

GD35 - "A mission of saving"
Goose Creek Ward, Ashburn, VA Stake
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With the recent anniversary of the Pioneer trek most people in the Church are familiar with the stories of the ill-fated Martin & Willie handcart companies. Rather than spend a lot of class time on that, I plan on reviewing the doctrinal basis that motivated the Saints who saved those handcart companies.

The Example of the Savior

In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus' teaching, when taken superficially, is talking about something that is purely physical: coming to the aid of one who is in physical need.

Luke 10

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain [man] went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded [him], and departed, leaving [him] half dead. 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked [on him], and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion [on him], 34 And went to [him], and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave [them] to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

But, what are the spiritual implications of the character of the three people Jesus presents? Why is it he that shewed mercy is the one that will inherit eternal life?

During his mortal ministry, Jesus used physical healing as a token of the more important spiritual healing he was making available to people:

Luke 17

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered

into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13 And they lifted up [their] voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14 And when he saw [them], he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 And fell down on [his] face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where [are] the nine? 18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Jesus final comment is that the one who returned was made whole by his faith. What did he mean by "whole"? Jesus physically healed ten lepers, but only one of them was spiritually healed at that time as well. This is the real healing Jesus offers. Notice the duality of the physical and spiritual healings.

Mark 5

25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. 28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. 29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in [her] body that she was healed of that plague. 30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? 31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

The woman is healed physically of her illness, but more importantly she is spiritually whole and Jesus blesses her for her faith.

Jesus' interests in people's physical well-being parallels his interest in their spiritual well-being. And it is so from the beginning. The Lord states in unequivocal terms how He regards the weakest and most easily overlooked among society:

Exodus 22

22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. 23 If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; 24 And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

If the men of Israel exploit or afflict widows or orphans the Lord will slay them and leave their wives widows and their children fatherless. No ambiguity here in how the Lord feels.

Deuteronomy 24

17 Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, [nor] of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge: 18 But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. 20 When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean [it] afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. 22 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

The Lord prohibits the people of Israel from impoverishing a widow and reminds them they were once slaves and it was the Lord who delivered them. He also tells them to be generous with their harvest by allowing widows and orphans to go through the gleanings. And again the Lord reminds them it is because they were slaves in Egypt.

This formula is used by King Benjamin in his final speech to his people, only he makes the spiritual implications explicit:

Mosiah 4

16 And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. 17 Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just-- 18 But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God. 19 For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind? 20 And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy. 21 And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another. 22 And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing

which thou hast done.

King Benjamin uses the same formula as is used in the Exodus quote above. He tells them they are indebted to the Lord for their spiritual salvation and He has heard their pleas and they begged for help. So too they must hear the pleas of those who require physical salvation.

The Lord has done everything within His power to save us with a salvation that is eternal, now we must do everything within our power to save others. In most instances, that which is within our power more physical than spiritual.

Following Jesus' Example as Physical Saviors

Jesus tells the latter-day Church that they are required to support those in need. As a prelude to the Law of Consecration, the Lord commands the Saints to support those in need:

D&C 42

30 And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken. 31 And inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me;

The Lord makes the physical support of those in need as necessary for discipleship, harking back to the parable of the Good Samaritan:

D&C 52

40 And remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple.

He indicates that supporting those in need is required for eternal life:

D&C 81

5 Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees. 6 And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father.

When the Lord gives the Saints instructions on crossing the plains to the Rocky Mountains He reissues the call to live the Law of Consecration and commands them to support the widows and the fatherless, in terms very similar to those used back in Exodus:

D&C 136

8 Let each company bear an equal proportion, according to the dividend of their property, in taking the poor, the widows, the

fatherless, and the families of those who have gone into the army, that the cries of the widow and the fatherless come not up into the ears of the Lord against this people. 9 Let each company prepare houses, and fields for raising grain, for those who are to remain behind this season; and this is the will of the Lord concerning his people.

Following Jesus' Example as Spiritual Saviors

Just as we should be doing all within our power to physically support one another, so likewise we should be doing everything we can to spiritually support one another:

D&C 4

3 Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work; 4 For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; 5 And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work. 6 Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. 7 Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.

The value of the individual is great to the Lord, so we must do everything we can to put the effects and power of the Atonement into action in individual people's lives:

D&C 18

10 Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; 11 For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. 12 And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance. 13 And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth! 14 Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people. 15 And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! 16 And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!

Conclusion

Just as the members of the early Church rushed to the assistance of the Martin & Willie handcart companies so too must we rush to the assistance of those who are in need, both physically and spiritually.