

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Unto the Least of These – 11-17 February 2023

Christ calls us to show His love unto the least of these among us. He says, “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). It will be the time of restitution, recompense, and the consummation of the work of the Gospel. Thus, the apostle Peter said: “And He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

Sunday: The Life and Ministry of Jesus – How best can we describe the life and ministry of Jesus in the context of this Lesson? The apostle describes “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). This sums up the life and ministry of Jesus, which He carries on today through His faithful servants. If you profess to be the servant of Christ, Paul says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). If we allow Christ to dwell in us, we will seek opportunity to do good: “As we have therefore opportunity,” let us do good unto all men. Doing good to others is to be considered a privilege to be enjoyed, and not an irksome duty to be discharged. Men do not speak of disagreeable things as opportunities. No one says that he had an opportunity to injure himself, or that he had an opportunity to lose some money. On the contrary, a man will speak of an opportunity to make some money, or to escape from some threatened danger. It is thus that we are to consider doing good to the needy. But opportunities are always sought for. Men are always on the lookout for an opportunity to get gain. So, the apostle teaches us that we should be seeking opportunities to help someone. This Christ did. He “went about doing good.” He travelled about the country on foot, a tramp if you please, but a glorious one. He was searching opportunities to do some good, and He found them. He did good, “for God was with Him.” His name is Immanuel, which means, “God with us.” Now, as He is with us all the days, even to the end of the world, so God is with us, doing good to us, that we also may do good. “We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1). To this end, “receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22) and with that power, which is Christ in you, go “about doing good.”

Monday: God's Provision for the Poor – In the Jewish economy, God made provision for the poor, but have we not been counselled to study and apply that economy even for the provision of the poor today? “As a people and as individuals we need to have a deeper sense of our duty to God and our responsibility to the world. There should be more earnest study of the Scriptures. I have been deeply impressed with the importance of studying the book of Daniel in connection with the smaller prophets, especially Malachi. And we need to give careful attention also to the lessons taught in the building of the tabernacle and the temple, and in the temple service. Through the prophets God has given a delineation of what will come to pass in the last days of this earth's history, and the Jewish economy is full of instruction for us” – Ellen White {RH November 10, 1896, par. 11}. “The rivers of blood that flowed at the harvest thanksgiving, when the sacrifices were offered in such large numbers, were meant to teach a great truth. For even the productions of the earth, the bounties provided for man's sustenance, we are indebted to the offering of Christ upon the cross of Calvary. God teaches us that all we receive from him is the gift of redeeming love. From his instruction to Israel, he would have us learn that he has made ample provision for the poor to receive the comforts of this life, and also for the gospel to be carried to all those who are perishing in their sins. The whole sanctuary service was designed to impress the people with the fact that the things which God has set apart for himself are holy. They were ever to observe the distinction between the sacred and the common. Holy things must be kept holy” Ellen White {RH November 10, 1896, par. 12}. “When these things are studied and heeded as the message of God to every soul, we shall see the deep movings of his Spirit among us. Conscience will be aroused. The record of past days will make its disclosure of the vanity of human inventions, by which men have excused themselves for neglecting the claims of God.

The Holy Spirit will reveal faults and defects of character that ought to have been discerned and corrected. It will show how, through the grace of Christ, the character might have been transformed. The Lord's servants will see how they should have had the joy of victory where they have known the sorrow of defeat" Ellen White {RH November 10, 1896, par. 13}. We are told: "The Lord will not only reveal himself as a God of long-suffering mercy, but by terrible things in righteousness he will make it manifest that he is not a man that he should lie. He will have no fellowship with false dealing. He will sanction no pretense. The time is near when the inner life will be fully revealed. All will behold, as if reflected in a mirror, the working of the hidden springs of motive. The Lord would have you now examine your own life, and see how stands your record with him" EG White {RH November 10, 1896, par. 14}.

Tuesday: The Rich Young Ruler – What call is given to us today as was to the rich young ruler? "The healing of diseased souls and diseased bodies, — this was Christ's work in our world, and it is our work also. His words to the rich young ruler, "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," are spoken to all who possess this world's goods. If they will follow Christ's example, using their entrusted possessions to relieve the physical and spiritual necessities of those less fortunate than themselves, they will secure the enduring riches of eternal life" Ellen White {RH January 12, 1905, par. 12}. "To those who, like the young ruler, are in high positions of truth, and have great possessions, it may seem too great a sacrifice to give up all in order to follow Christ. But this is the rule of conduct for all who would become his disciples. Nothing short of it can be accepted. Self-surrender is the keynote of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because God sees that there is no other way to save man than to cut away from his life that which, if entertained, would demoralize the whole being" Ellen White {RH January 12, 1905, par. 13}. "The work of evangelizing the world has been greatly hindered by personal selfishness. Some, even among professed Christians, are shortsighted, unable to see that the work of the gospel is to be supported by the goods that Christ has entrusted to them. Are we obeying the Saviour's instructions? Are we following his example? If we are truly converted, we shall regard ourselves as God's almoners, and will dispense for the advancement of his work the means that he has placed in our hands. Money is needed in order that the work waiting to be done all over our world may be carried forward. If Christ's words were obeyed, there would be thousands where there are hundreds willing to carry out his directions to the ruler. The Lord has entrusted to men and women an abundance of means for the carrying forward of his plan of mercy and benevolence. He bids his stewards of means to invest their money in the work of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and preaching the gospel to the poor. Perfection of character can not possibly be attained without self-sacrifice" EG White {RH January 12, 1905, par. 14}.

Wednesday: Zacchaeus – What testimonies were given by Ellen White to leading men who were not doing as did Zacchaeus? To General Conference president, Elder Daniels, who had invested in stocks and led others to do the same, as today ministers invest in stocks, coffee or tea and lead others to do the same, the question was asked: "Have you felt that you must confess your sin in diverting to city lands and mining stocks the means which should have been invested in the cause of God? You and your brethren who were engaged with you have a work of restitution to do. When you, Elder Daniels, can say, with Zacchaeus, that if you have received aught of any man unjustly you will restore to him fourfold, then there will be evidence of a genuine work of the Spirit of God in your heart" {PH096 71.2}.

Thursday: Consider the Man Job – Considering the testimony of Job, "I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out" (Job 29:16), how can we apply that principle today? "Thy neighbor as thyself." The question arises: "Who is my neighbor?" His reply is the parable of the good Samaritan, which teaches us that any human being who needs our sympathy and our kind offices is our neighbor. The suffering and destitute of all classes are our neighbors, and when their wants are brought to our knowledge, it is our duty to relieve them as far as possible. A principle is brought out in this parable that it would be well for the followers of Christ to adopt. First meet the temporal necessities of the needy and relieve their physical wants and sufferings, and you will then find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seeds of virtue and religion" – Ellen White {4T 226.3}.