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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, September 13th, 1874.

The Five Thousand Fed.—Mark vi. 34-44.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Psalm cxiv. 16.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 40-44.

SUMMARY.—Jesus fed the hungry multitude with material bread, and he himself is for the hungry souls the bread of eternal life.

ANALYSIS.—I. Hunger and destitution. Vs. 34-38. II. Preparation for supply. Vs. 39, 40. III. Abundance and more. Vs. 41-44.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—The miracle now to be studied is recorded by all the evangelists. Matt. xiv. 13-21; Luke ix. 10-17; John vi. 1-14. From John vi. 3 we learn that the Passover festival was near. This occurred in the middle of April.

Verses 31-33.—These are not given as a part of the lesson, but are so connected with it that they should be carefully examined. Mark and Luke both notice the return of the twelve to Jesus after John's death, and seem to imply that the retirement to the place of the miracle was consequent upon that return, and the crowds of people that then gathered about Jesus and the twelve. "The desert place," into which they retired belonged to Bethsaida, which may have been miles away. Luke ix. 10.

Verse 34.—When he came out. Apparently this means when he left the boat. Mark's account seems plainly to teach that the people were found on the spot when the Lord arrived. Moved with compassion toward them. Observe our Saviour's self-forgetfulness! He and his, worn out with labor, had sought rest and refreshment for themselves here. Pity, for the multitude, excludes all thought of self. As sheep not having a shepherd. Suggested by their appearance to the eye, scattered about in "the desert place," which was no sandy waste, but a most capital pasture land. The comparison, however, does not stop here, but chiefly refers to their spiritual condition. The Jewish teachers left without guides the whole nation, God's people, whom, as a flock, he had formerly led. He began to teach many things. Because of his compassion, and their neglected state. They were now ready to receive the truth, and that is the time when the true minister is always most eager to teach.

Verse 35.—When the day was now far spent. Literally, "much time having passed," that is, as our version gives it—much of the day-time. Matthew says it was now evening; and Luke, that the day had begun to decline. We suppose it to have been about 3 P. M. His disciples came unto him, and said, etc. John speaks as though Jesus first raised the question as to food for the multitude. A desert place, that is, away from cities and villages.

Verse 36.—Send them away, that they may go into the country, etc. No doubt the twelve had been required, as part of their duties, to attend to matters of business in connection with Christ's ministry, such as that on which they here speak. They have nothing to eat. We must remember that they had come around to this unexpectedly, and hence without opportunity to make provision for their wants. Jesus had spent some time here, perhaps a day or more, in healing and instructing them, before this last day to which our lesson especially refers.

Verse 37.—Give ye them to eat. In the original, and as spoken by Christ, the words "ye" and "give" are emphatic.

Do ye give them. You are to furnish food for them, not they for themselves, and this you are to give, not sell. It is placed in the hands of the church, not elsewhere, to be given as God's gracious bounty. Shall we go and buy two hundred penny-worth of bread, etc. It has not dawned on them yet that there is to be a miracle. They would willingly go and buy, but where to get the money—that is the question. We learn elsewhere that the twelve had a common fund, a treasury and treasurer. John xii. 6. The word "penny worth" here, gives a totally false idea of the amount of money required. The word translated "penny," in our common version of the New Testament, is "denarius," a Latin word transferred into the Greek to designate the Latin coin then current equal

to sixteen or seventeen cents in value, the same piece of money, then, was worth more than it would be now. A day's wages for a field hand seems to have been a denarius. Matt. xx. 2. It would be a low estimate now in most parts of this country to call the wages of such a hand a dollar, just six times the denarius or penny. Take this as fixing the worth of money then as compared with the worth of ours, and we have as the 200 penny-worth, about 200 dollars. As Philip said, this would not be enough to buy a respectable lunch, even of the plainest kind, for over 5000 hungry people. John vi. 7. Probably "the bag" of the twelve was rarely if ever honored with such a sum.

Verse 38.—How many loaves have ye? These loaves, as we have learned, were "not unlike flat stones in shape and appearance (Matt. vii. 9; compare iv. 3), about a span in diameter, and a finger's breadth in thickness." Five and two fishes. "They" say this, but Andrew, Simon's brother is spokesman. John vi. 8. Even this scant supply they found in possession of a young lad of the company, who, for some cause unlike the rest, had kept a little of his store. John vi. 9. The loaves were of barley.

Verse 39.—He commanded them to make all sit down [recline] by companies on the green grass. A charming spot for a lunch, but how absurd the command for these thousands to sit down so as to eat when there was but this insignificant trifle to distribute. To sight it was absurd, but not to faith.

Verse 40.—They sat down in ranks. Better, "in groups." By hundreds, and fifties. Fifty in some, and a hundred in other groups. The regularity of the grouping, as of garden-beds, facilitated the distribution of the food, and was also desirable as mere matter of order. The grouping by fifties made it easy to estimate the number present. There were of the men one hundred of these plats of fifty each. If they were arranged in an exact square, it would give us ten rows each way. The double plats of one hundred each would, however, make a change. As to the number of women and children present, we have no means of judging.

Verse 41.—He took the five loaves, and the two fishes. He knew from the beginning what he would do, and hence proceeds calmly as though there were abundance. And, indeed, there was for his purpose an abundance. Looked up to Heaven. As to the home of God, and in recognition of him as the Author of life, and of that which sustains all life. And blessed. As at the institution of the communion. John says he "gave thanks." The same word is also used of communion, whence one of its names—"the eucharist," from the Greek word, meaning to give thanks. The thanks for the gift of life and of food to sustain it, carried also a prayer that God would make both the life and the food as about to enter into, and become the life, blessed and a blessing. And gave them

[the broken loaves] to his disciples [the twelve] to set before them [the whole multitude]. The question, which is of no practical importance, has been raised, whether the increase of the food took place in the hands of Christ, or in the hands of the apostles, or at some other time. It has been well suggested that we cannot well suppose that our Lord took the time needful for one to break bread for the thousands, and hence it would seem that the increase was at least in part after the breaking.

Verse 42.—They did all eat, and were filled. Note here the emphasis that belongs to this word "all." Though there had been at the outset so little, enough for only two or three, yet all the multitude ate, and all not only tasted, each having a bare crumb, but all were filled, each eating as much as he would. For analogous miracles in the Old Testament, compare that of Elisha, 2 Kings iv. 42-44, and the two of Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 16; 2 Kings iv. 1-7.

Verse 43.—They [the twelve] took up twelve baskets full of the fragments. Each apostle had a basket. The Greek word for basket is here different from that used in the account of the next like miracle. Matt. xv. 37.

Verse 44.—About five thousand men, mentioned to give a complete idea of this miracle.

QUESTIONS.—Where was the miracle of our lesson wrought? Luke ix. 10; John vi. 1. Why did Jesus and the twelve go there? Vs. 30, 31. About what time in the year was it? John vi. 1.

Why this comparison? What did he teach them? Luke ix. 11.

Vs. 35, 36. What time of the day is here meant? Matt. xiv. 15; Luke ix. 12. What is here meant by "desert place"? Vs. 39. What did the apostles suggest?

Vs. 37. Christ's answer? Why should he state that, and still leave the twelve in ignorance of his purpose? John vi. 6. What did the twelve say? Their speaker? John vi. 7. How much of our money think you would it take to buy a meal for such a mass of hungry people? How much of our money would the 200 pence be?

Vs. 38. What food was there present? The size of these loaves?

Vs. 39. What command did Christ give?

Vs. 40. Why this regularity in sitting? Vs. 41. What did Christ do with the bread and fish? What is it to bless bread? John vi. 11; John vi. 33, 48. For whom is this given?

Vs. 41, 42. What in these verses show the greatness of the miracle.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 20th, 1874.—The Syrochæonian Mother.—Mark vii. 24-30.

Youths' Department.

"SHINE YOUR BOOTS, SIR?"

The tone was childish and sweet-toned, but a little unsteady. The man glanced down from under the brim of an old felt hat that had once been white, and a pair of soft large eyes looked up into his.

"Shine your boots, sir?" The man shook his head as he uttered a brief "No," and passed on.

But the tender face and soft, asking eyes haunted him. After walking on for half a block, trying to forget the face and eyes of the boy, he stopped, turned and went back, he hardly knew why.

"Shine your boots, sir?" It was the same innocent voice, but a little firmer in tone. He looked down at the bare feet and worn clothes, and a feeling of pity touched his heart.

"Not this morning, my lad," answered the man; "but here is the price of a shine"—and he reached him ten cents.

"Have not come to that yet"—and the lad drew himself up a little proudly. "I am not a beggar, but a bootblack: Just let me shine them, sir. Won't keep you a minute."

There was no resisting this appeal. So the man placed his boot on the boy's foot-rest, and in a little while its surface was like polished ebony.

"Thank you," said the little fellow, as, on finishing the second boot, he received his fee.

The man walked away, holding in his mind very distinctly an image of the boy that did not fade.

The next morning, while on his way to business, he was greeted by the same lad with "Shine your boots, sir?" and in a voice steadier than that on the day before. The little bootblack was gaining confidence in his new calling.

The man stopped, placed his boot on the boot-rest, and the boy set his brushes to work in the liveliest way.

"Where do you live, my little man?" The boy brushed on, seeming not to have heard. As he finished one boot, and was about commencing the other, the man said, changing the form of his question:

"Where is your home?" "Haven't got any." As the boy said this, he looked up into the man's face for an instant, and then let his eyes fall upon his work.

"No home?" "No, sir."

"Where do you sleep?" "Most anywhere that I can creep in," replied the boy, as he brushed away with all his might. Then, as he rose up, he said, with a business air,

"That is a good shine, sir!" "First-rate," answered the man, whose interest in the boy was increasing. "It cannot be beat? And now what is the charge?"

"Ten cents, sir." Then ten cents were paid. "Sleep almost anywhere that you can creep in?"—said the man. "What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, it is so. Sometimes I get a bed in a cellar, and sometimes in a garret, just as it happens."

"Do you pay for it?" "O yes, indeed. They will not let you sleep for nothing."

"How much do you pay for a bed?" "Sixpence or a shilling, according to where it is."

"Why don't you stay in one place? Why do you go from cellar to garret?"

"Because, sir, they get drunk, and fight and swear so almost everywhere I get

in that I do not care to go again; and so I keep moving around. Shine your boots, sir?"

And seeing a customer, off the boy ran, for he had his living to earn, and could not stop to talk when there was business to do.

The man walked away more interested than ever in this brave little fellow, at so tender an age fighting the battle of life.

A few hours later in the day—it was mid-summer, and the air was hot and sultry—as this man was passing the corner of a street where an apple-woman had her stand, he witnessed a scene that we will describe.

The apple-woman had fallen asleep. Two boys—a newsboy and the little bootblack just mentioned—were at the stand.

The newsboy, who was larger and stouter than the bootblack, seeing a chance to get apples without paying for them, was seizing two or three of the largest, when the little bootblack pushed bravely in, and the man heard him say,

"That is stealing, and can't be done." The newsboy grew red with anger as he turned fiercely upon the little fellow, raising his fist to strike him; but his well-aimed blow did not reach the soft, yet bravely indignant face, for an arm stronger than his caught the descending fist and held it for an instant with a firm grip.

In the next moment the scared newsboy had broken away, and was scampering down the street as fast as his legs could carry him.

"That was well done, my little fellow!" exclaimed the man, turning to the young bootblack. "And now," he added, "you must come to my store."

"Where is it, sir?" asked the boy. "Not far away. Come," said the man, as he moved on; and the boy followed.

They walked a distance of two or three blocks, and then entered a store, the man moving along through bales and boxes until he reached a counting-room, at the rear end. Laying off his hat he took a chair, turning to the lad, who now stood before him with a curious, wondering face—his boot rest, containing brushes and blacking, slung across his shoulders.

"Take that thing off and set it out in the store, or throw it into the street, I do not care which," said the man, pointing to the dirty box.

The lad took it off and set it outside of the office door, then came back and stood gazing at the man earnestly.

"What is your name?" "Jimmy Lyon, sir," said the boy.

"Is your father living?" "No, sir."

"Your mother?" "She is dead."

"How long has she been dead?" "Not long, sir."

"And there is no one to take care of you?" "No, sir."

"How old are you?" "Ten, last June, sir."

The man thought of his own little boy at home, just ten last June, and a shiver of pain crept through his heart.

"What are you going to do?" "Take care of myself, sir. I have got to do it now"—and Jimmy drew himself up and put on a brave look, which touched the man's heart.

"Was it in the city your mother died?" "Yes, sir."

"How long ago?" "It is only three weeks, sir." The brave look went out of his eyes.

"Where did she die?" "Down in Water street. She was sick a good while, sir, and could not work. Father died last winter. But he did not do anything for us." A shadow of pain was in the child's face, and the man saw him shudder.

"Ah! he understood too well the sad story that little boy could tell—the story of a drunken father, and a sick, heart-broken mother, dying in want and neglect.

"Your mother was good, and you loved her?" said the man.

Instantly the large, soft eyes gushed over with tears.

"What did she say to you before she died?" asked the man, speaking in a low, tender voice.

"She said," answered the boy, sorrowfully, yet with something brave and manly in his voice, "'Never steal, never tell a lie, never swear, Jimmy, and God will be your friend,' and I have not done any of them, sir, and never will."

"Your mother taught you to pray, Jimmy?"

"Yes, sir; and I say my prayers every night. Sometimes bad boys make fun of me, but I do not mind it. I just think it is God I am saying them to; and then I feel all right."

The man felt a choking in his throat, he was so moved by this, and would not trust himself to speak for some moments.

"God is our best friend, Jimmy," he said, after a little while; and no one trusts him in vain. He has taken care of you since your mother died, and if you will be a good boy, will always take care of you. Do you know that it was God who led me to the apple-woman's stand just in time to see your brave and honest act?"

The boy opened his large eyes wonderingly.

"We cannot see God, but God can see us; and what is more, can look into our hearts, and knows all we think or feel," replied the man.

"O yes, sir. My mother told me that. But I do not know how he led you."

"He leads us by ways that we know not, my child. I think I can make you understand. God sees and knows every-

thing. He knew that you would see the wicked boy try to steal apples, and that you would do all you could to stop him. Then he put it into my thought to go and see a man whose store I could not reach unless I went by the apple-stand, and this brought me to the spot just at the right moment. I call that God leading me. Now do you understand?"

"O yes, sir. I see it just as clear as day," answered Jimmy, a new light breaking over his face.

"And God, who loves you and wants you to be good and happy, knew that if I saw how honest and brave you were, I would be your friend."

"O, sir! will you?" cried out little Jimmy, trembling all over, while his fine face lighted up suddenly with hope and joy.

"Yes, my poor boy," answered the man, whose heart was feeling very tender toward the child; "I will be your friend always, if you will be honest, obedient, and truthful."

"I will try to be as good as I can, sir," sobbed out Jimmy, losing all command of his feelings.

Then the man went with him to a store where they sold boys' clothing, and selected everything he needed to wear. But before he let him dress up in his new garments he took him to a bath-house, that he might wash himself clean all over, and comb the tangles out of his curly hair.

No one would have dreamed that the handsome, well-dressed boy who a little while afterward walked beside his new friend, holding his hand so tightly, was the same whose voice not an hour before had been crying in the street, "Shine your boots, sir?" It was never heard there again.

God had sent the brave child who tried to be good a friend in need, and he is now a happy boy, studying with all his might, and no doubt he will become a good and useful man.—Children's Hour.

BULLS, NOT IRISH.

It was a Scotch woman who said that the butcher of her town only killed half a beast at a time; it was a Dutchman who said that a pig had no marks on his ears except a short tail; and it was a British magistrate, who, being told by a vagabond that he was not married, responded, "That's a good thing for your wife." It was an English reporter who stated at a meeting of the Ethnological Society there was exhibited "casts of the skull of an individual at different periods of adult life, to show the changes produced in ten years," though Dean Swift certainly mentions two skulls preserved in Ireland, one of a person when he was a boy, and the other of the same person when he grew to be a man. It was a Portuguese mayor who enumerated among the marks by which the body of a drowned man might be identified when found, "a marked impediment in his speech." It was a Frenchman, the famous Carlino, who, contentedly laying his head upon a large stone jar for a pillow, replied to one who inquired if it was not rather hard, "Npt at all, for I've stuffed it with hay." It was an American lecturer who solemnly said one evening, "Parents, you may have children, or if not, your daughters may have." And it was a German orator who, warming with his subject, exclaimed, "there is no man, woman or child in the house, who has arrived at the age of fifty years, but what has felt this truth thundering through their minds for centuries."