

Sunday Reading.

The Earthen Vessel.

The Master stood in his garden,
Among the lilies fair,
Which his own right hand had planted,
And trained with tenderest care.

He looked at their snowy blossoms,
And marked, with observant eye,
That his flowers were sadly drooping,
For their leaves were parched and dry.

"My lilies need to be watered,"
The Heavenly Master said;
"Wherein shall I draw it for them,
And raise each drooping head?"

Close to his feet, on the pathway,
Empty, and frail, and small,
An earthen vessel was lying,
Which seemed of no use at all.

But the Master saw and raised it
From the dust in which it lay,
And smiled, as he gently whispered,
"This shall do my work to-day!"

"It is but an earthen vessel,
But it lay so close to me;
It is small, but it is empty,
And that 's all it needs to be."

So to the fountain he took it,
And fill'd it full to the brim;
How glad was the earthen vessel
To be of some use to him.

He poured forth the living water
Over his lilies fair,
Until the vessel was empty,
And again he filled it there.

He watered the drooping lilies
Until they revived again;
And the Master saw, with pleasure,
That his labor had not been in vain.

His own hand had drawn the water
Which refreshed the thirsty flowers;
But he used the earthen vessel
To convey the living showers.

And of itself it whispered,
As he laid it aside once more:
"Still would I lie in his pathway,
Just where I did before."

"Close would I keep to the Master,
Empty would I remain;
And perhaps, some day, He may use me,
To water his flowers again."

For the Christian Messenger.

Christian Labor and Christ's Reward.

[The following discourse was prepared by the pastor of one of our Western churches, and will be read with profit. The writer does not permit us to give his name.—ED. C. M.]

"Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you."—MATT. XX. 4.

Here we have an apt emblem of the kingdom of heaven, i. e., the church of Christ. A vineyard is expected to produce fruit. Without this it is worthless. And Jesus says to His followers, "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." The soil of the vineyard must be broken up and cultivated, otherwise the expectation of the husbandman will be vain. The soil of the kingdom is human hearts. Naturally they are hard like the "wayside" into which the good seed cannot enter, or like the stony ground where there is "no deepness of earth." This soil must be broken by the "hammer" and melted by the "fire" before it can be fruitful. A vineyard must be watered by the rain and dew from heaven. So must the church. The gracious influence of the Gospel is thus spoken of: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain and my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small dew upon the tender herb." "He (i. e., Jesus) shall come down as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth." Again, a vineyard requires labor, without which it cannot be productive. So does the church. The Christian who does nothing for God cannot thrive. As well may we expect our gardens to flourish without toil as for our souls to prosper in spiritual indolence. Sinners are compared to idlers "standing in the market-place." They are not idle in every respect. They toil with hands and feet and brain to obtain the "meat that perisheth," and they are "often slaves of the devil." They work hard, fare hard, and get poor wages, for "the wages of sin is death." But as regards spiritual employment they are idle, and those living in Christian lands cannot, like the idlers of our parable, excuse themselves by saying, "No man hath hired us." God, throughout His word and by His servants, is saying, "Work in my vineyard for the advancement of my glory and the welfare of your own souls."

The Lord of the vineyard has plenty

of employment for every one, whether he has five talents, or two, or one. Let us then consider first the work, and secondly the wages.

I. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." The mariner on the ocean must labor with the aid of compass, chronometer, quadrant, and chart to find his whereabouts, and then shape his course so as to avoid obstructions, and reach his desired haven. Sinner, God says to thee, as to Adam in Eden, "Where art thou?" Here is work for you. Consider your past life. What progress have you been making? Examine the chart, the Bible God has given, and aim directly for the strait gate and narrow way. Has your course been wrong tending downwards to destruction? Then repent. Face about quickly. God says, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

II. Do sinners inquire like the Jews of olden time, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" The Master answers, "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

III. Have any reached this point of "Repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," and now inquire, "What more shall we do?" Listen to Peter; "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." In order to this, "Search the Scriptures" and "Pray without ceasing." In a word, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling because it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."

All this means labor, and "in all (this) labor there is profit." But must I seek only my own spiritual welfare? By no means. He that is satisfied with being saved has great reason to fear that he is not saved. There is nothing selfish in the religion of Jesus. It is full of benevolence and beneficence. Jesus labored for the good of others. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Then suffer still further a word of exhortation.

IV. "To do good and to commune forget not; for with such sacrifice God is well pleased." Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." God has a mighty work to be done, even the salvation and sanctification of his chosen, and this work he purposes to perform through human instrumentality. In the work of creation he was alone. In the work of redemption there were none with Him. "He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none to help." But in the work of conversion and edification He permits us to be co-workers with Himself. He puts the "treasure in earthen vessels," and by the "foolishness of preaching" saves them that believe. The Saviour's commission is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Is this burden confined to the ordained ministry? By no means. In the first age of Christianity they (the Christians) went everywhere preaching the word, and churches were multiplied. The Master gives "to every man his work." There is a sphere of usefulness for every redeemed soul, and the prayer of each should be, like that of Saul of Tarsus, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"

There is work in the family. Household devotion and instruction are as old as the race. Under the patriarchal dispensation it was the only mode of assembly worship. Afterwards, when congregational worship was instituted, it was not designed as a substitute for family devotion. And, under the present dispensation, public preaching and school instruction and religious meetings can no more supersede the necessity for family prayer and training, than railroads and steamboats, as means of locomotion, can supersede the use of legs. And there is work in the Sabbath School. Sabbath School instruction is just a mode of preaching the Gospel. And no finer field for the employment of talent presents itself to

the Christian. Here is work for the feet in gathering in the young; work for the brain in gathering scriptural knowledge and studying how to present it; work for the heart in wrestling for conversions; work for the voice in teaching and singing; and well may those thus employed be called "Sabbath School workers." Then there is work in the church for mutual edification and to promote advancement in holiness. And work out of the church, in business and social circles, and by the wayside. Again, worldly toil may be sanctified for the glory of God. Money is needed for the advancement of the cause of truth, and he is serving God who, out of the fruits of honest toil, contributes the carnal things, Paul furnishes a noble motive for manual work when he says, "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." And be assured that labor for God is not drudgery but rest. The Saviour says, "Take my yoke." That means subjection and work. But he adds, "And ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Let one laboring man spend the Sabbath in idleness and sleep, which he calls rest, and another spend it in holy service, which of these will be most vigorous on Monday morning? Surely the latter. Such is the testimony of those who have tried both plans.

But secondly, let us consider the reward, "Whatsoever is right I will give you." Such an offer from man would scarcely be accepted. We have not enough confidence in selfish human nature to trust an employer without a definite understanding. But we may safely trust Him who says, "He that reaperth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." "God is not ungrateful to forget your work and labor of love which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." "Wisdom's rewards more precious are, Than all their stores of gold."

There is luxury in trying to do good, which of itself is sufficient compensation for all the trouble. "In keeping of them (God's commands) there is great reward." That is in the very act, irrespective of any results. He that is trying to do God's bidding has the answer of a good conscience, and that is infinitely better than anything to be derived from the pursuit of selfish gratification. Then there is a great reward in seeing the fruits of labor. What is more gladdening to the heart of a Christian than to witness the conversion of sinners and the prosperity of the church?

And then, "Great is your reward in heaven." What joy it will give to meet in the celestial city those who have been saved through your feeble instrumentality. Of course they will ascribe all the glory of their salvation to Him whose right it is, and you would not have them do otherwise, but they will not forget to acknowledge with gratitude the humble bearer of the message which brought them peace and joy. Perhaps some one will say, "I would gladly labor if I knew that such results would follow." But why not trust Him who says, "Whatsoever is right I will give you." Ah, says another, "I am only a weak, foolish worm of the dust. What can I do?" Remember that God chooses weak things to confound the mighty, foolish things to confound the wise, and a worm to thresh mountains. But says another, "I have labored until I am discouraged." Listen to the greatest of mere human toilers in the vineyard, who, in the midst of opposition and persecution, in the darkness of declension and the light of revival still persevered, whom neither the malice of foes nor the defection of professed friends could move from his purpose, who though cast down was not destroyed, though perplexed was not in despair, but steadily pressed onward until he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course. Hear him saying to his fellow laborers through all time, 'Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.'"

An elevated purpose is a good and ennobling thing, but we cannot begin at the top of it. We must work up to it by the often difficult path of duty—of daily duty always very carefully performed.

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1882.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson VII.—NOVEMBER 12, 1882.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

Mark xv. 1-15.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 12-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He is despised and rejected of men."—Isaiah liii. 3.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Lesson, Mark xv. 1-15.

T. Final Condemnation of Jesus, Luke xxii. 66-71.

W. Jesus Before Pilate, John xviii. 28-38.

T. Jesus Before Herod, Luke xxiii. 1-17.

F. Jesus or Barabbas, Matt. xxvii. 15-26.

S. Rulers Gathered Against Christ, Psalm ii.

S. The Good Confession Before Pilate, 1 Tim. vi. 11-21.

THE KING DELIVERED TO THE GENTILES.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jesus Before Pilate, Vss. 1-5. II. Barabbas Preferred, Vss. 6-11. III. The King Disowned, Vss. 12-15.

QUESTIONS.—Where was Jesus? What insults had he endured?

Vss. 1-5.—Why was a session of the council by daylight necessary? Where did they take Jesus as a criminal? Who was Pilate? Why was his consent necessary? What charge did they bring against Jesus? How far did Pilate understand the merits of the case? What was his duty? Why was Jesus silent?

Vss. 6-11.—Who was Barabbas? For what crimes condemned? What was the custom?

Vss. 12-15.—What was Pilate afraid of? What bad qualities did he show? What cruelty was inflicted upon Jesus? In what capacity did he come up to Jerusalem? What did the rulers and nation now do? What great crime did they commit? What did the rulers and Pilate blindly fulfill? (Acts ii. 23; John iii. 14, 15.)

SPECIAL SUBJECTS.—Envy. Corrupt magistrates. Barabbas and Jesus. Popular fickleness. Roman scourging. Character of Pilate; his fate. The race rejects its King.

NOTES.—I. The Examination, (Vss. 1-5).

Vs. 1.—In the morning. John says, "it was early," (xviii. 28). The session of the Sanhedrim, spoken of in the last lesson, was between midnight and the dawn; and the law forbade capital trials at night. Hence the necessity of another meeting as early in the morning as possible, that the forms might be observed. The Evangelist specifies again the elements which composed this council—the chief priests, elders, and scribes—and then adds that the whole council were present at this consultation, or meeting. Here their former proceedings—the forms of trial and vote of condemnation—were ratified, and the question of how their sentence could be carried into effect, was, doubtless, anxiously discussed. Then they bound Jesus, as one condemned, and that he might not escape; and carried him away, bore him off under guard, or forcibly, and delivered him to Pilate.

This was all that they could do, except to make their accusation before Pilate, and demand that he put their sentence into execution. The place where they bore him is called (John xviii. 28) the "Judgment Hall," into which they did not enter, "lest they should be defiled." But Pilate went out to them, and inquired concerning their accusation, (John xviii. 29). They answered, in a general way, that he was a "malefactor"; and then specified, falsely, that he was a stirrer up of sedition, "perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King." (Luke xxiii. 2). For the Roman law would care nothing for their charge of blasphemy; but sedition and treason were capital offences.

Vs. 2.—Pilate. A name, like Judas, handed down to eternal execration. "After Archelaus (Matt. ii. 22) had been recalled and banished to Gaul by Augustus, Judea was annexed to the Roman province of Syria, and governed by deputies, called Procurators, the fifth of whom was Pontius Pilate, appointed in the thirteenth year of Tiberius, and already hated by the Jews for his extortions and severities. See Luke xiii. 1. Like his predecessors and successors, he resided commonly at Caesarea, but attended at Jerusalem during the great festivals, to preserve the peace, and also to exercise judicial functions."—Alexander.

He is described as a weak man, as his course in this trial shows; as also cold, cruel, and skeptical, holding the Jewish religion in contempt; but, as a Roman judge, having respect for Roman law. Though apparently unwilling to condemn Jesus, because assured of his innocence (Luke xxiii. 14), yet, like

Herod Agrippa, who afterwards killed James and seized Peter (Acts xii), he was ready to make capital for himself with the Jews, in any way that did not involve a restraint of his passions. Hence, after exhausting several expedients, he assented to their demand in the case of Jesus, though, by his own confession, it was the sacrifice of an innocent man. Art thou the King of the Jews? Morison understands this question as asked "with a dash of mingled nonchalance and sarcasm," as if his pretensions to kingship were to be treated as the harmless vapors of an enthusiast. Thou sayest it. Jesus treated the question seriously, and gave a positive affirmation, equivalent to I am—explaining the nature of his kingdom as not of this world, in rivalry of Caesar, but as a spiritual one, (John xviii. 36, 37). Pilate was strongly impressed with this answer, and saw that he was not one whose aim was to subvert the Roman power, and that he was, therefore, innocent of the charges against him; and, taking Jesus with him, he went out, and declared to his accusers: "I find in him no fault at all," (John xviii. 38).

Vss. 3-5.—But the chief priests renewed their clamor, and accused him of many things. They raged as wild beasts about to lose their prey, learning that Jesus was a Galilean, belonging to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, sent him to that ruler, who, after mocking him, returned him to Pilate. Answerest thou nothing? It would seem as if Pilate was anxious for Jesus to aid him in his stand against the Sanhedrim, by refutations of the "many things" charged against him.

II. Barabbas Preferred, (Vss. 6-11). At that feast he released. It was the custom, at every recurring Passover, to release unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. It did honor to their feast, which spoke of passing over transgressions. Pilate hoped to make this custom the occasion of Christ's release. Barabbas. This man's character is vividly given in a few words: a robber, murderer, a ring-leader in a fierce outbreak against the Roman dominion, notoriously guilty of the "sedition" of which Jesus was falsely accused. The contrast between this dangerous criminal and the meek and holy Christ, could not be stronger. Pilate affected by a lingering sense of justice, warned by his wife (Matt. xxvii. 19), deeply impressed by the bearing of Jesus, and conscious that in condemning him, he would be but the tool of the chief priests in gratifying their malice, because they had delivered him for envy. Pilate put this most desperate and guilty of prisoners over against Jesus, as if to compel the people to demand the latter's release. Moved the people. Excited their passions by false statements, appealing to their prejudices and their fears. That he should rather release Barabbas. Any one rather than Jesus. Yet, it is possible that the common people looked upon Barabbas, with all his crimes, as rather a patriot than a robber and murderer. So readily does party spirit, or political feeling, cast a glamour over the eyes.

III. Delivered to be Crucified, (Vss. 12-15). Vs. 12, 13.—Again. Pilate makes yet another effort to stem the popular current, not by the exercise of a just authority, but by the foolish plan of reasoning with a blood thirsty mob. What wilt ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? He solemnly appeals to their national and Messianic yearnings which had been connected with Jesus. They cried out again, Crucify him. His reluctance to accede to their demands seems to add fuel to their fury, and they now clamor for Christ's death. The wild beast spirit is aroused, and nothing but blood will satisfy it.

Vss. 14, 15.—Why, what evil hath he done? The last, despairing effort of a man who substituted worldly policy for the right; an added confession of Pilate, that Christ had done no wrong. It is a question for the ages: "What evil hath he done?" Crucify him. Thus does error ever reply to truth; for it is the only answer it can give. Willing to content (satisfy) the people. Not only willing, but, as in New Version, wishing. He was a typical politician. He was more anxious to be popular than to stand for the right. When he had scourged him. Pilate, as the representative of the Roman power, had confirmed the sentence of death, and had yielded to the clamor as to the method of Christ's death. But scourging was generally the prelude to crucifixion. The lesson closes with Jesus in the hands of the soldiers. He is stripped to the waist, bound in a stooping posture, and beaten with knots of rope, or plaited leather thongs armed with bits of iron or bone. "Under the fury of the countless stripes," says Gekie, "the victims sometimes sank; sometimes died upon the spot; sometimes were taken away

an unrecognizable mass of bleeding flesh." Surely "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities."

SUGGESTED LESSONS.

This is a lesson of marked contrasts. Jesus wishing to do the Father's will, even unto death; Pilate wishing to gain popularity. The chief priests, and multitude, fierce, violent, making loud cries. Jesus, meek, quiet, answering nothing. Barabbas, guilty, yet released; Jesus, innocent, yet delivered to be crucified. A governor, weak, and quailing before the people; a prisoner, strong, and calm in the midst of the most violent accusations.

Barabbas released; Jesus crucified. How suggestive is this of the great doctrine of Christ's substitutionary sufferings.

The dilemma of Pilate is that of every one who is halting between two opinions. We cannot please both God and the world.

Every one who hears the gospel has Jesus on his hands, either to receive or reject him. Pilate's question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" is the most important one of your life.

"Crucify him;" is the language of every soul that willfully rejects the great salvation.

Help for Parents, or for the Teacher of the Primary Class.

In a room of the Temple seventy-two men were waiting for Jesus; though it was not much after five o'clock in the morning. What day of the week was it? Did they want to comfort Jesus? Explain that these were the great men among the Jews—the judges, before whom people who had been doing wrong were brought to be punished. What wrong had Jesus done? Surely these men would be sorry that Jesus had been treated so roughly, and would punish those who had done so. Ah! how can I tell you? They listened to the story of Caiaphas; and then they, too, said that Jesus must die! They would have killed him right away; but they dared not. The Jews had no king of their own; but a king who lived far away in Rome ruled over them. He had sent a Governor named Pilate to see that the Jews kept his laws. The Jews pretended that it was because he had said he was the Son of God; but Pilate was a heathen, and would not care for that. At last, they thought of something. They would say that Jesus wanted to be king of the Jews, and was stirring them up to make war, so that they would have him for king instead of the Roman Caesar.

Follow Jesus to the palace of Pilate. Picture the yelling, hooting mob, the tramping soldiers, the angry priests. Explain that, though these Jews were so wicked as to wish to kill the King of kings, yet that they thought themselves too good to go into a heathen's house. So Pilate had his great chair, almost like a king's throne, brought out on a platform outside.

Pilate was afraid to do what he knew was right, which was to protect him from the people, sent him to Herod, to get rid of him. Herod's soldiers mocked him and treated him cruelly, putting on a splendid robe to dress him up like a king in mockery, and sent him back to Pilate. Here are the different places to which Jesus was taken. 1. From the Garden to Annas. 2. To Caiaphas. 3. To the judges (Sanhedrin) in the Temple. 4. To Pilate. 5. To Herod. 6. Back to Pilate. And he had had no sleep, no breakfast; and had been standing all that weary while.

We have part only of what Jesus suffered in this lesson; but even that shows how terrible sin is. Describe the beating. Jesus was tied by his hands to a pillar so low that he had to stoop, (teacher should bend her back), and beaten on the back with several strips of leather, to which were tied bits of sharp iron or bone, which tore the flesh. Did Jesus deserve this? Jesus was beaten that we might not be punished. Explain and teach Isa. liii. 5.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

An Unsuccessful Street.

A poor boy wanted to get on the charity list of a famous school. "You must make application soon," said his mother. "Not now, but by-and-by," said the boy. By-and-by he wrote. Then it was too late; the lists of applicants was full.

A doctor wanted a boy to run errands, and he would allow him to go to school an hour or two every day. "Offer your service," suggested the mother. "By-and-by," answered her son. The next morning he went; but another boy had been engaged the evening before.

"Ah! child," said the old grandmother, who was sitting by the fire when he came in, remember this; By the street of 'By-and-by,' one arrives at the house of 'Never!'