

New Testament Lesson # 19
May 13-19
Matthew 19-20; Mark 10; Luke 18
“What Lack I Yet”

(The marvelous news is that anyone can inherit Eternal Life if sufficiently humble)

I. When Israelites came up to the temple to worship, they were met on the steps by Levites singing and playing musical instruments. The priests would sing part of the Psalms, the pilgrims other lines while ascending. Thus it was “A Psalm of Ascent.” The 24th Psalm deals with “who is worthy to ascend unto the House of the Lord,” and thus into Heaven itself.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place” (v. 3).

“He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (v. 4).

“He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (v. 5).

II. Now for those who believed, or were beginning to believe, the Lord Himself was among them. He would eventually be the Ultimate Judge. And what would He say to the Ultimate Questions: “What shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?” “What lack I yet?”

A. The Lord had given what was expected before through Moses, and other of His prophets. But now He would speak in person, and through powerful parables and powerful acts.

B. However, first the **current Jewish leaders, who did not come into their position in the way the Lord had commanded, but were appointed by Rome and usually through bribery,** came to make their own Disbelieving Inquiries.

1. [Tempting Him] they asked “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

The Lord’s wise answers were not only pertinent then, but still have meaning for today.

2. His answer? The Lord intended that the man and woman be Forever One.

“he that made them at the beginning made them male and female.... and said... they **twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh.**” (Matthew 19:3-5).

3. In fact it is likely that [whether done physically or symbolically] the Lord’s taking the woman from the side of the man showed that they were from the beginning “One Flesh.” Thus it was **absolutely meant for them to return to the state of being “One Flesh.”**

a. And thus most of the conflicts and competitions we see in the world today of man vs. woman were not meant to be. For in the Lord’s eyes, man and woman, in marriage, are “One.”

4. And when sealed together as One Flesh, the Lord meant them to be Eternally Inseparable.

5. However, when one of them has acted immorally, becoming “One Flesh” with another, then of course, the bond is broken. And under such circumstances divorce would become acceptable in the eyes of the Lord (v. 9).

6. Church leaders of today are given guidance for other issues in this matter.

III. Through repeated statements, parables and acts, the Lord shows that it is **when we become meek and lowly, and as “little children” we are on our way to inherit Eternal Life.**

A. So when His disciples tried to keep away from Him the little children, He rebuked them:

“Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 19:13).

- B. And He adds to this concept when He tells the rich, young man, that even though He has kept all the commandments faithfully, to receive His greatest blessings, “If thou would be perfect, go and sell that thou hast. And give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me” (Matthew 19:21).
 - 1. To give up one’s possessions, those things which make men “Mighty,” is a major way to become “meek and humble.”

IV. The reference to how a camel can go through the eye of a needle has special meaning.

- A. Contrary to some belief, there is no “Eye of a Needle Gate” among Mid-Eastern walls. So there is no “kneeling of the camel and unloading the goods off its back so it can pass through such a gate,” as sometimes claimed. The analogy is apt nevertheless.
- B. But there is something more common that the Lord likely has reference to.

1. As people age, we usually become more humbled by the aging process itself.

As we approach the time when we hope to inherit Eternal Life, very often our bones become brittle and shrivel and we **become stooped and do not stand so erectly**. We lose eyesight and hearing. We begin to lose our memory. We lose our hair and even our ability to speak clearly. And particularly on our deathbeds, we will realize our possessions are of absolutely no worth anymore.

Is not this a major way the Lord has of humbling us, of making us “meek and lowly” and as little children again, that we may pass through something like an eye of the needle, and enter into His Kingdom? (Matt 19:25-6).

Obviously, it would be wiser to humble ourselves beforehand, in the ways Jesus taught.

V. Ironically, while even the apostles got caught up in pride and began to compete for God’s favor, the Lord tells them repeatedly that He who is Servant will please the Father the Most.

A. **The Savior Himself was doing so. He left His great and noble station in the Heavens, to descend among mortals, and even below the lowest, in taking upon Himself all men’s sins.** So He has asked far less of us than He has given Himself.

B. While the disciples asked for honor, (Mark 10:37), He tells them what **He will soon give:**

“We go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death, ...” (Luke 18:31-33). So while they seek honor, He is facing total humiliation.

VI. And, in telling the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, He shows that to inherit Eternal Life, we must Look to Him, for He will Open its Gates for the repentant. [This is another reference He likely was making when He said “with God all things are possible”].

- A. The Pharisee had prayed, “I thank thee, that I am not [a sinner, and cited the things he did to obey God]. Meanwhile the publican “would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”
“this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:11-4).

B. Above all, to inherit Eternal Life, we must acknowledge our sins, and rely on the Mercy of the Lord. We cannot save ourselves, though true repentance does mean to become obedient thereafter. Then our loving God will reward us further for our efforts to save others.

VII. The Book of Mormon adds some wonderful insights as to “What we might still lack.”

- A. Alma gave powerful teachings regarding being prepared to meet God (Alma 5).
 - 1. First we must undergo a mighty change of heart.
- B. Then we should ask ourselves these highly significant questions.
 - 1. Am I stripped of pride? (Notice the word “stripped” means absolutely none).
 - 3. Am I stripped of envy? (absolutely none).
 - 4. Do I make a mock of my brother?
- C. Alma says if not answered right, “Woe unto you, for you are not sufficiently prepared.”

VIII. Are there other ways to determine for ourselves what we lack yet?

- A. We can review Conference talks and seriously evaluate how we meet principles taught.
- B. One theme we might consider from our previous conference is whether we are partaking of the sacrament in the spirit that we ought (Elder Holland). Are we as reverent as we should be in Sabbath and other sacred meetings (Elders Holland and President Nelson).

IX. Will discovering the Church in the latter part of our lives keep us out?

- A. The Lord told the Parable of the Last Laborers. In it He assured us that regardless of when we join the Church in life, if we are faithful thereafter, we can hope for Eternal Life. The issue is not how many hours one has labored, but whether one does so with all one’s heart, might, mind and strength.
- B. I believe more particularly He was prophesying of our work in these Latter-days. While we were not there in the Meridian of Time, we have been called to serve in preparation for His Second Coming. And as the Laborers in the Eleventh Hour, **we too will be blessed with “All that He has to give,” which is not only a just, fair, but an incredible wage.**

X. The Lord has told us what we must do to inherit Eternal Life. And the wondrous thing is that every single person could achieve it! Thus we need not compete against each other!

As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland further clarified:

“Brothers and sisters, I testify that no one of us is less treasured or cherished of God than another. I testify that He loves each of us—insecurities, anxieties, self-image, and all. He doesn’t measure our talents or our looks; He doesn’t measure our professions or our possessions. He cheers on *every* runner, **calling out that the race is against sin, not against each other.** I know that if we will be faithful, there is a perfectly tailored robe of righteousness ready and waiting for *everyone*,¹⁴ “robes ... made ... white in the blood of the Lamb.”¹⁵ **May we encourage each other in our effort to win that prize is my earnest prayer,** in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.” (Jeffrey R. Holland, General Conference, April 2002) (Emphasis added)