Sunday School Lesson

ANALYSIS

December 29. Lesson XIII—Fellowship Through Service—Psalm 122: 119; Hebrews 10: 22-25. Golden Text—As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.—Luke 4: 16.

I. COMMON WORSHIP, Neh. 8: 1-12; Psalm 122: 1-9; Heb. 10: 19-25.

II. THE MISSIONARY TASK, Micah 4: 1, 2; Matt. 28: 18-20.

INTRODUCTION—Worship is originally "worthship," and is so spelled in some of its oldest forms. It is the recognition of worth or value. In a religious sense, as it is used here, it means doing homage to God, our Lord, our King, our Father in heaven, in whose power, goodness, and love we see the highest and the best of which our minds have, or can have, any knowledge. It is recognition in the Divine personality as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ of the highest values.

The Christian church began as a fellowship—a group of disciples, sometimes alone, sometimes with others, gathered about a Master, whom they came more and more to admire and love, until admiration and love grew into worship. It continued, after he was parted from them, as a company of disciples and friends of Jesus, with others whom they drew into their circle, who kept alive his memory, who were conscious of the presence of his spirit with them, and who "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine (or teaching) and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," Acts 2: 42. From Jerusalem they soon spread abroad, and similar companies of those who believed in Jesus and endeavored to follow his way of life were formed wherever his gospel was preached. The ideals of such a fellowship are present in many passages of the letters of Paul (see Rom. 15: 1, 2; Gal. 6: 2; 1 Thess. 5: 11-23).

I. COMMON WORSHIP, Neh. 8: 1-12; Psalm 122: 1-9; Heb. 10: 19-25.

Each of us alone may come to God in worship, bringing our thanksgiving, our confessions, and petition for our individual needs. In such private prayer we need not, and do not, forget the needs of others, but pray to God for them as well as for ourselves. But there is no doubt that in the company of others, like-minded with ourselves, our worship seems more satisfying and more complete, we are more conscious of the presence of God and the power of his spirit. That there are exceptions to this experience is true, but it seems to be generally the fact that in fellowship God seems most near. The discipline of common worship is necessary for all who would enter into the fulness of the Christian life.

The story of the great service, or rather series of services, of worship conducted by Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 8: 1-18) is full of interest. The Bible was not in those days, as it is now, in every man's hand. Many of the people of Jerusalem and Judah were ignorant of their own history, and their own laws. Ezra had come to them from the schools of Babylon as a teacher. Now to the assembled multitude he reads in "the book of the law," and his companions help him in explaining what the people could not themselves understand. There was, therefore, in the service, reading of the scriptures, instruction, thanksgiving, confession, the celebration of holy days, and in the intervals, remembrance of the poor.

Psalm 122 is one of the so-called Pilgrim Psalms, composed for, and sung by, pilgrims on their way to the city of Jerusalem to take part in the annual festivals. The psalm gives fine expression to the gladness of these holiday excursions, and the warm attachment of the Jewish people to the city and the sanctuary. The word "compact," in verse 3, should rather be translated "federate." Jerusalem was the federate, or federal, city, belonging equally to all the tribes and people of Israel. That seems to have been in the mind of David when he chose the Jebusite stronghold, and made it his capital city, 2 Sam. 5: 6-9. The coming up of the tribes to the city is a testimony to their unity, as is also the high courts, the "thrones of judgment." Therefore, will the pilgrims "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," for their own and their brethren's sake, and for the sake of their common sanctuary.

The passage chosen in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. 10: 19-25) contains an earnest exhortation to Christian fellowship and worship. The writer assumes that he, and those to whom he writes, have come through Jesus, as their High Priest, into the holy presence of God, and now live in that Presence. He exhorts, therefore, that with pure hearts, and in confident faith, they draw near to God in adoration and praise, and that they hold without wavering their good hope of salvation in Christ, for, he says, "We can rely on him who gave us the promise." And, he continues, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good deeds—not ceasing to meet together," (Moffatt). Like many others in the latter part of the first century he believed that "the day," the great day of Christ's return, was drawing near, and the opportunities for helping one another and confirming one another in the faith were, therefore, few.

II. THE MISSIONARY TASK, Micah 4: 1, 2; Matt. 28: 18-20.

Prophets of the Old Testament foretold a time when the nations would come to Jerusalem to learn the ways of God, Isa. 2: 2-4; Micah 4: 1-3. Our Lord sent his apostles out to carry the truth of his gospel to the nations, Matt. 28: 18-20. The expectation of the prophets and the commandment of Jesus are in essential agreement. The precious truth committed to Jerusalem must be made to all men. That is the duty of Israel, as Jehovah's servant, to be a "light to the Gentiles," and "salvation unto the end of the earth." It is the fulfilment of prophetic teaching in Jesus Christ that his apostles are bidden to preach to all the world. And with the commandment there goes his gracious promise, "Lo I am with you alway."

It was from a company of Christian people in Antioch that the first designated missionaries of the cross went forth. That which they had discovered to be of so great value to themselves they desired to share with others. Through them the Holy Spirit spoke, and Barnabas and Saul were sent, "recommended to the grace of God for the work." A true Christian fellowship is inevitably missionary in spirit (Acts 13: 1-3; 14: 26), as was the church in Antioch.

Radio Quit Rumor Started

Penguin Island, Believed Lost, Still Above Sea, Paris Learns

Paris.—One pleasant report reached the French government recently. The news came to the Ministry of Colonies that St. Paul Island, more commonly known here as Penguin Island, was still standing in the middle of the Indian Ocean, continuing to make a part of the French colonial empire.

Its fate has been worrying M. Tardieu's government and Paris public opinion, since nothing had been heard from St. Paul's inhabitants for more than two months. The suggestion was made that the island had been swallowed up by the ocean as a result of an earthquake.

It is true that news from that tiny bit of rock, somewhere between Cape Horn and Australia, never had been frequent. No boats called there except in case of emergency. Monthly radio flashes were the only contact with the outer world for the Breton fishermen living there..

But two months had gone, and no flashes had come through. The French authorities asked, therefore, that a steamer bound from Cape Town to Australia go somewhat out of its way to see what had happened to St. Paul. The Euripides found the islend still rising out of the ocean on 38.4 degrees latitude, 77.3 degrees longitude.. All the fishermen were alive, indulging, as usual, in fishing for lobster, cooking it in the boiling springs and getting the tins ready to be carried back to South Africa and Europe.

The only trouble was that the radio apparatus had ceased to work.

WHAT IS DUTY?

What is duty? With regard to ourselves, it is to be independent of the senses, and with regard to others, it is to be untiring in giving help and support; help to live well; help by agreement and by opposition, by giving and by withholding, by firmness and by compliance, by praise and by blame, by silence and by words, by what is pleasant and by what is painful. Dwellers on the same earth, travellers of the same hour, and companions along the same road, we ought to help one another; and when we reach the resting-place, we shall have first to render an account of what each has done for the happiness of the rest—for joy, or for goodness. A kind look will win its reward.

Old Town On the Thames Suffers Heavy Loss

HALF-MILLION DOLLAR BLAZE SWEEPS CHATHAM

All the furniture that was saved from the Garner Hotel, Chatham, after the fire of December 8-9, the worst in the history of the city.

Wall Street Crash

"Something Subtly Harmful to the Spirit of the Nation Occurs When So Many People Make So Much Money Without Earning it by Productive Labor

"It was announced by the Stock Exchange that the total market value of all stocks listed on the exchange has declined from about £17,414,600,000 on October 1 to £14,350,400,000 on November 1, a decline of £3,070,200,000. A high record value was reached on September 1st, with £17,933,600,000."

—Daily Telegraph New York Correspondent.

The weekly reviews of America, the organs of serious thought, are concerned about recent happenings in Wall Street. The "New Republic," in a searching article, says:—

"Is there anybody who would argue that the behaviour of the stock exchange during the past year has been a useful element in the nation's life? What good does it do for wealth—even paper wealth—to be won and lost so quickly?

"While the market was going up, the successful bulls and those who profited by their over-confidence loudly proclaimed, despite all critics, the virtues of speculation for the rise, but many of these same forces now console the speculators or their losses only by pointing out their folly. The question is insistent, what could have been done to prevent what has happened? What can be done to prevent its happening again?

"Some of the luxury trades will of course be hit, but they do not constitute the backbone of production and trade. Industry may now decline, but if this happens it will be largely as a consequence of tendencies which would have been injurious even if the market had retained its self-possession. The disturbance which the vagaries of stock speculation cause, in so far as it is economic, occurs as much during the rise of prices as after the fall.

"The diversion of savings and credit to operations in stocks has had unfortunate results. Anyone dependent on bank credit for normal operations has been having a hard time for at least six months. There are localities where even first mortgages, granted to home-owners on the safest of security, have been called or not renewed, where building operations are stagnant because of a shortage of loanable funds.

"If it had not been for the money which the Farm Board was able to lend for holding wheat and cotton, the stock crisis would have hit the farmers a body blow during their chief marketing season, first because people with money could use it to greater advantage in buying stocks or lending on security collateral than in financing crop operations, next because many of those dealings on the commodity exchanges liquidated their holdings in order to protect their shares.

"Many business men deserted their normal occupations because they could make so much more so easily by speculation. This must have affected the total of useful production and trade. Such a vast amount of energy and credit utilised in pursuing a phantom cannot be thought of as anything else than economic waste.

"The tangible losses are also important. Something subtly harmful to the spirit fo the nation occurs when so many people make so much money without earning it by productive labor. Senses of values are upset. It is perhaps justifiable to defend our material culture on the ground that a competence of material things is necessary as a basis for leisure, security and appreciation of the finer flowers of human effort.

"But there is not net cultural gain in an economic order which dumps untold wealth into the hands of hundreds of thousands who happen to guess right and gamble well, but who do not thus create a single object or idea. And when the wealth is as suddenly withdrawn, a gaping hole is left. How much might this ingenuity not have accomplished, if it had not been applied so single-mindedly to evanescent personal fortune?

"This argument does not, of course, lead us to advocate either abolition of the stock market or personal renunciation of speculation, on moral grounds. In theory, the stock market is an useful institution in a capitalist order. It is supposed to furnish a place where those who want to buy or sell shares of ownership in productive resources can do so. Such buying and selling is essential, as long as private ownership exists. An industrial organization, let us say, needs capital to enlarge its production. It offers shares of stock.

"People who have saved money want to put it to work for them. They buy shares. It is convenient to have a central market where this can be done. It is useful to have a place where the interplay of buyers and sellers can determine the values of what is for sale.

"Even speculators may contribute, according to theory, to the usefulness of such an institution. By buying or selling according to their estimates of future value, they shoulder many of the risks inherent in such a market. They help to stabilize prices. The use of credit for lending to investors or speculators can also be justified. It helps to carry new securities until they can be absorbed by investors. It smooths over the rough places. If the stock market operated according to theory, there would be little complaint—until we could devise better ways to accomplish the same result.

"Nobody is entitled to say, without exhaustive investigation and discussion, what in particular can be done to plug the gaps in social control of economic processes which the experience of the past months has revealed. Clearly, however, there must be found some means which will adjust the issuance of securities more closely to the real needs of industry, not allowing it to depend on the profits of the promoters and stock-selling institutions.

"There must be some social control of the use which private business makes of its surplus funds. There must be a good deal of popular education concerning the whole matter. We cannot hope to suppress the human instinct to gamble, but we may limit its capacity or harm in a realm which is so closely associated with the life of the nation.. We may do something to make the stock market serve the purpose it is supposed to serve."

John Bull's Hat Is "In the Ring"

Britain Out to Regain Trade Lost to U.S. in South America

London—William Graham, president of the Board of Trade, at a dinner to diplomats of three South American countries, said that it was the immediate British task to regain the former trade position in South America, with all friendiness toward the United States, and to improve on it if possible.

He stated that Great Britain had held important positions in the markets of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay before the war, but found after the conflict that the United States had largely stepped into his shoes. He referred with appreciation to the manner in which a recent British trade mission was received in those countries.

The Brazilian Ambassador, Uruguayan Minister and Argentine Charge d'Affaires were the guests of honor in the crimson and gilt banqueting room of Lancaster House. In addition to Mr Graham, Foreign Secretary Henderson, Lord D'Abernon and Sir Ronald Lindsay, recently appointed Ambassador to Washington, were among the distinguished leaders present.

In proposing a toast to the prosperity of the three South American countries, Mr. Henderson referred to the gigantic strides made by them during the last century in agriculture, industry and education, and expressed the keen British interest in these developments.

Lord D'Abernon told of his recent visit on a trade mission and, with reference to the $45,000,000 trade agreement negotiated with Argentina, quoted Sir Malcolm Robertson, a former Ambassador to Buenos Ayres, as saying that this order was not only valuable in itself, but represented the beginning of "an enormous thing."

FOUNDATIONS

Human society rests on inscrutably deep foundations, which he is of all others the most mistaken who fancies he has explored to the bottom.—Carlyle.

How Baden-Powell Was Neary Killed

Matabele-Up Tree Missed Boy Scout Founder by Hair's Breadth

London.—One of London's most interesting December visitors is Major Frederick Russell Burnham; once described by Lord Baden Powell as "the greatest scout alive," and referred to by Sir Rider Haggard as "more interesting than any of my heroes of romance."

This American holder of a British D.S.O., and chief of scouts under Lord Roberts during the South African War, told the hitherto undisclosed story of how a single Matabele warrior, in 1896, nearly prevented the creation of the Scout movement.

Resting Under Tree

The then Major Baden Powell was resting with his officers under a big tree—"where he learned the lesson that a scout must look up as well as down," said Major Burnham, who continued.

That morning the Matabele warrior had seen the last great attack of his nation to capture Bulawayo and destroy the hated white man end in utter route and disaster. To avoid the charge of mounted white men he had climbed with his big gun into this tree, and they had swept by him. But strangely the white indunas incautiously chose his particular tree to stand under while they rested their tired horses and gathered their scattered men.

Suddenly the thought must have come to this Matabele—I hold the life of any one of these indunas in my hand. They are only a few feet below me, my nation is lost, my race is constantly defeated by the white. I will select the most commanding induna, kill him, and die.

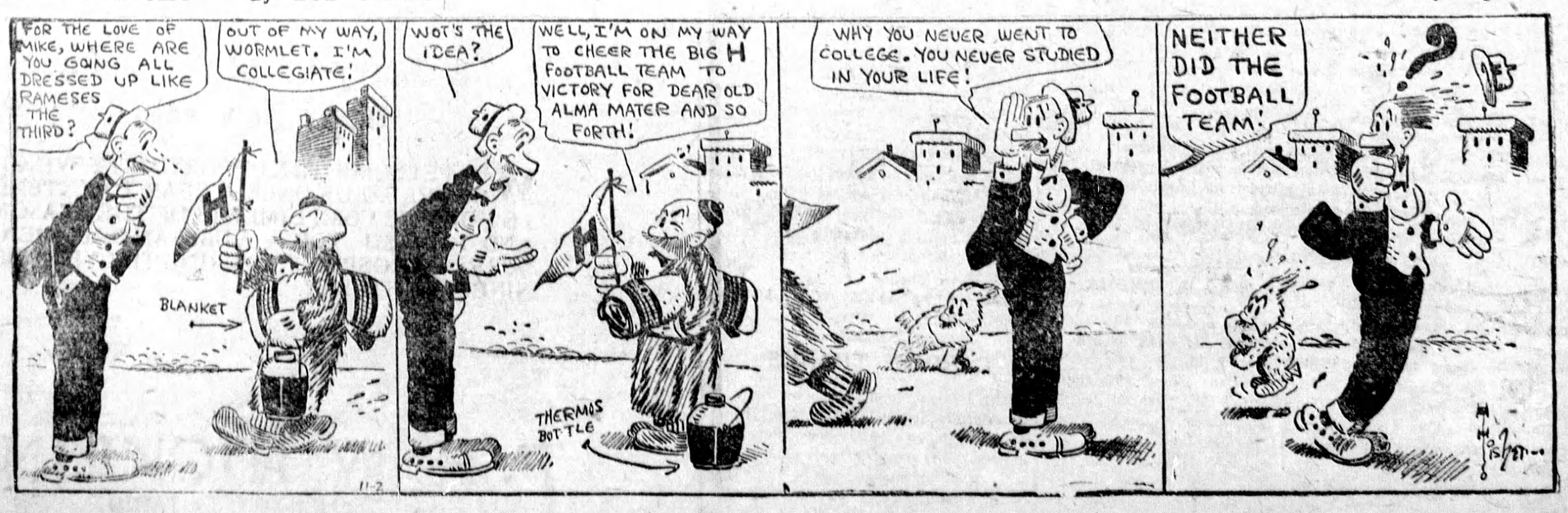
The Chief Scout was the one selected to die, but the Matabele missed his victim by a hair's breadth. The next instant the Matabele lay crumpled at the base of the tree. Let us hope that as his soul sped from the black body some angel of solace relieved his despair. For, if he had but known, had he killed that induna he would have destroyed an idea that in due time will assuage even such hatred as he and his people had for the whites.

Scouting will enable his people and all his race to live without humiliation and have their proper place in the sun, yet not destroy the white man.

"Neckers who don't want an audience should be careful where they park."

OPPORTUNITIES

"Difficulties are opportunities," my old schoolmaster used to tell us, but he wisely left us to discover what he meant and to find for ourselves the answer to the question, "Opportunities for what?" He never allowed us to plead the existence of a difficulty as an excuse for leaving anything undone, nor were we permitted to hope to survive our trials in place of overcoming them. Probably this is why so many of his pupils have found a high place in every sphere of life. He was inflexibly opposed to the modern tendency to make everything easy and to banish the need of effort, with its disastrous effect of robbing us of the power to conquer circumstances.

MUTT AND JEFF— By BUD FISHER

That Makes Everything Even.