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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL,

Lesson IX.—First Quarter, For March 1, 1908.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, John vi, 1-21.
Memory Verses, 11, 12—Golden Text, Isa. xl, 11—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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Whether we read in the law, the prophets or the Psalms or the New Testament, we see God revealing Himself in Christ and working His mighty works and speaking His wonderful words which we are to lay to heart and declare to all people. For these things people hunger even as when the multitude followed Jesus in the time of our lesson, and though His precious truths may be set forth by very weak and unworthy instruments, He so honors His own word that the hungering ones are blessed and made a blessing. This I see from year to year in all the classes, and have seen just the same in Japan, China, India, South Africa and many parts of our own land, and I cannot but believe firmly that our Lord is still saying to His redeemed everywhere concerning the multitudes who have no bread of life, "Give ye them to eat," and when we are tempted to consider how little we have to do it with He says concerning what seems to be our wherewithal of time or strength or money, "Bring them hither to Me" (Matt. xiv, 16, 18). It should never be a question of what we have or what we can do, but only and always who is He and what can He do. Our part is to yield and let Him work, to trust and obey, our hearts ever saying, "Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, * * * and in Thine hand is power and might." "There is nothing too hard for Thee" (1 Chron. xxix, 11, 12; Jer. xxxii, 17). The multitudes followed because they saw (verse 2), and those without must have something which they can see; hence the necessity of good works profitable to men (Tit. iii, 8). For believers the good word is "Blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed" (John xx, 29).

At the time of our lesson John the Baptist had been killed, his disciples had buried his body, the apostles had told Jesus all that they had done and taught, and because they had no leisure so much as to eat Jesus had said, "Come apart to a desert place and rest awhile (Mark vi, 29-31). Instead of rest they found a multitude, many of whom were perhaps on their way to the Passover at Jerusalem, and Jesus received them and spake unto them of the kingdom of God and healed their sick (Luke ix, 10, 11; John vi, 4). If we saw the kingdom as Jesus saw it—and still sees it—as set forth in Ps. lxxii, Isa. xiv and elsewhere, we would be more zealous to hasten it and therefore less apt to say, "Send them away," and more ready to "give them to eat" at any cost.

From the beginning Jesus always knew just what He would do and when and how he would do it, and when we have learned to dwell with Him for His work we cease to ask when and how, but just watch the way, and watch to see what He will say and hold ourselves ready to obey His every word and to do as occasion serve us.

When we find ourselves face to face with a difficulty we should remember that it is that He may show His power and glorify His name, and then we would not presume to make suggestions as Philip and Andrew did. With their 200 pence to buy sufficient bread to give every one a little and the few loaves and fishes not worth mentioning, they remind us of the mountain and the small things of Zech. iv, 7, 10, and also of the walled cities and giants which terrified Israel and the little city of Ai, which they feared not, but which proved too much for them.

When there were no further suggestions from the disciples, then Jesus quietly and orderly did what He intended and always knew that He would, and, having received what the lad had and looked to heaven for the Father's blessing, He allows the disciples to bear to the multitude who were seated in companies on the grass sufficient to fill them all and leave twelve basketfuls over. Thus He manifested our insufficiency and His all sufficiency—the great lesson we are so slow to learn. He might work without us, but He graciously sees fit to use us when we are willing. This particular miracle depended upon the lad's surrender of all that he had—even that which he seemed really to need—and who can tell what mighty things He will work in our individual lives when we are as fully surrendered to Him as the lad's loaves and fishes?

Let us note again—and with prayerful consideration—that this is the only miracle recorded by each of the four evangelists or, perhaps better, in each of the four gospels, and ask, What is the great lesson here for my soul? I

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am persuaded that in my own life this miracle and the story of this lad is back of all this Bible class and missionary work in which the Lord has so graciously and wondrously given me a partnership with Himself.

Some one has said that this story sets forth the one business of the church in this age—giving forth the bread of life—while that which follows in Matthew, Mark and John, the disciples tolling in rowing against a head wind with Jesus away on the mountain top in prayer, suggests the condition of the church while the Lord continues on the Father's right hand.

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