

“FIELDHANDS, TENANT FARMERS, and LANDOWNERS”

In his paper “Manufacturers”, Alexander Hamilton made the case for manufacturing and commerce as the future destiny of the new nation. He wanted a balance of agriculture and commerce. He said that industrialization would ignite the intellect of Americans, “stimulate activity of the human mind” and would allow those who were then impoverished to participate in the economy.

In his “Report on Manufacturers” Jefferson said that the increased proportion of manufacturers to farmers is the same proportion of “unsound to healthy parts” in the human body. He compared manufacturers to sores on the body. He believed that the vast amounts of land available showed that the destiny of this nation was in farming. In Jefferson’s mind, only a nation of those who own enough property to freely support themselves without dependence could create a Republic.

Jefferson already owned 5000 acres and 50 slaves which he inherited from his father. When his wife Martha died in childbirth in 1872 he inherited 11,000 acres of land and 135 slaves from her. This made him one of the biggest landowners in Virginia. His father’s estate was already heavily burdened with debt. The costs of building Monticello, of maintaining the lifestyle expected of gentry in Virginia, and the effects of inflation after the Revolutionary War drew Jefferson downward in a spiral of indebtedness. By the end of his life he was over 100,000 dollars in debt. He recognized that debt robbed men of freedom.

1.) "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others

standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." (Matthew 20:1-16 NKJV)

I wish that I had used the expression "day laborers" instead of "field hands" in the title. These men were hired to work in a vineyard not a field. The expression "day laborer" describes a category of workers who labor in many different areas. When I lived down in Johnsville there was a country store where Mexicans would gather in the morning. Farmers would come by in their pickup trucks and either pick the men they wanted or just hold up their fingers showing how many men they needed. The men would scramble to get into the truck first.

When I lived in the city there were a number of places where men would go, stand outside the door. Periodically, a man came to the door and announced how many men he needed and for what type work. Those who were willing to do that kind of work raised their hands and he pointed to the ones he thought would be best suited. Someone would be there to take them to the job. It was only for one day and they were paid at the end of the day. A day laborer is at the bottom.

He doesn't know from one day to the next if he has a job. He literally has to fight with others for a job paying the lowest wages. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like that.

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; (1 Corinthians 1:27 NKJV)

2.) Then He began to tell the people this parable: "A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him.' But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it they said, "Certainly not!" (Luke 20:9-16)

Jesus' listeners understood the images that Jesus was using. They understood that the vine was Israel and that the one who planted the vineyard is the LORD. They knew this from Psalm 80 and Isaiah 5.

You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, And caused it to take deep root, And it filled the land....Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, And visit this vine And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, And the branch that You made strong for Yourself. (Psalms 80:8-9,14-15 NKJV)

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes?" (Isaiah 5:1-4 NKJV)

Jesus is using images from Psalms and Isaiah in a parable which prophecies His death at the hands of the vinedressers of Israel – the

priests and rulers. There is in this parable a message to Christians. We have received many benefits from the Gospel. How willing have we been to go forth and bring to God fruit from the Gospel, new souls?

3.) Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:16-21 NKJV)

This parable concerns the righteous use of wealth. God provides for our needs and He wants us to enjoy good things. At the same time we are stewards of all the wealth God entrusts us with. Of course God expects us to tithe our income in good times and bad. When we begin to receive more and much more than what we need for ourselves then we can be like the rich man in the parable and begin to plan how we can indulge our fantasies, plan to take it easy and enjoy life OR we can begin to pray and ask God for direction. "Lord, this is a lot of money – more than I need. You must know of some need that you want me to be Your agent in supplying. Lord, open my eyes so I will know what You will."

You don't have to be a Helen Walton or an Andrew Carnegie to use your wealth to advance God's kingdom. You will know when your family is being adequately provided for. You will know when you have a reasonable measure of life's good things. If the Lord sends more than that, so that your cup overflows, start praying and start looking. The Lord knows where He intended for you to send the extra. If you keep it for yourself like the rich man in the parable, you are a fool and a thief.

