



LESSON V.—MAY 1.

Prayer and Promise.

Luke xi., 1-13.

Golden Text.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.—Luke xi., 9.

Home Readings

Monday, April 25.—Luke xi., 1-13.
Tuesday, April 26.—Matt. vi., 5-15.
Wednesday, April 27.—Luke xvii., 1-14.
Thursday, April 28.—Jas. iv., 1-17.
Friday, April 29.—Rom. viii., 26-39.
Saturday, April 30.—Is. lxxv., 16-25.
Sunday, May 1.—John xvi., 22-33.

1. And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, . . . when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, . . . as John also taught his disciples.

2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3. Give us day by day our daily bread.

4. And forgive us our sins; for we . . . also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me . . . , and I have nothing to set before him?

7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, . . . will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

INTRODUCTION.

We find Christ still in Perea, though just where he was when he spoke the words in today's lesson we do not know. The present lesson will recall that of the 'Sermon on the Mount.' The prayers taught on that occasion and on this are commonly known as the Lord's Prayer. Some slight differences in the wording of the prayer itself and the teaching that follows appear to indicate that it belongs to a different time and place.

The prayer, as Matthew records it, was given in the course of the Sermon on the Mount, while Luke's account states that it was taught in response to a question by a disciple, as Christ ceased praying in a certain place. The accounts are not contradictory; they record the prayer and accompanying teaching as Christ doubtless gave them on two or more occasions. Certainly the great underlying

principles remain true in all cases, and the importance of the theme would be apt to call for repeated notice and emphasis.

The lesson belongs to the closing period of his ministry, the exact time being estimated at about four months previous to the crucifixion. Read also Matthew vi., 9-13, and vii., 7-11.

THE LESSON STUDY.

Verse 1. 'As he was praying in a certain place.' The important point in this verse is not the much quoted petition, 'Lord, teach us to pray,' but rather the fact brought out again here, as in other places, that Jesus was accustomed to pray. It seems to us strange that this divine Christ, a person of the Godhead, should have need of this source of help and strength. But as a man, Christ suffered much, he needed rest, he could hunger and thirst, and he had enemies and sorrows. In such experiences he sought help and strength from his Heavenly Father, and teaches us to follow his example.

'As John also taught his disciples.' We have no record of the prayer or prayers taught by John. It is supposed that John's purpose was to help his followers to avoid the 'vain repetitions' of the Pharisees.

2-4. 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,' etc. Read the prayer in Matthew vi.

'Our Father.' How simple in comparison with the terms used in addressing earthly potentates! To the wicked God is a 'consuming fire,' to contending armies, 'the Lord mighty in battle,' to the world approaching its day of reckoning, he is 'the righteous Judge,' but the humble disciple, alone and in secret, is privileged to open his heart to his Father.

'Hallowed be thy name.' God's holiness and glory are not to be overlooked. The great end of man is the glory of God. 'That we should be to the praise of his glory.' Ephes. i., 12. Remember to utter praise and thanksgiving is a great help in saving us from utterly selfish petitions, unworthy of answer.

'Thy kingdom come.' Still the claims of God are put first in this model prayer. How many of you have ever stopped to think of the revolutionary meaning of these three words? In all our petitions for the welfare of our nation and rulers, we are still reminded that these shall at last give place to the kingdom which 'the God of heaven shall set up.' Daniel ii., 44. For the coming of his kingdom we are to constantly pray.

'Give us day by day our daily bread.' Now the prayer comes to the needs of men. Note that these are to be given 'day by day.' No reason here to pray for great wealth. The daily supply for the daily need is Christ's rule.

'And forgive us our debt.' The prayer for divine pardon is for 'debts' which we cannot pay, but which Christ paid for us. We simply claim for ourselves, in this prayer, the pardon thus provided.

'For we also forgive,' etc. Here is another side of the prayer for pardon that must be remembered. We must forgive if we would be forgiven.

'Lead us not into temptation.' Preserve us from temptations that would cause us to sin. Deliverance from evil is the proper desire and longing of every true heart, for we are in a world full of wickedness and suffering that the child of God longs to escape. Under his care we may be in the world but not of it, for he is able to deliver us from its evil.

This prayer is not understood to be the only petition to be made to the Heavenly Father, but it is the outline of the subjects that are to be sought in prayer.

5-12. 'And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you.' From giving a model prayer, Christ turns to encourage prayer, and persistence in prayer. He illustrates by citing the case of the man who at night seeks from a neighbor bread for the unexpected guest, and obtains it by his importunity. As Trench has said, if a selfish man can be won by importunity to give, more certainly will the Lord bestow his bounty on those who earnestly wait on him. The illustration presents a contrast rather than a comparison between man's yielding to petition and God's answering his children's prayers.

'For every one that asketh receiveth.' This is true, although we may call to mind a long list of our own 'unanswered' petitions. God answers, but in his own way, and for our best interests as he sees them, not as we see them. See James iv., 2-10.

13. 'How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' Here is the climax to the contrast above referred to. Matthew says, 'give good things,' in recording Christ's Sermon on the Mount, but Luke, recounting what was said in reply to a disciple's question, says the Father shall 'give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,' thus carrying us on to the greatest gift.

The class would do well to make a list of some of the answered prayers given in the Bible. Someone has made a book of them, and it is an inspiring account of God's loving answers to those who earnestly call upon him out of a pure heart.

The lesson for May 8 is, 'Watchfulness,' Luke xii., 35-48.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, May 1.—Topic—Answered prayers. Acts iv., 23-31.

Junior C. E. Topic.

PRAYER.

Monday, April 25.—How Moses prayed. Ex. xxxii., 31.

Tuesday, April 26.—How Solomon prayed. I. Kings viii., 22-30.

Wednesday, April 27.—How David prayed. Ps. li., 1-10.

Thursday, April 28.—How Daniel prayed. Dan. vi., 10, 11.

Friday, April 29.—How Jesus prayed. Mark i., 35.

Saturday, April 30.—Abram's angel visitors. Gen. xviii., 1-15.

Sunday, May 1.—Topic—How Abraham prayed. Gen. xviii., 16-33; Eph. vi., 18.

Sunday School Cards.

One of the most effective ways, apart from contributions of money, in which a Sunday-school can assist missionary teachers, is by sending them colored Sunday-school or Bible cards. Such are often left over in the primary or intermediate classes after the distribution to the scholars. These might be done up each week or two in small packages, very securely wrapped and tied, and forwarded by mail at a cost of a cent for every two ounces; and if registered they would be sure to reach their destination safely. The teachers of at least three thousand children in the Central Turkey Mission are begging for these pictures, and they are called for in other directions. Remember, it is Bible or Sunday-school picture cards that are wanted.—'Dayspring.'

Make it Progressive.

The actual beginning of all Sunday-school work is with the primary class. The systematic work of keeping the young people in the Sunday-school should begin in this department. Almost every normal child of four or five years is anxious to enter the Sunday-school, and to most of them, once they have joined, it is a real deprivation to be hindered from attending its sessions.

The primary class teacher should have a number of assistants, one of whom should accompany each group of scholars as they are promoted to the main school, and serve such group as teacher. Every class thus transferred to the main department should, if possible, permanently remain in the care of the same teacher, who should regard as her life work in the school the care and Christian nurture of her scholars. She should thoroughly know each member, frequently visiting them in their homes, and, so far as may be, blend her life with theirs. Her love for and devotion to each of them should be so sincere and so unchangeable that the severance of a scholar from the school, unless by death, removal to a distant place, or some other providence, would be impossible. Only real sickness, death, or absence from the city should hinder the teacher's attendance upon the schools' sessions. She should habitually and intelligently shape the character of her class-work and of all her intercourse with them toward their conversion, which should be the one overshadowing aim of all her work and the constant burden of her prayers.—'Ram's Horn.'