

The Quiet Hour.

Crossing the Jordan.

S. S. Lessons: Joshua 3: 9-17.
Oct. 12th, 1902.

GOLDEN TEXT—Isa. 43: 2. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.

Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God, v. 9. Thus should it be with all our undertakings, the great and the small. We may be plainly in the way of God's commandments and in the line of His purposes. Our first plans may have been laid under His guidance and with a desire for His glory. Step by step we may have been laid under His guidance. And yet the last decisive step remains. It should never be taken without once more turning to Him. God has always some last word for us which will dispel a lingering doubt, relieve an over anxious heart, lessen the difficulties of the understanding and send us with a firmer step and a lighter heart out upon the untrodden and untried path. Perhaps, if, like these people on the Jordan brink, we drew near once again at the crisis of our lives to "hear the words of the Lord our God," we should more frequently behold His mighty works.

The living God is among you, v. 10. God is the living, loving, personal God, whom Jesus has taught us to call "Our Father." We too may recognize the presence of "the living God" among us by His word, which He still causes to be perpetually proclaimed among us; by His providential dealings with the nations of the earth; and by the progress of the kingdom of Christ in the world, more particularly by the successes of modern missions. Before the hosts of God's Israel to day is not some empty name which has lost its power to inspire His foes with terror and His followers with the consciousness of victory, but the living, loving, ever-victorious Lord, who was dead and is alive forevermore and to whom has been given all power both in heaven and in earth. Draw on this power by prayer in faith. It has been pre-engage for us. "Whosoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you," John 16: 23

He will without fail drive out . . . the Canaanites, v. 10. God is still sifting out the peoples. Those nations that honor Him and obey Him, He will and does honor, sometimes by making them the scourge of wicked nations. Those that despise him are going to the wall. Shaken Spain, and flippant France and decadent Austria are weakening to-day. The warning is plain to us—our own new land—to shun the sins which are driving them out and to seek after that "righteousness which exalteth a nation."

The ark of the covenant . . . passeth over before you, v. 11. The pillar of cloud ceases to be their guide, but they are none the less surely and safely led. It is the ark in which was hidden the "testimony" of the Lord which is their guide now. God's methods of guidance change from time to time; but He never fails to guide. The word of His testimony is still to lead us on and mark out our pathway. Men may see it from different angles in different centuries; new methods of interpretation may be applied to it causing new light to break forth from it, or threatening sometimes to

obscure its clear bright shining, but it remains the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever, and which is a lamp to men's feet and a light to their path.

The priests bearing the ark . . . before the people, v. 14. Ministers of the Christian religion, office-bearers in the Christian church, and Sabbath School workers, are the natural leaders of God's Israel to day. It is not then place to watch the drift of religious opinion, and then follow in its wake, like political opportunists. It is theirs to lead the van in thought and effort. They should be able to stand firm on dry ground, giving no uncertain sound as to the way of life or the duty of the hour. They should be foremost in zeal, in holiness in self-denial, in victory over the world, the flesh and the devil. If it be the duty of the office bearers to lead and of the teachers to teach, it is equally our duty to follow and to learn. We have all much need to pray for a humble and teachable spirit and for grace to follow in the appointed way. Even in the first generation of Christians, it was necessary to warn men to be "swift to hear, slow to speak" (James 1: 19), and the same added, "My brethren, be not many masters knowing that we shall the greater condemnation," ch. 3: 1.

The people . . . passed clean over Jordan, v. 17. Between us and every new and higher good, every great material acquisition, every great intellectual acquirement, every great spiritual gain, every new stride forward and upward, every long step towards the conquest of our promised land, even between us and our heavenly home, lies some rolling, threatening, interposing Jordan of difficulty. It is there not to bar our entrance or stay our progress, but to develop new qualities of perseverance and trust and to give us new experiences of God's power and love, that we may be strong to go on.

The Duty of Lowliness.

If we cannot, at need, even humiliate ourselves to win our brother, it is difficult to see where our religion comes in, especially when we think what humiliation Christ suffered, that he might reconcile us to God, and make us friends again with our heavenly Father, and renew our broken love. Whatever be our faith and works, and however correct be our creed and conduct, if we are giving place to anger, if we are stiffening ourselves in strife and disdain, we are none of his, who was meek and lowly of heart.

Misunderstandings and estrangements will arise, occasions will come when it seems occasions will come when it seems as if not even love and forbearance can avoid a quarrel, but surely Christ has died in vain if his grace cannot save us from continuance of strife.—Hugh Black.

The very fact that you have troubles is a proof of His faithfulness; for you have got one-half of his legacy and you will have the other half. You know that Christ's last will and testament has two portions in it. "In this world ye have tribulation"; you have got that. The next clause is, "In me ye shall have peace." You have that, too. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This is yours also.—C. H. Spurgeon.

A rainy Sunday puts to the test the devotion to the house of God of the church member. Allowing that the physical infirmity of some would make it imprudent for them to venture out when the weather is unpropitious, we cannot evade the conviction that the many empty pews on a rainy Sunday prove that a host of church-goers cannot stand this test of their devotion.

Is it regard for their good clothes that causes them to absent themselves? Then we enter a plea for reform. The wearing of our best to the house of God when the conditions are favorable may be commendable, but when fashion so tyrannizes that we will not go to the sanctuary on the Lord's day, unless we can wear our best, it is time to cast off the yoke. A thousand times better come in a "rainy-day skirt" of worsted, than allow a silk or satin to keep you home and rob you of a blessing and others of the inspiration of your presence.

Have you considered what a depressing effect an array of empty pews has upon the pulpit? That sermon was prepared for a houseful not for a handful. Next to the inspiration the preacher draws from God is that which he derives from the upturned, eager face of the listener. Next to the incentive he obtains from the command, "Go preach!" is the encouragement given him by the thought, "Here is a multitude hungering for the Bread of Life whom I must seek to satisfy." The visits of the week have led to the selection of a theme that is designed to meet the needs of several. Sunday dawns; there is moisture in the air, a heavy mist, a chilling drizzle, perhaps a pouring rain, and on account of it the very people for whom that sermon is intended are missing. Except for the possibility that it may suit the case of some one present for whom it was not especially designed, the preacher feels his labor lost. How then can he put enthusiasm in the effort?

Have you thought of the effect of your absence upon the interests of God's kingdom in and beyond your own locality? An important part of the worship of God's house is the offering. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him," says St. Paul. The maintenance of many religious and benevolent enterprises depends largely upon these offerings in the churches. The development and extension of such work is made possible by the increasing gifts of the people. Now think how these enterprises must suffer in consequence of a succession of rainy Sundays! The difference in the average church between a rainy day and a fair day collection is likely to be from \$10 to \$25. What must it be throughout the Church?

Remedy? If the Lord gives you health, come to church with as much regularity as you go to business or come down to breakfast. Why not? And if you must be absent send your offering or make good the loss which different objects have suffered by your absence, by a two-fold or four-fold or ten-fold contribution the next time you come. Let your giving to the worthy objects that appeal to you be reduced to a system, and not be left to chance!—Ex.

If thou seekest Jesus in all things, thou shalt find Jesus; but if thou seek thyself, then thou shalt find thyself.—Thomas à Kempis.