

The Quiet Hour.

Easter Lesson.

S. S. LESSON—March 30th. John 20 : 6-18.
GOLDEN TEXT—Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life—John 11 : 25.

Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, and Nicodemus had buried the body of Jesus, and the Jews had set a watch to guard against its being stolen; the Sabbath was past; and now the women are coming to the sepulchre to mourn. Says Professor Ross:

"Mourning in the East is much more violent and demonstrative than among us. We try to check the outward expression of grief; Orientals not only give it free rein, but strive to rouse the extremest manifestations of it in one another. As soon as a death occurs, it is announced by the piercing shrieks of the relatives. When a neighbor comes to condole with one who has been bereaved, she announces her approach by the sharp, quavering wail which pierces every ear. In the house of mourning the women chant reminiscences of the departed to keep their tears flowing freely. The spirit of the dead is supposed to hover about the body for three days, and the mourning is kept up with special intensity during that time, because the deceased one is thought to be within hearing. And long after that, the women of the bereaved family will come and sit by the grave for hours, in a drizzling rain, to mourn the one buried there."

The following are the various appearances of our Lord Jesus, after His resurrection, and before His ascension to the right hand of God, the Father: To Mary Magdalene (John 20 : 14 17), to the other women (Matt. 28 : 9, 10), to Peter (Luke 24 : 34), to two disciples (Luke 24 : 13 31), to ten apostles (John 20 : 19 23), to eleven apostles (John 20 : 24 28), to seven disciples (John 21 : 1-14), to a great company (Matt. 28 : 16 20; 1 Cor. 15 : 6), to James (1 Cor. 1 : 15 : 7), to the apostles (1 Cor. 15 : 7), at His ascension (Mark 16 : 19, 20; Luke 24 : 50 53; Acts 1 : 3 12). Some think these two are really the same appearance.

Mary Magdalene is the first to bring the news (John 20 : 2). Peter and John on hearing it "ran both together." Peter is outstripped by the younger man, who arrives first at the sepulchre.

68. But the ardent Peter is the first to enter into the sepulchre. The napkin that was about His head was carefully "wrapped together in a place by itself." There had been no haste. John now enters in and sees what Peter saw. They are convinced that the body had not been stolen away, but that He must have risen from the dead.

9, 10. Strangely enough, with all their knowledge of the Old Testament and all the instruction given by Jesus Himself, they "knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead" (Ps. 16 : 10; Acts 2 : 25 31; 13 : 34, 35); and so half glad, half sad, and wholly bewildered they "went away again unto their own home."

11-13. "But Mary"—she is back again at the sepulchre, empty though she had seen it to be. Her love and grief will not allow her to stay away. She wept, for she thought the Lord gone forever from her sight and knowledge—the Lord she loved so much. She will take one more look into the empty tomb. As she looks, she sees angels through her tears. But it is not Jesus.

14 18. Then Jesus Himself appears, and although at first unheeded awakes Mary's faith by His word. She will clasp His feet, but is forbidden, and goes in joy to say to the still perplexed disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

Notice in verse 17 that Jesus is not ashamed, even after His resurrection, to call this weak band of disciples, so slow of faith, "my brethren" (cf. Matt. 28 : 10). He is our Brother still. Nothing could bring out more clearly and decisively the true humanity of the risen Christ.

Prayer.

Add to this day which Thou hast given me the gift of Thyself. Let me begin it now with a glad sense of harmony and oneness with Thee. Let me go forth confident in a sense of my sufficiency for all things, through Thee. Let me be conscious of Thy support every moment, and help me to work for Thee a provol first in everything I do. The day will approach perfection in proportion as it is pervaded by a sense of being guided and used by Thee. Make me willing for such guidance. Make me to yearn for Thy presence, and to be so sensitive to its withdrawal that I shall never stray from Thy side; and may the day that begins with Thy presence end with Thee in my heart. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Christ's Armory.

BY REV. J. R. MILLER, D. D.

In one of Holman Hunt's pictures he shows Jesus in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. It was in His early youth. Along the side of the shop is a little case containing a collection of ancient rolls. The artist would represent our Lord as having His little library of sacred Hebrew books in the shop where He worked at His trade, the suggestion being that in His resting moments He turned often to them to read and ponder over their words. Thus He stored the sacred truths in His memory. No doubt this was the custom of Jesus. He studied His Father's words diligently, until His heart was full of them. Then, when He went out from His quiet home, and when the tempter came to Him, He had but to bring out a divine promise, a word of Scripture, as one would draw an arrow from a quiver, and with it repel the enemy.

Better Than not Doing Wrong.

What we cannot do, or what we ought not to do, need not occupy our thought in comparison with what we can do, and what we ought to do. And if the latter has its proper place with us, the former need not have any place in our thoughts or conduct. The Law, given of God on Mt. Sinai, made prominent the commands "Thou shalt not." But the dutiful Jew understood, and Jesus confirmed and reaffirmed the truth, that the declarations "Thou shalt love God" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor" fulfilled the whole law. If we pay due attention to the "Thou shalt," we need not concern ourselves with the "Thou shalt not." Right performance is always better than the strongest prohibition.—The S. S. Times.

A Question Of Time.

There is with some persons an inexplicable craze for shortness in the matter of the Gospel. They wish very short pastorates, and they wish very short sermons. A very little religious truth goes a long way with them. They will tell you that their pastor has already been with them too long, and that he has outlived his usefulness, one great reason for their lack of interest in him being that his sermons average five minutes too long.

Any wise minister will look carefully to this matter of length in his pulpit exercises. While seeking that they shall be characterized by dignity, impressiveness and propriety, he will guard against undue length. He will wish to edify rather than to weary his hearers. He will not allow himself to be made nervous by the demands of the shallow and restless for extreme shortness. He will enter the pulpit for the purpose of imparting instruction and promoting worshipfulness, and he will not permit undue haste and brevity to destroy all possibility of accomplishing these ends. But at the same time he will not allow himself to be prolix and tedious, and so defeat his best intentions. Wisdom here is wisdom indeed. For his services he will take time enough, but he will not claim too much, lest he be left alone. But all sensible persons will sympathize with him in his efforts to make the service worthy of their attendance and attention.

Grant that there is neither call nor use for a three hours' sermon, such as the old Puritan and Scottish preachers sometimes gave their hearers, and yet, on the other hand, it hardly seems worth while to come to church to hear a fifteen minutes' sermonette. If one has anything worth preaching, he can hardly crowd it into fifteen minutes. It depends largely on what one has to say whether he needs any time in which to say it. We once knew an Episcopal minister who preached only a few minutes at any one time, and who said that his Bishop counted it an offense for one to preach over twenty minutes; but we heard that Bishop once when he came around to visit his flock, and he preached forty minutes. The secret of it was that he believed he had something to say that was worth saying. A sermon less than thirty minutes in length will not be apt to impart much information or make any deep impression.

Some one who pleads for brevity says that the twenty-third Psalm is a gem, and that it is very short. Of course; but all the Psalms are not so short, and they were all inspired. The fifty-first is a wonderful expression of penitence, the one hundred and third of trustfulness, and the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm of admiration for God's Word. The short one is all right in its place, but there are no verses to be spared out of the others. And so the thirteenth of First Corinthians is extolled for its brevity in setting forth the charms of Christian charity. But when God would set forth the facts as to the resurrection by the pen of the apostle, in the fifteenth chapter of the same epistle, the stately statement expands into one of the longest chapters of the New Testament.

And so the prayers made by the penitent publican, the thief on the cross, the returning prodigal and Peter sinking in the sea, are all very short, and are sometimes commended to the preacher's attention. Of course, they were all right in their place, but in neither case was the prayer offered up to guide a worshiping assembly, but was a mere ejaculatory petition in time of great distress