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BIBLE LESSONS.

Second Quarter.

STUDIES IN LUKES GOSPEL.

Lesson XII. June 22. Luke 12: 22-34.

TRUST IN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."—Luke 12: 30.

EXPLANATORY.

I. GOD WHO GIVES THE GREATER, THEREBY ASSURES US OF HIS CARE FOR THE LESS. 22. And He said unto His disciples, Jesus turns from the multitude to those who believe on Him (although all within their hearing), (1) because He would lift their thoughts into a more lofty and spiritual region than would be comprehended by unbelievers. (2) Because the disciples alone could fully appropriate the promises. Therefore I say unto you, because of the danger and evil of covetousness, and the folly, shown by the preceding parable, of spending life in laying up treasures for yourselves. Take no thought, Be not anxious. For your life.

"Life" here is the original the same word that is usually translated "souls" in the Old Version, "the principle of existence," "the basis of sense." Then follows the regard in which they were not to be anxious for their life. What ye shall eat. Make not your physical and temporal wants the special and great objects of thought and care. The precept has special reference to a concern for the future, as is evident from Matt. 6: 34. Neither the body, what ye shall put on. The mere outward things that comfort, adorn, and protect the body.

23. The life is more than meat: food. The argument may be twofold. (1) Since God has given us life and bodies, we may be sure that if we devote them to Him, He will see that we have the means of obtaining the food and clothing which are necessary for their existence and welfare. He will not bestow the greater, and then make the gift useless by withholding the less. (2) We should give our chief attention to that which is most important, and which makes the best use of our life and our bodies, for the service of God and man, and not be anxious about such lesser things as food and clothing.

What, then, are we to take thought about? Why, about our work. What are we not to take thought about? Why, about our life. The one is our business, the other is God's. But you turn it the other way. You take no thought of earnestness about the doing of your duty; but you take thought of care lest God should not fulfil His part in the going on of the world. A man's business is just to do his duty. God takes upon Himself the feeding and the clothing. Will the work of the world be neglected if a man thinks of his work, his duty, and he will be done, instead of what he is to eat, what he is to drink, and wherewithal he is to be clothed? I think that the work of the world will be only so much the better done.

II. ILLUSTRATION FROM GOD'S CARE OF THE BIRDS.—24. Consider the ravens. For they neither sow nor reap. Notice it is not said to us, "sow not, reap not, gather not into barns." The birds are not our example to follow in their habits, for God hath made us to differ from them: the doing all these things is part of our "how much better are ye." And God feedeth them. Not in idleness, not by putting food in their mouths while they sit still in the trees and sing and wait; but by providing the food which they can obtain, and providing them with the means of seeing and obtaining food. Not idleness, but industry; is taught us by God's care of the birds. How much more are ye better than the fowls. Jesus no doubt could point to ravens and other birds while He was speaking.

We never knew an earthly father take care of his fowls and neglect his children; and shall we fear this from our heavenly Father?

III. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF CARING FOR OURSELVES. 25. Which of you with taking thought, By being anxious, do maketh great that anxiety may be the uselessness of anxiety is now set forth. Can add to his stature: or his age, the duration of his life. One cubic. "Plans which give themselves no care, yet make an enormous increase, while ye by your anxieties do not in the least hasten your growth."

26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least. The really great things are the formation of the body, the giving of life. Why take ye thought (anxiety) for the supply of food, the government of the world, the control of the powers that surround us. There are a thousand things connected with our welfare that are as much beyond our control as the march of the stars through the sky. Let us commit that part of our lives to God, without anxiety, and only see to it that we do our duty, serving Him faithfully, carrying out the principles of His kingdom.

IV. PROOF FROM GOD'S CARE OF FLOWERS. Consider the lilies how they grow. Many were doubtless on every hand within sight of his hearers. They toil not, they spin not. They do not work in man's way for their gorgeous array. They simply live in the way God intended, and fulfil their mission. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Solomon represented to the Jewish mind the ideal of regal magnificence (see 1 Kings, chap. 10).

28. If then God so clothe the grass: every kind of herb, including the lilies, which is cast into the oven. The grass and coarse herbage, in the scarcity of other fuel, was cut, and dried in the sun, and used for fuel. How much more will He clothe you, who are infinitely better than the lilies. It is not possible that God should take better care of the lilies than of His children. Eye of little faith. In comparison with the faith you ought to have, contrasted with the worthiness of God to be trusted, His loving kindness that delights to minister to the wants of His children.

V. ANXIETY BELONGS TO THE WORLDLY, NOT TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD. 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, etc. The emphasis is on ye. The Greek for seek has the idea of covetousness and anxiety. Do not make these the main object of your lives, so as to neglect higher duties, or to put yourselves into temptation to sin.

Neither be ye of doubtful mind. The word in the original is derived from "major," and is explained by some: do not rise in fancy to high demands, creating imagined necessities, thus making yourselves more ill contented and more disposed to unbelieving anxiety. Others interpret it: do not fluctuate in your anxious, tossed between hope and fear.

30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: the heathen, worldly people. To make worldly things the chief end of life, to be absorbed in the pursuit of earthly wealth, the supplies of bodily wants, is a mark of a worldly man, is a proof that one is not a disciple of Christ. It partakes of the nature of heathenism.

VI. THE PROMISE OF GOD FOR HIS LIFE. 30. And your Father (whom you love and trust and obey) knoweth that ye have need of these things. He does not merely care for worlds and empires, but takes an interest in the personal welfare of each of us. God does not say to us that we have so earthly needs, or that it is a matter of indifference whether our wants are supplied. But He would (1) lift up our souls above an absorbing interest in them, to higher and nobler things, that are best here and endure forever. (2) He would show us the true way to obtain them; and (3) cause even these lower things to be a means of increasing our faith and love and ennobling our character.

31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God. Implying what Matthew expresses, seek it first. Make this your chief aim: for the heavenly riches. Treasure in the heaven that state in which the human will is the free agent of the divine will; where God's principles prevail, where His love is supreme, where His will is done as it is in heaven. And all these things: food, clothing, and all that is necessary to our welfare. Shall be added to you. Shall be given in addition. God will see that these necessary wants are supplied. So Jesus a little later on said to His disciples, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God sake. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18: 29, 30).

32. TREASURES IN HEAVEN. 32. Fear not, little flock. A few lambs among wolves; a few unarmed and untrained disciples in the midst of hostile countrymen, a hostile empire, a hostile world. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom: the kingdom of God which they were to seek first.

33. Sell that ye have. Take of the property you have already acquired, in order to give alms. Be more anxious to give than to accumulate. Provide yourselves bags (purses) which was not old; that ye may receive. Treasure in the heavens that faithfulness. These treasures are those of character, in ourselves and others, good deeds that make others happier and better, the rewards which God bestows upon faithfulness, the souls saved by your labors, the blessings of heaven, the unsearchable riches of Christ. No thief can take these away, nor moth corrupt.

34. For where your treasure is: that which you most prize and love and seek for, that into which you put your life, there will your heart be turned. Your highest love, your chief interest must necessarily follow the treasure. (1) The treasure is a test as to where the heart is. (2) The treasure is a means by which we can bring our heart into the right place.

"Lucy says that there are some good things in which we cannot feel much interest. The cure is to invest in them, put labor, care, thought into them, and the heart will follow. Thus we become interested in the Bible, in the poor, in missions, in any department of Christian work, by investing our treasures in them."

Barren-Bearers. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

It was Tom and Lucy's text for the day, in the Scripture scroll that hung under the wall, and Tom, who never found it hard to remember, responded promptly when mamma asked for it at breakfast; but Lucy, who was two years younger, and had stopped to play with baby when nurse was called out of the room, came colored painfully when her turn came. She could never learn in a hurry, and there had been very little time this morning after her baby brother had been taken off her hands.

"I—can't remember," she stammered, and tears started to her eyes.

Tom whistled. "Well, if you can't learn a little text like that, I'll give up," he said.

But papa looked lovingly at his little daughter.

"I can't learn the verse in her heart, if not on her lips—I am sure nurse thinks so," he said. "Tom, what does it mean by bearing one another's burdens? What is a burden?"

Tom was stirring his coffee a little shamefacedly.

"Oh, anything one has to carry, isn't it?" he asked. "A load or a bundle, you know, father."

"Tom carries my books to school for me every morning," pleaded Lucy, looking up shyly into her father's face. She had a dim notion that Tom was being blamed, and that was something her loving little heart could not brook. Surely that was doing what the text said. She could not understand why papa's smile grew so tender, nor why Tom looked at her so gratefully.

"But you cannot carry Tom's books for him; how are you going to bear his burdens?" asked mamma.

It was Lucy's turn to look sober: but it was also Tom's turn to speak.

"She helps in lots of other ways," said she, motherly. "And I ain't half as good to you as I ought to be, Lucy. Why, you always know where my things are when I want them, and help me out of scrapes; and I know it would have been easier, when I was laid up with my broken leg, if I hadn't had you to wait on me and read to me. Bearing with a cross chap like me must have been harder than carrying a hundred books."

"Was that bearing one another's burdens?" asked Lucy, opening her blue eyes wide. "Why, that was just loving and trying to help you, Tom. Is that what it means, mother? Trying to make things easier for people because we love them?"

"Yes, I think it is," said mother, and there was a fringe of tears to her smile.

"Making things easier for people because we love them, is indeed fulfilling the law of Him whose great command-

ment was that we should 'love one another.' And it is following very closely in the footsteps of Him 'who loved us, and gave Himself for us.' Children, you have often lightened mother's burden when it was heavy. I long to see you set out in life as loving, Christ-like little burden-bearers for all about you. Every heart has its load, and though you cannot lift it, you may make it easier to bear. Remember the little flower pressing up through the prison stones, that helped the weary man to bear his months of imprisonment, and do not be afraid to try. If you cannot open prison doors, you may bring a little brightness inside of them."

Tom was thinking. "I suppose Mr. Edwards finds it something of a burden, teaching us boys," he said. "I wonder if it would cheer him any if I tried to keep out of mischief and studied harder?"

Papa's eyes twinkled. "Ask him," he said.

"And there's Joe Brown," Tom went on. "The boys make game of him, because his clothes are shabby. I guess he wouldn't mind so much having to wear them if I showed him it didn't make any difference with me. He's the smartest boy in the class, and they all know it."

"Try it," whispered mother.

Lucy had slipped away to pick a bunch of flowers for the new girl who sat next to her in school.—Selected.

The following story of the present Lord Chamberlain when he was plain Mr. Hardinge Giffard, and before he wore the silk of a Q. C., is now going up and down amongst the papers: At an assize in South Wales he was cross-examining a hostile witness, who had been particularly shrewd in his replies. "They sometimes call you a Devonshire dumpling, don't they?" asked Mr. Giffard, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. "I believe they do," replied the witness.

"But you are not a Devonshire dumpling?" quoth the barrister who was destined one day to sit on the woolsack. The witness waited till the laughter in court had subsided. "Hey, but if I had been a dumpling," he drawled out at length, "you lawyers 'ud a' gobbled it up before now!"

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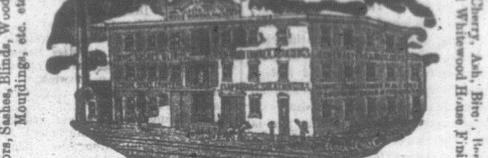
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