



LESSON V.—Nov. 4.

The Unjust Steward.

Luke xvi., 1-13. Memory verses, 10-12.
Read Luke xvi., 1-13.

Daily Readings.

M. Unjust Holder—xvi., 1-13.
T. Unjust Owner—xvi., 19-31.
W. Unjust Judge—xviii., 1-8.
T. Unjust Pharisee—xviii., 9-14.
F. Unjust Servant—Matt. xviii., 23-35.
S. Merciful God—John xiv., 1-31.

Golden Text.

'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'—
Luke xvi., 13.

Lesson Text.

(1) And he said unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. (2) And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. (3) Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship; I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. (4) I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. (5) So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? (6) And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. (7) Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, an hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. (8) And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. (9) And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. (10) He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. (11) If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? (12) And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? (13) No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Suggestions.

This parable is rather an illustrative narrative, and we are to look upon the rich man and the steward as necessary parts of the setting of the great truth to be taught, and not as having a separate interpretation, or typical and mystical meaning.

Not a little perplexity has arisen in many minds because our Lord selects such an objectionable and immoral character as the vehicle for his instruction. (1) In order to teach the lesson he desired it was necessary that there should be some natural reason for the situation that taught the lesson. Publicans and Pharisees were misusing their worldly gains. There was sure to come a time when they must give an account. They were really unjust stewards of things God had entrusted to them. A steward, therefore, was naturally the central figure of the parable. He must be unjust to represent these hearers, and to give a reason for the crisis in his affairs when he must give an account of his stewardship. Thus he could teach a lesson to his hearers from the prudence and ingenuity of the man who looked out for the future. (2) It is natural and

right to select some one quality for imitation without in any wise approving of the other qualities by which it is accompanied.

Mammon in the Syriac means money. It represents wealth, gains, money. It is called the mammon of unrighteousness, either because it refers to wealth even when gained unrighteously (Bruce); as was the case with many of his hearers; or because it tempts to unrighteousness, is the frequent cause of fraud, is full of danger: "Take any coin out of your pocket and make it tell its history, the hands it has been in, the things it has paid for, the transactions it has assisted, and you would be inclined to fling it away as contaminated and filthy. But that coin is a mere emblem of all that comes to you through the ordinary channels of trade, and suggests to you the pollution of the whole social condition. The clothes you wear, the food you eat, the house you live in; the money you are asked to invest, have all a history which will not bear scrutiny. Oppression, greed and fraud serve you every day. Whether you will or not, you are made partakers of other men's sins. You may be thankful if your hands are not soiled by any stain that you have wittingly incurred; but even so, you must ask, What compensation can I make for the unrighteousness which cleaves to mammon? How am I to use it now, seeing I have it?"—Marcus Dods.

How can we make friends by means of mammon? By giving it away in benevolence; by using it to help men; by supplying the wants of the poor; by sending the gospel around the world; by aiding schools and colleges; by advancing every good word and work; by investing it in the enterprises which give employment to men at liberal wages.

That, when ye fail—Die and can no longer use your wealth, or when you lose what you have gained, as often happens. They may receive you into everlasting habitations—Those whom you have helped will welcome you in heaven. Heaven will be sweeter, brighter, happier to you on account of them. Even in this world, giving to them brings you into the spirit of heaven, and gives you a foretaste of the future blessedness. It enlarges the soul, it increases forever the capacity for enjoyment.—From 'Peloubet's Select Notes.'

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. A reliable man is one who can be trusted in an emergency because he is honest in the performance of duty every day. He who neglects small duties cannot be depended upon to fulfil any. No duty is so trivial but that the doing of it will strengthen the doer in the characteristic of faithfulness. A character of reliability and faithfulness is in itself a treasure of inestimable value. Those who are not faithful in their daily duties can never obtain the true riches of character which can be given only to those who honestly earn them by patient striving after righteousness. He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much, for each failure of justice and righteousness has made a weak spot in the character, and each little sin yielded to has opened the way for larger and further reaching sins. The man who neglects his opportunities has no means of judging which are the great and which the small. Sins of neglect sear the conscience, blind the eyes, and render the character indolent and weak. Injustice is caused by selfishness.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon. He who tries to serve mammon will wake up some day, like the prodigal son, to find himself starving and deserted, sent by mammon to tend swine. God does not put his servants to such a task, nor treat them in such a manner; his servants have bread enough and to spare. The service of God is liberty in holiness, the service of mammon is slavery to sin. The man who makes a god of his money is as great a fool as the man who worships a little image of wood or clay. No amount of gold can buy off death and judgment. The possessions of riches brings with it awful responsibilities. He who worships mammon despises God, setting at naught his commandments. (Ex. xx., 3; Deut. vi., 14, 15; Luke x., 27.)

Questions.

Relate the parable of the Unjust Steward. Was it his unrighteousness that was commended? How can we prepare for the future? How should we regard money? Is it worth the sacrifice of faith, honor or re-

ligion? Do you really care more about your duty to God than about making a little extra money? Could money buy salvation (L. Pet. i., 18, 20), or any blessing from God?

C. E. Topic.

Nov. 4.—Are you doing your best? Matt. xxv., 14-30.

Junior C. E. Topic.

OUR TALENTS.

Mon., Oct. 29.—Strength. Isa. xl., 29.
Tues., Oct. 30.—Speech. Ps. xix., 14.
Wed., Oct. 31.—Sight. Luke x., 23.
Thu., Nov. 1.—Mind. Phil. ii., 5.
Fri., Nov. 2.—Hearing. Mark iv., 23, 24.
Sat., Nov. 3.—Skillful hands. Ps. cxxxvii., 5.
Sun., Nov. 4.—Topic—What are our talents? Matt. xxv., 14-30.

A Regular Little Turk.

A Christian friend was spending the afternoon with me, and in the course of conversation that beautiful promise in Isa. lv., 11, 'My word shall not return unto me void,' was quoted. 'Yes,' said my friend (herself a Sunday-school teacher for nearly sixty years), 'I can tell you of a true circumstance in connection with that verse.'

Many years ago, in the days when village schools were very different to what they are now (with all the modern requirements—certificated masters and mistresses, etc.), there was in the pretty village of N— an infant schoolmistress. She dearly loved the boys and girls, and longed intensely that they should early learn to know and love their blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Month by month and year by year she taught these little ones, often discouraged, yet patiently sowing the seed—God's Word.

Many years passed, old age came on, and she could teach no longer. One day a stranger from abroad arrived in the village, and anxiously inquired if Mrs. P—, the infant schoolmistress, were still alive, and where did she live? Her address was soon given, and he found his way to her little home. He then told her that he had come in fulfilment of a promise he had made to a very dear friend now dead. The promise he had given was that on his return to England he would go to the village of N— and find out Mrs. P—, and tell her that Tom Harris (I do not know the real name) had gone home to be with Jesus—so happy, a sinner saved and forgiven, and that it was all through her. He had been, he said, 'a very naughty, troublesome little boy, a "regular little turk"; but the texts so patiently taught had never been forgotten, and far away from the sweet Devon home, in a distant land, those very texts were used by the Spirit of God to show him his condition as a lost sinner, and also point him to Jesus, the Saviour—the way, the truth, and the life. We can all picture the joy of the dear old lady, now for many years safely home in the many mansions of our Father's home.'—E. T. G., in 'The Christian.'

Trifles.

It may seem to be a trifle to be able to teach the class without keeping the eyes riveted on the Bible. Those who have tried the method of having the lesson so in mind as to be able to look into the eyes of the pupil while teaching, know that this is no trifle, but a wonderful help in the keeping of order, which is so necessary in the impressing of truth. A good teaching plan is no trifle. It may seem to be a trifle for a teacher to be partial. Teachers sometimes wonder why they have lost their influence over certain members of their classes. The officers of the school, perhaps, could give the reason. They have selected a few of their pupils, to whom they pay especial attention. The other members of the class notice this, are hurt, and fail to respond to the teacher's appeals. 'Impartiality' should be a watchword of every teacher. It may seem to be a trifle for a teacher to forget a promise made to a pupil. To the pupil, however, it is great matter. He rarely forgets that promise, and the teacher's influence is lessened because of his failure to keep it.—A. H. McKinney.