

New Testament Lesson # 16
April 22-28
Matthew 18: Luke 10
“What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life”
By Lenet Hadley Read

I. Among Jesus most powerful teachings were to “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44),

A. Now He adds more layers to that powerful teaching.

B. After being asked how often to forgive, He responds, not seven times seven, but **“Until seventy times seven.”** (Matthew 18:22).

C. However, from the parable which follows, we see that He means more than this.

II. The Parable of the Lord who Forgives Much and the Servant who would not forgive Little.

A. This parable is of a great Lord who forgives debts to a servant of ten thousand talents.

B. But when that same servant finds someone who owes him just one hundred pence, he “casts him into prison” (vs. 23-35).

C. The Savior is clearly saying if we expect God, our Eternal Father, to forgive us of **our enormous debts**, then we must be willing to forgive any who owe us, whose debts by comparison are puny, in most cases.

D. Remember He already taught in the Lord’s prayer, “Forgive us our debts **as we forgive our debtors.**” He repeatedly ties our willingness to forgive to our being forgiven. We cannot escape these highly significant warnings.

E. Knowing this parable and teaching have a relationship to Christ, I suggest that the Seventy times Seven formula pertains to what Jesus Christ has forgiven. **“Seventy” is symbolic of all the nations of the earth. “Seven” represents all the time of the Earth.** Isn’t this what the Lord has done through His Atonement? **He Himself has forgiven all mankind from all nations and throughout all time through the work of His Atonement.** This means He forgave them to the point that He paved the way for everyone to be resurrected, and except for those who totally rebel against Him, will receive some reward of peaceful afterlife. [That the number Seventy represented all the nations of the earth see endnote below*]

III. Understanding the symbolic meaning of “Seventy” should help us see why the Lord called Seventy in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and in the Latter-days to take His Gospel to the World.

A. They are called to teach the people of all nations (symbolized by “Seventy”) His Truths.

B. That The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints follows this pattern is one of so many evidences of its being the Lord’s True Church.

IV. The story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42) has been a topic for a lot of commentary.

A. It is important to note, if we read these verses carefully, **the Savior did not rebuke** Martha. In fact, He praised her good works.

B. But He did **defend Mary** from Martha's criticism, saying that at that moment **Mary was seeking the most important part of life --- to understand His teachings. And that getting an answer for her desires should not be taken away from her.**

C. I don't believe we are meant to take from this story that Martha was less worthy. She too is shown in other events to have heard and believed His word (See John 11:19-27).

D. This is primarily an account of Jesus **protecting Mary's desire for the Word** at a time when Martha was rightfully feeling overburdened. We are also meant to learn that hearing God's word is more important than physical needs.

E. **Looking at this story again from the lens of "loving our neighbors,"** consider how Martha *could* have reacted to Mary's temporary desires to hear instead of helping her.

1. She could have let dinner wait and listen too! The Lord once said "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," and taught that "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me..." (John 4:32,-34). Many times Jesus showed that physical hunger was not foremost in His life, nor should it be foremost in our lives, but **rather to hunger for the word of God** (Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled"). Thus, I feel He would have happily waited for His dinner while Martha listened too!

And for that matter He had shown He had the power to provide food --- like making water into wine and turning a few loaves of bread into baskets of bread. Her faith exercised then would have been rewarded.

V. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

A. This is a powerful story of the need to love, serve, and care for others, regardless of our relationship to them.

B. But it is much more than that. **For centuries** many have realized this story teaches of Jesus Christ (So taught by early Christians, including Martin Luther and others).

C. **Jesus Christ is the True Good Samaritan, one who was a stranger and despised, who came down from Heaven to bind up the wounds of those who would otherwise suffer spiritual death due to their sins (all men).** If we look carefully at the parable, looking for those things which teach of Christ, we will understand this deeper level.

1. Note that it was those who were leaders in the House of Israel at that time, a priest and a Levite, who passed by and did not render assistance.
2. So, those currently in seats of power in Judea would not nor could not heal men's spiritual wounds. Only the Savior could, would, and did!
3. While teaching of Himself as the key example through this parable, He is also teaching us to **"Go and do likewise:"** to heal each other's wounds, regardless of whether they are strangers or even those perceived as our enemies.

a. Consider the humanitarian work done by the Church to those throughout the world, of many different cultures and faiths. Many examples are given in Church media.

b. For wonderful examples of how these teachings relate to us personally in modern times, see Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi, "The Healer's Art," *The Ensign*, March 2011, pp. 44-9. He gives many powerful examples of how those involved in World War II, developing hatreds for their enemies, were able to forgive and not only love but serve their former enemies.

VI. **In every way, we too are Samaritans!**

A. In truth, the ancient Samaritans were "types" of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is, **We are Israelites who have been mixed among the Gentiles!**

B. In fact, there are many evidences the Savior had Us in mind in His works and His teachings relating to “Samaritans.”

1. **We are like the Samaritan Woman**, who did not have a True Bridegroom until she met Jesus at Jacob’s Well. [Which is where Jacob met Rachel as his bride!].
 - a. Latter-day Israel is referred to in the scriptures as a widow who has been cast off. But who will eventually be received by Christ as our Bridegroom.
 - b. Upon learning Jesus was the Messiah, the Samaritan Woman happily shared that message with all others.
We are to do the same!
2. **We are like the tenth leper, being healed, who has alone returned and given thanks.** Isaiah related “a tenth” to Us when he said of “scattered Israel.” “But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return...” (Isaiah 6:13). [The remnant which will return, like the healed leper, is symbolically a “tenth.” Perhaps this is why we are committed to and thus identified by our giving a “tenth” in tithing.]
3. **In addition, it is in serving Him faithfully that we are really giving Him our Thanks!**

VII. Especially, we are like the Good Samaritan Himself, because we follow Him, and are to heal the spiritually wounded.

A. **We are also like the Innkeeper, with whom Jesus had left the wounded, saying, “Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”** (v. 35). [It is not unusual for symbolism to change in the same parable or similitude. In Old Testament sacrifices, Jesus was symbolized by the offerer, by the offering, and by the High Priest who prayed over the offerings. In other instances, the Dove symbolizes both Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost].

1. **We should definitely relate the Innkeeper to ourselves as members of His Church. We are the ones with whom Jesus Christ has left His spiritually wounded.** We are expected to care for them, serve them and bless them. And we are indeed promised that when He comes again, all that we have given to serve the spiritually and physically wounded will be multiplied into great blessings because of His love.

B. Above all, remember, It is **only WE, like Jesus Christ Himself, who have been given the full and necessary Truths and Ordinances which can be administered to those spiritually wounded. It is We only who can make Christ’s healing works fully obtainable.**

*Genesis 10 recounts the beginnings of the diverse people of the earth, Seventy-two descendants of Noah’s sons are listed and have been interpreted by some Jewish writers as the beginning of “seventy” as symbolizing all the nations of the earth (Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality*, p. 173; Ireneaeus (*Roberts and Donaldson, The Ante-Nicene Fathers* p., 576). This understanding of scriptural references to “Seventy” was accepted by both the Jews and Early Christians in the Common Era.