

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Mission to the Needy – 18-24 Nov 2023

Christ fully identifies Himself with suffering humanity. He says: “I was an hungered,” “I was thirsty,” “I was a stranger,” “I was sick,” “I was in prison” (Matthew 25:35-36). “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me” (Matthew 25:40). So completely is it that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). Furthermore, it is “the Son of Man,” before whom “shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another” (Matthew 25:31-32). And the Father “hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:27). Thus, the case of every member of the human family is committed to Him who was in all things “made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). How wonderfully are the love and mercy of God revealed in His dealings with His erring children!

Sunday: The Faith of Friend – In Luke 5:17–26 (see also Matt. 9:1–8, Mark 2:3–12), what are some of the lessons we can take from this story about mission and ministry? One is the correlation between sin and sickness. “Christ saw that the man was suffering with bodily disease, and he saw also that he was suffering with a sin-sick soul. He knew that in order to heal bodily maladies he must bring relief to the mind, and cleanse the soul from sin. The man needed health of soul before he could appreciate health of body. The Saviour was not unmindful of the effort that was made to bring the man to him, and his heart of love and pity was moved. “He saw their faith,” and it was enough. “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee,” he said to the sick man. Many watched with bated breath every movement in this strange transaction, feeling that Christ’s words were an invitation to them. Were they not soul-sick? Were they not anxious to get rid of their burden of guilt?” {RH August 15, 1899, Art. A, par. 8}. Consider souls that are sick with sickness caused by use of animal-based diet, the sin of indulging perverted appetites; they need the renewing of mind and repent of the sin of indulging appetites before they could appreciate health of body. “I saw some who were sickly among the saints, made themselves [so] by indulging the appetite. If we wish good health we must take special care of the health God has given us, deny the unhealthy appetite, eat more coarse food with little grease. Then you can consistently ask God’s blessing upon such food as is congenial with your natures. We must pray as did Solomon for food convenient for us, and act accordingly, and God will bless us. Some Sabbathkeepers make a god of their bellies, waste their means in getting rich food. Such I saw, if saved at all, would know what pinching is unless they deny their appetites and eat to the glory of God. There are but few who eat to the glory of God” – EG White, Ms 1, 1854 {1EGWLM 407.2}.

Monday: Christ’s Method Alone – What lessons do we learn from the miracle recorded in John 5:1-9? The miracles of Christ are recorded for us that we may believe in Him, and believing, have life in Him (John 20:31). In the fifth chapter of John’s Gospel we find a man who had had an infirmity thirty-eight years. He was greatly desirous of being freed from his disease, and with this object he lay beside the pool of Bethesda. At certain times the water was troubled, and then there was a rush on the part of the sick people who clustered round the pool to get first into the water, that they might be healed. As Jesus walked one Sabbath by this place He saw the man, and knowing that he had now been a long time in that case, He asked him, “Wouldest thou be made whole?” Notice what a despairing answer the man returns: “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.” He desired to be made whole earnestly enough, but he only saw one possibility of this being accomplished, and that was that some man would take pity on his helplessness and wait for an opportunity to help him into the water. The greatest thing that this man could think of that Jesus could do for him would be to undertake to wait by his side till the waters were again troubled. “Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.” This is what Jesus does for men. He comes to every one and says, “Wilt thou be made whole?” and He desires to do as much for us as He did for the impotent man on that occasion. We too may have been held by our infirmities thirty-eight years, or even more. Inherited tendencies to evil may have grown into fixed habits that are part of our lives, and

that we cannot possibly overcome, but it is as easy for Christ to make us whole, and free from them, as though they were not a day old. Jesus sees us in bondage to the lusts of the flesh, led captive by Satan, and defiled with the leprosy of sin, and he wants to make us every white whole, but, like the man by the pool of Bethesda, we too often put Him off by saying that if we only had the help that others have, we would be all right. If only we were as free from trouble and temptation as others that we know, we would soon be whole. If some man would help us, or other men would cease to hinder us, all would be well. The Saviour does not want us to lean upon these broken reeds, which always disappoint, and wound those who trust them. He has, all ready for us, all that we can desire and, passing by as worthless all our plans for helping ourselves, He solves the whole problem at once, by giving directly what we need. If we are willing to abandon our confidence in our own methods and acknowledge our weakness, we may pass straightway from the condition of weakness and infirmity, no matter of how long standing, and enter at once into the joyful experience of freedom in the Lord from all the power of the enemy. All the years that the impotent man had been lying by the pool had brought him not a single step nearer the attainment of his desires. All our own efforts to make ourselves whole, leave us further from the end than before. A word from Jesus accomplished immediately more than the man dared to hope.

Tuesday: Refugees and Immigrants – How does the Bible say about the refugees and the immigrants? Some of the sins that brought the captivity of Israel and the desolation of their land, were oppression and injustice. “O house of David, thus saith the Lord; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings” (Jeremiah 21:12). “Thus saith the Lord; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place,” “then will I cause you to dwell in this place” (Jeremiah 22:3; 7:5-8). We may not directly oppress the refugees and immigrants, but we may do so indirectly by our indifference to their plight.

Wednesday: To Help the Hurting – How does parenting teach us to help the hurting? Our little child has fallen and bruised herself badly. The flesh is swollen. Her eyes fill with tears, her lips quiver, and her whole body is trembling with the pain and the fright. Her countenance and her very attitude are a pitiful appeal for help and sympathy. So, what is to be done in such a case? Every parent knows what the first impulse is, and what brings the most speedy relief. Soothing remedies may be applied, but the greatest relief comes from the folding in the parent’s arms, and the love and kisses of sympathy that are bestowed. The little one settles down quietly, the strain is relaxed, the trembling ceases, and soon the pain is forgotten. What a common occurrence this is, and yet how slow we are to learn the lesson it suggests. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13-14). We are but children. Compared with God, we are far more helpless than our children are compared with us. Think of that statement, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” He pities them in just the same way, only infinitely more. “He health the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3). Christ says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The Spirit of the Lord is upon Him “to heal the brokenhearted,” “to set at liberty them that are bruised,” “to comfort all that mourn.”

Thursday: Greater Love – What is the greatest measure of love that man can in himself possess? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die” (Romans 5:7). What is the love of God for us? “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (verse 8). Human love is selfish; people love for the pleasure that they derive from the object of their affection, and usually cease to love when they are slighted. God loves that He may give pleasure to the objects of His affections, and He finds His pleasure in the happiness which His love imparts to the loved ones. Hatred and abuse only call out greater manifestations of His everlasting, unchangeable love. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.