

The Quiet Hour.

Prayer and Promise.

S.S. LESSON—Luke 11: 1-13. May 1, 1904.

GOLDEN TEXT—Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find—Luke 11: 9.

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As he was praying, v. 1. One might think that Jesus would have been above the necessity of prayer. Yet he prayed in the Jordan at His baptism, and the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove; on the lonely slopes of Mount Hermon, and He was transfigured, and His raiment became "white and glistening;" in the gloomy shades of Gethsemane, and angels came and ministered unto Him. True, He did not need to cry for pardon; but the better a man is the more irrepensible is the eagerness of his heart to commune with God, and the more impossible is life without His presence. Thus the Son of God becomes the supreme model for the praying Christian. "Let me breathe," says a man gasping, "or else I die." "Let me pray," says the Christian, "or else I die."

Teach us to pray, v. 1. We can do little without learning. We learned how to walk, to talk, to play, to read, to sing, to work. We must needs be taught how to pray. It is easy to pretend that we know. Certain men will loiter around the doors of the palace, that they may seem to be among the friends of the king. We may haunt the house of prayer, and even become familiar with the customary forms of address to God, and yet have little fellowship with Him. Only Christ can teach us how to order our thoughts and our hearts aright in the divine presence.

Our Father, v. 2. Edwin Booth, having once repeated the Lord's Prayer so as to draw tears and sobs from his auditors, declared that it took him thirty years' practice to acquire the power of repeating it so impressively. But to pray it in the fulness of its spirit what a lifelong walk with God and submission to His will would be useful.

Thy name . . thy kingdom . . thy will. Note the attitude the suppliant must assume. His eye is first turned to the Name—God's name, the Kingdom—God's kingdom, the Will—God's will; only afterwards it is directed to His own necessities. He must be surrendered before He can say, "Thy will be done." "This is a revolutionary petition. It would make many a man's shop and store tumble to the ground to utter it. Who can stand at the end of the avenue, along which all his pleasant thoughts and wishes are blossoming like flowers, and send these terrible words crashing down through it? It is the most fearful prayer to pray in the world."

Because of his importunity, v. 8. Jesus illustrates His point from the action of a very selfish man. You go to a neighbor's house in need. It is midnight; he is in bed; he cannot be troubled. But you keep on knocking. Eventually, to rid himself of your importunity, he rises and gives you what you want. Now, if a hard-hearted, self-centred neighbor can be thus forced to act by the very persistence of your entreaty, think you not that God will graciously hear who has said, "Ask and it shall be given you." The little child knows how, by kisses and tears and throwing her arms around her father's neck, to win what otherwise would have been refused. Even the suppliant eyes

of the dumb dog will win from the beggar half of his last crust. How much more will not God, who spared not His Son, freely give us all things?

Ask—seek . . knock, v. 9. Yes, ask! Lay the axe at the root of your foolish pride, and recognize the patent fact, that for the necessities and enjoyments of life you depend upon God! Seek! Let others give themselves up, if they will, to the search for earthly treasure. See that you find the pearl of great price. And knock! Be content to have the doors of the rich and great closed against you, so only you find your way into the place where God dwells!

The Holy Spirit, v. 13. This is God's greatest present gift to Christians. Without Him life is devoid of joy and power. We need to be "filled" by Him. Then are we singularly elevated above all the trials, worries, and temptations of this life. How may we receive this most precious possession? "Cleanse, consecrate, claim." As willing as a father to give bread to his children is God to give this Spirit of love and peace and power to us.

How much more . . your heavenly Father, v. 13. Because His resources are so much greater. The riches of the universe are under His control. And His wisdom! It is impossible for Him to make the mistake of giving what will injure His children. And, most wonderful of all, His love, which knows no limit!

The Greater Miracle in Jonah

Much is made by the enemies of God's word, from Julian the Apostate down, of the miracle of Jonah and the great fish. Its unreasonableness, in both record and fact, is urged, and it is also held up to the scorn and ridicule of men. How happens it that the other miracle of the book is not equally derided? The conversion of a whole city, of itself, and much more when the means used are considered was far more wonderful than the story of Jonah's punishment and deliverance.

The means of bringing Nineveh to repentance were, humanly speaking, utterly inadequate to such an end. A solitary prophet, and a weak and disobedient one at that, a weary traveller, coming alone from a distant land, a stranger, a foreigner, of a contemned race, representing a people already vassal, coming with no pomp or circumstance, and simply delivering a message, such was the agent for accomplishing the work. The agency was simply preaching, and preaching simply the word. "Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." But because it was God's message, it had its effect, and Nineveh repented and was spared.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The ministry that uses it as the sole instrument will be an effective ministry. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." "Preach the word." In all the history of the church the miracle of Jonah has been repeated when the conditions have been similar. There is nothing that so draws men as the simple, direct preaching of Christ. Paul knew it, and so announced that he determined to know nothing among the Corinthians "save Jesus and him crucified." Conversions, permanent uplifting, regeneration that reaches into the depths of men's hearts and makes them new creatures rather than reformed creatures, follow the gospel

and the preaching of it. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." But it must be preaching of the cross. Sociology, humanitarianism, philosophy, scientific speculation, rhetorical beauties, the attractiveness of art, the pleasing of the aesthetic tastes of the Ninevites would never have converted them. So much indeed was all that was not of "the preaching that I bid thee" eliminated in that case that the preacher was grievously displeased. He was not enough glorified, and God had to punish and teach him again.

"The preaching that I bid thee" is as powerful to-day as ever. The message of God, not the thoughts or wishes of man, will be the power of God unto salvation. In proportion as one's work is done in and through and for Christ will it be telling in its effects.—Southwestern Presbyterian.

The Making of Character.

Do not let us suppose that character requires great circumstances for the making. Character can be made in poor circumstances. There are huge manufactories in this country, with magnificent machinery, with chimneys belching forth clouds of black smoke to pollute the air, where they turn out carpets of most wonderful aspects, which would almost make you ill to look at, and which perish quickly in the using.

Far away in the east, in some poor little hut, an eastern workman is working with threads of many colors beside him; he has been toiling for years, and when he has finished he will have turned out a single square of such beautiful coloring and such perfect workmanship that when it comes to this country it will be bought at a great price, and the owner's great-grandchildren will see it fresh and beautiful. So much for the great manufactory and the whirling wheels and the noise and the smoke; so much for the quietness and obscurity of a single workman!—Rev. John Watson, D.D.

Doing the Will of God.

There are other thoughts in the Scriptures that catch men up on glorious wings to show them the face of him whose we are and whom we serve; but there is no thought that more transforms a man's life, more floods over him the transfigured glory of a face touched once on the mountain top years ago, than the thought that he can tie his life up to the doing of the will of God. Do you seek for an object in life? "I come to do thy will, O God." Do you seek for food? "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Do you desire society? "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother." Do you seek for an education? "Teach me to do thy will, O God." Seekest thou for reward? "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." There will be no change for him. When the wreck of matter comes, and the everlasting heavens are folded up like a garment and laid away for their last sleep, he will still abide. Other things will pass away, but he that is doing the will of God is a part now of a life that shall last forever, of that great sweeping, flowing life that alone holds this world steady, with all that is passing and changing in it. And by and by, when other things shall pass away, his life, instead of grasping in itself the things that are laid aside, will find that it has laid hold of the things that are going to abide forever, the things that alone are worth the seeking, the loving, and the aspiring after.—Robert E. Speer, D.D.