

The Quiet Hour

The Paralytic Healed.

BY PROFESSOR M.B. RIDDLE, D.D. LL. D.

*S.S. Lesson for March 11, 1901, Mark 1:1-22.
Golden Text: The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.—Mark 2:10.

Intervening events.—The order of Mark is chronological, and the events narrated are: A withdrawal of Jesus, the next morning, to a solitary place for prayer (Mark 1:35), where Simon and others found him (vs. 36, 37); a preaching tour vs. (40-45), narrated by Matthew and Luke also.

Place.—Capernaum; see last Lesson. Surroundings.—The house (v. 1) was probably the usual residence of Jesus; whether that of Peter or of the mother of Jesus is uncertain. It was evidently large with an inner court, which was probably surrounded by a gallery, where Jesus was teaching. The light roof of this gallery could easily be "broken up" (v. 4). The accounts forbid the view that was simply the removal of an awning.

Time.—The latter part of March, year of Rome 781; that is, A.D. 28, just before the second passover. See on next lesson.

Persons.—A crowd of people; a paralytic, and four men that carried him; certain scribes (and Pharisees,—Luke).

Parallel Passages.—Matthew 8:1-8; Luke 5:17-26.

Home at Last.

O bring us home at last,
Thou who didst guide us when our torn was bright,
Darkness is falling fast;
Gather Thy children home before the night.

O bring us home at last,
The evening mists steal o'er us damp and chill,
While autumn's morning blast
Sweeps in sad music o'er vale and hill.

O bring us home at last,
Have we much farther through the night to go?
Have we not almost passed
The wilderness? Thou wilt not leave us so.

O bring us home at last,
Our Father! Bid our weary wanderings cease;
Uplift the veil o'ercast
Between our spirits and the home of peace,
"British Weekly."

Half-Heartedness.

I am tired and sick of half-heartedness. You don't like a half-hearted man; you don't care for any one to love you with a halfheart, and the Lord won't have it. If we are going to seek for him and find him, we must do it with all our heart. I believe the reason why so few people find Christ is because they do not search for him with all their heart; they are not terribly in earnest about their souls' salvation. God is earnest; everything God has done proves that he is earnest about the salvation of men's souls. He has proved it by giving his only Son to die for us. The Son of God was in earnest when He died. What is Calvary but a proof of that?

And the Lord wants us to be in earnest when it comes to the great question of the soul's salvation. I never saw men seeking him with all their hearts but they soon found him.—Moody.

Words of Jesus—The Coin in the Fish's Mouth.

BY REV. JAS. STALKER, D. D.

Matt. xvii. 24-27.

Are we to suppose that when Jesus said to Peter on this occasion, "What thinkest thou, Simon?" there was a reproach implied in the use of the apostle's old name, as if Jesus were hinting that he had been acting in the character of the natural rather than the spiritual man, or, to quote the words employed by Jesus Himself on another occasion, "savouring not the things that be of God, but those that be of man." Peter had been asked by the tax-collector whether his Master meant to pay the tax, and he had made haste to answer, yes; but he had been in too great a hurry, as the interrogation of Jesus reminded him. It is of consequence to ascertain exactly what this tax was. It was not any of the imposts of the Romans, which the publicans collected, but a Jewish tax, founded on a payment of half a shekel made originally for the outfit of the tabernacle, but revived in later times as an annual tax, for the upkeep of the temple and its services. It was collected by the synagogue authorities throughout the whole Jewish world. Frequent mention of it is made in Jewish history out side the Bible, as it brought in a very large annual income to the temple treasury. It was generally paid in the form of a coin of two drachmas—as we should say a two-shilling piece, but the value was only fifteen pence—and the exact question put by the tax-collectors was, "Does your master pay the didrachmon?" It was in Capernaum that it was asked for, this being Jesus' usual place of residence. Possibly there was an evil intention in the demand for it, as rabbis were generally exempted from payment; or the question may have contained the insinuation that Jesus was one who despised the temple. And this was what drew from St. Peter the prompt assertion, that his Master would certainly pay, for he knew Him to be one who fulfilled all righteousness.

There is certainly an element of pleasantry in the question of Jesus, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute—of their own children or of strangers?" St. Peter did not at once perceive what Jesus was driving at, so he replied without hesitation, "Of strangers." "Then," rejoined Jesus, "are the children free?" Had Peter forgotten his own confession, uttered only a short time before at Casarea Philippi, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God?" Had

he forgotten the voice, still later, on the Holy Mount, "This is My beloved Son?" Jehovah was the King of kings, and the temple was His palace; Jesus was His Son, and therefore it was absurd to ask Him to pay for the support of the temple. It must all have been spoken lightly and brightly; yet, you see, there lies in it a very profound meaning. Indeed, this is one of the passages in which Jesus most distinctly claims a peculiar relation to God; and it is all the more impressive because He does so spontaneously. In most other passages the confession is wrung from Him, or it is made by others and He assents. But here He starts the subject of His own accord. This passage, therefore, takes a very prominent place in the testimony of Jesus to Himself.

The order given to Peter to go down to the lake, and with a hook fetch up a fish, in the mouth of which would be found a sater, or four-shilling piece, and therewith to pay the tax for himself and Jesus, was a remarkable one in many ways. First, it was a miracle of knowledge. A coin in a fish's mouth is not, indeed, an unexampled occurrence, as fishes dive at anything shining which they see in the water; but the astonishing circumstance is that Jesus should have known that such a fish was there, and that it would come to Peter's hook. Childish attempts have been made to explain the miracle away; but, if we are to accept the Gospels as trustworthy, there is no reason why this miracle should be an exception. Christ is the Lord of nature and of providence. As He saw what was in the fish's mouth, so does He see where the silver and the gold are, and He can cause them to be produced where they are needed. He sees the absence of money from the pockets of the poor, and this miracle encourages them to pray to Him in their time of need. Secondly, the objection has been raised that, in performing this miracle, Jesus acted contrary to His well-known principle of not using His miraculous power for His own behoof. But the answer has been well given that, instead of preventing His poverty, this miracle exposed it; and, besides, it served other ends besides the relief of a personal difficulty; for it contained great lessons for both the disciples and the tax-collectors. Thirdly, the most impressive lesson which it taught, in addition to the relation of Jesus to God, was the humility of Christ. He gave as the reason for paying the money, "Lest we should offend them." He had the right to refuse, but He did not insist on His right, just as St. Paul subsequently had the right to demand support from his converts, but worked with his hands rather than be dependant on them, and in the controversy about meats, urged the strong to sacrifice their liberty for the sake of the weak. Worldly men are especially touchy about anything which has the appearance of avarice in those professing to love God, and it is better to suffer loss than to give offence. Jesus had a great deal to say, in His doctrine, about offences; and we see in this instance how strictly He walked up to His own precepts.—Christian Leader.

Act well at the moment, and you have performed a good for eternity.—Lavater.