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THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson 11, June 10
JESUS AND HIS MINISTRY
 Golden Text.—The Son of man
 came not to be ministered unto,
 but to minister, and to give his
 life a ransom for many. — Mark
 10:45.

The Lesson as a Whole
 By J. C. Macaulay, D.D.
 Approach to the Lesson
 All the mighty movements of
 history that we have been studying
 this quarter have been preparatory
 to the wonderful event of this les-
 son—the ministry of Jesus, our
 Lord and Saviour. This panora-
 mic view of the ages, all focusing
 on Christ, and leading up to Him,
 should give us a sense of the majes-
 ty and sovereignty of God, and the
 wonder of His ways. History is
 His-story. Do not think that it all
 "just happened," or that after a
 series of expedients to meet a lot
 of unforeseen crises, God finally
 tried His last great experiment—
 sending His Son into the world.
 Those who lived in those various
 epochs could see how the convul-
 sions of their day were leading on
 to a certain goal, save the prophets
 who were given revelations of the
 purposes of God; and even they
 saw only dimly, and afar off (1 Pet.
 1:10-11).

Perhaps this will help us to re-
 alize that our times also are not so
 out of joint as they appear. In
 themselves, yes, but in their rela-
 tion to the whole purpose of God
 they are perfectly in step, leading
 on inerrantly to "the blessed hope
 and appearing of the glory of the
 great God and our Saviour Jesus
 Christ" (Titus 2:13, R.V.). Most
 men are conscious of ominous pre-
 parations of some kind, but are
 ignorant of their true nature. The
 two foci of history are the first and
 second comings of our Lord Jesus
 Christ. Our quarter's study has
 shown us the developments lead-
 ing to the first goal. Let us rejoice
 that we are witnessing wonderful
 preparations for the second point
 of arrival, which will be introduced
 by "our gathering together unto
 him" (2 Thess. 2:1).

If the generally accepted date
 for our Lord's birth is correct (4
 B.C., although some, including Sir
 William Ramsay, incline to 6 or
 even 7 B.C.), then the ministry be-
 gan in A.D. 26, when He was about
 thirty years old (Luke 3:23). Since
 we have only one lesson on the life
 of Christ in this series, the teacher
 would profit by a rapid, but care-
 ful, reading of the Gospels in a har-
 mony, such as Steven and Burton's,
 or A. T. Robertson's. Such a book
 as "Epochs in the Life of Jesus,"
 by A. T. Robinson, would also make
 excellent background reading.

Verse by Verse
 Luke 4:14.—"And Jesus returned
 in the power of the Spirit into
 Galilee." The Man who had received
 the anointing of the Holy Spirit
 (chap. 3:22; Acts 10:38), and yield-
 ed to the leading of the Holy
 Spirit (Luke 4:1), now ministers in
 the power of the Holy Spirit. It is
 important to remember that our
 Lord wrought by the Spirit of God,
 not in independent self-sufficiency.
 What a condemnation of our car-
 nal self-confidence!

Verse 15.—"And he taught in
 their synagogues." The synago-
 gues had no stated ministers. The
 Temple was the sphere of the
 priests and Levites. The elders
 were rather overseers, and invited
 any whom they deemed fit to read
 the portions and teach. Jesus was
 quickly recognized as a teacher in
 the synagogues of Galilee, and ex-
 ercised a blessed ministry.

Verse 16.—"And he came to Na-
 zareth, where he had been brought
 up." It is always a difficult ordeal
 for a young man to preach his first
 sermon in his home church. The
 Nazarenes were particularly slow
 to accept one of their own young
 men, brought up to carpentry, as
 a teacher.

Verse 17.—"The book of the pro-
 phet Esaias." The rolls were kept
 in a wooden box, called the ark,
 which was hidden from view by
 curtains. The Chazzan would hand
 the roll to Jesus in the pulpit.
 Whether the Lord Jesus Christ
 read the set portion for the day,
 or chose His own passage, is diffi-
 cult to determine. At any rate, it
 was a notable Messianic portion,
 Isaiah 61:1, 2.

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Verses 18, 19.—"The Spirit of the
 Lord... hath anointed me to preach
 to preach to preach." Notice
 the emphasis on preaching in our
 Lord's long-predicted and Spirit-
 anointed ministry. Two words are
 used here: the first means to tell
 good news, to evangelize; the se-
 cond, used twice, means to herald,
 to make proclamation of something.
 But the heralding was just as much
 evangelizing, for it was a procla-
 mation of emancipation and par-
 don. The "acceptable year" is
 doubtless this age of grace, ushered
 in by the redemptive work of
 Christ. He proclaimed what He
 came to establish with His own
 blood. The stopping place in the
 reading was significant. If He had
 gone on to the next phrase, He
 would have been announcing His
 second coming.

Verse 20.—"And he closed the
 book... and sat down." It was
 customary to stand for the reading,
 and to sit for the teaching. Lenski
 says that He "sat down on the plat-
 form, cross-legged on its floor, just
 as the hearers sat cross-legged on
 the floor of the synagogue."

Verse 21.—"This day is this scrip-
 ture fulfilled in your ears." Our
 Lord read Himself in the Old Testam-
 ent. Do we recognize Him in all
 Scripture?
 I read Thy Word, O Lord, each
 passing day,
 And in the sacred page find glad
 employ;
 But this I pray —
 Save from the killing letter. Teach
 my heart,
 Set free from human forms, the
 holy art
 Of reading Thee in every line,
 In precept, prophecy, and sign.
 Till, all my vision filled with Thee,
 Thy likeness shall reflect in me.
 Not knowledge, but Thyself my
 joy!

For this I pray.
 Verse 22.—"gracious words....
 Is not this Joseph's son?" They
 could not deny the grace of His
 speech, but His being a "local boy"
 blinded their minds to His real
 worth and authority. It is hard for
 us to take our own folks seriously.
 Read on in the chapter for the sad
 ending.
 Luke 19:10.—"For the Son of man
 is come to seek and to save that
 which was lost." A verse in mo-
 nosyllables, but carrying profound-
 est and most glorious truth. It is
 the "text" of the story of Zachae-
 us, and it is the "text" of all
 Christ's ministry. Jesus is the
 great seeker, and all His seeking
 has saving purpose. Salvation is
 for lost people. Alas! many are
 lost and don't know it. To awaken
 them in their lost condition is part
 of the seeking work of Christ.

Mark 10:45.—"not to be min-
 istered unto, but to minister, and
 to give his life a ransom for many."
 This definition of His purpose in
 coming into the world was given
 in answer to the squabbling of the
 disciples for first places. True
 greatness consists not in being ser-
 ved, but in serving. Christ's ser-
 vice is redemptive; and called for
 the total sacrifice. Have we any
 fellowship with Him in such sacrifi-
 cial service?

John 3:16.—Repeat this verse
 again and again. Notice the direc-
 tion of God's love—the world of
 sinners; the degree of God's love—
 the giving of His Son; the design
 of God's love—everlasting life for
 believing sinners. So here is an-
 other definition of the purpose of
 our Lord's coming into the world.
 The Heart of the Lesson
 The tremendously interesting

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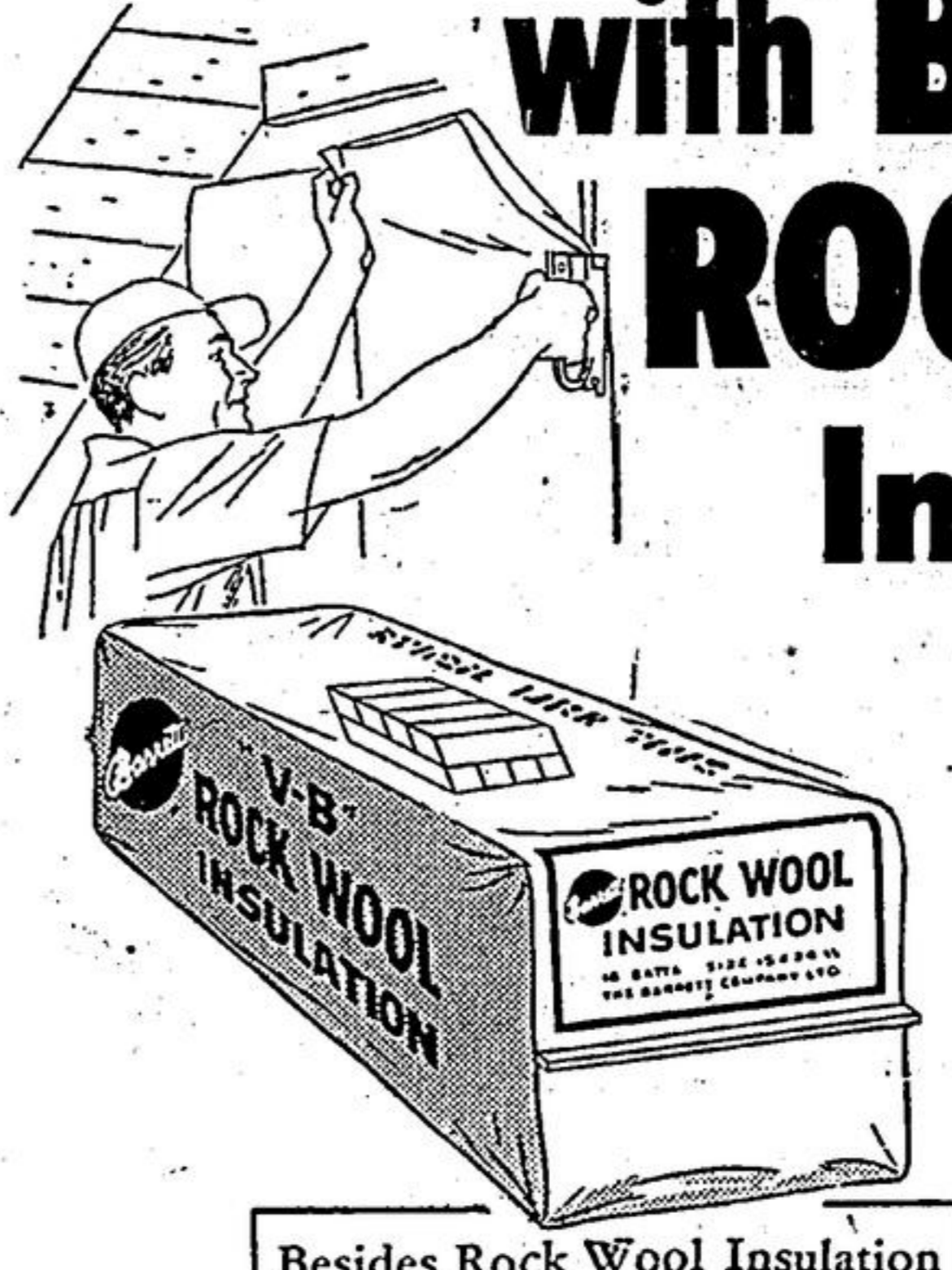
thing about our lesson is that here
 Jesus is talking about Himself, and
 they are amazing things which He
 has to say. Notice how He makes
 good such varied occasions to make
 these wonderful statements con-
 cerning Himself and His ministry.
 Whether it is reading the portion
 from the prophets in the synago-
 gue, or calling a rich tax collector
 to salvation, or rebuking the car-
 nal ambition of His disciples, or
 answering the heart questions of a
 noted rabbi, every situation calls
 for its appropriate revelation.
 His application of Isaiah 61:1, 2
 to Himself casts light not only on
 His work, but on His character.
 He is obedient, for He comes as
 one sent; He is dependent, for He
 comes, not glorying in His own
 strength, but relying upon the
 anointing of the "Spirit of the
 Lord Jehovah." Here the special
 activity noted is the preaching—
 evangelizing, proclaiming royal
 emancipation, heralding a divine
 amnesty. And of course this points
 to the Cross, where He provided
 what He announced.
 The finding and saving of Zachae-
 us, who made his wealth from
 extortion, was an object lesson
 against which our Lord declared
 the all-covering objective of His
 coming into the world—"to seek
 and to save that which was lost."
 Again it is a purpose of grace—
 not to seek and to apprehend the
 guilty, but to seek and to save the
 lost. What a sad word is that—
 lost! And yet what a tender word
 on the lips of Jesus! All the com-
 passion of His heart is in that word.
 He does not use the terminology
 of the prosecutor or the judge, but

of the shepherd, the father, the
 savior.
 Now it is His disciples who give
 Jesus opportunity to reveal His
 heart. Ambition, envy, and resent-
 ment have made a tense situation
 in the little band of earnest men
 (Mark 10:35-41). The Master must
 rebuke them, but how kindly! His
 reproof is in the form of the an-
 nunciation of a great principle of
 His Kingdom (vs. 42-44), and then
 He presents Himself as the su-
 preme pattern of that principle:
 "For even the Son of man came
 not to be ministered unto but to
 minister, and to give his life a ran-
 som for many." His majesty is not
 measured by the number of His
 servants, but by the extent of His
 service. His service is redemptive.
 It is the service of buying back
 from sin and death and destruction,
 and the price is—His own life.
 Then comes Nicodemus, the
 thoughtful earnest, questioning
 Pharisee, seeking out Jesus by
 night when conversation would be
 undisturbed by the crowds. From
 step to step the Lord leads the
 groping mind, until at last He gives
 him this glorious summing-up
 statement which is the prime fa-
 vorite of all Bible verses.



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