

OTHER THINGS.

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WILLARD TRACT REPOSITORY,
175 HUNTINGTON AVENUE,
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OTHER THINGS.— Mark iv. 19.

Let me read the whole verse to you: "And the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

In a previous chapter the Lord Jesus Christ manifests His power in restoring a man with a withered hand to soundness simply by His word. That word has lost none of its power from that day to this. Jesus Christ, the "same yesterday, to-day, and forever," lives to make it true to His children.

After this wondrous manifestation of His power, it is said, a multitude

gathered around and "thronged Him." He went to the seaside, and there the multitude was so great that He took a boat and rowed out a little, so that the crowd upon the shore could hear the words He uttered. I am sure we can say — I can for my part — that we have always been very thankful that the Lord took the common things of life and entered into every day occurrences to manifest His power and illustrate His truths. *The door, the shepherd, the vine, the fig-tree,*—by the *well, on the shore, at the feast,* "by all means" to show Himself the Messiah, the Saviour of men. He had all power, but used it not to astound and terrify men, or to call forth admiration or glorification of His person, but always as a channel of heaven's own truth and blessedness. We are continually questioning life's experience. If my circumstances were different; if I had been born differently; if I had means or if I had time, I could

have done this, that, or the other thing. My brother! my sister! Settle it once and for all that you are just where God placed you: not a creature of accident, not living a life of chance. He has turned aside many plans of yours, because they would have been fatal to you. He has turned you into paths of righteousness and pastures of green, by the side of still waters. He has led you day after day, and guided you with His love. Success in your plans might have been shipwreck to your soul. God knows all about you and all about your need, and He never makes a mistake. He lives: O, to *believe* that He lives to care for His children and to bless them!

By these common things He illustrates His truth. On this day he sat in the boat and taught the people, by the parable of the sower. "A sower went forth to sow." All men who have land, farmers especially, at this time of year, are scattering broadcast

their seed. They would hardly put seed into the ground unless they expected a harvest. They know that the seed is in the right element and that the rain and the sunshine will combine to bring forth plentifully, and they can count on stores for man and beast, on well-filled granary and barn.

How common the illustration now applied to the Word! "The sower soweth the seed." The sower is the Lord Jesus Himself. By parable He sought to do His most efficient work, and as in this parable of the seed-sowing, He sought to illustrate the principles of grace; something hidden in the heart as the seed was hidden in the ground; only once let it find lodgment and the work would surely go on without man's interference. Thus the Saviour could declare, as His earthly ministry closed, "It is finished." "I have finished the *work* Thou gavest me to do." Thenceforward, the Spirit was to enlighten and teach. His

Presence in the heart, the great and blessed seed of true Holiness.

You remember when John uttered that memorable sentence about the Lord Jesus Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." As if to say: "Look at Him! He is in your midst, so near that you may all apply for the great remedy for sin!" It is natural for men, when they are told of a distinguished personage arrived in their midst, to join the multitude, to rush on, if they may but get one look, one glimpse of the notable one. If we would take one glance at Him who is the King of Kings, who has called us to the great marriage feast, who has told us He has power to make us of royal blood, how quickly should we know the things that are freely given to us of God!

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow!" And to-day the seed-sowing goes on throughout Christendom.

The Word of God encircles the world. Men stand and declare it; the people talk about it, they meditate upon it. Among the multitude, to-day, exist the same four classes that are represented in this parable. The seed was sown at the wayside, upon stony ground, where the thorns grew, and into good ground. It brings the Lord very near when we realize that His was a ministry for all time. Human nature remains the same; its needs, its frailties, its capabilities. And it remains equally true that for us just to know our need is to bring to us a fruition as infinite in its resources as God is infinite.

Let us look at the different classes of hearers. The seed is sown at the wayside. Immediately the fowls of air gather and devour it. How true! There must be depth of earth, there must be the furrows, soft and pliable, to receive the seed that it may sink down and in, where the fowls of the

air, who are always present in numbers innumerable, may not seize upon it. What a picture of the heart of man hardened by indifference, where Satan has easy work to rob and destroy.

Some fell upon stony ground, and immediately it springs forth. But when the sun comes up, with all the fierceness of its noonday heat, it withers. Night comes, and the blade that sprang up out of the earth so fresh and bright in the morning is withered. To-day the Word of God falls upon some stony heart that has here and there a tender spot. There is no depth. You have seen such people. They are very common. They start well, they talk glibly, they look fair, and run well for a season. You hardly can understand why it is, when you look for fruit you find none. The blade has been just as green and fresh as any blade of grass you ever saw, but there is no fruit there.

It is fruit that God wants; fruit of our lives. Not simply the brightness of the upspringing blade that the noonday sun can wither. What good is the sunshine or the rain, if the seed has no root? These very blossoms become blighted upon the stony ground; and the analogy is constantly true that the hearts of many have been ploughed and harrowed by sorrow, the seeds of truth find entrance, but stones of pride, fear of man, reluctance to be counted among the followers of the meek and lowly One, stones that we must take away, or our blades of conviction turn to blight and decay.

In a little attic in a tenement one morning a man who had spent his life in dissipation awoke after a night of debauch, and looking around his room that had nothing in it of comfort, he thought of his life and what it was. He had nothing; he was of no use in the world; he was all alone in his degradation and poverty. What

should he do? Just at that moment the sun shot a ray of light through the dirty window and cast its beam upon the floor. Just one ray of sunlight! And by the Spirit of God a little ray of the Sun of Righteousness came into his heart, and brought a new, fresh joy. Light came out of heaven that morning, and he bowed there, lifted his heart toward God who caused the sun to shine, asked for forgiveness, and became a new man.

The Sun of Righteousness shines to-day, to illumine your heart and to reveal to you the One altogether lovely, full of grace and full of truth. Let the Holy Ghost plow through your hearts, take *you* away the stones, and the good seed, warmed by the Sun of Righteousness, will take root and grow.

Let us recognize there is no withholding by our Great Seed-sower. Everywhere, among all classes of men, the Word is scattered. And now it is

among thorns. And what are these? The "other things!" As though, after summing up the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, description failed, and it was left for every individual heart to seek out for itself these "other things," innumerable it would seem as hearts are countless. May we not to-day seek for heavenly light to reveal in our lives those other things that hinder the sower, that choke the Word, that make us to be barren and unfruitful?

We come to the fourth class. "And these are they which are sown upon good ground." They received the Word; they did not earn it. We must be just that are receiving always. The Lord, at the commencement of His ministry, said to His disciples, "Come!" "Follow me!" "I will make you fishers of men." They came to Him; and when they had received His benediction and His teaching, he said "Go." They received,

and if we would bear fruit we must receive. Such ground receives to-day; the seed is hidden out of sight, but wait, the fruit is sure, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold; *and the blessing is upon all, for the Master sowed the seed.*

Oh, then, be willing for the truth to enter your heart. Receive God's Word and let the blessing abide. Among the "other things" that choke the Word are doubt and discouragement. You say, perhaps,—"If I had the opportunities that so many people have I could bear fruit for God." Here Satan comes in to contradict God, as he has from the beginning. "Has God said He is no respecter of persons?" "I cannot speak well," you say. Speak the best you can. To you, this may be that "other thing" that keeps you out of the blessing. Again, "I cannot speak to others about their souls' welfare." Make a beginning and see. You

can sit down by the hour and talk about the ordinary events of life. Why not talk about Him who lives to bless His children, who is sowing His seed to-day, and who wants that it should spring forth in you thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold. Be not idlers in the household of God. The Sower still sows the seed. Be tender, be receptive, seek the light, and never be discouraged. Remember that He who walked this earth still lives to bless and to keep and to deliver.

When Alexander the Great was marching to conquer Persia, and the barriers of ice and snow prevented them, the soldiers were discouraged and cast down and finally could not go another step, worn out with marching and fatigue. Seeing this, Alexander got off his horse, took a pick, and began himself with a strong arm to cut his way through the ice. The men looked in astonishment; they, too, became enthused. First the cap-

tains, and even the chaplains began to shovel and pick the ice and snow, and then the common soldiers, and on they went to victory!

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life. Enter in, walk in the Light. Love, joy, and peace shall spring up under the Divine rays. Fruitage shall be yours. The "other things" will melt away, for the Holy Ghost shall burn them up, while His light and heat shall cause the good ground to bear some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold.