

24.08.2019 THE LEAST OF THESE

And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Matthew 25:40

Last week's study focused on how Jesus met peoples' needs (Luke 4:18, 19):

1. He brought spiritual, mental and physical healing to mankind... *'He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.'* Luke 7:20-23
2. Everything He did was in the power and might of the Spirit... *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD"* Luke 4:18, 19
3. His motivation was love...John 3:16, 17

In this week's study the focus changes to all who call themselves Christ's disciples - to us. Christ has anointed us by His Spirit to carry out His mission on earth while He is in heaven. We are called to do what He did; to meet the needs of mankind -spiritual, mental and physical. We do this because we have new, converted hearts and are motivated and compelled by God's love shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit (Romans 5:5).

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..." John 20:21

He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22

For the love of Christ compels us...2 Corinthians 5:7

'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give' Matthew 10:7, 8

"The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works... Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:10, 12-14

And Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark 16:15-18

The Sermon on the Mount

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us practical advice about how God's people are to live in a world under the dominion of Satan.

In Matthew 5:3-10 we are called to be merciful, peacemakers, and pure in heart. We cannot do any of these things unless we realise our own spiritual poverty and come to Christ in sorrow of heart and humility asking Him to fill us with His righteousness. We cannot feed the spiritually hungry until we ourselves have been fed by Christ, who is the Bread and Water of Life. If we do not know Him, we cannot tell others where to find spiritual food and water.

We are to be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Light dispels darkness. If we allow the Spirit to reveal Christ through us, then we will indeed be the light of the world. The light of Christ will shine through us in deeds of love and mercy and God will be glorified through our witness.

Salt gives flavour and slows down putrefaction of food. A Christian by his righteous life provides the sweet savour of godliness in the community he lives in and prevents moral decay.

'Salt and light have one thing in common: they give and expend themselves - and thus are the opposite of any and every kind of self-centred religiosity. Nevertheless, the kind of service each renders is different. In fact, their effects are complementary. The function of salt is largely negative: it prevents decay. The function of light is positive: it illumines the darkness.

So Jesus calls his disciples to exert a double influence on the secular community, a negative influence by arresting its decay and a positive influence by bringing light into its darkness. For it is one thing to stop the spread of evil; it is another to promote the spread of truth, beauty and goodness.' *The Sermon on the Mount: John Stott.*

Matthew 5: 21-31 tells us that God is interested in our hearts i.e. in our motives. Ill-will to our neighbours is regarded as murder. In our relationships and particularly in marriage, God calls us to be faithful to our word and to our spouses as He is faithful to us.

Matthew 5:38-48 calls us to have the heart of God; the heart that goes not just the second mile, but goes as far as is required to help the unloving. We are to love our enemies, bless those who curse us and pray for those who persecute us. In doing this, we will reveal to the world that we do not have the spirit of the world but that we are led by the Spirit of God for we are His sons and daughters.

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:44, 45

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:17

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8:14

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" Matthew 7:12

The Good Samaritan: Luke 10:30-37

In the story of the Good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.

"So which of these three do you think was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:36, 37

'The lesson is no less needed in the world today than when it fell from the lips of Jesus. Selfishness and cold formality have well-nigh extinguished the fire of love, and dispelled the graces that should make fragrant the character. Many who profess His name have lost sight of the fact that Christians are to represent Christ. Unless there is practical self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighbourhood, in the church, and wherever we may be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians.' *Desire of Ages: p.504*

The Peril of Indifference - the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16:19-31

This parable teaches us that it is only this life that we can choose the gift of God - redemption, salvation and eternal life. In the sleep of death, there is no opportunity for repentance. It is also about the perils of indifference and an unloving heart.

"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." Psalm 95:11, Hebrews 4:7

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2

'Keep your eyes on the Rich Man all the time. It is his story. His is the portrait that Jesus is sketching. The other characters belong only to the setting. And note that this is simply the story of a Rich Man, not of a wicked Rich Man, nor a dishonest Rich Man, nor a cruel Rich Man, just an ordinary commonplace Rich Man. Neither he himself nor his world sees anything to blame. He is not charged with any evil conduct or with acquiring his wealth by dishonourable means. It is not even said that he was harsh to the poor. Lazarus would not be daily at his gate unless he was accustomed to get the broken meats. He was capable of friendship with his wealthy guests. Probably he went to church and paid his tithes and was a highly respected man in his own circle. What was his sin? An unloving heart; an utter disregard of the Divine law of Brotherhood. He was willing that the scraps should go to Lazarus with the dogs at the gate. But he never thought of any closer relation. He never dreamed that Lazarus was a brother with a brother's claim for sympathy and friendship. The Great Gulf between Rich and Poor lay between them, widening every day, and he never thought of crossing it by a kindly word or a thought of friendly interest. That was his sin; an unloving heart.' *From: 'A People's Life of Christ.'*

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And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Matthew 25:40

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another." Thus Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. **When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering.**

In that day Christ does not present before men the great work He has done for them in giving His life for their redemption. He presents the faithful work they have done for Him. To those whom He sets upon His right hand He will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." But those whom Christ commends know not that they have been ministering unto Him. To their perplexed inquiries He answers, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." *Desire of Ages: p. 637*

Conclusion:

When Christ was on earth, not only did He state His mission, He demonstrated it in His ministry...men saw and heard that He brought physical, mental and spiritual healing to those in need of it. Today, we His disciples are called to do the same thing - we must demonstrate that we desire not only to tell the world of God's salvation, but that we do our utmost in the power of the Spirit to bring spiritual, mental and physical healing to those in need around us.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master." Matthew 10:24, 25

Additional Note:

Jesus did everything that was of the Father's will; Jesus did everything through the power of the Spirit and Jesus did everything for the glory of God.

The Christian's life must be lived as Jesus lived:

If everything in my life proceeds from God's will for my life, if it is done **only** in the power of the Spirit, then all the glory will go to God. I will love God, love my fellow men and seek only His will and His glory.

	JESUS	THE CHRISTIAN
BORN	OF THE SPIRIT. Matt 1:18, Luke 1:35	OF THE SPIRIT John 3:5
	JESUS	THE CHRISTIAN
PURPOSE OF LIFE	TO DO THE FATHER'S WILL John 4:34, 5 :30, 6:38; Hebrews 10:7, 9	TO DO THE FATHER'S WILL Matthew 6:10, Luke 11:2
OF HIMSELF	WOULD DO NOTHING John 5:19, 20; 8:28	MUST DO NOTHING John 6:63; 15:5
ATTITUDE TO HIS HUMANITY (the FLESH)	DISTRUSTFUL OF SELF; SELF-DENIAL. Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 4:1-13	DISTRUST SELF; DAILY SELF-DENIAL Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23
EVERYTHING DONE THROUGH	THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT Matt 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 2:27, 4:14, 18; John 3:34,	THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT John 14:17, Zech 4:6, Rom 8:14, 2 Corinthians 3:18
EVERYTHING DONE	TO PLEASE HIS FATHER John 8:29	TO PLEASE THE FATHER Ephesians 6:6
MOTIVATION OF EVERYTHING DONE	LOVE OF GOD AND MAN John 3:16, 17, Phil 2: 5-8	LOVE OF GOD AND MAN Mark 12:28-33
THE RESULT	GLORY TO GOD; GLORIFIED BY GOD. John 17:4, 12:28	GLORY TO GOD; GLORIFIED BY GOD 2 Corinthians 3:18
