

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson VII. Feb. 17, 1918. Jesus Teaching by Parables—Four Kinds of Ground.—Mark 4: 1-20.

Commentary.—1. Teaching by parables (vs. 1, 2). 1. Begun again—The shore of the sea of Galilee was a favorite place with Jesus for teaching those who came to him. He had taught here before, and now he was beginning "again" to teach the people. Great multitudes—Luke says they came "to him out of every city" (8: 4). This was the popular period of Christ's ministry. Great numbers listened to every discourse, and the synagogues were crowded when he spoke. Doubtless many had come out of idle curiosity, but a large number desired to be benefited by Christ's preaching. Entered into a ship—The fisherman's boat into which he entered was pushed a little distance from the shore, so that he could command a full view of his hearers. Sat in the sea—Jesus sat in the boat as he addressed the people. Sitting was the customary posture of the teacher in Christ's time. On the land—The smooth beach along the Sea of Galilee afforded a convenient place of assembly. 2. Taught... by parables—A parable is a story or description of nature or of actual occurrences, used to teach spiritual truth. The word has in it the idea of placing one object alongside of another, of comparison. In his doctrine—in his teaching.

II. The parable of the sower (vs. 3-9). 3. Harken—Listen. Jesus at the outset invited the close attention of his hearers. Behold—The opening of the parable is vivid, and it is more than probable that one or more sowers were actually scattering seed within sight of the hearers, for that region was rich and adapted to agriculture. It was the season for sowing, which commenced in October. There went out a sower to sow. He was provided with seed and went forth with a definite purpose. He went where there was soil prepared to receive the seed. The soil of Palestine was prepared for sowing by being stirred to a depth of four inches. The people lived in villages and literally "went forth" to their fields in the country. The sower represents the Saviour, who came to teach the truths of the kingdom, and the apostles, who were taught by him, and all others, who as public and private workers scatter the blessed truths of Christ's kingdom. 4. Way side—In Palestine the grain fields are not often fenced, and there are trodden paths extending here and there through the grain. The seed, falling upon these paths, would be especially exposed to the attacks of birds, which abound in that country. 5. Stony ground—ground of this sort was doubtless in plain sight of Jesus and his hearers. It was not a soil mingled with stones, sprang up—The thin layer of soil covering an extended layer of rock. If sprang up—The thin layer of soil would be thoroughly warmed by the sun, and the seed would quickly germinate. 6. Withered away—The roots could not find their way to moisture, hence there could be little growth and the young plant would quickly die.

7. Thorns—Thorns, briars and other prickly plants thrive in Palestine and indicate a fertile soil. There are twenty-two words in the Hebrew Bible that denote thorny or prickly plants. The farmer is accustomed to go through his wheatfields before these noxious plants ripen to cut them out. If this is not done the land becomes overrun with these pests, choked it. The thorns were so thrifty that they grew more rapidly than the grain, robbing the latter of the moisture and substance of the soil. The soil was good and favorable to an abundant harvest of grain, but for the fact that it was preoccupied by seeds of thorns. 8. Good ground—The soil was deep, free from weeds and had been properly prepared, sprang up and increased—Unlike the sowings on the other kinds of soil, the seed was not caught away by birds, nor was the quickly germinating seed blasted in the thin layer of soil by the heat of the sun, nor were the tender plants choked by the thorns. The seed germinated, grew vigorously and matured, brought forth—The harvest was abundant whether the increase was thirty, sixty or a hundred times as much as the amount of seed sown. 9. In closing the parable Jesus placed the responsibility upon his hearers. The truths he would convey were not beyond the comprehension of those who had a desire to receive them.

III. The Parable Explained (vs. 10-20). 10-13. Those of Christ's hearers who were interested in what he was saying, including the disciples, came to him and inquired as to the meaning of the parables. They had been deeply impressed with the words of Jesus and desired to know more fully the nature of the kingdom about which he had been speaking. Jesus gave these inquirers to understand that because of their interest in spiritual things they could comprehend the truths he was proclaiming, but those who had no real interest or only a passing interest in those truths would fail of comprehending them. His speaking in parables was a test of their desire to know spiritual truth. The parable would make clear the truth to those who had minds and hearts to receive it, and to those who had no desire to know and accept the principles of the kingdom the parable would tend to obscure those principles. Jesus desired that all who heard his preaching should receive the truth and enter the new kingdom, but he well knew that there were multitudes to whom the word of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah was applicable (6: 9, 10).

14. The sower—This is applicable to Christ and to all his followers who teach the truths of the gospel in sincerity. 15. Sower... taketh away—The heart of the wayside hearer is hard and not readily susceptible to the truth, and Satan through his numberless agencies snatches away the good seed before it settles into the soil of the heart. 16. receive it with gladness

The stony-ground hearers go farther than the first class; they not only hear, but believe, and receive the truth, and the seed springs up. They take upon themselves a profession of religion. The truths of the gospel are attractive. They appeal strongly to the hearts of all who give earnest attention to them. 17. have not root in themselves—There is no deep soil of repentance and true faith, into which the roots of a religious experience could strike. affliction or persecution arises—These are sure to come. The scorching rays of the sun act upon the plant growing in stony-ground soil, as tribulation and persecution do upon the superficial professor of religion. Both quickly wither and die, are offended—Stumble. 18. among thorns—There is a reception of the word and it promises to have its effect, but the heart is open to other things, as worldly anxieties and the love of wealth, so the fruitage of godliness is not realized. 19. unfruitful—The seed of the kingdom can never produce much fruit in any heart till the thorns of vicious affections and impure desires are plucked up by the roots and burned—Clarke, 20. good ground—Those given up to God's will. We are responsible for the nature of the soil. The Holy Spirit come to us with illumination and conviction and begets in us a desire for salvation. If we cherish the conviction and yield ourselves to God, trusting him implicitly, there will be an abundant harvest.

Questions—What is a parable? Where was Jesus now? Why did he speak in parables? Whom does the sower represent? What is the seed? What is the first soil mentioned? What devoured the seed? What is the second kind of soil? Why did the grain wither? What is the third kind of soil? Who are the wayside hearers? The stony-ground hearers? What was the harvest from the good ground?

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Topic.—Hindrances to a harvest.

- I. Inattention. II. Insincerity. III. Compromise.

I. Inattention. In consequence of the moral state of the Jewish nation Jesus taught the multitudes in parables. Standing by the seashore and surveying the mixed company before him, Jesus gave in parable a prophecy of the future of his truth among them. The stress of the story lies not in the character of the sower or on the quality of the seed, but in the nature of the soil. In framing this parable Jesus classified his hearers according to his experience with them, recalling the different effects produced upon them by his claims to be the Messiah. He chose that form of teaching which brought men face to face with nature and human life. He put truth into form in which it could not perish or be corrupted. He turned the minds of his hearers in the direction in which they could soonest unlearn their errors and be prepared to receive his truth. Before anything in this particular set of parables as to the kingdom of God could reach their minds, they had to unlearn all they had learned from their leaders to the Kingdom of God being a Jewish commonwealth. Time was needed for truth to prevail against error. Direct attack upon it would have been useless. Those whose minds were filled with the Pharisees' ideas of religion could hardly help understanding and misrepresenting the doctrines and sayings of Jesus. The parables were certain to be remembered. Their special value was that while they were fitted to preserve truth from being forgotten, they were above all fitted to preserve truth from being corrupted. Time will ripen them for the purpose of instructing the multitudes as well as Christ's disciples through all time. This parable of the sower is a solemn lesson and warning, and withal a description of what is actually taking place now.

II. Insincerity. Besides the wayside hearers who failed to be helped by Christ's teachings and work, there were others of an emotional temperament who were carried away in the excitement aroused by this sudden popularity. They were the stony-ground hearers. They lacked the sufficient depth of soil. Without either their judgment being informed or their will renewed, they were quick to wither under the daily tests of discipleship. The kind of soil into which the seed was sown determined the harvest. Life is the time for the getting of character and for the trial and perfecting of it. These insincere ones could not produce fruit. They were superficial in character.

III. Compromise. The parable presents a third class, perhaps more limited, who recognized Christ's power and authority, but they would not leave their old religion, which was wholly artificial. They tried to combine truth with error. Such were the double-minded class, unstable and finally unreliable, successful for a time, but failing short at last. The "thorns" occupy the short and fleeting period of time allotted for man's probation. They absorb attention and engage the heart. One kind of soil was fruitful, whose hearts were prepared by divine influences and responsive to divine culture and care. From them truth was neither stolen, stunted nor choked. They were true disciples.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Four kinds of soil. 1. The wayside.—Agrippa went with great pomp and heard Paul preach. That carried the powerful pleader laid the truth on his heart, as if he would plow a furrow into his life. But the devil's birds were near to pluck up the seed. Pride came with her glittering plumes and chirped in his ear. "Thou art a king, but who is this tent-maker?" Lust croaked behind pride, and had something to say about giving up Bernice. So they came one after another, plucked up the grain and flew away. 2. The stony ground. Paul found it in Galatia (Gal. 5: 7). Christ found it in Galilee (John 6: 6). 3. The thorn-choked soil. Demas is the New Testament illustration (2 Tim. 4: 10). 4. The good ground. This is the ground that has been thoroughly broken up by repentance and moistened with the

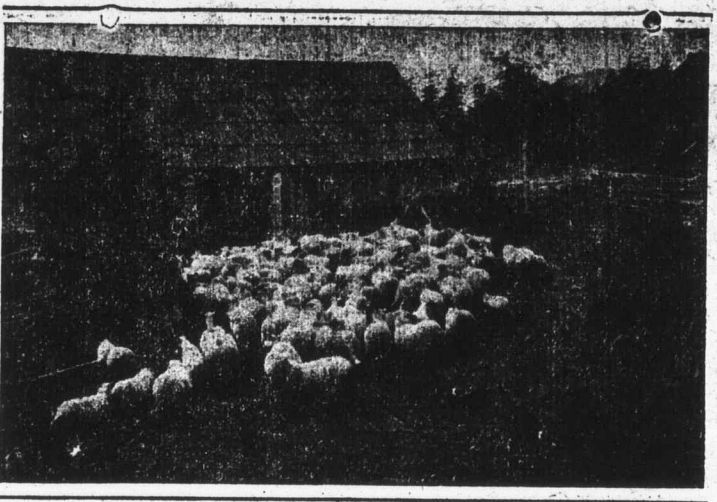
POSSIBILITIES FOR CANADIAN SHEEP RAISING

Greatest Increase From Flocks On Mixed Farms (By T. Reg. Arkell, Chief Sheep and Goat Division, Ottawa.)

War is on the tongues of all the world at present, because so far-reaching are its effects, that everyone, even to the utmost limits of civilization, has been effected to some degree. No person or industry has escaped completely. Examine its effects on the sheep industry of Canada, and, roughly, they are two in number. The world's consumption of wool has increased and the production has decreased. Together with this, the high cost of all commodities has effected great increase in the selling price of the wool in the fleece. The demands of increased armies of men on unproductive work has resulted in the higher cost of meat. High priced wool and the sheepraiser until his industry are now starting into this industry. Possibilities for sheep-raising in Canada are unlimited so far as land is concerned. There are vast tracts of

land which should make it continue for some time. The wool production has decreased all over the world, due to the following conditions: number of men now required for army purposes, and increased world-wide slaughter of sheep. The consumption of wool has increased, and this is chiefly due to the demands for army clothing. Therefore, the value of wool has increased, and as these conditions will continue to increase until war ceases, so the continued rise in value. Losses in merchant shipping are large since war started, and there will continue to be some loss until this warfare ceases. The result is, and will be, that ocean transportation of wool will be limited until normal conditions reassert themselves. Consequently, some countries which produced large quantities of wool and use smaller quantities may have some difficulty in disposing of their surplus. However, Canada will never suffer

Never before has the world used so much wool, the result being practically a wool famine. How many years this condition will exist cannot be forecasted. However, several years must elapse before these conditions can be righted so that wool will have an enhanced value during this period. From a meat standpoint the situation is almost the same. Meat enters very largely into the daily ration of the soldier and its supply has to be obtained from some source. One way in which the North American continent is aiding the Allies is in supplying large quantities of meat, and there is a strong demand for this commodity. The decrease of the world's sheep population has been estimated at fifty-four and a half millions since war started. The number of sheep in the warring European countries will continue to decrease until normal conditions are resumed. One reason for this is the difficulty of importing feeding materials, and the result is that the animals are being utilized for food. Again, in mutton, as in the question of wool, there is an increased demand for mutton for consumption in Canada. So a good market for meat is assured for some time to come.



Sheep do well in Canada from coast to coast. Here is a British Columbia flock which promises well. In most parts of Canada, however, sheep ranching is not feasible, but there is room for much more development of the small farm flock.

land from one coast to the other which are useful only for grazing purposes. These lands are particularly suitable for sheep in large flocks. Practically every mixed farm in the country could maintain its small flock. Thus there is ample room for sheep. It has been stated that Canada should and could maintain twenty millions of sheep instead of two million which at present is the total. Sheep are exceedingly profitable where the small amount of requisite care is applied. Wool is increasing in price continually at present, and so far as it is possible to forecast, this increase will continue for some time to come. The limitations of this increase are impossible to define, but conditions ex-

cesses very heavily of wool and does not produce sufficient for its own requirements, so that there always will be a keen demand for wools for home consumption, provided it is of the type and condition that can be utilized in manufacture in this country. According to Hoover, the United States Food Administrator, the wool clip of that country is decreasing and the consumption is increasing now. In fact, in 1916 only 35 per cent. of the wool used was produced within its boundaries. This means that should the home market in Canada by any chance fall, there will be a market at hand which will not entail ocean transportation.

At this point it is well to point out one thing, that in most booms, accompanied by inflated prices, there follows a period of depression. Just how much the values in the sheep industry are inflated is a question which cannot be answered. That there is at present some inflation must be a fact. The best authorities, however, consider that there is very little, so that any depression which will follow will not be very pronounced. All that is necessary to avoid this possibility is careful buying at present values. There is a possibility of too great an outlay of capital, which gives the same conditions as is found in an over-capitalized company.

Increase in large flocks cannot be looked for to any great extent. Ideal conditions necessary for ranching seem to be growing scarcer every year. Ranchers recede as the settler advances and have done so throughout the American West and are doing so in the Canadian West. If this continues there may come a time when ranching will become only a matter of history. This is simply surmise at present. Sheep-raising under mixed farming conditions is where the greatest increase will be found. Most farms of this nature can profitably maintain a small flock of sheep. Now that co-operation is spreading rapidly in the sheep industry the old difficulty of disposing of wool to the best advantage is disappearing. Co-operative wool selling is increasing the profits. This co-operation should extend amongst small flockmasters to the ownership of rams, dipping outfits and shearing appliances. In this way many of the present difficulties would be overcome and better returns ensured. —The Canadian Countryman.

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are in this body do groan, being burdened. What is time but a wharf where ships load and unload? What is a home but the place where parents are in commerce; they give out and their children take in. There used to be a common notice when ships were to sail, and the words "shifts without ballast" was often read; it meant sea is flat bottomed, that she can be shifted from one part of the port to the other without being stiffened with ballast. But some smart sailing craft must have plenty of ballast, or cargo, in order to be safe. "Not the soul be without knowledge is not good." A full sock can stand up right, an empty sock falls flat. You see men taking in cargo, striving away, stirring up power, starting on the voyage. "Whither away?" We ask their aim, their destination, and many give no answer. Some do not know, some do not care, some are easy-going and led by others, some are afraid. Timorous mortals start and shrink To cross the narrow sea, And shiver trembling in the brink, And fear to launch away. The bold launch into the deep, they have courage and conscious power, they study winds and currents, have they purpose in their heart? The ark was prepared for a definite purpose, it was not to sail, or make discoveries, to go on pleasure, or war. It was to save! Calmly she floated with her living cargo, without masts, or rudder, or pumps. The modern ship is different; she is loaded for a definite port. To meet a ship in mid-ocean and ask her destination and get no answer, is to conclude that the ship was in charge of a landsman, and not a seaman. Are you the captain of your soul, or is another leading you whither he will? Alas! how full of contradiction is man; he is great and he is mean; he is weak and he is strong; a drop shaken in the wind, but he is a child that thinks! He is a judge, a criminal; he is glorious and base; he is a novelty, a chaos, a worm. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." This "spirit" constitutes man's greatness, distinction, responsibility, and immortality. He is from God, must account to God. How are you going to answer one of a thousand? The duty is appalling if you try to do it alone. But there is a Davidsman waiting, available, ready. "Able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He even liveth to make intercession further."

About the easiest way for a man to lose his good name is to have it engraved on the handle of his umbrella.

MARKET REPORTS

TORONTO MARKETS.

Table with columns for 'FARMERS' MARKET' and 'WHOLESALE MARKET'. Items include Eggs, Butter, Carcasses, etc. with prices.

Table with columns for 'SUGAR PRICES-WHOLESALE' and 'TORONTO CATTLE MARKETS'. Items include Acedia gran, Redpath granulated, etc. with prices.

Table with columns for 'OTHER MARKETS' and 'WINNIPEG FUTURES'. Items include Oats, May, July, etc. with prices.

Table with columns for 'BUFFALO LIVE STOCK' and 'CHICAGO LIVE STOCK'. Items include East Buffalo, Receipts, etc. with prices.

SUNDAY AT HOME

PRESS ON. Still will we trust, though earth seem dark and dreary, And the heart faint beneath His chastening rod; Though rough and steep our pathway, worn and weary, Still we trust in God!

So from our sky the night shall furl her shadows, And day, poor gladness through his golden gates, Our rough path lead to flower-enamelled meadows, Where joy our coming waits.

Let us press on: in patient self-denial, Accept the hardship, shrink not from the loss; Our guardian lies beyond the hour of trial, Our crown beyond the Cross. —W. H. BURLEIGH.

THE COMFORTER, THE HOLY GHOST.

If thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that Saviour to thee, give me to drink; (thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given the living water.—If ye are 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?—Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

CAPACITY.

(By the late Rev. H. T. Miller.) Man has a capacity for the Infinite; this is his original mate. The ship is seaworthy before it is launched; when launched it is a matter of cargo, storage, furniture, direction, aim and end. Noth took a hundred and twenty years to build the ark; it was not ready before that time. How long did it take to build the spirit of man; was time one of its conditions; did angels help to fashion it; did other spirits help at the launch? Just as a perfect ship leaves the builder's hands as she plunges into the water, so a perfect spirit enters the body. There is nothing to be added, or deducted. The ship is in the sea, the spirit is in the body, for time they are essential to each other, but they are always "other," and not the same. "We that

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Cuba's Fine Tobacco.

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Nests On the Water.

It is almost unthinkable that a bird should build a nest on the water. Yet that is exactly what the grebes always do. With reeds, grass and plant stems the grebe makes a regular floating island somewhat hollowed out on top, usually near the open water of a marshy or reedy lake. We have several kinds of grebes, but their nests are much alike, sometimes moored to the reeds, but usually floating freely on the water.—St. Nicholas.

He is twice a conqueror who can restrain himself in the hour of victory. —Cicero.