

## The Quiet Hour.

### Christ the Life and Light of Men.

S. S. LESSON John 1:1-18. January 1, 1895.

GOLDEN TEXT—In him was life; and the life was the light of men.—John 1:4.

REV. W. J. CLARK, LONDON, ONT.

In the beginning was the Word, v. 1. We have come to another of life's beginnings. The gateway of the New Year is open before us. Who can tell whither its path will lead us? But this we do know. The One who was with God at the beginning of time is at our side to-day. Nothing is hidden from His gaze. He knows the future, and when we come to its hard duties, to the temptations that threaten to sweep us off our feet, we shall find Him there, ready to help us. We shall have a safe journey with a prosperous ending, if we begin the year with Christ.

All things were made by him, v. 3. "How precious," wrote the author of the peerless One Hundred and Thirty-ninth Psalm, "are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" The world is full of God's thoughts. The daily provision of heaven's light and fresh air, of food from the world's harvest fields, of warmth from the great, generous sun—what are these but divine thoughts finding expression? And the glorious world that lies beyond this—it, also, reveals a thought of God. But of all His thoughts, surely the most precious is the thought revealed in sending Jesus Christ to be our Saviour. With what joy we should look upon all God's works in providence and grace, since they make known His thoughts toward us. It is His blessed Son who gives reality to these thoughts. All power is in His hands, who is our loving Elder Brother.

In him was life, v. 4. "I think nothing human foreign to myself," said the Roman poet Terence. In everything noble and right in the world the Christian has an interest, for Christ is the source and spring of it all. The beautiful pictures and statues of the great artists, the lofty thoughts of the best writers, the wonderful contrivances of the famous inventors,—who should appreciate and enjoy these, if not the friends and followers of Him who gifts the intellect with genius and the hand with skill? The whole realm of man's achievement is the Christian's rightful heritage.

The light of men, v. 4. It is a law of matter, that no body will begin to move of itself. Some force must act upon it, else it remains inert. Just as truly in human life and history there is no effect without a sufficient cause to produce it. Now, history tells us of nations ceasing to be savage and becoming civilized. Their people, instead of being selfish, become brotherly. They come to regard other nations as friends, not as foes. The reason is, that in the breast of every man there is a light, more or less clear, guiding him in the upward path. And that light comes from "the life" manifested in the Son of God.

His own received Him not. But,—vs. 11, 12. Settle this in your mind, that nothing can hinder God's purpose. He comes seeking to make us the channels of His grace to others. We may close our hearts against the divine inflow. That will be our bitter blame and unspeakable loss. But some other channel will be opened up and flooded from the ocean fulness. Pleasure, wealth, fame—from these gifts of the world,

let us turn away if we will, but let us not miss the splendid opportunity of helping to fill the world with the knowledge of God!

Of his fulness have all we received, v. 16. The rainbow is made up of varied hues, but they are all derived from the light of the sun, the different colors depending on the angle at which the rays strike the raindrops. No two disciples of Christ are precisely alike in their character or mode of service. But it is the one divine energy that works in and through them all, and they are all needed for its full expression.

The only begotten Son . . . hath declared him, v. 18. When the Prince of Wales, the king's son and heir, made his tour of the Empire, how enthusiastic was the loyalty everywhere manifested towards the British throne! The Prince, by his speeches and intercourse with all sorts of people, made known the character of our sovereign and his care for his people, thus kindling their devotion into a brighter flame. Is our love to God growing cold, or our zeal for Him flagging? We have only to look again and again at the Son who has revealed the Father's love to us; then the smouldering fires will become a strong and steady blaze.

### The Real Joy of the Christmas Season.

By ROBERT E. SPURER.

Is not the real joy of the Christmas season found in its spirit of unselfishness? Even the child who looks forward to it with joy for what he expects to receive, will stand in thrills of delight with clasped hands, trembling with pleasure, as he watches other children or parents take up the presents which he had given, and the giving of which has filled his little soul with gladness. It is giving to others that makes the beauty of the day. It is giving to others that makes the beauty of all days. It is the glory of God's own character. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. And we are most lifted up into his likeness when we display his character of generosity free-handedness.

And ought not this spirit to go out at Christmas not to our own family and friends alone, but especially to Him from whom we learned the beauty of real giving? Christmas is the only holiday of the year that bears his name. All the other joys of the day have never sufficed to destroy our remembrance of his connection with it. From the carols of the morning to the last prayers of the evening, his spirit is the day. Surely we ought to make some such real, definite recognition of him as we make of our interest in our other loved ones.

This year it is proposed by many different denominations to suggest to all Christians that on Christmas day a gift be made to Christ as well as to our other friends. We give and we receive among ourselves, and we receive more bountifully still from him. It seems the most natural and the most Christian thing in the world that we should give to him.

But how may we give to him?

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a

stranger, and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was in a prison and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?"

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me."

"Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

"Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying:

"Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

Many will remember these words and their lessons, and will act in the spirit of them toward those about them near at hand. May such remembrances of them be multiplied. But besides those near, there are those afar. The very thought of Christmas is a reminder of the infinite distance from which the Saviour came on his errand of missionary service and missionary love. And no day could be more appropriate for some evidence of our love and appreciation of his coming, expressed in a gift to him, for the extension to distant people of the blessings which he and his truth have brought to us.

The whole unreachd world is as though it were before Christ. It is with China to-day as it was with Galatia before the Saviour came. And yet it is now A.D. 1904. The Christmas season which reminds us of our obligation to Christ, reminds also of the long delayed payment of our debt to the world, which is still as though Christ had never come.

It would seem almost just to say that the sincerity of our appreciation of Christianity and its meanings to us might fairly be tested by our readiness on Christmas Day to think of the people to whom it is unknown, and to whose need and lovelessness our love should most eagerly turn as we think of the birth of the Saviour of the whole world, whose hope was to bring peace and good-will to all mankind.

This was the thought which good Father Tabb put into his Christmas verse for a little child, the thought of our joyful duty to-day to desire anew and to strive to attain the deliverance of the whole world in the loving spirit of Christ:—

"A little boy of heavenly birth  
But far from home to-day,  
Comes down to find his ball, the earth,  
Which sin has cast away.  
O comrades, let us one and all,  
Join in to get him back his ball."  
The Morning Star.

When Christianity fades from the earth, civilization will revert to barbarism and all its glorious achievements will become things of the unretiring past.