

“The Least of These”: Ministering to Those in Need

Living the Gospel

Lesson #10 for September 7, 2019

Scriptures: Romans 8:20-23; John 3:16-17; Matthew 9:36; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 John 3:16-17; Revelation 14:6-7.

1. This lesson is about motives. Why do we do what we do? Are we seeking to earn our salvation? Why are we seeking to obey God’s commands? And His instructions? Is it for legalistic reasons? What needs to happen to a sinner to make him safe to save? God “cannot” admit to heaven anyone who will just start the great controversy all over again! So, what can we learn from the life and death of Jesus that transforms us into people fit for the kingdom of heaven?
2. First of all, we need to notice that **there is nothing we can possibly do to earn our salvation**. Ellen White has spoken clearly about this.

I ask, How can I present this matter as it is? The Lord Jesus imparts all the powers, all the grace, all the penitence, all the inclination, all the pardon of sins, in presenting His righteousness for man to grasp by living faith--which is also the gift of God. **If you would gather together everything that is good and holy and noble and lovely in man and then present the subject to the angels of God as acting a part in the salvation of the human soul or in merit, the proposition would be rejected as treason.** Standing in the presence of their Creator and looking upon the unsurpassed glory which enshrouds His person, they are looking upon the Lamb of God given from the foundation of the world to a life of humiliation, to be rejected of sinful men, to be despised, to be crucified. Who can measure the infinity of the sacrifice!—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works** 24.1.†

3. **If we as Christians see a need and reach out to help the poor and needy, it is a result of our relationship with Jesus Christ; it is never a means to earn salvation.** Everything that we have, everything that we ever hope to be, we have because of God’s kindness and gifts to us. We have received; we must give.
4. Read again John 3:16.

John 3:16 says, “For God loved **the world**....”—*Good News Bible*.*† The original Greek word for *the world* is *kosmos*, meaning “the world as a created, organized entity.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*,* vol. 5, 929.

5. Read Romans 8:20-23. What does this teach about the broader issues in the plan of salvation?

Romans 8:20-23: ²⁰For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope ²¹that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²²For we know that up to the present time **all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth**. ²³But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the Spirit as the first of God’s gifts also groan within ourselves, as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Romans 8:20–23). New York: American Bible Society.†

6. Let us be very clear: Our salvation is a gift from God. When we permit God to enter our thoughts to work with us, He has the ability to transform us into His sons and daughters. We cannot do it by ourselves. He is the only One who could do it. This is not a matter of getting our sins forgiven; God is forgiveness personified. (Luke 23:34)
7. Since the days of Martin Luther, the Christian world has had a fixation on *forgiveness* which they have renamed *justification*. Martin Luther was so worried about his earlier life and what he thought were his terrible sins, that, coming from his Roman Catholic background, he was sure that God was going to punish him. Thus, he could only hope for God's forgiveness, and thus, he was hoping to escape punishment.
8. How does God's judgment work?

John 3:17-21: ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.

¹⁸ Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God's only Son. ¹⁹This is how the judgement works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. ²⁰All those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.—*Good News Bible*.*

John 12:47-48: ⁴⁷If anyone hears my message and does not obey it, I will not judge him. I came, not to judge the world, but to save it. ⁴⁸Those who reject me and do not accept my message have one who will judge them. **The words I have spoken will be their judge on the last day!**—*Good News Bible*.*†

9. God's judgment is very transparent and is extremely fair. He simply opens the record or "books" of heaven, reveals what kind of people we are, and asks if anyone has any questions. God knows all the details of our lives, and He understands where we are headed; He even knows our motives. **If we are seeking day by day to become more like Jesus Christ, then He will welcome us into His kingdom. If, on the other hand, our thoughts are only selfish, God cannot admit us to heaven because we would feel, and be, completely out of place.**

Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture. His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence.—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy** 670.2.†

10. God loves everyone and everything except sin because He knows what sin does to us. He created a perfect world. He makes the sun rise on the good and the evil. He sends rain on everyone. (Matthew 5:45) Every breath happens only because of God's power.
11. The plan of salvation is not primarily about us. So many Christians believe that it is all about us. That is a very egocentric and selfish approach. The plan of salvation is about God. Everyone in the universe knows that we are sinners. (Romans 3:23) We need to understand the relationship between the plan of salvation and the great controversy. Satan has accused God of all sorts of terrible things which really describe Satan's character. As

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we read through the Bible, we need to see God's side and Satan's side and the differences clearly. If we have a clear understanding of the truth about God in contrast to the truth about Satan, we should be able to make correct choices.

12. God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Son—Jesus Christ—are more than willing to help us if we are willing to give Them an opportunity. The issue is not about our past sins; it is about our future behavior.
13. We all should feel the hurt, the sorrow, and the tragedy that is plaguing our world. There are laments in the book of Psalms, there is weeping in the book of Jeremiah and in the writings of other prophets, and Jesus Himself wept over the city of Jerusalem as He weeps over those of us who reject His appeals.
14. Read Matthew 9:36; 14:14; Luke 19:41-42; and John 11:35. Jesus must have lived a very disturbed life. Everywhere He looked there were people suffering; there were people who rejected Him because He did not do what they wanted Him to do by getting rid of the Romans. And then, there were all the sick people who wanted to be healed. Jesus also wept at the grave of one of His closest friends, not because He did not know what He was about to do in raising him back to life, but because He recognized what the consequences would be soon thereafter in His own death.
15. Sin is evil. Sin is evil not because it makes God angry that we have disobeyed Him; not at all! **Sin is evil because it destroys us and breaks our relationship with God.** Sin is always self-destructive. "For sin pays its wage – death." (Romans 6:23, *GNB**)
16. Carelessness, ignorance, prejudice, greed, selfishness, even covetousness, are at the root of the world's evils. Injustice, poverty, and depression reign in many parts of our world. Before God can help us, we must be willing to admit our need. We need to take a very close look at ourselves. We are so good at deceiving ourselves about the truth? Human beings tend to be very, very good at self-deception.
Ephesians 2:8-10: ⁸⁻⁹For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it. ¹⁰God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.—*Good News Bible*.*
17. God created us and saved us so that we can cooperate with Him by living a life of good deeds and reaching out to others.
18. God loves nothing more than to see one of His damaged sinners come back to Him. (Luke 15:7,10)
19. So, what is God's plan for us?
Those who receive are to impart to others. From every direction are coming calls for help. God calls upon men to minister gladly to their fellow men.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 103.4.
20. How does God convince us that sin is so self-destructive? What does He need to do to demonstrate that our self-centeredness, our selfishness, is so destructive? And Jesus has done everything possible to convince us of the truth and bring us back to Himself. (1 John 3:16-18)
21. Throughout His ministry, Jesus sought to reach out to people that the Jews traditionally rejected: Women with bad reputations, tax collectors, lepers, Samaritans, Roman centurions, even religious leaders and children. He was always genuinely warm and caring.

22. God had to go to extraordinary lengths to finally convince even His own disciples that they needed to reach out to people in other parts of the world, people known as Gentiles.
23. Consider: (1) Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4); (2) His healing of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13); (3) His dealing with the two demoniacs on the east side of the sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20) (Note that these were the first Gentile missionaries!); and (4) His traveling to near Tyre and Sidon to heal the demon-possessed daughter of that Canaanite woman. (Matthew 15:21-28)
24. Even after Jesus's death and resurrection, years passed before the Christians began to spread out from Jerusalem and carry the gospel to anyone besides the Jews. And that only happened after the stoning of Stephen and the severe persecution that broke out. (Acts 8:1) Then, there was the story of Peter and the Roman centurion. (Acts 10) Finally, some Christians from Libya and Cyprus went to Antioch and began openly preaching to non-Jews! (Acts 11:19-26) Then, Paul and Barnabas began their journeys into Gentile territory. The rest is history.
25. Why is it so difficult for us as human beings to reach out to those of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds? Read Malachi 2:10; Acts 17:26; and Romans 3:23.
- Galatians 3:28-29:** ²⁸So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.—*Good News Bible*.*
26. All of us must admit that we have the same heavenly Father. We all are descended from Adam and Eve as well as from Noah and his wife. Why do our cultural, linguistic, and color barriers prevent so many of us from doing what God wants?
27. Read Revelation 14:6-7. God is making His final appeal to every "race, tribe, language, and nation." We, of course, need to recognize that Satan is doing the same thing as spelled out in Revelation 13:3-8. This is and will continue to be an all-out war of ideas until Jesus comes back again. Everyone will choose either to serve God or the Devil. The appeal of the three angels' messages is to correctly understand God's judgment which is fair, transparent, and redeeming. It appeals to us to worship the One who is worth it. (Isaiah 50:6-7)
28. In the final days of this earth's history, there will be a battle between the forces of Satan and the forces of God. Those who worship on the seventh-day Sabbath will do so because they believe God created our world in seven days. They will worship Him because He not only created us but also has redeemed us, sending His Son to live that absolutely unbelievable life and dying that horrific death for us. He died that terrible death to answer all the accusations and questions that Satan has raised down through the generations.
29. God is doing everything He can to convince us how much He loves us and that love is the only way to run the universe.

God claims the whole earth as His vineyard. Though now in the hands of the usurper, it belongs to God. By redemption no less than by creation it is His. For the world Christ's sacrifice was made. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." John 3:16. It is through that one gift that every other is imparted to men. **Daily the whole world receives blessing from God. Every drop of rain, every ray of light shed on our unthankful race, every leaf and flower and fruit, testifies to God's long "The Least of These": Ministering to Those in Need #10** - page 4 of 6

forbearance and His great love.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons** 301.3-302.0.†

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13.)

Whatever the difference in religious belief, a call from suffering humanity must be heard and answered....

All around us are poor, tried souls that need sympathizing words and helpful deeds. There are widows who need sympathy and assistance. There are orphans whom Christ has bidden His followers receive as a trust from God. Too often these are passed by with neglect. They may be ragged, uncouth, and seemingly in every way unattractive; yet they are God's property. They have been bought with a price, and they are as precious in His sight as we are. They are members of God's great household, and Christians as His stewards are responsible for them.—*Christ's Object Lessons** 386.3-387.0.

30. Are we willing to take up the tasks that God has given us? Are we willing to let our lights shine in a sin-darkened world? Are we going to be brave enough to stand up for the truth when to do so will be at the risk of our lives?
31. As we have seen through this series of lessons, there are a lot of people who are hurting. We need to find various ways to reach out to help them. But, at the same time, we must offer them the wonderful news of God's love and His salvation. How do we do that in the most winsome way possible?
32. This lesson is all about the love of God and how it impacts us in our day-by-day lives. We are all broken sinners. We need to recognize our brokenness and recognize that God is the only Source of help that makes a difference. When we experience that incredible love, it should motivate us to turn around and share that love with others. Are we doing that?
33. Let us never forget what God's original plan for us was.

When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker.—Ellen G. White, *Education* 15.1.†

34. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has done what is quite a remarkable job at reaching out to many many different parts of the world with education and health institutions by the thousands. We operate almost 500 hospitals and, according to a recent count, 8539 schools to help people physically and mentally. We also have many, many churches trying to reach out to help people spiritually. But, the ideal plan would be for us to combine physical healing, mental healing, and spiritual healing into a single package. How can we do that? Unfortunately, we have tended to divide those efforts up.
35. So, how can we better provide a wholistic message—physical, mental, spiritual, and social—that is attractive and winsome?
36. So many people in our world have rejected even the idea of God. Someone scribbled graffiti in a New York subway saying: "God is alive—He just doesn't want to get involved." How do we convince people that God still cares and that He is desperately reaching out to touch them and their broken lives?
37. Consider these very challenging words from Ellen White.

Unless there is practical self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighborhood, in the church, and wherever we may
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be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 504.2.†

38. Try to imagine the turmoil that went on in the minds of the disciples when they finally realized that Jesus was not there as the Messiah to help them overthrow the Romans! How long did it take for them to realize that their challenge was to reach out to a broken world to teach them about God's love and His plan of salvation? To reach even Gentiles?
39. God will always do what is right. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8.)
40. Read also Ephesians 2:1-10. Do we recognize what an incredible sacrifice it was for God to send His Son here to live as a human being? Do we appreciate what He has done for us? He created us so that through us He could share the good news with the rest of the world.
41. Even in the Old Testament, God made it very clear that a complete transformation was needed. Read Ezekiel 37:1-10. Are we really so bad off that we are like a field full of dry bones?
42. Are we willing to put our lives on the line to reach out to others who desperately need to hear the truth? The everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6) is an "all-inclusive" gospel for all humanity. (John 3:16)
43. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. Think of the extraordinary lengths to which God has gone to try to win us back. Have we been transformed from His enemies into His friends? Are we ready to help Him reach others?

The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished.

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing** 143.2-3.† [Compare 1Corinthians 11:1.]‡

44. Remember that:

The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing** 470.1; *Counsels on Sabbath School Work** 100.1.†

45. The challenge has been set down. Are we ready to pick up our crosses and do what needs to be done?

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