

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, September 15th, 1878.—Impunity in Prayer.—Luke xi. 5-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."—Luke xviii. 1.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 9-13.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke xi. 1-13. Tuesday, Genesis xxxii. 24-32. Wednesday, Matthew xv. 21-28. Thursday, Luke xviii. 1-8. Friday, vs. 13; Matthew vii. 7-11. Saturday, Jeremiah xxix. 10-14. Sunday, Daniel ix.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The friend at midnight. Vss. 5, 6. II. Denies his petitioner's request. Vs. 7. III. Yields to his importunity. Vs. 8. IV. Injunctions and promises. Vss. 9-13.

QUESTIONS.—What request did one of the disciples make of Jesus? What was his reply? What does the Lord's Prayer embrace? Did not Jesus himself often pray? Luke iii. 21; v. 16; vi. 12; ix. 18, 28, 29. Should not his example be a law to Christian life?

I. Vs. 5.—What is the purpose of the parable Jesus is about to utter? Why is the hour of "midnight" mentioned? Why are "three loaves" asked?

II. Vs. 7.—What reply is made from within the house to the petitioner? How does it betray ill-humor?

III. Vs. 8.—Because of what did the petitioner gain his request? Meaning of "importunity"?

IV. Vss. 9-13.—What threefold injunction does Jesus now utter? What threefold promise? What contrasts does he draw? What blessing is promised greater than all others? Luke xxiv. 49; Rom. viii. 31, 32.

What examples have we in the Bible of persevering prayer? Gen. xxxii. 25-32; Matt. xv. 21-28; Luke xviii. 1-8. When are prayers not answered? James iv. 3. On what words of our Lord is this lesson a commentary? Matt. xi. 12.

In answer to a request of one of his disciples (Luke xi. 1-4) Jesus gave them a form of prayer that has ever been the treasure of the church. "It compasses the interests and necessities of a world, and the cravings and destinies of a race, alike for time and eternity."—W. R. Williams. The closing doxology, as reported by Matthew, "For thine is the kingdom," etc., is not given by Luke. "The difference of expression in the two cases is, possibly, explained by the fact that Luke gives here, as often, a less complete report of Christ's words." Andrews. Having, then, graciously given a perfect form of prayer, Jesus proceeds to instruct his disciples by a parable in what spirit they must pray.

EXPOSITION.—Compare the parable in xviii. 1-8, and note the differences. Mark the connection of this with vs. 1-4, and also its position in the gospel immediately after the account of the work of "the twelve" and "the seventy."

Verse 5.—And he said unto them.—In continuation of his answer to the request of his disciples (vs. 1) that he would teach them to pray. In vs. 2-4, he gave the substance with its form, in vs. 5-13 he gives the spirit. Which of you. The brief parable known as "the Friend at midnight," is thus put as an experience which each of his hearers could easily conceive to be his own. Shall have a friend. As "a friend," of course, the one to whom to go for a favor in case of need, the proper person, and in the circumstance, doubtless, the only person. At midnight. The hour at which the man's guest arrived (vs. 6.) Night travel in the hot East, is said to be common. The unseasonableness of the hour is important as bearing upon both the unwillingness to lend, and the urgency to borrow. The petitioner was in earnest and at pains. Three loaves. "Round cakes about a span [nine inches] in diameter, and a finger's breadth in thickness," which it was "usual to bake daily, or when required (Gen. xviii. 6).

Verse 6.—Verse 5 sets forth who asks, who is asked, and what is asked. This verse states why. A friend of mine. Holding to me the same relation that I hold to thee; having upon me the claim of hospitality that I have upon thee, and asking even more of me than I ask of thee. He is never in a condition to pray who is of a spirit to refuse the same prayer if it were made to him. I have nothing to set before him. Destination was the only justification of the request. The spirit prompting the confession made the petitioner a fit one to be helped. Blessed are the beggared in spirit, the utterly and consciously destitute.

Verse 7.—He from within.—Not here called a "friend," as he acted a part which did not merit the name. "From within" also suggests the friend without, kept out, but still urgent. Trouble me not. An ungracious answer, selfish. The door is now shut, etc. An ungracious and selfish refusal, both of a piece, and both in glaring, shameful contrast to the spirit and conduct of the outside friend. The door was "shut," that is, locked, or bolted. I cannot rise and give thee. This "can not," was rather a will not.

Verse 8.—Because he is his friend.—Disregards the claim and plea of friendship; the claim and plea made in the very first word of the petition (vs. 5). Because of his importunity he will. The literal meaning of the word translated "importunity" is shamelessness, and carries either a bad sense, or, as here, a good sense. Here is a marked contrast with the lesson of the parable in xviii. 1-8, where patient persevering and waiting are enjoined.

Verse 9.—And I say unto you.—In the first of vs. 8, the original shows "say" to be the emphatic word. Here it is unemphatic, but the great emphasis is upon "I," and next in emphasis is "you." Ask, seek, knock. This is the lesson of the parable; its application. Notice here a gradation from the weaker to the stronger, from the less to the more. "We" "ask" by a word, and when desire is even feeble. We "seek" by action, and with more of exertion than words require, and thus show a stronger desire and deeper earnestness. We "knock," when after search we find the door shut and barred, but are determined that neither closed doors, nor bars, nor bolts, nor any other obstacle, shall keep us from that good which we must have, or die. We start for heaven in asking; we move toward heaven in seeking; we stand at heaven's door when knocking. Or can we say we ask for the Spirit, seek for Christ, and knock for "access to the Father." (Eph. ii. 18.) Receive, findeth, it is opened. The answer of genuine prayer is assured, and, also, it corresponds to the asking. There is initial good, continuative good, and complete good. There is gradation and progression, as in petition, so in bestowment.

Verses 11, 12.—If a son, etc.—The request of a son to his father. The terms of comparison are—petitioners, a friend, a child of man, a child of God; petitioned, a friend in name, but not in deed, a human, and, therefore, sinful father, the Father in heaven whose very name is love; petitions, bread for another, food for the child's own life, the very Spirit, and, therefore, nature and life of God himself. Bread, fish, egg. Common articles of food; and so standing for all that sustains life, and thus for the very life itself. Stone, fish, scorpion. Respectively corresponding to the previous as somewhat like in appearance, but the very contrary in nature. The stone is worthless, the serpent and the scorpion are poisonous and deadly. No father is so evil as to give these instead of those.

Verse 13.—The grand conclusion.—The life, the true eternal life of man, is imparted and sustained by the indwelling and inworking of God's Spirit. By that Spirit are we born of God, and made partakers of his nature. By that Spirit our "inward man" is renewed day by day. To have God's Spirit is, therefore, to have the fulness of God's blessing.

Our lesson is "Importunity in Prayer," and is enforced by parable, precept, and paternity.

I. The Parable.—Verses 5, 6.—(1.) The time of asking is the time of need. (2.) The object asked is the object needed. (3.) The person asked is he who has, and whose relation to us, whose promises or professions, create a propriety in our asking, and even in our urgent asking. (4.) The spirit of asking is the spirit which would also give, if in like manner asked. (5.) Success to such an one comes from the earnestness of petition begotten of such a spirit.

II. The Precept.—Verses 9, 10.—(1.) It enjoins prayer to God, and is in explanation and application of the parable.

(2.) It is from him who had a right to give both the precept and the promise. (3.) It is made emphatic by its triple announcement and gradation to a climax. (4.) Its attendant promises are explicit, clear, full, grand, and true, because from him whose very name is Truth.

III. The Paternity.—Verses 11-13.—(1.) The aim here is to show that God is more forward to give than man to ask. Confidence in prayer is to be drawn from his tender mercy. (2.) The earthly parent so loves his child that the child's life is as his own life, and he can no more mock the cry of his child's want, than he could mock and cheat his own misery. (3.) The earthly father is yet evil, the heavenly Father is alone good, and the tender compassion of God for his child is infinitely more willing to give his Spirit, to give himself, where man thirsts for God, and will receive him.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 22nd, 1878.—Warning against Covetousness.—Luke xii. 13-23.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Take heed, and beware of covetousness."—Luke xii. 15.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Importunity in Prayer.

Once, after Jesus had been praying himself, one of his disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." He taught them the prayer which begins "Our Father," which we call the Lord's Prayer. Then he taught how we must pray by another of his parables, or story with a meaning. He supposed that a man should knock at a friend's door at midnight, and say that a friend of his had just come from a journey and he had nothing to give him, and ask for three loaves of bread, and the man inside should say, "Do not disturb me now; the door is shut, and my children are in bed; I cannot rise and give thee." "Will you" said Jesus, "give it up, and let your visitor go unfed? No; you will keep on knocking; and though the man in the house will not give you because he is your friend, yet because of your earnest knocking—because you will not go away he will rise and give you as much as you want." So we should pray; and Jesus made us three beautiful promises in one: Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened. Our earthly fathers give us food when we ask for it, and will not mock us by giving us stone for bread, or a serpent instead of fish. How much more does our heavenly Father love us, and how much more able to give his Holy Spirit, the best gift, to those who ask him!

Bouths' Department.

A Story for Girls.

Sit down on the porch, children, and let me tell you about Aunt Rachel and the story she once told me. One day, when I was about twelve years old, I had planned to go after strawberries, but Aunt Rachel said to me:

"A girl of your age should begin to learn how to do housework. Take off your hat, roll up your sleeves, and help me do the baking."

I pouted and sighed and shed tears, but was encouraged by the promise that I might go after the baking. Under good Aunt Rachel's direction I mixed a big loaf of bread, placed it on a tin as bright as a new dollar, and was rubbing the flour off my hands when she called out:

"This will never, never do, child—you haven't scraped your bread-bowl clean."

I shall never forget the picture she made standing there, her eyes regarding me sternly, one hand resting on her hip while in the other she held the untidy bowl.

"It will never do, child," she went on; "it is not only untidy, but it makes too much waste; to be a good housekeeper you must learn to be economical. You have heard the story of the young man who wanted an economical wife?"

"No," I answered, and I might have added that I didn't wish to hear either.

"Well," she continued, "he was a very likely young man and he wanted a

careful wife, so he thought of a way he could find one. One morning he went to call upon the different girls of his acquaintance and asked them each for the scrapings of their bread bowls to feed his horses. You see they all wanted him. So they got all they could for him. Finally he found a girl who hadn't any, so he asked her to be his wife, because he thought she must be economical. "Now," said Aunt Rachel, triumphantly, "suppose a man asked you for the scrapings of your bread bowl, what would you say?"

"What would I say?" I repeated scornfully; "why I'd tell him if he couldn't afford to buy oats for his horses that they might starve. I wouldn't rob the pig to feed them."

I suppose Aunt Rachel thought that lesson was all lost on me; but as true as you live I never knead the bread to this day without thinking of her lesson in economy.—The Morning.

Good Manners.

Before you bow to a lady in the street, permit her to decide whether you may do so or not by at least a look of recognition.

"Excuse my gloves" is an unnecessary apology, for the gloves should not be withdrawn to shake hands.

When your companion bows to a lady, you should do so also. When a gentleman bows to a lady in your company, always bow to him in return.

A letter must be answered, unless you wish to intimate to the writer that he or his subject is beneath your notice.

A visit must be returned in like manner, even though no intimacy is intended.

A smiling countenance is pleasant, but excess of laughter should be avoided, especially when it is possible for any one to suppose himself derided by it.

Whispering in company is always offensive and often for the reason that persons present suspect that they are the subject of it.

General waymarks for the journey of life.

Never ridicule sacred things or what others may esteem as such, however absurd they may appear to you.

Never show levity when people are engaged in worship.

Never resent a supposed injury till you know the views and motives of the author of it, and on no occasion relate it.

Always take the part of an absent person, who is censured in company, so far as truth and propriety will allow.

Never think the worse of another on account of his differing from you in politics or religious subjects.

Never dispute with a man who is more than seventy years of age, nor with a woman, nor with any sort of enthusiast.

Never affect to be witty, or to jest so as to hurt the feelings of another.

Say as little as possible of myself and those who are near me.

Aim at cheerfulness without levity.

Never court the favor of the rich by flattering their vanities or their riches.

To speak with calmness and deliberation on all occasions, especially of circumstances which tend to irritate.

Frequently to review my conduct and note my feelings.—Dr. West.

SHINE.—A man in a blouse once said: "I have no more influence than a farthing rushlight." "Well," was the reply, "a farthing rushlight can do a good deal. It can set a haystack on fire; it can burn down a house; yea, more, it will enable a poor creature to read a chapter in God's book. Go your way, friend, and let your farthing rushlight so shine before men that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

All our readers may not be familiar with the very remarkable concession in regard to infant baptism made by the well-known Jeremy Taylor, the eloquent and learned Anglican divine and bishop in his "Liberty of Prophesying," he states that "it is against the perpetual analogy of Christ's doctrine to baptize infants, for, besides that, Christ never gave any precept to baptize them, or even himself or his apostles (that appears) did baptize any of them."—Can. Baptist.

The Foreclosure of the Mortgage.

Walk right in the settin'-room, Deacon; it's all in a muddle, you see,

But I hadn't no heart to right it, so I've jest let every thing be.

Besides, I'm a-goin' to-morrow—I calk' late to start with the dawn—

And the house won't seem so home-like if it's all upshot and forlorn.

I sent off the children this mornin': they both on 'em begged to stay, But I thought 'twould be easier, mebbe, if I was alone to-day.

For this was the very day, Deacon, jest twenty year ago.

That Caleb and me moved in; so I couldn't forgit it, you know.

We was so busy and happy!—we'd ben married a month before—

And Caleb would clear the table and brush up the kitchen floor.

He said I was tired, and he'd help me; but, law! that was always his way—

Always handy and helpful, and kind, to the very last day.

Don't you remember, Deacon, that winter I broke my arm?

Why Caleb skursely left me, not even to 'tend to the farm.

There night and mornin' I saw him, a-settin' so close to my bed,

And I knew him in spite of the fever that made me so wild in my head.

He never did nothin' to grieve me, until he left me behind—

Yes, I know, there's no use in talkin', but somehow it eases my mind.

And he sot such store by you, Deacon, I needn't tell you now,

But unless he had your judgment, he never would buy a cow.

Well, our cows is gone, and the horse too—poor Caleb was fond of Jack,

And I cried like a fool this mornin' when I looked at the empty rack.

I hope he'll be kindly treated: 'twould worry poor Caleb so.

If them Joneses should whip the cretur—but I s'pose he ain't like to know.

I've ben thinkin' it over lately, that when Mary sickened and died,

Her father's spirit was broken, for she was allus his pride.

He wasn't never so cheery; he'd smile, but the smile wa'n't bright,

And he didn't care for the cattle, though once they'd ben his delight.

The neighbors all said he was aillin', and they tried to hint it to me;

They talked of a church-yard cough; but oh! the blind are those who won't see.

I never believed he was goin' till I saw him a-layin' here dead—

There, there! I don't be anxious, Deacon; I haven't no tears to shed.

I've tried to keep things together—I've ben slavin' early and late—

But I couldn't pay the interest, nor git the farm-work straight.

So of course I've gone behindhand, and if the farm should sell

For enough to pay the mortgage, I s'pose 'twill be doin' well.

I've prayed ag'in all hard feelin's, and to walk as a Christian ought,

But it's hard to see Caleb's children turned out of the place he bought;

And readin' that text in the Bible 'bout widows and orphans, you know,

I can't think the folks will prosper who are willin' to see us go.

But there! I'm a-keepin' you, Deacon, and it's nigh your time for tea.

"Won't I come over?" No, thank you; I feel better alone, you see.

Besides, I couldn't eat nothin'; whenever I've tried it to-day

There's somethin' here that chokes me. I'm nervous, I s'pose you'll say.

"I've worked too hard?" No, I haven't. Why, it's work that keeps me strong;

If I sot here thinkin', I'm sartin my heart would break before long.

Not that I care about livin'. I'd rather be laid away

In the place I've marked beside Caleb, to rest till the judgment-day.

But there's the children to think of—that makes my dooty clear,

And I'll try to foller it, Deacon, though I'm tired of this earthly speer,

Good-by, then. I sha'n't forgit you, nor all the kindness you've showed;

'Twill help to cheer me to-morrow, as I go on my lonely road,

For—What are you sayin', Deacon? I needn't—I needn't go?

You've bought the mortgage, and I can stay? Stop! say it over slow—

Jest wait now—jest wait a minute—I'll take it in bime-by.

That I can stay. Why, Deacon, I don't know what makes me cry!

I haven't no words to thank you. Ef Caleb was only here,

He'd sech a head for speakin', he'd make my feelin's clear.

There's a picter in our old Bible of an angel from the skies,

And though he hasn't no great coat, and no spectacles on his eyes,

He looks jest like you, Deacon, with your smile so good and trew,

And whenever I see that picter, 'twill make me think of you.

The children will be so happy! Why, Debby will 'most go wild;

She fretted so much at leavin' her garding behind, poor child!

And, law! I'm as glad as Debby, ef only for jest one thing—

Now I can tend the posies I planted there last spring.

On Caleb's grave: he loved the flowers, and it seems as ef he'll know

They're a bloomin' all around him while he's sleepin' there below.

—Mrs. E. T. CORNWELL, in Harper's Magazine for September.