



LESSON V.—JAN. 31.

Jesus Calls Four Disciples

Luke v., 1-11.

Golden Text.

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. John viii., 31.

Home Readings.

Monday, Jan. 25.—Luke v., 1-11.
 Tuesday, Jan. 26.—John i., 35-42.
 Wednesday, Jan. 27.—John ii., 1-12.
 Thursday, Jan. 28.—Luke v., 27-35.
 Friday, Jan. 29.—Matt. x., 1-15.
 Saturday, Jan. 30.—John xxi., 1-14.
 Sunday, Jan. 31.—John xxi., 15-25.

1. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake.

7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.

10. And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

After his rejection at Nazareth Jesus went to Capernaum, a city on the Sea of Galilee, and there 'taught them on the Sabbath days.' After teaching and working miracles for a time he left and went into other parts of Galilee. In this lesson we find Christ again upon the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret, that is, the Sea of Galilee. This body of fresh water, so closely associated with the life of Christ, was in the time of our lesson, a noted summer resort, and a centre of active life.

It was, then, a favorable region in which to preach the Gospel, not only because of the population it contained, but because a place of this character would naturally have many who were constantly coming and going, so that the reports of Christ's work and ministry would be rapidly spread.

Christ had now been engaged in his public ministry over a year, and we find him beginning to call his disciples that they might be trained to carry on his work. In this lesson we have the account of the calling of four of them. In order to include the four disciples whom Christ called at this time, the parallel passages, Matthew

iv., 18-22, and Mark i., 16-20, must be read. Whose name does Luke omit?

THE LESSON STUDY.

Verse 1. 'As the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God,' etc. Notice that the purpose was to hear the Word. There may be an impression in some minds that people thronged about Christ solely to be helped and entertained by his miracles, but it must be remembered that the conditions of those times were such that they had a great hunger after the truth, and here was One who could reveal it to them.

Miracles do not have such a prominent place in the times of Christ and his apostles, as we might suppose at first sight. Their main purpose was to witness to his identity as the Son of God, the hoped for Redeemer. In the labors of the apostolic church they had a subordinate place. See I. Corinthians xii., 28.

2, 3. 'And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's,' etc. Christ does not demand of us great outward and material preparation for service. He uses the means we have, if we are willing. He found Simon's boat lying idle for the time, as the fishermen were through with it for a few hours at any rate. His object was to get a little way from the shore, so that he might be free from the thronging of the crowd, and so could address them more at ease, and perhaps be better heard. So Christ, the Lord from Heaven, turns a common fishing boat into a pulpit, from which to speak to men. We refuse him better means than that every day, yet what would we have thought had Peter refused this service?

4-7. 'Launch out into the deep,' etc. The words to the crowd upon shore being over, Christ now turns to the everyday work of these humble men whose boat he had been using, and commands them to go out into deep water, where fish were to be had, and let down their nets. Simon Peter answered—it was like Peter to have some answer ready—'Master we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.'

The night, apparently, was the approved time for fishing, yet Christ calls upon them to try it now, in the day time, after a night of failure. Peter's answer seems to be an answer of faith. He shows how fruitless has been their work of the night before, but he knows it is no common man giving uncertain advice. Possibly he remembers the time the wine failed at Cana, and what then occurred. See John ii., 1-11.

A great draft of fishes, so many as to threaten both net and boats, followed their obedience. James and John, the partners of Peter and his companions, were hastily summoned with their other boat, and so all were together when Jesus further addressed them.

8-10. 'When Simon Peter saw it,' etc. Peter may have been an impulsive, rash man, but he was honest and humble as well. He realizes very keenly his unworthiness now that he perceives that he is in the divine presence. Farrar says concerning Peter's words, 'It was the cry of self-loathing which had already realized something nobler. It was the first impulse of fear and amazement, before they had time to grow into adoration and love. St. Peter did not mean the "depart from me," he only meant—and this was known to the Searcher of hearts—"I am utterly unworthy to be near thee, yet let me stay."'

Great was the amazement of Peter and his companions over the draught of fishes, though Peter alone uttered his thoughts. James and John, partners of his in their trade of fishing, were among the little company that was to furnish a third part of the apostles.

Jesus said to Peter, 'Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.' The word to catch in the original means to take alive, as prisoners who were not to be put to death. Peter was now to become one who would win men to Christ that they might be saved through him.

11. When the fishing party reached the

land, 'they forsook all, and followed him.' Their means of livelihood, their boats and nets, were forgotten in the presence of Christ and under his attractive power. There was faith shown in this act as well as love and devotion to the Master. They took it for granted that he who could provide a marvellous catch of fish would not forget the wants of his followers. Is there any passage which you can recall which bears out this idea?

Next week the lesson is 'A Sabbath at Capernaum,' Mark i., 21-34. Read also Matthew viii., 14-17, and Luke iv., 31-41.

C. E. Topic

Sunday, Jan. 31.—Topic—Every Christian called to be a missionary. Luke xxiv. 44-49.

Junior C. E. Topic.**THE FIRST BROTHERS.**

Monday, Jan. 25.—God's word about brothers. Zech. vii., 9.

Tuesday, Jan. 26.—The brothers' offerings. Gen. iv., 1-4.

Wednesday, Jan. 27.—The angry brother. Gen. iv., 5-7.

Thursday, Jan. 28.—The wicked brother. Gen. iv., 8.

Friday, Jan. 29.—The punishment. Gen. iv., 9-16.

Saturday, Jan. 30.—Another brother. Gen. iv., 25, 26.

Sunday, Jan. 31.—Topic—The first brothers and what they teach us. Gen. iv., 3-10; Heb. xi., 4; I. John iii., 12.

Opportunity and Responsibility.

What an opportunity that is which faces every teacher. For a half hour he may speak the things that he has on his heart. If he is ever moved to inspiration this is his time. Every lesson has in it great responsibilities. The wise teacher will search for hints and helps. He will find them too in unexpected places. The study of the Word will help him. He will get a thought at the prayer meeting. The pastor will unconsciously drop a word in the course of the sermon that will prove fruitful. His association with men will bear its part. A chance hint here and one there will serve to make the whole more effective. The avenues that open to the wide awake teacher are without number.

Then there is the formal preparation. If the pastor is under obligation to study his sermons, the obligation of the teacher is even more insistent. For the preacher has two opportunities to his one. He should teach as though every lesson were his last, for was there ever a more important half-hour? In it he must make the meaning of the lesson clear. He must present it so that it will stimulate thought and inspire action. He must control those thirty minutes so as to produce the effect for which the lesson was designed. It takes love and grace and pains and patience to get out the best. But where the task is rightly appreciated and the privilege of it fairly estimated what an opportunity to do a great thing in a great way!—'Living Epistle.'

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