

SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

## The Quiet Hour

YOUNG  
PEOPLE

## THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

By Rev. J. W. MacMillan, M.A.

The beginning, v. 1. The Belloves one day gave a long-drawn sigh. "What is the matter, friend Belloves, that you seem so sad?" said the Hearth. "I have toiled to no purpose," answered the Belloves in a dejected tone. "Haven't succeeded in kindling the fire, is it?" asked the Hearth. "That is the cause," replied the Belloves, "after all my blowing there is no flame. In fact the more I blow, the darker it appears." "Perhaps," said the Hearth, "it requires something more than you blowing to quicken. Let some one kindle a fire, and then your blowing will make it burn brighter." Make a start. You must be born again, before you can grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Of the gospel, v. 1. It is a wonderful story, the story of the wheat. Away out on the Western prairies the seed is cast into the black soil to die. But out of its death, the harvest springs up, first green and then golden. Then the reaping time comes, and the grain is carried across the continent and over the ocean, to feed the hungry multitudes of the old world. There is a spiritual parallel to this thrilling story of nature. God's Son came into the world and, like the seed, He was buried in death. But He rose again, and has become the Bread of life for the world's teeming millions. What joy, to have this living Bread, and to carry it to others!

Make His paths straight, v. 3. In a school for deaf mutes a bright boy was asked, "What is truth?" He answered by drawing a straight line on the blackboard. He was asked again "What is a lie?" and drew a wavering and crooked line. The straight path may be the hard path—it goes right over the hills and down the gullies—but it is the shortest and surest route to the journey's end—the only path for the man who would do his duty.

In the wilderness, v. 4. The hardest part of a true and brave life is at first. Law comes before grace. John, rough and terribly plain-spoken, comes before the mild and kindly Jesus. It is hard to resist the devil, but easy to watch him flee from you. Repentance, contrition, reformation, are the most difficult enterprises one can venture upon. But these accomplished, we reach the green fields and still waters of the divine pasturage, where goodness and mercy follows us continually.

Mightier than I, v. 7. He is the hero who can overcome his mood, and do the thing he does not want to do. Suppose, that, like John, you expect that your work will soon be over and yourself disregarded. Why, if the work is worth doing, have courage to persevere. Suppose that you feel indisposed to effort. Don't wait for the moment of inspiration to come, but set to work doggedly. Duty is its own sanction. John was like a star doomed to extinction, which refused to quiver and wane, but shone with undimmed lustre until the very moment that it was lost in the dawning day.

With water . . . with the Holy Ghost, v. 8. There are miles of difference between "would be good" and "could be good." Some desire only John's baptism of cleansing, and some seek besides Jesus' baptism of inspiration and energy. Some-

times one sees this sign, "Room to let, with power." That is the place to set up your machinery, which without power to drive it will be useless. "The whole task of conduct is to translate opinion into practice."

But, as the oxygen and hydrogen need the touch of the electric spark to be combined into water, so it is the power of God's Spirit than can convert our good intentions into holy deeds.

Jesus . . . was baptized, v. 9. No one can afford to be above his work. He that came to save from sin was "numbered with the transgressors." It is only in day dreams, when we forget the toil in the expected reward, that noble living seems all sweetness and light. That man who is decorated with the Humane Society's medal once risked his life to save another's. That great statesman was once a poor student, grinding at his books in a garret. That sweet-souled saint has resisted hundreds of temptations to fretfulness and complaining, before he attained to victorious contentment.

A dove . . . a voice, vs. 10, 11. The Father shows His approval of His children's obedience: He would be a strange Father if He did not. Sometimes it is in the success of their efforts, as when a missionary sees his dusky parishioners coming. And constantly His Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are children of God. He stood by Paul in the night on that ill-fated ship, which was soon afterwards wrecked on the coast of Malta. He confirms the faith of everyone who does His will. It was His own blessed Son who said, "I know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

## FAITHFULNESS.

Is it not faithfulness on our conceptions to be lured away from the action due to them or their support by any pleasure or any fancy, or by the desires of ambition, of society, or the world? No; whatever your profess, cling to it with all your soul. Whatever ship you sail in, fly your flag; and let all the world know clearly under which banner you sail the seas. There is no indifference, no to and fro, where there is faithfulness. As a man clings to his wife, so should he cling to the truths, forms, and faith which he has chosen. Let him marry, let him be faithful all round to his faith. That constancy, that faithfulness, is what moves the world. By that, the ideas we think worthy and precious are spread far and wide for the use and good of men. By that religious, political, social, moral, artistic, educational societies win their way, and there is no other way the wit of men can compass. By that, also, we ourselves attain slowly the most noble of all the virtues for the practical strength of character in man or woman—the virtue of enduring faithfulness. Have convictions and cling to them. Gain principles of faith, of morals, of human action; love them earnestly, and shape them into undeviating action—Stopford A. Brooke.

Bright as is the sun, and the sky, and the clouds, green as are the leaves and the fields, sweet as is the singing of birds, we know they are not all, and we will not take up with part for the whole. They proceed from a centre of love, which is God, but they are not his fulness; they speak of heaven, but they are not heaven; they are but as stray beams and dim reflections of his image—crumbs from his table.—John Henry Newman.

Salvation precedes spiritual culture. To feed the sheep is well, but the sheep that is drowning needs first of all to be taken out of the water.

## PENTECOST.

Marvelous was that first revival that set the Christian Church on fire, marvelous in its simplicity and in its results. The church in Jerusalem had almost none of the things we think essential. It had no building, no pipe organ, no choir, no deacons, no elders, not even a pastor! All it had was about one hundred and twenty members, mostly poor people. What could be done with such a church, what pastor in our day would want a call to it? Yet that church kindled a fire that lit up the centuries and became the model church for all time. What did it have besides these one hundred and twenty members? It had unanimity: "They were all with one accord in one place." Not one member absent, not one vacant seat. What interest did that manifest, they were one organized desire and cry. How hard it is to get even a respectable fraction of our people present with one accord at a prayer meeting or even at a church service. They are absorbed in business or fashion or are indifferent to religion, and our churches contain many vacant seats, every one of which is a break in the current of religious interest. If we could only get all our members in one place it would be a great revival in itself. These one hundred and twenty members were in one place with one accord in prayer. They had thus continued in prayer for days, and their united, crying hearts were an urgent appeal to heaven and a congenial soil on which the refreshing of the Spirit must easily and plentifully fall. This condition of united, persistent, strenuous prayer was the one cause of the Pentecostal shower that flooded the place and started streams of spiritual life down through the centuries. We run to fine churches and choirs and pipe organs, to richly stained windows and scarlet-cushioned pews, to artistic singers and eloquent preachers, and then we wonder why we do not have full churches and a powerful revival of religion. The true reason is that we are not all with accord of prayer in one place. Other thoughts are in our minds, and sometimes there are strained relations and social distinctions among us that forbid the presence and work of the Spirit. We are ever in danger of the old Pharisaic heresy of putting too much stress on the externals of religion and losing its inner spirit. We trust in our church organization and machinery and fail to fulfil the one conditions that brought upon this little, unorganized, poverty-stricken church the greatest blessing of history. In every church we can be all with accord in one place, if we only will. Let us fulfil this plain and simple condition, and there will descend upon us a flood of the Spirit that there will not be room to receive.—Presbyterian Banner.

The commendation of missionary work by those in high position competent to judge of its value, goes on uninterrupted. At a banquet given by the Ministerial Association of the City of Mexico to United States Ambassador and Mrs. Conger, recently, Mr. Conger paid a high tribute to the missionaries laboring in China, of whom he said, "They are a body of men and women who, measured by the sacrifices they make, the trials they endure, and the risks they take, are veritable heroes. They are the pioneers in all that country. They are invariably the forerunners of Western civilization."

Rev. F. B. Meyer says of Evan Roberts, the Welsh evangelist: "He is a pure, transparent soul; he is as humble as a little child. I never thought anyone could keep so unselfish and pure amidst all the homage which is rendered to him."

\*S.S. Lesson, January 28, 1906, Mark 1: 1-11. Commit to memory vs. 10, 11. Read Matthew 3: 1-17; Luke 3: 1-22. Golden text—Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only.—1 Samuel 7: 2