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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, November 2nd.

Jesus and the Young.—Matt. xix. 13-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Proverbs viii. 17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 13-15.

SUMMARY.—Jesus gladly receives from the young their loving service, and gives to the young his loving favor.

ANALYSIS.—I. The children welcomed vs. 13-17. II. The young man disappointed vs. 16-22.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 13.—Then [when in this country] were there brought. The Greek word thus translated does not imply that these were carried, but like the English phrase, is used in the general sense of conducting. See xviii. 1. "Bringeth them up." To him. Brought near, with intent to bring them quite to him: but the disciples who were about Jesus hindered. Little children. The word thus translated does not very definitely indicate the age. It is used in Luke ii. 40, and is often, there, employed of persons who have come to years of discretion—yung lads and misses—though the word in Luke xviii. 15, translated "infants" is more restricted, and shows that some, at least, of these children were very young. That he should put his hands on them, and pray. Imposition of hands was a rite which, from the earliest ages (see Gen. xlviii. 14) had been in use among the Jews, imploring God's blessing upon a person, and was especially employed by the prophets (Num. xxvii. 18; 2 Kings v. 11), but sometimes by elders, or men noted for piety.—Bloomfield. And the disciples rebuked them. Rebuked them who brought them; and thus their rebuke, in its effect, reached the children, to deny them access to Christ.

Verse 14.—Suffer [the] little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me. Suffer here means permit, or allow. "Forbid," or hinder, keep back. They were doing a manifold wrong—to the parents, by trying to choke out one of the most beneficent impulses; to the children—by keeping them away from their truest and most needed friend; themselves—by fostering a narrow, worldly, bigoted spirit; and to the Lord—by robbing him of his own loved ones. These words have caused unspeakable gladness in the hearts of millions of parents. For of such is the kingdom of heaven. Or, "of God." See Mark x. 15; Luke xviii. 16, 17. These references also help to explain the somewhat difficult expression, "of such," as does also Matt. xviii. 1-6. The kingdom is not made up of the mighty men of war, of those whose spirit is that of worldly greatness; but rather of those who are child-like in spirit—who have "humility, docility, and simplicity." Children, not less than adults, may actually be found in the kingdom. Every bereaved parent may find here a promise of comfort with reference to those who die in infancy.

Verse 15.—And he laid his hands on them. Mark x. 16 adds that "he blessed them." Thus did he comply with the parent's desire. Whether he accomplished for these children just that, and only that which those who brought them hoped, is not so certain.

It is almost needless to say that these children were neither brought to Christ for baptism, nor baptized when brought. Hence the passage has no direct bearing on the subject of infant baptism. Little children, of whatever age, may fitly be baptized, when they give evidence that they have truly so come to Jesus as to be in the kingdom of God. After birth into the spiritual Israel. The proper use, therefore, to be made of this passage, as bearing indirectly on baptism, is, that in so far as it teaches that "little children" may in faith come to Christ, and give evidence of having so come, it thereby teaches that they may become the proper subjects of that ordinance which is for all who do thus come, and show to others that they do.

Verse 16.—And behold, one came. Called in verse 22 a "young man," and in Luke xviii. 18, "a ruler." In vs. 20, he says of himself, "from my youth up"; which shows that, though a young man, he was probably from thirty to forty years old. The word "ruler" is taken to mean that he was either a member of the Sanhedrin,

or a ruler of some synagogue. It in either case designates him as one who had stood unusually well in the eyes of his countrymen for both intellectual ability and religious character. Good Master. Evidently used in faith—not hypocritically. Master here means teacher, and corresponds to the word disciple, or learner. What good thing shall I do? etc. In form not very unlike the question, "What shall I do to be saved"? though it has a very different meaning from this latter question, as asked by one under full conviction of sin. The words, "What good thing shall I do?" seem to carry the thought which is foreign to a fully convicted man, that he can do something which shall have in it a saving goodness or merit. The lost sinner, who knows himself lost, only wants to know how he can be saved.

Verse 17.—Why callest thou me good? So in Mark and Luke. Another reading of this passage, which is by many of the best scholars preferred, is, "Why dost thou ask me concerning the good?" If we take the first of these readings, Christ must be understood not as denying that he is good, but as denying that on this man's view of him, and of goodness, he can be called good. This man supposed that Christ, in his own human nature, had wrought out and created for himself a merit of his own. Jesus tells him there is no such goodness; as apart from the Creator. God alone is declared to be good, because he only is, in himself, and independently good. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Not that this is the purchase of life, but, as the words imply, "the way of life." Keep the commandments, and you show yourself to be in right relation to the One Fountain of Good.

Verses 18, 19.—Which? The Greek word here translated "which" shows that the ruler wanted to know what sort or kind of commandments were meant; Jesus merely named the commandments of the second table; those therefore which were supposed to be most easily and most commonly observed. This seemed to be a kind of reflection on his moral character.

Verse 10.—All these things have I kept. Showing his surprise that nothing more uncommon and difficult had been mentioned. He had kept all these. He was honest, and spoke from a sense of recititude. The words, what lack I yet? need not be understood as a claim to be sinless, but merely that, as respects the points named, he was not conscious of failure. He had no such view of the depth and comprehensiveness of law as "the Sermon on the Mount" discloses.

Verse 21.—If thou wilt be perfect. Without lack, truly in the way of life. Go and sell, etc. Not to be taken as a rule for all Christians, much less as an act which in itself would set this man right before God. Follow me. As a disciple.

Verse 22.—Sorrowful. It is not said how this struggle ended. May we not hope that it was in a victory over sin through grace?

QUESTIONS.—What question was discussed by the disciples soon after the transfiguration? Chap. xviii. 1. What answer did Christ give? Chap. xviii. 2-7. Does our lesson show that the disciples had not fully understood that answer? Where does our lesson find Christ? Chap. xix. 1.

Vs. 13. Who were brought to Christ? Probably by whom? For what? Why their wish that Christ should "lay his hands" on the children? Num. xxvii. 18; 2 Kings v. 11. What did the disciples do? Why did they do this?

Vs. 14. What did Jesus say? Meaning here of the word "suffer"? Meaning of the phrase, "of such is the kingdom of heaven"? Chap. xviii. 2-4; Mark x. 15.

Vs. 15. How did he receive the children? Mark x. 16. Is there anything here concerning the baptism of infants? How may we bring our children to Jesus? In what ways does Jesus now take little children himself, and bless them?

Vs. 16. What do you know of the age of this man? Vs. 20. Of his position? Luke xviii. 18. What did he ask? Meaning of his question? Was he sincere?

Vs. 17. Christ's answer? Did Christ mean to deny that he himself was good? In what sense is none but God good?

Vs. 20. The reply of the young ruler? Wherein was this true? Wherein false? Vs. 21. Why this requirement?

Vs. 22. The effect of the requirement? Abridged from the Baptist Teacher, Scripture Catechism, 150.

SUNDAY, November 9th.—Hosanna to the Son of David.—Matt. xxi. 8-16.

I think, with a shudder sometimes, of what life would be without Sunday—if day after day the great wheel of the world went round with its ceaseless clatter, never a rest in motion, never a pause in sound.

Youths' Department.

ONLY THIS ONCE.

"Pshaw!" pouted Loulie, as she stood by the window, gazing tearfully out. "O, I do think mother might let me go out, just this once."

"Just this once," repeated Aunt Susie. "Ah! Loulie, out of those three small words come a great deal of the misery and sorrow of this world. You are not the only one that has said those very words; and many, my dear, have gone to destruction through yielding to the tempter 'just this once.'"

Aunt Susie left the room, and Loulie turned again to the window. Her eye roamed over the broad meadow which stretched away to the little silvery stream, that could be seen, at intervals, winding in and out among the daisies. Tied to a tree near the bank was a little boat. As Loulie's eye rested on this, the rebellious look came back to her face.

"I don't care! I do think mother might let me go only this once, for all Aunt Susie says. And, beside, I promised Eva Fay I'd come, and I don't believe it is right to break one's promise. I don't think mother would care; she just thinks I will hurt myself, and I know I won't, if I am careful."

A little while after, two little hands opened the garden gate with nervous haste, and a little curly head rapidly disappeared among the tall trees.

"Where is Loulie?" asked Mr. Clyde, as they were sitting down to supper, at which she did not appear.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Clyde, anxiously. "Herbert, you had better look for her. She wanted to go sailing with some of her friends, but I would not let her."

Mr. Clyde seized his hat and left the house. He paused beside the river, for there, in the most dangerous part, was a little boat. His heart failed him as he recognized Loulie's form among several others. Suddenly, a piercing scream came over the water, and the father threw off his coat and swam swiftly to where his little daughter was bravely trying to keep her young friend from drowning. In a little while, Loulie and one of her companions were safely on the shore, but wet and shivering.

"O, papa!" gasped Loulie, "Eva, where is she? She was with us."

Mr. Clyde looked around in dismay. "I did not know she was with you. I might have saved her."

Loulie was taken home and put in a warm bed. She was thinking of Eva. Her father and some neighbors were searching for her body, for they knew she could not be alive. Soon her mother came sadly to the bedside. Loulie was silent, but her eyes asked the question her lips refused to speak.

"Yes, they have found her body, love. It was lying among some bushes near the shore. Poor little Eva!"

"O, mother," sobbed Loulie, "Eva was not going, but I begged her, and so she went. O, I see now what harm there is in doing a wrong thing only once."

"Yes, my darling, whenever the tempter whispers in your ear, 'Only this once,' think of this day, and pray to God to keep you from going astray, even just once."—Religious Herald.

WORRYING.

There are two classes of people who worry—those who worry themselves, and those who worry others; and it would be a difficult thing to decide which is the more objectionable of the two. Besides, the characters pass into each other in an almost indistinguishable manner; for no one can worry another without having first tormented himself up to the attacking point, and nature having endowed us with sympathy to a large degree—feelings being imitative as well as faculties—self-tormentors necessarily make others unhappy, if only by the contemplation of their own want of ease and cheerfulness. Worriers are among the least reasonable of human beings, and utterly impervious to argument. Dominated partly by a kind of constitutional despair, by which they always see the black side of everything, partly by absolute selfishness, which thinks that the pleasure of every one else must give way to their own; cursed with a lively imagination, which they do not attempt to restrain, and which possesses of itself a certain cumulative power that exaggerates all on whom it is exercised, and tormented with nerves so keenly strung as to be almost diseased—they make their

painful way through the world, seeing nothing but dangers and disasters for themselves, and only faults and misfortunes in and for their friends.

Bad as it would be if they were merely splenetic and hopeless, it would be comparatively bearable if they were not so persistent. But they never let a thing alone—persistence, indeed, being one of the elements of worrying. Have you committed a fault or a blunder? Well, we are all liable to do the same, and no one gets through life without committing more than one, and of a graver character, may be, than this of yours; but one would think, from the pertinacity with which the worrier dwells on your guilt or your folly, that you alone of all the sons of Adam or daughters of Eva had tripped in your path, and that no one before your time had run his or her head against a stone wall, and no one ever would. The thing is never dropped. It is made a perennial sore, and neither time nor confession can heal it. Like a phoenix it springs up again fresh and lusty from the ashes of your repentance when you fondly thought you had buried it for ever; and the worrier, nowise weakened or disconcerted at the holocaust you have made, lets fly as of old, and as vigorously as if you had never cried out *peccavi* at all. Years after—long years after—you are reminded as if it had only happened yesterday, of the time when you mislaid your purse, when you lost your temper, and said what you ought not to have said; when you gave your confidence to Count Swindleoff against the worrier's earnest remonstrances and had to pay for it; when you lost your chance with Bulfinch by not taking the worrier's advice, and had to pay for that too. None of these offences ever by any chance find a grave where they are buried out of sight and done with. All through life they are being continually unearthed and flung in your face, and connected in the most mysterious manner with the troubles and misfortunes of a future time, though, for your own part, you cannot see the flimsiest thread of relation anywhere. The worrier does, however; and this is enough.

Children are often the objects of an immense amount of worry. Resilience is one of the blessed qualities of youth, and without it, indeed, many a young creature would be worried into a mere nonentity, just a degree removed from imbecility. Imbued with the belief that their primary duty is to bend the twig the way they wish the tree to incline, parents of the worrying kind never have their fingers off that unhappy twig of theirs whose inclination is not quite to their liking. If they have a nervous child to manipulate, with a tendency to *gauche* and fidgety ways, instead of leaving the thing alone as a rule, with just a good-natured reminder now and again, made in a pleasant, heartsome manner, the worrier is always at the poor little victim, to the invariable result of increasing what he or she is seeking to correct. The nervous little fellow becomes more self-conscious still, more timid, more fearful of doing wrong, more hopeless of doing right. Were his arms like the sails of a windmill, as his disgusted mother says wittily, last year? This year the sweep is wider, and their whole action more angular and irregular. Did he jump about as if he was galvanised, or as if he had the beginning of St. Vitus's dance, when he was fourteen? At fifteen this galvanic battery is noticeably enlarged, and the "dance" has become a confirmed trick, never more to be broken through, all from the fatal habit of worrying which his father, or his mother, or both, have adopted as the best means at their command of overcoming a disagreeable little accident, which, by wise neglect, would have died away as it had sprung up. Indeed, these odd tricks of manner are often produced by worrying, just as deceit and ill-temper, and recklessness and sulkiness are produced by worrying, and the ruin of a fine nature, and the destruction of a noble individuality, and the gnawing away by slow degrees of all power and courage and manliness. One wonders how the poor young things bear it; for the worrier is of all human beings the most industrious. For the matter of that, one may well wonder how anyone bears it, shut up with it within the four walls of home. Like a perpetual headache, like a grumbling tooth, like a smoky chimney, like a thorn in the flesh, or any other thing that causes a perpetual current of discomfort, the worrying housemate is a blister to be borne with what of courage and patience the grace of God and the good gift of nature may allow. But one does not choose to live with blisters, and one would not

naturally care to be considered as a blister for one's own part; so that, although it may be good for one's soul to be a little worried at times (this is taking the ascetic view of life), still, on the whole, perhaps, one would get as much good by pleasanter means; and, taken at the best, the experiment is not worth trying.

FROM ROME.

BY REV. W. M. COLE.

In a discourse made by the Pope to a number of the officials of his former temporal government—who are still continued in their offices, although their occupation is gone—the old gentleman ascribed the inundation of the Tiber in 1870; the cholera in the north of Italy; some disease exterminating the children, of which we know nothing; and the more recent earthquake at Belluno, to the wrath of God against the sins, and especially the political sins, of the supporters of the Italian government. He tells us that the wrath of God is such that he looks down with an indignant eye upon the earth, and—*facit eam tremere*.

It would certainly be unbecoming in me to doubt his infallible word, but will the modern Oracle of the Vatican inform us how it was that no similar denunciations were pronounced, when, some few years ago, the earth trembled in the Neapolitan territory, then ruled by a Papal adherent? At that time entire villages were thrown down, many people were killed, numbers injured, and hundreds thrown, homeless and starving on the fields. Did not the Tiber overflow its banks at the commencement of the present Pope's reign? Was not the cholera sent as a devastating scourge upon this city in 1834, and upon the smiling village of Albano, which it filled with mourning, and carried off Cardinal Altieri and the Queen Dowager of the faithful royal family of Naples, among its many victims? Has he forgotten the accident which befell his followers at the church of St. Agnes? It would be well for the peevish and fault-finding Pius to remember the parable of the mote and the beam.

The *Naples and Roman Observer* contains the following description of a religious feast in the province of Naples. It is worth reading:

The *fiesta* of Monte Vergine is, as we have previously stated, a popular fete. It is held twice a year, once on Whit-Sunday, and again in the autumn. There is this difference however about it, that on Whit-Sunday the well-to-do of the lower orders attend it—such as butchers, bakers, wine-sellers, *facchini*, and small farmers—while in the autumn only those go who are enabled to lay by a small sum of money for the purpose. Monte Vergine is some two miles on this side of Avellino, and about thirty-four miles distant from Naples. On the mountain there is a small sanctuary dedicated to the Madonna, where, of course, the principal attraction is an image of "Our Lady." Now, this image is reputed to be constantly performing miracles. It sheds tears, not of brine, but of oil, which are gathered by the attendant monks, put into small *lachimatoj*, and sold to the *pellegrini* at 2 francs the bottle. The oil, or tears, is said to be a certain cure for a number of disorders, such as rheumatism, goat, and we know not what other complaints besides. It must be well rubbed in the part affected, the operation must be accompanied by prayer, and it is hardly necessary to say that the invalid must have abundant faith. As the Madonna is always weeping, the income derived from the sale of the tears is considerable. But this is not the only source of revenue derived by the good *fratelli*. There is a kind of cotton mantle to be worn by consumptive persons—and a certain cure we are told. It has been on the image, and may be had "dirt cheap" for five francs. There are also girdles and ribbons to be worn by the fair sex, for what purposes we cannot in common decency explain, but all of which help to swell the revenue of the Holy Friars. So much for sanctuary, which we may as well say is situated on a steep and rugged mountain, that must be ascended on foot. The first thing for an intending pilgrim to do is to get a carriage, either of one, two, or three, and sometimes four horses. As the journey is both long and tedious, the cost of the vehicle is considerable; besides, the racing which takes place in the streets of Naples, and on the *Strada Nuova* on the return, so fatigues the horses that they are fit for little work for a full month afterwards—indeed they often succumb from the effects of fatigue and furious driving. From three to four hundred francs are paid for a three-horse carriage, forty francs