

Sunday School Lesson.

11th Sunday after Trinity. Aug 17th, 1890

PRAYER BOOK LESSON.
Thy Kingdom Come.

Children generally have very vague ideas about the object of this prayer, when they think of it at all. To make the subject clear, it will be necessary to explain something of the different meanings of the word "kingdom."

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

In Eastern countries when kings intended to travel, they sent men before them to announce their approach, and prepare the way; generally a road had to be made for the occasion. John the Baptist was sent before Christ, the King; to cast down the heights of pride, and make the way straight (S. Luke iii. 3-6.) His message was "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The King soon appeared, but the kingdom was not yet established, for He, too, preached, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (S. Matt. iv. 17; S. Mark i. 14, 15.) By comparing these texts it may be seen that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are the same. Now, God is, and always has been, the King of the whole world, but the kingdom which Christ came to set up was of another kind. See what he says about it (S. John xviii. 36.) This word kingdom has three meanings.

(i) *The Church of God.* All members of the Holy Catholic Church are subjects in this kingdom, and owe allegiance to Christ the King. His kingdom is spreading gradually over the whole world; and nothing can stop its onward march, until the promise is fulfilled, that "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Heb. ii. 14.)

But there are many who belong to the kingdom, and yet disobey the King. In the parables of the "Tares" and the "Net" (S. Matt. xiii. 24-30, 47-50), we are warned that many, who belong to the visible Church on earth, will not be received into the kingdom of glory. Something more is required of Christians: and this brings us to the second meaning of the word.

(ii) *The Kingdom of God in the heart.* All baptized members of the Church are in the kingdom of God, but all have not the kingdom of God in them. Christ says: "The kingdom of God is within you" (S. Luke xvii. 21); and when He reigns in the heart, all other rulers must be driven out. He will not accept a divided throne; but requires that not only our actions, but even every thought, be brought into captivity to His obedience (2 Cor. x. 5). The kingdom of God is "Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17.)

If then we wish to be true subjects of the King, Who bought us with the price of His own most precious blood (1 S. Pet. i. 18, 19), let us be careful to obey His commands, and try to grow more and more like Him (2 Cor. iii. 18); so that we may be fit to be received into—

(iii) *The Kingdom of Glory.* This, the third meaning of the word, will be fulfilled when "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). Then all men shall bow before Him, who is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Phil. ii. 10, 11; Rev. xix. 16). The peace and security of this kingdom are described (Isa. xi. 6-9).

II.—THY KINGDOM COME.

The different meanings of the expression, *Kingdom of God*, being explained,—let us see what is meant by praying that it may come.

(i) *The Church of God.* We pray that it may spread over all the earth; ask God to bless the efforts of our Missionaries and Missionary Societies; and to "deliver all men from the power of darkness, translating them into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 13). It is necessary to do what we can towards the spread of Christ's Gospel, both at home and in heathen lands. Those who do not try to help, are not likely to be very earnest in praying, "Thy Kingdom Come."

(ii) *The Kingdom of God in the Heart.* We pray that all members of the Church may be true and loyal subjects of Christ; yielding Him hearty obedience, and lovingly submitting to His will on all occasions.

(iii) *The Kingdom of Glory.* We pray that Christ may soon come again to rule the earth, and that it may please God "shortly to accomplish the number of His elect, and to hasten His Kingdom." (See *Burial Service*.) But only those who are preparing to meet Him can offer this petition truly. Some will be afraid to face their King (Rev. vi. 15-17). Others will "look up and lift up their heads," gladly welcoming their lawful Sovereign. St. Luke xxi. 27, 28).

12th Sunday after Trinity. Aug. 24, 1890.

THE LORD'S PRAYER—THY WILL BE DONE.

I. THE WILL OF GOD.

God's will is what He wishes or intends.

(1.) *The way in which God's will is already done.*

He is the King of the world, nothing can be done without His permission. He rules all things, the sun rises and sets, men live and die—in one way. His will is always done. (Dan. iv. 35.)

(2.) *One way in which God's will is not done.*

It is God's will that men should be good. It is God's will that men should keep His commandments. But are these things done? We know they are not. Does God then will evil? No, but He will not force men to do right, He lets them choose (Deut. xxx. 19), though He tells them what their choice ought to be. God likes people to serve Him of their own free will, and not because of force. If a boy sits still when he is told to do so, he is obedient, but if he sits still because he is tied to the chair, this is not obedience.

God wants our will to be the same as His. Who did God's will perfectly? (S. John iv. 34). God tells us His will and then leaves us to choose whether we will do it. There is only one way to heaven, and that is the way of God's will.

(3.) *Submission to God's will.*

There is also another way of thinking of God's will. When good people have troubles they say, "Thy will be done." See what Jesus said when in pain and suffering in the garden. (S. Matt. xxvi. 39-42). He sets us the example of prayer when in suffering. As He thus gained strength to drink the cup of suffering, so too may we. We all have crosses to bear,—pain, suffering, disappointments, afflictions; well they are God's will, and we should say "Thy will be done." See what Eli said (1 S. Sam. iii. 18.)

II. THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

Is there any place where God's will is done? Always? By every one? In every thing? Readily, perfectly, willingly? Yes! in Heaven God's will is done by the holy angels. Our Lord teaches us to pray that we may do God's will as the angels do. They have two duties to perform, one of worship towards God; the other to perform His bidding towards man (Heb. i. 14) Let us imitate them in their worship and in their service.

Family Reading.

Devotional Notes on the Sermon on the Mount.

No. 29.—GOD'S CARE.

S. Matt. vi. 25-30—"Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? and which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? and why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

The extraordinary beauty of this passage needs no comment. Every one has felt it. We have taken a passage so lengthy for the reason that but little comment is here needed. The first crush of the grape will suffice. From the first word of the passage, all is beautiful, touching, persuasive.

"Therefore"—it begins—by reason of what has already been said: "Serve one Master." This is the true philosophy of life—have one dominating principle, learn to know and serve and obey one supreme master, and then your life will be free from discord, will be consistent and harmonious. "Therefore," the Divine Master goes on, "be not anxious for your life." This is better than the authorized: "Take no thought," although that probably conveyed the true notion at the time of its composition. It is the same word which is employed in the exhortation: "Be careful for nothing." Be not full of care, anxious.

If you are the servant of God, if He is your

Father, then you have no need, you have no right to be anxious. He will feed you, and He will clothe you, as He does all His creatures. Do you ask how you are to be fed? Behold the birds of heaven. They have no anxiety; yet God feeds them. They occupy their appointed place and do their appointed work. Do you the same, and God will feed you also.

In the same way He deals with the question of clothing. With ourselves this may be said to be a more anxious question than the other. Yet our Lord can say to us, why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Why? what good will your anxiety do you? It will show your want of faith, and it will strengthen your unbelief. It will thus help to cut you off from God, and it will give you no help in doing your own work.

Well, but, you say, what warrant have I for believing that God will clothe me? What warrant? You have evidences of it around you and before your face. Consider the lilies of the field. Behold the beauty of their attire, and ask whence it comes. Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these; and it is God who so clothes the grass of the field. But why should God's clothing of the flowers of the field be a lesson of faith to ourselves? Because these are God's creatures and we are His children.

They are His creatures. They are part of the order of things which He has constituted, and which He maintains. Can He forsake the work of His own hands? It is impossible. Everything, from the least to the greatest, is an object of care to Him. He who makes the sun to abide in his place, and the planets to revolve around their centre, does not disdain to care for the smallest of the objects which He has made, the flower of the field which withers almost before it is grown up, and the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven.

God provides for these unconscious objects, because He is their maker and their owner. Shall He not much more clothe His children whom He created in His own image, whom He redeemed by the blood of His Son, whom He renews and sanctifies by His Holy Spirit? How simple does the truth contained in these words appear to us! How inevitable the inference! How impossible it is for us to think otherwise!

So we are all ready to declare. And yet how difficult do we find it to carry the conviction about with us as a practical principle. The pastor speaks words of comfort to his flock from the pulpit, and he comes down to be himself assailed by anxious doubts and misgivings. The pious communicant draws in the precious truth and strengthens his heart by the thought of God's overruling and watchful providence; but he goes forth to wrestle with the old enemy of unbelief. Lord, increase our faith.

It has been objected by some that the teaching of this passage would encourage passivity on our part, the neglect of proper effort, as though we might leave all to God, as it is called, without any endeavour to fulfil our own duties, or make any provision for our own wants. The birds of heaven, the flowers of the field, neither toil nor spin, and yet in their happy freedom from care and toil they have their wants supplied by the gracious God whose creatures they are. May not we say the same of mankind? May not God's children abstain from effort, and "live by faith," as it is called, being sure that God will provide for them as He does for the plants and the birds?

The answer to this is very simple. If we fulfil our vocation as these creatures fulfil theirs, then may we leave all to the bountiful providence of God. The lily, the turtle dove—these were not made to toil and spin. The flower was appointed to grow and put forth its leaves, and the rain from heaven refreshes it, and the sun from heaven shines upon it and fosters it. And so with the fowls of the air. Man was made to think and to serve, to labour and to pray, and he may neglect the fulfilment of God's purpose concerning him on peril of having withheld from him the Divine blessing and assistance.

How beautifully does S. Paul express the thought of our dependence upon God! (Phil. iv. 6, 7): "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And