

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

First Quarter, Lesson 9, Mar. 4, 1900.

JESUS HEALING IN CAPERNAUM.—Mark 1: 21-34.

Read Luke 5: 1-11.

Commit Verses 32-34.

GOLDEN TEXT.—And he healed many that were sick.—Mark 1: 4.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—April, A. D. 28, on a Sabbath day soon after the rejection of Jesus by his fellow-citizens and acquaintances at Nazareth (see last lesson).

Place.—Capernaum, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Here was Jesus' home for the time, the centre of his work in Galilee.

Jesus.—Between 31 and 32 years old. He had been preaching nearly one and one half years of his three and one half years' ministry.

John the Baptist.—Thirty-two years old, a prisoner in Herod's castle of Macherus, beyond the Jordan.

The Connection. When Jesus had passed safely through the angry mob at Nazareth who were attempting to throw him down from the cliff which overlooked their city, he went to Capernaum, which he made his home and the headquarters of his work in Galilee.

One morning, while walking by the Sea of Galilee, he entered Peter's fishing boat, and preached to the multitudes on the shore. Then he bade Peter and Andrew go a fishing; and although they had toiled all night long and caught nothing, they let down the nets, and enclosed many fishes. Jesus bade them help him in his work. Henceforth they were to be fishers of men. And they went with him to Capernaum.

THE WITNESS OF HIS TEACHING.—Vs. 21, 22. And they went in to Capernaum, from the seashore. He went into the city to spend the Sabbath where there was a place of worship. And straightway, as soon as the service opened. On the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue. Equivalent to our church. And taught. It was common to ask any suitable person to speak at the synagogue services, which were more like our prayer meetings or Sunday school than our more formal church services. This Sabbath was one of the most busy days recorded in Jesus' life. It is a good example of two of the ways in which Jesus spent his Sabbath hours. (1) He attends divine worship and takes part in it. (2) The rest of the Sabbath he spends in doing good to all needy one within his reach. These two things express the spirit of Christianity and the right method of Sabbath keeping. They were astonished at his doctrine. Both what he taught and the manner and spirit of his teaching. For he taught them as one that had authority. His teaching was fresh, independent, and original. He spoke with the authority of one who knows. His conduct and character gave Jesus great personal power in his teaching. The teacher will speak with authority just in so far as the truth is a part of his own being, and has been made real to him in his experience. And not as the scribes, who merely interpreted and repeated the teachings of others.

THE WITNESS OF HIS POWER OVER EVIL SPIRITS.—Vs. 23-28. This event took place in the synagogue during the service. And there was in their synagogue. Coming to hear and see, doubtless in one of his quiet periods. A man with an unclean spirit. A man under the influence of an unclean spirit; just as we say, a man "in" drink. This was usually connected with disease, especially with indulgence in sensual lusts.

Demons are called unclean because they are impure, unholy, defiling, and produce such effects both in the body and the spirit of those whom they possess. The devil's characteristic work is to ruin both body and soul. And he cried out. The presence and teaching of Jesus aroused the antagonism of the demon. Let us alone. One word in the original; an exclamation of indignation and surprise. What have we (the unclean spirit) representing the whole body of evil spirits) to do with thee. Why do you interfere with us? Art thou come to destroy us? The Saviour, so far as appears, had not been formally interfering with the demon; but his preaching was contrary to their nature; his character was opposed to theirs; so that everything he did and said tended to destroy their influence. Practical. The cry of wicked men is illustrated. The mere presence of good men is an interference. All their efforts to save men, to put down bad practices, to enforce good laws, to overthrow intemperance, gambling, and all that pander to vice, to stop dishonest gains, seem to bad men like unwarrantable interference. They bid ministers, churches, reformers attend to their own business and let them alone. I know thee. As one belonging to the invisible world, he knew something of what was going on there. And Jesus rebuked him saying, Hold thy peace. Literally, "be muzzled." And when the unclean spirit had torn him. Luke says that the demon threw the man down in the midst of the crowd (Luke 4: 35). This proves the malignity of evil spirits. They will do all the harm they can, and only cease when compelled by the command of Christ. Practical. So it is ever apt to be. Satan will not easily leave his prey. So was it when the Israelites were being delivered from slavery in Egypt. So evil habits show unusual power when we try to cast them off. So often matters seem worse than ever just before a revival of religion. Came out of him. He had to obey. What new doctrine...? The teaching was new, concerning deliverance and salvation, and confirmed by such power. Authority. Right and power. Immediately his fame. The report of what he had done spread.

THE WITNESS OF MANY MIRACLES OF MANY KINDS.—Vs. 32-34. And at even when the sun did set. Was setting. They came at this time because the Sabbath had then ended, and the people felt free to come. Possessed with devils. These are mentioned in particular because they were the most difficult cases. Gathered together at the door of Peter's house. And he healed many. Not that some were left unhealed, but that he healed them all and there were many. Jesus did not desire the testimony of demons even when they spoke the truth.

A STUDY OF MIRACLES.

As this is the first lesson which describes the miracles which Jesus wrought, it may be well to spend some time in studying the place of miracles in the mission of Jesus.

1. What Is a Miracle? A miracle is the personal intervention of God by his will into the chain of cause and effect in nature. It is not "breaking of the laws of nature," nor "the suspension of the laws of nature," nor any change in the laws of nature, but simply God's doing with his infinite power the same quality of action, though vastly greater in degree, that we do every hour when we exert our personal will amid the forces of nature.

Illustration. "I regard a miracle," said uncle, "to be merely such an interference with the established course of things as infallibly shows us the presence and the action of a supernatural power. What o'clock is it with you, sir, if you please?" "It is half-past twelve, exactly; Greenwich time," replied Sam H. "Well, sir," said uncle, pulling a huge old time piece from his pocket, "it's one o'clock with me. I generally keep my watch a little furrier. But I may have a special reason too for setting my watch by the railway; and so, see ye, I'm turnin' the hands o' it around. Noo, wad ye say that I have violated the laws o' a watch? True, I have done what watchdom, wi' a' its laws, couldnae have done for itself; but I have done violence to none o' its laws. My action is only the interference o' a superior intelligence for a suitable end; but I have suspended nae law, violated nae law. Well, then, instead o' the watch, say the universe; instead o' moving the hands, say God acting worthily of himself; and we have a' that I intend for in a miracle; that is, the unquestionable presence of a mighty hand working the divine will. And if he sees fit to work miracles; what can hinder him? Has done it oftener than once or twice already, and wad ye say that he'll not get leave to do again?"

2. Miracles Natural to Christ. If there is a personal God, it is as natural that he should work a miracle, for sufficient reasons, as it is that the owner of a factory should interfere to save a child who is caught in the machinery, or for a physician to interfere with the natural progress of a disease. If Jesus was the Son of God, the power to work miracles was a natural accompaniment. All the miracles he wrought were useful, helpful, and guiding to a higher life.

3. The Miracles were a Testimony to the Authority of Christ. They are God's signature and seal to the words which his messengers speak. 4. The Miracles of Christ are Object Lessons. Every miracle is a picture before men of the character of God, of the nature of the gospel, of the loving kindness of our Saviour, of his power to help, of the wonders of grace he can work in our hearts of his power to deliver from the disease of sin. 5. The Contrast between the two Kingdoms. In these miracles we see first the results of evil, the kind of things which flourish in the kingdom of Satan and sin. Satan's kingdom is made up of demons and those filled with their spirit; its adherents are miserable themselves and seek to make others so; they tempt to sin; they injure the body; they ruin the mind and the soul. On the other hand, we see Christ in the world, and the good things which his kingdom is producing. Jesus glory is in the power to overcome the evil. 6. Moral Miracles. "When a man declares to me, 'I cannot believe in miracles,' I reply, 'I can, because I have witnessed them.' 'When and where?' 'On a certain street in this city is a man who was a week ago given over to every form of vice and brutality, and who is now a good citizen, an honest workman, a kind husband, a loving father, a pure, upright man. Surely, that is such a miracle as makes me forever believe in the possibility of miracles.'"—Professor Drummond. 7. These Miracles were Types of the Beneficent Effects of Christianity. Christ tells us that those who believe in him shall do greater works than he, and it is true that Christ in his Christianity is doing on a far larger scale the works of Christ than it was possible for him to do in Palestine. They are not miracles, but are better than the power of miracles, as the prolonged sunshine is better than a flash of lightning. Blind asylums have opened many eyes, and caused people to read and work even without sight. Hospitals have cured and cared for multitudes of sick and insane. We cannot raise the dead to life, but the average length of life has been greatly increased. The day laborer has more of the best things in the world than kings have in heathen lands.

MAKING ONE'S SELF USEFUL.

If I were only necessary to somebody, lamented a girl, the other day, I should have something to live for. But if I were to drop out of the world to-morrow it would not make any real difference to anyone.

But there is your father, said an older friend. Yes; but he is always at his business all day, and often out of the city. Jane, our old cook, does the housekeeping, and he really could get along just as well without me. He is so wrapped up in his business anyway that he scarcely notices he has a daughter.

Is Jane's housekeeping good? asked the other. Not very. When father has to entertain his friends he takes them to the club—but he would rather do that, anyway. Well, said her friend, you are evidently making yourself as unnecessary as possible, my dear child.

What do you mean? I mean that you are avoiding every opportunity you have—and they are many—of making yourself necessary to your father. You let a servant make the home instead of doing it yourself. You take the attitude that your father doesn't notice you when you ought to be noticing him instead. If I were you, Mabel—and I do not say this unkindly—I would put all thought of self away, and study the situation entirely from his side.

I would make his home so comfortable and his table so dainty that he would be proud to bring his friends there, as I know he used to do. I would show myself loving and responsive always, even though your father is an undomestic man. I should even interest myself in his business since he is so absorbed in it. But I think you would soon find that he has an interest in other things, too, that you have never tried to meet. I believe that in six months, by these simple means, you would make yourself so necessary to your father, with a twinkle of fun in her eye, that Jane could never hope to equal you.

But Mabel did not smile. Truth is not always comfortable to hear. I've had a new view of myself in your looking-glass, Mrs. Dashiell she said; and I don't believe I know how to be necessary to anybody. But, at any rate, I've got my eyes open to the reasons why!—Forward.

GIRLS, TELL YOUR MOTHER.

Two girls were passing along the street when one of them was heard to say, But your mother need never know anything about it.

Quick as a flash came the reply, My mother knows everything that I do; I will do nothing that she does not approve.

If every girl among our readers would take that young woman's resolution as her motto and adhere to it throughout the formative years of her life, there would be a great increase in human happiness and a corresponding decrease in the sum of the world's misery. Whenever a girl is led into a course of conduct which she feels that she must conceal from her mother, she has started upon the evil and a dangerous road. Her only salvation lies in immediate repentance and confession. Happy the young woman who never conceals her motives or her actions from the mother who bore her.—Central Christian Advocate.

HOW TO SECURE BETTER TEACHERS.—Better is a midway word. It stands between good and best. So we ask not how to secure good teachers; we have them. Where can we get the better teachers? Is it not that we must make them out of the good teachers we have? How then make the good better?

1. By unfailing regular attendance. 2. By a promptness which is always at least five minutes ahead of time. 3. By rich lesson preparation. Are you not absent usually when unprepared? 4. Love for the Word. Shown by daily study; in the words of Scripture, eating the word. But do not eat it raw. That is not merely the letter, not merely the helps, but the Christ found in it by his Spirit of fire. Show love for the Bible by using it only in the class.

5. Have more sympathy for the scholar, like the mother's tears spontaneous as the child's hurt. 6. Use largely the child's knowledge and his spiritual life. Remember little Samuel knew the Lord's voice better than Eli did. Use scholars to tell others, as Andrew told Peter, the woman of Samaria her friends, and the Waldensian convert his neighbor.—Dr. Irons, in Pennsylvania Herald.

ALL THE SAME.—In a New England poem which has become one of the classics of the school room, a dear little child hates to go above her schoolmates, and gives as her reason: Because you see I love you. The incident was lately repeated in a class of children in China, one of whom was able to make the Golden Rule his guide in a trying situation.

The youngest of the children had, by hard study, contrived to keep his place so long that he seemed to claim it by right of possession. Growing self-confident, he missed a word, which was immediately spelled by the boy standing next him. The face of the victor expressed the triumph he felt, yet he made no move toward taking the place, and when urged to do so, firmly refused, saying, No, me not go; me not make Ah Fun's heart sorry.

That little act implied great self-denial, yet it was done so thoughtfully and kindly that spontaneously from several lips came the quick remark: He do all same as Jesus' Golden Rule.—The Gleaner.

God's promises were never meant to ferry our laziness. Like a boat, they are to be rowed by our oars; but many men entering, forget the oar, and drift down more helpless in the boat than if they had stayed on shore.—Becher.

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