

Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek and stiffened his gait. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas."—The Christian Steward.

JAN. 5.—SONGS OF THE HEART. I. WHAT IS TRUE BLESSEDNESS?

Ps. 1; Matt. 5:2-12

(A NEW YEARS CONSECRATION SERVICE.)

HOME READINGS.

- Mon., Dec. 30.—Blessed like Abraham. Isa. 51:1-3.
Tues., Dec. 31.—The marriage supper. Rev. 19:5-9.
1908—
Wed., Jan. 1.—Knowing Christ. Matt. 16:16, 17.
Thurs., Jan. 2.—Hearing the joyful sound. Ps. 89:15-18.
Fri., Jan. 3.—Blessed in belief. Luke 1:39-45.
Sat., Jan. 4.—Blessed in forgiveness. Ps. 32:1-5.

FOREWORD.

Perhaps there is no subject upon which opinions differ so widely as what constitutes true blessedness or happiness. Many think that it is to be obtained by self-indulgence, and they seek to gratify every desire, only to be disappointed. God's word teaches that happiness comes as a result of self-denial, self-control and self-culture.

The psalmist tells us first that the happy man is known by the things that he does not do. Do you want to seek a happy man? The psalmist tells you that there are certain directions in which you need not look. You will not find him in the counsel of the ungodly, in the way of sinners, or in the seat of the scornful. This seems to take in the whole territory of the devil, for if you take these things from the Satanic empire there is nothing left. The Psalmist therefore distinctly tells us that the happy man is not to be found among the ungodly; and then he goes on to show how real happiness is to be secured.

EXPOSITORY HINTS.

V. 1. "Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." This is where men commence to go astray, by forming evil companionships; by walking in the street with giddy and unscrupulous acquaintances.

V. 1. "Standeth in the way of sinners." He makes rapid progress. At first he merely walks in the counsel of the careless, but he soon becomes accustomed to evil and stands in the way of open sinners. We are not surprised to learn that very soon he has taken his seat with the scornful.

V. 2. "But his delight," etc. Man must do something. If you tell him that to do certain things and leave him, then you have not benefited him very much. He cannot sit still and do nothing.

V. 2. "His delight." The study of God's word is not irksome to him, for he finds real pleasure in it. It is always new to him. The main thing about a man is "his delight." What does he like best? Where is he most at home? Where do his tastes and inclinations set? That determines the man. The current of his being will be settled thereby.

V. 2. "Day and night." The Bible will abundantly repay the closest study. You will never read it through or exhaust it.

The more we study it the more it increases in manifold beauty.

V. 2. "His delight is in the law of the Lord." These words are not to be taken in a narrow sense. The picture is not that of a man sitting with an open Bible before him. The idea is that of a man who sees the law of the Lord in all nature, all history, all life, everywhere and always. Reading of the book, too, of course, there must be.

V. 3. "He shall be like a tree," etc. A man's life should be rooted in God's law, and in God's service. It should not be as a plucked flower, but as a flower unplucked, growing on the eternal stem. Sever yourself from God's law and you cannot grow.

V. 3. "Rivers of water." The Christian is sometimes planted in the desert, but God always sends him the streams of living water to nourish him. Paul found such rivers in a Roman prison.

V. 3. "His leaf shall not wither." Righteous men should have beauty of character. Christian men should be as much distinguished by beautiful demeanor as by any other characteristic.

CHRIST'S BEATITUDES.

Christ's idea of blessedness differs materially from that of the world. The world's beatitudes are:

Blessed are the rich, for they can purchase anything they desire.

Blessed are the powerful, for they can have their own way.

Blessed are the handsome, for they are much admired.

Blessed are the educated, for they exercise great influence.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward, here and now.

Jesus does not, however, refer to any of these things. His catalogue includes an entirely different list of persons. No doubt, many found their enthusiasm dampened by the strange truths that He uttered.

V. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." To be poor in spirit is to be conscious of need. It is a state of dependence upon God.

V. 4. "They that mourn." They mourn, because they are poor in spirit. Those who have a sense of moral poverty, who feel that they are miserably poor while they ought to be rich toward God. They are weighed down by a sense of imperfection and failure.

V. 5. "The meek." Poverty of spirit is humility looking Godward—a grace before God. Meekness is humility looking manward—a grace before men.

V. 6. "They which do hunger." There is such a thing as soul hunger. Spiritual food is as necessary to our happiness as bread to the body.

V. 7. "The merciful." Through the influence of this grace of mercy we shall act toward others without injury or wrong, and help our fellow men by deeds of philanthropy and kindness.

V. 8. "The pure in heart." Purity of heart is the result of all that has gone before. It springs from that purifying which is the answer of God to our poverty of spirit, mourning and longing. We say that water, air, or cold are pure when free from mixture with any foreign elements. So purity of heart means singleness of moral aim, freedom from all alloy of insincerity.

SUGGESTIVE HINTS.

How can I be happy? The first psalm and the beatitudes spoken by our Saviour tell the whole secret of happiness, and the destiny of the blessed man.

A man who goes in search of happiness will in all probability never find it.

"Happiness," cried the philosopher of antiquity, "consists in the extinction of the desires." "Happiness," rejoins the modern man of pleasure, "lies in the gratification of them." The Christian idea is that happiness consists in the control and regulation of the desires.

The miser finds his happiness in some act of meanness by which he has saved a shilling. The philanthropist finds delight in the opportunity of giving away a thousand dollars to a benevolent object.

Virtue and happiness are mother and daughter. Pope says:

"Know then this truth, enough for man to know—
Virtue alone is happiness below."

If you have not learned to shelter your positive goodness behind a barrier of negative abstinence there will be little vitality and little fruit in your Christian life.

QUOTATIONS.

Don't trouble about happiness for a moment. Be true, be right, be holy, be meek and merciful, and you will come a matter of course. But if we begin at the other end we shall never get blessedness; it will vanish from us.—Dr. Jos. Parker.

The Saviour shows himself to be "Christus Felicitator," the true Lord of happiness. Obedience to His laws secures that felicity which, without Him, is a fiftal and uncertain thing.—The Culture of Pleasure.

There is no such thing as finding true happiness by searching for it directly. It must come, if it come at all, indirectly, or by the service, the love, the happiness we give to others.—Ralph Waldo Trine.

In a world like this, there is so much wickedness, and so many men who do not live after the highest pattern, no good thing will ever be achieved unless we have learned to say, "No, this I will not do because of the fear of the Lord."—Alexander Maclaren.

The first duty of a youth who has determined to be true to God is to make choice of his surroundings. To a large extent he can do this; he may have to work with those who are described in this psalm—ungodly, sinners, scornful—but he can be with them as little as possible, and this is half the battle. Compelled to be in the world, he can resolve not to be of the world.—A. H. Walker.

JAN. 12.—THE TRUE CENTRE OF LIFE.

John 15:1-10

HOME READINGS.

- Mon., Jan. 6.—Christ our Righteousness. Jer. 23:5-6.
Tues., Jan. 7.—Christ our Maker. Ps. 102:24-27.
Wed., Jan. 8.—Christ our Saviour. Hos. 1:1-7.
Thurs., Jan. 9.—Christ the Word. John 1:1-5.
Fri., Jan. 10.—Christ our Judge. 2 Tim. 4:1-5.
Sat., Jan. 11.—Christ our Preserver. Col. 1:9-17.

FOREWORD.

The method of Christ's teaching seems to have depended largely on chances and every-day happenings. Seeds of truth were blown from Him by every breeze of circumstance. This allegory was probably suggested by a trellised vine outside the window. It would appeal to the people quite readily, as the country was full of