

The Rev. J. F. Loucheux D. D.
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"OCCUPY TILL I COME."

John M. Gopher
Number

A

SERMON

BY THE

Rev. A. W. RUDISILL.

*Preached at the United Communion celebrated at Madras,
on the 3rd January 1886.*

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WHEN the closing hours of our Saviour's sojourn upon earth drew nigh, he led his disciples out as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them and it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up to heaven. Some one has said that the ascension of Elijah was as the flight of a bird which none can follow, the ascension of Christ as a bridge from earth to heaven for all who will to ascend. While this is true, and beautiful as it is true, there is a *fact*, a *promise* of a good thing to come which the believer should always associate with the ascension of our Lord. As he went up the disciples looked steadfastly toward heaven until a cloud received him out of their sight; still they gazed, doubtless transfixed with wonder, at the sublime spectacle they had witnessed, when two angels with unseen approach stood by them and said, "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." Here there is no ambiguity to keep us in the dark as to the actual personal second advent of our Saviour. "It is the *same* personal, visible Jesus which ascended that shall *come*. The coming shall be *in like manner* with the going. A figurative or spiritual coming would clearly not be a coming of the *same Jesus*, and still more clearly not a coming *in like manner*." So strongly is the promise of the second coming of our Lord rooted in the heart of the believer that

Christians in all ages have lived in expectation of this glorious event. "It may be at morn, when the day is awaking, when sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking. It may be at the blackness of midnight, but Jesus *will come* to receive his own."

We find two reasons given by Luke, why Jesus spake the parable from which our text is taken: "He added and spake a parable because he was nigh to Jerusalem and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear," so then to all who are looking for their coming Lord this teaching has a deep significance.

The Roman Empire made and unmade kings. The city of Rome was the centre of its power so that noble aspirants for regal authority journeyed thither from far off lands to obtain a throne and a sceptre. This parable is perhaps not so much the detail of a particular case as a picture of what frequently took place during the times of the Empire, still, it is so readily suggested by the case of Archelaus that many suppose him to be the nobleman. Both Herod and his son Archelaus received the kingdom of Judæa by going to a far country; that is to the Emperor at Rome. When Archelaus went to Rome to obtain the sceptre of Judæa the Jews sent a message to Cæsar saying "We will not have this man to reign over us." Besides, Jesus had just entered and passed through Jericho, where these facts were well known. Archelaus went to Rome to receive a kingdom that soon passed away. The divinely born Son of God has gone to the highest heavens to be invested by God his Father with the kingdom that shall never pass away. We are here waiting for his return. With what interest then ought we to read the messages of our ascended Lord! One of them is: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you

that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." Another message is "Occupy till I come."

Instead of putting weapons into the hands of his servants to protect his interests by force of arms, the nobleman gives to them pounds and says "Occupy till I come," and we can readily discover what he meant by this charge if we read the 15th verse: "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." By its old English use the word "occupy" signifies to traffic. The revised version very properly renders it "Trade ye herewith till I come," therefore the object of the nobleman in entrusting his servants with his pounds was that they should gain for him more. We have just been singing words that I think must have touched every heart :

The Church has waited long
Her absent Lord to see ;
And still in loneliness she waits,
A friendless stranger she.
Age after age has gone,
Sun after sun has set,
And still in weeds of widowhood,
She weeps a mourner yet.

The whole creation groans,
And waits to hear that voice
That shall restore her comeliness,
And make her wastes rejoice.
Come, Lord, and wipe away
The curse, the sin, the stain ;
And make this blighted world of ours
Thine own fair world again.

There may seem at first sight too much anxiety expressed in these words, but it is a Scriptural experience. Paul said, "ourselves also which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." B

the apostle did something *more than wait*. He looked forward with joy because his pound had gained. "For what" he says "is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Again, "as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." We too can meet the Lord with joy when we have something to show. To wait in idleness is to wait in sin. "Thy pound hath gained," will be our joy.

There are three ways by which men procure gain. The first, is by waging war; the second, is by trading; the third, by production, or the directing of the forces of nature to the service of man. The Romans preferred war and despised traffic. The light in which trade was regarded by them may be gathered from Cicero who says: "The gain of merchants, as well as all who live by labor and not skill is mean and illiberal, their very merchandise is a badge of their slavery. All artisans are engaged in a degrading slavery." War was the national policy of the Greeks and Romans, even the great Roman roads were built with a view to their military advantages, and not to trade and industry. Augustus pronounced the penalty of death against the senator Ovininus for having degraded himself by conducting a manufactory. Quite the contrary is the manner in which the kingdom of Christ is to spread over the earth. Many have longed to extend this Kingdom with carnal weapons, and to gain for Christ by the sword instead of by the inoffensive improvement of their talents by gospel means. Jesus says "he that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." Christ is the Prince of Peace, and if His spirit can be cultivated so that men shall love men everywhere, will not war cease, will not all strife be done away? Neander says: Nothing can be more hurtful to the cause of truth than attempting to support and further it by some other power than its own. This just sentiment deserves to be written in letters of gold. Experience has shown that nothing can be more hurtful to the cause of Christ than

attempting to gain for it in any other way than the one he has marked out. It still holds good. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help ; and stay on horses and trust in chariots because they are many ; and in horsemen, because they are very strong : but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord !"

The first way in which we can gain is by diligently disposing of the gospel wares, God has so freely given us. The Saviour is represented as having bought us with a price. The kingdom of God is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls. We are told to buy the truth and sell it not. "Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat, yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Again "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich." When the Christian has bought without money and without price, he is to increase that which he has bought. God gives to us freely but gives only that we may improve and add to that which we receive. He says "Trade ye herewith till I come." In this the children of this world are wiser after their generation than the children of light. How busy they are ! Give one of the wise ones of this world a penny, he asks for no more, he does not sit down and despair because it is not a thousand pounds. He will multiply it and multiply it again and again until he gains millions. Such a man was John Jacob Astor. Born near Heidelberg, the youngest son of a peasant, he left home with only a little money, but he bought, sold, traded until he counted his millions by the score. Just such active earnest pound multipliers are needed in the Church to-day. With a holy greed for holy gains we need to go into the world. Instead of folding our hands and idly referring the solution of every difficulty to the coming of Christ, we are to obey him if we love him, and busily keep gaining for him until he comes, yea if we knew he were coming to-day the intervening hours should be spent in holy gaining. "Occupy *till* I come."

How touching is that scene where Paul calls the Elders of Ephesus and with tender words bids them farewell. From the depths of his mighty soul he speaks: "take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock." Why these words of caution? Hear him, "for I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." And Paul's words came true, the wolves came with hellish malice, to scatter, tear and slay. Hymenæus and Alexander made shipwreck of the faith. Phygellus and Hermogenes bitterly opposed Timothy and turned many away. The words of Philetus began to eat as a canker. Diotrophes strove for pre-eminence and rejected the holy John. Cerinthus rose against him in bitter enmity. The Nicolaitans falsely called themselves Christians, but were tried and found liars. *All these things occurred in the Church of Ephesus.* What did these Ephesians do? Did they quake and quail? Did they seek to hide themselves from the heretical tempest that threatened to tear up the foundations of the Christian religion? Did they wait in idleness for the coming of their Lord? No. With fiery zeal they worked and labored. They brought false apostles before the tribunal of truth and branded them liars. And yet these very Ephesians so full of zeal for the truth were looking for their coming Lord. The looking for his coming did not abate their zeal. We must emulate them. We stand to-day in the grip of a great combat. The heresies of Ephesus, like so many serpents let loose, are seeking to poison the true, to mar the beautiful, to corrupt the pure, and to ensnare the good. Unceasing vigilance is the price of our purity of life and of doctrine. It is true we have wealth of truth, wealth of power, wealth of grace, all at our disposal. But what avails all this wealth, if we fold our hands, or remain in utter ignorance as to its use. This is a fact which thoughtful people will like to ponder. In the world of trade and production, wealth is said to consist in man's power to command the always

gratuitous services of nature, and production to consist in directing the forces of nature to his service. Therefore men must first know something of the laws by which the forces of nature act and something of their manner of working, before they can produce valuable articles to sell, otherwise they will be limited to a simple exchange of raw material. Trade and commerce increase in importance only as men become skilled in production. The more perfect the development of the latent powers of the earth, and the greater the development of man's peculiar faculties, the greater his power of production. The surest and best way for us to command a ready sale for the milk and honey and wine of the gospel is to show what pleasing effects they produce upon us. When we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in richness and maturity it will beget in others a longing to be like minded. When we like Paul can appeal to our lives, and say to those around us, as he did to the elders of the Church of Ephesus: "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind" the world will be more ready to hear us, and we shall create a demand for the power which can enable a poor sinner to speak with such confidence. Since we are not to propagate the gospel by the sword we must let its light shine through us so that it shall appear attractive and draw others to buy. The Christian graces need to be nourished by us, so that we may be, as Paul urged Timothy to be, "a pattern of good works."

"Heaven does with us, as we with torches do:
 Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
 Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
 As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touched
 But for fine issues; nor nature never lends
 The smallest scruple of her excellence,
 But like a thrifty goddess she determines
 Herself the glory of a creditor,
 Both thanks and use."

We are encouraged to develop the highest type of Christian manhood, and to direct with increasing energy the

spiritual forces God places at our disposal, because the grace of God can reach, in its rich fulness, to depths unreached by arts of man, unpenetrated by false religions; it can touch our being in a sense the gross world knows not of. It is universally admitted that the spirit of a man stamps its peculiar characteristics on the body which contains it. The operation of the mind upon the body is an instructive and useful study. When the mental temperament is unusually large, there are no indications of slothfulness or of sensuality, it gives keenness to the eye, fine moulding to the brow; looking at such a face one feels as though an angelic sculptor had cut and chiselled the features. So to every one of his true members, Christ gives the impress of His spirit of gentleness and love. Through every one He calls sinners to repentance; through every one He manifests His love for humanity. He visits the poor, the sick, the dying, the prisoner. The world can know Christ only as they see Him weeping, smiling, shining through His followers.

Matthew Boulton the partner of Watt said to Boswell "I sell here Sir, what all the world desires to have. Power!" What made it possible for Boulton to sell power? Had Watt created power? No, but he was the inventor of the steam engine. That is to say, all that was admirable in its structure, all that was vast in its utility, all that enabled it to set weight at defiance, to dart shrieking over mountains dragging with incredible speed trains of fabulous length, to impel loaded ships against the fury of the winds and waves, all was owing to the genius of Watt. It was he who grappled the struggling monster, Steam, directed with intelligence his frantic efforts to escape, and lo, forever after, steam was destined to be the slave of man! As in the physical world we have steam, and powder, and dynamite, and electricity, but they avail nothing without wisdom to utilize them, so in the spiritual world we live in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. His power is at our disposal; without Him we fail, but free as the air we breathe He is just as ready to fill

us. We must honor the Holy Ghost. We can receive Him, not by frantic struggles, but by faith. He comes to us as easily as the inherited power of Alexander and Solomon. But we must have wisdom to use this power rightly. Therefore it was that Alexander said in the zenith of his power, "I am more obliged to Aristotle who instructed me, than to Philip who gave me life and empire." In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: "And God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, I am but a little child, I know not how to go out or how to come in. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart. And the speech pleased the Lord." It is often the case that men long for spiritual power, when the truth is they do not use, or direct, the forces already at their disposal, they hide the one pound in the napkin. Like Solomon they need to pray for wisdom to improve what they have at their disposal. How strange if men instead of diligently utilizing what they have should be constantly longing for more power in the world of nature. Give to one of the wise children of the world a cart load of iron ore. He does not despise it and say "Give me gold." He takes the ore, frees it from impurity, hardens it into steel, forms it into strips, tempers them, works them up until he increases the trifling value of the ore into a quarter of a million dollars worth of watch springs. Wonderful production of value! *The ore is worth more than its weight in gold!*

While this is true we ought not to forget that in the world of trade and production the greatest returns are invariably the result of many years of toil; one of the great merchants of modern times began a gigantic scheme in the prosecution of which he expected only outlay during the first ten years, and unprofitable returns during the second ten, but after that, a net annual result of one million dollars. It required much patient toil and many an apparent defeat before men could transform iron ore into watch springs, such as are now produced; and we need to remember that this applies as

well in spiritual things. Hence we need to pray for the "instinct that can tell that God is on the field when He is most invisible," or we shall become disheartened and grow faint when we do not see immediate results. In this holy gaining the returns are sometimes slow, and at times hid from our eyes; one sows, another gathers the results.

In the Eastern waters bounding Manhattan Island, New York, early navigators found so many rocks and shelves that they called the place "Hell Gate." For many years past a great number of vessels have been wrecked at this place, official reports say at the rate of the value of one schooner a week; this does not seem an extravagant estimate when we bear in mind that the value of vessels and their cargoes passing "Hell Gate" each day is estimated to be between four and five million dollars. In 1848 a careful survey of the rocks was made, and both the merchants and the Government resolved that they must be removed, so as to make navigation safe for large as well as small vessels. On September 24th, 1876, a little girl three years old, standing near by "Hell Gate" touched a small key; immediately numerous distinct spouts of water rose up in the air to the height of forty or fifty feet, followed by fragments of rock mingled with mud which were projected fifteen or twenty feet higher, then, a thick cloud of black smoke! In some directions the shock was felt a hundred miles! No wonder! the little girl's touch had sent into the air, and shivered into fragments, a rock of nearly three acres in area with an average depth of nineteen feet! About nine years afterward this same little girl stood by "Hell Gate;" again she touched a key; three big blocks of water rose up in the air, the centre one, a third of an acre at its base, rose one hundred feet. On either side of it two greater ones attained an altitude of two hundred feet! Then they fell slowly, and from the roaring seething waters shot innumerable rocks weighing tons a piece: and after the rocks, a pillar of dark cloud. The adjoining great cities with their millions of inhabitants trembled, and well they might, for the touch of the little

girl, in the sixtieth part of a second, had shivered into fragments, and blown into mid air, a rock which had an area of eight acres, and a greatest depth of sixty feet! If a savage had seen this little girl twice touch the key, and twice trouble the waters and wake the slumbering rocks, he would doubtless have regarded her as the centre of all this power. It is easy to see however that three factors are to be considered in this terrible upheaval. The explosive material, the adjustment of it, and the little girl. Let us look at a few facts in connection with the adjustment of the dynamite. The great rock was torn from its bed and shivered into fragments in the sixtieth part of a second, but the knowledge and wisdom required to bring all the mechanical contrivances to the point of readiness when the little girl by touching the key could produce the wonderful effect, was the result of the energies of the highest intellects exerted through past centuries. The 23 headings, the 46 galleries, the 15,000 chambers, the 50,000 copper cartridges containing 300,000 pounds of dynamite and rackarock powder, the drills worked by compressed air, the 500,000 feet of wire, were the products of many agents, ranging from the instinct of the mules in the underground galleries to the mind of Sir Isaac Newton. The sciences of mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, photography, mechanics, hydrography, hydraulics, and even medicine laid their choicest treasure at the feet of General Newton. Nearly all the great discoveries and inventions of the past hundred generations of men were directly or indirectly brought into requisition. That key was a focal point in which the results of the life work of the mightiest minds converged; and when the fulness of time was come it was touched. Rays from the minds of Aristotle, Galileo, Bacon, Napier, Newton, Copernicus, Franklin, Watt, Henry, Draper, Gen. Newton. I must stop; if some long list of all the minds whose thought rays converged there, could be read to you, days and nights would pass before their names could be pronounced. One sixtieth part of a second, one little key pressed by the tiny

finger of a tiny girl, but O ! what a focal point of mental toil ! what a concentration of genins ! Strictly speaking no new element was created ; the upheaval was rather effected by the nice and minute adjustment of those things which before existed ; it was the zenith of the grand but gradual conquest of thought over matter. If any one should ask, "What is the need of the Church to-day ?" It is not unlikely that the almost universal reply would be—"The endowment of power." It is commonly assumed that God has no greater gift for his people, than that of power, the power of the Holy Ghost which converts and sanctifies men. We have in recent times seen multitudes seeking to be endowed with power from on high. Few would object to leading thousands of souls to Christ, therefore with an earnestness and persistency that is some times painful to witness, men cry for power. Unless we touch the key and the upheaval follows in the sixtieth part of a second we are prone to become disheartened. In our impatience we cry "O God give me power." And the evidence to us that we have received the power is nothing short of the upheaval. Perhaps God wants us to be down in the dark where the world cannot see us, and *when we pray for power* he gives us a few dynamite cartridges to put in their places. "I want to see mine explode" says one ; but all cannot touch the key. True a nation *shall be* born in a day, but in the mean time much patient toil is needed. In New York Harbour some rocks on the surface were blown up immediately. The men did not need to wait long. But Hallet's Point and Flood Rock required time, because the work was great. Those who see immediate great results are not always the ones who are doing the most effective work for God. Some do not see many explosions, but down in the strong holds of Hindnism, Mohammedanism and superstition they are handling power, they are preparing for mighty upheavals. Some in the quiet of their homes, in prayer and faith and filled with the Holy Ghost and wisdom, are devising diamond drills for exploring rock, or they are executing

drawings for tunnels or cross cut galleries, in which coming generations shall place the dynamite, the wires, the mechanical contrivances, and, after that, some one of child like faith shall touch the key.

At the conclusion of Daniel's wonderful vision he received intimations of Christ's coming in glory. The veil is lifted and he sees a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. He sees the wise turning many to righteousness; many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased. Many purified themselves and made themselves white, and were refined, but the wicked did wickedly and none of the wicked understood, but the wise understood. It seems to me that this is a faithful portrait of our own times. Around us there is great wickedness, social impurity, and infidelity; men deny the Lord that bought them; evil men and seducers wax worse and worse; in the distance we see unmistakable signs of a coming storm, black clouds, lightning flashes, low thunder, but amid it all there comes to us the message of "the man clothed in linen" standing above the troubled waters crying "but go thou thy way until the end be: for thou shalt rest, and shall stand in thy lot, at the end of the days."

In the midst of this waiting and working it is comforting to know that, although enthroned in Heaven, Jesus is nevertheless with his people. We must not think of him as being absent in the sense of one who is altogether absent. He is still with us in our trials, disappointments and toils. I trust you will bear with me if I bring before you from my own home life a scene that has often, in the hour of temptation and lack of apparent results, taught me patience and filled me with blessedness. Once when I was a boy and had been guilty of misconduct which merited punishment, duty impelled paternal love to pass sentence that I should sit for a time at the foot of the cellar steps. It was to me a severe punishment. Distressed by the darkness, the silence and the solitude, I sat wondering how long I must remain there. Soon I heard footsteps: the door opened, and, with in-

expressible tenderness my mother came down and sat by my side. "You deserve this punishment" she said, "but I have come to sit by you." A few years ago, my mother passed within the veil: she now mingles her song with the blood-washed around the throne, but that stay with me in the darkness I shall never forget. Although the believer is cleansed from sin through the blood of Jesus, nevertheless he dwells in a fallen world. The darkness of sin is all about him; he must endure the contradiction of sinners: oftentimes he will be in heaviness through manifold temptations. But through it all we have the promise of the Saviour, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."
