

The alert servants and the irresponsible steward

(Luke 12:35-48; Mark 13:34-37)

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto 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. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

“Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be

beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

The main point here is alertness in service to Principle under all circumstances and the joy and satisfaction of being Principle's idea.

The whole passage begins with Jesus saying, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." He was showing the importance of alertness, being ready for action, as he himself always was.

The good tennis player is the one who is alert in returning the ball according to the way it is played to him. The champion is the champion because he is continually alert in his responses and is happy to be so. Too often we are absorbed in our own thinking and so are not alert to what is suddenly thrown at us, and perhaps an hour or a day later we realize that we missed an opportunity to say something. The healthy state of mind is always prepared to accept the challenge of Principle, because scientifically that challenge could not come unless the individual already held the answer. We should expect the same Principle which brought us the challenge to draw from us the responses given by itself.

Jesus had alerted himself to be the responsiveness of Principle to itself, to its demand on itself. As soon as any call came, he quickly accepted it as his own consciousness moving to express itself in the flow of good, and so he responded immediately. "I will come and heal him." The immediacy of his healing was the immediacy of the acceptance of good without the hesitation involved in believing that something has to be overcome in order for the good to flow. The length of our hesitation defines the length of the treatment we give. If we immediately saw and felt and knew good alone, this would define for us what we call instantaneous healing. Whenever error, so called, touched Jesus' consciousness, it did not touch it as error but at once sparked off the living truth about which it was trying to be an error.

When he went to the well in Samaria because he was thirsty, he had not outlined what would happen there. He played the ball as it came to him. After he had asked the Samaritan woman for something

to drink, her question was a teasing one: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). She was implying that it was her attractiveness which had broken down the barrier. Jesus was instantly alert to the mentality of the woman as it appeared to be, but through spiritual sense he immediately interpreted her question, which to the human senses could appear motivated by sensualism, as the sign of a mentality which had always been reaching out for satisfaction and therefore was always in a state of prayer. "Desire is prayer" (S&H 1:11), and that word "desire" applies to many aspects of human longing and need. The Master's spiritual sense and alertness could only read the spiritual message and therefore cause him to follow it up with the answers which her true self had been seeking and also finding, but which had been temporarily hidden by the veil of materialism. Her later invitation to the men of the city, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" should show us the wonderful side to her nature which Jesus had discerned and revealed.

Spiritual alertness is known by its ability to perceive the spiritual factor and motive at the back of everything, even though the surface appearing at any time may be loaded with that which material sense can only interpret as material in purpose and character.

A Scientist with his loins girded about him — that is, clothed in spiritual thinking and affirmations — will certainly detect the claims of error, but always only as claims of error, having no entity or reality and existing only in the realm of belief, whilst his discernment penetrates to the actual and only thing that is going on. It is not spiritual alertness if he finds error in others or in any condition and finds this alone, but it is spiritual alertness if he identifies the specific truth which casts the lies into self-oblivion.

The Principle which is Life must be forever calling on itself for fresh expression of itself, and that calling on itself is calling on its idea. We *are* Principle's idea or expression, so if we are alert right where we are, Principle flows through us and there is the coincidence of the human and the divine.

“And ye yourselves like unto 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.” Here Jesus brings in a picture of servants ready to greet their lord on his return from a wedding, and this evokes an atmosphere of joy and fulfilment, an expectancy of good and happiness. If we realized that Science is always coming from the wedding of Principle and its idea — therefore laden with and radiating good — and we were waiting for it in that attitude of mind and with that expectancy, then in the exact ratio of this we would receive it in that way. Principle is always coming from the wedding of itself to its own idea and therefore to us. That is the spiritual atmosphere to which Principle invites us. It is wise to note how often Mrs Eddy couples the term Love with the term Principle. This changes the sense of demand to that of inspiring and loving invitation, impelling response. Principle calls us to the wedding of “the Lamb’s wife, — Love wedded to its own spiritual idea,” and this is followed by the marriage feast, “for this revelation will destroy forever the physical plagues imposed by material sense” (S&H 575: 2-6).

So we should be on our toes not only expecting ideas, but also expecting ourselves to be fully in rapport with them, fully wedded to them. Too often we think of an idea of Principle as being above us or beyond us, or that we are not equal to it. We should find ourselves ratifying “a union predestined from all eternity” (Un.17:8-9). We and the idea *are* one, so we have only to accept that unity and thereby experience the coincidence of the idea and ourselves in our intelligent expression of it.

“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.” The student even of mathematics has to admit that when he has served the purpose of its principle by bringing his thought into line with the mathematical calculus, he finds that this serves him in any direction he wishes it to do in the mathematical sphere. And so it is that when we are serving the divine Principle in a true expectancy, we have the

feeling that *it* is serving *us*. We cannot be waiting for it in joyful certainty without being in a frame of mind which allows Principle to express itself through us in what will be to us new and satisfying ideas.

“And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.” Because Jesus lived in a constant realization of good’s ever-presence without a time element before its manifestation, we can safely assume that he was not referring here to certain times of day. Because also he was above all men familiar with the Scriptures and their definitions of character-expression, we may well take it that he had in mind the states of character-expression defined at the beginning of the Bible in the story of the seven days of creation and in this case specifically the second and third days. Accepting this, we see that he is saying first of all that we need to be alert that we are not caught out in the “second watch” by missing the point of the second day and its firmament to divide the waters under it from those above it. The tendency is to think that the purpose of this firmament of understanding is to separate evil from good, but this is one of the biggest errors of the human mind and leads to constant misapprehensions, for it presupposes that evil exists as a reality. “God never said that man would become better by learning to distinguish evil from good, — but the contrary, that by this knowledge, by man’s first disobedience, came ‘death into the world, and all our woe’ ” (Un.14: 27-2). Whilst the first surface impression may be the separation of good from evil, we have to acknowledge that this cannot be the true meaning, for if the waters under the firmament stand for evil, then how could the dry land of the third day emerge from those waters being gathered together unto one place? In other words, how could a dry land conviction of the reality of *good* be derived from the gathering of the evidence of *evil*?

What we do need to activate is our understanding of the distinction between God (symbolized by the waters above the firmament) and man (symbolized by the waters beneath), the distinction between Principle and idea, Cause and effect. Jesus himself did this constantly

and consistently in his declarations of the Father and the Son and the relationship between them. For instance, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." The relationship was always correct in his thought. He never became inert through thinking that it was God only and he never became egotistical through thinking that it was man only. He kept the relationship right, and that is the only way to approach the Science of being and the only basis of progress.

Our best sense of both God and man is bound to be elementary — the waters above (our sense of God) and the waters beneath (our sense of God's expression in man and the universe) are *both* waters and classified in Science as "elements of Mind" (S&H 507:3). Even our present highest ideas of God are "but the sign and symbol, not the substance of good" (Un.61:18) and must go on improving; and our understanding of man and the universe as given us by reason and revelation is similarly elementary and must also go on improving, with an ever-growing realization of what perfection means. But when this vital distinction between God and man is kept clear in thought and we see the importance and magnificence of both God and man, we are "blessed" by order and harmony. There is no other way to be active and scientific as a servant of Principle, conscious of the distinction between Principle and idea, but also accepting that we are that idea, fully dependent on Principle and necessarily expressing its perfection, and *because* we are, we can be it where we are. We can then say that Principle comes and finds us "in the second watch" serving its purpose rightly under the guidance of the second day picture. Principle always found Jesus balanced in thought in the spirit of that "second watch," and the same can be true of us.

Referring to the lord coming "in the third watch," Jesus now lays stress on the need to be alert to the meaning and dynamic purpose of the third day of creation. An outstanding point of that third day is that it is the waters under the firmament (symbolizing God's expression of Himself in man and the universe) which are gathered together unto one place so that the dry land appears and brings forth

fruitage. This symbolizes that we can only gather a "dry land" conviction and certainty about God from His expression — that is, from the evidence of His presence in man and the universe. Every conviction of the existence of Principle can come to us only through Principle's expression in man and the universe. That is where Jesus found his own solid "dry land" certainty of the ever-presence and reality of Principle — in the spiritual interpretation of the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the consistency of nature, and in the character-expression and activities of men and women. His constant ability to heal stemmed from his constant realization that the expression called man is really the presence of Principle in its manifestation of itself.

And so if Principle comes to us in the realization of this "third watch," how blessed we shall be in demonstration; and through that demonstration the solid "dry land" conviction of God's onliness and "everywhereness" will appear. What is more, from this conviction there will certainly grow fresh ideas further confirming God's presence as the one and only Being — according to the symbolism of this third day the seed will be in itself. Jesus stresses the necessity of being alert and active in the "third watch" because of the tendency of the human mind to ignore the fact that it is here on earth that we have to find continually the affirmation and re-affirmation of good in all the activities of man and the universe. In our present state of understanding nothing else will enable us to stand on firm "dry land," or give us a conviction born of experience, unassailable by wavering doubts. Principle will always remain a vague somewhere-above-us Being, however much we try to gain certainty merely through our understanding of the synonymous terms for God in the absolute, unless we constantly use that understanding of the absolute to demonstrate it here on earth where we are (that is, in the waters beneath the firmament). All our understanding and work will be unfruitful unless we acknowledge this, which is why the Master emphasized it here in these words about the "third watch." Is not this point underlined by Mrs Eddy when she states that "Jesus beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals. In this perfect man the Saviour saw

God's own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick" (S&H 476:32-4)? It was here in the human scene that he gained his immovable conviction of what he had beheld in Science. Otherwise it would have been mere theory without any relation to present experience.

"And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through." If we knew the value of the state of mind in rapport with Principle — the necessity of which is clearly indicated in the reference to Principle coming in the "second watch" or the "third watch" — we would never allow ourselves to be deprived or robbed of it. Nor would we allow ourselves to be robbed of the golden gift of expectancy.

Discouragement, self-criticism, fear, stubbornness, anger, and so forth are thieves with apparently reasonable arguments, always ready to break into our thinking and create a mood depriving us of awareness of Principle's presence. But if we are alert to them as thieves and not as *us*, they need never make headway into our consciousness and steal our peace or joy, for they have nothing of Principle to support them. If we think of them as *us*, we are apt to be on the defensive and to feel, "This is me, and I can't do anything about it." But if we recognize them as thieves, we can be on watch to prevent their entrance. "Error found out is two-thirds destroyed, and the last third pierces itself" (Mis.355:13-15).

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." The Son of man stands for the coming of the Son of God to men where they are and in the language and symbolism which they understand. The Son of God is Truth, the ideal, already fulfilled, and because it is already fulfilled, there is no doubt whatever about its unfolding to us as the Son of man. The Son of God and the Son of man cannot be divorced, for they are one, as Jesus showed when he spoke of "the Son of man which is in heaven."

The Son of man "cometh at an hour when ye think not." It is therefore wise to keep thought alert in expectation of the clarity of thinking and inspiration symbolized by the coming of the Son of

man, even though it is not in our hands to dictate the time when this illumination takes place. Suddenly, as clear as a bell, comes the realization for which we have been longing, proving that it is not we who bring it, but the activity of Principle in our consciousness and experience.

So often the breakthrough, the realization, does come unexpectedly, when we are doing something like washing the dishes or driving, and maybe the day after we have been thinking everything out. The fact remains that the Son of man *will* come, here or hereafter — that is, at the time we are seeking or when we have put it all aside and are busy with other things. Therefore if it does not *appear* present at this moment, we should always be expecting that Principle, which is ever present, will be made known to our understanding where we are and in a manner which will bring us joy and certainty. We must keep thought “alive to His promises” (S&H 373:4-5). If we adhere to the ideal, we shall be taken towards it. The things that stood in the way of our realization will be dissipated.

Principle unfailingly holds the initiative and we cannot step into Principle’s shoes and dictate the where, when, and how of its unfoldment to us. Our task is to be Principle’s expression and then we shall have the joy — and it is a joy — of discovery and newness as Principle unfolds our unique expression of itself, which has always been in Principle and known to Principle. “What Deity *foreknows*, Deity must *foreordain*” (Un.19:3-4), and so there is no doubt in Science about the revelation for us of what is already known to Principle.

At this point Peter asked, “Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?” The parable of the steward which follows was Jesus’ reply to this question of Peter.

“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” This is a story of service to Principle and to the ideas given by Principle. The ideas of Principle constitute its household. Each one of us is a steward of the ideas which come to us from Principle. Our job is to serve them and actively feed them by dwelling with them and letting them speak to us

until they reflect back to us a meatier conviction than when they first appeared.

Our sacred stewardship of the household of Principle is something to be taken to heart. All Principle's ideas call for service from man. They ask for devotion of thought in order that they may mature and return in increasing measures of good to us. Every idea of Principle is a challenge to us to rise in service to it — that is, to contribute intelligently to what it is saying until we understand it more fully and it gives us a better concept of Principle. This is in line with Jesus' statement, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." All such work is self-rewarding, but too often is neglected. For instance, if we take any statement of Mrs Eddy's, we cannot allow it to remain mere words or to be in any degree pulseless and cold; we must see the real meat at the back of the words, and the capacity to do so comes from the Principle which gave us that statement.

We do not find real satisfaction if we are letting thought wander, instead of keeping it directed to the specific ideas which we know call for attention and feeding from us right where we are.

In speaking of "ideas of Principle" we need to understand that these ideas range right through the whole experience of conscious thinking. The highest ideas may be found in our realizations of the perfection of man and the universe as the expression of Principle. The lesser ideas may be found in our obedience to the symbolic principles which control every human activity in which we engage and which finally derive from the one overall divine Principle. Every idea impelled by Principle is equal in importance — equal in quality, though differing in the range of enlightenment which it covers — and they are all one in purpose and necessity on this plane of experience. The housewife conforming her whole thought to ideas of Principle given to her in the realm of cooking, for instance, is alert to reject any haphazard thinking which takes her attention off the matter in hand. If she allows her thought to wander off into dreamland, she may become disappointed and disgruntled with her results, until she wakes up to the need for consecration to the work in hand and to the ideas embraced in and supplied by the principle of that work; she

may appear to get away with impatience in some direction which she considers purely spiritual, but the place where she gets a quick rebuke for impatience is at the cooker, and so the lessons of obedience which she learns in the kitchen are important ones in the "plainer manual" of her "spiritual armament" (Un.6:27). It is the same with any other human activity. If someone is in business, he is not merely concerned with a particular product; he is in the business of obedience to Principle with regard to that product — its making and distribution and all the relationships this involves — and he is soon pulled up if he is not obedient. Our whole being is important to Principle, and the joy of accepting this truth has no limit to its endowments.

If we become poor servants in any department of the household of Principle, it will reflect itself in every other department. What really counts is our response to the call upon us, whether or not it appears mundane. We need the chastening of the apparently mundane until it is removed by Principle because we have fulfilled its good ends. Jesus could not stay on earth, for the reason that he had fulfilled the purpose of all the chastening processes, but it was because he had done so that he was ready for higher service. Through his patient obedience to a patient God in dissolving with the universal solvent of Love the adamant of error (see S&H 242:15-20) in every seemingly small encounter on the way he was eventually able to stand in the judgment hall and be slapped on the face without being disturbed.

"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." Man's only real joy in life is to be a steward in the household of Principle. This work has been given him by the Principle which is Love, and when he is about that work, it is wonderful and he feels the blessing of service to Principle. Mrs Eddy says, "conscious worth satisfies the hungry heart, and nothing else can" (Message 1902, 17:24-25). When Jesus was about his Father's business in this way, there is no doubt that he was conscious of the approval of his Father and of his own worth as the expression of Principle. Referring to the effect of this, which he knew his disciples would experience in their turn, he said, "These things have I spoken unto

you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Man is the expression of intelligence, the expression of Mind, and in order to *be* what he is, he must take the continual flow of ideas from Principle and serve them into the meatiness of a greater understanding than their original presentation brought him — "give them their portion of meat in due season." As we acquiesce in what we are and to the best of our ability set about the work given us by Principle, our true selfhood is developing to us and it is as if Principle approves and blesses us. The words "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," whilst sounding to others as if they were uttered by a voice from a separate Being in heaven (Matthew 3:16,17 and 17:5), were actually expressive of Jesus' realization of what Principle is knowing of all its ideas. Here in earth's preparatory school anyone applying himself faithfully to responsiveness to Principle, whether it be in the expressions of art or in the expressions of love in the home, will find that in the ratio of the purity and unselfed love which is present, he will receive a feeling of approval and happiness indefinable to sense, but sacred to him in experience.

"Of a truth I say unto you, that he [the lord] will make him [the steward] ruler over all that he hath." Devotion to the ideas of Principle brings a sense of dominion and ever-deepening conviction. "He of God's household who loveth and liveth most the things of Spirit, receiveth them most; he speaketh wisely, for the spirit of his Father speaketh through him; he worketh well and healeth quickly, for the spirit giveth him liberty: 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'" (Message 1901, 9:27-2).

That is the positive side of the parable. Now comes the warning side.

"But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

If we tend the ideas of Principle and dwell with them, they take on for us the meatiness of conviction, and then the continual inflow from Principle brings blessing through that very activity. We feel Principle coming to us more clearly through the tending of its ideas. But if we believe that Principle is not coming to us and inspiration is a long time in arriving and we cannot make out what is going on, we may decide that we are not going to serve Principle; we are not even going to take the ideas we have from Principle and work with them until they become true meat. Instead we may become angry with ourselves and beat up Principle's ideas, as it were, criticizing them and telling ourselves that they are ridiculous and that we will no longer bother with Science. We may begin to "beat the menservants," who symbolize the requirements to stand up to error with courage — we may tell ourselves that there is nothing to be gained by continuing to rebuke the claims of disease, for instance, in any of its myriad manifestations. Or we may start to "beat the . . . maidens," who represent the simpler demands for our obedience — to be loving, gentle, persevering, patient, for example. We may "eat and drink, and . . . be drunken," not only believing that we need food, drink, and rest in order to maintain our strength and ability, but actually arguing for them to the exclusion of the realization that whilst they may be a "suffer it to be so now" of our human experience, they have no final part to play and therefore should never be relied upon but denied any quality which obviously cannot obtain in matter, but belongs to Mind alone. Accepting sense testimony in any direction puts us off balance in our devotion to Principle and thereby temporarily causes what is here covered by the word "drunken." We are then "cut in sunder" with conflict and wrestling. This can temporarily throw us out of our sense of Science and even make us disbelieve and reject it.

We all need to be alert to this attempt of mortal mind to make us discouraged with our own progress and from that standpoint to turn against the channels of good and even scorn them. If we recognize that this is not us but is the whispering of mortal mind trying to insinuate itself into our thought-processes, we shall rouse ourselves to new and stronger loyalties to the spiritual, and this in itself is a

victory for good.

Anger and disappointment was what overtook Peter at the trial of Jesus. He could not see what Jesus was about, because he had thought of him as a militant for good and now he appeared weak and ineffectual. So Peter, who was a very active man, got angry with the whole affair and tried to deny any connection with his Master. He attempted to find his "portion with the unbelievers," which of course was impossible. For a time he was well beaten up by conscience, but his "homing" was sure and certain and he was roused to a greater sense of service than ever before. On the other side of the coin there was John, who may not have understood what was happening, but through his love did not question it and just wanted to be there to learn, and through his learning learnt to love more. He was always a steward in the household of Principle.

The rule is that we must carry on serving Principle's ideas and not get discouraged, because Principle will suddenly dawn on us in a way that we probably never imagined and we must be continually expectant of its coming. An elaboration of what this attitude involves is given in this quotation from "Science and Health": "When the illusion of sickness or sin tempts you, cling steadfastly to God and His idea. Allow nothing but His likeness to abide in your thought. Let neither fear nor doubt overshadow your clear sense and calm trust, that the recognition of life harmonious — as Life eternally is — can destroy any painful sense of, or belief in, that which Life is not. Let Christian Science, instead of corporeal sense, support your understanding of being, and this understanding will supplant error with Truth, replace mortality with immortality, and silence discord with harmony" (495: 14-24). Note that this passage starts with the word "illusion" applied to sickness and sin, for that is all they ever are.

"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

The "stripes" stand for pangs of conscience. To put it negatively, we could say that if we do not face up to what we are, but try instead to be what we are not and to dodge the issues of life, then it is not Principle but our own conscience which is the whipping agent, making us disturbed and angry. But looked at from a higher standpoint we could say that the "stripes" are not a form of punishment, but rather a form of awakening to what we are and what we have to do. Our true conscience is our awareness of what we are and therefore of what we need to do. Conscience is man's instinct for God's perfection and allness, his plumb line, and it is proof of the ever-presence of perfection; without it he would never realize that he was temporarily falling short: When conscience is disturbing him, he is refusing to accept its message, but eventually it will *goad* him on. If he does accept its message, because he is active in the spiritual, that conscience *calls* him on and gives him good direction. The beauty of conscience is that it points us to the truth, and the only final truth is perfection. If conscience shows us the error in thought and we merely stay with that error, we have not heeded the real call of conscience, which is always progressive. So the "stripes" are given by man's instinctive knowing of his ability and necessity to respond to Principle, proving that every man is sound and Principled in reality, although some may temporarily try to resist that fact of being.

All that the prickings of conscience demonstrate is that it is impossible for a man not to be what he *is*, and therefore any attempt to neglect this work must bring apparent suffering, because it is impossible in Science. We *are* the expression of intelligence, the expression of Mind. We *are* the presence of Principle and consequently can find happiness only in being what we are.

Mrs Eddy gives the positive sense of "stripes" when she says, "and 'with his stripes [the rejection of error] we are healed'" (S&H 20:15-16). So the stripes are not a negative form of punishment from Principle, but we ourselves spurring ourselves on, as Jesus continually did quite naturally. He did not inflict on himself any punishment, but as Paul says, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne

of God." He never allowed himself a lapse in direct antagonism to all that was un-Principled. It was said of him that he "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." Anyone devoted to work controlled by a principle knows the necessity of this, for there is no resting on one's oars. Jesus certainly never relaxed in his perpetual reminder to himself of the requirements of Principle. His was a continually forward-moving activity, always causing a greater demand on himself and therefore calling forth a greater response.

The Master differentiates between those who know they should be tending Principle's ideas and knowingly neglect what they realize to be required of them and those who are not aware of the need for such service. The fact that those who are not aware still receive *some* stripes (though fewer than those who do know and yet are slapdash or casual about their obligations) shows that instinctively everyone knows whether or not he is obeying or responding to Principle. Those who try to trample wilfully on this instinctive sense will eventually receive measures of rebuke or suffering to break this "stubborn will," callousness, "self-righteousness," and "stupid rest" (see Mis.398:5-8). He who endeavours to ignore his own recognition of what is right and to dispute the need for service to Principle will one day have to wake up more actively to its requirements than he who has failed inadvertently and quickly accepts the health-stimulating mandate of Principle.

Jesus was pointing out what is perfectly logical: in the ratio of a man's understanding and expression of Principle must he meet the greater demands which that understanding brings to him. The sergeant-major in the army has won his promotion through being both able and willing to fulfil his duties; he knows what his new position demands in advance of what was previously asked of him, but he also expects the newest recruit to begin obeying the basic requirements of the service.

Principle is ever impelling men forward into greater areas of understanding and demonstration of its own perfection. Therefore when we respond in some degree to that perfection, Principle is bound to lead us forward into increasing measures of responsiveness. "Man is the offspring and idea of the Supreme Being, whose law is perfect and

infinite. In obedience to this law, man is forever unfolding the endless beatitudes of Being; for he is the image and likeness of infinite Life, Truth, and Love. Infinite progression is concrete being" (Mis.82:15-20). The student will find that this law will always apply in his experience. He will never come to the end of infinitude and what it means in terms of the joy of expansion. Jesus held this unlimited concept of how Science would operate for the student when he said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

There is a similar parable in Mark's Gospel: "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Every man has his work to do, and he also has to watch. Watching is and must be twofold — it means watching against errors in our thinking and performance, but how can we detect them unless we are watching the ideal, unless we are watching Principle and its works and manifestations and refreshing thought with that?

There is no hardship attached to watching. Hardship arises only if we resist it — like trying to go to sleep before we have cleared our thought of something troubling us by facing up to it. We have to be "instant in season, out of season," and nothing brings truer happiness.

Jesus is showing the need for continual alertness. The human mind has a tendency to drop off in its enthusiasm if results are not apparent or if there seems a long time without clarification of thought or the inflow of inspiration. It is apt to go to sleep in self-criticism or else in discouragement, as the disciples did in the garden of Gethsemane, thereby losing one of the greatest opportunities of their lives to express true friendship and appreciation of what their Master had already done and was about to do for them and for all mankind.

Here in this parable he was warning against this very tendency. Keep going, he was implying, and the Son of man will come, often when you least expect it. Frequently it comes at the darkest hour, before the dawn, represented by "at the cockcrowing," or it may come in any phase of human thought and feeling. So we must be ever expectant of Principle breaking through our apparent ignorance; and it will do so best when we will not admit that ignorance, but constantly lay claim to that Mind which was also in Christ Jesus.

If we feel the suggestion of discouragement after reading a parable like this, we need only agree that in every walk of life men and women are under normal circumstances naturally alert to errors that would occur and also to the realization and practice of good. The housewife, the business man, the sportsman find their happiness in this alertness and obedience to the principles of housewifery, business, sport. Their real satisfaction and joy stem from that. No housewife is happy in slovenliness, no business man is happy if unprincipled methods enter his business, nor is any sportsman happy with anything in his performance which is out of line with what is required by the principle involved. The simple fact is that for happiness in all walks of life man needs to find everything responding to the activity of Principle according to the ratio of his understanding of it and to be included in it through a full responsiveness. This parable, imbued as it is with the spirit of happiness indicated in the reference to the lord returning from a wedding, calls upon us to see that our thinking is continually wedded to Principle, whether in relation to the activities of everyday life or to those higher contemplations and realizations which come when we give time solely to ideas embraced in the realms of consciousness classified as the purely spiritual.

We cannot remind ourselves too often of the simple but profound truth that we are divine because we are nothing more and nothing less than Principle's expression of itself. Therefore we experience human happiness in the exact ratio that we express that divinity in our daily and hourly living where we find ourselves to be.