



LESSON XII.—MARCH 20.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand.

Matthew xiv., 13-23.

Golden Text.

Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. John vi., 35.

Home Readings.

Monday, Mar. 14.—Matt. xiv., 13-23.
Tuesday, Mar. 15.—Mark viii., 1-9.
Wednesday, Mar. 16.—Mark viii., 10-21.
Thursday, Mar. 17.—II. Kings iv., 42-44.
Friday, Mar. 18.—John vi., 35-46.
Saturday, Mar. 19.—John vi., 47-58.
Sunday, Mar. 20.—Mark vi., 35-46.

13. When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

14. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

15. And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

16. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

17. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

18. He said, Bring them hither to me.

19. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

20. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

21. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

22. And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

23. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

There must be something special about the miracle we find in to-day's lesson, for it is the only one recorded by the writers of all four Gospels. In addition to the account given in Matthew xiv., 13-23, the parallels should be read as follows: Mark vi., 30-46; Luke ix., 10-17; John vi., 1-15, 22-65.

The present lesson begins where the last one left off. In verse 12 of this chapter we are told of the burial of the body of John the Baptist, and the report of his death made to Jesus. Verse 13 recounts the action immediately taken by Jesus when he heard this terrible news. The time of this lesson was in the third year of Christ's ministry. His teachings and works are more and more attracting the attention of the masses, while the opposition to him is gaining ground. This lesson furnishes abundant opportunity for enforcing the duty of service to our fellow men.

THE LESSON STUDY.

Verse 13. 'When Jesus heard of it he de-

parted,' etc. It is thought that his reason for leaving Galilee at that time was the fear of a popular uprising following the murder of John the Baptist. There was forming a revolutionary movement looking toward making Christ a king. This he did not want to encourage, and so possibly went into another region to allow matters to become more quiet in Galilee. Again, as we learn from the other accounts, Christ wished to lead his disciples apart that they might rest, for they had just returned from their tour upon which he had sent them, and had reported their work. But the crowds observed his movements and came to him.

14. 'And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them.' We want to emphasize the reading of the accounts of this miracle in the other Gospels. Much will be gained thereby. In connection with this verse in Matthew, Luke says very beautifully, 'And he welcomed them, and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and them that had need of healing he cured.'

They that come unto him he will in no wise cast out. Christ is never too busy with great concerns to welcome the one who longs for the divine comfort, help, and guidance.

15-18. 'They need not depart; give ye them to eat.' In these four verses, and in their parallels in the other Gospels, we have an account of the conversation between Christ and his disciples concerning what was best to be done for this hungry multitude, far from home and with night at hand.

His disciples would have settled the matter very simply. It was a desert, that is, an uninhabited place, and they would have had the multitude sent to neighboring villages to shift for themselves as best they might.

Very often difficulty and failure in discipleship occur at this very point. We really love the Master and want to be with him, but we are somewhat annoyed and impatient over the presence of the multitude, with its endless needs. Christ and the twelve had come away from the crowd into a secluded place where they might rest a while, and where the twelve might enjoy the opportunity to converse with the great Teacher, undisturbed by the sorrows of the world.

But here is the crowd. From the shores whence this great loving Teacher and Physician sailed, the wistful eyes of the multitudes have marked the course of the vessel that carried him, and they hasten on foot around the shores of Galilee. To the desert place near Bethsaida go the Lord and the twelve. About him swarm the thousands, with their sins, their sorrows, their hunger; and the disciples see their chance for a class in advanced theology go glimmering. 'And he had compassion on them.' The special training of the few must wait upon the relief of the many.

So the time originally meant for the disciples is freely given to the multitude. But as evening approaches the twelve can with propriety advise that the supperless company be sent into the villages to buy food. Perhaps a part of the day may yet be saved for the twelve. But Christ sees no reason for such action; no time yet for comfort and conversation, with suffering humanity all about them. He issues a command to the astonished disciples to feed them. Many a Christian has met with a similar experience—a command to take up some large work, with little or no means in sight.

The five small barley loaves or cakes, and the two fishes, in possession of a lad form the stock of provisions in sight. But 'without him was not any thing made that was made,' and he asks that the loaves and fishes be brought to him.

19-21. 'And looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.' The place was covered with grass, and Christ commanded that the multitude be made to sit down in companies. The expression seems to carry the meaning of

arrangement as though at tables. They were the guests of their Lord, and taking the loaves and fishes their Host blessed and brake them into his disciples' hands, and they distributed to the waiting people. The twelve came to rest and to be ministered unto spiritually, but now they must minister to the bodily needs of their less favored fellows. 'And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.'

When all had eaten till satisfied, there were gathered of the fragments twelve baskets. Each disciple's obedience in helping to distribute the modest loaves and fishes is rewarded by a basket full of that which remained over, after the five thousand were fed.

22, 23. 'And when the evening was come, he was there alone.' The disciples have been sent away in the ship, the thousands to their homes, but 'he went up into a mountain apart to pray.' What a day! Sailing away to find rest with his disciples, followed by the multitude, teaching them, healing them, feeding them and sending them home rejoicing, and his disciples to their ship, the Master now goes apart to pray, and evening finds him a petitioner before his Father, 'there alone.'

The lesson for March 27 is the quarterly review.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, March 20.—Topic—Little things that Christ makes great. I. Cor. i., 25-29.

Junior C. E. Topic.

TEMPERANCE MEETING.

Monday, Mar. 14.—'Wine is a mocker.' Prov. xx., 1.

Tuesday, Mar. 15.—'He that loveth wine.' Prov. xxi., 17.

Wednesday, Mar. 16.—'Shall come to poverty.' Prov. xxiii., 21.

Thursday, Mar. 17.—'Who hath woe?' Prov. xxiii., 29, 30.

Friday, Mar. 18.—'Overcome with wine.' Isa. xxviii., 1.

Saturday, Mar. 19.—'They err in vision.' Isa. xxviii., 7.

Sunday, Mar. 20.—Topic—What comes from the beer-mug? Isa. v., 11, 12.

Mr. Feeblemind has a great many Masters and Misses Feeblemind at every school, and it is highly desirable that their measure should be taken by the Sunday-school teacher. There are such children at all schools—all the more if they have been underfed or bull-ragged at home; or there may have been something to try their nerves which may not be seen at an average meeting. There are a number of children to whom the verb to 'fail' is only too familiar in all its terrible tenses. 'I have not done well,' 'I am not doing well,' 'I never shall do well.' The result is that many and many a child takes for granted that it will be at school a failure, gaining no prizes, receiving no praise, not securing full marks, hardly half-marks. Anything that will raise the self-confidence of the child and lead it to hope will be useful.—Dr. Butler.

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