

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22ND, 1871.

The Two Sons.—Matt. xx. 23-32.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Go work to day in my vineyard." vs. 28.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Matt. ix. 35-38; x. 5-24; Rom. v. 13-21.

When did the interview described in our lesson occur? vs. 23. Who came to Christ? What was he doing? How had he entered the city? vs. 1-11. What had he done immediately after? vs. 12-17. What effect had these events on "the people?" vs. 9-11. What on the priests, elders, etc.? With what design did they visit Christ? What questions did they ask? Explain them.

Why did Christ answer by a question? What does he mean by "the baptism of John?" What had that baptism to do with Christ's authority? What do you think of their answer? Why did Christ refuse to answer their question after they had replied thus to him?

Is the parable of the two sons explained by Christ? vs. 31, 32. Is it given to defend himself merely, or to rebuke and warn "the priests and elders?" What was the father's demand of the sons? vs. 28. Was either son without blame? State what was wrong in each. Why was the first approved rather than the second? Read Luke iii. 12-14; vii. 30; compare Luke iii. 7, 8. Did the publicans and harlots receive Christ more readily than did the Scribes and Pharisees? Luke xv. 1. How do you explain this fact? Do you see anything like this in our own day? Explain.

Have you ever said to Christ "I go?" Have you done more than simply say it? What were some of the causes that lead one to say it without doing? Has our lesson any bearing on Sunday-school work? What?

SUMMARY.—God requires not pretence, but service. Hollow profession is more hopeless than open rebellion.

ANALYSIS.—I. Christ arraigned. vs. 23-27. (1) The demand. vs. 23. (2) The counter-demand. vs. 24, 25. (3) The dilemma and evasion. vs. 25-27.

II. The arraigners arraigned. vs. 28-30. (1) The charge in parable. vs. 28-30. (2) The charge unveiled. vs. 31, 32.

EXPOSITION.—Place and time.—The temple in Jerusalem, in the week of the crucifixion, the second day after the triumphant entry. This was a memorable day in Christ's life and the Jews' history, because on it were pronounced formally and solemnly, those last awful words of warning and judgment to the Jews recorded in chapters xxi-xxv; also Mark xi. from vs. 27, xii., xiii., and Luke xx. and xxi.

The connection.—The conversation, which forms our lesson, was preceded by Christ's public entrance into the city, riding as a king, with the multitudes attending, shouting his praises, casting their garments, and palm branches in the way, vs. 1-11 by his clearing the temple of traffic and traffickers in a way and with words of absolute authority, as though he alone was Lord of the temple, vs. 12, 13,—by miracles of healing in the temple and the reception of the children's hosannas in defiance of Jewish authority, vs. 14-17,—(all this on the first two days of the week,) and now on the third day he begins again his public teaching in the temple. The conversation is followed by others of the same day, occasioned by still further attacks. These following discourses should be studied in connection with that of today as they form one sublime and terrific whole. There is a constant advance, a rising from majesty to majesty. They reveal Christ as Judge, and explain that extraordinary phrase "The wrath of the Lamb." Christ's love is not easy good nature.

The arraigners.—"The chief priests and the elders." The chief, or high priest, was the official successor of Aaron, (Lev. v. 1-6), and there was of course but one high priest at a time, i. e., in office, but those still living who had held the office were also called by the name. Formerly the high priest kept his office during life, but under the Romans changes were frequent so that there were several high priests living at the same time. These high priests and elders were probably a deputation, or committee from the Sanhedrim. They come, therefore, with the highest authority of the nation,—came regularly, and officially.

The cause.—The regulation of the temple service, and care of the temple belonged to the Sanhedrim. Christ's acts, seemed to infringe upon their authority. They would indict him as a usurper of their authority, as doing what no one might do without permission from the Sanhedrim.

That body had licensed the temple traffic, by what right did Jesus break it up?

The questions.—The first demands his authority for the acts, its nature, what it is. The second its origin, who gave it, whence it is. If Jesus has no authority he stands before the people a gross criminal. If he has authority from the Romans, and recognizes it, then he proves false to Moses and loses his standing with the Jews. The Sanhedrim has given him no authority. Very fit questions then were these, to be asked and answered. What, whence, thy authority? It seemed easy to convict Jesus of gross lawlessness.

The counter question.—"The baptism of John" means John the Baptist's whole work, including his teaching, warning etc., and especially his testimony concerning Christ. The baptism was that prominent and significant fact in the mission which stood for the whole. His right to baptize was his right to teach. Hence the question: Was this baptism "from heaven," i. e., did God authorize John to do his work as a messenger, a prophet of God, or did John take it up himself, or as the agent of men merely? John till death was true to Christ. Christ till death was true to John, owning him as his forerunner. John witnessed most clearly, and men knew it, the Sanhedrim knew it, that Jesus was the Son of God, Messiah, true Lord of the temple.

The dilemma.—The Jews had carefully and skillfully made and set a trap and driven their victim into it, and lo, in a twinkling, they see him free and themselves caught. Cunning, wicked, silly hypocrites.—They see the questioner's point. Say yes, and they convict themselves, for they refused to own John as a prophet, and his testimony to Jesus. They clear Jesus, for his acts are their Messiah's. Say no and the people, will "stone" them. Luke xx. 6. See Psalms cii. 13-17.

The evasion.—"They reasoned with themselves," withdrew a little perhaps to talk the thing over and decide on the answer. Mark, no question as to what was true. They would say yes, or no or anything else to save themselves. It will not do to be silenced outright. They see they are vanquished, disgraced, and cover, or try to cover their retreat with the miserable words, "We cannot tell." We don't know, a pitiful lie. And these were the Jewish rulers,—and the arraigners of our Lord!

"Neither tell I you," must have been seen and felt by all to be a most fit answer to the heartless plotters. Thus ended in defeat and shame the carefully prepared scheme to ruin Christ,—thus also has ended many, many another scheme against him as in his church!

The parable.—It is simple and plain. God is in the parable presented as father of those commanded to labor. This is the more natural as here it is only of Jews that the parable is primarily spoken, and God is represented as the Father of that nation as such. He is also in a sense the Father of all.

The command.—"Go work to day in my vineyard," represents especially the preaching of the gospel. There was but one command, the same to the two sons. There is one gospel for all men. "There is no difference." Rom. iii. 22.

At first.—The two sons represent the two great classes of which the one was openly irreligious, the other professedly religious. The profligacy, the no, is wrong,—the profession, the yes, is good if genuine, if it have the inward reality. Not profession, but holiness in profession is to be condemned.

At last the priests and elders were again caught and out of their own mouths judged. The publicans and even harlots, the "sinners" in great numbers, as former lessons have shown us, repented under Christ's ministry also; but the scribes and Pharisees, the religious, grew more and more hostile to Jesus and his doctrine.

Then and now.—We see the principle of the parable constantly verified. Men and communities now who have a form of godliness without its power are comparatively hopeless. Beware of a false profession. Let us not despair of the openly dissolute, profane, etc,—but carry to them the gospel.

ILLUSTRATION.—The Karens in multitudes became Christians while the Burmans have been slow to receive the truth. The former unlike the latter were not self-righteous adherents of a religious system.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 341, 342.

It takes a smart man to conceal from others what he don't know.—Billings.

NINE YEARS OLD.

I'm nine years old to-day, Almost grown up, you see; And I know enough to tell That nine is three times three. And what are three times seven? If you can't tell I can; It means six feet and freedom, And every inch a man.

I think I know my tables Very perfect for a boy; But learning them, be certain, Was not a special joy. However, that's all over, And I'm just three times three; Nearly as tall as mother— Almost grown up, you see.

This morning father said That years don't make the man— That nothing but the heart and mind Makes one, or ever can. But give me three times seven, And I will risk the rest; Though mother says that of one's life The boyhood is the best.

I'm nine years old to-day— Almost grown up, you see; And, whatever may be lacking, There's no baby about me. I mean to study hard, And learn everything I can; So that when I'm three times seven, I'll be every inch a man.

THE LITTLE WHITE LIE.

I was in trouble beyond any doubt— I was in trouble—and how to get out? "Tell a white lie," said the Devil to me. "Tell a lie! oh, how dreadful! But what would it be, If I should? though I never shall tell one," said I. "Don't be frightened," said he, "we won't call it a lie— A few words in their way quite as good as the truth, And for this occasion, far better, forsooth."

But my little white lie, when I'd told it, grew black; Then, oh! how could I hide it, or how get it back? For it never would do to be caught in a lie, For 'twas known that a very good youngster was I.

I must manage in some way to keep it from sight; "Tell one more," said the Devil; "'twill make it all right."

But my two grew to three, and my three were soon four, And my four lies gave rise to a dozen or more; Till I felt in my soul such a sense of disgrace, I had scarcely one friend I dared look in the face; And at night to my room I went creeping up stairs— God is Truth! could I sleep without saying my prayers!

But my fears and my conscience thus followed about, I was really half glad when the lie was found out; For it was—it is always the way with a lie— And all said that a very bad youngster was I. Good or bad, I have learned in one thing to be wise, And shun in the future all little white lies.

THE SAILOR'S SAFETY.

A minister who lived near the seashore was preaching one day to a congregation in which were several sailors who had just been shipwrecked, and had narrowly escaped drowning. He spoke of the danger to which our souls are exposed of being lost forever on account of our sins, and compared sinners to drowning men, who catch at anything to save them. When he compared Jesus to a plank floating on the water for the drowning men to lay hold of, he told them how safe those were who laid hold of this plank, for, "O my friends!" said he, "this plank bears—this plank bears!"

One of those sailors was converted by the sermon he heard that day. Fourteen years afterward the minister was called to see a dying sailor. It was the same man who had been led to become a Christian by the sermon just spoken of. He thanked the minister for that sermon, and especially for what he said about Jesus as "the plank that bears."

"Those words," said he, "have been a great comfort to me ever since. And now I die in peace, because I know that this plank bears."

Those were the last words that he spoke. Clinging closely to this plank, he was landed safely on the heavenly shore beyond the reach of storms or dangers. And here we see how that good minister, like the air, was supporting life when he preached Jesus to these sailors, and spoke of him as "the plank that bears."

CLEARING UP THE WILDERNESS OF THE SOUL.

Christians are very much like farms. Usually, at first, settlers clear up and cultivate about ten acres of ground, just around the house. Of the whole hundred and sixty acres, only about ten or twenty acres are redeemed from the wilderness during the first year or two. After that it is customary to cut away five acres or so a year. And gradually the farm is subdued. But it is seldom that a farm is redeemed and cultivated alike in all its parts. So God deals with us. Little by little, and through many degrees, he clears up the various parts of our nature, and subdues them from the wilderness, and brings them into a cultivated state. But there are unsubdued parts of our nature. And they are to be taught patience, meekness, humility, disinterestedness, kindness and love. And many men that have gone through great trials, wondering what God meant, have by-and-by come to a disclosure of the Divine intention in that quietness and joyfulness of spirit which is wrought out in them.—Beecher.

ENCOURAGING TO PARENTS.

Two godly men were walking together in England, when one expressed to the other his great joy and gratitude, as he had just witnessed the happy conversion of his last unconverted child.

The good man addressed replied that he had yet two children out of Christ, for whom he had long prayed, apparently in vain.

"But has not God," responded the other, "specially promised to hear and answer our prayers for our children?"

This question went with great power to the good man's heart. He resolved to pray and plead with God as he had never done before, and at once he began.

Two weeks after, as he was at work in his field, his wife sent word to him to hasten to the house. As he entered, she said to him, "Grace is up stairs, in great distress, and all she will say is, that she 'wants to see father.'"

Suspecting the cause of her grief, the father flew to his daughter's room, and found her bathed in tears, upon her knees. As he approached her, she exclaimed, "Oh, father, I feel myself a great sinner, I am afraid I shall go to hell!" The father quickly and joyfully replied, "No, glory be to God! I am not afraid of that now." He pointed her to the Saviour, and encouraged her to trust in him; and soon she was enabled to rejoice in his forgiving love.

That very evening the youngest son, now alone of all the family out of the Ark of Salvation, asked his father's permission to accompany him to a religious meeting. The request was, of course, readily granted. Very soon the son rejoiced in the pardon of his sins.

Then was the happy father enabled to obey the command given to Noah, "Come, thou and all thy house, into the ark." Alas, that so few whole families are "in the ark"! Parents you need more interest, more faith, for your children. "The promise is to you, and to your children." Oh, plead and claim that promise.—American Messenger.

GOD SEES YOU.

Many children have read the fairy tales of the Danish writer, Hans Christian Anderson. A pleasing story of his childhood is told in a sketch of his life.

Little Hans was one day with his mother and some other poor neighbors, gleaning in the field of a man who was said to be very harsh and cruel. They saw him coming, and all started to run away. But Hans' clumsy wooden shoes came off; the stubble or short stumps of the grain-stalks which had been left by the reapers, hurt his tender feet, so that he could not keep up with the others; and he found he must be caught. The rough owner of the field was very near, and could now almost reach him with his heavy whip; when Hans, whose helpless case now suddenly filled him with new courage, stopped and turned, and looking into the man's face, said: "How dare you strike me, when God can see you?"

The anger of his pursuer was subdued at once. Instead of striking the boy, he gently stroked his cheeks, asked his name and gave him some money. The truth, of which little Hans had reminded him when about to do a mean and cruel act, seemed to make him ashamed of it at once, and so cause him to speak and act kindly.

How many wicked words and acts children as well as grown up people might be kept from saying and doing if they could at the right time be reminded, as that man was of the presence of God! When you rise in the morning; through all the hours of the day; when you go to your rest at night; in the darkness, when you are fast asleep; when you are faithful in duty, when you are careless; when you are kind and loving, and when you are unkind, and selfish, and sinful—always, everywhere, God sees you. When you are tempted to speak harshly to your little brothers or sisters, or undutifully to your parents; when you are tempted to lie, to cheat, to steal, to speak a profane or naughty word—ask yourself: "How dare I do this wicked thing, when God can see me?"

LEND OR GIVE AWAY OLD BOOKS.

Why not? You have read them. They are on your shelves, and are not "drawing interest." Keep books of reference, Dictionary—get the best; Bible; Encyclopaedia, and such as relate to your calling or profession, but give away or lend the rest. Having cleared out that which is only "lumber" to you, room will be made for a stock of new works, such as "Good Books for all," and much good would come of it. We know the evils of lending books to habitual and forgetful borrowers; but one may choose his customers in this as in other respects, and how kindly it would be in you, dear reader, to carry a really useful book to a hungry young man or woman, and say: "I have brought a good book for you to read and return." Try it, and see how much happiness you may secure at a small cost.

WOULDN'T RUN IN DEBT.

A New York paper says that the other day a little son of a well known bank-officer in Wall street lost his purse while coming from Central Park, and a stranger, seeing his discomfort, paid his railroad fare, three cents. The boy, thanking him, said: "If you will tell me your name, I will bring it to you to-morrow."

"Oh! no," said the gentleman, "never mind about it."

The boy persisted, saying his father never allowed him to run in debt.

"I will not give you my name," replied the gentleman, "but I live at No. —, on — street."

The next morning, the door-bell rang at that house, and our little hero told the amused servant-maid his errand.

"Which of the gentlemen is it?" said she; "there are several in the family."

The boy twisted on his heel, and after a moment's thought, said: "Have you a photograph book in the house?"

She brought it, and turning over its pages, he said, pointing to one: "That's the one. Please give him these three cents, and tell him that the boy who borrowed it in the cars yesterday left it to pay his debt."

If that little fellow grows up with the careful principles which he has now, he will be a man to be trusted.

THOSE EYES.—Eyes are made to watch, but they also need watching. John Bunyan tells us that the chief entrances to "the town of Man-soul were Ear-gate and Eye-gate; the three other being Mouth-gate, Nose-gate, and Feet-gate." Through hearing and seeing many a heart has been filled with sin and sights and sounds which have been admitted through the eyes and ears. He that would escape from sin must shut his eyes and stop his ears from the seeing and hearing of evil. Watch "Eye-gate" and "Ear-gate," and keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

"That you believe you have a call to preach is all very well as far as it goes," said an old doctor of divinity to a theological student; "but," he heeded, "we must wait, and see whether people think they have a call to hear you."

A CAPITAL ANSWER.—Self-made man examining a school of which he is manager. "Now, boy, what is the capital of 'Oldland'?" Boy—"An H, sir."