

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLEBEGINNING OF GALILEAN
MINISTRY.*

We study to-day the beginning of the Lord's ministry in Galilee. We learn from the gospel of John that Jesus began his preaching in Judea about a year earlier. (See John i, 19, iv, 1.) The proclamation of the good tidings by word, example, and deed was Christ's principal work before the final act at Jerusalem. Line upon line, and precept upon precept is still the business of his Church in order that men may know and believe.

I.—Departing Into Galilee (vs. 12-16).

The imprisonment of John by Herod indicated rising opposition to Jesus, who had not yet sufficiently proclaimed his mission. Hence he withdrew to Galilee where he had been brought up and which was less dominated than Judea by the priests and their traditions. He was thus less hampered. He did not, however, take up his residence in his old home, Nazareth, for it had not received him (Luke iv, 16-30), influenced by its narrow prejudices. He came, therefore, to Capernaum, a city of political and commercial importance, situated on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. This became his home and here many mighty works were done.

FULFILLING PROPHECY.—The Holy Spirit had revealed these events to Isaiah (ix, 1, 2) who saw that the people, living in the home of old tribes Zebulun and Naphthali, which had always suffered from the incursions of the Gentiles and which was a region of spiritual darkness, should at length see "a great light."

II.—Preaching Repentance (v. 17).

Jesus had preached for about a year but now he began in Galilee to herald that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. John the Baptist's work was done, and Jesus now entered more fully upon the establishment of His kingdom. His residence at Capernaum, away from the traditions and priestly influence of Jerusalem, was comparatively favorable to his work.

The coming of the new and better kingdom demanded the passing away of the old. Hence the first call is to repentance, which means a change of mind or heart, including sorrow for sin, amendment, and faith or confidence in God. There ought to be something of this in all preaching. Man is a poor sinner, corrupt by nature and evil by practice. He has lost God's image to a large degree, and become subject to death. The first step toward recovery is to turn away from sin toward God.

By the kingdom of heaven is meant both the external and invisible church of Christ, or Christ's rule in the hearts and lives of men. It consists of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. The old dispensation was passing away with every act of Christ, and completely "finished" when he made the great sacrifice on the cross. He was preparing the world for a new and better order of things by his preaching.

III.—Calling Disciples (vs. 18-22).

A less wise man than Jesus might have thought that the apostles of the new kingdom should be taken from the priestly or learned class, but the Lord knew whom to choose. Hence he selected his first disciples from the common people. The four here mentioned were fishermen. Their occupation was honorable, but humble and

toilsome. James and John were the sons of Zebedee, who appears to have been a man of means.

As Jesus stood by the Sea of Galilee, the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God. (Luke v, 1-11). Having stepped into Simon Peter's boat, Jesus spoke to the people as he sat in it. At the conclusion of his discourse, he rewarded his friends with the miraculous draught of fishes. When they came to land with two boats filled with fish, Jesus called Peter and Andrew, and James and John, two sets of brothers. They had been believers and followers before (John i, 40-42); but now they were asked to leave their ordinary work for the service of the kingdom of God. The call given by Christ was characteristic: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Every minister, teacher and soul-winner is a fisher of men. The figure is very suggestive. Notice: 1. The prerequisites—(a) The divine call, "Follow me"; (b) The divine endowment, "I will make." 2. The characteristics—(a) Enthusiasm, (b) Patience, (c) Fortitude, (d) Tact, (e) Faith. 3. The appliances—The gospel. 4. The object—The salvation of souls.

The compliance with Christ's call was most commendable. It was prompt. They did not hesitate or debate the matter. It was self-denying. They left the ship and their father. They gave up property, business and friends for Christ's sake. It was literal. They followed him. They did not substitute their own ideas or wishes for Christ's way and command. It was in faith. They trusted Christ for support and guidance.

IV.—Doing Good (vs. 23-25).

Now followed a period of remarkable activity. It is summed up in verses 23-25. Many wonderful sermons, miracles and incidents are embraced in this time, of which a fuller record is given in the other gospels.

Jesus came to save his people from their sins, and measurably also from their temporal consequences, one of which is disease. He is the Physician, tender and skilful in healing all manner of diseases. Here is a pitiful record of ailments of body and soul with which poor mortals were then afflicted.

Though the age of miracles is past, the age of progress in medicine, surgery and healing, is coming in more and more with the advancing light of the gospel. The modern missionary goes forth to the sin-cursed and disease-stricken, with healing for the soul in one hand and healing for the body in the other.

"And the report of him went forth unto all Syria," northward and eastward from Capernaum. And as his fame increased, there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, from Decapolis east and south of the sea of Galilee, from Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond Jordan, the region known as Perea.

Religion is friendship—friendship first with the great Companion, of whom Jesus told us, who is always nearer to us than we are to ourselves, and whose inspiration and help is the greatest fact of human experience. To be in harmony with his purposes, to be open to his suggestions, to be in conscious fellowship with him—this is religion on its Godward side. Then, turning seaward, friendship sums it all up. To be friends with everybody; to fill every human relation with the spirit of friendship; is there anything more than this that the wisest and best of men can hope to do? If the church would accept this truth—Religion is Friendship—and build its own life upon it, and make it central and organic in all its teachings, should we not see a great revival of religion?—Washington Gladden.

NEGLECT.

Promptness and diligence in the worship, and preparation for the worship, are essential as promptness and diligence in the work God has given us to do, and who has ever known a work succeed as it should for which no preparation was made, and no diligence and promptness exercised?

There is something peculiarly dangerous in neglect, and it is none the less dangerous by reason of the fact that there is nothing vicious in it.

God's warnings are sufficient, but their force is not felt by us, not because of any lack in the warning, but because of our apparent inability to appreciate it through our failure to appreciate the danger. For all this, these warnings against neglect must be heeded if we would reflect credit and not discredit upon the cause of our Divine Master.

We need not to become outbreking to wound the Saviour and abuse his cause. Failing to "watch with him" will do it. We need not "sow tares in the field"—our "enemy" will do this. We only need to "sleep." Jesus' power delivered ten, but he received no glory from the nine who neglected to return after their healing. The greatest man who has lived upon the earth, save the Son of God, was forbidden the honor and the glory of entering the land promised to his fathers, not through continuing the counsel of the Most High, but because he neglected to sanctify God in the eyes of the people. Through neglect, Eli lost the priesthood; and Samuel brought about a revelation which resulted in God giving Israel a king in his wrath.

There was a man who "hid his lord's money." Let the day begin and end, the weeks come and go, neglecting the master's business. Upon the master's return his plea that his lord had no need was rejected, his neglect was reckoned a crime, and he was condemned as a "wicked and slothful servant." To-day this man's name is Legion.

Our gifts lie dormant, our opportunities unemployed, the "great salvation" is "neglected," the harvest passes, the summer ends and we are not saved.

Have we yet to learn that a soul may be lost through neglect?

How pitiful the cry, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," only to learn it cannot be, and now too late to remedy the neglect.—J. E. C. in Presbyterian Standard.

A PRAYER.

O Lord our God, we offer Thee most hearty thanks for the mercies which have crowned our year. They cannot be numbered. Day by day Thou hast appointed our way. Ills that we have feared have vanished. There has been among us sorrow and sometimes pain, and death has not been absent from our great circle more than from others, but Thy consolations have not failed. Thy comforts have been inexpressibly lovely. Thy loving kindness has not failed. For all these things we thank Thee. Have we sinned? Thou hast forgiven us. Have we had strong temptation? The promise has been fulfilled that we should not be tempted beyond our power to bear. And now, our Father, because we so value these tokens of Thy grace we dare to ask that they may be continued still. Take not Thy favor from us. Still comfort us. Still console. Still help us in our struggle against sin. Let mercy follow us through all this rolling year. Breathe Thy loving spirit even again into our weary souls and aid us as we think how we may glorify Thee, For Christ's sake. Amen.—Westminster, Philadelphia.

In the coming forth from God, he has not left God; in returning to God, he has not left us.—Augustine.

*S.S. Lesson, January 10, 1910. The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry. Matt. iv, 12-25. Golden Text—"The people which sat in darkness saw great light." Matt. iv, 16.