

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

Sunday, April 10.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.—Luko x. 25-37.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Luk. xix. 18. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. I am the Lord. Commit 33-37.

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

The chapter from which our present lesson is taken follows our last lesson in immediate connection. Verses 1-12 relate the sending out of the seventy, and the directions that were given them; 13-16 set forth the responsibility of those cities in which our Lord's great works were done, as compared with that of Tyre and Sidon; and 17-25 contain the report of the seventy, the Lord's joy in view of the results He saw growing out of the progress of His work, His promise to them, and a portion of the conversation that followed.

LESSON NOTES.

(25.) Behold, a certain lawyer . . . tempted him (tested, or tried him), saying, Master (teacher), what shall I do? &c. This question seems not to have been asked in the spirit of a true inquirer, but rather, to test, or try, Jesus. He may have asked it merely for the sake of controversy; or, what is more likely with the hostile purpose of finding an occasion against Jesus. To inherit eternal life—or, in other words, how could he obtain it as the reward of some specific course of conduct while here.

(26.) Contrary, evidently, to the lawyer's expectation, Jesus turned the question back upon himself; and thus put him in the position in which he had thought to put Jesus. What is written in the law?—how readest thou?—as if He had said, You know the law—that is your profession; what does it tell you to do?

(27.) And he, answering, said—thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. (Deut. vi. 5), and thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. xix. 18).

(28.) And He said unto him, thou hast answered right; (compare Matt. xxii. 37-40; Rom. xiii. 10) this do, and thou shalt live. If one could do all that is comprehended in the lawyer's answer, he would have fulfilled the entire law; and there would be then for him no condemnation. But this fallen man cannot do. Jesus alone has ever done it, and, having done it, and borne its penalty in His people's behalf, He has become the end of the law to every one that believeth.

(29.) Willing (wishing) to justify himself, &c. The lawyer, in answering Jesus' question, had placed himself in a difficult position. He could not but feel conscious of short-coming in regard to men generally; but he doubtless hoped that Jesus would define neighbor according to the narrow, Jewish idea, which excluded Samaritans and Gentiles; and if so, he hoped to be able to show that he had done all that the law required.

(30.) And Jesus, answering, said. Jesus often resorted to parables when wishing to bring his opponents to an impartial view of the case under consideration, and elicit from them a decision which, while true in itself, should be clearly against themselves. A certain man: a Jew, evidently—went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jericho is about eighteen miles to the north east of Jerusalem. The road lies through a narrow valley, the rocky region on either side being then, as well as now, infested by thieves (robbers), into whose hands the unfortunate Jew fell. These stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

(31.) A certain priest came down that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Jericho was a large city, and many priests and Levites resided there. This priest was bound by the Law (Deut. xxii. 4; Ex. xxiii. 4, 5) to succor the beast of either his friend or his enemy, which he should find either astray or fallen by the wayside; how much more then its owner; but, regardless of that, this priest, when he saw the wounded man, passed by on the other side!

(32.) And likewise a Levite—one also of the priestly order—who should have been one of the first to obey the requirements of God's law—he even came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. Thus, when the very highest functionaries among the Jews could show such cold-blooded indifference to suffering, what could be expected of the common people?

(33-35.) But a certain Samaritan—a name synonymous among the Jews with heretic and devil (John viii. 48), whom no Jew would think of recognizing as a neighbor—he had compassion on him; went to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, took care of him, and, on the morrow, when he departed—he had taken care of him a whole night, at least—he took out two pence equal to two days' wages (Matt. xx. 2, 9)—and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. This whole narrative has such an air of literalness that it is difficult to regard it as a parable at all, but rather as a recital of a real event. It certainly sets forth what Christ has done for the sinner with surprising accuracy. He saw; He pitied; He came to him; ministered to him; bore him to a place of safety; cared for him tenderly, and promised to reward him who should continue to care for him.

(36-37.) Which now of these three, thankest thou, was neighbor, &c. Jesus does not Himself answer the lawyer's question—“Who is my neighbor?”—but teaches him first what true neighborliness is; and then calls upon him to decide which one truly acted the part of a neighbor to the wounded man. Of course, the lawyer, in common honesty, must decide for the Samaritan; and yet, with a meanness and illiberality that could not be altogether concealed, he will not even name the Samaritan, but simply says, he that showed mercy. However, the desired end had been gained; the proud Jew had been forced to decide, not only against the priests and the Levites, but against himself and his whole nation;—and in favor of a despised Samaritan. Then said Jesus, go, and do thou likewise. You see what it is to fulfil the law in respect to your neighbor—go, imitate this Samaritan. He has only done what your own law requires. Learn from his example how much you fall below the demands of your own law in regard to man; and from that judge truly the state of your affections towards God, who demands from you nothing less than perfect and supreme love.

SUGGESTED THOUGHTS.

We learn from this lesson the breadth of meaning contained in the word neighbor. Every human being is our neighbor; and to each we owe the same kindness and consideration we would claim for ourselves under similar circumstances.

Christianity is the only religious system that has ever recognized this;—witness her Asylums, Refuges, and various benevolent institutions. Heathenism can show nothing of the kind.

The Jews called Jesus a Samaritan, and said He had a devil, yet it was to them first, perishing captives of Satan as they were, that He came; and to them first He sent out His band of holy workmen whose mission was to seek and to save those who were lost.

The great and underlying lesson of this parable, if such it be, is of Christ and His salvation. The Samaritan not only perilled his life in a region of thieves and robbers, but he gave time, money, and care. Jesus did more. He laid down His life. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; Jesus gave His life for His enemies!

QUESTION SUMMARY.

(For the children.)

(25.) Who came to Jesus? Why did he want to tempt (test, or try) Jesus? He wanted to find out how much Jesus knew about the law. What question did he ask?

(26.) Instead of answering him, what two questions did Jesus ask him? (27.) Give the lawyer's answer. Where do you find the first part of this answer? Deut. vi. 5. Where the second? Lev. xix. 18. What did Jesus say about that answer? Why did He say—this do and thou shalt live? Because every other commandment is included in those two, and if he kept them, he would be keeping all the law. Has any one ever done that? No one but Jesus. Sin has made us unable to do it, but Jesus did it for us; and then died in our place.

(29.) What question did the lawyer ask? Why did he ask that? Because, like other Jews, he did not allow that any were his neighbors but Jews; and he fancied he had been as good to Jews as it was possible to be. (30-35.) Give the story contained in these verses, in your own words. Did the priest and Levite act like true neighbors to this poor man? Who did? Would you not sooner have expected the priest and Levite to be kind to the poor man than the Samar-

itan? Why? (36.) What did Jesus ask the lawyer when He had finished the story? (37.) Give the lawyer's answer. Do you think he was quite willing to give that answer? Why not? What did Jesus then tell him to do? Has Jesus done for those He saves quite as much as the Samaritan did for the wounded man? Has He done any more? What has He done more?

“LIVES OF GREAT MEN ALL REMIND US.”

John Knox, before the light of the Reformation broke, travelled among several honest families in the west of Scotland who were converts to the Protestant religion. Particularly he often visited Steward Lord Ochiltree's family, preaching the Gospel privately to those who were willing to receive it. The lady and some of the family were converts. Her ladyship had a chamber, table, stool, and candlestick for the prophet, and one night she said to him: “Mr. Knox, I think that you are at a loss by want of a wife?” To which he said, “Madam, I think nobody will take such a wanderer as I.” To which she replied, “Sir, if that be your objection, I'll make inquiry to find an answer against our next meeting.” The lady accordingly addressed herself to her eldest daughter, telling her she might be very happy if she could marry Mr. Knox, who would be a great reformer and a credit to the Church; but she despised the proposal, hoping her ladyship wished her better than to marry a poor wanderer. Then the lady addressed her second daughter, who answered as the eldest. Then the lady spoke to her third daughter, about nineteen years of age, who very faintly said, “Madam, I'll be very willing to marry him, but I fear he'll not take me.” To which the lady replied, “If that be all your objection, I'll soon get you an answer.” Next night at supper the lady said, “Sir, I have been considering upon a wife for you, and find one very willing.” To which Knox inquired: “Who is it, Madam?” She answered, “My youngest daughter, sitting by your side at the table.” Then, addressing himself to the young lady, he said, “My bird, are you willing to marry me?” She answered, “Yes, sir; only I fear you will not be willing to take me.” He said, “My bird, if you be willing to take me, you must take your venture of God's providence as I do. I go through the country sometimes on foot, with a wallet on my arm and a Bible in it. You may put some things in for yourself, and if I bid you take the wallet you must do it, and go where I go and lodge where I lodge.” “Sir,” said she, “I'll do all this.” “Will you be as good as your word?” “Yes, I will.” Upon which the marriage was concluded. She went with him to Geneva. And as he was ascending a hill, she got up to the top of it before him and took the wallet on her arm, and sitting down said, “Now, good man, am not I as good as my word?”

THE STORY OF A TRACT.

The difference between labor for Christ and labor for an earthly master lies very much in the fact that, in effort to promote the glory of God, we never exactly know how much we have been the means of accomplishing. We preach a sermon, deliver an address, give away a tract, and—have nothing to show. But we should never forget that in the matter of secular service, usually so termed, we are working in the province of sight; whilst in what is called sacred work, we are laboring in the REALM OF FAITH. Sometimes, however, and in curious ways, it is given to the servants of Christ to know the result of even their most accidental work. The following story is an illustration in point—

In a large sea-port in the north of

England a minister was one day waited upon by the captain of a ship, who was a candidate for fellowship with the Church to which the minister was pastor. In the conversation which ensued, the minister put several questions to the captain by way of eliciting reasons for the faith that was in him. Amongst the rest, the minister inquired by what means the sailor was converted to the Saviour. The answer of the Captain was in effect as follows; “Well, you see, Sir, one Sabbath morning a month or two ago, as I was walking between S. and E., I saw something white lying on the footpath before me. As I got nearer, I saw it was a piece of printed paper with a small stone lying on the top of it. When I got quite near, I saw that the paper was perfectly clean, and had evidently been recently laid down. The stone on the top of the paper showed me that the tract—for it was a tract—could not have been accidentally dropped; but was intended for the first passer-by who should think fit to lift it. I took it up, read it, was convinced of sin, and led to trust in Jesus Christ.” The minister was satisfied as to the sailor's sincerity, recommended him for fellowship with his people, and the captain became united to the Church of his Saviour.

Some time after, the captain's pastor was invited by a brother minister to a soiree. He went to the soiree, and waited to take part in the “after meeting.” The first speech was made by the minister of the church in which the meeting was held. In the course of his address he told people that every one could do something for Christ. If they could not preach they perhaps could visit the sick; if not, they could give away a tract; and if too bashful to do that, they could lay one on the footpath, and put a stone on the top of it to prevent it being blown away.

At the close of the meeting, when the ministers met in the rectory, the captain's pastor said to his ministerial friend, “By the way, Mr H. you were talking to-night about placing tracts upon the footpath under stones; do you ever do that?” “Why?” said Mr H., “why do you ask that?” “Oh!” said the captain's minister, “because I lately received into my church a sailor who traced his conversion to the reading of a tract which he found on the footpath between S. and E.” “How long ago,” said Mr H., “and was it on a Sabbath day?” The captain's pastor named the time, it was on a Sabbath day, and the Rev. Mr H. had that very day gone from S. to preach at E., and during his journey laid several tracts upon the footpath.

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether it shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”—Ecclesiastes xi. 6.

THE SAME WILLIE.

We heard a pretty story the other night. A little boy had cut off his hair in front, which was not a wise thing to do, perhaps, and to punish him the family at table pretended not to know him. They said: “We wonder where little Willie is;” and when he asked for things they said: “Why, who is this boy? He is not Willie, surely.” The mother acted as though he were a stranger. By and by the little boy's heart was so hurt that he began to cry as he said: “Jesus knows me. I'm the same little Willie to Him.”

Yes, the good thing about this life is, that though we make mistakes Jesus knows all the reasons and forgives us if we ask Him.