

14th December

Memory Verse:

Out of the strong came forth sweetness Judges 14:14

Today's memory verse is very short (and sweet) and you will understand why I chose it when you read the lesson. It is an unusual verse but it is one millions of people see regularly without even realizing it! Even the youngest may be able to learn it. It comes from a special moment in the history of Samson and in today's optional resources files you will find the story ready to read or read aloud.

Something to read and some map work

Abram Lyle¹ (1820-1891) was born on the 14th December in **Greenock**, Scotland. He was a Christian man and an elder of the Sir Michael's Street Relief Presbyterian Church in the town, although I can find no details of his biography such as when he was converted. Abram Lyle was a successful businessman in Greenock and a partner in a sugar refining firm. When his partner died he and his sons moved to London and established a sugar refinery on the banks of the River Thames in **London**.

To begin with, the new venture was hard going and made a loss. Sometimes Lyle even had to ask his employees to wait for their wages as there was simply not enough money to pay them. This was a hard struggle for Abram Lyle and his sons.

A by-product of sugar refining was a thick sticky syrup and at first Lyle treated this as a waste product, giving it to his employees in barrels or distributing it to the poor for free. However, people seemed to like the stuff, spreading it on bread or dolloping it onto porridge so in 1885 Lyle started putting it into tins and selling it. The design of the tin has hardly changed from that day to this and Lyle's Golden Syrup is the world's oldest brand of anything, according to the Guinness Book of Records.

If you read the story of Samson in the Optional Resources files for today you will find out that Samson had to fight a lion and kill it. That was a hard struggle even for Samson but it was God's Spirit that enabled him to do it. Out of that hard struggle God brought something sweet. Abram Lyle chose the Bible text which went on the tin himself. "Out of the strong came forth sweetness". Perhaps he was thinking that out of his hard time of struggle with the unprofitable refinery God at last brought him something sweet. I hope there was enough syrup left for the poor people still to get some for free!

Use your atlas to find Greenock and work out how far it is from London. Why do you think both Greenock and the banks of the Thames were both good places for a sugar refinery?²

Something to write

Today's Bible text is a riddle – which shows you just how long riddles have been popular! Do you know any other riddles? Here is a well-known one:

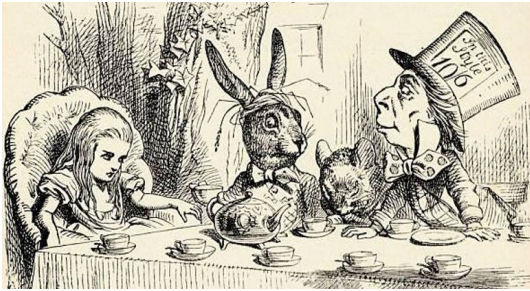
¹ Permission for image requested from Tate and Lyle 04/11/20

² Greenock is a port and the Thames also has good access for ships. Sugar cane from the West Indies can be easily brought in by sea. Nowadays much of our sugar comes from sugar beet. In Victorian times all sugar came from sugar cane.



As I was going to St. Ives,
 I met a man with 7 wives.
 Each wife had 7 sacks.
 Each sack had 7 cats.
 Each cat had 7 kittens.
 Kitten, cats, sacks, wives,
 How many were going to St. Ives?

Like many riddles the answer is a trick which depends on you listening *very* carefully to what is said. Only one person was “going to St Ives” – presumably the other crowd were leaving as the riddler “met” them!



The Victorians loved riddles and Lewis Carroll makes fun of this in *Alice in Wonderland*. He has the Mad Hatter ask Alice, “Why is a raven like a writing desk?” Poor Alice cudgels her brain, thinking over “all she could remember about ravens and writing-desks, which wasn’t much,” for a while and then gives up. But alas, when asked for the answer the Hatter replies, “I haven’t the slightest idea!” This is not a very satisfactory answer to a riddle!

Many riddles end with the question, “Who (or what) am I?”

I am not alive, but I grow;
 I don't have lungs, but I need air;
 I don't have a mouth, but water kills me.
 What am I?³

Some of the oldest English riddles which date from the middle ages take this descriptive form. Here is the opening part of one from the *Exeter Book* which dates from the second half of the 10th Century:

Hwylc is hælþa þæs horsc ond þæs hygecræftig
 þæt þæt mæge asecgan, hwa mec on sið wræce,
 þonne ic astige strong, stundum reþe,
 þrymful þunie, þragum wræce
 fere geond foldan, folcsalo bærne,
 ræced reafige?

If you don't quite follow, here it is in modern English:

Who among heroes is so sharp and so skilled in mind
 that he may declare who presses me on my journey,
 when I rise up, mighty, sometimes savage,
 full of force, I resound, at times I press on,
 travel throughout the land, I burn the people's hall,
 plunder the palace?⁴

³ fire

⁴ Megan Cavell, ‘Translation for Riddle 1’, *The Riddle Ages: Old English Riddles, Translations and Commentaries*, ed. by Megan Cavell, with Victoria Symons, and Matthias Ammon (20 Feb 2013),

The answer is “storm”.

Now have a try yourself. Think of an everyday object – or you could choose something intangible like “storm” or even a feeling like “fear”. Now describe it carefully but in a tricky way. Medieval riddles were often long. The one I've given above goes on for another ten lines! However, a great skill in more modern riddle-making is to get everything into the riddle in a few words. When you have finished writing your riddle, try it out on your friends. The most successful riddle is one that is hard to guess but when the answer is revealed it seems obvious. So if everyone guesses your riddle it is probably too easy. If, when you tell them the answer, they say, “I don't get it,” it is too hard.

Something to cook

Lyle's Golden Syrup is a useful ingredient in all sorts of delicious treats. This lesson is the perfect excuse to make one. Here is a simple old recipe called “bun loaf” that I think will disappear within moments! Before you start grease and line a medium sized loaf tin with greaseproof paper – or use a non-stick one!

Ingredients:

8oz (220g) Self Raising flour
2 heaped tablespoons golden syrup
1 heaped tablespoon marmalade
2 heaped tablespoons mixed fruit
2 fluid oz (60 ml.) Milk
2 fluid oz (60 ml.) Water

Mix the fruit and flour in a bowl or basin. Make a dent or “well” in the centre of the mixture and put the rest of the ingredients into it. Slowly stir from the centre of the “well”, gradually incorporating the dry ingredients.

Bake for about an hour at 325°F

To glaze you bun loaf warm a tablespoon of golden syrup (in a cup in the microwave for a second or two) and then brush the warm syrup over the top of the loaf.

And... I think *hygecræftig* is going to be my word of the week. Next time my husband fixes my computer I shall say, “thank you, dear, how hygecræftig of you!”