



LESSON I.—APRIL 2.

Jesus the Good Shepherd.

John x., 7-18.

Golden Text.

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. John x., 11.

Commit verses 17, 18.

Home Readings.

Monday, March 27.—John x., 1-18.
 Tuesday, March 28.—John x., 22-30.
 Wednesday, March 29.—Ps. xxiii.
 Thursday, March 30.—Jer. xxiii., 1-8.
 Friday, March 31.—Ezek. xxxiv., 1-10.
 Saturday, April 1.—Ezek. xxxiv., 11-19.
 Sunday, April 2.—Ezek. xxxiv., 20-31.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

Jesus had lately used those indispensables, 'light' and 'water,' as emblems of his office and function. He now employs a new figure, almost as familiar, for the Hebrews were always a pastoral folk. This, with the story of the Vine and Branches (chapter xv.) is said to be the only instance of allegory in the New Testament.

The Jewish Church had grown into a great ecclesiastical establishment, furnishing numerous offices of honor, power, and emolument. These were naturally sought by the ambitious, and held tenaciously by the successful. One object of this allegory is to set forth the character of these mercenaries. Like thieves, they have effected an entrance in such a way that their true character has not been discovered. But, though they have obtained the garb of office, they do not have the following of the true members. The latter, instead of following, flee, and do not hear them. The character of these false shepherds is further delineated. They work havoc in the highest interests of men. They steal, kill and destroy in the realm of spiritual values. Their purely mercenary spirit is indicated by the epithet, 'hireling.' In any final crisis, when the very life of those whom they serve is at stake, they would fly like arrant cowards. Thus, with steady and courageous hand, Jesus held the mirror before the hierarchy of his day.

On the dark background of the false shepherd Jesus now projects the ideal of the true. He is one who enters upon his function in the appointed way. The Holy Spirit (the porter) approves; the Church recognizes him (the sheep hear his voice). His life is spent in care of the flock; he calleth, leadeth, putteth forth, goeth before.

Jesus makes a decided turn in the allegory when he declares himself to be 'the Door.' Entrance to the Church is by the Person and work of Jesus. As the Eastern sheepfold has but one door, so the Church has none other than Christ. 'There is none other name under heaven given among men.' Through him we come to salvation and spiritual sustenance (find pasture) and the more abundant life.

Again, there are shepherds and shepherds, but Jesus is pre-eminently the Shepherd. The evidence of this is His voluntary surrender of life and the reciprocal and perfect recognition subsisting between shepherd and sheep—analogueous to that which maintains between Father and Son.

Finally, Jesus bursts the shell of Jewish sectarianism in the generous and courageous words, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' It was a hint of this kind which had led these sectarists, on a former occasion, to ask scornfully, 'Will he go and teach the Gentiles?' Alas! how they did 'dissolve the pearl of charity in the acid of sect.' The 'one Shepherd' exalts persons above institutions, when he says there shall be 'one flock,' not 'one fold,' as in the Authorized Version, which gives precisely the opposite sense. The refer-

ence is to the invisible Church, made up of the faithful of every age and land.

LIGHTS ON THE LESSON.

The division of chapters is arbitrary, and, in this instance, unfortunate. One must look in the closing verses of the preceding chapter to find the circumstances which led to the speaking of this allegory. Jesus had said that he had come for judgment; that those who saw not might see, and that those who saw might be made blind. The official pride of the leaders was touched by that saying. To parry his blow, they cried, 'Are we blind also?' As if such a thing was impossible and even unthinkable. Jesus practically said, in response, 'I will now hold up the mirror and show you what kind of shepherds you are.' His merciful purpose was to awaken some of the best to self-knowledge and healing.

Every one who enters by this door (Christ) is saved and becomes in turn a minister of grace to others (a shepherd, not the Shepherd, as in Authorized Version). The pattern is Jesus. Every good shepherd lives for the flock.

He who, shunning the door, climbs up from some other quarter by that very act reveals his dishonest character and unworthy purpose.

'To steal' and 'to have life.' The contrast is that of the false and the true religion. Phariseism and ecclesiasticism fleece and kill. They have always done so everywhere and by whatever name they have been known. But true religion always gives the present life a more abundant development. 'Whatever form of religion tends to deprive mankind of its free, natural, and joyous life is anti-Christian. The constant tendency of Christ's teaching and influence is to make the whole life—social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual—more abundant.'

'Lay down life, take it again.' The mother lays down her life in the birth and rearing of every child. She takes life again in the matured manhood or womanhood of her offspring. The analogy maintains in the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus. He voluntarily surrendered his life. No one took it. Now, with joy, he 'sees his seed,' his spiritual offspring, and prolongs his days in them, as the prophet said he would. (Isa. liii.)

'They understood not.' How their worship of the letter had destroyed all commerce between their minds and the relations which it set forth! 'The sheep did not hear them.' It is the preachers of Christ who alone have secured the world's attention. 'And shall be safe.' The extent and assurance of this safety are expressed in the parable, 'Go in and out.' An Hebraistic phrase to denote the whole of life. 'The hireling'; not every one who is hired is a hireling, but he who serves only for hire. 'He goeth before them,' Jesus tests in his own Person the experiences of his disciples. 'The other sheep also shall hear Jesus' voice.' They have already heard fragments of his teaching through their noblest fellows, but they shall now have his doctrine entire.

NOTES FROM COMMENTARIES.

I am: The central point of the whole is the Lord's testimony to himself as the Good Shepherd in the highest sense of the word. First, however, he speaks preparatorily (1-6) concerning human shepherds generally, anticipating and preparing the way for what follows.—Stier. The door. The way into the fold, with all blessed privileges, both for shepherds and sheep.—J. F. B. Came before me. Came instead of me.—Clark. A bishop means a person who sees. A pastor means one who feeds. The most unbishoply character a man can have is, therefore, to be blind. The most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed.—to be a mouth.—Ruskin. Sheep did not hear: Instincts of their Divinely taught hearts preserving them from seducers.—J. F. B. Shall be saved: The great object of the pastoral office.—J. F. B. Go in and out: A Hebrew phrase, indicating all the acts of a man's life.—Clark. Steal, kill, destroy: Those who enter the priesthood to enjoy the revenues, are vilest thieves and murderers.—Ibid. Might have life: Not merely to preserve, but impart, life and communicate it in exuberance.—J. F. B. More abundantly: Jesus is come, that men may have abundance.—Clark. A hireling: Who makes merchandise.—Clark. The shepherd in the East is usually the owner or the son of the owner of the flock, though sometimes an agent, whose salary is a fixed proportion of the produce, as Jacob under Laban. The hireling is the man who happens to be hired for fixed

wages, merely for the day, and has no further interest in the flock.—Tristram. The sheep are not: Who has no property in them. By this he points to his own peculiar relation to the sheep.—J. F. B. The wolf coming: Not the devil distinctively, but generally whoever comes upon the flock with hostile intent.—J. F. B. The wolf is the enemy of souls in any of his manifold disguises, as not only persecution, but heresy, worldly living, or a low standard of faith and morals.—Sadler. Am known of Mine: The soul's response to the voice that has inwardly called it.—J. F. B. Other sheep: He means the perishing Gentiles.—Ibid. Came before me: Came instead of me.—Clark. Do not imagine I shall lay down my life for the Jews exclusively. I shall die also for Gentiles.—Ibid.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, April 2.—Topic—The making of a Christian: his food. II. Tim. iii., 14-17; John vi., 47-58. (Consecration meeting.)

C. E. Topic.

LED BY A CLOUD.

Monday, March 27.—God that brought them forth. Ex. xxix., 45, 46.
 Tuesday, March 28.—The cloud over the tent. Num. ix., 15-23.
 Wednesday, March 29.—The cloud of the Lord. Num. x., 33-36.
 Thursday, March 30.—By day and by night. Psalms lxxviii., 14.
 Friday, March 31.—The Lord that leadeth. Isa. xlviii., 17, 18.
 Saturday, April 1.—I will guide thee. Ps. xxxii., 8.
 Sunday, April 2.—Topic—Led by a cloud. Ex. xl., 34-38.

Jamie's Blackboard Lesson.

(Phil O'Math, in the 'S. S. Teacher.')

'Papa,' said Jamie, 'please let me take your pencil.'
 'What do you wish to do with my pencil?'
 'I want to draw something.'
 Jamie took a piece of paper and drew on it some arrows, saying—
 'These are Satan's arrows.'
 'What do you call those arrows?' said his papa.
 'I call this one "mad" and this one "fight."'
 In a little while Jamie's little sister entered the room and managed to annoy him very much by her naughtiness, and attempted to fight him.
 'Ah,' said Jamie, 'that is one of Satan's arrows.'

The little exhortation that followed led Maybelle to put her chubby little arms about her brother's neck and to imprint a kiss on his cheek. Jamie approvingly answered—

'That is one of Jesus' arrows.'

The father looked on in astonishment, mingled with gratitude. But a few hours before he had given the Sunday-school a blackboard review on 'Confidence in God,' in which he had used arrows to represent the darts of the enemy of souls. He hardly thought that the smaller children were so much impressed by it, but this little incident proved to him that even the little children heard and remembered what he had said.

I give this incident for two reasons: first, for the encouragement of modest, timid, but honest workers with children; secondly, to impress the importance and responsibility of all those who are charged with sowing seed into child-minds.

Pictorial Testament Premium

A very handsome Pictorial New Testament, just published, with chromographs and engravings from special drawings made in Bible lands by special artists, J. C. Clark and the late H. A. Harper. The book is neatly bound in leather, round corners, gilt edge, well printed on fine thin paper, making a handsome book. The colored plates contained in this edition are particularly fine.

Any subscriber to the 'Messenger' can secure this book by sending four new subscriptions to the 'Northern Messenger' at 40 cents each, or six renewal subscriptions at forty cents each.