

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

LESSON IV. January 27, 1918.

Jesus Forgiving Sin.—Mark 2: 1-12.

COMMENTARY.—1. The Gospel in Capernaum (vs. 1, 2). 1. entered into Capernaum—Nazareth was the early home of Jesus, but he now made his home in Capernaum. This was a city of considerable importance on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, about twenty miles northeast of Nazareth. He returned to this place shortly after the cleansing of the leper. It was noted that he was in the house—News spread rapidly in the East, even in the absence of modern means of communication. Jesus was probably either in the house where he lived with his mother and his brethren or in that of Peter. The Revised Version, margin, reads, "At home." 2. many were gathered.—The people were drawn together partially through curiosity, and partially to receive benefit from Jesus. There were Pharisees and doctors of the law present from Galilee and Judea as far as Jerusalem (Luke 5: 17). no room to receive them—the courtyard, as well as the house, was filled and a crowd was about the door. preached the word.—We may suppose that most of those who had assembled were expecting to see some marvelous display of Jesus' power, but he took occasion to declare the gospel to them. He preached at this time in a private house and not out-of-doors nor in the synagogue.

II. An Afflicted Man Brought to Jesus (vs. 3, 4). 3. they come.—Friends of the sick man, sick of the palsy—Palsy, a contraction of the word paralysis, is a disease that deprives the part affected of sensation or the power of motion, or both. This patient was utterly helpless. The disease is considered incurable. "Palsy is a type of sin. Sin in the soul takes all the forms which paralysis does in the body. 1. It takes away the sense of feeling. 2. It weakens the will so that when men would do good, evil is present with them. They put off duty; they know, but will not come to a decision. 3. It produces a fixed condition of evil, with intense suffering." borne of four—Matthew says (9: 2) that the sick man lay upon a bed. He was carried by four, each at a corner of the bed. The poor man could not have come to Jesus unaided, nor could one or two alone have brought him. It required united effort to bring him to the Healer. 4. uncovered the roof.—The audience thronged the house to that extent that those who were bringing the sick man to Jesus could not enter. They therefore ascended the outside stairway to the flat roof, and taking up the material of which the roof was made, let the sick man down through the opening into the presence of Jesus. Their earnestness did not admit of their giving up easily. They overcame all obstacles and brought the palsied man to Jesus. They let down the bed—The construction of Eastern houses was such that it was not a very unusual thing to remove a portion of the roof, yet it was an extraordinary sight to see a bed with a sick man in it being let down into the house through such an opening.

VI. Forgiveness and healing (vs. 5-12). 5. Saw their faith.—That is, faith of the sick man, and of his friends who brought him. It was manifested with the sick man's own consent, and on doubt at his own instance, that he was brought. They all, it would appear, had faith in Christ as the great power of God.—Morison. They had heard of Jesus. "And the power of the Lord was present to heal them" (Luke 5: 17). They not only believed the reports, but they believed that Jesus would heal in this case. They acted faith. Son—A term expressive of sympathy and endearment. Matthew adds (9: 2), "Be of good cheer." Jesus saw that a word of encouragement was needed. Although his case was a desperate one, both physically and spiritually, relief was at hand. Thy sins be forgiven thee—"Thy sins are forgiven."—R. V. The sick man evidently felt himself a sinner in need of pardon. It was the forgiveness of sin that was more urgent than the healing of the body. The conditions necessary to forgiveness, repentance and faith, had surely been met by the afflicted man. He found in Jesus more than he had really anticipated, and he was filled with wonder and delight because of what came to him. At the words of Jesus he could go forth a saved and well man.

6. Scribes.—They had charge of the books of the law, and were the teachers and leaders of the nation. They had been listening to the discourse of Jesus. Reasoning in their hearts, it would seem from the fact that our Lord's death had already been decreed (John 5: 18), that these persons, hostile to him, were watching greedily for any words or acts of his that they might use against him. It seemed to them now that their opportunity to accuse him had come. 7. Speak blasphemies.—The charge was made because Jesus had spoken forgiveness to the palsied man. The scribes declared that Jesus, in forgiving sins, had assumed a prerogative belonging to God alone, and that he was a blasphemer in thus professing to be divine. It is true that God alone can forgive sins, and Jesus in doing this openly declared his divinity. 8. Jesus perceived.—This was a miracle of knowledge. The scribes had said nothing, but Jesus knew absolutely the very thoughts they were thinking. In his spirit—His soul was human, but his "spirit" was divine, and by this divine faculty he penetrated and then revealed to them the "thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4: 12).—Maclear. Why reason ye these things in your hearts?—Matthew says (9: 4), "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" They were unjustly accusing him. They would not recognize him as divine. Their thoughts were evil because they were evil, yet Jesus spoke to them in gentleness. He never sought to drive people from him, but to bring them to himself, and to the saving truth of the gospel. He could, however, speak with severity when

occasion demanded, but he always spoke in love.

9. whether it is easier to say.—Both are equally easy and equally difficult. Everything is equally easy to that power which is unlimited. A universe can be as easily produced by a single act of the divine will, as the smallest part of matter.—Clarke. The claim that he was able to forgive sins might not be so easily established as the claim that he was able to heal the palsied man. In the latter case the evidences of the cure would at once be seen by all, while in the former the work would be spiritual and not so readily discerned. His power to heal the man of the palsy would show that he was divine, and therefore able to forgive sins. 10. but that ye may know.—He would give them positive proof that he had authority to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," by performing a miracle before their eyes. Son of man.—This is the first time that this title is used in Mark's Gospel, where it occurs fourteen times. The writers of the Gospels do not themselves apply the title to our Lord, but he applies it to himself. It represents the human side of our Lord's nature. He was the Son of God from all eternity, but he became the Son of man in due time. 11. arise.—The man who was let down through the roof a helpless invalid was commanded to arise, take his sleeping-mat and go home.

12. he arose.—went forth.—The test was successfully applied. The intervening moment must have been one of suspense to all, save to the Healer and the healed; the one scene in the consciousness of power, the other strong in faith, before them all.—This thing was "not done in a corner." Christ's miracles were performed in the most public manner and were never questioned by those who witnessed them. amazed—Luke adds that they "were filled with fear," glorified God.—They had a high degree of reverence for God and were filled with admiration for his power and goodness.—Benson. on this fashion—Christ's works are without precedent. He acts independently and precedent. He acts independently and three marks of his divinity: 1. Forgiving sins. 2. Perceiving thoughts. 3. Healing disease. Jesus had come to them with his unlimited power and matchless love to show them the way to spiritual life and power.

Questions.—Into what city did Jesus enter? Why had the throng of people assembled? Who was brought to Jesus? What course was taken to bring the man into the presence of Jesus? What did Jesus first say to the sick man? What complaint did the scribes make? Why did they object to Jesus' words? Who alone can forgive sins? How were the people to know that Jesus could forgive sins? How did the cure of the palsied man affect the people? How is it shown in this lesson that Jesus is divine?

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Topic.—Jesus meeting man's deepest need.

I. By giving health to soul and body.

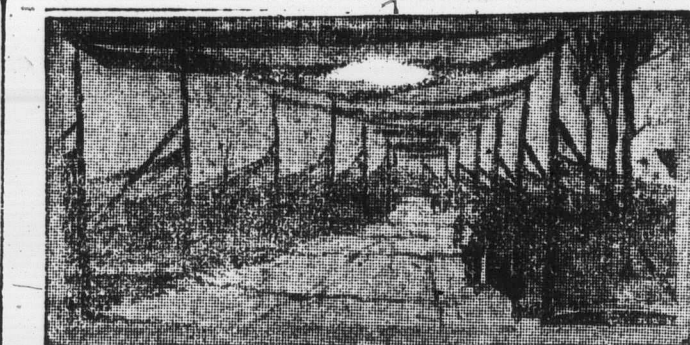
II. By convincing men of his divinity.

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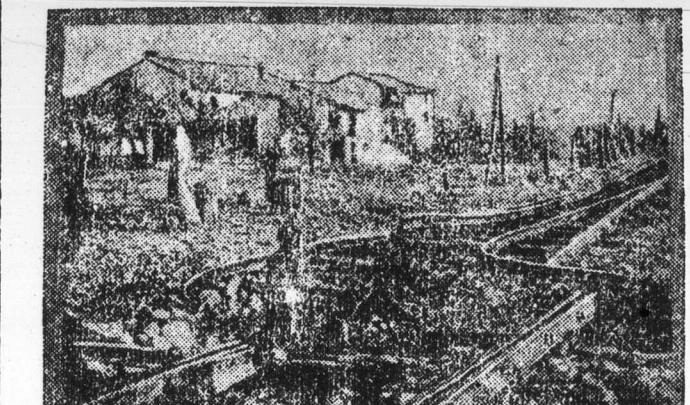
Our Lord's miracles of healing were obviously designed to give relief from suffering and to restore to health. As the great Healer he pitied and relieved physical suffering, yet he had regard to the more serious conditions of the soul. He designed by his miracles of healing to direct attention to himself and to awaken faith in himself as able and willing to save sinners. In this miracle of healing the palsied man, Jesus first openly avowed the spiritual purpose of his ministry and the spiritual authority he possessed to pardon and to save. "The forgiveness of sins took the pre-eminence in all Christ's blessings. There was general interest and appreciation in the community. Multitudes crowded to hear Christ's words. Many applicants were urgently seeking his healing mercy. As an illustration of the whole covenant of man's redemption from guilt and its consequences, Christ forgave the sins of the paralytic and then sent health into every fibre of his being. The paralytic may have been more troubled about his sins than his sickness, though his friends did not know it. The strange interruption made by his friends into Christ's presence was not resented, but welcomed. Christ's divine love was not restrained by the presence of unbelievers about him.

II. By convincing men of his divinity.

Jesus peremptorily challenged the scribes in their logic and confronted them with his discovery and defeated them utterly. He proceeded to put them in the way of coming to a correct conclusion. By the miracle which they witnessed impotence was visibly changed into strength, helplessness into self-helpful activity. The hitherto palsied man knew that his sins were forgiven him in response to the divine voice. His spiritual activity was the manifestation and proof of redemptive forgiveness. With rejoicing heart and restored bodily powers he arose and departed to his home free from the burden of guilt, free from the infirmities of disease. The trusting soul of the paralytic grasped the secret of divinity which escaped the subtlety of the scribes. Their very knowledge stood in their way, but it was not spiritually acquired and employed. The healing of disease and the pardon of sin, though not on the same level, both appealed to the same divine power which Jesus claimed and exercised. Though his critics could not deny the facts, they would not acknowledge the power. The masses of the people were free from prejudice and more open to conviction. They united in giving glory to God. Faith increased among the people while unbelief worked its deadly results of envy and malice among those who should have been the first to perceive and accept the teachings and claims of Jesus. He was willing to consider their reasonings and to lead them to accept his claims, but they turned everything to support their belief, the result of which must be increased opposition. The paralytic and his friends had faith; Jesus saw that their hearts were capable of receiving greater revelation. With the scribes



HOW A ROAD IS CONCEALED. STRIPS OF CANVAS OVERHEAD HIDE A ROADWAY FROM AEROPLANE OBSERVATION. WING SCREENS ALONG THE SIDE SERVE ALSO TO OFFEAGE THE LINES OF THE ROAD.



STRATEGICAL RETREAT. GERMAN PHOTOS SHOWING HOW THE ITALIANS COVERED THEIR RETREAT RECENTLY; WELL-DESIGNED RAILROAD.

there was no faith and no avenue through which they could gain spiritual help. They set themselves against revelation.



CONTENTMENT.

To better what you've done or got By day is right.

But be contented with your lot At night.

Through discontentment lies the way To better things.

But rest, when night supplants the day Your wings.

March through the day to life and drum

And bravely fight.

And then let sweet contentment come At night.

—Edgar A. Guest, in the Detroit Free Press.

THEM THAT HONOR ME I WILL HONOR.

Whosoever . . . shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in Heaven.

—Matthew 10: 32-33.

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—He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

For none of these things which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

A FUNERAL.

(By the late Rev. H. T. Miller.)

The other day I attended the funeral of a good man, it was a devout gathering, and several hymns were sung. Here is one stanza:

Now the laborer's task is o'er,

Now the battle day is past;

Now upon the farther shore

Stands the voyager at last.

Father, in Thy gracious keeping,

Leave me now, Thy servant sleeping.

This is faultless, except the two last lines. As I went home I meditated, and came to this conclusion: The first few lines land the man in heaven, the last two bring him down to the grave, to the sleep of death. But who are you speaking of? The man? Well, the man is not in the coffin or in the tomb; while you say, "earth to earth," he is trimming his torch of Isaac's rapture, or putting his fingers in the dry channels of the cheeks of Jeremiah, where the tears once flowed.

We sang another hymn, which began thus:

"Sleep thy last sleep.

Free from care and sorrow;

Rest, where none weep.

'Till the eternal morrow."

There is no sleep, and no last sleep, and no to-morrow; it is even to-day; it is NOW. "I am that I am," and we can say the same if we are in Christ and Christ is in us.

"Sleep on beloved, sleep and take thy rest.

Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast."

This is very pious and tender, but think of a cold corpse on the warm bosom of the Son of God! How confusing, how impossible; we are composed of two natures, opposite and diverse, soul and body, pure spirit and pure matter, we splice these two together in a clumsy fashion, and writers of verse make great blunders, and compilers of hymn books are embarrassed. How can the spirit of man sleep? It knows no fatigue, is never hungry, it is a piece of infinitude. It is not limited by time or space, and knows nothing of degrees or conditions, though while in the body we sometimes think so. Talk of revision! It is time some people began to revise their thoughts.

Can we make a coffin for a soul.

Can we bind a spirit which is free.

Can we hold a man in darkened thrall,

And blind the eye which evermore shall see?

We cannot say "good night," for he's in day.

The veil is lifted, and he's with the saints.

We bury but the crumbling house of clay.

He's gone beyond the sphere of dull complaints.

The living soul is on the Saviour's breast.

The light is gone behind the horizon's sun.

The ceaseless spirit, scorning thoughts of rest.

Joins in the choir of heaven's Eternal hymn.

The grave is not the goal of human soul.

The earth is not the place where spirits sleep.

The night is past, no more the shadows roll.

The watch is o'er, the eyes no more can weep.

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Wigg—That girl is very susceptible to flattery. Wagg—I guess that's right. I once told her she was as sweet as honey, and would you believe it, the very next day she had hives.

SHALL WE INCREASE OUR POULTRY PRODUCTION?

What is Done Must Be Done As a By-Product of General Farming

A very interesting phase of the programme for increased production of farm products, has to do with eggs and poultry. Some are already adopting a slogan such as "Double our poultry production for 1918," while others say, "Keep a hen for every acre." In most cases the latter would bring about a very substantial increase without putting the farm poultry flock upon an uncommercial basis.

The seasons of 1917 have seen some rather curious anomalies in the poultry business from the standpoint of the farmer or farmer's wife with live poultry for sale. In the face of a very high summer price for eggs, prices for market poultry were very low, so low in fact that there was nothing to be made by feeding for any great length of time, and large numbers of poultry went to the market. Moreover, consumption in cities fell off seriously from 1916.

A HEN FOR EVERY ACRE.

Without going into the whole situation at all thoroughly, it seems that there is little justice in urging farmers to greatly increase poultry and egg production. A hen for every acre would be excellent work, but the danger is that our production will increase rather than increase. A campaign for maintenance is justifiable. If an increase can be secured economically, well and good.

Undoubtedly the humble hen can play a prominent part in preventing the progress of the Pigeon pest. We cannot increase any of the meat animals as rapidly or economically as poultry, but the chief poultry increase must be made on the general farms of the country. It must be made as a by-product of general farming. The farm flock must be brought to such a size that all the waste and scraps and land available for chickens to run on will be used and the fowls maintained from these sources plus a reasonable amount of other feed.

No one who knows the situation thoroughly would suggest seriously that extensive poultry enterprises be taken up by the general farmer. In fact, a warning against that very thing might be in place. Nevertheless every farmer ought to keep just as many hens and eggs as he can economically and as a by-product of his general farming.

The average size of the farm poultry flock in Ontario at the time of the Census in 1911 was 63 head, of which about 7 per cent. were turkeys, geese and ducks. If this average is increased to one hundred hens next year, a very substantial increase in production should be obtained. There should be

no economic difficulty in raising one hen per acre, and that is virtually what 100 hens per farm would mean.

It is said that there are a million and a half eggless farms in the United States, but whether this be true or not in the United States, a proportionate number of eggless farms certainly does not exist in Old Ontario.

Chickens will "pick up" a good part of their living from waste that otherwise would never become of any value. They will feed themselves, to some extent at least, from weeds and scraps and crumbs and small scraps which, if not eaten by the chickens, would not become of food value to man. They will eat the eggs and larvae from which come various destructive insects, particularly orchard pests.

Most of the attention required by farm flocks can be said to be given by the women and children of the household. The question of labor is not a puzzling and uncertain problem in the poultry production programme of the general farm. If the farmer increases his flock to a size suitable to fit in as a by-product of his general farming, he will probably find that it will not require extra help.

Early hatching next spring is necessary if any considerable increase in production is to be attained. It is also necessary, during the winter, that the farmers save young hens and pullets, so they will be on hand for stock in the spring. The stock of the country has been reduced considerably this fall by a widespread sale, for market, of young hens and pullets. Therefore, it is necessary to conserve stock now, or else the shortage may interfere with the maintenance programme.

Early hatching in the spring will increase the number and size of fowls and the number of eggs produced next year. It will result in bigger birds, and birds that will lay in the winter months.

The chickens first hatched in the spring are the ones that are largest in summer, that mature first in the fall and that lay eggs in the winter. Furthermore they are the ones that will want to sit early the following spring, which, in turn, will hatch earlier chickens—and so the cycle will continue. On the contrary, chickens hatched late in the spring do not mature until so late in the fall that they will not become winter layers. They will not sit until late the next spring, and so another cycle of late maturing, late laying fowls is established.

About seven months are required for a chicken to grow to maturity, during that period of growth its feed goes to the making of bone, flesh and feathers. When it becomes mature its

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