

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL L.E.-SON.

Third Quarter Lesson 12, Sept. 16, 1900

THE RICH FOOL—Luke 12: 13-23.

Read Luke 10: 38-12: 34.
Commit Verses 10-21.GOLDEN TEXT.—*What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?—Mark 8: 36.*

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—November or December, A. D. 29, immediately following the last lesson.

Place.—Probably in Perea, beyond Jordan.

Jesus.—About 33 years old. On his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem.

THE REQUEST FOR JESUS TO BE A JUDGE CONCERNING PROPERTY.—V. 13

One of the company. Not a disciple, but one of the hearers. Said unto him. Perhaps interrupting the discourse.

All the good he seems to have got out of it was to see that Jesus was wise. It is quite probable he had failed in his effort to obtain his rights. *Speak to my brother.* He does not ask Jesus to arbitrate between him and his brother, but to give a decision against his brother. *That he divide the inheritance with me.* In the East there is comparatively little wealth in the easily convertible form of coin, but a man's property is estimated very much as in the days of Abraham, by the number of his flocks and herds, and of his household goods, as changes of raiment.

This man was probably one of the younger brothers, who had been defrauded out of his portion.

THE POSITION OF JESUS IN REFERENCE TO SUCH QUESTIONS.—V. 14

And he said unto him, Man. The form "O man" was one which expressed censure. Was it for this that men came to him, instead of seeking for the kingdom of God? This is the only instance of our Lord's so addressing one who had come to him as a questioner. *Who made (appointed) me a judge. A public officer of a worldly kingdom. Or a divider, i. e., umpire, arbitrator.*

Why Jesus Refused to Decide This Case. (1) Because it would be an interference with the government, and entirely out of place. It would have given occasion for the government to interfere with his great work. (2) It would have given the people a wrong idea of the Messiah and his kingdom, confirming their idea that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince, and his kingdom of this world. (3) He would lead the man to higher good, to a heavenly inheritance, and the principles of the kingdom of God. It was of infinitely more importance to this man that he should have the right spirit than that he should possess any amount of property.

Modern Applications. 1. Christ's church should be separate from the State.

2. It is the business of Christ's church to inculcate those great principles which will lead to all true reform.

3. The greatest power in reform is the conversion of men from the love of sin to the love of righteousness. This makes all good reforms possible, this inspires and carries them out.

4. The Christian minister, like his Master, proclaim true principles, opposes all wrong, advocates all right, but does take part in personal quarrels between selfish people.

THIS INCIDENT A WARNING AGAINST COVETOUSNESS.—V. 15

And he said unto them. The people he was addressing when the man interrupted him. *Takes heed.* Look out. Have your eyes open to the danger which besets you all. *Be wary of covetousness.* Guard yourselves from covetousness, all forms of covetousness.

Covetousness (1) is not a mere desire for more; for that desire, in some form, is ever appealed to in the Bible, and is the root of all civilization and progress. (2) Covetousness is the overstrong desire for more, uncontrolled by reason, or conscience, or the Word of God,—a desire that is willing to gain for itself (a) at the expense of others, (b) at the expense of higher and better things. It is not coveting to desire a house, but to desire it so as to deprive our neighbor of it, or to gain it by wrong-doing. All true gains, all true increase, are such as benefit both parties and the community in general.

Specimens of Covetous Men:—

Laban (Gen. 31: 41, 42).

Achan (Josh. 7: 20, 21).

Eli's sons (1 Sam. 2: 12-17).

Samuel's sons (1 Sam. 8: 3).

Saul (1 Sam. 15: 9, 19).

Ahab (1 Kings 21: 1-4).

Gehazi (2 Kings 5: 20-24).

Priests of Israel (Isa. 56: 11; Mal. 1: 10).

Judas (Matt. 26: 14-16; John 12: 6).

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-10).

Dimitrius (Acts 19: 24-27).

Felix (Acts 24: 25, 26).

Covetousness Leads to the Breaking of All the Other Commandments. Every sin is born of desire, and this intense desire, which would gain its end at any or every cost, is the fountain whence flows the sins forbidden by the commandments. "The love of money is the root of all evil." It is the worship of mammon; it leads to false oaths, and Sabbath breaking, and dishonoring parents, to murder and adultery, and stealing, and lying. The Covetous Life is a Failure.

For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, i. e., It does not follow, because a man has abundance, that his life consists in wealth. Life depends for its value upon the use we make of our possessions. Wealth cannot prevent disease and death, as in the parable that follows. The things that are essential to the best and happiest life can neither be given nor taken away by wealth; they belong to all, as the sunshine and fresh air.

'Dying, Horace Greeley exclaimed: 'Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer to-day will curse to-morrow, only one thing endures'—character.'

JESUS ILLUSTRATES HIS TEACHING BY A PARABLE.—V. 16-21

The ground of a certain rich man. This man is represented as rich, not because successful covetousness is worse than unsuccessful covetousness, but because the rich are more exposed to this sin, and to show that even if one gains all that his covetousness desires, still it is folly. *Brought forth plentifully.* His crime was not dishonesty, though we do not know how he acquired his land. His sin was in greedy and selfish use of these gains. The man was successful, as the world goes. *And he thought within himself.* He talked with himself. *What shall I do.* He did not know how to invest his surplus. He does not seem to have thought of using it for God and humanity. *No room where to bestow my fruits.* All the products of his land. He looked everywhere but to heaven for a place in which to lay up his treasures. *I will pull down my barns.* He was planning for a long life, and larger worldly resources. *I will say to my soul.* His conscious self. *Much goods laid up for many years.* He counted on a long life, and imagined that his "much goods" could satisfy his soul. *Takes thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* Such was his conception of life! *But God said.* By whom his days were controlled. *Thou fool.* So different from what the shrewd man thought he was. *This night.* Instead of his proposed "many years." *Thy soul shall be required of thee.* So far from raving a vast store of gratifications for his soul, his soul itself is not his own; and, regarded as his organ of pleasure, is now reclaimed by God. *Then whose shall those things be.* It would make little difference to him whose they were, since they were not his and could no longer minister to his pleasure.

The Mistakes of this Man. He made a mistake in thinking there was no place for produce except in barns.

He supposed his riches would be a comfort to him when they were hoarded, whereas they became then only a care and a burden. The nearest approach to the old disease of the possession of things that we have in modern times is exhibited when a man is possessed of the money he thinks he possesses.

He left out of his thoughts all consideration of the infinite God who made and owned him. He says, 'my barns, my goods, my fruits, and even my soul.' *So is he.* A complete fool, a miserable failure. *Layeth up treasure for himself.* Not in heaven, not in humanity, not in character. *And is not rich toward God.* Rich in those things which God loves, and which bring him near to God,—rich in love, in character, in good works, in deeds of kindness, in labors and gifts for the salvation of men. The only man who is really rich is he who is rich toward God.JESUS STRIKES AT THE ROOT OF COVETOUSNESS.—V. 22, 23. Therefore. As the conclusion from the parable and the incident that led to it. *Takes no thought.* This translation has troubled many a tender conscience. The Greek for take no thought is literally, be not drawn in different directions, be not distracted, be not anxious. *For your life, what ye shall eat.* To support life. Make not your physical and temporal wants the special and great objects of thought and care. Do not let them burden you so that you cannot give your time, and thought, and money to better things. *The life is more than meat.* The kind of life you live, the best use of your life, its highest powers, its greatest enjoyments are of vastly more importance than the kind of food and clothing you have. If one or the other must be neglected, let it be the one of least value.

Jesus goes on to show the reasons: God's loving care, treasure in heaven, the promise that if we seek first the kingdom of God, our bodily wants will be cared for.

Observe that this command does not tend to idleness or want of thrift, or to poverty, but on the contrary, to the best prosperity, and to the best enjoyment of whatever God gives us; while over-anxiety tends to dishonesty, to crime, to selfishness, to disappointment, and to bitterness of spirit.

The Commercial Traveler's Reminiscence.

AN INCIDENT FROM LIFE.

One day while I was in the northern part of North Dakota, riding in a train from Grafton to Cavalier, two commercial travelers sat in the seat just in front of me. The streaks of gray through the once black hair indicated they had passed life's middle mile-post. Their manner and conversation disclosed the fact that they were old chums who had not been together for some time. They chatted enthusiastically of former days, and one by one old friends, whose names they had almost forgotten, were recalled. I paid little attention to their conversation until I heard them say something about church,—a subject rather foreign to the average commercial traveler in the West,—then, without appearing to be attentive, I listened for every word. This is what I heard.

Do you remember Miss L. —?

I certainly do.

Well, she was my Sunday-school teacher before the war, when we lived in B—. There was a class of twelve or thirteen of us boys, ranging in age from fifteen to eighteen. We were, as boys go, rather wild and reckless, and sometimes we tried her patience to the utmost; yet she was always so kind and gentle—ever trying to say and do something to interest us—that every one of us thought the world of her.

The war broke one. Some of us, old enough, enlisted, and others not old enough ran away and joined the army. Most of the class were at the front. Her faithfulness was just as true to us on the battlefield as in the Sunday-school, for, as regularly as the first of the month receive a letter from her saying that she missed her boys so much, and telling us she was praying that we might be true soldiers, that we might be kept safely, and returned to meet friends and loved ones again. I tell you, it was a great comfort in those trying times to get such news every month.

Well, the war closed, and we all came back only to separate in a short time as the boys entered business in different parts of the country. Nevertheless, I believe, Tom, her faithfulness has followed us even to-day, for nine years ago I got a letter from her asking me to attend a reunion of the old Sunday-school class in St. Louis, where she now lives. As my route was planned for another part of the country for that time, I had to send her my regrets. A few days after, however, I discovered that the firm would have some business for me in St. Louis shortly, and I secured permission to go there at that particular time. Arriving in the early evening, and having the street and number of her home, I readily found the house. I rang the door-bell, and she herself answered the call. As soon as she saw me, she said, Why, it's Frank! And, do you know, she hadn't seen me for nearly twenty years. I tell you, I feel like a Sunday-school scholar again.

Faithful Sunday-school teacher of that class of boys! you may have thought you were making little impression on those lives as you met them Sunday after Sunday, but, if you could have heard one of your scholars tell this as I heard him, your heart would go out with greater gratitude to God that he kept you faithful in your work. Who knows what your influence has kept him from all these many years? I do not know your name, but expect to in the sweet by-and-by; for when I have greeted my Saviour, as I enter the pearly gates, I shall want him to send my angel with me to introduce me to you, that I may tell you that not only were those boys helped by your work, but one other, at least, when difficulties and discouragements confronted him, was led to take on new courage, and press on with new zeal, on account of this new evidence that 'those who sow in tears will reap in joy.'—S. S. Times.

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If Ye Faint Not.

BY FANNY HURRELL.

Harry Lawrence was the naughtiest boy in Langton Sunday school. His teacher had remonstrated with him again and again, but entirely without effect.

At last she said to the superintendent, I must ask you to remove Harry from my class. He is so troublesome that he is quite beyond me. Yet I like the boy and shall be sorry to give him up.

Oh, don't despair about him, said Mr. Odham, the superintendent. I can assure you that your influence is already telling greatly on the lad. He is not half so bad as he used to be.

Miss Mortimer shook her head.

It is very good of you to say so, and I will keep on trying a little longer, but I fear it is of no use.

That Sunday night she had a strange dream. She thought she was digging a little plot of ground. The soil was very poor, and seemed to yield no fruit to her labors, but something prompted her to go on working. There were several other plots around her, and some of them were very fair and beautiful. Those who tended them looked happy and satisfied. Ah! why could not she have had one of these?

At last she thought in her dream that she really must throw her tools on one side, and give up this fruitless task, when she suddenly heard a voice beside her, saying these words, Be not weary in well-doing. * * * Ye shall reap, if ye faint not.

She turned and saw the Master to whom each plot belonged. She knew it was He, because she had seen Him in her dream going to the various workers and uttering words of encouragement.

Oh, Master, she murmured, I am so weary. The garden yields nothing. It is useless to go on toiling. Shall I ever gain any reward for my labors?

Again the tender voice spoke, if ye faint not.

The next Sunday her naughty pupil was missing, and on going to inquire for him she found he was very ill with congestion of the lungs. Her heart went out to the boy more than it had ever done, and she stayed sometime with him.

When she rose to go the boy's gaze was fixed on her face as if he wanted to say something.

What is it, laddie? she asked kindly.

I'm so glad you didn't give in, teacher. I thought I would just see who could hold out the longest, you or me, and you did. * * *

If I get better I've made up my mind to be different, with God's help.

Miss Mortimer recalled her dream. She bent down and kissed her tiresome pupil. How true God was to his promise, she thought reverently.—London Sunday-School Times.

Untying Knots.

All you have to do is simply your duty. I stood in a factory a short time ago, and learned a deep lesson. As I entered, all seemed confusion.—the buzz of machinery, the whirl of everything dazed me. But I soon saw that all was right, and that each one was doing the task assigned to her. I stood and looked at a young girl whose work was to untie knots in threads as they were passing over the wheel. All day long she simply untied knots. Now, if she had said: This is such a little thing to do and I get so tired of it, I think I will try to do what the girl next to me is doing, she would have damaged the whole work. The simple thing of untying the knots had to do with the beauty and finish of this whole design—Selected.

BUTTONS ON THE BACK OF A COAT.—When a man carried a sword he held his sword belt in place by means of two buttons on the back of the coat. But though swords and sword-belts have long gone out of fashion the two buttons on the back of the coat still remain, and no man would consider his outway or his frock coat properly finished if it did not have two buttons placed in the small of the back immediately above the coat tails.

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