresees our trials, and often, before he inflicts a severe stroke, he prepares us for it by various and wonderful methods. Sometimes he prepares us by leading us to the sick bed of a sufferer, and by letting us hear him tell how the Lord sustained him; sometimes by shading one of our props without removing it; and sometimes by bestowing great and astonishing mercies. The whole process cannot be understood now, but it will be made plain to the saints in glory. What delight it will afford above to trace the Lord's dealings with our souls, and to discover the secret causes of the events of his providence!

August 12

Mark 10:32-34. Christ again predicts his sufferings.

As we read the history of our Savior, we are continually struck by the union of courage and of tenderness in his character. He was now on his way to comfort two weeping sisters, by raising their beloved brother from the grave. He was also on his way to the place of his own execution. Bethany was a village very near to Jerusalem. What different scenes were soon to be witnessed at those two places! In Bethany the Lord would restore another's life; in Jerusalem lay down his own! But though he knew the painful trials that awaited him, He went willingly to the appointed spot, while his fearful disciples followed him reluctantly. Had we seen them on their journey, we might have supposed that one of them was going to receive honors, and the rest to endure sufferings. Whereas it was He who went boldly before, who was to be the victim, while those who followed trembling were to escape.

The Lord Jesus took his disciples alone by themselves, to unfold to them the history of his approaching sufferings. He took them apart, because he did not choose to declare before his enemies the deeds which they would commit against him; for such declarations would have emboldened them in wickedness. But to his own disciples he revealed even the particulars of the dreadful transactions. On this occasion it is

recorded for the first time that he spoke of his deliverance to the Gentiles, and of the insulting spitting of his enemies. These degrading circumstances were now unfolded to his disciples, who revered him as the Son of God. Had they understood the meaning of their Master's words, their feelings would have been outraged, and harrowed up to the utmost pitch. Yet the words seem so plain that we can scarcely conceive how they could have been misunderstood. But, perhaps, as the Lord often used figurative language, the disciples supposed that his prophecies concerning himself were figurative; perhaps, though they often understood him literally when he was speaking figuratively--they thought he was speaking figuratively when he was speaking literally. This is still the great difficulty in the interpretation of prophecy--to distinguish the figurative from the literal; and perhaps future ages will show that the church in these days has fallen into some of the same errors as the apostles.

Great was the loss they sustained in consequence of their slowness of understanding. Had they been prepared to see their Lord bleeding on the cross, they would not have forsaken him in the hour of distress; and had they kept in mind the promise of his rising again, they would have been spared the bitterest tears they ever shed. That day of bitter tears during which the Prince of Life lay in his tomb, would have been to them a day of bright hopes, had they remembered his words. With what joy would they have hastened to the grave on the dawn of the third day, if they had expected to hear that he was risen!

In looking back on our past lives, can we not remember many seasons which would not have been so sad had we remembered the Savior's gracious promises?--seasons of doubt and perplexity--seasons of suspense and anxiety--seasons of disappointment--seasons of bereavement-- seasons of darkness and of the shadow of death? When those seasons have been past we have felt, "O had I from the beginning of the trial, and throughout its course, remembered my Lord's words, 'Fear not, I am with you,' and many similar words, what bitter pangs should I have been spared!" In all our troubles here below there is one promise that ought, above all, to cheer us. It is his promise, "I will come again, and receive you to myself." The words are plain. "He will come again!" he will actually come in a glorious body, and our eyes shall behold him. Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly.

August 13

Matthew 20:20-28. The request of the mother and sons of Zebedee.

Was it a right request that the sons of Zebedee made when they asked to sit at the right and left hand of their Lord in his glory? Was it right in their mother to plead that this honor might be conferred on her children? A desire to be first is natural to the human heart in its fallen state; but this desire is the cause of the greater part of the anxiety and discontentment that prevail among men. All cannot be first; therefore if all desire to be first, all but one must be disappointed. And will that one be happy? None are so miserable as the proud. Nebuchadnezzar, the first monarch of his day, was a miserable man. What an account we read in the prophet Daniel of his fears, and tremors, and rage! On one occasion his spirit was troubled by his dreams, and on another through his fury the form of his visage was changed. No creature can be happy from his own greatness--but only from knowing the greatness of God. The angels are happy, because they delight in seeing God upon his throne. Adam and Eve were happy in the garden of Eden until they desired to be as gods; then, ceasing to delight in the glory of their Creator, they became miserable. When the Holy Spirit enters the heart of man, he begins his work by casting down "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." (1 Cor. 10:5.)

Yet true believers are troubled, as long as they remain on earth, with sinful feelings; though, as they grow in grace, they grow in humility. The apostles, at their last supper with their Lord, disputed who should be greatest. Let us be on our guard against the secret workings of ambition. We have perhaps ceased to desire the great things of this world. We have perhaps no desire to shine in worldly circles, or to be commended by irreligious people. But do we cherish a wish to be thought much of by religious people? to be commended above our fellow-Christians? to be more noticed, more admired, more honored? Whereas we ought to esteem others better than ourselves. Our Savior has set the most wonderful example of humility by coming into this world to minister to us, and even to give his own precious life as a ransom for our sinful souls. Yet with what gentleness he answered the two brethren! He knew they had forsaken all to follow him; he knew that they would prefer shame and suffering with him, to any honor or joy apart from him; therefore he treated them with tenderness, though he did not promise to grant their request.

The words in ver. 23, "It shall be given to them," are written in italics to show that they were inserted by the translators in order to make the sense clear--yet, perhaps, if they were omitted the sense would be more clear--for Jesus did not say that it was not in his power to give the most honorable seats to whom he would. We know that whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. (John 5:19.) This is what he said--"To sit on my right and on my left hand is not mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of my Father." The Son will bestow honor according to the decrees of the Father.

Though the Savior concealed from the apostles what they desired to know, he told them some things that must have been strange and unwelcome. He revealed to them that they must partake of his own bitter sufferings. This is the first time in which it is recorded that he spoke so openly of the sufferings of his apostles. The terms in which he spoke of their future trials were suited to sweeten them to their affectionate hearts. It was out of his own cup the two brethren were to drink, and in his own baptism they were to be baptized. It is this thought that has sustained many believers under persecution, and has strengthened them even to endure the burning flame, or the bloody cross. But not martyrs only--all true Christians suffer with their Lord. There is no sorrow that we can ever experience that our Lord has not tasted first; and he has tasted it, not only that he might take away our guilt, but also that he might sympathize in our grief. He knew all that James and John would be called to endure; and he knows also what each of us will be appointed to bear. He could have told James that the sword of Herod would cut short his days before those of any of the other apostles, and he could have told John that the cruel decree of Domitian would banish him in his old age to the Isle of Patmos, to dwell among convicted criminals. And he could tell each of us what losses we shall sustain, what pangs we shall suffer, what death we shall die. But he forbears to tell us more than that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God. Who shall occupy the places at his right hand and at his left he has revealed to none; but though their names are secret, their characters are manifest--they will be humble. Whether they will be missionaries, or martyrs, or whether they will be beggars or slaves, we know not; but this we know, they will be self-denying and self-abased followers of their lowly Lord.

August 14

Mark 10:46 to end. Blind Bartimaeus.

In the history of earthly princes we do not often hear of the poor and afflicted, but of brave generals and wise senators. In the history of the Prince of peace we meet continually with anecdotes of beggars and outcasts. Those whom men overlooked and spurned were the objects of his most tender regard. The blind, as among the most helpless, received signal tokens of his favor. On one occasion we read of a blind

man who was brought to him by his friend. (See Mark 9.) Bartimaeus appears to have had no friends to assist him; if he had a friend, it was that blind man who sat with him begging, and was as helpless as himself. Far from being encouraged to come to Jesus, he was rebuked by the multitude, and told to hold his peace. Many people anxious about their salvation have been placed in the same circumstances. No friend has offered to lead them to the Savior, while many have rebuked them for their concern about their souls.

On another occasion the Lord passed by a blind man, and restored his sight without waiting to be asked, for that blind man knew neither the Savior's name, nor his power, until they were revealed to him by the Lord himself. (See John 9.) Bartimaeus, far from being noticed by the Lord, could obtain for a long while no answer to his earnest entreaties. His case was more trying than that of the woman of Canaan; for stern answers were less discouraging than no answers at all. Besides, she could follow Jesus with her cries, while Bartimaeus from his blindness was unable to find his way to his Lord. Jesus was passing by--would soon be past--might never pass that way again, (as indeed he never did;) it was a short opportunity; it seemed likely it would be the only one. All things were against the poor blind beggar; but instead of being disheartened, he "cried the more a great deal." There are some who leave off praying without having suffered as much discouragement as poor Bartimaeus. If their cold and careless prayers do not receive an immediate answer, they are ready to give up the case as lost, and to try no more. But those who persevere in fervent prayer shall be blessed with blind Bartimaeus.

At length Jesus stood still. Thus he honored the beggar in the presence of the surrounding crowds. He commanded him to be called. Those who had before rebuked him, must now have felt ashamed. The blind man was evidently agitated and distressed, for those who called him said, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calls you." What a joyful moment was this! With what haste the poor man obeyed the summons! He cast away his outer garment, that it might not slow his movements, and approached his compassionate friend. Though the Lord well knew his desire, he induced him to express it in his own words--for he loves to hear the petitions of his people. Not only did he bestow sight on Bartimaeus, but he pronounced these words of commendation--"Your faith has made you whole." This assurance must have been dearer to the poor beggar than even his bodily sight, for it implied a promise of eternal blessedness. Though the Savior said, "Go your way," yet the grateful man followed his deliverer.

Thus as the Lord journeyed towards Jerusalem, he gathered in his train fresh monuments of his power. The march of earthly conquerors is tracked with blood; smoking villages and mangled corpses mark the way which they have trodden, while weeping captives are chained to their triumphal chariots. But the Savior left joy behind him wherever He went, and collected new trophies of his mercy. Thus will He come at the last day. He will bring his saints with him; he will be attended by those whom he has rescued from the darkness and blindness of sin and death, from the grave and its corruption, from hell and its horrors. Shall we belong to that triumphant band? Has Jesus opened the eyes of our minds? Do we now follow him in the way?

August 15

Luke 19:1-10. Zaccheus.

In this history we find an instance of a spiritual cure wrought by the Lord. Opening the eyes of Bartimaeus was not so great a work as opening the heart of Zaccheus. Though the Lord was continually healing the lame and the blind, yet it was not to heal them he came into the world. For what did he come? Hear his

own declaration--"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." But men in general (not being aware of their lost condition) did not apply to him for salvation, as they did for the healing of their bodily infirmities. Zaccheus did not cry for mercy as Bartimaeus did. His desire was to see this wonderful prophet, of whom he had heard so much. For this purpose, being little of stature, he climbed into a tree. It is probable he would have been satisfied had he obtained a good view of the Savior, as he passed beneath. How much astonished he must have felt when the Lord, upon coming to the place, looked up and said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at your house!" He must have been ready to exclaim, as Nathanael once did, "How do you know me?" It was evident the Lord knew not only his name, but his circumstances. He knew that he had a house in which he could receive guests. He knew more than this; he knew his heart--he was sure that Zaccheus was willing to entertain him beneath his roof--He must have known it, for He Himself had made him willing. On no other occasion is it recorded that he entered without invitation the house of a stranger.

It was indeed a singular honor that was conferred upon Zaccheus. It was his privilege to show hospitality to his Lord at the very beginning of his acquaintance with him; and he seems to have been conscious of the greatness of the privilege, for he came down the tree with haste, and received him joyfully. Whence arose his joy? Though curiosity may have been his only motive for ascending the tree, yet some higher principle seems to have actuated him before he descended. Like Nathaniel and the woman of Samaria, he may have felt that none but the true Messiah could have such knowledge of him and of his circumstances. No wonder he rejoiced in the prospect of an opportunity of conversation with Him who knew all things.

Very interesting communion must have taken place beneath the roof of Zaccheus; but very little is recorded. In a short space of time, the master of the house had learned so much of the will of his Lord, as to stand up and make public declarations and confessions. He declared he would give half of his goods to the poor--he confessed that he had by false accusations (or by overcharging when he gathered the public taxes) defrauded some people--he promised to restore to them four times what he had taken. It is a good sign when those who are impressed with religious truth begin by making restitution, asking pardon of those whom they have offended, and adopting an entirely new course of life.

The gracious Savior was not slow to honor the good resolutions of Zaccheus. He gave him the title of a son of Abraham; thus showing that it was his faith that had produced his holy determination. Had the honorable young ruler possessed the faith of Zaccheus, he would not have refused to part with all his possessions at the command of Christ. But, notwithstanding his attractive qualities, he was destitute of that precious grace. Zaccheus possessed it, and would have held back nothing from his Lord that he had been called to give up. No doubt he would have gladly followed him in the way; but it seems he had duties to discharge at home. It was his part to endeavor to bring every member of his household to the knowledge of his Savior. Could he forget the encouraging assurance, "This day has salvation come to this house!" Those who belonged to his family might henceforth count themselves blessed. The visit of their divine guest was to them the earnest of eternal bliss.

There is a period in the history of some families when true religion first finds admittance. Various are the means by which it gains entrance--sometimes it is through a godly friend, and sometimes through a godly servant--in some cases the family are led to hear a faithful minister, in others--to read a holy book--but whatever are the means employed, that period is memorable indeed when the first member of a family turns to the Lord with all his heart. That member will not rest satisfied with serving God alone; he will offer prayers, and use persuasions, until his children or his parents, his brethren and his sisters, unite in the same blessed service.

August 16

Luke 19:11-19. The first part of the parable of the ten pounds.

This parable was related to correct a mistake into which many of the Lord's disciples had fallen. They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. They were not wrong in supposing that the kingdom of God would one day be established upon the earth; for it will be set up with power and great glory; but they were wrong in supposing that the time had already come. There will be great voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." But before those acclamations will be heard, many events must take place. The Lord had already prepared James and John for enduring sufferings, before they could be exalted to honor; and now he prepared all his disciples for performing services before they could partake of rewards. Zaccheus had just shown his willingness to serve the Lord, by making promises of restitution to the injured, and of liberality to the poor. His spirit ought to be the spirit of all the followers of Christ. Though we can only be saved by free grace, yet we must show our gratitude for this free salvation by our works.

The Lord Jesus compared himself in this parable to a nobleman who went into a far country, to receive a kingdom from his monarch, and who returned to that kingdom to take possession of it. It was in this manner that Judea and Galilee were bestowed by the Emperor of Rome upon those noblemen who ruled over them. The rulers were invested with their power at Rome, and when invested they returned to the countries they were appointed to govern.

Before the nobleman in the parable departed, he entrusted each of his ten servants with a pound. Thus, before the Lord ascended to his Father, he charged all his disciples to serve him faithfully until the day of his return. It was not the apostles alone who received this charge. All who believe in Christ are bound to devote themselves to his service.

The pound represents those various ways of doing good which God has placed within our reach. Though in this parable each servant had the same sum committed to his keeping, yet another parable shows us that all Christians do not enjoy equal opportunities of usefulness--but all enjoy some, and all are required to improve those they possess.

In the days of the apostles believers were endowed with miraculous powers, which they were bound to use in the service of their Lord--as Paul declares, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1 Cor. 12:7.) In these days, though miraculous powers are no longer possessed, there are many ways in which good may be done.

By gifts, by instruction, by example, and by prayer, Christians may promote the glory of God.

Those who possess property can bestow bread on the hungry, and scatter food for the soul by distributing Bibles and tracts, and by promoting the preaching of the gospel all over the world.

But some who are not able to give much are able to instruct. A word dropped in season, even by a child, has sometimes saved a soul.

Example is still more powerful than instruction. Those who would be offended by advice, are often convinced by a holy life, a meek demeanor, and a forgiving spirit. Therefore the apostle Peter charges those women who have unbelieving husbands, to endeavor to win them by their Christian behavior. (1

Peter 3:1.)

There is another mode of doing good, which, though the most secret of all, is the most effectual--it is prayer. The good that prayer has done will never be known until the last day. Then it will be seen that those who could be useful in scarcely any other way, brought down blessings by their prayers. It is recorded of a poor man, who was for a long season confined to his bed by sickness, that he made it his daily employment to pray that light might enter the various dark villages in his neighborhood. Every one of those villages for which he thus separately prayed, enjoyed, in the course of a few years, the light of the Gospel. It will often be found that conversions are answers to the prayers of some pious relation. Delightful discoveries will hereafter be made concerning our obligations to those who prayed for us.

It may well astonish us to think the Lord will reward the imperfect services of his sinful creatures. Even our prayers are mixed with sin. Every good action has some alloy of evil in the motive, some defect in the performance, and is too often followed by self-complacency in the recollection. The same precious blood which blotted out our sinful deeds, is needed to cleanse our righteous deeds from all their pollutions. Never will the faithful servants of Christ feel more abased in their own eyes than when they hear their Master say, "Well done." Even the angels, who have done the will of God without fault since the creation, count it a privilege to be permitted to serve him. What, then, will those who have served him so imperfectly, feel when they are exalted to posts of honor, and entrusted with authority and power!

August 17

Luke 19:20-28. The last part of the parable of the ten pounds.

This parable contains a most solemn warning to the professed servants of Christ. Not to live to God's glory is a fatal sin. To make no efforts to please our heavenly Master is a sign that we do not love him. Did that servant love him who hid the pound in a napkin? His language, as well as his conduct, proves that he did not. What a character he ascribes to his Lord! He calls him an austere man, one who is rigorous, exacting, and severe. Who could love such a Master! Those who think in this manner of God do not try to please him. They give up the attempt in despair. They say to themselves, "If I were to give away large sums, perhaps I should only waste my money and do no good. If I were to labor from morning to night in teaching and exhorting, perhaps I should only waste my breath; no one might attend to my instructions. If I were to pray without ceasing for the conversion of my fellow-creatures, perhaps God would not grant my prayers."

It is very wicked to entertain such thoughts, for God has given gracious promises of success to those who labor in his service. He has said, "Cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it after many days." (Eccles. 11:1.) He has said again, "He who goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. 126:6.) He has said again, "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matthew 21:22.)

If, notwithstanding all these promises, we persist in thinking that God might leave us to labor in vain, we make him a liar. Sometimes God does not grant speedy success, but he remembers what each does for his name's sake, and he will acknowledge every effort at the last day. In general he blesses the labors of his servants beyond their highest expectations. Ask aged believers who devoted themselves early to his service, whether they expected, at the beginning of their course, to reap so rich a blessing as they have reaped. The words of the dying Count Zinzendorf are memorable. He said, "I expected to bring but a few heathen to the knowledge of the Lord, and, lo! thousands have believed." Mr. Charles, of Bala, little thought, when he was seeking a method by which to supply Wales with Bibles, that his desire would lead

to the formation of a Society which should fill the world with Bibles. The last day will fully show what abundant showers of blessings have attended the labors of the faithful. Some who have scattered innumerable tracts, and who have not known what became of them, will then learn the histories of those silent messengers, to their own unspeakable joy.

But what will be the overwhelming sorrow of those who have done nothing for their Lord! The pound they possessed will be taken away from them. No further opportunities of glorifying God will be granted to them. In hell there is no possibility of serving Him. But in heaven there will be opportunities of glorifying Him through the ages of eternity. The saints will not find their rest less refreshing, because it will be spent in the worship of God, and in labors of love.

The last words of the parable contain an allusion to those enemies whom the Lord was going to encounter at Jerusalem--those enemies who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." How wonderful was the courage with which the Shepherd led his little flock towards the scene of his own painful death! He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. How insignificant are all the services which we can perform to please him, when compared with the sufferings he endured to save us!

August 18

John 11:17-27. Christ converses with Martha at Bethany.

How mingled were the feelings with which Martha went to meet her heavenly Friend! Joy she must have felt because he had come at last--grief because

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