

The ages had been waiting for the opening of the lips of Jesus. Wise men had gone before him, and wise words had been spoken; but the world heeded them not. There was one who, when he opened his mouth, breathed consolations and bestowed blessings. His words came with authority, because he backed them with good manhood, and because his life was a constant representation of God. Who can help hearing the Being who takes up all our burdens and woes? Could the blind man turn away carelessly from Him who opened his eyes? or the dead man, after he had been raised from the tomb? If I am lost in the woods, and one comes to help me out who was born and raised in them and knows every thicket and tree, he is able to guide me, and I give myself into his hands. How skilfully Jesus threaded the mazes of that rabbinical teaching! With what success did he sift the chaff away from the wheat! He knew the purpose, thought and words of the Father too well to be cheated by the vast bulk of lore that passed with the people for the oracles of God. God put no such yoke on the neck of the people. He *taught* them: he did not torment them with high-sounding praises. It was not merely a voice crying in the wilderness, as for example, that of John. He sits down patiently to unfold and explain to them God's great truths. His first word is, "Blessed,"—for mercy is the great burden of his mission. He comes among his people like a disguised king, that he may pry out their wants and catch them off their guard. Presently he will stand in the busy market-places challenging false teachers; but before this, he must give full proof of his gracious ministry, so that the people will feel safe in following him. In his idea of a blessed life, what a marvellous union of the human and divine! A good lump of heaven mixed in with the earth makes a fine combination. Streaks of truth flashing through our daily acts make life bright, healthy and cheerful. Noble deeds are like wreaths of flowers bound about the brows. The words of Jesus are impulses forcing life on into the narrow and heavenly ways.

#### A.D. 28] LESSON VIII. [August 21.

##### JESUS AND THE LAW.

Matthew 5. 17-26. Gold. Text, Matt. 5. 17.

THE Sermon on the Mount may be looked upon as sounding the keynote of the policy of Jesus. In these utterances his aim was to show that his purpose was spiritual, and not political. He is standing at the door-step of God's new temple. He must determine between what is fictitious and what is real. A repudiation of the law and the prophets will bewilder the Hebrew mind. But a cleansing of them from rabbinical glosses and interpretations will be helpful. A separation of secular from spiritual things will be an upward move. The covenant made with Abraham concerning an earthly inheritance is about to give way to a covenant based on better promises: the law given through Moses must retire before the Law of the Spirit, that came by Jesus Christ.

"Think not that I am come to destroy"—this is the high note in the song of Salvation. Jesus is a Builder. Nothing but Sin and Error can suffer in his hands. These he will tear up, root and branch, and he will do this for the love he has for truth and righteousness. Never was there such a staunch friend and supporter of good law and good living as Jesus. But with him, law was only good as it was helpful to man. A code or a philosophy that was more rigorous or high-sounding than beneficial, he looked upon as burdensome.

It is not singular that Jesus should be charged with destroying the law, when the law itself was charged with the duty of leading men and women to the Christ? People then were a great deal like people now; when their opinions and prejudices were opposed, they cried out, "He breaks the law!" Thus they did in Paul's case, when the earnest apostle was struggling with them to bring them to Christ. What a job one has who attempts to relax the hearts and hands of men from their grasp on the earth! With eyes wide open to the consequences, many people prefer to grovel with the beasts. There are principles which, if adopted, bring to a man a deadly doom. Here are a few: "Might makes right." "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." "Deal with your neighbor as he deals with you." "Take care of number one."

When Jesus sat down on that mountain side, he found the world resting on such falsities as these. The Jewish leaders had so perverted the Law of Moses that this was its tendency. There was no help but to set it aside and begin afresh. To reform the law was a more difficult task than to give a new one. So he culled out of it its eternal truths and set it aside. He fulfilled the law by transmuting it into human lives. Life with him was greater than law, and *this* he came to give to the world. There is nothing so valuable as a truthful life. Truth-doers are the inheritors of the heavenly kingdom.

#### A.D. 28] LESSON IX. [August 28

##### PIETY WITHOUT DISPLAY.

Matthew vi. 1-15. Gold. Text, 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

THIS is the third division of this remarkable sermon, the first comprising the eight beatitudes: the second, the new and Christly exposition of the law. In this the disciples of Jesus are warned against hypocritical display of their good deeds, by the examples of the abuses of the duties of almsgiving (verse 2), of praying (verse 5), and of fasting (verse 16). This discourse now passes from actions to the motives which underlie them. He has, indeed, spoken home to the heart previous to this, but then it was only by inference; now he speaks directly. His aim is to draw a broad and plain line of distinction between *seeming* and *reality* in religion. The portraits of the mere pretenders, and of the genuine and good, are here sketched by an unerring hand. Every line, feature and hue is true to the life. The student will do well to mark their points of