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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter-Lesson v. - Nov. 1.

CHRIST THE TRUE VINE.
—John 15:1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.—Job 15:8.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES.—Vers. 1-3. Some think this allegory was suggested by the "fruit of the true vine" they had just used in the last supper.

The True Vine. *I am the true vine.* The genuine, the ideal, the perfect vine. What he meant was, that he, the Father, and the disciples, stood in exactly the same relationship as the vine, the husbandman, and the branches. This true vine is Christ; not the man Christ Jesus, but the living, abiding Christ, the Christ who is with his people always, even unto the end of the world who reproduces himself in every true disciple.

The Husbandman. *My Father is the husbandman.* Not the hired laborer, but the owner of the vine yard.

The Fruitless Branches. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit.* These are the external professors, the merely baptized members, who have no life and never had. It includes those who are joined to Christ by intellectual conviction, who accept of him and his teachings with their minds, but do not obey him nor love him. *He taketh away.* Because their presence injures the other branches; and their remaining is of no benefit to themselves.

The Fruitful Branches and their Fruit. *And every branch that beareth fruit.* Every disciple is a branch; every true church is a branch. It is not measured by the results, the amounts of money given, the number of souls saved, as we are too often inclined to measure fruits; but by the love, the obedience, the graces, the devotion, which lead to these onward results. *He purgeth.* Better, he cleanseth. The very fruit itself must be thinned out in order that larger fruit of better quality may be produced. The object of all this redemptive work is in order that the soul may bring forth more fruit. This pruning explains the reason for many of our losses and trials. *Now (already) ye are clean.* Cleansed, as described in the previous verse. *Through,* because of, on account of, the word, which I have spoken unto you. You are already cleansed from past sin through your acceptance of and obedience to my word. Jesus comforts them with the assurance that they are cleansed, that they are bearing fruit, though they need further cleansing in order that they bring forth more fruit.

THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF ABIDING IN THE TRUE VINE.—Vers. 4-16. *Abide in me, and I in you.* Abide in me; see to it that I abide in you, *As the branch, etc.* The union between the branch of a vine and the main stem is the closest that can be conceived. All true spiritual fruit is the effect of his life flowing in us.

Abiding in Christ. To abide in Christ means to keep up a habit of constant and close communion with him, to be always leaning on him, resting on him, pouring out our hearts to him, and using him as our fountain and life of strength. *He that abideth in me... bringeth forth much fruit.* This saying is true of individuals, of teachers, of ministers, and of churches. To be fruitful, to really make this world better, and do for it what Christ began on earth, we must abide in him. No Christless church can be truly successful. Teach Christ, live Christ, abide in Christ, and the fruit is sure. *For without me.* Better, apart from me, not simply without my help, but separated from me as a branch cut off is separated from the vine. *Ye can do nothing.* There will be no true good works, no true success. *He is cast forth as a branch.* That is cut off and thrown outside the vineyard into the brush-heaps for burning. *And is withered.* Loses its power of bearing fruit; in time loses even the appearance of life. *And they are burned.* As dead branches of a vine are burned; destroyed. The soul which is separated from Christ is separated from the source of spiritual life, withers away and is eventually destroyed. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.* To have his word abiding in us is to keep his sayings and precepts continually before our minds and memories, and to make them guide our actions and rule our daily conduct and behavior. *Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* Because such are so imbued with God's will that they will ask what is God's will to give, for God's glory, in submission to his wisdom and love. *Herein is my*

Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. In the fruitfulness of the vine lies the joy and glory of the husbandman. *So shall ye be (become) my disciples.* Learners in the school of Christ, followers of his teaching. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.* This is a marvellous statement of the measure and the quality of Christ's love for us. When we wish to know how much Jesus loves us, let us remember how much the Father loves his only begotten Son. *Continue. Abide.* In my love. "My love" is Christ's love for us, not ours to him. To abide in his love is to rest our souls continually on it, being assured that it is exercised toward us, to live and labor under a constant sense of it, being fully persuaded that nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ. *If ye keep my commandments.* The natural and necessary effect of abiding in his love is to keep his commandments. *Even as I have kept my Father's commandments.* A complete adoption of the Father's will by the Son, and of the Son's will by us, the condition which makes continued love possible. *These things have I spoken.* The verse forms a conclusion to the allegory of the vine. *That my joy might remain in you.* Joy like his, having the same source in God, and the same quality, enduring and invincible. *And that your joy might be full.* Or fulfilled; grow more perfect.

The Joy of Christ. This joy is (1) the joy of a free activity in doing right, like the joy of motion in health, like the song of a bird in the morning. (2) The joy of entire consecration and submission to God. (3) The joy of doing good, of self-denial for others. (4) The joy of perfect faith in a wise and loving God, committing everything to his care. (5) Joy in the conscious love of God to us, communion and friendship with him. (6) The joy of loving others. (7) The joy of seeing others saved. (8) The joy of victory. (9) In the end, outward delights and pleasures to correspond with the inward joy. *This is my commandment.* The great universal law of his kingdom. *That ye love one another.* Being all branches of the same vine, the same life flows through all; all have a similar nature, and that nature like Christ's, which both loves and attracts love. *As I have loved you.* With the same unselfish, warm, personal, devoted love as he feels toward them. It has been called "the eleventh commandment." Love sums up our relation to Christ and to our fellow-men. *Greater love has no man than this.* No man can show greater love to his friends. *That a man lay down his life for his friends.* Beware of reading this as though laying down the life were equivalent to dying. To die for a friend is not the greatest manifestation of love; to live for him by consecrating the whole life to him, is far greater. As Christ consecrates not only his earthly life, but, in his intercession with us, his eternal life, to his friends, so, if we are his friends, we shall lay down our lives for him, not necessarily by dying for him, but by doing whatsoever he commands us; that is, by living for him. But it implies that we will die for him and for one another, if necessary. *Ye are my friends, if, etc.* Obedience is the test and expression of true friendship of disciples toward their Lord and Teacher. *Henceforth I call you not servants.* They are indeed to serve him, but it is not in a servile way, a blind, unquestioning obedience to an unknown authority, a service merely from a sense of duty. *For the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth.* A servant does not know all his master's will; he is expected simply to execute his commands without knowing the reason why they are given. *But I have called you friends.* You are emphatic. I take you into my counsels, I reveal to you my plans, and you serve me, because you love me, and carry out my plans. The highest service in the world is that of friendship and love. And this is the high privilege of all Christ's disciples. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.* Pupils among the Jews generally selected their own rabbi or teacher; Jesus reverses the order, and calls his disciples. Their appointment to this high office was purely of grace. They were chosen vessels to whom he was pleased to commit the great treasures of the Gospel. To believe that we are in the place ordained for us by the wisdom of God; that God cared to much for us that from all eternity he planned out our lives for us; that not chance, that not short-sighted human beings, not demons, but the ever-wise, ever loving God plans our lives, is a source of great comfort and power. *Go and bring forth fruit.* This is to which he ordained them. The fruit is good works, souls converted, a kingdom founded.

The Restful Yoke.

Mark Guy Pearse tells us of an incident which occurred in connection with a sermon of his on Christ's invitation to the weary and heavy laden:

"I had finished my sermon when a good man came to me and said: 'I wish I had known what you were going to preach about. I could have told you something.'"

"Well, my friend, I said, it is very good of you. May I not have it still?"

"Do you know why his yoke is light, sir? If not, I think I can tell you."

"Well, because the good Lord helps us to carry it, I suppose."

"No, sir," he explained, shaking his head; "I think I know better than that. You see, when I was a boy at home, I used to drive the oxen in my father's yoke. And the yoke was never made to balance, sir, as you said." (I had referred to the Greek word: But how much better it was to know the real thing.)

He went on triumphantly: "Father's yokes were always made heavier on one side than the other. Then, you see, we would put a weak bullock in alongside of a strong bullock, and the light end would come on the weak bullock because the stronger one had the heavy part of it on his shoulder."

Then his face lit up as he said: "That is why the yoke is easy and the burden is light—because the Lord's yoke is made after the same pattern, and the heavy end is upon his shoulder."

"So shall ye find rest to your soul."—Illustrated Missionary News.

To want to do some useful labor in the world, to think that useless life is only premature death, to find ourselves apparently shut out from usefulness, and yet to believe that God wants us to grow into His likeness by whom all the work of the great working universe proceeds—that is indeed a puzzle to one's faith. It may be that God used to give you plentiful chance of work for Him. Your days went singing by, each winged with some enthusiastic duty for the Master whom you loved. Then it was easy to believe that He was training you; His contact with your life was manifest; the use He made of you was very clear. By and by came a change. He took all that away. He snatched your work out of your hands, or made your hands so weak with sickness that they let it drop themselves. What then? Have you been able still, in idleness, in what seems uselessness, to keep the assurance of His care for you? Have you been able still to be satisfied with knowing just that here you were, ready to be used if He thought best? That has depended upon whether all your old work with Him really brought you to know Him. If it did, if in it all, while you delighted in doing it, the principal blessing of it all was that it permitted you to look into God's soul and see how self-complete and perfect and supreme He was; how, after all His workings, it was not in His works but in His nature, not in His doing but in His being, that God's true glory lay; if as you worked with Him, you really looked into His nature and discerned all this—then when He takes your work away and bids you no longer to do good and obedient things, but only to be good and obedient, surely that is not the death of faith. That may be faith's transfiguration. You can be idle for Him, if so He wills, with the same joy with which you once labored for Him. The sick-bed or the prison is as welcome as the harvest-field or the battle-field, when once your soul has come to value as the end of life the privilege of seeking and of finding Him.—Phillips Brooks.

Drinking and Longevity

A Medical authority, says an English paper, has advised life insurance companies to issue policies to reformed intemperate only at the same rates as to old men in order that financially they may be properly guarded. It is held that a man of forty-eight who had been a hard drinker, but had abandoned the practice, would probably have his longevity so far impaired as to warrant a life-insurance company in dealing with him as though he were from sixty-five to seventy years old. It will be seen from this that the chances of longevity are promoted by abstinence in early life as well as in later years; that in the matter of using strong drink it is better, as Dr. Cayler with much pertinence has said, to "stop before you begin."

In a recent report Dr. Albert Day says: "Absolute safety to the individual who uses the pernicious destroyer of mankind, or who has ever used it, is in the complete abandonment of its use and total abstinence. I am fully convinced that, as individual safety depends on total abstinence, so national temperance and prosperity require total prohibition and complete expulsive legislative action."

The secretary of state of New York classifies the cause of pauperism to that state in 1890 as follows: "Intemperance direct, males, 8,368; females, 2,464; children having intemperate parents, males, 1,401; females, 1,357; females, having intemperate husbands, 1,290,"—an aggregate officially accredited to intemperance of 14,880.