

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

(By Rev. W. J. Clark, London, Ont.)

I am the door, v. 7. How magnificent is the self-assertion of Jesus! Who but He could make such claim as this without rendering Himself ridiculous? But the words fit as naturally to His lips as the word of welcome with which the master of the house brings in his guest. It is a lordly call. He whose right it is to command our presence invites us into His banqueting house. It is the summons of love. It is from the peril of other doors, doors that lead to devious pathways and horrible pitfalls, that He would lure us; for to "enter in" by this divine Lord and Saviour is to find ourselves in possession of the best that earth can give and the surety of heaven to follow.

The sheep did not hear them, v. 8. The violinist, by tightening and relaxing his instrument brings it into perfect tune with the piano. Then from violin and piano together there comes harmonious music. So every true heart detects in the teachings of Jesus something that is in accord with its deepest and purest feelings and convictions. Every voice out of harmony with His makes discord in the honest soul. In our Lord's great parable of the tower, it was those who had "an honest and good heart," who gladly received the word. Our chief qualification for understanding the gospel message is not great learning, or a well trained mind, most important though these are, but a heart that loves the truth and is resolved to obey it.

By me, v. 9. As with a single blow of a sharp edged axe, our Lord cuts clean to the root of all pretensions set up by priests or churches to say who shall or shall not be numbered among His people. This is a personal matter between the soul and the Saviour. If, in response to our believing acceptance of His word, He has given us the assurance that we are His, then there is no person in the universe who has the right to say we are not.

If any man enter in, v. 9. A door would be of little use without hinges. On these it swings open and shuts to admit and exclude.

The hinge of the door through which we enter into the enjoyment of the blessings of salvation, is our own choice. The gospel offer is made freely. It is intended for "any man." We are urged most lovingly and earnestly to accept it. But we are left free to accept or reject. And because we are free, we are fully responsible for our treatment of the offer. "I will arise," said the prodigal, "and go to

my father"; and that moment the only hindrance was thrown down, and the way to the banquet of love in his father's house was opened.

I am come that they might have life, v. 10. Many definitions have been given of life, but there is none perfect. Only this we know, that men long for life.

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.
'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
O life, not death for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want."

And it is to satisfy this imperious desire that Christ came, not to lessen or narrow the value of existence, but to make it fuller and more resplendent than ever before.

I know my sheep, v. 14. May we not be glad that these words come before those of v. 15? The Saviour knows us, knew all about us, through and through, before He came into the world. He knew—how sure we are of this!—much in us that grieved Him sorely. And yet He loved us, in spite of it all, so that He died for us. Now we can never be afraid to come to Him, for it was just to bring back the wandering sheep that He came.

I lay down my life for the sheep, v. 15. The life of Christ was the price paid for our redemption. That perfect sacrifice pleads for us, as once the blood of Abel cried to heaven for vengeance on the murderous Cain. We may note four points in regard to this great offering: (1) The One who made it was without sin Himself. He had no guilt of His own to bear, and so He could bear the guilt of the world. (2) Christ died for others. It was to take the place we deserved that He went to the cross. (3) He died to atone for sin. There must be a settlement about sin before God could accept us. (4) He died willingly. He went to Calvary, not under compulsion, but of His own free will. Blessed be God for such a Saviour!

Therefore doth my father love me, v. 17. Loved Him because He obeyed; loved Him because He made that sacrifice of His life itself for others. Is there not a word here for us? Would we win that Father's love? Shall it not be by like obedience to His holy commandments, and like readiness to give ourselves to the service and the saving of our fellow-men? That is the infallible way.

WITNESSES TO THE LIFE DIVINE.

By John Campbell Shairp.

Not their own, ah! not from earth was flowing
That high strain to which their souls were
tuned;

Year by year we saw them plainly growing
Liker Him with whom their hearts communed.
Then to Him they passed; but still unbroken,
Age to age, lasts on that goodly line,
Whose pure lives are, more than all words
spoken,

Earth's best witness to the life divine.

NET OR LINE.

Fishing is a symbol of soul saving. The Master frequently used it. This was natural. His disciples were fishermen and many of their friends were also followers of the sea. Net fishing marks the revival. It brings the many to the shore. Sometimes the net was broken. This is by no means an infrequent occurrence. We have known accessions that left the churches weaker than they were before. Again the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net cast at random into the sea. When drawn ashore it is found to contain fish of every kind. The good are selected from the bad, but the selection is not ours. It requires the discrimination of an angel which few possess. Revivals do not always follow the most sanguine efforts. All night through the fishermen labor and catch nothing. The trouble is we are fishing in vacant waters. There is a "right side" to the ship where the fish are. God alone is able to see beneath the surface.

But net fishing was not the only kind known to the disciples. When the apostle wished his tax money, like the average apostle since, he found himself uncertain as to where it was to be found. The Master came to the rescue. It was a pure case of fishing for money. The only one in all Scripture. No net was employed, nothing save a hook and line. Neither was the fishermen to be over particular as to the quality of the fish. The first one that came up was good enough for the purpose. The fish had the money in its mouth. The hook was also there. To be relieved of this it was willing to yield all. No collection plate could have so moved it. Here then are two kinds of fishing, individual and collective. Peter seems to have been an expert at both. In this he was an exception. The net fisherman often fails to successfully cast his line and the contrary is equally true. But why discuss methods in view of the one greater object? God's work is manifold. We are all brought into the kingdom by ways that we knew not; the means are adapted to the occasion. Whether a net or a line it matters not so long as the end crowns the effort.—Philadelphia Presbyterian.

Keep the sunshine of living faith in the heart. Do not let the shadow of discouragement and despondency fall upon your path. However weary you may be, the promises of God will, like the stars at night, never cease to shine, to cheer and to strengthen. The best harvests are the longest in ripening. It is not pleasant to work in the earth plucking the ugly tares and weeds, but it is as necessary as sowing the seed. The harder the task the more need of singing.—Royal Path of Life.

S. S. Lesson, April 2, 1905.—John 10: 7-18. Study vs. 1-18. Commit to memory vs. 17, 18. Read Psalm 23: Isaiah 40: 10, 11; John 10: 1-12. Golden Text—I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.—John 10: 11.