

truly seeks the Lord with His whole heart.—*Jer. 29: 13.* And to such the finding is a demonstration of the truth of the Divine message.—*2 Tim. 1: 12.*

THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOOD NEWS.

V. 17. Having by the testimony of two witnesses—the word of the Lord and their own experience—became assured of the blessed fact, they made no delay in declaring it to others. And thus these humble shepherds became the first preachers of Christ unto men.

When God has spoken to us in His Word, and we have realized in our own experience His great salvation, we ought also to "tell to all around, what a dear Saviour we have found."

If we seek and find Him we also shall return glorifying and praising God for all the things that we have heard and seen.

JULY 14.—The Childhood of Jesus.—

Luke 2: 40-52. A. D. 9.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and with man.—*2: 52.*

IN THE STUDY.

Our lesson covers all that period of time from the return of our Lord from Egypt until His entry upon His public ministry at the age of thirty. But the date of the principal incident in it is about A. D. 9, or when Jesus was twelve years old. Nazareth, the home of Jesus for these nearly thirty years, is a city of lower Galilee, about seventy miles north of Jerusalem, in the territory of the tribe of Zebulun. "It is situated on the side of a small, verdant, rich and beautiful valley, surrounded by hills, with a narrow outlet from the south. From the summit of the hill on the eastern slope of which Nazareth lies is a truly magnificent prospect. Towards the north the eye glances over the countless hills of Galilee, and across the snow-capped and snow-crowned Hermon. On the east the Jordan valley may be traced, and beyond it the dim heights of ancient Bashan. Towards the south spreads the broad and beautiful plain of Esdraelon, with Tabor and Little Hermon and Gilboa visible on its eastern border, and the hills of Samaria on the south, while Carmel rises on the west, and dips his feet in the blue waters of the Mediterranean." Says Dr. Thomson: "It is certainly remarkable that this place, dearest to the Christian heart of all on earth except Jerusalem, is not mentioned in the Old Testament, nor even by Josephus, who was himself on every side of it, and names the villages, all about, but seems yet totally ignorant of its existence. It was probably a very small hamlet hid away in the narrow valley, and almost political impudence whatever. There is a sort of latent beauty and appropriateness that He, who made all things out of nothing, should Himself come forth to the world out of a place that had no history." Its present population is about 3,000.

Of the childhood and youth of our Lord nothing is recorded save this one solitary incident. For nearly thirty years He remains in the obscurity of His mountain home developing those traits of mind and spirit that were to shine out in such dazzling glory. Thirty years of preparation for three of public ministry! But how much the more dependent on the thirty. There is a deep significance in the Evangelist's respecting the youth of our Lord, but how expressive and instructive is that silence! But though the sacred narrative is silent, we may nevertheless, from the home where He lived, the family of which He was the central figure, and the people among whom He dwelt, ascertain certain things concerning those years spent in the quiet valley of existence. "He grew as our children grow, only in a childhood of sinless

and stainless beauty, as the flowers of roses in the spring of the year, and as lilies by the waters." *Karrar.* As a Jewish youth He would be required to learn a trade, probably His father's.—*Matt. 13: 55; Mark 6: 3.* He would be taught to read and write at the ordinary Synagogue school; for education was very general in Palestine in those days, and schools numerous. One Book above all others would be His constant study. While in His leisure hours from the summit of the hill above the village He would look down upon nearly all the places rich in sacred associations,—and thus with "The Land and the Book" before Him He would, like Timothy, *know* the Scriptures from a youth. That He made rapid progress, and that His mind was early stored with sacred truth, is seen from the wisdom He manifested on His first visit at the age of twelve to Jerusalem and the Temple.

"The popular conception of the Saviour is too much that of *human body dwelt in by God*, which wholly omits the 'reasonable soul' so strongly implied in *2 Cor. 2: 17-18; 4: 15; 5: 7-9; Matt. 23: 38; Luke 10: 22*, and in the words, 'I dwell in wisdom.' This growth in wisdom does not imply defect; for from His earliest childhood Jesus was 'filled with wisdom'; His human mind expanded, and so, though always full, it constantly increased in wisdom. The expression 'increased in favour with God' is very remarkable and is to be understood like the other one, not that God was at any time *less* 'well pleased,' but that as Jesus grew there was more and more on which the Divine favour could rest.—*Stack.*

"We have no mention of Joseph after the events narrated in this lesson; and it is, therefore, probable that he died before our Lord entered on his public ministry.

"There is one great difficulty in enforcing upon children the example of Christ. Their common conception of Him is of one to whom goodness was so easy that it had no merit, who could not feel as children do feel, who was altogether far above the petty trials and difficulties of child life, and whose example cannot be fairly adduced. Let us, therefore, make it our special business in this lesson to exhibit Jesus as a *real boy*, let us not seek to diminish the reverence with which His divinity is regarded; that feeling already exists, and we shall rather increase it by dwelling on the real humbleness of the eternal Son of God."—*Stack.* Heb. 2: 171, 4: 15.

Jesus is a friend and a Saviour, who can feel for and understand the children, for He Himself was a child.

The following suggests itself as a suitable line of thought for the teacher in the class: 1st. The Home of Jesus; 2nd. The Growth of Jesus; 3rd. The Daily Life of Jesus; 4th. His First Visit to Jerusalem and the Temple; 5th. His Stay in the Temple with the Doctors; 6th. His Return to Nazareth.

IN THE CLASS.

Questions. What events have taken place since our last lesson? The circumcision.—*V. 21. Ex. 13: 2.* The presentation in the temple.—*V. 22-28.* The visit of the Magi.—*Matt. 2: 1-12.* The flight into Egypt, Herod's cruelty, and the return.—*Matt. 2: 13-23.* Where was Nazareth? How long did Jesus live there? Why is the only incident recorded during His life in Nazareth? How was prophecy fulfilled by His dwelling at Nazareth? *Isa. 11: 1.*

THE HOME OF JESUS.

A mountain home, small, rude, despised. *John 1: 46.* Let us not despise any one because of his home. The greatest and best men have been born and brought up in obscurity. It is not where a man begins; it is where he ends. The diamond that gleams in the monarch's crown was formed in the dark mine. See the humiliation of our blessed Lord! He stooped down to the lowest and humblest position, and was content to be

despised so that He might save us. *Matt. 20: 7; John 19: 19.*

THE GROWTH OF JESUS.

He grew as our children grow. From an infant wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger, He grew day by day until He could walk and run, and talk and think, and learn, until at twelve years of age, all were astonished at His understanding.

As He grew in body He grew in mind. He did not spend His hours in idleness and listlessness, but improved them diligently. How precious the opportunities of youth! Then the mind and character are forming, and as the boy is so the man will be. And above all, and the cause of all, is the "grace" or favour of God was upon Him.

HIS DAILY LIFE.

It was that of a poor man's son. His food was plain. His clothing was not of the best. He had many little duties to perform. He had his studies to master. The Sabbath services to attend. No doubt he was an affectionate, obedient, contented and studious boy. The word of God was His constant companion, and as He read His sacred narratives and lessons of heavenly wisdom, He received the good seed into good soil. He received it into His heart, and treasured it there. *Ps. 119: 11.* As He grew older He began to use His father's tools and to assist Him in his work, and when Joseph died He took his place and became the support and comfort of His mother. *Mark 6: 3; John 2: 12.*

"The trivial round, the common task,
Should furnish all we ought to ask—
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

HIS FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE.

At the age of twelve a Jewish boy became a 'son of the law,' thenceforth bound to obedience to all its requirements, including attendance at the passover. We can imagine the deep interest and the emotions that filled the breast of Jesus as He took this journey to Jerusalem—the Holy City, and the Temple. Already He had begun to realize something of His great destiny, and the future that was before Him in that city.

The feast lasted seven days.—*Ex. 12: 15; 13: 7*—from the 14th day of the first month, corresponding with our March, to the 21st, the day beginning at the setting of the sun. So deep was the interest of Jesus that He tarried behind, and only after three days search. He was found in the temple in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking questions. He was there to learn, and so eager was His desire for heavenly wisdom that the hours passed almost imperceptibly. He was absorbed in His Father's business.

"As to questioning, great courtesy was allowed. It is a grievous mistake to say that call this scene 'Christ disputing with the doctors.'"
Killo.

"His reply to His mother reveals His consciousness of His divine mission and the necessity that was laid upon Him. 'I must.' "This is no reproachful question. It is asked in all the simplicity and boldness of childhood."—*Alford.*

HIS RETURN TO NAZARETH.

Again our Lord is hid from our view. For eighteen long years He remains in Nazareth, ripening for His great work, subject to His parents, doing the common duties of daily life. So did Moses in the wilderness. We ought to be far more anxious to be ready for our work, and to be worthy of any position than to have it. When we are ready for our work the work will be ready for us.

He increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man—so ought we all. But this can be for us, only by going to Jesus the only perfect One, and making Him our trust and our example.