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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter—Lesson III Apr 17 '98

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

—Matthew 17:1-9.

Read Matthew 17 and 2 Peter 1:12-18.

Commit Verses 1-3.

GOLDEN TEXT.—We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.—JOHN 1:14.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Autumn of A. D. 29; a week after the last lesson; in the night, probably toward morning. (Compare Luke 9:37.)—Andrews, New Ed.

Place.—Probably Mount Hermon, or one of its spurs, in the vicinity of Caesarea, where Jesus and his disciples were the week before, as we saw in our last lesson, though tradition dating from before the fourth century places it on Mount Tabor in Galilee.

THE PRAYER MEETING ON THE MOUNTAIN.—And after six days. Six complete days. Jesus taketh Peter, James, John. The same three who had gone with Jesus into the room where he raised Jairus' daughter. A few months later they were nearest to him as he prayed in Gethsemane. Into a high mountain apart, from the other disciples and crowd. Luke tells us that Jesus went up into the mountain to pray; and that the Transfiguration took place while he prayed. So it was at his baptism; as he prayed the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him as a dove. At the feeding of the 5,000, he had spent the night hours in a mountain alone praying. He prayed when he chose the twelve at the institution of his supper, in Gethsemane, and on the cross. In this case there was a prayer meeting. Doubtless the three disciples joined with their teacher in prayer. And to this prayer meeting of four was the promise fulfilled that "where two or three are gathered together, etc."

THE ANSWER. THE TRANSFIGURATION.—And was transfigured before them. The word rendered "transfigured" implies not merely a change of outward form, but a real, essential change. A foreshadowing or prophecy of his true form—comes out in his transfiguration. And his face did shine as the sun. Nothing less than the brightest and most glorious of all objects within human knowledge, could express the radiant glories of Jesus' face, when his heavenly nature shone through the veil of his flesh. And his raiment was white as the light: i. e., luminously white "as no fuller on earth can whiten them," a supernatural whiteness.

THE CONFERENCE OF THE THREE GLORIFIED ONES.—V. 3. And, behold, there appeared unto them, i. e., the disciples) Moses and Elias: the Greek form of Elijah. These persons were really present. Luke says "they appeared in glory," i. e., in their glorified bodies; something like that of the transfigured Jesus, but with less radiance.

REPRESENTATIVE PERSONS. These two were representative persons especially adapted for this meeting with Jesus

(1) Moses was the representative of the Law, which was our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ; he had foretold his coming, and through him had been instituted the sacrifices which Christ fulfilled, and which explained his sacrifice on the cross.

(2) Elijah was the representative of THE PROPHETS who foretold the coming of the Christ and prepared the way for him, and had expressly pictured the sufferings of the Messiah, as well as his kingly glory. Elijah was the one who was to prepare the way of the Lord, by his character and spirit reappearing in John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. Talking with him. The representatives of the Law, the Prophets, and the gospel conversed together. The subject of their conversation is reported by Luke. They spoke of his death, his departure, which included his death, resurrection, and ascension. This conversation would enable the disciples to see the importance and necessity of that which they most dreaded, and which was to them the greatest mystery.

THE THREE WITNESSES.—V. 4. We learn from Luke that the three disciples during their long season of prayer had been heavy with sleep, but had resisted the drowsy influence and kept awake. Their reward was that they saw his glory. Then answered Peter. After they had looked on awhile, and the heavenly guests were departing Peter answered not to any question, but to the feelings and questionings that the scene awakened in his mind. And said unto Jesus. Anxious to continue in such heavenly company. Lord, it is good for us to be here. The experience was good, and would make him a better and more useful man all the rest of his life. It exalted his knowledge of Jesus as a Saviour. It increased his faith.

It enabled him to bear more bravely his burdens. If thou wilt. Art willing. Let us. The disciples. Make three tabernacles, or booths, from the bushes on the mountain, like those used at the feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus made no answer. The events that followed were the answer. There was need for them all in the world below. Working for Jesus was better than standing and gazing at his glory. All that was gained upon the mountain top must be taken down into the sinful, sorrowing world. There the light must shine.

THE DIVINE TESTIMONY.—Vs. 5-7. While he yet spake, was speaking. A bright cloud. Like the shekinah in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and in the Temple when it was dedicated by Solomon. Over-shadowed them. Thus Moses and Elijah were hidden from their sight. And behold a voice out of the cloud. The same voice which had been heard once before at the baptism, and which was to be heard again when he stood on the threshold of his passion (John 12:28), attesting his divinity and Sonship at the beginning, at the middle, and at the close of his ministry. This is my beloved Son. Adding the voice of God to the attestation of the scene itself, and interpreting the scene. Hear ye him. For he is the ambassador of God, bringing the message of love from heaven. They fell on their face, and were sore afraid. For God himself was there. The great manifestations of God's power close at hand fill the soul with dread solemnity. Jesus came and touched them. Expressive of an almost brotherly tenderness. Be not afraid. Only in Jesus can we draw nigh to God without dread.

THE RETURN TO THE WORLD.—Vs. 8, 9. They saw no man. The two heavenly visitants had passed away in the cloud. As they came down. To where the other disciples were waiting. Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision, the things seen, the spectacle, to no man, etc. Because they could not fully understand its meaning until then, so as to tell it aright, as to Jesus' nature, his death, his resurrection, the future life.

LESSONS FROM THE TRANSFIGURATION.

God gives great comfort in great needs. Jesus himself was nearing the hour of his supreme trial. How he dreaded that hour is seen at Gethsemane. By the transfiguration doubtless Jesus was reassured as to his own nature and work.

Like the disciples, we have a vision of the true glory of Jesus.

We are assured of the reality of the life beyond the grave.

The harmony of the law, prophets, and gospel was made manifest. Here were representatives of "the whole family in heaven and earth."

Christians are nearest together in doctrine when nearest to Christ in heavenly experience. The best Christians differ least in essentials. The churches, become one on the Mount of transfiguration. The differences in the light of our little lamps are all absorbed in the radiance of the sun.

We all need the highest and sweetest experiences of the love of Christ, to see him in his beauty and glory, to feel the breath of heaven, and hear the voice of God. (1) It widens the outlook, giving earthly things their true place in life. (2) It gives a clearer view of the end to which we are working, of the state to which God would bring all men. (3) It helps us bear our burdens, overcome our temptations, do our Christian work. (4) It helps to change us into the image of Christ.

The disciples were not allowed to remain on the Mount. They must descend to their duties in a sinful world. But the blessing was not lost. A deep experience in a Christian, a true revival in a church, are not lost because they do not continue in this form. They bless all the remaining time, and one fails of his best usefulness unless he has had the transfiguration experience.

Character in The Teacher.

In his very interesting and instructive Yale lectures the late Phillips Brooks defines preaching as consisting of truth and personality. Precisely the same definition may be given of teaching. It may not be possible to determine how large a part, in either case, consists of personality, but it is beyond question that it is not inconceivable.

It is well nigh essential that there shall be a living teacher to communicate truth to the heart of the pupil.

What, then, shall be required on the part of the teacher? Manifestly a fair measure of knowledge of the truth to be taught, and some skill in the practical use of the methods and appliances of teaching, but chiefly a noble, beautiful Christian character. The life of the teacher is continually impressing itself upon the life of the scholar. It is not only true of such great teachers as Mark Hopkins, President Selye, and Professor Park; but it is true also, in a larger or smaller way, of every man or woman who fills the place of teacher in the most obscure class of any humble Sunday-school. The words that break from the lips are of some significance, but they are easily spoken, and how soon forgotten; the life, however, is constantly bodying itself forth, and its influences are straightway wrought into the lives of the scholars and there become vital forces.

If the teacher is gentle, gracious, Christlike, a man or woman of radiant and saintly personality, it does not matter so much what the teaching, so called, is, for this gracious and heavenly personality infuses it with beautiful and noble and divine meanings, and insures the highest and nobles results. For so The Word had breath, and wrought With human hands the creed of creeds In loveliness of perfect deeds, Which we may read that binds, he shed Or build the house, or lig the grave.

For the teaching of life is unconsciously learned even by the simplest minds. It is also the teaching of life that makes the deepest and most permanent impression upon the profoundest minds. Truth wrought into life becomes thus powerful in the teacher, and powerfully affects the pupil. It is vital because it is embodied in a living being. It speaks when no voice is heard, and moves when no motion is perceived. It shines on the face, it gleams in the eye, it thrills in every movement of him who is enthralled by it. The truth has thus been transformed into character, and so is enabled to transform character.

First of all, let the teacher be a good man, a good woman; one who often enters into communion with God; who knows thus the mind of Christ; who speaks true and beautiful words because no others will express the high character which lies behind the formal expression. If the teaching be good such a character will enforce it, ennoble it, vastly improve it. If the teaching—from the pedagogical viewpoint—be poor, such a character will nevertheless make it good. There can be no poor teaching where the character is great and beautiful and divine, for such great character insures great teaching, and the teaching process goes on continually. The teacher of noble character teaches in her home, on the street, everywhere. It was St. Francis of Assisi who said, "We have preached Christ as we walked."—Pilgrim Teacher.

SUCCESS PROVERBS.—Find your purpose and fling your life out to it. Try to be somebody with all your might.

What is put into the first of life is put into the whole of life. Start right.

The first thing to do, if you have not done it, is to fall in love with your work.

Don't brood over the past nor dream of the future; but seize the instant and get the lesson from the hour.

Poverty and hardship have ever been the great schoolmasters of the race, and have forced into prominence many a man who would otherwise have remained unknown.

Necessity is the priceless spur. Give a youth resolution and the alphabet, and who shall place limits to his career?

Don't wait for extraordinary opportunities; seize common occasions and make them great.

A great opportunity will only make you ridiculous unless you are prepared for it.

The lucky man is the man who sees and grasps his opportunity.

Don't dally with your purpose. Not many things indifferently, but one thing supremely.

The world always listens to a man with a will in him.

The man with an idea has ever changed the face of the world.

Find a way or make one. Every thing is either pusher or pushed.

There is nothing small in a world where a mud crack swells to a Amazon, and the stealing of a penny may end on the scaffold.

Not everything that succeeds is success. A man may make millions and be a failure still.

Guard your weak point. Be Lord over yourself.—Success.

Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm.

The Dented Bed.

Bertie came home every day at twelve to his lunch. His mother noticed how quiet he was up stairs. One day she toiled up the stairs after he had gone and pushed open the door of her boy's room. There, on the edge of the cot, were two dents where his elbows had rested, and she read his secret at once. The young man spent the middle of the day on his knees, pleading for grace to keep him from temptation. Like Daniel of old he knelt three times a day. Always after that day the loving mother crept upstairs to look for the dents in Bertie's cot. She measured her boy's spiritual life by the dents in his cot. She knew that as long as prayer was a power in his life so would he rapidly grow in grace. Now and again she missed the dents, but as a rule the little signs were there to comfort her anxious heart.

Are there any dents in your cot, young reader? Do you know what it is to spend a certain time each day in communion with God?—Phil. Standard.

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The Song-Service.

The song service in the Sunday-school should never be a "hurrah boys" affair, the children being spurred to effort by exhortations to sing louder, to "lift the roof off," etc. It may be spirited, but it certainly should be tender, reverent, devout. More attention should be paid to singing with the spirit and understanding than with unthinking volume of sound. In this respect the teachers, as well as the chorister, should set the example. They should not consider it a time in which they can chat with their fellow teachers, or with any of their scholars, for that will give the impression that singing is of little importance. Let them throw their soul into the service, and they will find, that some of their scholars, at least, will follow their example. Sometimes a word in relation to a hymn, as to its meaning or origin, or the relation of an incident connected with it, will give to it a new significance and cause it to be sung with more feeling.—Pilgrim Teacher

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