

Monday, December 1, 1902

Lesson: "Behold one came and said, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life."

Prayer

I want to talk to you a minute about Christmas. I want to save you from embarrassment. Do you know what day of the week Christmas comes on? (Thursday) What day of the month? (Laughter) You've got that down fine. We used to have our examinations after Christmas but so many boys went home, had a good time, got out of the notion of coming back to school. Now we've changed our schedule. We have arranged to have eighteen weeks of our school before Christmas. The last examination will be held on Tuesday morning. That examination will be math and if you can work every example before the eleven o'clock train you may go home on it; if not, you will have to wait for a later train.

Before I selected a date for school to begin (August 20) I took the calendar and after counting the engagements and looking over them I found that there were only four or five boys who couldnot get home by Christmas Day.

Now listen, boys, hear me. There shall not a single boy come back to my school who doesn't stand these Christmas examinations. Of course, there might be some circumstances arise that would make a difference.

The examination is for a purpose. I have no secrets. We have no desire to puzzle you. I don't want the teachers to pick the hardest passages in Latin or the most difficult examples in math. We just want to get a fair test of what you know.

If you've kept your reviews up as I urged you to do, you will have no fear of examination.

When I was in college the day for examination in geometry came and there were three propositions that puzzled me. While I was going to the building, I reviewed one of them, while the bell was ringing I worked another, and while the roll was being called I worked the third. My name was the first called. We had oral exams then. He gave me each of those three propositions and I worked them as fast as he called them out.

Didn't it pay me to review?

Just after the war there was nothing left in N. C. but dirt and I went to digging in it. There was a vacancy in a school and my old teacher recommended me for it. It was the best paying position in the state at that time.

Didn't it pay me to review?

Anybody can do an easy thing. It is the hard thing that makes a man.

I want to tell you something about Vanderbilt. Don't you tell the boys there I told you but I wanted to recommend next morning as a subject for prayers at the Vanderbilt Goliath's challenge to David. I heard a noise while I was in the Jackson building. I heard something that sounded like the war whoop of a savage. There was a crowd of fellows passing with a skeleton in a coffin dressed in Sewanee colors.

I just said right then, "I hope in my very soul that Sewanee will win." The Vanderbilt went to Mayor and secured the cannon in advance. Night came on and the stillness of death reigned in the streets. I knew what that meant, "Sewanee had won."

Tuesday, December 2, 1902

School opened by "Son Will"

Lesson: "The wilderness and the solitary places shall blossom as a rose."

If I were to set my heart on money I would like to have the income of Mr. Schwab the head of the Steel Trust. He gets the biggest salary on the earth. If he were to pass here in a sleeper we would all hear of it, but if you were to pass his house he would never know it. Why? Just because he's done something and you haven't yet had the chance to do anything yet.

My son, I am trying to fire your ambition to do something in this life. Your mother has been working hard with her own hands to make that fruit cake for you. Now, my son, if you won't sit down and work an hour every night in order that you may have a good report that will please her, then you are a scrub all over and I want you to know it. Listen, boys, if you don't want to please that mother that has loved you and cared for you and from whose bosom you drew the very juice of life, you are a scrub whichever way you are measured.

Wednesday, December 3, 1902

School opened by Mr. Clark.

Lesson: "He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness, etc."

Boys, somebody here stole M- M-'s dinner on Thanksgiving Day. I take it to be a school boy. Somebody is stealing the textbooks. I think it is a school boy. I would be dreadfully mortified to have a thief for a son. That sort of thing got to be epidemic in school once. I got ipecac and put it in the pie. Of course, I couldn't prove that the boys ate the pie, but one thing was sure that some boys were vomiting just the kind of pie that had been missed.

There are so many thousand of things that come up that can be settled by this little rule, "Don't do things on the sly."

I wouldn't go behind a man's counter.

The natural history of animals is developed by watching what animals feed upon. In the spring I see my hogs feeding along where the ground is soft. They are not rooting deep either.

Friday, December 5, 1902

School opened by Mr. Price

Lesson: The Beatitudes.

Prayer

Well, your judgment wasn't good yesterday.

Today is Friday. I want you to respect yourself. The biggest thing in you is your self-respect.

My boy, you can't come here to this school without hearing these constant reminders.

Boyhood is the only time God is ever going to give you to make a scholar.

Tuesday, December 9, 1902

Lesson: Hebrews XIII

All sorts of building that men do is done on lines of least resistance except building character that is done on lines of greatest resistance.

Wednesday, December 10, 1902

Lesson: "He that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love."

Prayer

I don't want any of you to have the itch. It is astonishing to me that the progress of humanity is so slow and that of the individual is so slow. We have to keep eternally reminding boys even about the itch.

Wouldn't you hate like thunder to go home Christmas with the itch. Wouldn't that be a burlesque on Santa Claus?

You needn't hope to better your condition by going elsewhere. The itch is everywhere.

The very first time that you suspect it go to the doctor. That's the easiest way out of it. The folly of concealing it has been demonstrated a thousand times. It's everywhere. Kings and all other mortals have it.

There isn't another school in America that has had an uninterrupted patronage as this one. Thirty-three years and full all the time. It will be full the next time you hear from it. The reason is, my son, that no boy here is an exception to any rule. This is a strictly democratic institution.

My son, listen, if you dodge this examination you never will hear the last of it. I saw men in the army who were never on the firing line. If I didn't intend to come back after Christmas I wouldn't dodge the examination. These boys will tell it seventy-five years from now.

My son, I would rather meet my obligations than to dance a jig with Santa Claus. I'd rather be a man than to be an angel. You Seniors, whenever read about a man of note in Latin authors it always said of him he could stand cold, hunger, thirst, and heat.

Oh sir, I've lain on the battlefield wounded so thirsty that my mind seemed to be going from me and my tongue swollen till it almost filled my mouth.

My son, I stuck to my army.

I wouldn't shirk this examination. If you can't stay till the 23d, you shan't come back after Christmas.

December 14, 1902

Song: "I Am Thine O Lord"

Lesson: "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right, etc."

I think that I have noticed that people who obey their parents generally have long life on this earth.

Prayer

So many of you saw that play "Sam Davis" the other night that I read you that passage about the Christian soldier. He was reared up here in Rutherford county. He was not a scholar; only a private soldier. He undertook a very hazardous duty and he understood it. He secured through the treachery of a Union soldier a drawing of the fortifications. Gen. Dodge knew that the traitor must be very near to him for those papers are always carefully guarded.

He offered Sam Davis his liberty to disclose the traitor but Davis had sworn not to and he didn't. He valued truth more than his life. His name will go down through the ages with those of William Tell, Horation Cocles, and others. His fame will continue to grow because he stood.

Mr. Roosevelt recently at a banquet given to Justice Harland in discussing character very charitably divided the world into two classes - those that mean well; and those that do well.

My son, you have a splendid life before you if you will stand. I could stand here from now till night and tell you of splendid successes men have made in dollars and cents. I saw an old man who failed in

business give up his money, his home and everything to his creditors. He said, "It isn't mine." Inside of a week he had been offered the best paying position in the state. He never had to move from his homestead.

It's lonesome to do right. When I go into a town I find that the majority of people are politic and if I do right I'm persecuted. It's the same way in a University. When John Wesley was at college, he and just a few fellows met together to worship God. He was called "Crazy John". What has become of the names of the multitude of others? Their memory has perished from the earth.

Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego made a very little association back yonder in Babylon. What has become of the names of the men that threw them into the fiery furnace. When I was a mere stripling I was out walking with a crowd of other young fellows. We passed the home of the venerable old Chief Justice of my state. The old fellow called us in to talk with us. He was then about eighty years old. He found it hard to entertain us. After a while he took us to his side board and showed us all sorts of wines and liquors. Every single boy drank but me. When we left the old fellow he called me back and put his arms around me and said, "Young man, I am going to remember your name. There's a man in you."

Tuesday, December 16, 1902

Lesson: "Behold I will send my messenger before my face," etc.

I want your attention for a moment. About going home Christmas. Now my son, all duties are reciprocal. If father works for your interest, you ought to catch on after a while and try to work for his interest. I want to tell you now what I said at the beginning of school and what I have said many times since. That is that this is a democratic

institution and no boy is an exception to any rule. Now when I get a letter from a parent that leads me to think the boy has deceived his father about the Christmas examination I answer by return mail and sometimes by wire.

Now I want the groups of boys that board at the different boarding places to meet right now. Let one boy from each house make a list of the boys and state where each one is going after Christmas.

Wednesday, December 17, 1902

Lesson: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given him," etc.

The present president of the U. S. has made for himself a national reputation as an orator because he never appeals to a low sentiment. No man that appeals to low principles such as enmity, hate, jealousy, etc., ever rises above the mediocre.

Prayer

I wish I could get your attention just for a moment. The boy who needs to listen most of all is often the most inattentive.

Of all pitiable things in this world is the fellow that's "cock-sure." That is the reason we have trapping and examinations is just to reveal yourself to yourself. I am not trying to say anything new this morning. I said these things to your fathers many a time.

Now the boy that has kept up his reviews for all these seventeen weeks that I have been warning you needn't be afraid of examinations.

When we were building this house, an old tramp came and wanted work. He seemed to be sobered up, although he appeared to be dissipated.

He wrote on the fresh new black board in a handwriting that

couldn't be surpassed by a copy plate, "In hoc signs vinces." He got the job. There is a power in knowing things.

Many years ago I got off a train one night and as the porters gathered around me, I put my hand on one fellow's shoulder and said, "I'll go to your hotel if you'll carry my trunk." That trunk was full of books. I followed him through the dark to a hotel. Next morning as I sat out on the piazza as a guest of the hotel, the same fellow that carried my trunk was called out by the proprietor to pick up the quids of tobacco and cigar stumps. Imagine my surprise when I recognized the son of my old professor in Greek.

We sent a boy to the University years ago. He heard the scalawags talk. He came down to breakfast one morning and said he read two books of Homer at one sitting. When they told me about it I just said it was a lie. Whenever you read about a child of three or four years to age reading the Greek testament it's a lie. They couldn't do it.

You can't fool the world. The world is too smart. You may fool a girl sometime. She wanted to be fooled is the reason.

It takes honest men to stand together. Thieves can't do it. If they could they'd take the world.

Two boys sat together on examination. Their papers were just alike. Don't you know they copied? One of them is dead. The other a man now about 35 years old is teaching a little country school at twenty dollars a month.

Now, my son, be careful tomorrow. Don't cheat. I'd rather know myself to be a gentleman than for all mankind to know it.

Boys, it isn't necessary to live, but it is necessary to tell the truth. Now if you haven't kept up your reviews and you go to

examinations and can't read your Latin, don't cheat. "But, Mr. Webb," you say, "I'll lose my class." Well, lose it. It's better to lose your class than to lose your self respect.

Boys, I've lived long enough to see the fruitage of character. If I live long enough, I'll set a table sometime and have the old people ask about you and I'll remember a fellow attached to a tie and a walking stick.

Now I'm going to make a prediction that I made every year for years and its always comes true. There's a weakling here that's made a pretty good record that will break down at Christmas and he never will make a record again. Some boy, I don't know who, will go to the dogs and to the devil after Christmas.

I want you when you go home to see father and mother show them that you appreciate them.

When Gabriel blows his trumpet there will be some fellow whining that he can't learn Latin.

I've talked to many boys this morning for the last time. I ask God's blessing on you and trust when I shall meet you again I shall meet a man.

Thursday, December 18, 1902

Lesson: For he that will - - - - - let him eschew evil and do good, let him to seek peace and ensue it.

Prayer

Now you have had more liberties in this school than in any other you were ever in.

My son, you must not speak to another person inside of these grounds today. If you want a knife or a pencil or anything, you ask

your teacher to get it for you. Your papers will not be taken before twelve o'clock. It will not be taken then if it is not neat and clean. We can't base civilization on filth.

Every boy will sign a pledge. "I pledge my word of honor as a gentleman that I have neither given nor received aid on this examination." Any boy that violates this pledge will never enter this school again.

Friday, December 19, 1902

Call roll. Keep your seats.

School opened by John Webb

Lesson: "Great is our Lord and of great power; his wisdom is infinite."

Prayer

Sunday, December 21, 1902

Song: "God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

Lesson: "And there were in that country shepherds keeping watch over their flocks." (Luke)

Brother Curtis will lead us in prayer.

How many boys here are 16 and over? Please stand.

Do you know, boys that you are indebted to the church for Christmas? If you will study history, you will find that the greatest benefits that have come to people have come through the church. The very people that are most benefitted are the ones that fight church work. Christ brought peace to this world.

The Hague Court that sits today is the greatest step towards peace since Christ's coming. The day of wars will soon be over, I believe.

The origin of a custom is a curious thing.

There was an old German bachelor that used to spend his income giving presents to children. The children beset him so that finally he appointed a time for them to come. There were so many that he couldn't attend to all of them at once. So he asked the children to just take off an oversock which they used to wear before overshoes came in and hang it on a nail and then come back the next morning. People who saw the popularity of the old bachelor took up the custom.

My boy, I'd rather be dead than betray a trust.

I have five dollars here that a mother sent me and asked me to give it to her boy Christmas Day. Now if I should say to that boy, "You need a hat and a pair of shoes," and should give him a two dollar hat and a three dollar pair of shoes, that would be betraying a trust. It is wrong to divert funds.

If I give Brother Curtis here ten dollars for foreign missions and he applies it to church extension, then I could go before court and recover it. He has no right to divert funds.

Now, my boy, I wouldn't spend that money in a way that would be displeasing to the giver.

I know the vulgar conception of Christmas is eating and drinking, loud manners and excesses. Thirty years ago I told boys this same thing and asked them not to drink eggnog. A mother came to me after Christmas and told me that she had made an eggnog for him and he wouldn't drink it. She was vexed at him. That boy lead his classes. He is the wealthiest man in his state. There never was another member of that family that rose above the ordinary.

I was traveling with Bishop Galloway on one occasion and there was a lawyer with us who had one of the finest faces I ever saw. Soon we

came to a man who wanted to ask him a question about a case. He stopped and talked pleasantly with him. We met several persons among whom was a poor old man and an ignorant Negro. He talked just as long and just as pleasantly to the old Negro about a five dollar case as he did to the fellow with a hundred thousand dollar case. Soon we met an old blather-skite who told the lawyer that he had some facts that he didn't want the other side to find out. Instantly the lawyer said, "I don't want to be party to any sly dealing." "My, wasn't that refreshing," said the Bishop.

Let us go into this Christmas determined to have fun on high lines, but, boys, let us be gentlemen.

Monday, December 22, 1902

Lesson

Prayer

I promised you that there would be a hundred and eighty boys here at commencement.

Something has come up that is very humiliating. I have a note here that a boy has written. I also have one from the boy's father. The note says, "Let the boy come home this morning." The letter says, "Keep the boy till school is out." Now I'm going to send that note to that boy's father.

Sly conduct always brings shame.

I know that I've got a will power and that I'm free. Don't talk to me about heredity and environment, fatalism or what not. I know I can do as I like. The ego is the unit. The reason that history pivoted on Martin Luther is because he had a will.

Here right on the occasion of the celebrating of the birth of the Son of God a boy disgraces himself.

My son, a man is measured by what he does.

My son, I've read biography all my life that I might talk to you. If I pick up a book about a man's life and it tells nothing about his boyhood, I lay it aside. I want to know the foundation of that life.

Last night I heard the clock strike every time till four in the morning. I was thinking how I could get the boys to make a record. O what a tremendous thing a record is! If you were to ever become great some biographer would come here and search through the papers for your examination paper. If it were neat, he would no doubt have a facsimile in his book.

Oh my boy, a record a man's measured by what he does.

If the fellow who lives in the cabin yonder has raised a flock of turkeys or a fine hog, people will know him.

December 23, 1902 - 3:30 P.M.

On one occasion as Christmas was approaching, I talked to the boys for an hour on fireworks. That night there was a little boy about fourteen years of age got the boys together at his boarding house. He asked them what would become of them if they should meet with sudden death. He read a passage from his Bible and prayed with them.

Next day that boy was hunting with his companion who shot him accidentally. I was sent for and as soon as I came in sight he said, "Mr. Webb, _____ shot me but he didn't mean to do it. His mother came for his body and was taking it home. Her old father came to meet her on her journey home. After he had spoken words of comfort to her, he walked back and started into another coach. He

fell from the train. That mother returned home with a dead son and a dead father.

I don't want any of you to have as a Christmas present a wounded hand. I want you to go home and come back with a sound body and a sound heart.

I'll let that subject rest. I want you to have a glad Christmas. I'm glad you are here. You've stood your examinations and I understand there are some good records.

Those of you who are going home, may I say a word to you. The loud mannered fellow as soon as he gets on the train will begin to talk loud. I traveled on trains before the Civil War. This year I've traveled already over three thousand miles. I never saw a person get hurt who stayed near the center of a coach.

My son, life is a splendid thing. It's the biggest thing in this world.

Wednesday, December 24, 1902

Lesson: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc.

We will meet here for study next Monday morning. You will be in your rooms every night as usual.

Tonight you may invite anybody you choose to come here to this school house and have a good time.

Sunday, January 4, 1903

Lesson: "He that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love," etc.

Prayer

This past year has been the most remarkable financially that the world has ever seen. Every man who wanted work could get it. The