

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XLIII.

Oct. 27, } *THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.* { Luke xvi.
1878. } 19-31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death”—Prov. xiv. 32.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Luke xvi. 1-15.... The unjust steward.
T. Matt. xxv. 1-13.... The ten virgins.
W. Matt. xxv. 14-30.... The talents.
Th. Luke xvi. 19-31.... The rich man and Lazarus.
F. Matt. xxv. 31-46.... The last judgment.
S. Prov. xiv. 21-35.... The wicked driven away.
S. James ii. 1-10.... The poor, rich in faith, chosen.

HELPS TO STUDY.

This is a parable, not a fable. It is not a picture of the imagination, but an unveiling of the truth by Him who knows all things and speaks this truth, terrible as it is, in love. Christ's object is not to awaken groundless fear, but mercifully to warn us of our danger, that we may escape for our lives.

The parable is composed of two scenes, the one here on earth, the other in Hades.

I. THE SCENE ON THE EARTH: Verses 19-22. In it very marked is the contrast between the rich man and the beggar. The portrait of each is sketched in a few bold strokes. The rich man lives in luxury. He is clothed in costly garments (Note 1). He is wealthy and enjoys life. No accusation, such as St. James (v. 1-6) hurled against the rich men of his day, is brought against him. It is not said that he was fraudulent or gluttonous. To think of him as such, destroys the purport of the parable. His crime was that he lived for himself. He had ample means, abundance of opportunities, but he had no thought for God, no love for men. His only care was to dwell at ease, and to keep at a distance all that was unpleasant. At his very gate, all unheeded and neglected, lay a poor beggar.

This beggar's name is mentioned, while the rich man's is not given. On which Augustine remarks, “Seems he not to you to have been reading from that book where he found the name of the poor man written, but found not the name of the rich? for that book is the Book of Life.” The name is significant, *Lazarus* is an abbreviation of *Eleazar*, that is, “God helps.” He represents these pious poor ones whose confidence is in God alone. The name throws light on the character of the man. In what a state of utter destitution and misery he is; utterly helpless he is laid at the rich man's gate, doubtless by some friends, poor like himself. There he was preaching every day the most pathetic sermon to Dives. It was God's providence placed him there. It was perhaps God's last pleading with the rich man, his last opportunity of breaking away from selfishness. But it is in vain. The beggar lies in his rags, while the wild, masterless dogs licked his sores, and snapped up the crumbs with which he would gladly have been fed (Note 2). But at length death mercifully releases the beggar from his misery. There is no description of his funeral. It was “only a pauper whom nobody knows.” This is all as far as appears to men.

The rich man was allowed a little space longer for repentance. Then he, too, died and was buried. No doubt there was all the pomp and pageant of a costly funeral, with the ostentatious sorrow of hired mourners.

So ends the contrast on earth. It is still carried on in the unseen world, but with what a reversion. Where the glory of the rich man ended, there the glory of Lazarus began.

II. THE SCENE IN HADES: verses 23-31. A glorious retinue awaited Lazarus at the portals of the unseen world. He is carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The ministering spirits (Heb. i. 14) still attend the just. The Jews used the expression, “Abraham's bosom,” of the perfect rest and bliss of Paradise. It implied communion and fellowship in glory with all that is good and great. We must be careful here, lest we think that the beggar's poverty was his title to glory; that simply because he was poor here he was enriched hereafter. It was because that, although poor, he was “rich in faith” (Jas. ii. 5) that he was welcomed to the Mansions of Peace. Both his name and his patience, and the whole spirit of the parable, with its contrasts, make this evident.

But the rich man lifted up his eyes in Hades. He is in torments. These are real and terrible. If the Lord makes use of figurative language, it is not because the reality is less, but greater than the figure. Arnot compares these figures to the red lights which are hung out as danger signals. Through them the great dangers, which are, as it were, behind them, and which are unseen, are made known for our warning.

The wretched man seeth Abraham afar off. He pleads that he is a Jew. The Rabbins said, “All the circumcised are safe.” Here is one, but not safe; and in vain he pleads his privileges. The man who had fared sumptuously would now gladly receive the slightest alleviation of his miseries from the beggar whom on earth he despised.

It is evident that death has not changed the character of Dives. He has not ceased to be selfish. There is no penitence or pardon. He seeks for relief, but not for repentance or pardon.

Abraham recognizes him as a Jew, but this avails nothing. His request cannot be granted. It is both unreasonable and impossible. He is now reaping just as he had sown. He chose on earth his good things, self-indulgent he lived. He has his reward—Matt. vi. 2. He sowed to the flesh, and of the flesh he is reaping corruption (Gal. vi. 8). What right has he to complain of the harvest? On earth he had opportunities and warnings. But now it is too late. *Death has fixed his condition irrevocably.* Between him and the

blessed there is a great gulf fixed. There is no hope of, no warrant for, repentance beyond the grave.

The second request of Dives only makes it plain that his character is unchanged. He would justify himself and censure God's dealings with men. He desires a warning to be sent to his brethren lest they should also come to this place of torment. He implies that if he had been better warned, he would have escaped. He shows, too, the unchanged unbelief of his heart. He thinks his brethren should give heed to a returned spirit, when they refused to believe Moses and the prophets. It is the very essence of unbelief that it gives that credence to portents and prodigies which it refuses to the Word of God. No good can be done by “spirits” coming to the earth. This shows us the worth of the pretended “spiritualist manifestations.”

In the answer of Abraham our Lord emphatically declares the sufficiency of the revelation and the opportunities which God has given us. If our Lord thus set forth the sufficiency of the Old Testament, how much more is that of the New established.

Our Lord has lifted but a little the veil which conceals the unseen world. Let us not seek to be wise above what is written; but rather let us endeavour to give earnest heed to the solemn lessons of this mysterious Scripture.

To every one is here given ample opportunities. All are without excuse (Rom. i. 20). Even God's providential arrangements are for the purpose of proving and educating men. Thus the poverty of Lazarus should have called forth and exercised the unselfish sympathy and benevolence of Dives.

Whatever a man sows here, he shall reap hereafter. Character formed here, determines condition in the future.

There is consciousness, remembrance, recognition in the eternal world.

The time to decide our eternal destiny is the present. On the present moment hang everlasting issues. Hence arise the value and the responsibility of life.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

1. Purple.—This was the costly dye of Tyrian purple, so celebrated in the East. This was exceedingly scarce, being from a rare shell-fish about Tyre, and only a few drops in each fish. The precious article and art are entirely lost. This was the outer garment or robe.—*Jacobus*. It was accounted the royal colour. There was as much of pride as of luxury in its use.—*Trench*. Fine linen.—This linen was chiefly produced of the flax that grew on the banks of the Nile, in Egypt—Prov. vii. 16; Ezek. xxvii. 7. It was peculiarly soft and white, and was therefore much sought after as an article of luxury.—*Barnes*. Pliny tells of a kind of *byssos* (fine linen) which was exchanged for its weight in gold. Its glory was in its dazzling whiteness. The linen was the inner vest, the purple the outer robe. The blue and white composed a highly-prized combination of colours.—*Trench*.

2. It was the custom for the rich to eat only the crusts of the loaves, and to use the soft part within as a napkin upon which to wipe the fingers. The portions thus used, and thrown away, were the “crumbs” for which he hoped.

“THE Sunday School,” writes Prof. A. H. Fischer, “is an older institution in Germany than is generally supposed. The city of Hamburg had one as early as 1789, and in 1824 the Baptists started another in the same city, which is still in existence. In 1862 the whole number of Sunday Schools in the states composing the present German Empire (excepting Alsace) was thirty-two. From that year the number rapidly increased, so that ten years later it had reached over 1,200. The number of teachers was over 4,600 and the number of children in attendance over 80,000. I have no later statistics; but it is probably safe to estimate that there are over 1,500 Sunday Schools and more than 100,000 Sunday School scholars in Germany now.”

THE heaven of Christ is felt in all institutions to-day. Strike out of the daily paper all that bears the mark of Christ and you leave a grinning skeleton. Strike out of literature its Christian tone, and its soul is gone. As a rising tide penetrates every inlet and creek and bay, and lifts on its bosom each brown chip and blackened stalk, as well as lordly steamer, so are great and small lifted by the mighty influence which Christ has sent forth. We have little faith in man left to himself, or in human institutions unassisted; but we have faith in that Spirit which envelops the earth even as the atmosphere bathes this soft-rolling ball in all its zones. We place our finger upon this article of our creed, and with strong, glad voices say, “I believe in the Holy Ghost.”—*Christian at Work*.

MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY.

LONDON.—In First Presbyterian Church, London, on 26th October.

LINDSAY.—At Lindsay, on the last Tuesday of November.

LANARK AND RENFREW.—In St. Andrew's Church, Carleton Place, on November 19th, at 1 p.m.

SAUGEEN.—In Knox Church, Harriston, on Tuesday the 17th Dec., at 2 o'clock p.m.

TORONTO.—In the usual place, on the first Tuesday of November, at 11 a.m.

GUELPH.—In Knox Church, Guelph, on the third Tuesday of November, at 10 o'clock a.m.

BARRIE.—Next ordinary meeting at Barrie, Tuesday, 26th November, at 11 a.m. Adjourned meeting, to dispose of call from Knox Church, Oro, and of unfinished business, at Barrie, Tuesday, 15th Oct., at 11 a.m.

BRUCE.—In the Presbyterian Church, Port Elgin, on Tuesday, 17th December, at 2 o'clock p.m.

PETERBOROUGH.—In St. Paul's Church, Peterborough, on the third Tuesday of January.

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WORDS OF THE WISE.

FOLLOWING many vocations has ruined the life of many a man.

BELIEVE not ill of a brother till it is proved beyond doubt.

THERE is but one thing that is sure here on earth, and that is death.

GOD denies us nothing, but with a design to give us something better.—*Adam*.

TRANQUIL pleasures last the longest. We are not fitted to bear long the burden of great joys.—*Bovee*.

As the heart is, so is love to the heart. It partakes of its strength or weakness, its health or disease.—*Longfellow*.

THE great man loves the conversation or the book that convicts him, not that which soothes or flatters him.—*Emerson*.

IN a musical instrument, when we observe a number of strings set to harmony we conclude that some skilful musician has tuned them.

IN the cities of the dead the houses are small and close together; and a thistle is as liable to grow from a rich man's grave as a daisy is from the mound that covers the dust of a beggar.

CHRIST not only purges, but seconds and enforces our prayers. He continually joins the cry of his blood to the cry of our prayers. We may safely depend upon it that we shall prevail.—*Scott*.

IF there be one thing on earth which is truly admirable, it is to see God's wisdom blessing an inferiority of natural powers, where they have been honestly, truly and zealously cultivated.—*Dr. Arnold*.

“It is the unexpected that happens.” None know the future but God Himself and those to whom He reveals it. This fact should teach us modesty when trying to pierce the veil of the unseen.

MORE than two-thirds of our voters are property-holders, and the rest want to be, hope to be, and *can be*. This country of ours is not the permanent field for tramps and communists.—*Secretary Sherman*.

GOOD words do more than hard speeches; as the sunbeams without any noise will make the traveller cast off his cloak, which all the blustering winds could not do, but only make him bind it closer to him.—*Leighton*.

TO have Christ come to us in the fourth watch of the night, hushing the stormy wind and stilling the wrathful waters and bringing us straight to land, is a better blessing than to be with Him when He feeds the five thousand.—*J. B. T. Marsh*.

MAN proposes but God disposes. We trust our own wisdom; but how often it proves to be folly! We fret and fume because our wise plan is interfered with; but by and by we find out that God's plan was wiser than ours, and we bless Him for our disappointment.

A MAN of genius never seeks applause; while the little minded of those who have but a small portion of intellect try by their vanity and conceited boastings to build upon the mental resources of others their own fame and reputation. However, it is for the best, for they soon fall to their proper level—once they reach it, they never rise.

A NAME on a church register, with its owner always, or nearly always, absent, or worshipping here and there, and yonder, anywhere, or nowhere, is a positive hindrance. Fifty prompt, praying, faithful, working Christians in a church are a stronger organization than five hundred diverted, indifferent and undetermined. Proper discipline will both work and weed the garden of the Lord.—*Methodist Recorder*.

How idle are words that are based only on wild conjecture! Much would be gained every way if we all would be careful to adhere to plain, unvarnished truth in our statements. It is not in politics only that false and idle words are used. To bridle the tongue is one of the most difficult duties incumbent on Christians. A bitter word, once uttered, cannot be recalled. And for every idle word we are to give an account to the great Judge of all.

SOMETIMES the kindly helper deceives himself. A day may be filled with good acts which are yet, in one sense, a waste. It would not be wise for Mr. Moody to spend the hour before his evening service in helping a country boy finish splitting his cord of wood. To say *no* to one man may make it possible to say *yes* to a thousand. But it is not a hard task to decide whether one's own danger is in the direction of quick kindness or of calculating selfishness.—*S. S. Times*.

THE province of a christian newspaper is not an exclusive discussion of religious subjects, but the discussion of all proper subjects from a Christian standpoint. The writers of the Scriptures dealt with questions of every day life, with governments, laws, wars, the crops, and household affairs, as well as total depravity, doctrines and the churches. A religious paper, secularized, is in a very bad way; but a religious paper that spiritualizes secular things is very important, and an honor to Christian progress.—*Christian Weekly*.

CHRISTIANITY is as many-sided as humanity. It touches us like the atmosphere at every point. It feeds the simple and defies the speculations of the learned. On one side it is all divine, on another it is all human. Here it moves upon the voluntary power with the strength of a great purpose; there it settles upon the affections with the gentleness of the dew. Now it warms in the embrace of the intuitions with the ease of an instinct; then it towers above the conscience, gripping the convictions with the omnipotence of obligation. Again it has the breadth and billow of emotion; next it awes and masters the mind with the cold serenity of the intellect. One moment it moves with a vigor that expects to gain all by all activity; the next moment it submits with the meekness of one who hopes for all purity through all suffering. Christianity is as many-sided as its subject and as its author. It most perfectly realizes the idea of the Infinite, who alone is greatest in all directions.—*Christian Advocate*.