

The wicked husbandmen

(*Matthew 21:33-44*)

“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

The parable begins: “There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard” — the vineyard is of course where vines grow and bear fruit, and Jesus (like Isaiah before him) is using the vineyard as a symbol of the fact that man is Principle’s idea and there-

fore fruitful. Jesus said of the Christ Mind which he reflected, "I am the true vine."

"And hedged it round about" — this symbolizes that Principle necessarily makes its idea Principled, holding it within its laws, its government, its infinite harmony. With Principle all is Principled and within the realm of Principle. "Mind's possibilities are not lessened by being confined and conformed to the Science of being" (Mis.60: 20-22).

"And digged a winepress in it" — as Principle's idea each individual has the means of inspiration leading to fruitage. The important thing is letting inspired ideas ripen into practical fruitage, so that we can say, "That which . . . our hands have handled . . . declare we unto you." In the story of Joseph in Genesis the butler's dream in Chapter 40 emphasized the pressing of the grapes into Pharaoh's cup — the grapes were not there just to be looked at, any more than spiritual ideas are there to be gazed at and not expected to operate in our experience.

"And built a tower" — an observation point to see that no one encroaches on the vineyard. Principle gives us the means of watching so that there is no invasion of thought by anything not of Principle. A man close to Principle in his particular sphere is quick to detect any deviation from Principle or any attempt to divert himself or others from the path of Principle or introduce an alien influence.

"And let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country" — Principle lets out to us a wonderful opportunity right where we are, because right where we are we can "live so as to keep human consciousness in constant relation with the divine, the spiritual, and the eternal," and if we do this, it will "individualize infinite power," which is Christian Science (see My.160:5-8). The "far country" into which we may think Principle has gone is our ignorant belief that Principle is ever absent. It is the belief that God is "up there" making demands on us, whereas that which requires perfection from us is Principle operating *as us*. "Immortal man was and is God's image or idea, even the infinite expression of infinite Mind, and immortal man is coexistent and coeternal with that Mind" (S&H 336:9-12).

“And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it” — there is never a time when Principle does not demand fruit. Principle knows nothing of excuses, of personal feelings or anything of the kind. It knows no seasons, no moods, no moments when its idea is off duty. There is never a time in mathematics when it is not “the time of the fruit,” and this we accept without difficulty. “When we understand that God is what the Scriptures have declared, — namely, Life, Truth, and Love, — we shall learn to reach heaven through Principle instead of a pardon; and this will make us honest and laborious, knowing that we shall receive only what we have earned. Jesus illustrated this by the parable of the husbandman. If we work to become Christians as honestly and as directly upon a divine Principle, and adhere to the rule of this Principle as directly as we do to the rule of mathematics, we shall be Christian Scientists, and do more than we are now doing, and progress faster than we are now progressing” (Hea.8:19-2).

Where we are, we are equipped to have all the ideas to make that position in our experience perfectly harmonious and responsive to Principle in all the fruitage necessary for that moment. Otherwise we would not be there. That is a fact of Principle. Mortal mind bears opposite testimony and says that we are in need of something not available at this moment, but we and our need are one. The need would not arise if the answer was not in our consciousness. That again is a fact of Science. That is why divine Love “always has met and always will meet every human need” (S&H 494:10-11). It is not a question of a benign Father stooping down to see a need; the individual’s progress has aroused that need by the very answer which the individual as Principle’s fully fruitful idea already *has*, waiting to be used.

“And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inherit-

ance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.”

Mortal mind, or the wicked husbandmen, will endeavour to get us to reject our privilege and ability to bear fruit at every stage of experience, and if we allow it to kill the servants of Principle, such as honesty, obedience, understanding, and love in our daily life, then indeed will this lead to the killing of that ability with which we are all endowed—the ability to help and heal mankind through the Christ-ideas which are ever available to the properly prepared thought.

The child has the ability to bear fruit in the home by the expression of love, decency, and responsiveness, but if permitted to do so, mortal mind will endeavour to cast out that servant of Principle. “Children should obey their parents; insubordination is an evil, blighting the buddings of self-government” (S&H 236:21-22). If through false parenthood a child is allowed to reject the requirements of good in the home, this opens the way to greater antagonism later in life towards the laws of the land and the laws of decency, which he may ridicule and attack.

The adult has the ability to bear fruitage to Principle in the expression of right relationship, right business practices, right family responses and responsibilities, and so on, but there again the wicked husbandmen will endeavour to beat him up on those counts, so that he mocks, rejects, and stifles the legitimate demands for fruitage in these spheres. He “stones” them by employing lines of reasoning which make them appear ridiculous. A man who will not be obedient to the laws of the land and the laws of decency on earth will never become obedient to the demands of Principle, and a man who tries to become obedient to the demands of Principle and yet would tear up the laws of human relationship will find that too to be impossible.

Through this parable Jesus was giving the warning that unless we nip error in the bud, we allow it to grow until we revile the higher demands of goodness with even more stubborn aggression, persecuting our own Christ nature and becoming an actual advocate of error against the claims of Principle. This finally makes it impossible for us

to accept the basic Christ-idea at the back of the lesser demands. It is all one.

Do not let us imagine that this parable applies to the world, but not to ourselves. When the demand comes to be loving or kind or whatever it may be, we may say that it is unnecessary and that we can be Christian Scientists without meeting such demands. But we cannot realize our inherent spiritual nature without the finest morality being manifested and without it being part and parcel of our growing expression of spirituality. It is as impossible to become spiritual by rejecting the moral as it is to become truly moral by neglecting the spiritual. There has to be the coincidence of the human with the divine, and it has to be consistent. Mrs Eddy repeatedly makes this plain in her writings.

The great Master said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Jesus came to lead morality out of mere ritual and habit into the inspiration which makes it natural.

One of the reasons why these parables are magnificent is that Jesus was not teaching a subject so much as what he himself had become, and thereby they have a depth and a living quality which other teaching may lack. It is himself which a man teaches — his own relationship to Principle, his own responses to Principle. Once it becomes mere theory, teaching becomes flat and uninteresting to the listener. But Jesus' words made his hearers' hearts burn within them. What gave his teaching its power was that he was fully involved in what he was saying.

Here we can see that he had lived the truth of this parable. The spiritual idea, or Christ, "entered into the minutiae of the life of the personal Jesus. It made him an honest man, a good carpenter, and a good man, before it could make him the glorified" (Mis.166:29-32). Earlier than that, it made him a good son. If instead of being "subject unto" his parents, he had said to them after they found him in the Temple at the age of twelve, "I'm finished with you if you question

what I'm doing," he would never have been able to say later, "not my will, but Thine, be done" or yielded to the demands of Principle and been controlled by it to the manifestation of good. At every point he was the servant of Principle and acquiesced in the demands of good at every level. In Jesus we see a man moving in complete harmony with all that was Principled, so that when he was asked, for instance, by the centurion to heal his servant, he replied, "I will come and heal him" (Matthew 8:7). The centurion represented Rome and the persecution imposed by Rome on his race, but no human reasoning interfered with Jesus' immediate responses to Love.

If we are in earnest and we look at our own lives, we can see that we feel the demands of Principle for fruitage first of all in our own individual thoughts and behaviour and then in our thoughts and behaviour towards others. In each case the arguments of mortal mind will try to kill or at any rate lessen our response to those demands. In the case of the first demand the argument may often come, for instance, "All this talk about the need to be kind and calm and controlled is outdated in this day and age, and I shall be left behind if I listen to it." If we heed any such argument, we do not render the fruit which Principle demands. Then when a greater call comes to be a servant of Principle by producing the fruit of practical good in helping others, the argument which tries to kill response to that demand is likely to be some form of self-depreciation or else laziness. And so again we may not yield the fruit we should.

Then comes the greatest call of all. It comes continually, but it is the one we find the hardest to admit. This is the direct demand to acknowledge our sonship, that we are Principle's idea, its perfect and wholly spiritual idea. Principle is always sending that to us as its great gift, its beloved son. False theology will do all it can to kill it for us; it masquerades as our own thought and suggests with many subtle lines of reasoning that it is sacrilegious to admit any such thing. But first and last this is the most important demand. Moreover, obedience to it will give us the fruitage which we can bear back to Principle from the vineyard of its everlasting knowing of itself. The inheritance or natural outcome of the Christ Mind depends

absolutely on our expression of that Christ Mind, and therefore if we allow anything to suppress or “kill” our natural ability to express it, we can never possess the inheritance, which is why the argument of the wicked husbandmen as to the way to gain the inheritance contradicts itself, as do all the arguments of mortal mind.

We know instinctively that Principle’s supreme call on us is a right demand and acceptable to intelligence, but mortal mind becomes more rampant by the very presence of that which it knows to be right and tells us to kill it by obstruction or argument against it or by sheer indifference. We can all listen to sweet nicenesses about being good, but most people find a stubbornness coming up when the demands of Principle are Principled without any deviation or trimmings. They complain of being pressurized when asked to identify themselves with Principle in consciousness, spiritual atmosphere, and character-expression. The resistance is never us, but is mortal mind trying to impede our fruitage, and it is for us to cast it out as a liar.

It was when Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30) that he was accused of blasphemy and of having a devil and the Jews took up stones to stone him. And so with each one of us in some degree: we may be able to admit theoretically that we are the son of God, but actually to put on the shoes of the son of God and wear them — to accept the joy and power of being “the royal reflection of the infinite” (S&H 313:16-17), to accept that we are entitled, for instance, to the best of answers immediately to any problem or need which we may feel — is a different matter. Everything tries to say, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him.” But Principle is imperative.

We do not always kill the servants and finally the “son” of Principle by hatred or rejection, but sometimes through our own poor opinion of our ability to respond and to rouse ourselves to meet Principle’s demand. Thus we may hear a voice saying, “I am not good enough” or “This isn’t meant for me.” Such despondency, if allowed, would kill the opportunity to be inspired by accepting Principle’s demands and to say, “Yes, I *can* respond and therefore I

will respond, even though the fruitage and how to attain it may not be clear to me at this moment.”

Jesus recognized in his own disciples that they had followed him faithfully, but had not fully realized the joys and privileges of sonship. And so he said to them, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” He saw that they had not acted as sons. If they had asked, they would have wakened to what they *had* as sons of God. The only source of fruitage is the full recognition of the relationship between Principle and its idea, the acceptance of the joy and power of being Principle’s consciousness of itself.

To claim the fruitage of sonship without having lived as a son means that we have feet of clay and our claim will collapse. But to live as a son and not claim the fruits of sonship is equally bad. Jesus lived as a son in his own self and in the use of his understanding for others, but he did it all with increasing joy in sonship and what that entitled him to. It was this which he saw to be lacking in his disciples and in human consciousness in general.

“When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

If we try to reject Principle’s demands for fruit, the only result will be that Principle will cast out the husbandmen of mortal mind which we have allowed in and will waken in us the inherent husbandry of good which will restore us to our natural status as Principle’s idea. The stone of our own Principle-impelled reasoning will inevitably

establish itself and there will be fruit for us to gather. We shall wake up to the fact that we *are* good and truly moral and *have* the power of Science. Then the stone which mortal mind tried to cause us to reject — the admission of perfection as Principle's idea — will become for us "the head of the corner." In falling on it we had what seemed a bad time, but finally it will have fallen on us to crush out all the false, negative thinking and grind it to powder, to the nothingness of dust. The calculus of good, represented by the stone in the Bible, is forever in man. If any man tries to reject it, he will find he cannot do so. *It* will crush all that tried to turn him against it and will annihilate it. The stone of the true line of reasoning impelled by Principle, even if it has been rejected at every level, does become the headstone of the corner, or that alone on which we build everything in our conscious experience. In other words, though we make our bed in hell, even there shall we be made by Principle into the man of Principle. Mrs Eddy uses the very words of this parable in her statement: "Truth is always the victor. Sickness and sin fall by their own weight. Truth is the rock of ages, the headstone of the corner, 'but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder'" (S&H 380: 4-7) — grind all his resistance, based on false education, into the nothingness on which it is founded.

Saul as a persecutor of the Christians fell on the stone and it broke him as Saul, grinding to powder all the false teachings which had influenced him, and thus he became Paul, the great Christian.

Jesus' utter conviction of the impelling power of Principle and the ultimate impossibility of resisting it made all his teachings stir human thought and cause men to make excuses or else to reject out of hand that which every one of them, like himself, knew to be true. His teachings uncovered a hating Saul and a loving disciple, John, but both of them arrived at the final truth — one through suffering, the other through Science. Simon the Pharisee entertained the representative of Truth as just a pleasant and popular thing to do and therefore temporarily it made no real impact on him. It is better to think that we hate something than to be tepid about it or indifferent to it, but the best way of all is to love in the manner shown us through the

beloved disciple John.

The solution to the process of suffering lies in never letting Principle go into "a far country," never thinking of ourselves as separate from Principle or as having lost or even *able* to lose contact with Principle. "Existence, separate from divinity, Science explains as impossible" (S&H 522:10-11). "God, the divine Principle of harmony, is ever with men, and they are His people. Thus man was no longer regarded as a miserable sinner, but as the blessed child of God" (S&H 573:15-18).

The Christ-idea can only be the realization of ourselves as Principle's expression of itself. The Christ-idea is forever aware of the fact that there is nothing going on but Principle and its expression of itself as ourselves and as others, and only by holding this true sense of ourselves and our true Christhood are we made safe from suggestions (symbolized here by the wicked husbandmen) that we can be or do anything of ourselves other than as the expression of Principle. The wicked husbandmen would husband in us a sense of egotism. The true husbandman of Principle fosters and enlarges the idea of our wonderfulness as Principle's expression of itself. This the wicked husbandmen can never assail.

We have to become aware of the fact that Principle *has* us as its exponents and expression and is going to have us as that from our point of view as well, since it knows nothing else. Any deviations which we like to indulge in are never taking place in actual fact, and have no more effect on the ultimate outcome and purpose of Principle than a small boy playing marbles on his way to school, for to school he has to go. Principle is never put off course, never interfered with.

So after giving this illustration Jesus shows that even if we continually reject Principle at every level, it will all be turned into its native nothingness. But that will be done through grinding it to powder, or the suffering of bitter experience, instead of through Science. The way of Science is the way of Jesus — to obey Principle first in youth, just as he did, which means for us that we respond to Principle even before we fully understand the reason why. We are told of the early days of Jesus that he was "subject unto" his parents,

but later in his life when he understood more of true parenthood, he was able to ask intelligently, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He said this even whilst holding a deep respect and affection for his mother, which caused him to make provision for her future even when he was on the cross and she and his beloved disciple were beneath it (see John 19:26,27). In this way and this way only we respond to Principle in our growing maturity — in our increasing understanding of Principle — and thus we begin to feel and know that we are the son of that Principle which we have learnt to obey, until it becomes our All-in-all, our only Father, the father of all our movements, thoughts, and decisions. We cannot become a son until we are fully obedient to the Father, but when through practice we retain that full responsiveness, then in whatever sphere of life we are engaged, we finally cannot make a mistake, for Principle controls us absolutely. That day has to be for everyone. Delay only causes unhappiness and suffering, because instinctively and inherently and by all our spiritual sense we know that we are the son of Principle, that we are responsive and must be responsive.

Jesus must have been smiling on the shore after his resurrection because he knew the inevitable victory of Principle for its man. Had he not known that, he would have been very disappointed over the performance of his disciples so soon after he had left them, for they, trying to reject the necessities of the higher calling to which he had elevated them through the past three years — namely, to be "fishers of men" — had almost aggressively returned to the routine of ordinary fishing. This attempt to be no longer what they really were resulted in their catching nothing that night (John 21:3). But the disappointment this caused them allowed the ever-waiting friend of man, the Christ, to call them and awaken them to their true purposefulness; the Master's conversation with his errant but very capable student, Peter, revealed this at that wonderful breakfast on the shore of Galilee. We all have the privilege of partaking of that morning

meal so beautifully described in "Science and Health" (34:29 — 35:12).

If we would only realize that Principle is going to have us perfect in our experience and cognizance, even as it already has us perfect in *its* experience and cognizance, we would begin to acquiesce in Principle's demands and would watch earnestly to see and feel Principle's awareness and cognizance of us so that we could respond to it. It would be good if we developed the habit of asking, "What is Principle thinking of me now?" and having found the answer, said, "That is what I will think of myself." "What is Principle asking of me now?" and having found the answer, said, "That is what I will cause myself to do." We must look first to Principle, to God, and eliminate anything from thought which we know could not be in the divine consciousness and then conform to what we know must be in that divine consciousness. Then we have made ourselves the sons of God. In this way we yield Principle-created fruitage to our own cognizance and experience, and in so doing we are returning it, as it were, giving it back to the Principle which gave it to us. And, what is more, no doubts or negative arguments (that is, wicked husbandmen) are then able to kill this sonship or prevent it returning to its Principle with the fruitage of the true vine.

Some may argue that there is every reason to believe that a man can drift along through life without worry, just as a boy can drift through his schooldays at every stage of education. But inevitably there comes the time, either here or hereafter — and as far as he is concerned it is always "here" — when the individual has to face up to the facts of Life and his own immortal stature calling on him to respond to it. So it is as well to refute the argument that there is little or no spiritualization going on and in fact little need of it, for this is never so. In winter a man could look at his garden and be convinced that nothing much was happening, but a gardener knows that everything is happening; the spring will come and the seasons will bear their testimony to the impelling purpose of Principle to which everything has finally to respond.

The teachings of Jesus were not interesting theories which can be

ignored, but gave details of the wonderful opportunity every man has now for heaven here in immediate experience without procrastination. The simple fact is that Principle is going to have us recognize in ourselves the perfection which it recognizes in us, because we are its expression. Because this inevitably *will* take place, it is a wise man who resolves to do his best to bring it into his experience sooner rather than later. As Paul said, "now is the accepted time," so there is every need to get on with it. Any suggestion to the contrary can only be erroneous.

The lesson of the parable is that Principle demands of each one of us that at every level of our experience and expression we render fruitage which is Principled in nature. Sometimes the earnest student is misled in his interpretation of what may be termed the fruitage of Christian Science and believes that it is confined to the healing of so-called physical problems. Certainly this is important and necessary, but thought focused on that alone may overlook the importance of what may be called the "firstfruits" of spirituality, referred to by Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22). These are the firstfruits leading to the greater fruitage of demonstration over sin, disease, and death. They are the qualities which open the floodgates to the inspiration which enables healing to take place. "The highest spiritual Christianity in individual lives is indispensable to the acquiring of greater power in the perfected Science of healing all manner of diseases" (Message 1901, 2:3-5).

The impetuous Peter desired to walk on the water as his Master had done, and Jesus allowed him to do so, but may not the reason for his inability to sustain that demonstration have lain in the fact that whilst *he* was absorbed in his own performance of what he regarded as a miracle, Jesus had looked upon walking on the water as a natural process to reach the students who needed him? It was the fruitage of a true spirituality which gave Jesus the ability to dismiss the suggestion that anything physical could separate him from the students he loved. The ability to walk on the water undoubtedly represented a wonderful demonstration or fruitage of spirituality, but it was the

spirituality possessing his consciousness to the exclusion of all else which caused that demonstration to be made with consummate naturalness. (See Matthew 14:22-33.) And so it is with us: we find that the firstfruits of spirituality lead to that other fruitage which we long to have.

The servants of Principle, the qualities which express Principle, are so important that we should make sure that we do not disregard them and so kill their influence in our lives, thereby leading to the temporary killing of our own inherent right to reflect the son and heir of Principle, the Christ, in our ability to heal. Some of these servants of Principle and what they lead to are revealed in this question asked by Mrs Eddy: "if the unselfish affections be lacking, and common sense and common humanity are disregarded, what mental quality remains, with which to evoke healing from the outstretched arm of righteousness?" (S&H 365:11-14).

We need to be alert that mortal mind (symbolized by the wicked husbandmen) will use many arguments (throw many stones) to destroy these qualities. For instance, we may find ourselves accepting the false reasoning that there is no necessity to submit to the requirements of morality (that is, how we conduct ourselves in questions to do with the flesh) since matter is unreal. Logically, however, immorality in this sense can occur only through a conviction that matter *is* real; therefore before we can understand that matter is unreal it does become necessary to be moral and to understand true morality, which is the dismissal of all the claims of the flesh as having no more substance than a dream from which we desire to awaken ourselves. All along the line, so-called human reason will endeavour to destroy the servants of Principle and if allowed will lead us to a position where our heir, our inherent Christ ability to do good and to heal, will be killed in us either through self-depreciation or through a belief that the expression of this Christ ability is not necessary for us. As the expression of all these qualities is part and parcel of our true being and of the ultimate ability to overcome belief in evil and so help and heal mankind, Principle will demand and finally ensure that we come into line with its requirements.

THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

This is the lesson of the parable, and we are wise to take the lesson and begin to enjoy our ability to present Principle with fruitage which Principle has given us for that purpose. There is no greater joy to be had, as Jesus proved and stated.