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BIBLE LESSONS.

First Quarter.

STUDIES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

Lesson XI. March 16. Luke 5: 1-11.

THE DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

GOLDEN TEXT. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."—Luke 5: 10.

EXPLANATORY.

I. JESUS TEACHING BY THE SHARON. 1. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him. The friends and acquaintances of Jesus at Nazareth rejected Him and His teaching; but there were great multitudes who did wish to listen to His marvellous words. To hear the Word of God. Truths which had divine authority.

Note that the teacher or preacher who has a divine message—rather than the needs of men—will attract scholars and hearers as the fire attracts those who are cold, or a feast those who are hungry.

He stood by the lake of Gennesaret. The Sea of Galilee. Stanley calls it "the most sacred shore of water which the earth contains." "Josephus, in a passage glowing with admiration, after describing the sweetness of its waters, and the delicate temperature of its air, its palms, and vines, and oranges, and figs, and almonds, and pomegranates, and warm springs, says that the seasons seemed to compete for the honor of its possession." The lake is of oval shape, from 12 to 14 miles long, and about half as broad. It is formed by the river Jordan, and is 653 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. It is 155 feet deep in some places.

2. And saw two ships. Rather, boats. Probably fishing-boats without decks. And were washing their nets. To cleanse them from mud or stones, or matter accumulated from the bottom of the lake or along the shore.

3. And He entered into one of the ships (boats), which was Simon's. Simon Peter. Simon is a contraction of Simeon ("hearing" and Peter means "a rock." And prayed (asked) Him that He would thrust out a little from the land. So that, keeping the crowds at a little distance, He could better address them. "At the north end of the lake of Gennesaret there are small creeks, or inlets, where the ship could ride in safety only a few feet from the shore, and where the multitudes, seated on both sides and before the boat, could listen without fatigue or strain. And He sat down. The usual posture in teaching.

Note how Jesus seemed to love to teach. It is a great blessing to be a teacher. Of few things is it more true that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The teacher gains more accurately, deeply, harmoniously, completely, by His teaching. He has new motives for learning and for obeying the truth. He has the life and inspiration which come from living contact with other souls. He has the blessing of doing good.

II. THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES. 4. Now when He had left speaking. He had finished all He wished to say at that time to the people. They must now meditate on and inwardly digest the truths that had been taught. 5. And Simon... said... Master, we have toiled all night, etc. The night was the best time for certain kinds of fishing, either because, as Pliny suggests, the fishes cannot see as well then, or most probably because that is the feeding time of the fishes. Never that, as they say. They would I will let down the net. This was an act, not of despondency, but of faith.

6. They enclosed (in their net) a great multitude of fishes. That a miracle is intended is unquestionable. How wrought, whether by a divine act, drawing together at this time and place a shoal of fishes, or by a divine knowledge perceiving the shoal that was there, the narrator does not indicate. And their net brake. Was breaking; i. e., began to break.

7. And they beckoned. They probably made some signal, well understood by Galilean fishermen. Unto their partners. Fellow-workers. James and John (ver. 10), and probably their hired men (Mark 1: 20). And filled both the ships (boats), so that they began to sink. They were full so that they could just float.

8. When Simon Peter saw it. His full name is here given, for this is the turning-point in his life. He fell down at Jesus's knees. Implying that Jesus was in the boat all the time. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. The language was a strong expression of his own unworthiness to be in the presence of one whose divinity was even then perceived by Peter's quick intuition.

9. For he was astonished, etc. More exactly, Amazed held him, and all that were with him.

III. FISHERS OF MEN. 10. Fear not. For your very consciousness of sin, and the new increase of your faith, will prepare you for the better work I have for you to do. Henceforth thou shalt catch men. The word catch here means in the original to take alive, as in the margin of Rev. Ver.

Note that the higher work comes to the disciples while they are faithfully performing their common daily tasks. So the song of the angels was heard by the shepherds who were engaged in their ordinary work with wafel seal. It is to those who are faithful in the least that the call comes to higher duties.

IV. FORSAKING ALL AND FOLLOWING CHRIST. They forsook all. They immediately left their nets (Mark), their means of living, and became the permanent followers of Jesus, trusting Him for all they needed. They thus gave evidence to the people of their sincerity and faith. Their lives became a perpetual sermon. They indeed fished at intervals (see John 21: 3), but the business of their lives was henceforth to follow and preach His gospel. They had been called up higher.

PETER'S EXAMPLE. Peter here is an example for us: to hear when the Lord speaks; to labor when He commands; to believe when He promises; to follow whithersoever He calls. The fishermen were blessed while laboring in their own calling.

FORSAKING ALL FOR CHRIST. We are to give up everything to Christ—our property, our time, to use as He would have us.

us. We are to give away as much as He directs; to leave all, and be missionaries, if He demands; to suffer the loss of all, if that is needful, in order that we may do right; to spend upon our families, our business, our leisure, just as Christ would have us, and in all things seek to build up the Kingdom of our Lord, and save men from sin.

"I'll Try It Once More, Billy!" BY REV. EDWARD A. RAND.

They stood on the hill back of the old home, and they gazed seaward, Jerry Palmer and his weary, worn mother. "I don't see anything, mother," moaned the boy.

She sighed, and said, "Nor, I, Jimmy. We will go home."

He turned and nodded, fiercely, the hand of her boy, as if fearful that she might lose him, and together they went down the slope leading to the story-and-a-half house that was home.

The father, John Palmer, was at sea. Whether dead or alive, who could say? Nothing had been heard from him for a long time. He was skipper of a fishing-smack, one of a fleet of twenty which had sailed to the fishing-grounds together. The nineteen had returned. Where was the "Polly," Skipper Palmer's fishing smack? Jerry asked his mother every day until he to the crest of the hill in the rear of their home. There they scanned the sea anxiously, but always came down grieving, shaking their heads, saying they had seen "nothing." That is an awful word sometimes.

As they were now about to enter their home, Jerry stopped. He looked at a drift of snow not far from the door. It was in the path to the shed.

"When I get home, if it is cold enough for snow, Jerry, I'll help you shove the path." "Until then, keep the path clear for mother," said the skipper before going away.

"I will!" was Jerry's prompt reply. Sometimes his wrists would get tired, but he had kept his promise, until the last snow which had ceased falling that morning. There had been many days out of school that he had lacked time to shove out of the way this remaining drift.

"I will do it now," he said, as he returned with his mother from the hill-top. "You are tired, Jerry. Let it go until to-morrow. I will rather have you with me," said his mother.

Together they entered the house, and with the help of the drift-wood gathered by Jerry on the beach, the skipper's wife began to get supper.

When supper was over, the mother and boy knelt down in prayer, side by side. She used an expression like this: "God help those on the sea!" When they rose from their knees, Jerry exclaimed, "Mother, you said what I told father."

"What was that, Jerry?" "I told him I would say, 'God help those on the sea!'"

Yes, with much fear and trembling Jerry had stolen up to his father, and whispered his purpose to pray for him. Skipper Palmer's reputation was not that of a religious man, and Jerry hesitated long ere he told his father. Any one watching the man, though, would have seen him a minute later wiping his eyes with his rough sleeve.

Did he think of Jerry's promise while he was gone? We sometimes when away from them forget the good words said to friends. The skipper remembered, however. He and Billy Morton were off one afternoon, looking after a trawl that had been set. A fog came up. The shadows of twilight came down. John Palmer and his companion could not find their vessel. They spent that night and the next day in their little boat on the great, heaving sea. A second night was coming on.

"Looks bad!" muttered the skipper. "Chilly!" His companion said nothing at first, but soon exclaimed gloomily, "Don't see a thing, but the howling sea!"

"See? It was one wide waste of water revealing no hope. The chilled despairing men drifted on. Suddenly, the skipper cried: 'Billy, there's a fore-and-aft schooner! Let me holler!'"

He tried to raise his voice in a shout for help, but the sea mocked him. The vessel sailed on.

"No use!" muttered Billy. "No use!" moaned the skipper. To himself he said: "Oh, my wife and poor little boy!"

But Jerry! His Jerry! Yes, and somehow there came to him the words his boy had uttered, the promise to pray for his father, and cry, "God help those at sea!"

God help? Was there not a strong, great, merciful God somewhere? This conviction gave the skipper new energy and courage. He will try it once more, Billy," he said. "It's no use shouting. I'll stand on the seat and wave my old son's wester!"

There on the seat of the boat stood Skipper John Palmer, and waved his son's wester.

"God help those on the sea!" kept sounding in his ears, and it nerved him to renewed waving. The skipper waved, and Billy watched.

"Skip!" he screamed, "I believe she is a heaven'tol Look, Skip!" "So she is! Now I'll wave harder! You go it, too, Billy!" Like madmen they frantically waved their old hats, and it was soon very evident that they had been seen, and the vessel was coming to their relief.

"Tuck your trousers into your boots, then, if you are going through that drift."

"I will, mother."

When he reached the place for the drift, and drift was there! He saw a shove, however, flying backward and forward. Who was it? Some compassionate neighbor it must be.

Jerry stopped suddenly, as if sickness had brought him to a halt. His father had once said, when he got home he would help Jerry shove. Could it be—?

Jerry did not have time to finish this question; his father was clasping him in his arms.

"Jerry, I didn't want to surprise you too suddenly, and I did this thinking some of you might come out and see the sign, and sort of be prepared for the news," said the skipper.

"You want me to tell mother that the path is shoveled, and let her guess the—?" "No, you needn't," said a voice. It was Jerry's mother. She had followed him, anxious to know why, in going after an amount of wood he had not returned sooner.

How joyfully the skipper's arms now went about his wife! Together they all hurried into the dear old home.

That evening the skipper said to his wife: "You may think it strange, but I have turned a new leaf, and all on account of Jerry."

Then he told about his rescue. "I've begun to pray, and I want to kneel with you and thank God for his goodness," he added. They all knelt in prayer. There, in the little home by the rolling sea, the skipper bowed gratefully before God, and ere he closed his prayer his voice was heard in earnest tones, saying, "God help those on the sea!"—Christian Advocate.

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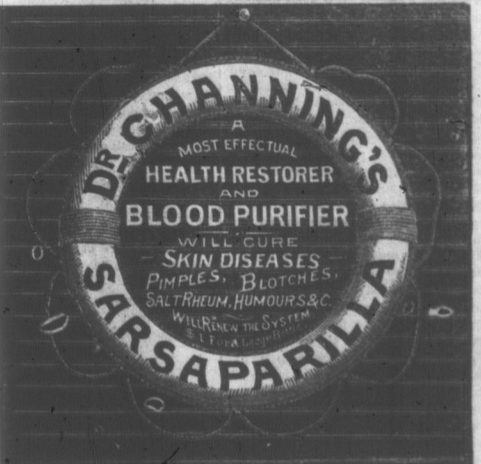
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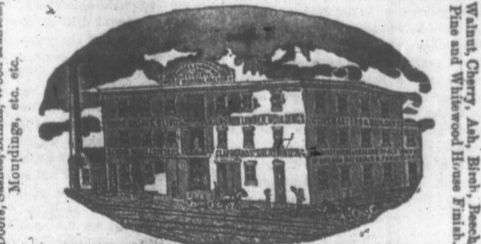
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