

UNIFORM

Sunday School Lesson



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Pastor.

Swannanoa Methodist Church
Swannanoa, N. C.

Lesson for Sunday, Feb. 12.
"Guidance for Effective Prayer"
Lesson Text: Luke 18:1-14
Billy Sunday (not Graham) used to say, "The Bible is soaked in prayer." You do not have to read the Bible very carefully to discover how true that is. From beginning to end all sorts of people pray for all sorts of things. Some of the prayers are long; some of them are very short.

We have in our lesson today illustrations of this. Here are three different persons, each of them praying about very different things. And, notice, each prayer is short. The prayer of the widow has only five words in it. The prayer of the Pharisee has thirty words in it. The prayer of the publican seven. And, notice, the longest prayer is the least effective. ("Effective Prayer" is the subject of the lesson, remember.)

Prayer is such a big subject that it is hard to know where to begin or when to stop. But my space is limited, so I shall have to confine myself to just a few observations. It might be well to start by taking a look at the four characters presented in these two parables.

1. The Widow. Just a quotation or two from a Bible dictionary will indicate something of her position.

"Throughout the Bible widows appear as needing assistance. Their condition therefore must have been sad." "A widow had no right of inheritance to the property of her husband." "There seems to have been no fixed regulation concerning the care of widows, but, on the other hand, their defenseless position was used by many men as the occasion for advancing their own interests." "The position of the childless widow was particularly sad, since even during the lifetime of her husband she usually enjoyed no consideration." From this it is evident that a widow had a hard time defending herself and her rights, whatever they may have been. Only as others, particularly men, showed them kindness, was there much hope of happiness in store for them. That seems to give point to James' definition of religion: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction." I want to say a word or two more about her as we think of.

2. The Judge. He is described briefly: "He feared not God, neither regarded man" (including widows.) Not much of a man to be sitting on the bench administering the law. We look for open-mindedness in a judge, a willingness to listen to the plea of any who are in need of justice, regardless of their position in life. And certainly we want a judge to be a God-fearing man, a religious man. How else can he administer justice? This judge had none of these. He is called "the unjust judge." He is only moved to render judgment because he doesn't want to be bothered or disturbed. What the basis for the appeal to the judge was the parable does not say; but we may be sure it was a just cause. "Avenge me of my adversary!" is her insistent cry. But, apparently, the question of the justice of her cause does not enter into the verdict. "Though I fear not God nor regard men; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her." (I will grant her request.)

The application of the lesson of the parable comes at the beginning rather than at the end: "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." ("And not to lose heart" the Revised Version has it.)

We do not pray to an unjust judge. We pray to a loving heavenly Father. And yet we are exhorted

to keep on praying: to pray, as Paul put it, "without ceasing." We are to pray, if necessary, as persistently the unjust judge. We are to keep on praying until the answer comes. For just as surely as the judge at last gave in and granted the request of the widow, just as surely, but for very different reasons, the heavenly Father will answer us. It would be interesting if we could talk about the reasons why God frequently delays the answer to our prayers. But that would take up too much space. It would be the best way to solve the problem of delayed answer to prayer is to remember what prayer is. One of the best definitions I know is found in the Westminster Catechism: "Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will." He knows what is best for us. He will give us the best He knows. If we have faith in his purposes for us we can pray, and keep on praying; and wait in patience for the answer which will surely come.

That will have to do for the first parable, which teaches us: 1. Persistence in prayer. 2. God's purposes for us as he answers our prayers.

Now let's take a look at the characters in the other parable. Here again we have the teaching the parable is meant to convey set out at the beginning: "And he spake a parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Again, let's look at the characters: "Two men went up to the temple to pray."

1. The Pharisee. From the standpoint of the world he was a good man. He acknowledged that himself, and I think his neighbor agreed with his judgement. His goodness was both negative and positive. He was not an extortioner. He was not an adulterer. I suspect both of these sins were common then as they are now. To be honest and pure are excellent virtues. And it may be he could say with the rich young ruler, "All these (commandments) I have kept from my youth up." And he was to be commended for going beyond his duty—fasting and tithing more than was required. He almost leaned over backwards to be righteous in his own sight.

But the trouble with the Pharisee was that his goodness gave him the bighead. It made him, as that kind of goodness so frequently does, look down on others. "He despised others," as the text puts it. No man is really righteous who has that attitude. "There is so much bad in the best of us, and so much good in the worst of us, that it little behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us." "That attitudes puts a chasm between us and our fellows; and everybody is hurt. Paul has something to say about that: "Brethren; if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted" (and fall.) We may not have the same kind of "faults," as our weaker brethren; but "faults" we have. We need to confess them before God. And thank Him that we are "not as other men" up to that point. I heard a great preacher say one time, "But for the grace of God I might have been a murderer." I think it was Gipsy Smith who, after he had listened to others testify out of what terrible sins they had been saved, said, "Brethren, I thank God he has kept me from them rather than saved me out of them." So, even though others may disagree with me, I think the Pharisee's pride was understandable. His mistake was in two things: He didn't give God any credit for helping him to be righteous; he despised others who were not as righteous as he. After all, real righteousness is a gift and a grace and a growth. And God is in it all. The Pharisee "trusted in himself that he was righteous." He was after the standards of men. But because of his attitude toward his righteousness, his "righteousness" was as filthy rags. "In the sight of God his goodness was not good enough. He measured his righteousness by the wrong standard—as many who are not Pharisees do in our day. "I thank Thee that I am not as other men." "I am so much better than they." He prayed—but his prayer was not answered.

2. But let's look at the Publican; the tax gatherer. The Pharisee was a good man—and knew it. Knew it so well that he didn't have any pity for the other man. The tax gatherer was a bad man—and he knew that. He knew it so well that he went off by himself—away from the holy altar and from the supposedly holy men like the Pharisee—who worshiped in the Temple at the hour of prayer. The publican thought himself too sinful to come near them or to. And the publican, knowing himself a sinner both in the eyes of God and in the sight of men, instead he abjectly "beat upon his breast." From the depths of his soul comes the cry of penitence, the appeal for pardon, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner." One of the shortest prayers in the Bible. Only seven words. But one of the most effective. He got what he prayed for. He got it right now. "He went down to his house justified." There is no need for persistence, perseverance, in that kind of prayer. God is ready NOW to answer and forgive any man who will lift up his broken spirit to cry, "I have sinned; Lord, have mercy on me!" "When they call, I will answer them." "I will forgive their iniquities and heal their diseases." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "The publican went down to his house justified rather than the other," because he was willing to confess his sins.



LIBRARY HOURS:
Mon., 6-8 p.m.
Wed. & Sat., 3-6 p.m.
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Sing a Song of Seasons, by Sara and John Brewster.

This is one of the very best anthologies of poetry for children. The poems selected include short and simple ones for the younger child, as well as many for the older ones. In general, the selections are arranged by seasons, and also include poems for special days like Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July, as well as birthdays.

This volume represents many outstanding poets that every child ought to become acquainted with, such as Eleanor Farjeon, Walter de la Mare, Emily Dickinson, Rachel Field, R. L. Stevenson, and many others. In fact, these poems are so delightful that older folks will enjoy reading them to the children.

Home On the Range, by Bertha and Elmer Hader.
The Boy Who Had No Heart, by Maude & Miska Petersham.

All for your youngest readers! Both these stories will please the children. The first one is all about a little boy who wanted to be a cowboy, and live with Indians. A trip to his grandfather's ranch brought satisfaction, even if it were mingled with some disillusionment about those pleasures. The Boy Who Had No Heart is a story of a boy's search for his real heart. His experiences told in the usual charming style of the Petershams and it is illustrated with very effective pictures.

Scholarships To Be Given School Bus Drivers

To augment and stimulate interest in the state's school bus driver training program, the North Carolina State Automobile Association has established two annual \$500 scholarships to be awarded to the outstanding boy and girl school bus drivers.

The scholarships were announced at a sales workshop attended by approximately 100 representatives of the N. C. State A. A. and the South Carolina State Automobile Association at Hotel Charlotte. The scholarships will be presented to the best qualified boy and girl bus drivers selected by the Governor's Traffic Safety Council, with the sanction and support of the State Board of Education, the State Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the State Highway Patrol, and public school officials throughout the state. A committee will select the outstanding boy and girl driver in each high school in the state, and at the end of the school term, a contest will be conducted in each of the 30 State Highway Patrol districts to select the two winning representatives from each district.

—Individual liquid savings of Americans now amount to more than \$230 billion, of which about \$50 billion is in U. S. Savings Bonds. E and H Bond holdings alone are around \$40 billion. Good insurance for prosperity.

Scott Bill Would Let GIs Reinstale Lapsed Insurance

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25.—Sen. W. Kerr Scott said today that he will sponsor legislation that would give both World War II and Korean veterans an opportunity to apply for National Life Insurance in cases where veterans failed to apply for it while in service or let it lapse.

"Figures of the Veterans Administration show very clearly," Scott said, "that many veterans either never applied for government life insurance while in service or have let it lapse since they left service."

Scott, who will join Sen. Russell Long in offering the measure, said it does not make any additional persons eligible for the insurance. "It merely gives veterans who are already entitled to it a limited period of time to renew it or take it out," Scott said.

Under the measure, persons who served in the armed forces between October 8, 1940, and September 2, 1945, would be given a year to apply for government insurance.

"Many veterans," Scott said, "failed to take out government insurance while in service or let it lapse. These same people now realize that they made a mistake, and I feel that they deserve an additional chance to get insurance they are entitled to have."

Scott said that there are a total of 421,000 World War II and Korean veterans in the state now. Of this number, only 135,000 have kept up their government insurance, he said.

Poet's Corner

Conducted by
Anne K. Sharp, Chairman
Creative Writing Group

WHAT IS CHARM?

Charm is the measure of attraction's power
To chain the fleeting fancy of an hour;
And rival all the spell of beauty's power.

A subtle grace of heart and mind that flows
With tactful sympathy; the sweetest rose,
If not the fairest, that the garden knows.

A quick responsiveness in word and deed,
A dignity and staidness in art,
The will to follow or the art to lead.

She to whom this most gracious gift is known
Has life's great potent factor for her own,
And rules alike the cottage and the throne.

—Louisa Carroll Thomas.
"Charm" was suggested by Miss Mary Young, a member of the Creative Writing club.
Anne Kendrick Sharp,
Chm. Poet's Corner,
Creative Writing Club.

Young People Meet At Montreal

By Mary Sullivan.
Officers of the Senior High Fellowship group of Abingdon Pres-

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bytery arrived in Swannanoa Monday morning for a week-end young people's conference.
Eighty officers from the Abingdon Presbytery participated in this retreat under the direction of Rev. I. M. Ellis, director of the young people's work in that Presbytery. They gathered for a season of spiritual inspiration and Christian fellowship.

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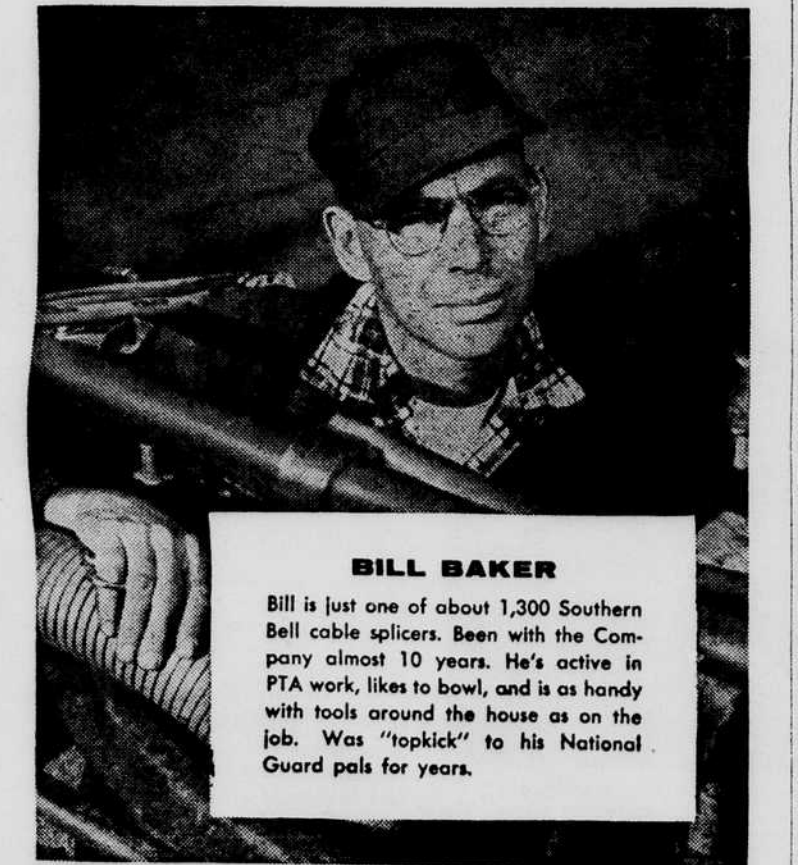
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