

for protection, grace and guidance, salvation; he prayed too for the strangers, that they might be prospered in their journey, and when their earthly journey was ended that they might have a home in heaven. The travellers retired to their apartment. According to their arrangement the sceptic was first to keep watch, but instead of preparing for an attack he was for lying down to sleep, as though he had never thought of danger. The Christian said to him, "It is your turn to stand guard first, where have you lost your apprehension of danger?" "Ah," replied the infidel, "I feel as safe as at a New England fireside, where the Bible is read as that old man read it, and prayer is offered as that old man prayed."—*Rev. M. W. Ripley.*

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

Sunday, May 1.

LOST AND FOUND.—LUKE XV. 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT. V. 10.—Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Commit 4-7.

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

Between the last lesson and this, we find some of our Lord's most valuable teachings, a portion of which is found in the other Gospels, but the greater part is peculiar to Luke. Their connection, time, and occurrence can, however, be determined only approximately; and even that only after a careful comparison with other records.

LESSON NOTES.

(1.) Then drew near to Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. These were the people whom the Pharisees and the Scribes oppressed and who, following the example of their religious leaders, oppressed each other as far as they had the power; nevertheless, they came to Jesus with a less captious and a more teachable spirit than the others, and His condescension towards them in teaching them, healing their sick, ministering to their afflicted, and even eating with them, so unlike anything they had been accustomed to, led great crowds to follow Him, and eagerly to hang upon His words.

(2.) And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured (found fault.) Had Jesus fallen in with their ways, kept the poor at arm's length, and conformed his teachings and mode of living to their ideas, they would not have so much objected to His exercising His miracle-working power on them. But when He openly denounced not only their own teaching and practices, but themselves,—when He so far cast reproach upon their exclusiveness as to eat with the despised classes, their displeasure vented itself in hostile criticism and open fault-finding. This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. This reproach was, in their minds, fatal to Jesus' claims to be the Messiah; for, so confident were they of their own wisdom and holiness, that they were scarcely able to think of even the Messiah as better than themselves; hence, that which is Christ's highest glory—that He came into the world to seek and save sinners—they made a ground for the keenest reproach. This accusation, though uttered in contempt and scorn, was, like many others, most gloriously true.—Jesus did, and does receive sinners, and eats with them.

(3.) And He spake this parable unto them,—that is, unto the Pharisees and scribes. The Jews unwillingness to receive and appropriate to themselves the truth, led our Lord to veil much of His teachings under the form of a parable—a kind of discourse of which they were fond—and in seeking the meaning of which they often came upon truths too pertinent to themselves to be evaded or turned aside.

(4-6.) What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulder rejoicing, &c. Here was a comparison which all who heard—acquainted, as they were, with

shepherd life—could well understand. A shepherd, having a flock of an hundred sheep, in counting them, finds that one has strayed. Instantly his heart goes out after that one. He does not say—oh well, it is only one out of a hundred—it will not be missed from so many; but he leaves the obedient, the unstraying ones, and goes to seek the lost not indifferent, by any means, to his ninety and nine, but anxious, eager, longing for the wanderer. It is as if Jesus had said to the scribes and Pharisees—Now this is just what I am doing. My solicitude is not for the safe ones, but for the lost ones. You yourselves account these "publicans and sinners" as lost, shall not I, then, go after them, and save them? You do not think it strange when the shepherd rejoices over his recovered sheep, and, bringing it home in safety, calls upon all to rejoice too—saying—rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. You do not think the shepherd's anxiety, his search, and his joy in recovering his lost sheep, at all strange—at all unworthy of him. And shall I be blamed for caring for men who have gone astray?

(7.) I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. The question may be asked, who are they that need no repentance? Certainly they who are saved need no repentance. But this does not seem the exact point of the parable. The Pharisees and Scribes claimed that they had no need of repentance. It was, doubtless, on this ground that they rejected John's baptism (ch. vii. 30.) It was at this that Jesus' words were pointed (Mark ii. 17. This claim, Jesus, for the moment, and for the sake of argument, appears to allow; but proceeds to show them that the special joy of heaven is not over those who are all right; but over those who, having been wrong, have become right—have repented. Allowing that they are as good as they suppose, the great joy of heaven is not over them, after all, but rather over those despised ones, if they but repent and return. (The joy in heaven will be considered in connection with v. 10.)

(8-9.) Either what woman, &c., &c. This parable is substantially the same in teaching as the foregoing. Something valued—something small and insignificant, it might seem to others, but, to its owner, of great consequence, and not to be given up as lost while any chance of its recovery remained—after long and anxious search was found. The finder rejoiced greatly; but, feeling that her joy should be the joy of all who cared for her, calls upon them to share it. Rejoice with me, &c.

(10.) Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. This joy in heaven is usually spoken of as though it were primarily the joy of the angels. No doubt the angels do rejoice; but a moment's careful attention to the language shows that the joy is the joy of God—it is in the presence of the angels. The joy of the shepherd at the recovery of his sheep, the joy of the woman at the finding of her lost piece of silver was that of satisfied ownership; the joy of the friends was that of sympathy, tender love for those who rejoiced before them with such a great and peculiar joy. The great and special joy of God is in the recovery of His lost ones; and in this joy all the holy ones in heaven and all the redeemed ones on earth partake. God's joy is their joy.

SUGGESTED THOUGHTS.

The shepherd and the woman left no means untried for the recovery of what they had lost. So God leaves no means untried for the recovery of lost men. If they perish, therefore, the blame is their own.

The righteous are always the objects of God's tender care, of His loving complacency. Hence He is not represented as rejoicing over them; but rather over those who, having been lost, are found.

The mother, who after long seeking and many tears finds her child who had strayed in the wilderness or in the city, does not rejoice over those that had remained with her; but over the found one; and all her other children rejoice with her.

That the Scribes and the Pharisees did not sympathize with Jesus in His efforts to save sinners, is conclusively proved that they were not righteous. God's children are in sympathy with God in His yearning over the perishing.

QUESTION SUMMARY.

(For the Children.)

(1.) Who drew near to Jesus to hear Him? (2.) Who found fault? Why did they find fault? Because they wanted Jesus to be and do like them. What did they accuse Jesus of? Was that true? Was it wrong in Jesus to do that? Should not the fact that Jesus received sinners and ate with them, make us love Him very much? If Jesus did not do so could you be saved? could any body be saved? (3.) In what did Jesus speak to them? What is a parable? (4-6.) Give this parable in your own words. Who is represented by the man that owned the sheep? Whom do the ninety and nine sheep represent? Whom does the sheep that strayed represent? Which was the shepherd anxious and troubled about? Why? What did he do when he found it? What did he say to his friends and neighbors? Was he very, very glad? Why? (7.) When is there great joy in heaven? (8-9.) Give this parable in your own words. Whom does the woman represent? Who is meant by the lost piece of silver? What does her long and anxious search represent? When she had found it, was she very, very glad? What did she say to all her friends? (10.) When then, does God rejoice? In whose presence does God rejoice? Do you think angels rejoice with God over a poor sinner that repents and comes to Jesus? Does any one else rejoice? Yes, all good people who know about it. Jesus says to you Come, come into me. Have you listened and come? If you come, who will rejoice over you?

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST THE SOURCE OF MINISTERIAL EFFICIENCY.

But the perpetual inspiration for life and for motive, for patience and for sacrifice, is conscious union with Christ. Christ at this moment is different to each one of us here. He differs in our idea of His perfection, in our attainment of His image, in our fruition of His presence, in our capacity for His love. And as Christ differs for us, His kingdom will differ by us. Oh, to get nearer to His face and to better see His glory and to be in deeper sympathy with the purpose of His cross. This at least is what He himself tells us is the one secret of glorifying Him in the world and of discovering His truth for ourselves. "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you. And this sustained holy fellowship will mean two things,—Peace for our own hearts and intercession for our people. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." As the greatest of American preachers puts it, "God is even more jealous of His love than of His honor." "Let us run into the shelter of that Divine life, just creep across the threshold, where no trouble can pursue, and if we are really Christ's, then back again into the very bosom of His Father. He will carry us. We, too, shall look out and be as calm and independent as He is. The needs of men shall touch us just as keenly as they touch Him, but the sneers and strifes of men shall pass us by as they pass Him by, and leave no mark on His unruffled life." It will also keep us to intercession, and our ministry with our people will ever depend on our prayers for them. Hear Massillon, in the "Discours sur le Zele des Pasteurs":—"Accompany your anxieties with your prayers; speak still more often to God about the disorders among your people than to themselves; deplore more often to Him the obstacles which your own unfaithfulness often offers to their conversion than these which their own obstinacy can produce. Charge yourselves alone, before His feet, with the scanty fruit of your ministry; as a tender father,

excuse in His presence the faults of your children, and accuse only yourselves." Finally, look on seriously, steadfastly, solemnly, to the end of all. As I, for one, look back over a ministry of nearly thirty-two years, three reflections fill my spirit with wonder and with sadness; the awfulness of the responsibility which I have so feebly appreciated—the grandeur of the ministry which I have so coldly undertaken—the joy of the ministry which I so scantily taste. My brethren, my brethren, the cross of Christ is at once the measure of Divine love and human necessity, and the story of that cross we are to preach, and to live for the salvation of the world. Let us not grow accustomed to its awfulness, or wearied by its onerousness, nor indifferent to its reward. Let us preach our sermons first to ourselves, and let us humbly, eagerly, reverently, faithfully, use the means of grace for our own spirits, it we would pass them on to our flocks, which we are to feed for God. Let us remember the failing strength, the waning opportunities, the regrets on the death-bed, the inevitable summons to the judgment seat of Christ. You remember, perhaps, the dying regrets of Adolphe Monod, a saint of God, if ever there was one in our modern times. He regretted that he had not learnt to better purpose, that the secret of a holy, active and peaceable life is in an entire self-surrender to God, both of will and plan. He regretted his scanty, desultory, and broken study of the Word of God; he regretted that he had wasted time through not being sufficiently methodical and painstaking in the use of it; he regretted his prayers; he regretted the absorbing influence of trifles. And it was too late. Life was gone, and regrets could not bring back the irrecoverable past, nor experience the wisdom of yesterday. As I began, I end:—"Ministerial efficiency is dependent on the life and character of the minister." In St. Paul's way of putting it, "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is souls we have to win; and we shall best win them, not only by ingenious dialectics, or vivid scene-painting, or massive erudition, or by pathetic appeals, but chiefly by the awful earnestness of men who are fired with zeal for God and with serious sympathy for their brethren, whose goodness is the breath of their speech and their consistency its rhetoric. We have presently to meet these souls in eternity; and these characters of ours, which are the personal forces of our ministry, we are ourselves forming day by day, to be our spiritual, indestructible inheritance in the everlasting future. If the fiery trial which is to try us is to spare our work, it can only be by our now welcoming the candle of the Lord to search us, and prove us; and the only guarantee presented for our personal acceptance and our public coronation is a "life hid with Christ in God."—*Bishop of Rochester.*

—An old Dutch dominie in the country, the Rev Dr. —, was a shrewd man, and he once had a balky horse, which always stopped at the foot of a certain hill and took his own time for starting. One pleasant morning the dominie concluded he would try his way of curing the horse, so he put a day's provision and a day's reading into his carriage, and started for the hill. At the foot the horse balked as usual. The Doctor laid down the reins, settled himself back, and took out his book. After waiting some time the horse concluded he would go, but with rein and voice the Doctor forbade it, so they stayed there all that day till it was too dark to read, when, hungry and thirsty and subdued, the horse went up the hill, and never balked again.