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BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER.

(Condensed from Peloubet's Notes.)

Lesson XII. Sept. 20. John 10: 1-16.

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."—Ps. 23: 1.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE ALLEGORY OF THE SHEEPFOLD. This passage is an allegory rather than a parable. This and the parallel passage in chapter 15 are the only instances of allegory in the Bible.

THE DOOR. 1. "He that entereth not by the door." There is only one door to Oriental sheepfolds. *The door* is the way appointed by God for entering His kingdom and the leadership in it. It includes consecration to God's service, seeking His glory and not their own, a character fitted for God's service.

THE ENEMIES. "But climbeth up some other way." So as not to be seen by those who have the care of the sheep. These are they who enter the ministry, or become teachers and leaders of religion from selfish motives, without entire consecration to God, without entire devotion to the good of men, simply to gain honor, or money, or a living, or an easy life. "The same is a thief" (a petty thief, working secretly) "and a robber" (a brigand, or highwayman). He receives the honor and the emoluments of his office without performing its duties.

THE TRUE SHEPHERD. 2. "But he that entereth in by the door." Openly, with no need to conceal his purposes. "Is the shepherd." The word *the* is not in the Greek. It should be simply a shepherd. "Shepherd of the sheep." The guide, leader, and teacher of the true children of God, wherever they may be found (ver. 16).

THE PORTER. 3. "To him the porter (the doorkeeper of the fold) openeth." The Holy Spirit, acting through His appointed ministers. "And the sheep hear His voice." Listen obediently, give heed to the voice of the true Shepherd. "He calleth His own sheep." Who in the fold are mingled with other flocks. "By name." Even in this country (England) shepherds and shepherds' dogs know each individual sheep; in the East the intimacy between shepherd and sheep is still closer.

LEADING TO FRESH PASTURES. "And leadeth them out." We have here the third characteristic of the true shepherd. He not only (1) enters the fold by the door, and (2) calls the sheep with His well-known and familiar voice, but (3) He is careful to lead them forth to good pasturage.

GOING BEFORE THEM. 4. "And when He putteth forth." The Greek word here is different from that translated *leadeth* in the previous verse, and implies constraint, an energetic putting forth of any sheep who might be hesitating to leave the restful fold, or fearful of the dangers in untried fields. "His own sheep." A better reading in Rev. Ver. is, *all His own*. Not one is left out. "He goeth before them." So our good Shepherd goes before us; He leads us where He would have us go; He is a perfect example of what He would have us to be.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE SHEEP. (1) "And the sheep follow him." This is the proof that we belong to his flock. "They know his voice." This is true to the letter. So the Christian knows Christ's voice. He knows Him not by church forms, which may be changed, but by His eternal nature.

5. "And a stranger will they not follow; for they know not the voice." The true disciples recognize a different spirit and tone and purpose and so will not follow.

6. "This parable." Not the word usually translated parable in the other Gospels, but rather a metaphor, an allegory. "They understood not." They did not see the point.

II. FIRST APPLICATION OF THE ALLEGORY; CHRIST THE DOOR. The allegorical picture being before them Jesus takes up one point and explains and applies it.

7. "Verily, verily." Pointing to the importance of the saying. "I am the door of the sheep." By which sheep and shepherd alike enter. It is the door *of the sheep* rather than of the *fold*, for the thought is of a door to a life, rather than to any organization.

8. "All that ever came before Me." Not all teachers, or prophets, but all who came *professing to be the Messiah*; or all who, pretending to be teachers from God, yet substituted for the divine teachings which pointed to Christ, false doctrines and principles, selfish ends, formalities and all methods of salvation which do not really save. "Are thieves and robbers." The teachers opposed to Christ were robbing the people of salvation, of true life, of the Messiah. "But the sheep did not hear them." The true people of God did not go after these false Messiahs, nor obey the false teachings of the Pharisees.

9. "By Me if any man enter in." To the fold, to the kingdom of God, the state of reconciliation and salvation offered by the Messiah. "He shall be saved." Safe from the sins that would ruin; safe from the punishment of his sins. But being safe is far from all. "He shall go in and out, and find pasture." Satisfaction for every need of the soul, sustenance that is pleasant and brings life and growth.

10. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." False teachers are seeking their own honor or advantage. "I am come that they might have life." The true religion comes first to give this present life more abundant development, and then through that to give eternal life. Hence, whatever form of religion tends to deprive mankind of its free, natural, and joyous life, is anti Christian. "And that they might have it more abundantly." Omit the more. The spiritual life is to be overflowing, without measure, as God continually bestows His gifts.

III. SECOND APPLICATION OF THE ALLEGORY: CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD.—11. "I am the Good Shepherd." The Good Shepherd claims the admiration of all that is generous in man.

"The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." To lay down the life is to consecrate it, devote it to the flock. So we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3: 16), though comparatively few are ever called on to die for them.

MARKS OF THE HIRELING. 12. "But he that is a hireling." Not every one that receives pay is a hireling, but one who serves only for pay, without love for the work, or care for the employer. "The wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep." And every wilful and determined opponent to truth and righteousness is a wolf.

13. "The hireling fleeth." Runs away in time of danger; neglects the sheep for his own advantage.

14, 15. "And know My sheep, and am known of Mine (even) as the Father knoweth Me," etc. (pointing the verses as in the Rev. Ver). In a limited way this is true of the good pastor or shepherd; he knows his flock personally and sympathizingly; he is not merely a preacher to them; he is their best friend and adviser. "And I lay down My life for the sheep." He knows them, He knows their needs, He knows their danger from the enemy, He knows, too, what capacities there are in them for serving God and returning His own and His Father's love; and so, because of this knowledge, He lays down His life for them, that His infinite grace may reach them and perfect them.

16. "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold." The Gentiles, who were not in the kingdom of God. He does not say "of another fold," as if there were then another true church, but "not of this fold," scattered abroad, without fold as yet. "They shall hear My voice." They will listen to the Gospel, and to the voice of God in their souls, and accept His invitations, and become the sheep of His flock. "And there shall be one fold." Better, *one flock*; no one exclusive enclosure of an outward church,—but one flock, all knowing the one Shepherd, and known of Him. And one flock because one shepherd; one not in creed, or organization, or method of worship, but one in Christ Jesus. One in heart, one in purpose, one in the service of God and man.

One Rainy Day.

"Such a horrid morning!" exclaimed Agnes Marsh, as she came into the breakfast room. "It always has to rain if I am planning for some special pleasure; of course the picnic will have to be given up. I never can go any where!"

"Never can go anywhere!" said brother Ralph, laughing heartily. "Please mention a day when you have not been anywhere, and I will make a record of it."

"Of course you don't care if it does rain, you can put on your rubber coat and go fishing," replied the sister. "Rain rain, rain; I'm sick of such weather."

"This rain is worth thousands of dollars," spoke a voice just at that moment, and Agnes looking toward the open window, saw the old farmer, with his weekly supply of butter and eggs, driving up to the kitchen door. He was speaking to the coachman.

"Hay crop looked mighty poor I tell you, and the gardens was a-drying up; wouldn't had no vegetables; water getting low in the pasture, and everybody's cistern round my place going dry. We don't often have such a spell of weather this time of year; nearly three weeks without any rain."

"There, Agnes, did you hear what that man said? Three weeks without any rain! Such a spell of weather unknown to the oldest inhabitant, and yet you seem to think rain has been the special feature of the month."

It was a good day for Ralph to go fishing, and the boys who were to go with the girls to the picnic concluded to join him, and they were soon in a boat in the middle of the lake fishing.

"I don't know what to do with myself," said Agnes to her mother, as she wandered from one room to another.

"I should think you would be really glad of one quiet day at home," her mother replied. "You have been somewhere every day for three weeks. The weather has been bright all the time, and yet you never spoke of it; this one rainy day, when you are obliged for once to stay indoors, you make more of than all the good ones put together. But that is the way with us many times, we do not appreciate our good times, but forget our blessings because of one rainy day now and then in our lives. Why don't you read or fill in the time with your fancy work, and not be so ill-natured and unhappy?"

But Agnes said she had read all the books there were in the house, and was tired of her fancy work, and really there was nothing to do but to mope.

"Good morning, Mrs. Marsh," said a pleasant voice in the hall. "Excuse me for coming in so early, but I came on an errand of mercy. There is a family down in 'The Hollow' that are in great trouble. The children are all down with the measles, and the father broke his leg yester day, so he can't work, and they are so poor I'm really afraid they will suffer for food."

Mrs. Marsh was very kind-hearted, and she began immediately to look about the pantries for something to send the poor family.

Some good spirit whispered to Agnes that she might do something if it did rain.

"Helen has had the measles," continued the neighbor, "and she is going with Patrick when he carries the things."

"I'm glad I've had the measles, too," said Agnes, a bright look coming into her face. "I'll go with Helen and carry some of the illustrated papers, and what else? O, I know, that doll sister Lou's baby left here last summer, and that toy woolly dog Ralph gave me for fun last Christmas."

An hour from that time the six picnic girls, with their gossamers on and well laden with bundles, tiled through the streets on their way to The Hollow. They had all had the measles. How very fortunate it was, they said to each other, as they laughed and talked along the way.

The poor little overworked mother was amazed to see the young ladies from the hill standing at her door, the rain dripping from their gossamers, offering their baskets and bundles.

She forgot her manners, and did not even ask them to come in, but of course they knew that six girls in the room would frighten the sick ones, and their damp garments might have given them chills and driven the measles in again. The mother said "they had come out most beautiful that morning," and she was sure the children would get along well. Tommy's came out once, but struck in again, and now were out as thick as could be.

"We did not do much good though, did we?" said Agnes on the way home. "Girls let us have a scrap-book picnic at our house. You go home and get all the pictures you can and I'll get mine, and we will make pretty scrap-books for those sick children out of some pink and blue cambric I have in the house."

All the other girls were delighted with the suggestion, and they were soon busy with the new work.

"Didn't catch a single fish, Ralph!" exclaimed Agnes; "and you Jack, only that one miserable little—what do you call it, 'Shiner?' And the rest of you boys with empty baskets! A whole day gone to waste."

"But what have you done yourself, I'd like to know?" Ralph said.

With a show of satisfaction and exultation, Agnes opened the door of the room where the girls were surrounded by pictures, paste-pots, and blue cambric clippings.

"Making scrap-books for children who have the measles down in The Hollow," meekly spoke Agnes.

The boys looked at each other in astonishment, and Ralph exclaimed, "Boys, did you ever hear of the girls doing such a good thing before?"—*Lois Chidsey.*

The Little Vegetable-Knife.

"I wish I could find it," said Mrs. Hughes; "I've looked everywhere for it. Mary, have you seen that little black handled vegetable-knife?"

Mary had not seen it.

"Well," said Mrs. Hughes, "I've got my closet in nice order while looking for it, and cleaned out under the stationary tubs, and everywhere else where a knife could hide, and I can't find it anywhere. It was the most useful knife in the house. I paid only ten cents for it, but it had such a cutting edge to it, and such a nice point, and was so handy."

The guilty little knife heard all this from a crevice behind the stove where it had slipped in sheer disgust and weariness of life. It hadn't supposed it was of so much value in the eyes of its mistress. It had felt hurt because the silver knives with which it sometimes kept company while they were waiting to be washed, were put away in the basket in the dining room with much other polished and glittering plate, and it was tucked in a dark corner in the kitchen closet (just where its mistress's hand would be sure to find it). Life was dull for the little knife. It was tired of peeling potatoes and trimming spinach and serving all sorts of homely and petty offices. The kitchen case-knife looked down upon it because it was so small and such a little maid-of-all-work, and they didn't like its being so sharp-pointed. It was all right for folks to have points, but knives should be round at the ends and not pointed.

"I suppose I've got to peel the potatoes with these great, dull, clumsy case-knives till I find my dear little knife, or buy another," said Mrs. Hughes. Here a throb of joy and of jealousy thrilled the heart of the little knife. Its mistress had called it "dear," and she had spoken, too, of buying another. It resolved if it ever got out of its hiding-place to be content with its lot of humble usefulness, and not repine because it was not a silver knife or a "great, dull, clumsy case-knife."

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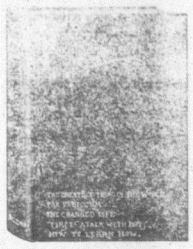

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