



## LESSON VII.—MAY 14.

## Jesus Prays for his Followers

John xvii., 15-26.

## Golden Text.

I pray for them. John xvii., 9.

Commit verses 20, 21.

## Home Readings.

Monday, May 8.—John xvii., 15-26.  
 Tuesday, May 9.—John xvii., 1-14.  
 Wednesday, May 10.—John xvi., 22-33.  
 Thursday, May 11.—I. Cor. xii., 1-14.  
 Friday, May 12.—I. Cor. xii., 15-31.  
 Saturday, May 13.—I. John v., 1-10.  
 Sunday, May 14.—I. John v., 11-21.

(By Davis W. Clark.)

Jesus puts a period of his ministry with a prayer. It is the climax to all his preaching. The circumstances are pitiful. He is at the edge of Gethsemane, at the foot of Calvary. Yet there is no note of gloom or weakness. There is not even a cry for help.

One word in the middle of the prayer is really the key to it—'For their sakes.' It is a prayer of intercession. As a high priest he approached the majesty of heaven. The priest of the old dispensation carried the twelve tribes upon his bosom, graven in the precious stones of his breast-plate. The Priest of the new dispensation carried the holy apostles upon his heart. There is infinite dignity in his attitude. It is so remarkable that John breaks his custom and refers to the comparatively small incident of the upturned face. There is the repose of soul incident to the consciousness of a holy work thoroughly well done. The note is one of triumph. He presents to his Father the men whom he has trained for him.

The marvel of this prayer is that each part of it seems complete and separate, but in a moment one pours all its content and force into the next, and so on until the very heights of heaven are reached. The prayer for self is only made that it may be merged into a prayer for disciples, and that in turn for Church, and that for world.

It has been called the glorification prayer because of its first petition, 'Glorify Thy Son.' It relates to his own person. Yet there is no element of selfishness in it. He wishes only to reflect the glory of the Father, in order that through this reflection as many as possible should know the Father as the true God. The 'It is finished' of the cross is an echo of this serene and triumphant 'It is finished' of the prayer. This obedience, which completes to the last detail the work given by the Father, forms the basis of the petition which follows.

Jesus moves now in his prayer from self to disciples. The beginning and end of three years' ministry is compassed in fewest possible words. The commanding purpose was to make a number of chosen men acquainted with God and with himself as a Divine Messenger. In this he had been superbly successful. His heart's desire and prayer now is that the work of his ministry may be conserved. He does not pray in general terms for the world. He prays specifically for these men. He is conscious that his own exit from the world is very near. They are to be left behind with the invaluable deposit of his teaching. They must be kept inviolate or all is lost. It would be a superlative blunder to ask that they be taken out of the world with himself, for the very purpose of their training was that they might remain as the almoners of knowledge and grace—kept from evil, in the world, but not of it, sanctified through truth.

The prayer takes still another sweep, its final and widest. When the Intercessor cries, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them which shall believe through their word.' It

is a petition for the Church which is to be. Incidentally it reveals the fact that there was no shadow of doubt upon Jesus' mind but that his disciples would make converts. As the prophet said he would, he 'sees his seed,' and prolongs in them his own shortened days. He prays for the unity and concord of the Church. And again, incidentally, he indicates that the realization of this ideal of harmony is the convincing argument to the world of the Divinity of his commission.

The prayer is without 'amen.' But there is no evidence of interruption. Instead of being broken off, it flowers out in radiance and fragrance. There is a beatific vision which Jesus entreates for the men whom God had given him. His heart's desire is that they may see his glory. The cross is the golden period to this incomparable prayer. The last affirmation is that he will declare his Father's name, but his ministry ends that hour. There are no further opportunities of preaching. How, then, will he make declaration? Is it not by his obedience unto death?

## LIGHTS ON THE LESSON.

Some difficulties confront the reader. The prayer is the most misunderstood of Jesus' utterances. Spenser believed it beyond comprehension. He quaintly said, 'It goeth beyond the measure of faith which the Lord is wont to impart to his disciples during their pilgrimage.' For this reason he never preached upon it or attempted an exposition of it; but when he was dying had it read to him three times.

At the same time it is among the most admired of Jesus' sayings. It is declared to have incomparable and crystalline simplicity, majestic repose, luminous transparency of thought, one flowing from another, forming a connected development, each explaining what precedes or being a further deduction. The inwardness of the East, the home of religion, seized and expressed with the precision of the West, the home of science. The analogy of the form and order to that which is commonly called the Lord's Prayer has been pointed out, but in point of fact the divisions are not mutually exclusive. They interpenetrate, so that it is possible to find several different arrangements, all of which may be correct.

But this lily of a prayer may be lost in the effort to dissect it. It is far more important that we should discover the spirit of the petition than its mechanical framework.

A crisis creates the prayer. It is no litany intoned at an arbitrary hour and by an ecclesiastic designated to perform the service. It is the voice of need which cannot pour itself into any form, however venerable, and which must, perforce, extemporize.

Jesus stands with the little group of men to whom he has made the greatest possible revelation, and whom he expects in their turn to be revealers of his truth. He must needs leave them. If they fail, all is lost. He knows what it means to be 'in the world,' and the world against one. He cries to heaven for these chosen men, that they may be kept and sanctified, and their unity preserved.

Getting out of the world, even if it is to 'go to heaven,' is not the most desirable of things. If the disciples had made their exit at the same time Jesus made his, the world would have been unblest by their testimony.

Jesus was sent, and we are sent. An analogy maintains between the Master and ourselves. There is a Divine idea to be worked out in every human life. This lifts us above dumb and driven cattle. Jesus' example of fidelity to the uttermost is our inspiration.

## NOTES FROM THE COMMENTARIES.

Not out of world: World's hatred true court-colors of Christians.—Luther. Jesus knew well what it was to be in the world.—Hofacker. I pray not that Thou should'st take them now at once with me out of the world.—Stier. That would secure them, but leave the world unblest by their testimony.—J. F. B. The question must not be of their going out of the world with me, for I have much to do by their means—My kingdom to spread and my little flock to increase.—Luther. His prayer was for their protection, not for their withdrawal.—Westcott. Specific intercession for his own, whom he leaves behind, commencing with revelation proceeding through preservation unto holiness.—Stier. Sanctify them: Keep them was negative; sanctify is positive; asking advancement of the process begun.—J. F. B. The

means of sanctification is the word of truth. (Acts xx., 32.)—Stier. For their sakes: I have altogether devoted and consecrated myself in their place and for their sake.—Semler. Sent into world: How could he send them into the world when they were in the world already? Because he had raised them to a sphere above the life of the world, and it was thence that he sent them into the world, as really as he had been himself sent from heaven.—Godet. But for them also: The consecration of the disciples and his sending them forth naturally suggests an enlargement of the Church and of his care.—Expositor's Greek. All one: This unity is infinitely more than unanimity, since it rests upon unity of spirit and life.—Tholuck. This unity has its true and only ground in faith in Christ through the Word of God as delivered by the apostles, and is therefore not mere outward uniformity, nor can such uniformity produce it. At the same time its effects are to be real and visible, such that the world may see them.—Alford. Perfect in one: The ideal of humanity which will be reached when men dwell together in perfect harmony. May behold my glory: In the sense of enjoying it.—New Century. Christ concludes with a brief review of the endearing and responsible relation in which he stands to his disciples, and the gracious purposes which he has still to accomplish in them.—Ibid.

## C. E. Topic.

Sunday, May 14.—Topic—Spirit-filled Christians. Acts ii., 1-4, 41-47.

## Junior C. E. Topic.

## A RIBBON FOR REMEMBRANCE.

Monday, May 8.—Remember past mercies. Ex. xiii., 3.

Tuesday, May 9.—Remember God's leading. Deut. viii., 1-6.

Wednesday, May 10.—Remember his marvelous works. I. Chron. xvi., 12.

Thursday, May 11.—Remember now thy Creator. Eccl. xii., 1.

Friday, May 12.—'We will remember.' Ps. xx., 7.

Saturday, May 13.—Put them in remembrance. II. Tim. ii., 14, 15.

Sunday, May 14.—Topic—A cord of blue; the value of reminders. Numbers xv., 37, 38, 39, first clause.

## Carry Your Own Bible.

The habit of carrying a Bible publicly is in many ways a good thing for the one who carries it. Ralph Wells says that he has found a new gain in carrying his Bible through the street on Sunday. The newsboys used to offer him the Sunday paper on his way to church, but when they see his Bible under his arm they never ask him to buy a paper. But the greater gain is that it helps to fix and to strengthen a young person's Christian character. One of the best recommendations a young person could have, with me, of his fitness to lead a meeting would be that he carried his own Bible to the meeting well thumbed and marked.—Exchange.

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