



## LESSON III.—APRIL 16.

## The Supper at Bethany.

John xii., 1-11.

## Golden Text.

She hath done what she could. Mark xiv., 8.

Commit verses 2, 3.

## Home Readings.

Monday, April 10.—John xii., 1-11.  
 Tuesday, April 11.—Matt. xxvi., 6-16.  
 Wednesday, April 12.—Mark xiv., 3-11  
 Thursday, April 13.—Luke x., 38-42.  
 Friday, April 14.—Luke vii., 36-50.  
 Saturday, April 15.—Rom. xii., 1-9.  
 Sunday, April 16.—Rom. xii., 10-21.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

Jesus had worked his greatest miracle under the very eaves of the ecclesiastical establishment. It was accepted as a challenge, and steps were immediately taken to compass his death. His hour not yet having come, the Master retired to Ephraim, twenty miles away, near to the wilderness or sparsely populated country. There, in company with his disciples, he passed the time in physical and spiritual recuperation. A price was practically set upon his head, for the chief priests and Pharisees had given notice that if any one knew where he was he should give information in order that the arrest might be made. With mingled motives of curiosity, admiration, and opposition the people who had come to Jerusalem in large numbers to attend the Passover made quest for Jesus. For the time he eclipsed both temple and ceremony. As the days passed they began to say to each other in their disappointment, 'Is it possible he is not coming to the feast at all?' But when the time was fully come, the Master resolutely set his face toward that slaughter-house of the prophets—Jerusalem. He was fully cognizant of all the peril of going to the city at this juncture. It was in this instance that one significant incident like a shaft of light fell across the inky blackness in which his life closed. It was that high and loving courtesy shown him in the home in Bethany. They banqueted Jesus. They make a supper in his honor, and in grateful recognition of his merciful deeds.

In the noblest villa of the suburb of Jerusalem, the table with its damask coverings, was set in hollow square, as the custom was. It was surrounded by richly upholstered couches. Shaded lamps cast their full radiance upon the goodly scene. Eye, nostril, ear and palate were delighted. Color, fragrance, music and viands matched their several organs of sense. According to Oriental custom, the house was open and the interested villagers hung like an animated fringe around the table, sharing with the invited guests sight of the cheer and gladness. On either side of Jesus reclined the trophies of his power—Simon whom he had healed of leprosy, and Lazarus whom he had revived from death. Noble and beautiful women graced and adorned the scene and hour.

One significant and timely deed lifted this feast to the level of a sacrament. Out of her boudoir Mary brought the most precious thing it contained—an Oriental cruse of alabaster, filled with genuine liquid perfume, very precious, the seal of which had never been broken. Her unspeakable gratitude would fain express itself in a deed of reverence and love. Unstintedly she poured the costly liquid upon Jesus' head and feet, using her luxuriant tresses for a towel. In a moment every recess of the house was filled with the subtle and delicious fragrance.

But as may be expected in every human gathering, which of necessity must contain some whose ethical evolution is retarded or stunted, an apple of discord was thrown into this feast of love. It came from the very hand that was filching from the common purse of the apostles. Judas stole the livery of charity in which to serve his own cupidity. He affected benevolence that he might cover his own grasping spirit. Some of the apostles were evidently infected with his carping spirit, and at least joined mildly in the specious protest.

Right royally did Jesus come to defense of Mary and her deed. He interpreted her action and put the seal of his Divine approval upon it. If she gave him a momentary and passing embalming, he embalmed her forever in the ineffable incense of his praise: 'She hath wrought a good work. She hath done what she could. Whosoever this gospel shall be preached there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her.' A practical principle of life is irradiated in connection with this incident. Jesus affirms that deeds which can be done any time must give place to those which can only be done just now. 'The poor are always with you; not so I.'

The banquet intended for his honor really set the seal of Jesus' doom and hastened it. The banquet couch proved a pedestal to list him not only in sight of the admiring people, but also of his implacable enemies. The end of it was that not only 'much people knew that he was there and came,' but immediately also 'the chief priests consulted.'

## THE TEACHER'S LANTERN.

A lesson in sacred aesthetics is here. Money spent to adorn and beautify religion is never to be begrudged. A cathedral for example, is a monument to the divine. It teaches and inspires. So wealth expended in awakening the sentiment of worship is never lost. It is always justifiable. Proportionate expenditures upon the artistic and tasteful are to be commended. They are definite contributions to ethical and spiritual evolution.

Much has been said of the 'loneliness' of Jesus. But it must also be remembered that he was also much in society. The references are numerous enough to affirm a habit. He adorned and beautified many a supper and wedding. His social side was not atrophied.

Judas, by reason of the enormity of his crime, is almost excluded in the average thought from the role of human beings. But it admits of question whether there are not men now living who under similar circumstances would not do exactly as Judas did. He was a man, not a devil from the nether world.

Martha did not sulk. Jesus had on a previous visit criticised her for being troubled with much serving. She did not on that account fly moodily to the other extreme and refuse to serve at all. It is very significant, then (although it might be overlooked), when the record says, 'Martha served.' Taking criticism is a fine art as well as giving it.

Judas' proposition can not be disputed. It was a great sum—\$100 in perfumery! The wages of a laborer for a whole year! But no higher use of that money could have been made than was made of it. It was a sacramental act. It was an expression of gratitude and reverence. While it did not preclude deeds of charity, the latter could not be any substitute for it.

That home at Bethany was ideal. The meshes of the domestic net were soft as silk, but firm as steel. No wonder Jesus loved to be there.

An adult Bible-class is said to have spent the entire hour in discussing the shape of the alabaster-box. It is to be feared that many are busy over husks and shells, pure technique—geography, archaeology, and the like, but never reach the subtle fragrance of the ethical and spiritual meaning.

## MOSAIC FROM COMMENTARIES.

Six days before: Devout men set time apart before to prepare themselves for a ceremony.—Henry. Lazarus: Is mentioned throughout the incident as forming an element in the unfolding of the hatred of the Jews which issued in the Lord's death.—Alford. Ointment of spikenard: The original literally rendered is nard pistick. It is quite uncertain

what pistick means, whether genuine liquid or pistick, a local adjective. Filled with odor: The detail is peculiar to John, and is one of those minute points which belong only to a personal impression at the time.—Westcott. Judas: One of the number not of the nature of the apostles.—Henry. Three hundred pence: He estimated with precision. Judas' talent was connected with the temptation that made him a thief.—Lange. Why was not: Proud men think all ill-advised who do not advise with them.—Henry. He was a thief: The reigning love of money is heart-theft, as anger and revenge are heart-murder.—Ibid. Took away: Betrayed his trust. Betrayed his Master.—Ibid. Given to the poor. Charity to the poor made a color of opposing a piece of piety to Christ.—Ibid. Censure infects like a plague.—Stier. Cared for the poor: It is the successors of Mary of Bethany, and not of Judas Iscariot, who really care for the poor.—Butler. Let her alone: The beautiful work of love elevated, interpreted, and glorified into a prophetic act.—Stier. In the act of love done to him she had erected a monument as lasting as the gospel.—Olshausen.

## C.E. Topic.

Sunday, April 16.—Topic—Glorifying God in our recreations. I. Cor. x., 31; Ps. xvi., 5-11.

## Junior C. E. Topic.

## HOME MISSIONARY MEETING.

Monday, April 10.—The poor and the stranger. Lev. xix., 9, 10.

Tuesday, April 11.—Love thy neighbor. Lev. xix., 18.

Wednesday, April 12.—Oppress not a stranger. Ex. xxiii., 9.

Thursday April 13.—Love the stranger. Deut. x., 17-19.

Friday, April 14.—'If thy brother be poor.' Lev. xxv., 35, 36.

Saturday, April 15.—'Teach the strangers.' Josh viii., 34, 35.

Sunday, April 16.—Topic—The strangers in our land. Lev. xix., 33, 34.

## Primary Teaching.

One of the most difficult and at the same time important positions in our Sunday-school work is that held by the primary teacher. We hope the time is forever past when the idea prevails that anybody can teach the primary class. Speaking of primary teachers and teaching, a writer in the 'Baptist Teacher' says:

'What is a good primary lesson? To my mind it is a lesson that attracts, instructs, impresses and moves to action. As teachers, our work is almost exclusively with seeing and hearing. These two bridges lead to the intellect, the heart, and the will, or to the three processes of the child's mind, thinking, feeling and willing. Therefore, a good lesson must give the child something to think about, something to feel, and some choice to make. We reach the intellect through truths. By this we instruct. We reach the feelings through experience, telling our own or calling to mind our pupils' experiences. By this we impress. We reach the will by presenting the joy or sorrow, the gain or loss of action or inaction. By this we move to action. A picture shown, or a story told, should first cause the child to think, then feel, and then the will should be reached. Unless teaching results in action, it is not successful. Never leave a child impressed, made thoughtful, without crystallizing this emotion into action. Fenelon, the famous French preacher, said: "State a fact, paint a picture, raise a passion."'

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