

The Quiet Hour.

A Sabbath in Capernaum.

S. S. LESSON—Mark 1: 21-34. February 7, 1904.

GOLDEN TEXT—He laid his hands on every one of them, and blessed them.—Luke 4: 40.

BY REV. C. MACKINNON, B.D., SYDNEY, N.S.

Astonished at his doctrine, v. 22. The rest of the verse shows that what surprised them was, not so much the things that He said, as His way of saying them. He did not argue, nor guess, nor infer, but spoke with authority an assured message. The message of the gospel is sure: it is God's word. Let us have no hesitation nor misgiving as to its truth, but speak it fearlessly and with confidence. God's message, uttered in conviction of its truth and from experience of its power, is invincible.

In their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, v. 23. The church may seem a strange place for such a character. But the restless spirit in an unclean heart will drive its victim everywhere, seeking peace. Let him have a welcome and a pew. Do not let us gather up our respectable skirts and say, "Put him in the gallery." The old fashioned door on the family pew, with the lock inside, is gone, thank God!

What have we to do with thee? v. 24. The evil spirit has other business in the sanctuary than attending to Christ. In Macgowan's "Dialogues of Devils" two such spirits meet. One is cool and lively; he has been to the theatre and others have done his work for him. The other is warm and weary; he has been to the house of worship, and it kept him busy—work as fast as he could—to pick up the seed that was sown in the heart. In every church and Sabbath School, let the presence of Christ be so manifest that the devils in our hearts will cry out in terror, "Art Thou come to destroy us?"

Torn him, v. 26. How hard is the victory over an unclean spirit! But the power of Christ is supreme. There is no sin but will yield before His authority. A veteran of Waterloo well remembered the hot fight on that famous Sunday, when the cavalry of France was hurled in vain against the inflexible squares of the British, but declared that harder still were the battles he had to fight in his own heart. Yet Christ had given him the victory, though he was torn by the struggle.

A new teaching! (Rev. Ver.), v. 27. The truth was really as old as the love of God, though it seemed new to their ears. If we dip into the old Puritan divines, we find many thoughts there which we had supposed were the discoveries of our own time. Like the Straits of Juan de Fuca, these thoughts had once been found, then forgotten, then rediscovered. Truth is always new to the man who sees it for the first time. Further, we should never refuse an idea, because we never heard it before. Welcome all light; prove all things; hold fast that which is according to the word of God. A thing is not necessarily true because old, or false because new.

Anon they tell him of her, v. 30. After the miracle of the synagogue, the disciples had such perfect confidence in their Lord that they immediately told him about Simon's mother-in-law. Let us bring our sick to Jesus at once. After centuries of gracious consolation bestowed upon His people,

surely we can trust the great Physician. We do not assert, like the Dowicist, that our faith will infallibly cure. We do not presume to interpret the divine purpose. But we do presume to trust it and can sing:—

"Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours!
Jesus hath vanquished death and all its powers."

She ministered unto them, v. 31. It was the ministry of gratitude for a gracious recovery. She did not sit and mope, and say, "O, how sick I was, how near to death!" No, she said, "Now I am better and can do something, let me best thank God by serving Him." In many French churches tablets may be seen, erected to commemorate recovery from some dangerous disease. The most acceptable tablet to God is the consecration of the new strength to His service.

They brought unto him all, v. 32. A mighty eagerness. Healing was in sight for their loved ones. How could they possibly fail to bring them all? We do not envy the frame of mind which is satisfied unless all the loved ones are saved.

The Atonement.

The atonement on the cross was a voluntary sacrifice. God did not thus punish an innocent person in order to save sinners from the punishment due for their sins. Christ offered himself, of his own choice, because he loved man so deeply. When the Greeks were besieging Troy, relates Peloubet, and met with ill success, the Priest Calchas told them that the only way to appease the offended goddess, and gain the victory, was to sacrifice to Diana, Iphigenia, the beautiful daughter of King Agamemnon. And these brave men of old are said to have taken her by strategy and force, and brought this innocent girl to the altar, to slay her in their stead. This sacrifice (though she was rescued) was unworthy of them, was mean and unjust beyond words to express. So, too, Tennyson's "The Victim" represents the priests of Thor and Odin as demanding of the king a human life to assuage the anger of their gods against the lands expressed in famine and plague and fires and foes, like the troubles that came upon Job.

But these have no resemblance to the sacrifice of God's Son, who gave himself for us, a heroic act of love to save men, just as a brave man risks his life to save a child from danger. Whenever any persons have offered themselves, as Horatius and his comrades at height of heroism. The sacrifice expressed the highest love possible.

The sacrifice on the cross was the highest proof and the strongest expression of the love of God to man. Christ proved the greatness of his love by what he was willing to suffer for those he loved. Ruskin says that "the fountain in which sins are indeed washed away is that of love, not of agony." But the agony was the measure and the proof of love. It declares God's love to man "in letters that can be read from the stars." The fact is that there is no other way to express in language that all can understand the highest degrees of heroism, courage, self-sacrifice, and love. It is these qualities we see rather than the agony, as we do not see the particles of matter in the air by which the sunlight is diffused, but we see the light and know the sun itself is shining through them."—Herald and Presbyter.

"Run Speak to That Young Man."

Some years ago we were asked by a wife to speak to her husband about Christ. He was a most genial and popular physician in a large city; but alas, like many such, he had become addicted to drink.

We waited in his office for some time. At last, with a smile on his face, he came up, grasped our hand and laid his other on our shoulder. "What can I do for you?" he asked.

Looking him straight in the eye, and smiling back, we said, "I came in to talk with you about Jesus Christ and his love for you." In a moment great tears fell on my hand, and his grasp tightened as he cried, "You are the first man who has spoken to me about my soul in twenty years."

Twenty years of silence in a Christian city, in a Christian home, and no one to speak to him about Christ. Twenty years of silence! And such men are all around us, waiting for those who know Christ to introduce him.

Run, speak to that young man.

Paramount Claims.

In the life of most mothers, whether rich or poor, there generally comes some time when to do her full duty to her children she must give up a great many things that are worth doing at other times. Perhaps she has decided literary and musical talents. They must remain partially in abeyance under the pressure of the claims of the children, which are paramount to all other claims. This is a genuine sacrifice to many mothers, even if they have strong motherly qualities. It is not an easy matter to step aside from those places which can be filled so well, in order to care for little children. But that is not a fair way to look at it. No mother steps down from a throne when she gives herself to the training of her children. She undertakes a task which angels could not perform. She accepts the noblest crown of life. Her throne is undisputed. If she is ever tempted to complain of her lot she misses part of its blessedness. But accepted as God's work upon the earth there can be no discontentment with it.

The sweetest lesson I have learned to-day from God's Book is about the things he covers up.

Tell me, if you can, the name of the thief on the cross, or the woman from Sychar, and who was the poor outcast that bathed the Savior's feet with her tears?

Possibly in heaven they will never know but that these were among earth's fairest blossoms. I can think of God's charity thus outstretched.

Most of us have things we want covered up—and covered up forever, too. I am glad the Judgment Day will not reveal the sins of Christians.—Dowling

Man was meant to be an oak, not an acorn, but many are content to remain the mere embryos of unexpanded power. The difference between the acorn and the oak is growth. Vigor and fiber and sinewy usefulness come by growth. But if man is content to remain as God created him, then all maturity of power is impossible. God says to the seed, grow; to the intellect, grow; to the immortal soul, grow. Rise out of thy acorn life until under thy shadow the magna charta of empires may be traced, angels may meet with thee and thy leaves be for the healing of the nations.—United Presbyterian.