

Devotional Service

(The Missionary Text-book for this year is "Methodism in Canada," by Rev. A. Sutherland, D.D. The missionary topics correspond with the chapters of this book, which can be secured from Mr. P. C. Stephenson, Wesley Buildings, Toronto. Price, postpaid, in cloth, 35 cents; in paper covers, 35 cents.)

APRIL 22.—"THE LORD'S DAY: HOW TO KEEP IT HOLY."

Leke 6: 8-10; Ex. 20: 8-11; Rev. 1: 9-18.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., April 16.—The Sabbath instituted and commanded. Gen. 1: 1-3. Ex. 31: 12-18.

Tues., April 17.—How Nehemiah protected the Sabbath against greed. Neh. 13: 15-22.

Wed., April 18.—How Isaiah protected the Sabbath against pleasure. Isaiah 58: 1-14.

Thurs., April 19.—Sabbath keeping productive of national prosperity. Jer. 17: 19-24.

Fri., April 20.—How Jesus spent the Sabbath. Mark 1: 21-34.

Sat., April 21.—The first and second Christian Sabbaths. John 20: 1-29.

The Sabbath was instituted at the very beginning of the human career by the Divine Creator, because He saw that humanity could not endure continuous toil. In every part of his being man requires one day in seven when he may turn from the toil that tires, and the work that wears, and rest his physical frame, renew his mental faculties, and enter upon that holy fellowship and worship which means so much both for his moral character and spiritual well-being. In every relationship of his life, man is benefitted by the proper observance of the Sabbath—as an individual, in the family, as a member of the community, and as a citizen. If humanity required that day before the fall and in the more sluggish life of the oriental world six thousand years ago, how much more do we need that day amid the rush and hurry of life in this western world, and the twentieth century of the Christian era. Our loving Father, seeing that man would forever need that Rest Day, has perpetuated it as the inherent right of the race down to the end of time. He, therefore, not only instituted the Sabbath at the beginning, but as His chosen people were on their way to their own land, restored to them His Sabbaths, and commanded them to keep the day holy; and when Jesus came He did not do away with the Sabbath, but continued it into the new dispensation which He came to establish. He declared, "The Sabbath was made for man," and further, "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." Therefore, this Divine institution is intended for man through all the ages and in every clime.

On the day of the resurrection of Jesus from the grave His disciples began at once the observance of this institution on the first day of the week in commemoration of that glorious victory. From that time through all the changes and vicissitudes of the Christian Church the followers of Jesus have ever observed the first day of the week as the Lord's day—the Christian Sabbath. The writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers abound to references to this fact. Like John on the meek and lowly Nazareth have sought to be in the spirit on the Lord's day. We would recommend all persons who desire to read a very clear discussion of the various days of the week on which the Sabbath has been observed under the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations to secure the book, "Sunday,

the True Sabbath of God," by Rev. S. W. Gamble, and sold by the Methodist Book Room, Toronto.

Our model in our Scripture lesson for keeping holy the Lord's day is John, the beloved disciple. He was in the spirit on that day, and his whole being was brought into harmony with the Divine. It will be so with us.

1. The Spirit of the Day. Everything depends upon the preservation throughout the day of a proper frame of mind. Those who speak of attending church in the morning and spending the rest of the day in recreation can have little idea of what is spiritual religion. That the Creator may be rightly worshipped there must be the stilling of the heart before Him, withdrawal of the thought from things earthly, composure of mind, clearness of spirit, elevation of thought and affection for the things that are above. This is possible only where there is a previous preparation for the Sabbath, and is observed as a day of quiet. It is impossible where the Lord's day is broken in upon by work, or devoted to gaiety or recreation. What impression can they have of divine things who invite men to enter God's presence without previous and solemn searchings of heart, or of the duties of worship who think it possible to rush from them direct into folly and frivolity?

2. The Conversation of the Day. Being in the spirit on the Lord's day will rule our conversation. Subjects will be avoided which are felt to be out of harmony with the character of the day. Conversation will be directed into channels bearing on the great themes of the day, on the services of the sanctuary, on the meaning of Scripture, on experimental religion, on Christian work at home and abroad. It will not be strained or unnatural, as if nothing could be said which is not of a strictly religious character, but it will be "always with cheerful, yet holy." It will obey the precept, "not speaking thine own words." Not only will "filthiness and foolish talking and jesting" be avoided, which are at no time "convenient," but matters of business, politics, news of the day, will be eschewed, and subjects will be chosen fitted to excite and strengthen good dispositions. The tongue has great power over the heart.

Nothing tends so quickly to dissipate sacred impressions as frivolous or worldly conversation. The effect of many a good sermon is lost by the chatter of the conversation on the way home from church or at table afterward. It is Satan's choice device for catching away that which is sown in the heart.

3. The Occupations of the Day. The vesture of the day defines our occupations. The Lord's day should not be given up to pleasures or gold-getting. Those who have made Canada their home, whether born here or coming from other countries, and who persist in pursuing their selfish plans for amusement, or to secure gain, are not among Canada's best citizens, nor is their conduct worthy the emulation of any one. But man cannot remain idle. As a day of rest the Lord's day creates a vacuum, which will probably be filled in the unworthy pursuits of pleasure or profit, unless devoted to higher and ennobling purposes. Make the day spent in the unworthy pursuits of pleasure or profit, and the day is destroyed. If our proper duties are attended to, there will be neither opportunity nor desire for doing one's own ways, finding one's own pleasure, and speaking one's own words; but the day will retain its character as a "delight in the holy of the Lord, honorable." Prominent among the duties of the day—giving, in fact, the keynote of the whole—

is the duty of worship. Nature itself dictates that it is the duty of man to worship the Being that made him. Much more is it the duty of the sinner to worship the God of his salvation, adoring His perfections, celebrating His praises, gratefully commemorating His love, imploring His blessing, laying bare the heart before Him with the petition: "Search, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

In Mark 1: 21-34, we learn how Christ spent the holy day—the morning in the synagogue; the afternoon, teaching; the evening, doing good; the evening in the midst of the people casting out devils, restoring to health, and giving comfort to all. To attend the services and Sunday-school, to visit the afflicted and bereaved; to search out the sinful and bring them to their Saviour would be to spend our time profitably on the Lord's day. And to do this would give physical, mental and spiritual blessings.

Our topic is "How to keep holy the Lord's day." Assuredly no Christian will devote the day to visiting; baseball or any sports; fishing, hunting, or similar occupations; nor would we be the cause of our fellow men being forced to work making journeys for convenience or any other purpose; nor would we be willing shareholders in any electric or industrial company which proposes to operate on Sundays. There are many things to be avoided—but so many things to do that are commendable that the followers of Jesus may surely say every Lord's day, "This is the day the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."

TEN REASONS WHY

In the beginning of the twentieth century a day of Weekly rest and worship is peculiarly necessary.

Rev. Dr. Kneeland, secretary of New England Sabbath Protection League, recently said:

1. The intense pressure of modern living and the electric methods of business competition, demand, as never before, a weekly rest day.
2. The maintenance of the family life so vital to civilization, and so threatened in this age, renders the weekly rest and worship day an economic necessity.
3. The modern city problem, one-third of our population residing in cities, the city with its congested life, a majority crowded into tenement houses, cannot be solved without the Christian Sabbath.
4. The depleted rural communities, with their closed churches and their increasing criminality, need the saving, refining influences of the day of moral and spiritual development.
5. The fictitious demands of fashion and social emulation, with their feasts, functions and entertainments, are intruding more and more upon the Lord's Day and must be bravely met, and that largely by Christian women.
6. The self-complacency and self-gratification of rapidly increasing wealth are a constant temptation to devote our Canadian Sunday to inferior and debasing uses.
7. The inordinate, popular craving for pastime, with its Sunday holiday craze for sports, games, races, theatricals and exhibitions, will destroy the virility and stalwartness of our national life, unless wisely controlled and checked.
8. The craving for stimulation and the tendency to gratify it after pay hour on Saturday and on Sunday, make the open saloon, the open Lord's Day twin evils, which must be treated together. To marry the two by legislation, the open

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