

PREFACE

The Gospel according to Mark is the subject of study in number two and three of the first volume of the Bible Student. The study manuals generally devote an entire year (50 or 52 lessons) to the study of one of the Gospels. In order to make possible the treatment of Mark in 24 lessons, the editor has employed as much condensation of the comment and other lesson material as was consistent with the plan and purpose of the Bible Student. It will be noted that a large amount of explanatory matter is embodied (in parentheses) with the text of the Gospel. The comment itself has been limited to points necessary for the study of the text. Frequently the lessons which Christian readers are to draw from the various incidents in the life of Christ, as related by Mark, are merely indicated by a brief sentence. The Questions and Applications are added to lead into a richer comprehension of the text and of its teachings.

Two important new features are introduced into this number of our manual: The reading of parallels and the retelling of the story by members of the class.

The Parallels: Wherever so indicated, the parallel account ought to be looked up in class and read. It is surprising how much light will often be cast upon the lesson in this manner. Also, the student will thus be led into more intimate acquaintance with the gospel narrative. Instead of reading parallels in class, they may be assigned to individual members (or to a group) for home study, to be reported on orally in connection with the retelling of the lesson-text.

Retelling the Story: A retelling of the story is frequently called for in these lessons. The purpose is to deepen the impression of the text and to supply, at the same time, another opportunity for self-expression by the class. If time is lacking, the reading of the parallels in class may be omitted. The retelling of the story should be called for wherever indicated. This, too, may be assigned in advance to a member of the class, or the leader may call upon a member to retell the story impromptu.

Not all classes are alike. Some will ask many questions, others few, some will work fast, others slow. It is believed that the average class will be able to complete each of the twenty-four lessons within a sixty minute study period. If it is found that the study of the lessons transgresses this allowance of time, various expedients may be used in order to complete each manual in twelve weeks. 1) The reading of the portions from Mark, as suggested in the directions above, by the class-leader instead of verse by verse by members of the class; this will mean a saving of time if the class leader has carefully studied the text in advance so as to insure rapid reading. 2) The various sections which constitute the lessons may be assigned in advance each to a student, or to a group of students, if the class is organized into groups. Such special advance work (in addition to the preliminary reading of the lessons which all students are expected to do) will very much speed up the work in class. 3) Each student (or group) may be given one Application or Question (the matter in italics, or slanting type), to report on when the class meets. 4) Out of each lesson an entire section may be assigned to the class, or to a group in the class, to be reported on at the next meeting. In such case, none of the

THE BIBLE STUDENT

A Bible Study Quarterly
for Young People, Adult Bible Classes
and Home Study

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Chapters 1—8



THE WALTHER LEAGUE OF THE EV. LUTHERAN
SYNODICAL CONFERENCE,

6438 Eggleston Avenue, - Chicago, Illinois

THE BIBLE STUDENT

Price: Single copies 20 cents each; 70 cents a year (4 quarterlies), postpaid; 10 or more copies to one address, 60 cents a year each.

Published Quarterly at 263 4th Street, Milwaukee, Wis.

Entered as second class matter June 26, 1922, at the post office at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Address all communications to the Walther League Service Department, 6438 Eggleston Ave., Chicago, Ill.

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DIRECTIONS

These lessons may be studied by Bible classes according to customary lines, the leader or chairman reading the basic lesson material (printed in heavy black type) and the class members in rotation reading the other material, looking up Scripture references, and answering questions.

Wherever practical or desirable, the following scheme of class organization may be adopted:

Organize the class in groups of three. If the class numbers more than thirty, make groups of four or more. The number of groups in the class should never be more than ten.

Each group chooses a group leader who holds office for one quarter or for one year, as the class may decide.

The group leaders serve in rotation as class leaders, each in one meeting, until all have served, when the leader of group number one serves again as class leader, and so through to group number ten.

The class leader of each meeting takes his or her place at the table with the chairman, who is the pastor or some one appointed by him or chosen with his approval.

The chairman, if chosen by the class, will serve one quarter, or a year, as the class may determine. He has general control of the meeting and directs the study of the lessons during the Bible hour. He may apportion details of this work to the class leader as he may see fit.

You will note that each lesson consists of opening devotion, lesson study material, and closing devotion. The chairman, or in his absence the class leader, opens and closes each meeting, by reading the prayers and Scripture lessons indicated and by announcing the hymns.

The passage to be studied in a particular lesson (portions printed in heavy type) is read by the class leader. The comment on the lesson printed in ordinary Roman type (like this) is read by the group leaders, in rotation.

All material printed in italics (*slanting letters*) is read by the class, each group being given one section in rotation. A member of group One reads the first italicized section, looks up and reads texts referred to (all other members of the class looking up these texts in their own Bibles), and answers any questions printed in that section. The next section is taken up precisely in the same way by group number two and so on. These sections may be so assigned to the groups for study in advance.

The chairman will intersperse as he sees fit explanations and application, supplementary to the material contained in the printed lessons. He will also give opportunity for questions by members of the class, in addition to the question material of the lesson. He will also occasionally ask a member to tell the contents of a chapter, or paraphrase a story in his own words. Written reports of this nature may be called for at intervals. The lessons are considered not as a maximum but as a minimum for Bible class work. Frequent opportunity should be given to the members of the class to sing hymns of their own choice especially at the close of the meeting. The hymns indicated are numbered according to the new Lutheran hymn-book of the Missouri Synod. Where the

hymns are missing in the Wisconsin Synod hymn-book others are supplied. The first line of every hymn being given, other hymnals may be used. When singing hymns the class ought to rise.

The group leaders see to it that the members have their Bibles with them. They also distribute the hymnals, and in other ways aid in the management of the class and its work.

In the use of these lessons, the utmost variety is permissible. For instance, it is possible to leave all italicized lesson study material for home work. Or written reports may be asked, each group reporting on one of the numbered portions. At first the looking-up of texts will take much time, but there is no better way to get acquainted with the whole Bible. If the texts to be looked up (referred to in italicized portions) are assigned to individuals (or to groups), there will be a saving of time for the class meeting.

lesson material of this section except the text itself would be read in class. The entire work on such section would consist in a report from members of the class.

If one or several of the above suggestions are carried out, there will be no trouble in finishing Mark in twenty-four lessons. Now some cautions and don'ts:

DON'T, for the sake of "getting through," omit the "Questions." These questions are designed to be **thought-compellers**. Furthermore, they are intended to call out discussion, action, so that the class does not merely listen to a lecture while in session but **studies the Bible and discusses it**.

DON'T omit looking up the references called for in the comment and questions. These references are essential to the understanding of the lesson. By looking them up, you enable the Bible to **interpret itself**. Hence these lessons cannot be properly used unless each member has a Bible at hand.

DON'T try to gain time by omitting the hymns. These have been selected with the greatest care and will add greatly to the deepening of impressions. Sing them, or at least sing a number of stanzas judiciously selected from each. They will prove a wonderful stimulant to the class.

Once more,

Don't omit the Questions, the References, the Hymns!

And now one more caution. Do not think, because the incidents of the Gospel narrative are familiar to us, that we cannot receive from them new knowledge, new impressions of divine truth, new strength for daily life, new comfort and hope. The Bible is an inexhaustible well of Living Water. You will never go in vain when you go to it for knowledge, strength, and consolation. You will find this to be true when you study Mark. All that the editor's comment on the lessons can do is to remove obstacles to the understanding of the text. His work is not a substitute for the work of the class, but only an aid to it. If it will open anew the eyes of our Bible student to the unsearchable riches of Christ and His salvation, as taught in miracle, parable, and life, the purpose which this Bible Study Quarterly is designed to serve has been served.

And may God bless you!

THE EDITOR.

Remember: The Bible Student is not written according to the Church year. It may therefore be used at any time. The date appearing on the front cover is required by postal authorities and has no relation to our series. The volume dated July, 1922, for example, may just as well be used in December, 1923.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

FIRST LESSON

Mark 1, 1-8

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Hail to the Lord's Anointed (No. 132)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 148. Prayer

1. INTRODUCTION

Before we begin the study of the Gospel itself, it will be interesting to know something about the man who wrote it,—“John whose surname (additional name) was Mark.” John was his Hebrew name and Mark his Roman name. His mother was a prominent member of the congregation at Jerusalem, and Barnabas was his cousin. Mark was a companion of Paul during his first and second imprisonment at Rome and maintained active relations also with Peter. When Barnabas and Paul left Jerusalem to go to Antioch they took Mark with them; and later he went with them on their missionary journey. They met with opposition and persecution, and when they had reached Perga, Mark was discouraged and turned back, not to Antioch, but to Jerusalem to his mother's house. But twelve years later when Paul was in prison he wrote to Timothy “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me . . . take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” 2 Timothy 4, 9.11. The servant who had turned back because he did not have the courage to face the difficulties, had become so valuable that Paul longed to have his companionship.

According to very ancient testimony Mark had the assistance of Peter the apostle in the writing of this gospel. Undoubtedly this tradition is a reliable one, since the Gospel according to Mark, while not written by an apostle, yet is characterized by such vivid clearness of style and wealth of ideas that it must have been written under the direct guidance of an eye-witness of the events. It is very full and exact in most of its statements concerning the apostle Peter. It is possible that Mark, though not a disciple of Jesus, was at least a witness of some of the events of Holy Week. His mother was evidently a woman of some wealth, occupying her own house, and employing several servants or slaves. Her house was used as a church and formed an important Christian center. It is more than probable that Mark was converted by Peter when that apostle dwelt as an inmate of this Christian family in the same house.

Mark's Gospel was written about thirty-five years after the crucifixion. That it was published at Rome is attested by many ancient Christian writers. It was written in Greek and addressed to the Christian converts from heathendom, especially to those living in Rome. This is shown by its careful explanation of Jewish customs and localities, by its explanations of Aramaic words, and by the numerous expressions derived from the Latin. Because intended for Christian converts from the heathen world it contains few quotations from the Old Testament. The Gospel contains few of our Lord's many discourses, dealing almost entirely with objective facts from the ministry of Jesus, especially the miracles of healing, which it describes with great fullness.

Rapid movement is characteristic of the second Gospel; it is history written by a young man, eager, intent, who could appreciate and describe the marvellous accomplishments of the Servant of Jehovah. "Straightway" was his favorite word; he used it forty times in his book, and eleven times in the first chapter.

The Gospel according to Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels. An introduction treats the activity of John the Baptist, Christ's Baptism and Temptation. To the end of chapter nine the ministry of Christ in Galilee is described, and from chapter ten onward, His ministry in Judea, His Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension.

Let us now study the passages of the New Testament from which we obtain our information regarding the evangelist.

Read Acts 12, 12.25. 13, 5.1.3. 15, 37.39. His name.

Read Col. 4, 10.11. His Jewish birth. A cousin of Barnabas.

Read Acts 12, 12-17. His mother.

Read 1 Pet. 5, 13. Acts 12, 12. Indications that he was converted by Peter.

Read Acts 12, 25. 13, 5.13. With Paul on his first missionary journey.

Read Acts 15, 37-39. Dissension with Paul.

Read Col. 4, 10.11. Philemon 24. 2 Tim. 4, 11. Companion of Paul in his captivity.

OUTLINE LIFE OF CHRIST

The following outline of Christ should be frequently referred to while studying the Gospel:

1. Period of Preparation.

The "Silent Years" from infancy to the age of 30. Birth. Flight to Egypt. Visit to the temple when twelve years of age. Boyhood years in Nazareth.

2. The Year of Obscurity.

Place: Principally Judea.

Events: Baptism and Temptation. Miracle at Cana. First Passover and Cleansing of the temple. Conversation with Nicodemus. Visit to Samaria. (Our source for most of the information regarding this year is the Gospel according to John.)

3. The Year of Popularity.

Place: Mainly in Eastern and Southern Galilee.

Events: John's imprisonment. Second Passover attended. Tour of Galilee with four disciples. The Twelve chosen, followed by Sermon on the Mount. The tour of the twelve.

Miracles: The paralytic. The centurion's servant. The widow's son. The tempest stilled. Jairus' daughter. And many others.

4. The Year of Opposition.

Place: Northern Galilee, later in Perea beyond Jordan.

Events: Death of John. Circuit in Tyre, Sidon, and Decapolis. The Transfiguration. Tour of the Seventy. Perea ministry.

Miracles: Feeding the 5000. Syrophenician's daughter. Man born blind. And many others.

5. The Year of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

Place: In Perea, later in Judea.

Events: Retirement at Ephraim. Visit to Perea. Entry in Jerusalem. Passover and institution of the Lord's Supper. Trial before Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate. Crucifixion, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension.

Miracles: Raising Lazarus. Ten lepers. Bartimeus. Withered fig-tree. Malchus.

1. THE APPEARANCE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Mark 1, 2-8

2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. 3. The voice (is heard) of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.

4. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; 7. and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet (string) of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8. I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

The rise of Christianity was preceded by a long period of 400 years, during which prophecy was silent. The Jewish people possessed the revelation of God in the Old Testament, but the religious guidance of the nation passed to the rabbis and the scribes, who made void the law of God by their traditions. The advent of Christ was heralded by a great revival of prophecy. God again began to communicate directly with His people, as in the case of Zacharias, Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, the Shepherds, the Wise Men, and in particular John the Baptist, declared by our Lord to be the greatest of the prophets, yea, and more than a prophet.

About the year 26 (Jesus was born four years before the Christian year 1), the Baptist began his public ministry. The place was the wilderness of Judea, a desert tract about ten miles wide to the west of the Dead Sea. His dress and food are described. "Camel's hair" was either a camel's skin or cloth woven from camel's hair. John's dress was a protest against luxurious robes of soft wool, fashionable at the time. Locusts are still eaten by Orientals, chiefly by the poorer classes. They are eaten either boiled or roasted, sometimes fried in olive oil. Wild honey was either obtained from combs built in crevices of the rocks or the reference is to a juice exuded by certain trees, properly called tree honey. Rough in aspect, clad in the garb of the wilderness, nurtured on its scanty fare, passionately earnest, with fiery directness of speech, John shook the land to the core with his preaching of repentance. A strangely mingled company surrounded him on the Jordan. Wild tribesmen from Bashan, shepherds from the glens of Gilead, peasants from the rich vales westward, fishermen from Galilee, merchant, money-changer, tax-gatherer, soldier, Pharisee and priest, were there, drawn by the irresistible attraction of "a man sent from God."

John was a very humble man. He shrank from human praise and commendation. When they asked him if he were the Messiah, he said he was only "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He did not care to have his name advertised. All he wished to be was a voice

proclaiming the divine message. The quotation in verse two is taken partly from Mal. 3, 1 and partly from Isa. 40, 3. "Make ready the way of the Lord! Make smooth the highway before Him!" The Lord is approaching, and He intends to establish His throne in the hearts of men. Only penitent humble sinners are admitted into this Kingdom. So prepare your minds and hearts! The rocks of self-righteousness, of pride, of reliance on personal merit or good character, will bar the King from the hearts. These must be removed so thoroughly that not a trace is left behind.

Read the parallel in Luke 3, 1-18.

Application: Repentance is not mere sorrow for a sin but a real change of mind and life. It includes 1. sorrow for sin, as an offence against God; 2. confession of sin; 3. amendment of life. All three factors are prominent in the preaching of John. There is no Christian faith and no forgiveness of sins without such repentance.

From John 1, 25 it is clear that there was a general expectation that the Messiah and those associated with Him would baptize. The preaching of John therefore was not out of harmony with the Messianic hopes of the people, and many came to be baptized of him, confessing their sins.

John said that he himself was not worthy to perform the meanest of all services for the Messiah. It was the office of the meanest slave to unloosen the master's shoes.

Read John 13, 1-20 and observe how the Savior Himself condescended to the place and the task of the lowliest servant.

To the promise v. 8 Matthew adds the term "and with fire." The reference there is directly to Christ's baptism. John would say: "My baptism is only preparing you for the greater Baptism which Jesus will give. Then you will be baptized with fire, you will receive spiritual life and sanctification and a holy zeal in God's service."

Question: How do you distinguish between the work of John the Baptist and the methods of modern revivalists?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Comfort, comfort ye my people (No. 130)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Acts 12, 1-10

Monday: Acts 12, 11-23

Tuesday: Acts 12, 24-13, 13

Wednesday: Acts 13, 14-25

Thursday: Acts 13, 26-37

Friday: Acts 13, 38-52

Saturday: Acts 14, 1-18

SECOND LESSON

Mark 1, 9-28

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: To Jordan came our Lord, the Christ (No. 401)

or Now Christ, the very Son of God (No. 403)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 84. Prayer

2. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Mark 1, 9-11

9. And it came to pass in those days, (when John was baptizing) that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: 11. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The baptism of Jesus was His consecration by the Holy Ghost (Acts 10, 38) to the three-fold office of Prophet, High Priest and King. It was His entrance upon His work of redemption; here Jesus became the Christ, (the Anointed One) says Luther; and while thus consecrated to His work, He was given the Father's assurance by the momentous words: "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

Read the parallel Matth. 3, 13-17.

The descent of the Spirit made it certain to John that he was in the presence of Messiah. Very probable, since they were cousins they were early acquainted, although previously John "knew Him not" as the Messiah, John 1, 33. As John's baptism was unto remission of sins, it seems strange to him that the holy and innocent Jesus should demand this rite. But though without sin, Jesus came to identify Himself with sinners, Gal. 4, 4, 5, to fulfill all righteousness by conforming in every part to the divine law in the place of the sinner. He was now taking His place as one with us,—Immanuel—to be our Redeemer. He had no sin of His own, and yet He stood there that day in the place of sinners. Jesus thus entered upon His mission as the Messiah, (the Christ, the Anointed One) to be the world's Redeemer.

Retell the story.

Application: We have here one of the leading passages in the New Testament for the doctrine of the Trinity. The Father bears witness not only to Christ's Messiahship, but to His eternal and divine Sonship. And lest the Baptism of Christ should be thought to indicate that He was a sinner like ourselves, the Father was pleased to pronounce Him absolutely sinless. The words are a message full of grace to mankind. As the Son is well pleasing and acceptable to the Father, so also are all those who are found in Him.

Question: Are Baptists warranted in referring to Christ's Baptism as proof for their doctrine of immersion?

3. THE TEMPTATION

Mark 1, 12-13

12. And immediately (after His Baptism) the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13. And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

The Holy Spirit sent Him forth into the wilderness, God Himself having ordained that Jesus should be tempted, that is to say, tested, tried. According to ancient tradition the wild country near Jericho was the scene of the temptation. "Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness." The stern necessity of this experience could not be more forcefully expressed. Then there followed forty days of temptation, of ceaseless combat with Satan; it was the first battle which Jesus fought for our souls. And He "was with the wild beasts." Their presence was the evidence of the effect of sin and of the power of Satan. Mark makes special note of the ministry of angels to Jesus.

Read a more complete story of the temptation Luke 4, 1-13.

Application: Heaven's eye was upon Jesus during all the time of His trial, and help was sent in every time of stress. It is the same with us when we are in any struggle or any need. God watches that we shall never be tempted above what we can bear, and that help shall always come at the right moment. His angels are ever at our side, we are never left alone in any need or danger. Read Heb. 2, 18.

Question: What was Satan's purpose in tempting our Lord?

Sing Hymn: O God Forsake Me Not (No. 347, 1-3).

or O God, Thou Faithful God (No. 155)

4. THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

Mark 1, 14-15

14. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

The Galilean ministry of our Lord commenced after John was put into prison, which was some time after He had been baptized. He was baptized late in 26 A. D., then remained for a time in the neighborhood of the Baptist, some of whose disciples attached themselves to Him and followed Him back to Galilee. In April 27 A. D. He went to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, and cleansed the temple for the first time. He then preached and baptized in Judea for about eight months. Hence the events which Mark relates occurred near the close of the year 27. It was, in a special sense, the time of fulfillment for Galilee. All the events recorded in the chapters which follow, to the end of chapter nine, constitute the Galilean ministry of our Lord.

Application: Our first duty is repentance. We can not take one step after Christ until we give up our sins. Repentance is a change of heart, a turning of the face the other way. A faith that is not joined with instant, genuine, and thorough repentance is not the faith that saves. He who bewails a sin and confesses it, secretly intending to return to it again, need not think that he is forgiven. Only by sincere repentance and faith do we enter the Kingdom of God.

Question: Christ preached the Gospel; what substitutes for the Gospel have some churches today?

5. THE FIRST DISCIPLES

Mark 1, 16-20

16. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. 18. And straightway they forsook (dropped) their nets, and followed him. 19. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

Retell the story.

Simon, Andrew, and John had already been disciples for some time (John 1. 35).^{*} Very probably the call recorded in connection with the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke 5, 1-11) was the same referred to in this chapter. They were now called to be apostles and were Christ's companions ever after. In the fact that there were hired servants in Zebedee's boat we have an indication that the family was not poor.

The compliance of the apostles was immediate, though it entailed a sacrifice of home, and business, and friends. They gave up all to follow Christ. Yet how some people today hesitate and seek excuses, when they are asked to sacrifice but a small portion of their time, or energy, or money for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom!

Can you give instances?

Note that there were many disciples,—at one time Christ sent out seventy to preach the gospel; but there were only Twelve whom He had chosen as His apostles. "Apostle" means, one who is sent. They were chosen to become eye-witnesses of His miracles, witnesses of His preaching, of His death, and of His appearance after He was risen; and they were to be the teachers of the Church.

^{*} All passages referred to in these lessons should be looked up in class and read!

6. HEALING OF THE DEMONIAK

Mark 1, 21-28

21. And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. 22. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit (possessed of the devil); and he cried out, 24. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. 25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace (be quiet), and come out of him. 26. And when the unclean spirit had torn (convulsed) him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. 28. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

Retell the story.

The cry of the evil spirit was one of fear. The very nearness of the Son of God threw him and all his evil company into a panic. The demon flees, uttering screams of terror through the unfortunate man. The people were utterly overcome with astonishment. An excited questioning arose in the school: "Who can explain this? Has He a new revelation that enables Him to deliver men from the power of demons? Does He do this by His own authority, in His own power?" They saw that He ordered the unclean spirits about, and they obey Him without question. The news spread like wildfire in the whole region of Galilee. Jesus had here demonstrated that He was indeed the Holy One of God, who had come into the world to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver all men from the bondage of Satan.

Note the expression: "As one that had authority." In this His teaching differed from that of the scribes, who were the acknowledged public instructors of Israel. But they, with all their knowledge of the law of Moses and of the rabbinical traditions, could not touch the heart with their doctrine. It is clear that there was a divine authority in the very manner of Christ's teaching. His revelations of the will and mind of God, His insight into human nature, his foretelling of the future,—all this made a most profound impression on His hearers. Jesus even as a boy of twelve had astonished the rabbis in the temple with His supernatural wisdom. And today He remains the Teacher of the world, whom all must hear unless they are to perish forever.

Questions: When did God first promise the coming of a Prophet "like unto Moses," coming as Mediator and Deliverer, and speaking with divine authority? Read Deut. 18, 18. Through whom does Christ exercise His prophetic office today?

Can you give significant instances of demoniacal possession today?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: To God, the Father of all love (No. 60, 1-4)
or To God be glory, peace on earth (No. 74)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Acts 14, 19-28

Monday: Acts 15, 1-12

Tuesday: Acts 15, 13-21

Wednesday: Acts 15, 22-31

Thursday: Acts 15, 32-41

Friday: Acts 16, 1-10

Saturday: Acts 16, 11-18

THIRD LESSON

Mark 1, 29—Chap. 2, 1-12

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: I love Thy Zion Lord (No. 468)

or Zion stands with hills surrounded (No. 465)

Psalm 90. Prayer

7. THE HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Mark 1, 29-34

29. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon (at once) they tell him of her. 31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto (waited at table for) them.

32. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33. And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34. And he healed many that were sick of divers (various) diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered (permitted) not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

Read the parallel account, Matth. 8, 14-17.

Peter was a married man (1 Cor. 9, 5). He had a house in Capernaum which he shared with his brother Andrew and apparently with his wife's mother.

Question: What argument against the Roman doctrine that priests must not marry do you derive from this passage?

How readily Peter, like the others, had left his boats and fishing-nets, and was ready to give up all for Christ! But though Jesus accepted his self-denial and sacrifice, yet by this miracle He not only convinced him that he had chosen an almighty Lord, but proved that He was able also to grant temporal blessings to those who follow Him.

Retell the story.

Application: Jesus is never indifferent to our troubles. He is ever mindful of our family cares and anxieties, all our sorrows and our joys are shared by Him.

What a spectacle—all the inhabitants bringing their sick to the door of Jesus! Even so today, Jesus has compassion on the multitudes. In heathen lands we have, in our medical mission, a work of mercy foreshadowed in these miracles of healing. But the crowd which gathered that day at Capernaum was a picture of humanity. To him who looks below the surface, the human race, apart from Christ, offers a spectacle with which no hospital, assylum, or pest house could compare. Sin, vice, crime display themselves in a thousand forms, each having its own loathsomeness, its own anguish, its own curse. Yet the power of the Redeemer is unlimited, His compassion ever unexhausted. As in the days of His flesh, He still has "compassion on the multitudes." Still He stretches out His arms, as the great marble statue in the Johns Hopkins Hospital rotunda in Baltimore pictures Him, calling: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

8. A TOUR THROUGH GALILEE

Mark 1, 35-39

35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. 37. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek (are looking) for thee. 38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Christ praying—who of us would not like to have heard Him praying! But stop, have we not some of His prayers in the New Testament? You know the one He prayed in Gethsemane, and another, soon after, on the Cross. Then we have John 17, the entire chapter, the grandest prayer in the Bible, and in the Sermon on the Mount, the "Lord's Prayer," which better than any other expresses every human need.

Question: In what respect, do you suppose, were Christ's prayers unlike our own?

In the midst of publicity, of strenuous labors, Christ prayed early in that morning hour. Shall we not say that those hills of Galilee are hallowed by the fact that the Son of God there prayed? Yet He says that wherever two or three of us are gathered He is right with us! In other words, Christians can pray wherever they are.

We note that Jesus **needed** prayer. Thus He prepared for preaching (verses 35 and 38), for working miracles (ch. 9, 29), and thereby He strengthened Himself. Should we not be instant in prayer? Prayer can make the weakest strong. Through communion with God the impossible becomes practicable. Prayer makes us feel the power of omnipotence at our back. The Holy Spirit is bestowed upon us, and our strength is no more our own, but God's.

Application: The great trans-Atlantic liners are able to carry so much, because they are themselves being carried. The mighty Atlantic tides swell under the keel of the enormous vessel and lift her as easily as they could lift a skiff. Have you seen a man accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God? It was because the power of God was bearing him up, power obtained by daily communion in prayer.

Read the parallel account Matth. 4, 23-25.

Looking once more at this section we observe that not only the common people but also their leaders were curious to see the prophet of Nazareth. But above all, that is clear from the succeeding chapters, sinners, who were repelled by the hypocrisy of the self-righteous Pharisees, were attracted to the gracious and compassionate Redeemer. No wonder that men come to Christ today. He alone satisfies the innermost demands of the human heart.

Question: What can our Church learn from verse 38?

Sing Hymn: Jesus, Thou my heart's delight (No. 89).

9. THE HEALING OF A LEPER

Mark 1, 40-45

40. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43. And he straitly (sternly) charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44. And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad (spread the news of) the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without (outside) in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Read the parallel Matth. 8, 1-4.

Matthew reports that this miracle took place immediately after our Lord had preached His sermon on the mount. Having taught with authority He now heals with authority: "I will, be thou clean!" The leper had recognized in Jesus the Messiah, and, kneeling down, paid Him divine honor. No one was allowed to touch or even to greet a leper. Jesus touched him, but, so far from being Himself defiled, His touch imparted cleansing. The man is dismissed with an urgent command to be silent. Jesus feared that the people would proclaim Him Messiah and attempt to force Him to be the leader in a revolution against the Roman government. We shall see later how frequently Jesus enjoins silence upon those whom He benefited. He knew the carnal hopes with which the people looked forward to the coming of Messiah. He was not come to establish an earthly rule, but to found the kingdom of heaven, and the only homage which He desired was that due Him as Lord and Savior, as God.

Retell the story.

Question: In what respect was the prayer of the leper a model for the prayers of Christians afflicted with sickness?

Read Lev. 14, 3-4 for the law of Moses regarding lepers.

Sing Hymn: My Jesus, as 'Thou wilt (No. 387) or O Lord, my best desire fulfill (No. 389).

10. THE HEALING OF THE PALSIED MAN

Mark 2, 1-12

1. And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about (not even at) the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy (a paralyzed man) which was borne of four. 4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press (crowd), they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7. Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8. And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit (was conscious) that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9. Whether is it easier (What is the easier thing,) to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? 10. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy), 11. I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed,

and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. (We never saw the like of it!)

"Jesus had completed His first journey through Galilee, and had also been to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Some of Christ's most notable sermons, as the sermon on the Mount, also belong to this interval. It was after some days, after quite a long while, that Jesus came again to Capernaum." (Popular Commentary.)

It was the kindness of Jesus to the sick, the poor, the troubled, that drew so many to Him. Among those who came that day were four men carrying a friend on a stretcher. The man was a paralytic and could not help himself, but he had friends who were ready to assist him.

They ascended to the roof by the outside stairs with which most Eastern houses are furnished, and made a hole in the flat roof, and let down the bed by cords in front of Jesus.

The Master looked at the paralyzed limbs and quivering frame and saw deeper, and answered another prayer first, because that was what the poor man needed most to have done. The moment Christ saw him He perceived that a greater disease afflicted his soul than that which afflicted his body.

It must have seemed at first as if Christ had misunderstood the wish of the paralytic and his friends. The man had come to have his palsy cured, and instead of doing this Jesus forgave his sins, leaving him still unhealed.

But after Jesus had forgiven the man's sins, He performed the other healing also. He bids the man rise, take up his bed, and go to his house, —a strange command to give to a paralyzed man. He could not lift his head nor walk home. But as we look at the helpless form, he does rise and obey that impossible command.

The absolution was given for the man's own sake, but it was also a challenge to the Pharisees, some of whom had doubtless come from Jerusalem expressly to oppose Jesus. "What is easier," He said, "to say, Thy sins be forgiven; or to say, Arise and walk?" The former, of course, is easier to say. Any fraud can say, "Thy sins are forgiven." This miracle, then, must be regarded as the Father's own acknowledgment of the Messiahship and divinity of His Son. Was He a blasphemer, as the scribes asserted? Jesus deliberately appealed to the judgment of God and in the healing of the palsied man, God had spoken. Note also: "Power on earth to forgive sins"—a speech which hints at the heavenly origin of Jesus.

Application: 1. In seeking the salvation of our friends, we should be very earnest. If we really care for them we will never be discouraged or balked in our efforts to get them to Christ. Christians who have been healed by Christ should try to carry to Him their unconverted friends.

Application: 2. The palsy had a mission—it brought the man to the Healer and Savior. When its mission was accomplished it was dismissed as a servant no longer needed. Does this teach a lesson?

Application: 3. Whatever Christ bids us do, He will by His grace enable us to do, if we simply go forward in unwavering faith and unquestioning obedience.

Application: 4. The onlookers doubtless regarded the healing as a far greater miracle than the forgiving. Alas! the world has not changed. If the Gospel made men wealthy, healed sickness, and lengthened life, then

would it be prized; but because its results are largely unseen, and its greatest blessings promised for the future, it is slighted and even mocked. But the exceeding blessedness and value of the Gospl may be and shall some day be seen.

Application: 5. There are a great many troubles we would like to have removed, but which we can keep and still be useful to our fellow-men; but our sin we must get rid of, or we shall perish forever. Therefore Christ oftentimes does not for us the things we should like to have done. He answers our heart's needs before he grants our mere wishes.

Questions: How does this story illustrate faith—Christ's omniscience?—absolution?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: O faithful God, we worship Thee! (No. 425)

or And wilt Thou pardon, Lord (No. 422)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Acts 16, 19-40

Monday: Acts 17, 1-9

Tuesday: Acts 17, 10-21

Wednesday: Acts 17, 22-34

Thursday: Acts 18, 1-11

Friday: Acts 18, 12-23

Saturday: Acts 18, 24—Chap. 19, 1-7

FOURTH LESSON

Mark 2, 13-28

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Blessed Jesus, at Thy word (No. 3)

Psalm 67. Prayer.

11. THE CALL OF LEVI

Mark 2, 13-17

13. And he went forth again by the sea side, and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom (tax office), and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

15. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat (table) in his house, many publicans (tax gatherers) and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many, and they followed him. 16. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? 17. When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The first year of Christ's public ministry had been a year of obscurity. He was not yet well known. Then, as He spoke and wrought, His fame

grew. We are now in His year of popular favor—His second year. One scene of enthusiasm follows another. After the healing of the paralytic the people were amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion." The calling of Matthew is next recorded.

Read the parallel Matth. 9, 9-13.

Levi was another name of Matthew. Matthew means "Gift of Jehovah," and Levi may have adopted this name at his call. He was a publican or taxgatherer, probably in the employ of Herod. The taxes which he collected were levied on goods imported from other districts. Many caravans trading between Egypt and Damascus passed through Capernaum and there had to pay toll.

Those who were engaged in this business of collecting customs were not reputable men. They were hated by their people because their work was to gather taxes for the Romans. Usually they were dishonest, or extortionate, taking all they could get. The publicans were regarded as mean and unpatriotic. However, Jesus can take even a bad and disreputable man and out of him make an apostle.

While sitting in his tax office, the call of Jesus came to Levi, and he arose and followed Him. "It is probable that Levi was already acquainted with Jesus, that He at least knew of Him, having been present, perhaps, at some of His sermons. At any rate, it was an effectual call. The Lord, by His Word, so influenced the heart and mind of this man, that he willingly gave up his work and became a disciple of Christ. And from this day he bore the name Matthew, in accordance with a Jewish custom, by which individuals assumed a new name upon the occasion of some critical occurrence in their lives, like Peter and Paul." (Popular Commentary.)

The next verses refer to a feast which Matthew made for his Master in his, that is to say, Matthew's house. The Pharisees were not invited but walked in to see what was happening. In the East a banquet is a public affair and anyone may drop in as a spectator. The Pharisees tried to confuse the disciples by asking, Why does your Master eat with these publicans? The publicans were social outcasts, no Pharisee would have any dealings with them. Jesus answers: They who are of sound health (that is, those who think they are perfect, like the Pharisees) need no doctor; they that are sick (that is to say, the publicans and sinners, who know their sins and repent of them) need a Savior, and it is to them that Jesus extends His call and offers His pardon. No one would criticise a physician because he is always going among sick people. He would be a strange physician who would drive round all day, calling only on well people, chatting and eating with them, and refusing to go among the sick. His mission is to the sick, not to the well. Jesus came as a physician. His mission in this world is to the lost. It should not have been thought a strange thing, therefore, that He went among the lost, the fallen, the outcast. These were the very persons He had come to seek.

Is it possible that the Pharisees understood that even while pointing out to them their self-righteousness, He was extending to them His grace? Or is it not clear, that, with their boasting of good works, they were in greater need of repentance and conversion than the publicans?

Retell the story.

Question: How do we know whether we are converted? Who converted us? (John 3, 5.) By what means? (Rom. 10, 17.)

Sing Hymn: My hope is built on nothing less (No. 306).

12. THE CONTROVERSY ON FASTING

Mark 2, 18-22

18. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber (guests at a wedding feast) fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 21. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent (tear) is made worse. 22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles (wineskins); else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred (torn): but new wine must be put into new bottles.

The event just recorded probably took place on a Monday or on a Thursday, the days on which it was customary to abstain from any but the most necessary food. Seeing Jesus at a banquet, the Pharisees ask Him why He and His disciples were not fasting that day? The question had two purposes. It was intended to hold up to public scorn the laxity of the religious practices of Jesus as compared with the strictness of the Pharisees and even of John. Also, it was intended to produce a division between the disciples of John and those of Jesus. In reply, Jesus speaks in figurative language: The children of the bridechamber, (that is to say, the friends of the bridegroom who, amid singing and playing of instruments, conducted the bride to the house of the bridegroom, where the wedding feast was held,) are the disciples of Christ. This was a reminder to the disciples of John that their own master had called Him the Bridegroom. (Read John 3, 29.) When the bridegroom was taken from them by a violent death they would mourn and fast. This is the first prediction in Mark of the Passion and of the sorrow of Christ's disciples after His death. Now, that their Lord was still with them, they had every reason to feast and to be happy.

Fasting among the Jews indicated penitence, sorrow for sin, humiliation. Read Ps. 35:13. It would be thought very strange if a family, without any sorrow in their midst, all of them happy, with the circle unbroken, should go into deep mourning. There is no fitness in wearing the garb of mourning when there is joy on every hand. But when one is dead in the home, then it does not seem strange to see the family showing their sadness and wearing the tokens of grief. Jesus said that there was no reason why His disciples should be fasting and sorrowful at that particular time, for He was with them. There would be no fitness in fasting then.

Retell the story.

Application: The Lord's words are aimed against all empty professions and meaningless forms. Our religion should be natural and sincere, never affected or hypocritical. The Jewish forms and ceremonies, the washings, sacrifices, etc., in their day had had a meaning. They were symbolical and typical of great spiritual truths; a sort of kindergarten-teaching of God's will. But all these truths and emblems were fulfilled by Christ Himself, and now the old forms are done away, as the blossom is done away when the fruit comes.—How does all this apply to the prescribed fast days of the Roman Church? When does our church joy become a meaningless form?

The bottles which our Lord referred to must be understood as the usual Eastern bottles, which were simply goatskins drawn off the animal entire, the neck of the animal forming the neck of the bottle. Those who are trying to combine the Law with the Gospel, those who insist that Christians must observe fast days, sabbaths, etc., like the Jews, are trying to put new wine into old bottles, are patching a new garment with old cloth. In the Gospel age, they are loading down the Christians with laws that have been abolished by Christ.

Can you give examples?

13. JESUS AND THE SABBATH

Mark 2, 23-28

23. And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was a hungered (hungry), he, and they that were with him? 26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Read the parallel Matth. 12, 1-8.

The corn is in the ear but not quite ripe for reaping. The time is therefore about May, perhaps April. Walking through a wheat-field the disciples pluck some ears, and rubbing them in the hands to remove the hull, eat the grains.

That the incident related from David's life took place on the sabbath is inferred from the fact that it was the day for the changing of the loaves (1 Sam. 21, 6), which was the sabbath (Lev. 24, 8). Abimelech seems to have been high priest at this time but evidently Abiathar, his son, performed the functions of office jointly with his father. It was in the literal sense a breach of the ceremonial law for the priests to give David the showbread; but it was not a breach of the spirit of the law, for the necessity of hunger overruled the ceremonial regulation. The work of the priests in the temple was also in a certain sense a continual profanation of the Sabbath; yet they were "blameless" because their work was necessary for the maintenance of the ordained worship of God. (Matth. 12, 5.) Thus Jesus shows that even from the Old Testament standpoint the Pharisees were wrong in blaming his disciples.

The Pharisees were exceedingly punctilious in the observance of the letter of the law and, besides this, of the rabbinical rules regarding washings, fastings, offerings, etc., which had been added from time to time to the law. They also regarded it as their duty to keep a close watch on others and to note any failure in them to follow the rules. They were especially keen in watching Jesus and His disciples. Their motive was not sincere interest in the teaching and example of Jesus, but to criticise Him, that they might accuse Him. Verse 28 cuts short the entire argument.

Application: 1. The conduct of Christians is always watched by unfriendly eyes, eyes keen to detect the slightest apparent fault.

Application: 2. "Lord of all, Jesus has the right to abrogate the Old Testament Sabbath if He chooses. The old injunctions concerning sacrifices, Sabbaths, etc., were in force till He came. Col. 2, 16-17. The Third Commandment enjoins only so much upon the Christians that they gladly hear and learn the Word of God. He that does this much keeps the Third Commandment in the sense of the New Testament and need not be worried by the Sabbath fanatics of these latter days." (Popular Commentary.)

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Salvation unto us has come (No. 314, 1.2.6)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Acts 19, 8-20

Monday: Acts 19, 21-41

Tuesday: Acts 20, 1-12

Wednesday: Acts 20, 13-21

Thursday: Acts 20, 22-38

Friday: Acts 21, 1-14

Saturday: Acts 21, 15-25

FIFTH LESSON

Mark 3, 1-30

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: The Church's one foundation (No. 466)

Psalm 111. Prayer

14. THE WITHERED HAND

Mark 3, 1-6

1. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse (get a charge against) him. 3. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth (Come forward). 4. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace (were silent). 5. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out; and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

Read the parallel account in Matth. 12, 9-14.

Again the Sabbath is the question at issue. According to the record in Matthew, our Lord, more specifically, asked His opponents whether they would not lift a sheep out of a cistern if it had fallen in on the sabbath-day. He appealed to simple common sense. The Jews could not but admit that a man should lift his sheep out of the pit on the Sabbath. Forthwith he healed the withered hand, and, in a rage, His enemies depart. The

Herodians were Jews who had formed a political party to support King Herod and his family. While the Pharisees agitated for Jewish independence the Herodians supported the Roman domination. But in order to destroy Jesus, Pharisees and Herodians united, even as later Herod and Pilate became friends in their common rejection of our Lord.

Application: The kindness of Jesus was not discouraged by the ingratitude and enmity of men. Though the plots of His enemies drove Him out of the city, they did not stop His doing good. Though some rejected His love, His heart was not closed. What lesson does this bear for us?

15. THE WITHDRAWAL OF JESUS. MULTITUDES HEALED

Mark 3, 7-12

7. But Jesus withdrew himself (retired) with his disciples to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, 8. And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him (to prevent him from being crushed by the crowd). 10. For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12. And he straitly (severely) charged them that they should not make him known.

We note the extraordinary sensation made by the preaching and the miracles of Jesus, as shown by the great distances from which the multitudes were drawn.

"There were people from Galilee, the northern part of Palestine, where Jesus was then carrying on the work of His ministry. There were people from exclusive Judea that followed Him. Even haughty Jerusalem was represented, as well as Idumea, the country of the Edomites south and west of the Dead Sea, and Perea, the country on the east side of the Jordan, and the country about Tyre and Sidon, in Phenicia. It was a revival moment which affected the entire country. There was hardly a person of average intelligence in all Palestine and in the surrounding countries that had not heard about the great Prophet and His preaching and healing in Galilee." (Popular Commentary.)

Also, we note that while there was an enormous number of cures, there is no allusion to any failures. Clearly the miracles recorded in the New Testament are only a very small proportion of the miracles performed.

What beautiful text from Isaiah is quoted by Matthew in this connection? (Read Matth. 12, 15-21.)

16. THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE

13. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would (the men he wanted): and they came unto him. 14. And he ordained (appointed) twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16. And Simon he surnamed Peter; 17. And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: 18. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19. And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.

Jesus stood in the throng and called certain men to come to Him. He singled out the persons and called them individually. That is the way He is doing continually—calling men to come to Him.

How do you distinguish this call from the call to the ministry?

They could have refused if they had chosen; Christ never makes disciples by force. But they responded promptly. There was no hesitation. They said nothing about considering the matter for a while. They did not talk about being unfit or unworthy; they did not tell Him that they were afraid they could not keep their word if they promised to be Christians. They did not say, "Tomorrow we will go." The moment they heard their names called they answered.

Compare carefully the names in the parallel accounts Matth. 10, 2-4 and Luke 6, 12-19.

The sons of Zebedee are called Sons of Thunder on account of their fiery temper, perhaps also on account of their powerful eloquence. With some of the apostles we are already familiar. James the son of Zebedee, sometimes called "the Great," was the first apostle to be martyred (Acts 12, 2). Bartholomew is the same as Nathanael of Canaan (John 1, 45). James the son of Alphaeus is sometimes called the little James and is mentioned (Mark 15, 40). Thaddaeus, called Lebbaeus in Matthew, is the same as the "Judas not Iscariot," John 14, 22. Judas Iscariot is so called because he was a native of Kerioth, a village in Judea; Iscariot means "Man of Kerioth."

All the apostles had power given to them to perform works of wonder as their credentials.

Recite the names of the Twelve.

Application: 1. The apostles learned from their Master the things they themselves afterward taught. We can not do any good work for Christ until He teaches us how to do it. He teaches us by His Word, by His Spirit. This is one reason why we should study the Bible so carefully, that we may be able to teach others by our conduct and by our words the things Jesus would have us teach them. Can you give examples?

Application: 2. Men say there are no miracles now. Is this true? Are no sick people healed now? Are no evil spirits cast out? Are no blind eyes opened, no deaf ears unstopped, no lame made to walk? If miracles are not wrought so frequently and evidently on the bodies of men, they surely are on their souls. The spiritually dead are raised to spiritual life. Eyes are opened to see God and heavenly things. Ears are opened to hear the voice of the Spirit. Fevers of passion are cured. Sicknesses of soul are healed. The evil spirits of greed, lust, selfishness are cast out. These are the credentials of all Gospel teaching and preaching.

Sing Hymn: Thou who the night in prayer didst spend (No. 492) or Lord, pour Thy Spirit from on high (No. 488).

17. JESUS ACCUSED OF DEALINGS WITH BEELZEBUB

Mark 3, 19b-30

And they went into a house. 20. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

22. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath (comes to) an end. 27. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme (all the blasphemies which they may utter): 29. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Read the parallel account in Matth. 12, 2-37.

All four gospels agree in representing "the brethren" of Christ as unbelievers and altogether opposed to His ministry. Only after His resurrection were they converted and thereafter joined the Christian congregation. (Acts 1.) The "friends" in verse 21 are His kinsmen. While they did not assert, like the scribes, that Jesus was possessed by the devil, they regarded Him as one beside himself, whose mind was unsettled and who needed to be put under restraint.

Beelzebub means "Lord of flies," a term applied by the Jews in mockery to the devil. To ascribe to the devil the acts of Jesus which so evidently reflect God's own love and holiness; to be so active in opposition to the Holy Spirit manifested in the perfect life of Christ showed that these people had become like Satan himself, dead to every impression of true holiness, and unable any longer to recognize it when they saw it. They called evil good and good evil, yes, regarded the spirit of holiness which showed itself in the acts and miracles of Jesus as diabolical. So blinded had they become, so hardened were their hearts, as a result of continued rejection of Christ, of persistent sinning against better knowledge! This is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is not forgiven because he who so hardens his heart no longer desires repentance and hence must be lost.

Jesus points out to His enemies the absurdity involved in the idea that Satan should cast out Satan. He declares that He, far from being in league with the devil, is going to put an end to his rule. Satan met Him at the door, at the time of His temptation, and resisted His entrance with all his power. But Christ was too strong for him and overcame him and entered. This was the beginning of Satan's downfall.

Application: 1. When there is no way of defeating the earnestness or breaking the power of good men, vile tongues resort to slander.

Application: 2. They said of the wonderful things Jesus did, "By the prince of the demons casteth He out the demons." It will be noticed that even His enemies did not seek to deny that Jesus performed miracles; they only tried to account for His mighty works in a way that would blacken His name. Unbelievers in these days who deny the miracles of Christ should take note of this fact, that even His worst enemies when He was in their very midst did not attempt to deny them.

Application: 3. All willful and determined resistance to the influence of the Spirit is a step toward the unpardonable sin which consists in this, that man consciously rejects grace and does not want salvation through the blood of Christ. This utterance of our Lord should lead us to treat with utmost reverence every appeal, persuasion, or bidding of the Holy Spirit; never to resist, but always to yield and submit to His guidance in the Word.

We have no other Friend in this world who can guide us home. If we drive Him away from us forever we shall be left in the darkness of eternal night. How long we may continue to reject Him and not go beyond the line that marks the limit of hope, we know not; but the very thought that there is such a line somewhere ought to startle us into instant acceptance of the offered guidance.

Question: What would you say to one who is worried by the thought that he has committed the unpardonable sin?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Hasten, O sinner, to be wise (No. 55)

or Delay not, delay not, O sinner (No. 57)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Acts 21, 26-36

Monday: Acts 21, 37—Chap. 22, 1-10

Tuesday: Acts 22, 11-24

Wednesday: Acts 22, 25—Chap. 23, 1-11

Thursday: Acts 23, 12-24

Friday: Acts 23, 25-35

Saturday: Acts 24, 1-9

SIXTH LESSON

Mark 3, 31—Chap. 4, 1-29

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Jesus, Thou my heart's delight (No. 89)

Psalm 103. Prayer

18. HIS MOTHER AND HIS BRETHREN

Mark 3, 31-35

31. There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. 32. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. 33. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? 34. And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Who were the brethren of Jesus? Some hold that they were our Lord's cousins, sons of Mary's sister and Cleophas; others believe that they were the sons of Joseph by a former wife, hence half-brothers of our Lord; others, finally, hold that they were children of Joseph and Mary born after Jesus. The first view cannot be proven. It is clear from the Gospels that the brethren did not live with Mary, the wife of Cleophas, but with the Virgin Mary and were regarded as members of her family. The second view mentioned is a very ancient tradition and it does seem more reverent to suppose that our Lord's mother never had any other

children; also it would seem strange that the Lord committed the care of His mother to John, if she had had four living sons to support her. The only serious objection to be urged against this explanation of "brethren" is that "brother," when used without further explanation naturally means a full brother and not a half-brother or step-brother. Yet "brother" among Orientals is used as a general form for "relative."

In this passage Jesus declares that all who believe in Him, are His brethren. How wonderful is divine grace! How strange it is that sinful creatures can be taken thus into the very family of God, and have all the joys and privileges of children of God!

Question: How should this knowledge of brotherhood with Christ influence us in our conduct towards our brethren, especially towards the weak and sinning ones? Read Gal. 6, 1.

19. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Mark 4, 1-20

1. And he began again to teach by the seaside: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, 3. Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred. 9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. 11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: 12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. 13. And he said unto them, Know ye not (Don't you understand) this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

14. The sower soweth the word. 15. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness (enthusiasm); 17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. 18. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19. And the cares (worries) of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

This chapter introduces a new mode of teaching, that by parables. Parables are narratives, fictitious, but conforming to the usages of daily

life, by which the duties of men or the nature of God's Kingdom are portrayed figuratively (in picture language). Jesus did not teach regularly in parables until opposition to His teaching had developed, and the people under influence of the Pharisees had begun to harden themselves against His influence, and to criticise His doctrine. As a punishment for the wilful blindness of so many He spoke in parables, which were, however, understood by faithful hearers or, if necessary, explained to them. Read again verses 10 to 12. Also verses 33 and 34. The "mystery" of the Kingdom is the person and work of its King, Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, "mystery" means that which has been revealed,—the plan of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Those who have such faith, will learn more and more of His Kingdom by studying the parables, while the others will harden their hearts all the more, though saving truth was offered as freely to them.

Read the parallel account of the parable of the Sower in Luke 8, 4-15.

The Parable of the Sower was studied in detail as part of the work in No. 1 of the Bible Student. The seed falling on the hard, beaten track, are persons who hear the sound of the teacher's voice, but who fail to comprehend his meaning. Some persons are so in love with sin that they understand so little of what is preached in the name of God as if it were uttered in a foreign language. They may hear and be attentive, and enjoy what is said, but their duties to business, social calls, and worldly affairs generally renders them unresponsive to the truth. Then there are those who quickly and readily receive the Word, but they do not receive lasting impressions, their religion is a matter of feeling and sentiment, and when they have "run well" for a time, they soon tire, and fall away. Others deliberately attempt to serve the world and its lusts while professing the teachings of Christ,—which is impossible. Others, finally, respond to the teachings of the Gospel, and bear rich fruit in their lives. Conscious of their privilege and responsibility, they serve God with good works.

Retell the parable.

Question: Is every person represented by one of these four kinds of soil, or does each of the four lessons apply to us at various times? Which of the three classes that fail have come under your own observation? When young Christians so soon leave the Church, what has generally been the reason?

Sing Hymn: Almighty God, Thy word is cast (No. 13).

20. THE CANDLE HID

Mark 4, 21-25

21. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel (bowl), or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? 22. For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested (disclosed); neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad (except to be revealed). 23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear. With what measure ye mete (measure), it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25. For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

The Lord had spoken of "the mystery" of the kingdom of God. He now corrects a false impression which might have arisen from the mention of a "mystery." Only for the moment would the Gospel be a mystery limited to His believers in Palestine. Those to whom the secret was now

confided, who now knew the way of salvation, were charged with the responsibility of publishing it, "setting it on a candlestick," after the ascension, hence, "Take heed, understand what ye hear!" To them had been measured out a full and complete knowledge concerning the kingdom of God, and with that same fullness they were to bring it to others. There is encouragement for continued study of Christ's teaching in the following verse. To the diligent student of divine truth more of truth shall be revealed. The slothful student shall not only learn no more but shall even forget what he already knows.

Application: Is this not our experience in our attention to Bible study? Does not the reward which we receive exceed the measure of our diligence and attention? A Christian who studies his Bible attentively, will be surprised by the measure of understanding that will be given him,—if only he makes the object of his search, Jesus, the Savior, John 5, 39. Pastors, searching diligently, are often almost overwhelmed by the mass of material at their command for preaching. But the Christian who makes no headway in Bible knowledge will find even the little head-knowledge that still has remained with him, to be dull and meaningless; and this, says Jesus, is the judgment of God on the indifferent and the lazy.

Question: How shall both the fear and the love of God become a motive for Bible study? See Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment. What have we reason to fear, if we become slothful in Bible study? How does this result show itself in the life of such a Christian?

21. THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY

Mark 4, 26-29

26. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn (grain) in the ear. 29. But when the fruit is brought forth (crop is ready), immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

In this parable the man that casts the seed into the ground represents the apostles and other preachers of the Gospel, planting the knowledge of salvation in the souls of men. They are to sleep and to arise,—preach the Word without undue anxiety and perform their appointed share of work every day. They should know that growth is slow. First comes the blade. Missionaries who have no results to show, are not to be discouraged, there will be a time of harvesting. It is gathered in Christian lands when a faithful pastor, after long waiting, gathers in a harvest of well-instructed church members. It is gathered in heathen countries when after years of labor at last the natives come and ask for baptism.

Men do not go forth now with seed-bag swung over their shoulder. Now they ride out on the great grain-drill and, as the drive over the field, plant the seeds deep in the earth. Still the lesson of the seed is the same, in whatsoever way it may be planted. It is a very little thing, but Jesus sees in it and in its mode of growing a picture of something very great, very wonderful,—a picture of the Kingdom of God.

Application: Man does not stay in the field and watch the seed growing. He casts it into the ground and lets it grow as it will. He does not dig it up every day to see how it is growing. We cannot help the soil take care of the seed. So all we can do is to get the truth into the hearts of those we would save,—God will do the rest. We are not responsible for the

growth of the seed, for the work of grace in the human heart. God made the seed, and God's Spirit is operative wherever it has been sowed. When the teachings of Christianity have found lodgment in the heart so that a man knows himself a sinner and Jesus as his Savior, let the Spirit continue to do His work; so "the earth beareth fruit of herself."

Question: What is the office of the Holy Spirit in the work of our salvation? How does He do His work?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: On what has now been sown (No. 11)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Acts 24, 10-23

Monday: Acts 24, 24—Chap. 25, 1-6

Tuesday: Acts 25, 7-21

Wednesday: Acts 25, 22—Chap. 26, 1

Thursday: Acts 26, 2-18

Friday: Acts 26, 19-27

Saturday: Acts 27, 1-13

SEVENTH LESSON

Mark 4, 30—Chap. 5, 1-34

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Let me be Thine forever (No. 408)

Psalm 65. Prayer

22. THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

Mark 4, 30-34

30. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

33. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. 34. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded (explained) all things to his disciples.

The mustard seed in the parable is a vegetable or herb, which in Eastern countries grows such strong stalks that men can climb into them like into a tree. Its seed is of all the vegetables the tiniest. Even so, Christianity from small beginnings has had a wonderful spread in all continents. Founded by a man who was executed as a criminal, a member of the despised Jewish race, the Christian movement, directed by twelve Galileans of little wealth or education, rapidly expanded into a world-wide church, in which all the poor and lowly, the sin-stricken and despairing take

refuge. And this growth has continued to the present time. From the years 1700—1800 it is estimated that the Christian population of the globe advanced from 155 millions to 200 millions. From 1800—1900 the progress has been from 200 millions to more than 500 millions. And still the fields are white to the harvest, the laborers few.

Question: How does the history of Luther's Reformation illustrate the truth of this parable? How does the history of our own Synod illustrate it? How, possibly, the history of your congregation?

23. STILLING THE STORM

Mark 4, 35-41

35. And the same day, when the even (evening) was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over (cross) unto the other side. 36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. 37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful (afraid)? how is it that ye have no faith? 41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Read the parallel account Luke 9, 57-62.

Immediately after speaking to the people in this series of parables, Jesus gave command to sail over to the other side of the lake. The Sea of Galilee is, of course, referred to. East of the lake, the water-courses have cut deep ravines and wide gorges which act like great funnels to draw down the winds from the mountains. This explains the sudden and violent tempests which to the present day endanger shipping on the Sea of Galilee.

In stilling the storm, Christ showed that behind the terrible forces of nature, behind storm, pestilence, volcanic eruptions, and sudden death, there is still the loving hand of divine Providence which controls all. He permits none to perish though his body perish. And when it is God's holy and merciful will, nature is subject to Him. Notice that the presence of Christ in the boat with His disciples did not prevent the coming of the storm. But by a word He bids the waves subside, and there was a great calm.

Retell the story.

Application: Sometimes people think when they are in trouble that Jesus has forsaken them, or they would not have such hard experiences. If He were with them, they say, He would not permit them to suffer so. Yet they will find that when they cling to Jesus in utter confidence, nothing can harm them. That little boat never could have gone down with the Lord on board. In a way, one can regard the boat as an emblem of the Church. (Indeed, leaders of His future church were in it in that wild night.) Christ is always with His Church, not only in its days of sunshine and prosperity, but also in its days of trial and in the midst of fiercest storms. Never can the Church be destroyed. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Question: What does this narrative teach about the person of Christ? His natures?

Sing Hymn: My spirit on Thy care (No. 369) or I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus (No. 370).

24. JESUS CASTS OUT THE LEGION OF DEVILS

Mark 5, 1-20

5. 1. And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3. Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder (snapped apart) by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, 7. And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8. (For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.) 9. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10. And he besought him much (begged him earnestly) that he would not send them away out of the country. 11. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choked (drowned) in the sea. 14. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done (had happened). 15. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16. And they that saw it told them how it befell (what had happened) to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17. And they began to pray (beg) him to depart out of their coasts.

18. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel (were astonished).

Read the parallel account Luke 8, 26-40.

Gadara was an important town populated by Gentiles (non-Jews), and situated about six miles southeast from the lake. In this territory lived a man possessed of evil spirits, not by one or several, but by a host of them. He says: "Our name is legion,"—and a Roman legion comprised between five and six thousand men. The exact number of evil spirits which inhabited the man cannot, of course, be computed from this; the word "legion" stands for a large number and is an emblem of great power, of a multitude organized for a common task, in this case, the task

of laying waste the man's body and soul. The devils, however, in one point were more honest than some people of that time. They acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God; this was more than the unbelieving Jews were willing to do. They cry out in horror that He is about to torment them "before their time,"—before the last Judgment, when final sentence will be pronounced also on the evil spirits. Then followed the miraculous healing, and the entrance of the demons into the swine. The demoniac, now in his right mind, was told by our Lord to publish his wonderful cure. At other times Christ forbade just this thing, but in the case of Decapolis there was no danger of a fanatical outbreak, caused by dreams of a worldly Messianic empire, because the population of this district was almost entirely non-Jew. Decapolis, literally the Ten-town District (as we now speak of the Twin Cities, the Tri-City District, etc.), was a territory beyond Jordan containing at one time ten federated cities of which Gadara was one and Damascus the most important.

Retell the story.

Application: 1. No chains could bind this demoniac. When sin is on the throne, all other influences and constraints become like spiders' threads in comparison. No human hands can break the chains of sinful habits. No mere resolution can free from Satan's bondage. But when Christ comes through His Word He sets the captive free. Those who have long been trying to reform their lives, to break away from evil practises, see in Christ the Friend who alone can deliver them and save them.

Application: 2. The people actually asked the Savior of the World, the Son of the Most High, to leave their country because they lost a herd of swine! Evidently, the devil had greater power over the hearts of these people than he had over the man possessed. Their eyes were not opened, though they had witnessed this great miracle. So people today hate religion, the Church, the Bible, because Christianity interferes with their wrong business or cuts off a source of sinful gain.

25. HEALING OF A SICK WOMAN

Mark 5, 21-34

21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea. 22. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23. And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. 24. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged (pressed around) him.

25. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood (hemorrhage) twelve years, 26. And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. 28. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole (recover). 29. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague (disease). 30. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue (healing power) had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 32. And he looked around about to see her that had done this thing.

33. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole (well); go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

The poor woman, wasted by long sickness, crept up behind Jesus as He was hastening to the ruler's house, and shyly and stealthily touched the tassel of his garment with her trembling fingers. There was prayer in that touch, a heart's cry, which Jesus heard, though no word was spoken. There was also faith in the touch. The woman knew that that One who was passing so near to her had power to heal, and to heal her; and she did the best she knew, and touched the fringe of His garment, believing that in some way she would be healed. Instantly healing power flowed from Jesus into her body, and she was made well. How did she get the blessing? She did not pray eloquently, nor at all in words. She brought no present to the feet of Jesus. She had no written petition, and probably knew less of Christian doctrine than you. All she did was to come and touch. The touch is the least of acts. It is the method of the dumb; it is the method of confidence. How great was her faith in expecting a blessing from a touch!

Application: "In spite of the great advance in medicine and surgery in the last century, and especially during the last decades, there are still many individual sicknesses and epidemics that baffle the entire medical profession. This is not said in disparagement of the profession, but in the interest of truth. People that make the doctor their god, and trust in him absolutely, may ultimately find themselves in the position of this woman. It remains true today, and the more skilful and conscientious a physician is, the more freely will he acknowledge that the Lord must direct the diagnosis and bless the medicine, otherwise the science of the greatest physician will avail nothing." (Popular Commentary.) State in your own words the attitude of a Christian over against medicine and doctors.

Question: 1. Why is it better to die with a disease that baffles human science than to be cured by a Spiritistic, Christian Science, or "Faith Cure" healer?

Question: 2. What was the experience of Paul with sickness? Read 2 Cor. 12, 7-11. What lesson does this teach you?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Come, ye weary sinners come (No. 58)

or Come, ye disconsolate (No. 512)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Acts 27, 14-32

Monday: Acts 27, 33-44

Tuesday: Acts 28, 1-10

Wednesday: Acts 28, 11-22

Thursday: Acts 28, 23-31

Friday: Rom. 1, 1-15

Saturday: Rom. 1, 16-32

EIGHTH LESSON

Mark 5, 35—Chap. 6, 1-16

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Send Thou, O Lord, to ev'ry place (No. 484)
or Awake, Thou Spirit, who didst fire. (No. 481)

Psalm 100. Prayer

26. RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

Mark 5, 35-43

35. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master (to come) any further? 36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. 37. And he suffered (allowed) no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

38. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel (little girl) is not dead, but sleepeth. 40. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee,) arise.

42. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment (were utterly amazed). 43. And he charged them straitly (strictly) that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

According to Mark and Luke the apostles Peter, James, and John and the parents witnessed the miracle, one of the greatest in the ministry of Jesus. The narrative undoubtedly was obtained by Mark from Peter himself. Jesus regarded the raising of the dead as part of His ordinary ministerial work and gave the same power to the apostles (Matthew 10, 8; read also Acts 9, 40).

The tumult in the house of the elder was made by the professional mourners who would come to a house of mourning and make lamentation. The multitude of hired mourners marks the wealth and position of Jairus. Mark quotes our Lord's actual Aramaic words, Talitha cumi; which means, Maid, arise!

Retell the story.

Application: Jesus has power over death. Since He passed through death, and is risen again, dying in Christ means only passing into a fuller, richer, a heavenly life. Has a brother, a sister been called away? They are not dead. Though you see them not, they are enjoying the heavenly abundance of life. You have the comfort of knowing that in the hands of Christ, all is well. And you have the assurance of meeting your Christian relatives

and friends again by and by. When Christ, our Life, is made manifest on the Last Day, He will raise them up, every one, and receive them into the eternal home prepared for them that love Him.

Question: How does the Christian religion take the sting out of death, and rob the grave of its victory?

Sing Hymn: Asleep in Jesus (No. 540).

27. JESUS REJECTED BY THE PEOPLE

Mark 6, 1-6

1. And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. 2. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? 3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. 4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Jesus now returned to his own town, to the village of Nazareth.

Nazareth! In a beautiful, basin-like valley, enclosed by some fifteen hills, was situated this place of world-wide renown. It seems to sleep among the hills, and rests on the slope of a hill which, from its elevation of nearly 600 feet, commands one of the finest views in Palestine, with the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Carmel on the west, the great plain of Esdraelon two miles to the south, Mount Tabor six miles to the south-east, and Hermon's snowy summit away to the northward.

When the evangelist states that Jesus went out from thence, he refers to Capernaum. Thence He went forth to the scenes of His childhood, and to the surroundings in which He had labored as a man. On a certain day He preached in a synagogue, and Luke records the address which He delivered, in which He proclaimed Himself the Messiah of whom Isaiah had spoken. This only led to His rejection and to a brutal attack upon His life. Some were, indeed, impressed by His wisdom and power, but others saw in Him only the carpenter's son, (Matth. 13, 55), or, as Mark has it, "the carpenter." It may be inferred from this that our Lord during the days before His baptism, worked at the trade of a carpenter. And so Jesus showed that He was actually one of our race—a race which God had commanded to work. He would be in all things like His brethren.

Application: What an astonishing thought! God knew, when He made toil the lot of man, that His own Son would toil. Shall He not understand and sympathize with us in our daily toil? Surely, if He labored Himself, He will not forget, or misunderstand those of His children who earn their living by the labor of their hands. At your work, remember, He sees you, and will provide the strength and grace which you need.

But this very humility of Christ, which ought to have excited their admiration and respect, caused the towns-people to stumble, they could not believe that God was willing thus to humble Himself. They had familiarly known Him as a child, knew the education He had received, the ordinary work He had done. And at this their nature rebelled against His claims—should

this be the Messiah, the Prophet like unto Moses?! Jesus marvelled at their unbelief, and truly He might marvel at the sad ability of the human will to defeat even the gracious purposes of the Lord Himself. However, He did not yet give them up utterly to their wilful blindness; rejected Himself, He sent His disciples among them with wonder-working power, to preach that men should repent.

Retell the story.

Question: 1. We note how those who were most familiar with our Lord, who had the greatest tokens of divine favor by His presence among them, rejected Him in unbelief. Can you make an application of this in your observation of those who from childhood have known the Savior and who have His gospel preached to them in all its purity? Consider the case of the Galatians, Gal. 1, 6, 5, 7; of some who were once Lutherans.

Question: 2. When so-called Divine Healers fail to cure, they blame the unbelief of their patients and point to this incident, quoting Matth. 13, 58. But the record does not say that on account of their unbelief, Jesus failed to work cures which He attempted; He did cure some, in spite of the unbelief of the inhabitants. When the disciples failed to work miracles, did Jesus blame the unbelief of the people? Read Matth. 17, 41-21. Whose lack of faith did He blame? How do you apply this to the claims of the Divine Healers?

Question: 3. Jesus suffered rejection by His own best friends, His boyhood acquaintances, even by His relatives. Do you understand why we say that the entire life of Christ was a Passion? Being true man, do you suppose that He did not feel the sorrow of being misunderstood?—that He did not suffer as we do when we experience envy and jealousy? In this there is comfort for us. We note how He was tested in all things, like we, but without sin. And He has atoned for actions of which we become guilty when we find that people are jealous of us, and when good friends desert us. What sins are we apt to commit under such circumstances?

Sing Hymn: My God, accept my heart this day (No. 412).

28. THE SENDING OF THE TWELVE

Mark 6, 7-13

7. And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; 8. And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip (wallet), no bread, no money in their purse: 9. But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart from that place 11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Read the parallel account Matth. 10, 5-10.

Jesus turned away from Nazareth, never, so far as we know, to visit it again. What, however, they refused, He immediately offered to others. He went round about the villages teaching. Furthermore, He now sent out His apostles to bring the message of salvation to all who would hear. This mission of the Twelve began about five weeks before the second

Passover of Christ's ministry (John 6, 4), and lasted about a month. It was intended partly to prepare the way for visits of Jesus Himself, and partly to train the apostles for their future ministry. He sent them out two by two for the sake of mutual encouragement. They were to carry no girdles or money-belts, nor a wallet or pouch (scrip) for food, nor extra garments; nor shoes, but simply sandals. We find Peter using sandals when the angel delivered him out of prison, Acts 12, 8. They were to work miracles on a large scale, and when they came back, were able to report many cures, verses 13 and 30. The apostles used oil (olive oil) as an outward and visible sign that the healing was effected in the name of Christ, the Anointed One.

Retell the story.

Question: 1. Was this anointing done for the restoration to health or as a preparation for death? Have Romanists a right to refer to this passage as proof that their "extreme unction" is a sacrament?

Question: 2. The city that rejects the Gospel will receive a sentence more severe than Sodom. (Gen. 19, 24.) The reason for this is that the inhabitants of Sodom, though noted for their horrible immoralities, sinned in ignorance of the Gospel, while these cities of Galilee were sinning against light. They merit a deeper damnation. What do we conclude from this passage regarding eternal punishment, and its degrees?

29. HEROD AND JESUS

Mark 6, 14-16

14. And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad;) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in (working through) him. 15. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

The opinions of various people regarding the person of Christ are here recorded. Many rumors were afloat that in Him one of the Old Testament prophets had come to life. Of greatest interest is the reference to Herod. The boyhood of Jesus and most of His public ministry was spent within the territory which had been assigned to this king by the Roman government. It was not, however, until the mission of the Twelve that his attention was attracted to Jesus. By comparing the reference to the "leaven of Herod," in chapter eight, with Matth. 15, 6, we find that Herod was, like the Sadducees, a freethinker, who denied the resurrection of the dead. Now that he heard of the miracles wrought by Jesus and of His ministry of repentance, he came to the conclusion that John the Baptist was risen from the dead. Such was the effect of a guilty conscience working on a superstitious mind. Conscience becomes a torturing fire, he cannot forget the Baptist whom he had so unjustly caused to be beheaded,—and Mark now proceeds to tell how this came about.

Retell the story.

Application: 1. We may think it easy to forget sin, but conscience refuses to forget. Only when we have "a good conscience toward God" through the knowledge of salvation by Christ's blood, are the pangs of an evil conscience quieted.

Application: 1. Men first deny that there is a hereafter, then they believe in spooks. Such was the case with Herod, and so it is the case with

noted spiritists today (Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), who first were materialists (denying the existence of a soul) and now believe that the dead speak through mediums.

Question: What are some opinions that men have today about Christ? Why do these people fail to find the right answer to the question, Who was Jesus?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Savior, again to Thy dear name (No. 16)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Rom. 2, 1-16

Monday: Rom. 2, 17-29

Tuesday: Rom. 3, 1-19

Wednesday: Rom. 3, 20-31

Thursday: Rom. 4, 1-25

Friday: Rom. 5, 1-16

Saturday: Rom. 5, 17-6, 10

NINTH LESSON

Mark 6, 17-56

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: O God of Jacob, by whose hand (No. 364)

Psalm 138. Prayer

30. THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Mark 6, 17-29

17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. 18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. 19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel (grudge) against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: 20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed (protected) him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

21. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates (notables) of Galilee; 22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt (anything you like) and I will give it thee. 23. And he swore unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. 24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by (this very moment) in a charger (dish) the head of John the Baptist.

26. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject (disappoint) her. 27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison. 28. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother. 29. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Read the parallel account Matth. 14, 3-12.

During a visit to his half-brother, Herod had fallen in love with Herodias, his half-brother's wife, and had persuaded her to leave her husband. He at once divorced his own wife and married Herodias, who was, besides, the niece of her new husband. The daughter's name was Salome. It was the custom of the Orientals, after a banquet to witness the performances of professional female dancers, which were of a suggestive character. Here the princess, Salome, dances before the company, and the rash promise of Herod follows. Herod was evidently a weak man. He was not entirely without good intentions, especially under the preaching of John he "did many things,"—good things are meant; he was open to good influences, but lacked firmness of character. He is open to the appeals of John, yet in his weak way refused to withdraw a promise he had made under the influence of passion. He feared John, now he fears public opinion more: what will men say when he fails to make good his boasting promise? Will they consider his word reliable hereafter? He had not enough honor to say: "That head is not mine to give!" John is beheaded.

Retell the story.

Application: Company, wine, the fascination of the dance, pride flattered by the presence of the Galilean nobles—then the terrible crime. What lesson can we derive from this for our daily life?

Question: 1. Herod thought that his honor demanded that he make good his word. What was wrong with his reasoning?

Question: 2. "How could Herod have refused," asks one, "when he had taken such an oath?" Let us supply the answer: It was a sin to swear such an oath. Imagine a man calling God as a witness that he will commit murder! "But he had no such thing in mind when he swore the oath." True, his oath was a wicked one nevertheless, on account of its rashness. If in a moment of rashness we swear to do something, we do not know what, such an oath is not only foolish but downright sinful. We should rather break our promise than do a wicked thing. Herod was afraid of the laughter of his guests, and committed a horrible crime rather than be a man and refuse to do the thing which he knew to be wrong. No wonder he began to tremble when he heard of the miracles of Jesus. "This must be the Baptist come back to life!"—Give some examples of unrighteous oaths which men swear today.

Question: 3. Do you suppose that Herod's crime did not find him out? Not long after this, he was defeated in a great battle and put to shameful flight. Herodias and Herod were banished by an order of the Roman government to a wild part of Gaul (France), where they both perished miserably. Seeing Salome bring in the head of John, and Herod sitting on his throne surrounded by his nobles, no one would have thought otherwise than that Wrong was victorious and Right had perished. Do you know the old proverb about the mill of God grinding slowly, but very fine? What does it mean?

31. THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

Mark 6, 30-44

30. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. 31. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert (lowly) place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. 33. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them (got to the place before them), and came together unto him. 34. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

35. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed (it is getting late in the day): 36. Send them away, that they may go into the country (farms) round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. 37. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth (fifty dollars' worth) of bread, and give them to eat? 38. He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies (in parties) upon the green grass. 40. And they sat down in ranks (groups) by hundreds, and by fifties. 41. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42. And they did all eat, and were filled (had enough). 43. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

Read the parallel account John 6, 1-14.

There are here really two incidents, the withdrawal of our Lord, and the feeding of the five thousand. But they are so closely connected that we shall treat them as one.

We note first that the Lord seeks retirement, no doubt, to escape the notice of Herod, who, having heard of His fame, might seek to get Him into his power. This was the same Herod to whom Jesus was sent later, on Good Friday, by Pilate. But now the time of Jesus was not yet come. As He had said on another occasion, It cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. Then, too, Jesus needed a vacation for himself and his disciples. More than once we read that He took His disciples away from the crowd for a period of rest. Also, it is plain that the disciples on such occasions were taught by their Master, He explained His parables to them, spoke of His suffering and death, and in other ways instructed them.

But the people inquired where He had gone, and in great multitudes they followed Him, anxious to hear the message of salvation. And Jesus is willing to sacrifice his ease for the sake of the ministry to the forlorn. The sad condition of the people excites His pity. Many, no doubt, were tired and dusty from the way, others ill, or aged, or otherwise afflicted. But Christ knew that all this was not their worst trouble. He knew their spiritual need. They were wandering like lost sheep away from the fold, and had no shepherd. Really, the inhabitants of Galilee were rather prosperous. Aside from such cases as just mentioned, a visitor might

have said that these people seemed to be in pretty comfortable circumstances. Certainly, we must never imagine the people who crowded around Jesus to have been a lot of tramps, or paupers. Even so, many people may seem prosperous in our eyes today, we may even be tempted to envy them their success,—and yet when Christ looks upon them, He is moved by compassion because their lives are starving, their souls are perishing, they do not know Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Question: In what then does true happiness consist? Is it the business of the Church merely to relieve bodily distress? What is more important, to relieve physical suffering, or spiritual—to assist people in bodily troubles or in troubles of the soul? Applying this to Christian giving, what is more important—giving to charitable institutions or giving to missions?

Retell the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle recorded by all four evangelists and also one of the most wonderful. It cannot be accounted for as unbelievers account for the miracles of healing, as the powerful effect of mind over mind, or of mind over body, but is distinctly a physical miracle for which there is no natural explanation. The miracle is to be regarded as taking place when Jesus had blessed the loaves and fishes. The baskets referred to were large baskets such as were frequently carried by Jews.

This miracle marks a crisis in our Lord's ministry. His popularity was at its height. The people were convinced that He was the Messiah. They demanded that He should be crowned king of Israel (John 6, 14-15), and should lead them against their enemies. By rejecting their advances, and by showing in His address, soon after, at Capernaum, that His aims were of an entirely different character and His kingdom not an earthly one, He forfeited His popularity and never regained it (John 6, 66).

Application: The story teaches, 1. Christ's creative power and lordship over nature; 2. His benevolence and bounty, giving His people enough and more than enough; 3. That He is the spiritual food of mankind, the Bread of Life, sustaining the souls of those that believe on Him.

32. JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA

Mark 6, 45-52

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away (dismissed) the people. 46. And when he had sent them away (said good-bye to them), he departed into a mountain to pray. 47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. 48. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. 49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50. For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer (Courage!): it is I; be not afraid. 51. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure (utterly astounded), and wondered. 52. For they considered not (had not understood) the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened.

Read the parallel Matth. 14, 22-33.

The apostles had been most unwilling to be sent away. John explains the reason. The people were desirous to make Jesus king by force, and the apostles, still ignorant of the spiritual nature of Christ's rule, fell right in line with this popular movement. So Jesus constrained them to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee while He went up a hillside and communed with His Father. In the fourth watch (according to Roman reckoning) or between three and six o'clock in the morning Christ appeared to them on the water and meant to pass by them, doubtless to test their faith. Matthew at this point records the incident of Peter's attempt to walk on the sea. This was quite in keeping with Peter's character, confident and enthusiastic, and unconscious of his own weakness.

Retell the story.

Application: So faith in the Lord's strengthening power guides us securely over the agitated sea of a sinful life, but it too often happens that the weakness of this faith permits us to sink down in the waters. Well is it for us if we cry with Peter: "Lord save us!" "He maketh the storm a calm." "So He bringeth them to the desired haven." Who, upon the troubled sea of time, would be without a Comforter so gracious, a Helper so mighty?

Map Study: Locate on a map of the Holy Land the Sea of Galilee and find the cities on its shore so far mentioned in this gospel. What, speaking roughly, was the width of the lake (east and west), and what its length (north and south)?

Sing Hymn: O for a faith that will not shrink (No. 354).

33. CHRIST THE HEALER

Mark 6, 53-56

53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew (recognized) him. 55. And ran through that whole region around about, and began to carry about in beds (pallets) those that were sick, where they heard he was. 56. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

Retell the story.

The land of Gennesaret was a fertile plain on the west side of the lake and at its northern end, extending southward from Capernaum. So beautiful was the land in its wealth of fruit and grain that the ancient rabbis called it Paradise. Here Jesus healed great numbers of sick and it is again to be noted that no failures of any attempted cures are recorded. On the contrary, it is stated that every one that touched the tassels of His garment was healed.

Application: What do we conclude from this regarding the pretensions of divine healers, who claim that they are working by the power of Christ, yet fail to cure in numberless instances?

Note the vividness of Mark's descriptions. You can not fail to gain the impression that here, again, we have the report as Mark received it from the eye-witness, Peter. As we read his vigorous language, we seem to see the eager, anxious people, farmers and fishermen, hurrying through the district, seeking out all the diseased and infirm, carrying them on stretchers and in hammocks to the places where Jesus is expected, and laying them in the open spaces, that they might be seen at once by the mighty Physician and Prophet. Now was the Light come to Galilee! Read Isa. 9, 1-2.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Jesus, Thy boundless love to me (No. 84, 1-3)
or Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only (No. 86)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Rom. 6, 11-23

Monday: Rom. 7, 1-13

Tuesday: Rom. 7, 14-25

Wednesday: Rom. 8, 1-11

Thursday: Rom. 8, 12-25

Friday: Rom. 8, 26-39

Saturday: Rom. 9, 1-33

TENTH LESSON

Mark 7, 1-30

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless (No. 311, 1-5)
or Salvation unto us has come (No. 314)

Psalms 142. Prayer

34. A DISCOURSE ON PHARISAIC MORALITY

Mark 7, 1-13

1. Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. 3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not (decline to eat), holding (in obedience to) the tradition of the elders. 4. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables (couches). 5. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

6. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9. And he said unto them, Full well (surely), ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by

me; he shall be free. 12. And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother. 13. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered (keep up): and many such like things do ye.

Read the parallel Matth. 15, 1-9.

The active enmity and jealousy of the scribes and priests was strikingly shown by the sending of these agents who were to investigate the claims of Christ and if possible find something against Him. That they should come all the way from Jerusalem is explained by the fact, related in John's Gospel, that Jesus had already preached in Jerusalem and had defied the authorities there by His cleansing of the temple. In relating the dispute about the eating with unwashed hands Mark adds a note (verse 3 and 4) for the benefit of his Gentile (Greek and Roman) readers, who would not be familiar with Jewish customs. He says that the Jews wash their hands very frequently and do not eat unless they had washed, according to their ritual, the dishes which they used. They would even wash the "tables,"—by which are meant not the tables on which the food was placed but the couches on which guests would recline at dinner. The penalty for neglecting such washings was excommunication by the High Council of the Jews.

Question: It is to be noted that the word for "wash" used here,—baptizein—is the same as that used for baptizing. Does this argue for immersion as the only permissible manner of baptism, or does it argue against it.

Retell the story.

In the daily ritual prescribed by the Pharisees, washings held a place of great importance. The Law of Moses prohibited the touch of many things deemed to be unclean. And if any one had touched them, he was counted unclean, and was not permitted to enter the temple until he had cleansed himself by the washings prescribed by the Law. The purpose of these regulations had been a good one; the Jews were to be awakened to the need of spiritual washing, of repentance and sanctification. But the Jews, especially the Pharisees, who wished to be esteemed more righteous than others, placed their whole religion in these outward ceremonies, frequently washed themselves before the meals, even during the meals. At the marriage feast at Cana there were placed six waterpots of stone with water for these purifying purposes. This, however, was only a custom, and not a thing commanded in the Law as given through Moses. But the Pharisees occupied much time in performing these washings, and neglected the more important things of the Law of God by such observance of the traditions of their elders. They made clean the inside of the cup, says our Lord on one occasion, but did not purify their hearts. With the representatives of this religion of outward form, Jesus had a discussion on the occasion referred to in this chapter.

Jesus does not hesitate to condemn their entire system of morality. Lip-service, but a heart far from God,—in these scorching words He characterizes their religion. He quotes against them Isaiah 29, 13. They had the shell of religion, its kernel was not there. In verse 11 the word Corban is a term which originally meant a sacrifice or a gift to God. It was used in the time of Christ very commonly in the sense of vowing something to God, to the temple service, the support of the priesthood, or some other religious purpose. It was held that if a man thus devoted or vowed his property to the Church, his parents could not claim it, though they were in the most bitter need of it,—it was "Corban," vowed to the

Church! By a vow of this kind, so the scribes held, a man would be excused from the duty of supporting his parents. Thus by their traditions they made void the command of God, in this case, the Fourth Commandment.

35. THE THINGS THAT DEFILE

Mark 7, 14-23

14. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: 15. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. 18. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; 19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging (making clean) all meats? 20. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness (recklessness): 23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Our Lord here invites everybody to listen and understand. He is about to announce an important principle, one that went counter to what the Pharisees had been teaching the people. Nothing which enters man from without can defile him, that is to say, make him morally unclean; that which renders man filthy in the sight of God are the things that issue from him, his thoughts, words, and deeds. It is as though he said: "The scribes teach you that it is not lawful to eat with hands that have not been washed, because hands unwashed make the food unclean, and unclean food defiles the soul. But in this they are mistaken. Not that which enters man but what issues from him is unclean—the impure heart defiles the man."

According to the Law given by Moses the Jews were indeed prohibited from eating certain meats: such food was called "unclean." You will find these laws concerning food in Leviticus, chapter eleven. Jesus now teaches that the whole ceremonial law, with its distinctions of meats, its washings, its sacrifices, its entire round of external duties and observations, is no longer binding, because He has come to fulfill the entire Law for us. The ceremonial law is to be abolished entirely. In verse 19 the last three words are to be understood as a remark of the evangelist: "(This He said) making all meats clean," or, By saying this He made all food clean (permitted it to be eaten).

Jesus distinguishes the laws given for a particular purpose and for a limited time, and those that are perpetual in their obligation; those intended for the Jews only, until the coming of Messiah, and those which are binding on the consciences of all men. By means of the ceremonial statutes of the Old Testament, God preserved Israel from becoming merged with the heathen round about them; they were kept a "holy," that is, a separated people unto the Lord. Christ teaches His hearers that there is but one cause of real pollution, man's fallen nature; the source is within; the seat of it is the heart with its desires. Thence proceed defilements of speech through the mouth, thence spring actions which besmirch conscience.

Retell the story.

Read Leviticus chap. 11; tell the names of some animals that the Jews were to regard as unclean, that is to say, were not permitted to eat.

Read Leviticus 20, 24-26. The purpose of this distinction between clean and unclean meats is there stated.

Read Col. 2, 16.17.

Sing Hymn: O Thou that hear'st when sinners cry (No. 419).

36. THE SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN

Mark 7, 24-30

24. And from thence he arose, and went into the borders (territory) of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would (wished to) have no man know it; but he could not be hid. 25. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: 26. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 27. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled (satisfied): for it is not meet (fair) to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. 28. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. 29. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

Read the parallel Matth. 15, 21-28.

The withdrawal was due to the hatred of the Pharisees and the loss of disciples caused by the speech in the synagogue of Capernaum (John 6, 66). Jesus now made a long sojourn on heathen soil, passing near Tyre, then along the coast of Sidon, through which He passed, then across country to the sources of the Jordan, then through the Ten City district (Decapolis) to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. In passing through Sidon one of the strangest incidents in our Lord's public ministry took place. There came to Him a woman of Canaan, called by Mark "a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation"; she spoke Greek but belonged by race to those Syrians who dwell in Phenicia, Phenicians of Canaanite descent. According to Matthew, she addressed Him, "O Lord, Thou Son of David." She recognized in Him the Messiah. The works of Jesus had spread His fame far beyond the confines of Galilee. He is barely on heathen soil and He is recognized as the promised Redeemer of mankind.

Now, Jesus usually was quick to answer every call for help. His heart responded instantly and lovingly to every one who came to Him. A Christ silent to the cry of a mother, pleading for her child, seems so contrary to what we know of the sympathizing and helping Christ that the record seems almost incredible.

Matthew tells us also that the disciples interfered, begging Him to send the woman away. They seem to have been annoyed by her following after them and her continual pleading. The fact that she was a Gentile may account for this. The Jews had no sympathy with the Gentiles. When Jesus did speak to this woman, at length, it was a very discouraging word that He said. The "children" are the Jewish people. They were in a peculiar sense God's family. It seems very strange to hear the word "dogs" falling from the lips of Jesus Christ, applied to Gentiles. It does

not seem like Him. No doubt there was something in the tone of voice which Jesus used, or in the look of His eye as He spoke to the woman, that took away from His words the offensiveness. Certainly she was not insulted by what He said. Perhaps she was encouraged by the word "first"—"Let the children first be filled." A first implied a second. Then, Jesus, adopting the expression "dog" with reference to a non-Jew, had slightly softened it. He says not "dogs" but "little dogs," household pets, and the woman cleverly catches at the expression, and agrees that if the Gentiles are household dogs then it is only right that they should be fed with the crumbs that fall from their master's table.

Retell the story.

Application: 1. In all the New Testament there is no other such striking illustration of the persistence of faith. Obstacle after obstacle was met and overcome. The woman believed from the beginning that Jesus had power to heal her poor child, and she determined that she would not go away without winning from Him the help which she so much needed. The lesson for us is that we should never be discouraged by delays in the answering of our prayers. He, before whom we stand, can do for us whatever we need to have done. Nothing is impossible to Him. He waits to draw out our faith until it reaches its fullness of power and wins its victory. People sometimes think now that Christ is silent to them when they call upon Him in their trouble. No answer comes to their cries. He seems not to come for their distress. But they may always know that the silence is no indication of indifference. Christ's delays are not refusals.

Application: 2. Why did Jesus speak to this woman so harshly and wait so long before granting her request? 1. To test the strength of her faith; 2. To teach her the lesson that persistence in prayer will finally obtain fulfilment; 3. To teach His disciples that greater faith might be found among the heathen than in Israel.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Come, ye disconsolate (No. 512)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Rom. 10, 1-10

Monday: Rom. 10, 11-21

Tuesday: Rom. 11, 1-21

Wednesday: Rom. 11, 22-36

Thursday: Rom. 12, 1-8

Friday: Rom. 12, 9-16

Saturday: Rom. 12, 17-21

ELEVENTH LESSON

Mark 7, 31—Chap. 8, 1-26

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: In the hour of trial (No. 409)
or When in the hour of utmost need (No. 515)

Psalm 28. Prayer

37. THE DEAF-MUTE

Mark 7, 31-37

31. And again, departing from the coasts (territory) of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. 33. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; 34. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. 35. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

36. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged (forbad) them, so much the more a great deal (eagerly) they published it; 37. And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf hear, and the dumb to speak.

Read the parallel account Matth. 15, 29-31.

This man who was brought to Jesus was deaf. He seems to have been totally deaf. Then, besides, he had an impediment in his speech, probably was a stammerer. The friends of this poor man brought him to Jesus and besought Him to heal the man.

This miracle is selected by Mark for its unusual character. Usually our Lord healed instantaneously, here by stages; usually by a word, here by material means. The reason for the difference of treatment must be sought in the spiritual state of the sufferer. The Lord took him aside from the crowd. The miracle was done privately that the man, in the absence of a multitude, might be able to direct his entire attention on Jesus. Then followed certain actions by which Jesus produced faith in the man. He "put His fingers into his ears, and He spat, and touched his tongue." There was something in each of these acts which would help the man to understand the purpose of Jesus. He was deaf—the touching of his ears would suggest to him that Jesus intended to cure his deafness, and started in him expectation and faith. His speech was disturbed—the touching of his tongue by Jesus with the moisture of His spittle would indicate to the man that He was about to cure the defect. Jesus' looking up to heaven was a prayer, and would turn the man's thought to God as the only Healer. The sigh or groaning of Jesus showed the sufferer His sympathy with him in his trouble.

The writer of the Gospel gives the very word which Jesus used. He spoke the one word, "Ephphatha." This word is Aramaic. It means, "Be opened." He spoke to the deaf ears and the disordered centers of speech, and instantly these organs recognized their Master.

Retell the story.

38. FEEDING THE FOUR THOUSAND

Mark 8, 1-10

1. In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, 2. I have compassion on (am sorry for) the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: 3. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. 4. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread (where can one get loaves to satisfy these people) here in the wilderness? 5. And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. 6. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before (serve out to) them; and they did set them before the people. 7. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. 9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

10. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

This story is not a bare repetition of the feeding of the five thousand told in all four gospels. The second miracle occurs both in Matthew and in Mark, the place in this instance being the Ten City district. Aside from other evidence, Jesus makes it quite clear that there were two miracles, a feeding of five thousand and a feeding of four thousand. In some ways the situations were similar. Again the Lord was so full of zeal for the good of the people, denying Himself rest, refreshment, and sleep, preaching to them for three days. So true were the words of His, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." Again the crowd had exhausted such small supplies of food as they carried with them, and once more the Lord directs His disciples to distribute the bread they had. It seems strange that the disciples had forgotten the other occasion, when their Lord had provided for five thousand hungry men. "Whence shall we be able to satisfy these men with bread here in a desert place?" But is not this just what most of us do? We do not learn from our experience of divine answers to prayer. We forget God's favors of yesterday when we are in trouble today.

Retell the story.

Application: Again the divine nature of Christ breaks through the "form of a servant." And surely in this miracle we can again see a parable of our Lord's mission and office. Read John 6, 47-51.

39. A SIGN FROM HEAVEN SOUGHT

Mark 8, 11-13

11. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question (argue) with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. 13. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

Read the parallel account Matth. 16, 1-4.

From Matthew we learn that there was now an unnatural and unholy alliance between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These sects had con-

tended for many years for the favor of the public and had been very free in their condemnation of one another, but their hatred of Jesus now furnished a bond of union. Some of their agents now tested Christ by demanding a sign from heaven. Jewish superstition held that the devil could work miracles on earth, but that only God could work them in heaven. The Lord answered that no sign should be given them on account of their unbelief, but then added, according to the record in Matthew, that while He would perform no miracles for them they should receive "the sign of Jonah." This sign they received when Jesus was raised from the dead after the third day, even as Jonah had been in the belly of the fish for three days.

But had they not had signs from heaven? Were not the angelic messengers at Bethlehem, and the Star of the Wise Men signs from heaven? And more recently, the voice that spoke from heaven at the Baptism, and the Spirit coming in dove-like form,—surely they had heard about these signs from John's disciples. So unreasonable is unbelief; such is the hardness of a jealous heart.

Retell the story.

Application: Let us not imagine that this attitude over against Christ and His doctrine died with the Pharisees. They are a type of all those who are not satisfied with the simple preaching of the Word, but want something sensational. Apply to sensational preaching and religious sensationalism in general; the crowds which some false prophets (and prophetesses) draw when they claim miraculous power; give examples. Read Luke 16, 31.

40. THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

Mark 8, 14-21

14. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. 15. And he charged (cautioned) them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? 18. Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? 19. When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. 21. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Read the parallel Matth. 16, 5-12.

The leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy, a would-be religion, pride, insistence on outward form. The leaven of Herod, (called in Matthew's report, the leaven of the Sadducees, since Herod represented the worldly spirit of Sadduceism) is worldliness and skeptical doubts of the teachings of Christianity. The disciples took Jesus' words literally as a command to lay in a fresh stock of bread but to avoid all bread made with leaven from the house of a Pharisee or a Sadducee. This misunderstanding might seem foolish to us but was not really so unreasonable. Had not Jesus pronounced the Pharisees worse than the heathen? Was it not natural that He should proceed to pronounce their houses, food, leaven, etc., unclean?

Retell the story.

Application: Leaven (sour-dough, yeast) has this quality that it spreads its influence rapidly through the mass. A small quantity will leaven an entire baking of bread. So it is with false doctrine. Mention some teachings which people call unessential, and concerning which they ask us to be "liberal." What has been the experience of churches which permit a little false doctrine to creep in? The Pharisees had principally one false doctrine, they believed that the Messiah would establish a worldly (secular) kingdom. And because Jesus did not yield to this idea, they rejected and crucified Him!

Sing Hymn: Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide (No. 110).

41. THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN

Mark 8, 22-26

22. And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him (with the request) to touch him. 23. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eye, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught. 24. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. 25. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

The man was healed in stages. Jesus first strengthened his faith by partly healing him, and then completed the cure. "I see men; for I behold them as trees walking"; medical writers agree with the process here described. A famous oculist, for instance, says of a patient of his, who, having been born blind, recovered his sight: "When he first saw, he knew not the shape of anything, nor any one thing from another, however different in shape or magnitude."

Our text refers to one of the gracious characteristics of our Lord which Mark delights to dwell on. It is the touch of Jesus. He takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand, and her sickness leaves her. Moved with compassion He touches the leper. That touch of sympathy so unaccustomed was now received by the poor man, in spite of his uncleanness. And so when the Lord stood over the damsel, who to Him, was not dead but sleeping, He took her hand in His and said: "Arise!" After His Transfiguration, coming down from the mountain He delivers the poor lad from the frightful possession of a demon and again it is Mark alone who adds the words: "But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up." He could have spoken the word that would have put the boy on his feet; but the loving compassion that filled His heart prompted the outstretched hand. He is the same pitying Christ today and, how defiled by sin a man may be, His hand is stretched out to Him in the Gospel message, filled with compassionate healing power.

Retell the story.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Thy way, not mine, O Lord (No. 384)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: Rom. 13, 1-7

Monday: Rom. 13, 8-14

Tuesday: Rom. 14, 1-8

Wednesday: Rom. 14, 9-23

Thursday: Rom. 15, 1-14

Friday: Rom. 15, 15-33

Saturday: Rom. 16, 1-27

TWELFTH LESSON

Mark 8, 27—Chap. 9, 1

OPENING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Thou art the Way (No. 94)
or How sweet the name of Jesus sounds (No. 96)
Psalm 34. Prayer

42. THE CONFESSION OF PETER

Mark 8, 27-33

27. And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28. And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. 29. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest (hast in mind) not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Read the parallel Matth. 16, 13-20.

Jesus now undertook another distant excursion partly to escape the enmity of the Pharisees, but chiefly to hold private conversation with His disciples. He now intended to lead them on to a fuller recognition of His Messiahship. That they might recognize in Him the Savior of the world, the Son of the everlasting Father, was the supreme object of His ministry. The momentous conversation which led up to their confession of Him as God and Redeemer, took place at Caesarea Philippi, that is to say, the Caesarea built by a ruler named Philip. It was situated at the sources of the Jordan, the farthest North reached by Jesus on His wanderings, near the foot of Mt. Hermon (9,000 feet) in the midst of magnificent scenery. Comparing the several accounts in the Gospels, we learn that Jesus had gone apart to pray, and the disciples with Him, when this conversation occurred. It was a new epoch in our Lord's ministry. He was now turning His face directly toward the cross. He asked the disciples two questions. The first was, "Who do men say that I am?" The disciples told Him what the people were saying about Him.

Retell the story.

Application: Some people cry out against doctrines, declaring it is no matter what a person's creed is, if only he does what is right. But it does matter what one believes about Christ. If you regard Him as only a man you can not trust Him as your Savior. One who is only a man can not forgive your sins, nor deliver you in temptation, nor walk with you in death. Some of the Jews thought Jesus was John the Baptist came back to life, some, that the prophecy of Mal. 4, 5 was fulfilled in Him.

Peter in the name of the Twelve confessed his belief in Jesus as the Christ. Matthew records the utterance with greater completeness: "Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew also has preserved the promise of Jesus regarding His church, made in this connection, that "the gates of

hell shall not prevail against it,"—no persecutions or assaults of Satan shall destroy it. As soon as Peter had made his noble confession, Jesus began to explain what Messiahship meant according to the divine purpose. He told His disciples that He must suffer many things, and be rejected and killed, and then that after three days He would rise again. This was not the thought of the Messiah the disciples had. The effect of these words of Jesus upon Peter was very marked. His whole soul revolted against the thought of rejection and death for his Lord. He took Jesus and began to rebuke Him, as if he would hold Him back by force from such a destiny.

Application: The reply of Jesus to Peter has a lesson for us all. He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Peter had been doing the work of Satan in trying to hold his Master back from His divinely appointed way. Had Jesus followed the well-meant advice of Peter, He would not have become our Savior through suffering and death.

Application: 2. We are expected to carry the reproach of Christ; we must be ridiculed and despised for believing the Bible, for going to Church, for partaking of the Sacrament; but there are those who would prevent us from thus suffering reproach with Christ. These are our worst enemies, no matter how kindly their interest in us.

Sing Hymn: Let thoughtless thousands choose (No. 550) or Let me be Thine forever (No. 408).

43. EXHORTATION TO SELF-DENIAL

Mark 8, 34—Chap. 9, 1

34. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37. Or what shall a man give in exchange (as an equivalent) for his soul? 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my works, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. 9, 1. And he said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Retell the story.

Not only during the age of persecution was it necessary for Christians to deny themselves. The lesson is a universal one. Luke adds: "Let him take up his cross daily,"—daily! That cross may be persecution, it may be loss of friends or loss of business, suffered for the sake of Christian conviction. And anyone who by trying to shun the cross or to escape self-denial would save his life here, will lose it hereafter. But he who loses his life for Christ's sake, either by dying in His cause or by denying his lusts out of love for Him, he in the life to come shall find his life in the bosom of Christ and eternal joy.

Read Gal. 5, 24; 6, 14.

Question: Can you mention a parable in which it was said to a certain man: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee?" How does it apply here?

What if all the mineral wealth of the globe were our own, if all precious stones mined from the earth were at our feet, what would we do with

them all? If life teaches us one lesson it is that riches do not make happy, that wealth of the world cannot purchase true happiness.

Sing Hymn: I would not live alway (No. 535, 1.4.5) or What is the world to me (No. 385, 1.7.8).

Question: No one has ever been tempted by "the world and all its glory" except our Lord, when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Can you mention temptations by means of which Satan succeeded in making people throw away their chance of salvation?

Jesus asks, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The soul in its value defies all comparison.

Question: What is it that gives the soul its inestimable value? What proof has God the Father given, that the souls of men are inexpressibly dear to Him? How is the same truth illustrated in the work of the Son of God, (Phil. 2, 6-8) and in the work of the Holy Spirit? (John 14, 26.)

Other loss can be compensated for, the loss of the soul never. Chicago was burnt, and at the same time the loss was staggering; but Chicago has become a greater and more beautiful city by reason of its great fire. When people lose their sight, their hearing becomes more acute. But there is no compensation for the loss of the soul. Job lost all he had, but in the end was a much richer man. If he had lost his soul, all would have been lost indeed.

We are in danger of losing our soul when we are ashamed of Jesus and His Word. We may, indeed, escape ridicule and persecution by denying the faith which we have learnt. But he that denies Jesus Christ will be denied by Him on the last day. Only those who bear the cross with Him shall be united with Him in glory and receive the eternal reward of grace.

Question: What is there about Jesus that causes men to be ashamed of Him? What imperfections do we see in the Church? What other reasons can you mention that cause men to turn away from Christ and His doctrine?

Yet there is no reason why we should be ashamed of Jesus and of our faith. Those who trust in His Word implicitly can never go wrong and will never be disappointed. And though all the wisdom of the world is arrayed against the teachings of our Church, and wickedness seems to be secure, and the Gospel at a discount, we know that there will ever remain great numbers who are not ashamed of Jesus and that on the Last Day He will declare their faithfulness to Him and His Word before His Father and the angels of heaven. That this might be the end of our faith, is the purpose of our Bible study.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Sing Hymn: Jesus! and shall it ever be (No. 91)
or Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide (No. 110)

Closing Prayer. Benediction

A WEEK'S BIBLE READING:

Sunday: 1 Pet. 1, 1-12
Monday: 1 Pet. 1, 13-23
Tuesday: 1 Pet. 2, 1-10
Wednesday: 1 Pet. 2, 11-25
Thursday: 1 Pet. 3, 1-22
Friday: 1 Pet. 4, 1-19
Saturday: 1 Pet. 5, 1-14

OPENING PRAYERS

O Holy Spirit, Sanctifier and Comforter, visit us, we pray Thee, with Thy love and favor, enlighten our minds more and more with the light of Thy everlasting Gospel, graft into our hearts a love of Thy truth, increase in us true religion, enable us heartily to choose that good part which shall not be taken away from us, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy preserve us unto the heavenly kingdom, O blessed Spirit, whom, with the Father and the Son together, we worship and glorify as one God, world without end. Amen.

Lord, our God, Thou Lover of mankind, we humbly beseech Thee, enlighten and instruct us by Thy Word in the true knowledge of Thee and Thy will. Teach us Thy precepts and judgments, and let our hearts be occupied in Thy Law day and night. Confirm us in true faith, and number us with Thy flock. Vouchsafe unto us the garment of incorruption, cleanse us from all pollution of flesh and spirit, and let Thy Holy Spirit dwell in us, that all our coming in and going out may please Thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Eternal and ever-blessed God, who art the Author of our life and the End of our pilgrimage, we beseech Thee so to guide us by Thy Word and Spirit amid all perils and temptations that we may not wander from Thy way, but may finish our course in safety, and come to our eternal rest in Thee through the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYERS

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and apply them, that by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

O almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that following His steps, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life; through the same Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who hast given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the glorious revelation of the Gospel, cause Thy Word to dwell in us richly, we beseech Thee, and fill us with the knowledge of Thy will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may know our sin, and Thy Son as the Savior from sin, and may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

Lord God, Heavenly Father, we pray Thee so to govern and guide us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may with all our heart hear and receive Thy Word, and truly sanctify the Lord's Day, to the end that we may, in turn, be sanctified by Thy Word, that we may rest all our confidence and hope on Jesus Christ, Thy Son, amend our lives in accordance with Thy Word, and avoid every offense, until we shall, by Thy grace in Christ, be saved forever through the same, Thy Son. We ask it in His name. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven: Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with us all. Amen.

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