



LESSON V.—Jan. 30.

How to Pray.

Matt. vi., 5-15. Memory verses, 9-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.

'Pray to thy Father, which is in secret.'—
Matt. vi., 6.

Daily Readings.

- M. Matt. vi., 1-15.—How to pray.
- T. Luke xi., 1-13.—'Ask and it shall be given you.'
- W. Luke xviii., 1-14.—'Men ought always to pray.'
- Th. Jas. v., 13-20. — The power of fervent prayer.
- F. Matt. vi., 16-34.—'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'
- S. Phil. iv., 1-13. — 'Let your requests be made known unto God.'
- S. Ps. xxv., 1-22.—Confidence in prayer.

Lesson Story.

In continuation of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. He warns them against all forms of hypocrisy and ostentatious piety. The pious acts which are performed only for show will receive the reward of being noticed and applauded by man, nothing more. The secret acts of worship and charity, known only to God, will be rewarded by him in rich blessings.

Genuine worship is not done for man's applause; takes, in fact, no thought of man, only of God: The soul stands alone with its maker in the secret inner chamber of the heart, there to worship and pray. Even in public prayer the soul must from the inmost heart pour out its praise and prayer to God. This is the meaning of entering into the closet and shutting the door — shutting the door of the heart against the worldly thoughts and everyday cares of life.

Our Father sees the genuineness of our hearts and he rewards our trusting prayers with the blessings sought. Our Father knows all about us, he has the answer ready for us before we pray, (Isa. lxv., 24.) but he wants us to trustingly ask him for the things we need. Not only the spiritual needs, but the temporal, the everyday wants, "our daily bread." We must come to God as little children to a loving Father. Our Father in heaven is real. His love is real and unchanging. He is kinder than the most tender human father. He loves to have us talk to him, he loves to have us ask him for our daily needs.

Jesus especially teaches the necessity of forgiving. We must forgive like God, who casts away all remembrance of our sin when we have once repented and asked his forgiveness. (Psa. ciii., 8-12.)

Lesson Hints.

In the East it is quite a usual thing to see men praying in the street, on the corners or in any noticeable place. Private devotions are most publicly and showily performed by many. We of this country can scarcely understand such ostentation. We are too apt to go to the other extreme, hiding our "light under a bushel." Hiding our religious feelings from the sight of all as though we were ashamed of them. Ashamed to own our love for Christ, yet eagerly accepting his mercy and salvation. We are so much afraid of making a show of piety that we often dishonor and actually deny Christ by our silence.

'Enter into thy closet' — do we not here find a special command to private prayer? Yes, and when private prayer and communion is given up the soul life grows cold and empty. The neglect of secret prayer is the beginning of all backsliding. But this does not prohibit public prayer and testimony, in which Jesus set the example. (John xi., 41, 42.)

'Vain repetitions'—repeating forms that mean nothing special to us. Many of our scholars make our Lord's Prayer itself a vain repetition, gabbling over the words which they neither understand nor care about. This prayer which they all repeat at least once a week should be made plain to them,

that they may understand what they are asking.

'Much speaking'—it is not so much what we say as what we mean that God cares for. 'Hallowed' — holy, honored. We hallow God's name by honoring it and holding it sacred. (Ex. xx., 1-7.)

'Thy kingdom' — the kingdom of peace, truth and purity; the kingdom of righteousness, mercy and praise. If we pray for God's kingdom to come, we must do all we can to bring it.

'Thy will'—God's will instead of ours. God's way, the only right way, God's wisdom to take the place of our foolishness. If God's will is to be done, each one of us must do it. 'In heaven'—the angels obey God gladly, promptly, lovingly. If we have God's Spirit we will be glad to do whatever he tells us, we will be glad to learn what he wants us to do.

'Daily bread'—all good things come from God. This is why we thank him and ask his blessings on our food at each meal-time. You could not have daily food if God did not give some one the strength to earn it and prepare it for you.

'Forgive us our debts'—our sins are the great debts we owe. We can not pay it. If God did not forgive, it would stand against us for ever, and drag us down into hell.

'Temptation'—(Matt, xxvi., 41.) 'Deliver us from evil'—save us from sin, its power and shame, its fascination and ruin. Deliver us from the snares of the tempter.

'Thine is the kingdom'—we are thy subjects. 'The power'—all power, omnipotence. Power to answer all prayer, power to forgive all sins, power to deliver us from evil. 'Forever' — throughout all ages, eternity. 'Amen'—let it be so.

Primary Lesson.

Perhaps you have sometimes wondered why the prayer we repeat so often is called the 'Lord's Prayer.'

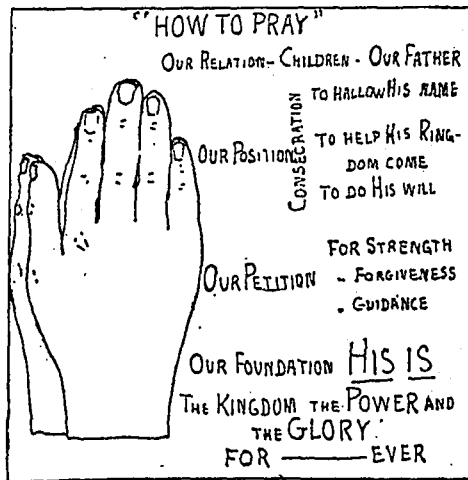
It is because that is the very prayer that Jesus taught his first followers to pray. We must remember this when we are saying it, and remember that we are talking to God just as really as if we saw him standing by us. 'Saying our prayers' is not always the same as really praying. It is very little use to say prayers that we do not understand.

Praying is really talking to God, praising him for his goodness and greatness, and asking him for the things we need. He wants to give us the things we need. He wants us to ask him to take care of us every day and every night. He wants us to ask him to forgive our sins and make us good for Jesus' sake.

God is our loving Father in heaven.

The Lesson Illustrated.

Our Lord's Prayer—A great, restful prayer, every word of which is a promise; for Christ would not teach what God would not give. At the very beginning we must get into



right relations with God. 'The disciples came' this is a prayer for Christians.

Secondly, it is a costly prayer; for, first of all, it makes us voice a mighty and perfect consecration, and especially if, 'as it is in heaven,' applies to the whole three clauses instead of the last with which we generally read it.

Thirdly, petition. Prayer is larger, and means communion, God talking to us, and we to him. Petition, is asking for something. What great promises are implied in Christ's teaching us to ask these next three things, all we need for ourselves.

And, lastly, as a sweet reminder of the

great, infinite, almighty and everlasting Strength, upon which we build all our prayer, a rock that cannot be shaken, how precious a foundation the facts of this, which we sometimes so carelessly pass over, as 'only a benediction.'

Practical Points.

Jan. 30—Matt. vi., 5-15.

A. H. CAMERON.

The hypocrite's reward is in this world. Their punishment in the next. Verse 5. He who would have power in prayer, must be often alone with God. Verse 6. Long prayers are never commended in scripture. The short, earnest petition flies swiftly to the throne of grace. Verses 7 and 8. We may not approach our heavenly Father without reverencing his name, desiring the progress of his kingdom, and patiently submitting to his will. Verses 9 and 10. The Lord will give us temporal blessings as well as spiritual, and true faith asks daily. Verse 11. Nothing can equal the peace that flows from a knowledge of sins forgiven. How can we enjoy this blessing if we deny it to others. Verses 12 and 15.

Lesson Hymn.

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne,
Make all my wants and wishes known.

In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief;
And oft escaped the tempter's snare,
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

W. B. B.

Suggested Hymns.

'Take time to be holy,' 'Blessed hour of prayer,' 'The Mercy-seat,' 'Showers of blessing,' 'Are your windows open towards Jerusalem?' 'Faith is the victory.'

Christian Endeavor Topic.

Jan. 30.—'For Christ and the Church.' — what shall we do? — (Ex. xxxv., 20-29; Luke xiv., 33.)

Honor Roll.

Next week's issue will contain the last Honor Roll of those who have answered these questions, and the announcement of the prize-winners.

Order in School.

The good order of a Sunday-school is the chief mark of good management. The standard of Sunday-school order ought to be even better than that of the best secular schools.

The superintendent should train the scholars to come quietly to their own places on arrival, and remain throughout the entire session. To begin and to continue through the opening exercises with the utmost reverence.

He should train them moreover, to take hearty part in all general exercises, such as singing, prayer, reading the lesson, reviews, etc. To secure this general responsiveness by scholars is the joint work of superintendent and teachers; but, however hard to do, it is the sure test of good management. He should especially see that the teachers during the class study are freed from all disturbance and interruption by officers, visitors, or even by himself.

He should dismiss the school quietly and reverently, mindful that all permitted disorder in the school will inevitably grow into greater disorder in the church.—'Sunday-school Magazine.'

One of the strongest testimonies we have ever heard to the evangelistic value of a Sabbath-school was given by a Glasgow minister, a few days ago, to a meeting of teachers. He said he had experience of good home missionaries and other valuable agencies in connection with his congregation, but affirmed that he had known of more families becoming church-going through the efforts of teachers following up the children in their classes than from any other cause. They were not always able themselves to deal with the parents, but when they could not they reported the facts to himself or his office-bearers, and the cases were looked after.—'Presbyterian Review.'