

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, October 4th, 1874.

The Deaf Mute.—Mark vii. 31-37.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise," Psalm ii. 15.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 32-35.

SUMMARY.—Our Saviour makes the deaf hear, and the dumb speak.

ANALYSIS.—I. The request. Vs. 31, 32. II. The compliance. Vs. 33-35. III. The sequel. Vs. 36, 37.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—Our last advance lesson took us to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, far up to the northwestern extremity of Palestine, to the land of the Gentiles. The miracle of healing which was then our study was performed in answer to the prayer of a Gentile mother upon her daughter. This lesson presents to us our Lord among a different, yet still a non-Jewish population, and performing a cure, whether upon Jew or Gentile we are not told, in answer, as before, to the intercession of friends.

Verses 31.—And again. This word "again" refers to the statement in vs. 24. As Christ before left one district for another, so now "again" he makes a like change. "He came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. The position of Decapolis we have already seen, was to the east and southeast of the Sea of Galilee, only one of the ten cities being on the west side of the Jordan, south of the sea. The Saviour therefore probably travelled to the southeast, crossing the southern end of the Lebanon range of mountains, the northern part of Galilee, the Jordan above the Sea of Galilee, and perhaps above Lake Merom, and so came around through the northern borders of the Decapolis territory to the sea, at its north-eastern part in Granbonitis, in the same general neighborhood where we saw him miraculously feed the five thousand. Matthew simply says: "Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the Sea of Galilee." But he adds, what Mark omits, "And went up into a mountain and sat there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them." 15, 29, 30. The mountainous character of that entire region we have more than once already remarked. Of the many miraculous cures declared by Matthew to have been effected, Mark alone singles out one, and only one, for description. It was doubtless because there was something special in it which conveyed a spiritual truth which he wished to impress.

Verses 32.—They bring unto him one. Who are meant by "they"? Doubtless the deaf man's friends; those of his own family, it may be. He was brought by loving ones—just as now love carries, and carries gladly, those who, less fortunate, are entrusted to the keeping of love. God blesses in this way the helpers and the helped, enriching their natures, enlarging their hearts, sweetening and ennobling their lives, by affectionately doing and grateful receiving. That was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech. Some translate, "deaf and dumb," but less accurately, for the Greek word translated "had an impediment in his speech," is literally "hard speaking"; and from vs. 35 it seems that the cure enabled him to speak "plain," or "correctly," which implies that he could before speak, but not correctly. He was "tongue-tied." This shows that his deafness, if total, was not from birth; and that his dumbness was not that of ordinary "deaf mutes," because their inability to speak arises not from defect in the organs of speech, but from necessary ignorance of the sounds of words. His defect of speech may have been aggravated, but certainly was not caused, by his deafness. They beseech him to put his hand upon him. "They," that is, his friends who brought him. We notice, what is unusual, that this request names, not the cure, but the method of cure. And scholars have very fully remarked that the Saviour, with evident purpose to correct their probable error of belief that his imposition of hands had a special virtue, adopted another method. We are very much inclined to limit God to certain ways of working, to certain channels of communication. God ordains the means, and

is infinitely above and independent of all means. Of course, the real wish of both the deaf man and his friends was the cure. Verse 33.—He took him aside. Probably with the deaf man he also took some or all of the friends who brought him, and perhaps also one or more of the twelve. Vs. 36, comp. Vs. 37-43. Similar was his treatment of the blind man of Bethsaida. viii. 23. Put his fingers into his ears. In token that it was "the finger of his power" that would restore his hearing. To "open the ears" is a phrase which very naturally and generally signifies to remove deafness, whatever its cause; and the act of putting the fingers into the ears would be the "sign-language" for that phrase. He spit and touched his tongue. Christ next moistened his finger with his own spittle, and laid his finger on the man's tongue. This was the "sign-language" which said, "Thy speech shall also be restored by me." It is said that spittle was and still is used in the East as a medicine. Verse 34.—And looking up to heaven, he sighed. Why this upward look, and this sigh? Jesus ever recognizes the Father as the source of his life, and the Father's will as the law of his action; and this upward look shows to this deaf man that he is not acting apart from God, but that the cure is to be from God. He does thus in this act what he came into the world to do—leads to the Father and reveals the Father. And that sigh is the sigh of one who took and bare our sicknesses, not in cold mechanical power or force, merely, but in profoundest sympathy, being touched, nay, deeply moved, with the feeling of our infirmity. But neither here nor anywhere else did Jesus cure as a mere physician of the body. He was Saviour; and in all disease and its fruits he saw sin and its curse. Ephphatha. An Aramaean word. So the Saviour spoke to the man in his own familiar speech, that the first word falling on his ear might be the familiar and welcome one which would sound there till death again closed his ears. Verse 35.—Straightway. This is here an important word, as it shows that the cure was truly from the immediate, miraculous power of God, as the cure was instantaneous. We are often, in Scripture, represented as made deaf to God's truth by sin. "Having ears, hear not." It is the touch of God's Holy Spirit, in connection with the word of his Gospel of grace, that restores our hearing, so that we know and recognize the voice of our Father, and the voices of our heavenly companions, and the sweet sounds and harmonies of the new heaven and the new earth. Happy he whose ears are open, whose tongue is loosed, and who speaks "plain."

Verses 36.—Charged them, etc. Probably, as in other like cases to prevent the excitement of curiosity, as though he were a magician. The non-compliance with his command probably cut short his activity in that region.

Verses 37.—The people here were less accustomed to his miracles than were they of the other side. Their exclamation, "He hath done all things well," has naturally reminded expositors of the words spoken of the natural creation. Gen. i. 31. Here were the works of a "new creation."

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 31. Where did the last advance lesson leave Jesus? What do you know of the region to which he came? Vs. 32. Who was brought to him? By whom? In what spirit ought we to care for the needy? What request was made? Why?

Vs. 33. What did Jesus then do? Why should he take the man aside? In what other cases did he act similarly? Vs. 37, 40; viii. 23. What did Jesus next do? Meaning of that act? What next? The meaning?

Vs. 34. What next? Why this upward look? Why the sigh? How did Jesus bear our sin? Heb. iv. 15. What word did Jesus speak? Its meaning? Do you suppose the deaf man heard it? What similar case have we had? Vs. 41.

Vs. 35. The effect? Was this instantaneous? What, think you, were the man's feelings? How does this man represent the sinner and his salvation?

Vs. 36, 37. The charge? Its effect? The people's feelings? Their words?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. SUNDAY, October 11th, 1874.—The Evil Spirit Cast Out.—Mark ix. 17-29.

It is objected that a pastor has so much to do in these times that he cannot spend time to visit the members of his flock. It should be answered that his time is given him for that very purpose, and if he fails to use a good portion of it for that, he misappropriates his time.

Youths' Department.

MARIAN'S VALENTINE.

BY MRS. BRADLEY.

"Has anybody seen Elsie Lee this week?" asked a Sunday-school teacher, one morning, in class. "She was absent last Sunday, and she is not here to-day. I'm afraid she is ill."

"No, she isn't," answered a little eager voice. "I saw her yesterday, Miss Madeline, and she was just as well as anybody."

"Why doesn't she come to school, then?"

"Oh! because," the little voice began quickly, and then checked itself. "I know, but I can't tell you, Miss Madeline. Elsie wouldn't like it."

Miss Madeline looked surprised. "Perhaps Elsie will tell me herself," she said. "It is not because she is going to stop coming altogether, is it?"

"Oh, no indeed! Elsie wouldn't do that for anything. She's coming again as soon as ever she can, she says."

"Very well," said Miss Madeline, and no more questions.

But little Marian Hunter was more curious. "Why doesn't Elsie come?" she whispered to Sadie Blake, who was her "particular friend," as they walked home after Sunday-school. "You can just tell me, you know, and if it's a secret I'll never breathe it!"

"Well, then, I will; but you are sure you won't let Elsie know?"

"Never!" said Marian, solemnly. "Because you see," said Sadie, "it would hurt her feelings dreadfully. Elsie's a real nice girl, you know; but her father's dead, and her mother is poor, I guess. And Elsie's shoes are worn out; and they expected to get some money, and it didn't come; so she can't have any new ones for I don't know how long."

"What a pity!" cried Marian. "To think of such a nice girl being so poor!"

"Yes, it's a pity," said Sadie. "But mind you don't tell."

Marian pondered the matter all day. It seemed hardly possible to her that a girl like Elsie Lee should have to stop from Sunday-school for want of decent shoes. The knowledge made her sad, but it taught her her first lesson of self-denial. For the next day, as it happened, there came a letter from grandpapa, with two new five-dollar bills; one for Marian, and one for her brother Robby. "To buy valentines," grandpapa said. And Rob rushed off to "Burton's" and bought half-a-dozen lovely ones, and there was a jolly time sealing them up, and sending them away to the little girl Rob liked best.

But Marian only sent one valentine, and that was her five-dollar bill, put up in a strong envelope, and carefully directed to Elsie Lee. She dropped it in the box when Rob was posting his gay valentines, and laughed merrily to think how astonished Elsie would be, and what a secret she had to keep. When she saw Elsie come into class, next Sunday, with her pretty new boots, she felt happier than she had ever done before. It was better than all the valentines in the world; and the sweet lesson she learned then, of denying herself to do good to others, has made her happy all her life.—Young Reaper.

NOTES FROM OUR VILLAGE.

"Will you go to meeting with me this afternoon, Mabel? Come; this is your last day here; do go once before you leave."

"What do you do in 'meeting'?" asked the gay, beautiful, "High-Church" city-bred belle, with just a shade of contemptuous inflexion in her voice.

"Well, there will be no sermon; there never is in the afternoon. The good minister sits in the aisle, in front of the pulpit, and invites anyone he likes to make a prayer. Any other one, who feels the need of it, may request that he or she may be mentioned personally in the petition; and those who wish it may relate his or her experience."

"How very funny! All the old women 'speakin' in meetin', and scaring themselves dreadfully. I'll go. I dare say I shall have a good laugh, if I don't fall asleep."

So we walked through the long, hilly street of the village, in the pleasant hour before sunset, in the sweet, warm, hazy air of early autumn. The glory of the Lord shone round about us; for all the hills were burnished, splendid, gorgeous, in purple and crimson and gold. Mabel's

deep gray eyes grew large and luminous as her artist-soul drank in the ineffable beauty.

The building was so crowded with the villagers and many visitors, that it was with difficulty we obtained seats, apart from each other. Mabel found a place next to a young, sad-eyed, sweet-faced country-woman, and looked, with her flower-like face, and superb French costume, like some rare exotic by the side of a humble mountain daisy.

The minister opened the services with a few fervent, simple words, and then said: "Brother—, will you lead in prayer?"

A plain old country farmer rose in the aisle before us, rugged, brown, and bowed. His prayer—sincere, and, I doubt not, as acceptable, because sincere, as if it had been offered in polished language—made Mabel shake with laughter.

He sat down, and there was utter silence for a moment. Then a high, sweet woman's voice, far in front of us, sang out, clear as a bell:—

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer! That calls me from a world of care, And bids me at my Father's throne Make all my wants and wishes known.

The congregation joined in; only one voice was sung; and again the strange, solemn silence fell upon us.

It was broken by the sudden rising of a lank, awkward boy, who spoke in a frightened whine:—

"I want to inform the congregation that I've found Jesus," and he dropped down as suddenly as he rose.

This time Mabel was convulsed with laughter; and when a girl in long cork-sole ringlets popped up, immediately behind the boy, with—"I've found a hope," uttered in a sort of spasm of rapidity, and down she went—Mabel was in such aggravated spasms of mirth that I became terrified lest, in the just anger of those around us, we should be ignominiously expelled.

But the sweet singer, who saw in these utterances only the contrite souls of the speakers, burst forth triumphantly with:

Oh, gift of gifts! oh, grace of faith! My God, how can it be That Thou, who hast discerning love, Should give that gift to me?

Only one voice, as before. Then the pure notes, high above all the other voices, died away, and a strange-looking woman arose.

"I hain't got no gift o' language," said she; "but I want to give in my testimony. I've allers ben a wicked woman; I've allers gone agin my conscience. I've made my folks miserable, for many a long year; and I'll allow that that's the reason God has poured trouble after trouble down onto me, till I was e'en-a-most drowned in 'em; an' I was about to take my own life, when some one—'t must hev ben one o' God's angels—went singin' through the woods. Shall I ever forget the words?—

With tearful eyes I look around; Life seems a dark and stormy sea;—"

She stopped, her voice breaking into a hoarse sob, when the other sweet, pure voice immediately went on—

Yet, mid the gloom I hear a sound— A heavenly whisper—"Come to me." Oh, voice of mercy! voice of love!— In conflict, grief, and agony, Support me, cheer me from above! And gently whisper—"Come to me."

I looked at Mabel. She was not laughing. A strange, awed expression rested upon her features; her head was bowed down as the sad-eyed woman at her side rose, and, turning to the last speaker, said, in a low, gentle voice:

"My sister, we all thank our Heavenly Father that He put His strong arm of protection about you while it was yet time; and since you have joined with us in profession of your faith, there has been no one more earnest in those good works without which faith is nothing."

Then, reverently folding her hands, she prayed that God would pardon her dear sister, and give them all love and charity, one for another, and His peace, which passeth all understanding.

Out rang the sweet voice—

Haste thee on, from grace to glory, Armed by faith, and winged by prayer, Heaven's eternal day's before thee, God's own hand shall guide thee there.

Mabel was now silently crying, and big tears were blinding my eyes, when a grand old man rose from his seat. Bent and feeble now, I could see that he had once been tall and stately, looking as the Puritan fathers must have looked when they first stepped upon "the stern and rock-bound coast" at Plymouth. Fine, clean-cut features, and eyes still blue and piercing, remained, but his voice trembled painfully as he said,

"I am ninety-four years old, and most of those I love have gone to the graveyard before me; I hev lived all these years in Beth'lem, and, boy and man, hev tried to serve the Lord; and I owe my blessed hope in my Saviour to the teachin' an' example of my good and pious mother."

Then, with aged, trembling hands up-lifted, he prayed that all the children present might be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. After a moment's pause he added, that if it were God's will, he should be glad to leave this sorrowful life with the dying leaves outside, and hasten to meet his mother and his Saviour in heaven. "Would God grant it for Jesus' sake, amen."

With the "amen," the singer's voice, purer, more up-lifted, seemed to bear that wearied soul away on wings of harmony, as the glorious words fell from her almost inspired lips:

Jerusalem! 'tis thee I greet! Throw wide thy gracious gate, Free entrance to these longing feet, At last released, though late, From wretchedness and sinning, And life's long weary way; And now God's great gift winning Eternity's bright day.

I looked again at Mabel. Every vestige of colour had left her cheeks, and she sat motionless, like one in a trance.

Near us was a handsome, well-dressed man, past middle age, who had listened with absorbed attention to all that had been said, and who now seemed strangely agitated. In a moment he arose, and then he spoke.

"I presume that no one here remembers a poor boy, who nearly fifty years ago left this place to seek his fortune. Fatherless, motherless, with no claim upon anyone here, I wandered away with a heavy heart to earn my bread. Many a time have I been exhausted, discouraged, almost hopeless, but my mother had taught me to pray—her dying gift to me was her own Bible. It has gone round the world with me, and God has never forsaken me. I have long been a rich man, and I have come once more to these grand hills—my childhood's home—to testify my gratitude to my Maker for all His goodness in some substantial way. I never intended to speak as I am now doing; but after what I have heard and witnessed, I should be most ungrateful if I did not give my testimony and belief in the abounding love and mercy of God. Oh, friends! take me back! Let me be one with you in this most sweet and touching service, and when I leave you, pray that I may never be ungrateful for the earthly blessings He has heaped upon me, and for the far more priceless gift of His Son, Jesus Christ."

Everyone had listened to the stranger in deep silence. Every heart had thrilled responsive to his words. It seemed as if the very breath of heaven had entered into the little church, cleansing and purifying each soul present, and filling it with inexpressible devotion, when, like a soft trembling wave, the pure young voice came floating down the aisles, and we heard the solemn acknowledgment:

A charge to keep I have, A God to glorify; A never-dying soul to save, And fit it for the sky.

He sang alone; a feeling too deep for utterance had prevented the rest from joining in, and many heads were bent in silent prayer and thanksgiving.

But oh! what do I see? Pale as death, her eyes dilated, her whole frame quivering like an aspen, Mabel arose and essayed to speak. The muscles of her mouth refused to obey her will, but with a painful effort she faltered in low broken tones, "Pray for me," and sank down upon her knees.

Oh, it was the voice of God that spoke in those three little words, "Pray for me," uttered so low, yet distinctly heard in every part of the church. Joyful tears were streaming down many women's faces, as for the first time the singer's voice trembled, broke, and at last sobbed through the humble entreaty:

Just as I am—without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bidst me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

As she finished, a young minister who was living in the same house with us, and whose life had been nearly sacrificed in missionary labours, rose to pray. The radiance of heaven was upon his face, and God spoke through him to the awakened soul of Mabel in a way I had never heard before. The words poured out in an inspired flood, carrying her soul restlessly upon its mighty waves to repentance, faith, prayer, praise, love, joy, peace and at last heaven! Oh, it was surely a miracle

which we have seen? With a soul were ended; seemed as if ing over the the soul that gorged and possession of great gold moving high unfurling, a marching halallelujahs. And Mabel but with her humility, a solution to walked by glory of the entwined in we had no perfect accordful myst of heart" child. Beautiful society, I upholder of pure, and she had in soul to His Holy Spirit out of the blessed na —The Co ON As lost in Slow h m n d His man's add Salt to s "Your pas How dee And gre (And wh stat "A chr "To him we "For me pel Thy kin th Souls sw "ah For thee giv The stra I "Accu m "Avan ev "Cast n "Just g With z "is Said he Comple "He' Lord. The strong receive Board Socie the me My de I ha I have can to glad to Circle widely think were we ar the bl each as a v The are in Upon