

Book of Mormon Lesson #38

# “OLD THINGS ARE DONE AWAY, AND ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW”

3 Nephi 12-15

by Ted L. Gibbons

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

The Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the everlasting Gospel--the record of the ancient Nephites, translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith, by the gift and power of God in him--that we may come to a knowledge of the principles of the Gospel in simplicity and in purity. It makes clear many dark sayings of the Jewish Scriptures, as they have come down to us. It sheds a flood of light over the Bible; it contains the key of knowledge and understanding; and it is more precious than all the works of modern times, and is worth more. (Journal of Discourses, Vol.23, p.300 - p.301, Erastus Snow, October 7, 1882)

INTRODUCTION: From time to time we are able to watch events of so great a magnitude that we know the world will never be the same. I remember standing in a front yard in Seattle in 1969, looking up, when the first men walked on the moon. I knew—we all knew—that the world was changing. I remember when the Berlin Wall fell. I have two chunks of painted concrete from that wall. We knew then too, that the planet would thereafter move in a new direction. I remember when President Hinckley announced the plan to construct small temples, and revolutionize the work for the dead. We knew that this world and the spirit world would never be the same.

The delivery of the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple were such moments—when the law of God for his children began to change. The Savior presented a code of personal behavior to his disciples, and challenged them to live in a different way than they had lived before. It used to be this way, he said, but I am telling you that it must not be that way any more.

As you read and ponder (and teach) these powerful messages, take a careful look at yourself. I have on occasion suggested that this sermon includes one of the great lessons on anatomy in all of human history. To summarize, that lesson is that your heart is located

right next to your time and money.

1, JESUS TEACHES THE BEATITUDES TO THE NEPHITES  
(3 Nephi 12:1-12)

As you begin to review these verses, note this commentary from the Bible Dictionary of the LDS scriptures:

Beatitudes: Name given to certain declarations of blessedness in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-11, cf. Luke 6:20-22). They describe certain elements that go to form the refined and spiritual character, and all of which will be present whenever that character exists in its perfection. Rather than being isolated statements, the Beatitudes are interrelated and progressive in their arrangement. A more comprehensive and accurate listing is found in 3 Ne. 12 and JST Matt. 5:, where a greater spiritual emphasis is given.

Can you see how these statements are interrelated and progressive? So often we have viewed them as independent descriptions of valuable gospel attitudes and behaviors.

The addition in the Book of Mormon account of the phrase “come unto me” in the first beatitude is most useful. The meaning of that directive is given clearly in 3 Nephi 12:2.

Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

When we come unto Christ, we are to “come down into the depths of humility and be baptized . . .” In fact, the phrase “poor in spirit” in verse 3 is a clear reference to humility. And those who are not humble will not come, or will not come all the way. Pride limits or prevents meekness and mercy and peacemaking.

That humility will cause us to mourn (12:4) for our sins. As we recognize the Redeemer and the pain that we have caused him and are causing him, we will be comforted. Isaiah promised,

. . . to give unto [us] beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the

garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that [we] might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD. (Isaiah 61:3)

Powerful comfort indeed!

It is meekness (12:5) that allows us to really get outside ourselves.

As we begin the battle with the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19), as we press forward along the straight and narrow path (see 1 Nephi 8:24; 2 Nephi 31:20), we must avoid the temptation to leave the path and feel our way (1 Nephi 8:31) toward the great and spacious building that is the pride and vanity of the world (1 Nephi 11:36; 12:18).

In daily discipleship, the many ways to express selfishness are matched by many ways to avoid it. Meekness is the real cure, for it does not merely mask selfishness but dissolves it! Smaller steps could include asking ourselves inwardly before undertaking an important action, Whose needs am I really trying to meet? Or in significant moments of self-expression, we can first count to 10. Such thoughtful filtering can multiply our offering by 10 as a mesh of reflective meekness filters out destructive and effusive ego. (Neal A. Maxwell, "Repent of [Our] Selfishness" Ensign, May 1999, p. 23, emphasis added)

The thing that keeps us moving on the path and toward the Savior is our longing (our hunger, our thirst) for the things of the Spirit, and to be reconciled with God (12:6). As we hunger and thirst for righteousness, the Lord makes a simple promise to us: You shall be filled. How long can you go without food before your stomach begins sending urgent messages to your mouth? How long can you go without scripture study, without prayer and service and spiritual experiences before your spirit begins sending messages to your heart?

We cannot wear our righteousness like a can of soup around our necks.  
We must get it inside before it will do us any good at all.

Abraham had this hunger:

And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness,

desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. (Abraham 1:2)

This is one of those places in this sermon where one can apply the lesson on anatomy that we mentioned at the beginning of the lesson. Where is your heart located? Does your use of your time and money reflect your hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Having been forgiven, we are inclined to forgive, to reflect the mercy (12:7) we have received from the Savior into the lives of others of the Father's children. We are invited to be Christlike in this remarkable way—to stand beside him in forgiving and lifting. What an honor this is for us. We have been instructed that we ought to be as he is (3 Nephi 27:27) There is no better place nor time to be as he is than when we have been hurt by someone who then becomes a candidate for our mercy.

All of these qualities taken together begin to purify our hearts (12:8). Our humility and our repentance and our meekness and our longing for righteousness and our mercy will make us pure. We will be transformed by our lifestyles into the children of Christ—his sons and his daughters (see Mosiah 5:7)—Christlike beings worthy of exaltation and the opportunity to live in Zion. It is not that we will look good, but that we will be good.

Zion is the pure in heart--the pure in heart, not merely the pure in appearance. It is not a society or religion of forms and observances, of pious gestures and precious mannerisms: it is strictly a condition of the heart. Above all, Zion is pure, which means "not mixed with any impurities, unalloyed"; it is all Zion and nothing else. (Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.9, Ch.2, p.26)

The most logical meaning of peacemaker may not be the most correct one. Any effort to reduce or eliminate contention in a relationship is commendable, but the meaning of being a peacemaker in the beatitudes probably relates to the gospel of peace, and to making it available to our brothers and sisters. (12:9) You remember that when Lehi arrived at the tree and tasted the fruit and discovered how good it was, his first concern was that his "family should partake." (1Nephi 8:12) And when we have truly come to

Christ and been purified, our next concern must be to tell others, that is, to “publish peace.”

And how blessed are they! For they did publish peace; they did publish good tidings of good; and they did declare unto the people that the Lord reigneth.  
(Mosiah 27:37)

Peacemakers have beautiful feet too (see Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:15; Mosiah 15:15-18). Pull of your shoes and have a look.

Our final concern is to stay the course. Will we continue to do all the things the beatitudes teach us even when we are persecuted and reviled and mocked for doing so? (12:10-12) The Lord here offers us the opportunity to stand next to Joseph and Hyrum and Stephen and Peter and Paul and John. It feels to me like it would be a great honor to be part of this companionship of courage.

For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.  
(3 Nephi 12:12)

## 2. JESUS DECLARES THAT HIS FOLLOWERS ARE TO BE THE SALT OF THE EARTH AND A LIGHT TO OTHER PEOPLE (3 Nephi 12:13-16)

In many places (such as the book of Hosea) the Lord uses the language of metaphor to suggest that some things are like others. But there are other times when such language might be expected but does not appear. In Matthew 25:40, the Lord proclaimed

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:40)

He did not say, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, it is like ye have done it unto me. Doing it to or for someone else is doing it to or for him. The same thing happens in these verses in 3 Nephi 12.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden

under foot of men. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house; Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (3 Nephi 12:13-16)

You are salt. You are light. Many things salt is supposed to do, we must do. Many things light is supposed to do, we must do.

My wife made stew the other day. She served it with a salt shaker. "I didn't put in enough salt," she told us. "It needs salt." The world needs the savor of salt.

Our light must help others to see more clearly what they must do and what they must believe and whom they must follow. Read 3 Nephi 18:24. What is the source of light we hold up? Someone once said that there are two ways to be light. We can be the candle that furnishes the light, or we can be the mirror that reflects that light.

I read a poem years ago inside the front cover of the Ensign magazine. I have been searching <[lds.org](http://lds.org)> for a long time and cannot find the issue, but I will have it before I post this or in the next lesson. I probably have the spacing wrong for the poem; perhaps even a few of the words. But I am working from memory here and I am only a short breath away from senility.

The author (I believe) was Dorothy Hobson Fitzgerald.

Christ flung his glittering mercies  
Like a net of golden light to draw my heart  
From doubt and dark rebellion.  
Always I slipped out  
In Thomas-blindness crying for a sign,  
"At least one human face reflecting thine,  
Here in the flesh."  
Then by his grace this too was added  
Unto me.  
Not like Thomas now, but Paul,  
On the Damascus road I stand,

Dazzled, caught up forever out of night,  
Because you passed,  
Whose eyes and heart and hands  
Are Christward mirrors,  
Flashing light,

3. JESUS DECLARES THAT HE HAS FULFILLED THE LAW OF MOSES. HE TEACHES THE  
PEOPLE A HIGHER LAW.  
(3 Nephi 12:17-48; 15:1-10)

There are so many marvelous principles given these chapters that it is impossible in the space and time available to discuss all of them. Let me offer a few insights.

The counsel to love our enemies (3 Nephi 12:44,45) brings to mind this lovely account of a dream about Hitler from Elder George F. Richards of the Twelve. The timing of this dream—somewhere in the midst of WW II, is significant.

Then a few years ago, at the closing of a conference of the St. Johns Stake, we had had a wonderful conference I thought, and I was very happy on retiring. I was sleeping in the home of the president of the stake, Brother Levi Udall, and that night I had a remarkable dream. I have seldom mentioned this to other people, but I do not know why I should not. It seems to me appropriate in talking along this line. I dreamed that I and a group of my own associates found ourselves in a courtyard where, around the outer edge of it, were German soldiers—and Fuhrer Adolph Hitler was there with his group, and they seemed to be sharpening their swords and cleaning their guns, and making preparations for a slaughter of some kind, or an execution. We knew not what, but, evidently we were the objects. But presently a circle was formed and this Fuhrer and his men were all within the circle, and my group and I were circled on the outside, and he was sitting on the inside of the circle with his back to the outside, and when we walked around and I got directly opposite to him, I stepped inside the circle and walked across to where he was sitting, and spoke to him in a manner something like this:

"I am your brother. You are my brother. In our heavenly home we lived together in love and peace. Why can we not so live here on the earth?"

And it seemed to me that I felt in myself, welling up in my soul, a love for that man, and I could feel that he was having the same experience, and presently he arose, and we embraced each other and kissed each other, a kiss of affection.

Then the scene changed so that our group was within the circle, and he and his group were on the outside, and when he came around to where I was standing, he stepped inside the circle and embraced me again, with a kiss of affection.

I think the Lord gave me that dream. Why should I dream of this man, one of the greatest enemies of mankind, and one of the wickedest, but that the Lord should teach me that I must love my enemies, and I must love the wicked as well as the good?

Now, who is there in this wide world that I could not love under those conditions, if I could only continue to feel as I felt then? I have tried to maintain this feeling and, thank the Lord, I have no enmity toward any person in this world; I can forgive all men, so far as I am concerned, and I am happy in doing so and in the love which I have for my fellow men.  
(Conference Report, October 1946)

With regard to the command to be perfect (3N12:48), C.S. Lewis said,

The command Be ye perfect is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that we were "gods" and He is going to make good his words. If we let Him — for we can prevent Him, if we choose — He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly . . . His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what he said. [Mere Christianity (New York, Macmillan, 1952) pp. 172-175)

#### 4. JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES HOW THEY MUST LIVE TO BE HIS TRUE DISCIPLES



(3 Nephi 13,14)

We are counseled at the beginning of 3 Nephi 13 to give alms in secret, and not to be seen of men.

Let us remember . . . and always keep in mind the words often quoted by President Harold B. Lee: "There is no limit to the good that you can do, if you don't care who gets the credit" (see Antoine R. Ivins, in Conference Report, Apr. 1946, p. 42). The need of the hour is true discipleship in the Lord's restored church. (Elder Jacob de Jager, C.R., Oct. 1978)

We do too many things so that people can see us doing them. As D&C 121:35 warns us, we too often "aspire to the honors of men." Take a moment and review these references: Mosiah 4:16-19; D&C 38:35; D&C 52:40; D&C 81:5.

Forgiveness is required to be forgiven (3 Nephi 13:14,15). But it must be complete and uncluttered. The message of D&C 64:9-11 is that failure (unwillingness) to forgive is a greater sin than anything anyone else might do to you. And there are no arguments against this. God, for whom all things are present, does not care about sequence. It will do us no good to claim that someone else started the pain. In this context take a careful look at D&C 98:23,24,39,40)

The use of the word "reward" in 3 Nephi 13 teaches an interesting lesson, related to some degree to the lesson about alms in the first verses of this chapter. The basic question seems to be this one: do you expect to be rewarded twice? If you do things for the praise of men, and you get the praise of men, you have your reward. But if you do good in secret, for the glory of God and the blessing of your brothers and sisters, God will see and reward you openly. (See 3 Nephi 13:1-4; 5,6; 16-18)

The counsel of the Savior is that we put our treasure (our reward) where we really want it.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (3 Nephi 13:19-21)

Remember our lesson on anatomy? Your heart is located next to your treasure—your time and money.

If your eye is single (to the glory of God, and focused on heavenly things), you will not seek the things of the world, you will lay up treasures in heaven, and your whole body will be filled with the light of inspiration and revelation. However, if your eye is evil—that is, focused on the things of the world, you will not have access to the things of the Spirit, you will seek the things of the world, and you will be filled with darkness. And you must make a choice. No one can walk both sides of this fence (See 3 Nephi 13:22-24).

At the beginning of 3 Nephi 14 (verses 1-5), the Savior gives us a solemn warning about judging. He even includes an insight about boards and sawdust that may have come to him in his father's carpentry shop when he was a child. But in verses 15 to 20, he gives direction about how to judge when it is necessary to do so, and it often is necessary. He said,

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them. (3 Nephi 14:15-20)

There is one other often misunderstood or ignored promise in this chapter that is worth a look.

Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it

shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. (3 Nephi 14:7,8, emphasis added)

Have you noticed in your study of the scriptures how often the Lord uses the word shall to discuss his willingness to give answers to prayers? What do you think of the promise, “For every one that asketh, receiveth”? Have you ever prayed and felt that you have not received? A close friend once taught me with these words: “The Lord answers every prayer, either in the way we want, or in a better way.” I believe with all my heart that that is true.

**CONCLUSION:** In our discussion of Helaman 5 in Lesson 33, we talked about building our lives on an unshakable foundation. Our obedience to the sayings of the Lord in this sermon and in other places provides the stones and mortar of our construction.

Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it. (3 Nephi 14:24 - 27)

Why would anyone who knows and cares build anywhere else?

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation . . . (Isaiah 28:16)

Find a photo of the leaning tower of Pisa. Show it to your family and your class and think about the importance of building on a sure foundation.



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