

lesson seven

AUGUST 10–16

Jesus and Those in **Need**

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD’ ” (Luke 4:18, 19, NKJV).



Jesus reached out to all who needed His help. Jesus' mission shows us a religion that is characterized by good deeds, justice, and mercy toward others.

Luke 4:18, 19

Introduction

Following in the Footsteps of Jesus to Help Those in Need

We live in a world where there are enormous inequities. The top 1 percent of the world's wealthiest individuals now owns 50.1 percent of the world's wealth.¹ As the world's richest individuals grow richer, it seems mass poverty increases and people's ability to find basic needs for survival, such as clean water, food, and work, decreases. Our family served for the past five years in the Philippines. It amazed me to see large slums with people in abject poverty while only a few minutes away we could be driving on a brand-new freeway with the latest Ferraris racing past us. Life just is not fair.

One person can't possibly save them all!

While serving as missionaries in a developing part of the world, we were overwhelmed at times by the great need we saw all around us. When you see so much need, the temptation is to give up. One person can't possibly save them all! And it is true; by myself, I could not combat such massive inequities in the world. It reminds me that the reason our world suffers from so much inequity is the utter selfishness of humanity. Thankfully, we have hope in Jesus Christ because He did not partake of such a sentiment but took upon Himself human nature to become one of us (Phil. 2:5–8) to save us. When He was born and as He grew up, as this week's lesson will show us, He lived in abject poverty. Jesus knew what it was like to go hungry and suffer, and in the midst of so much suffering, He still worked to alleviate the suffering of others.

So how could Jesus do this? What was His secret? This week we will look at the example of Jesus, who, one life at a time, showed others about the true character of God—a God of selfless love—who ultimately sacrificed His own life so that we can experience reconciliation and peace with God. No matter what our economic position may be in this world, what counts is to make sure that we secure the riches of eternal life in the kingdom to come. The kingdom of this world, with all of its supposed wealth, will not matter in terms of true heavenly riches—the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, and peace, which are the true currency of heaven. After all, the things of this earth will grow strangely dim, as the old hymn says, in the light of His glory and grace. We will not be able to take the physical things accumulated on this earth with us to heaven. The example of Jesus reminds us that it is our characters—demonstrated through our everyday actions, including how we treat the poor and marginalized within our sphere of influence—that matters most in the kingdom of heaven.

1. Robert Frank, "Richest 1% Now Owns Half the World's Wealth," CNBC, November 14, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/11/14/richest-1-percent-now-own-half-the-worlds-wealth.html>.

Logos
The Mission

Luke 4;
John 2:13–17; 5:1–15;
Phil. 2:7, 8

Mary's Song (Luke 1:46–55)

Mary was given a great task: She was to be the mother of Jesus. She had to raise the Savior of the world and teach Him how to do simple things, such as eating, walking, and talking. One can only imagine how Mary must have felt. She had a gift from God that came with a responsibility, and as a young mother, she had no easy task. The Bible, however, says in Luke 1:46–55 that Mary praised God. In fact, she glorified His name, for He had blessed her and had “filled the hungry with good things” (verse 53). The Lord brought joy to her body and soul. Mary had a gift, a mission, but that gift came with a responsibility. Today we have that same gift—that same mission—the beautiful gift of knowing Jesus. At the same time, that gift comes with a responsibility to share it with others. It doesn't matter your race, gender, or financial status, the responsibility to share that gift remains the same.

**God wants you to understand that He loves you
and would do anything for you to be saved.**

His Mission (Isa. 61:1, 2)

Jesus came to this earth out of love. He came to save, to forgive, and to serve. Jesus was sent to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and to release prisoners from cells of darkness (Isa. 61:1, 2). His mission was to proclaim to everyone that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 10:7, 8). When Jesus saves, He redeems every aspect of someone's life. Even if you were sick, poor, full of sin, or whatever your condition might be, both saving you and changing you into a new person were equally important aspects of His mission. He did all of this through love that came from the Father above, and that is what is sometimes hard to understand.

How is it that an all-powerful God loves me? How is it that He, who created the whole universe, cares about me and whether I am saved or not? God sent His Son to earth with a mission. God wants you to understand that He loves you and would do anything for you to be saved. He says, “Come now, and let us reason together . . . : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). Jesus came to heal us physically and spiritually. He came to heal and free us from our physical and spiritual slavery. Jesus came to serve.

Jesus Heals (Matt. 12:15–21)

Being sick is not only hard for the patient but also expensive. In many societies, only those with insurance or with a lot of money can afford proper health care; the rest are left to fight their sickness alone. Jesus healed everyone, not caring whether they were important and not caring whether they had insurance. All Jesus cared about was their faith: if they had faith that He could heal them, He would. Such was the case with the centurion found in Matthew 8:5–13.

The centurion came to ask Jesus to heal his servant, and when Jesus asked whether He should go to the centurion's house to heal the servant, the centurion answered, “‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed’ ” (verse 8, NIV). The centurion had faith in Jesus, and he was rewarded for his faith.

Jesus also healed a man who was born blind (John 9). People believed he was blind because of the sins of his parents. Jesus healed him and then asked him whether he believed in the Son of man. “‘Who is he, sir?’ the man asked. ‘Tell me so that I may believe in him.’ Jesus said, ‘You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.’ Then the man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped Him” (verses 36–38, NIV). God healed people because they believed He could do so.

The Cross of Christ (Isa. 53:3–6)

Jesus came to help those in need. Isaiah 53:3–6 describes what Jesus took upon Himself to help those in need. Jesus was despised and rejected; He took up our pain and suffering so that we wouldn't have to do it. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (verse 5, NIV). How can wounds heal us? How can salvation come from someone else's suffering?

His sacrifice saves us because He lived a life without sin. Jesus showed us that salvation is for all those who believe and for those who accept His cross. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave us a mission: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14). His mission was to tell everyone of His Father's kingdom—He did so by serving others. Jesus was tempted, hurt, and crucified for the entire human race so that we all could be saved. It is our turn to take that mission and, like Simon of Cyrene, carry that cross to tell others about His second coming. Let us reason together, and let us humble ourselves in preparation for His coming.

REACT

1. Why do we sometimes limit the circle of people we help?
2. How can we carry out Jesus' mission in modern society?

Testimony

Jesus Was Poor Too— But He Helped!

Matt. 25:40; 19:21

Jesus equated serving the poor with serving God (Matt. 25:31–40). He invited the poor and other social outcasts into God's kingdom (Luke 14:15–24). His mission was to give sight to the blind, enable the lame to walk, cleanse the lepers, give the deaf their hearing, raise the dead, and proclaim the good news to the poor (Matt. 11:4–6).

“How much is squandered on gifts that benefit no one!”

We, likewise, should care for the poor for the following reasons:

Jesus will judge us by how we treat the poor. “In placing among them the helpless and the poor, to be dependent upon their care, Christ tests His professed followers. By our love and service for His needy children we prove the genuineness of our love for Him. To neglect them is to declare ourselves false disciples, strangers to Christ and His love.”¹

The poor have a claim on our sympathy. “The Lord provides for the widow and the fatherless, not by a miracle in sending manna from heaven, not by sending ravens to bring them food; but by a miracle upon human hearts, expelling selfishness, and unsealing the fountains of Christlike love. The afflicted and bereaved ones He commits to His followers as a precious trust. They have the very strongest claim upon our sympathy.”²

It encourages temperance. “How much means is expended for things that are mere idols, things that engross thought and time and strength which should be put to a higher use! How much money is wasted on expensive houses and furniture, on selfish pleasures, luxurious and unwholesome food, hurtful indulgences! How much is squandered on gifts that benefit no one! For things that are needless, often harmful, professed Christians are today spending more, many times more, than they spend in seeking to rescue souls from the tempter.”³

No matter what our financial situation may be, every disciple of Christ is called to care for the poor with the full force of resources at their disposal. In doing so, we profess our love for God. This is so because everything we already have belongs to God, and He has commanded us to serve!

REACT

1. Why was Jesus Christ, the King of kings, born so lowly?
2. How can the poor have a claim on my hard-earned wealth?

1. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 205.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

Luke 4

Evidence

Anointed to Reach the Poor

At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus went into the synagogue and delivered a message about His purpose in this world, which was to preach and lend a hand to the needy or afflicted across the many aspects of life.

He took the scroll of the book of Isaiah and read: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18).

Jesus delivers the prisoners and captives.

This passage has a meaningful message. The expression “has anointed” in its Hebrew form (מָשַׁח *mashach*) is derived from the word *messiah* (מָשִׁיחַ), which means “the anointed one.” In Jewish tradition, prophets and kings were anointed through a ceremony that involved pouring oil on their head. The important idea is that God called Jesus and now calls His followers and anoints them in the same way kings and prophets were anointed. This gives Christians authority and responsibility to act according to His will.

Then the task as stated means to preach to the *anavim* (עֲנָוִים), which refers to the “afflicted” or “meek,” those who are both in spiritual and material poverty; whose hearts are oppressed through a sense of their sins. Finally, Jesus delivers the prisoners and captives—the gospel releases the mind captive under sin; it gives relief and peace.

The biblical account in John 9 narrates the story of Jesus healing a man who was blind from birth. The passage also mentions the “pool of Siloam.” This pool was possibly built in the first century B.C., and its ruins were discovered in 2004. This discovery proves the historicity of the Bible and its teachings. The Hebrew word *shiloah* means “sent.” It was this same pool where Jesus sent the blind man to be healed (John 9:6, 7). Upon washing, the blind man was then able to see, and he who once was an afflicted person became an anointed man who not only glorified God but, without having seen Him with his own eyes, also testified about His mercy and love.

This biblical account demonstrates the effect that divine power has, and sharing this gospel is the task entrusted to Christians.

REACT

1. As a believer, reflect about your experience with the needy people whom you have encountered in your life.
2. Can you think of any examples in the Bible where people took the initiative to help others, expecting nothing in return?

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How-to Charity Begins at Home

Matt. 20:28;
2 Cor. 5:14;
Rom. 14:7;
1 Tim. 1:6

We may be tempted to show our love to God by doing “big things” for the church. But we express the pure love of Christ by showing heartfelt concern for one another (Matt. 25:35, 40). If God’s love motivates our actions, we will proclaim the gospel by using our gifts and talents to serve others.

Each one of us has been blessed with different gifts and talents for the purpose of ministering.

Peter gives the best description of the Savior’s earthly ministry in five words: “who went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). Indeed “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28, NKJV). Jesus modeled a life worth living. As Ellen White writes: “Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil.”¹ Here are a few suggestions for how to use our talents and gifts to share the light of the gospel with those around us:

Ask God for guidance and strength. When we ask God for guidance, we surrender control of our lives so that we do not do anything through our own power or for our own good, but rather, we do it to glorify God and act to alleviate the problems of others.

Be bold to share your talents. Ellen White, in reflecting upon the person who received one talent, says: “The talents, however few, are to be put to use. The question that most concerns us is not, How much have I received? but, What am I doing with that which I have?”² Each one of us has been blessed with different gifts and talents for the purpose of ministering (1 Cor. 12:4, 5).

Have a mission. We must be ambitious for the glory of God, determined to overcome all obstacles and fulfill the purpose of our existence to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31). Jesus had a mission to save the lost, and we should carry on this mission in helping others (Isaiah 58).

Be strong in the Lord. There will always be challenges and temptations when we try to do good deeds. Some people may not support our ministry. They can do horrible acts of cruelty and injustice. But we need to be strong in the Lord. We have the privilege of following Christ’s example through every challenge and triumph to work toward the salvation of others.

REACT

1. In what ways can we show love to God by ministering to others?
2. What challenges can we alleviate that oppress those in our communities?

1. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 133.

2. Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 329.

Matt. 21:12–17

Opinion
The God of the Needy

The greatest sermon ever preached by Christ was the life He lived. His interactions with the common person portray how the God of heaven is interested in the life and affairs of each person. The religious teachers failed to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah because He did not meet their expectations to deliver them from Roman bondage. Jesus did not drive the Romans away but, rather, ministered to the people, healed them, and demonstrated compassion even to the poor and oppressed.

**These religious leaders had betrayed the trust
God had given them.**

Isaiah 58:5–7 talks about how true fasting is more than an outward demonstration but comes with setting free the oppressed and caring for the poor and hungry. From outward appearances, the religious leaders looked pious as they covered themselves with sackcloth and ashes, but they failed to observe the true fast that God desires. The same religious leaders who were supposed to be guardians on behalf of the weak and the poor were, in reality, despising them. The poor and oppressed were left to fend for themselves. These religious leaders had betrayed the trust God had given them.

In Matthew 21:12–17, as He entered the temple, Jesus saw all the buying and selling (think of all the animals and birds, and the shouting filling the air). Jesus was furious. He saw how God's house had become a house of trade, a den of thieves, where cheating and corruption were carried out within this supposedly holy place.

Jesus cleansed the temple. The religious leaders left in fear as those they despised, the sick and poor, now gathered around Jesus. Even the little children sat at His feet. Now the blind, lame, poor, and sick found a place in God's temple. This simple act of cleansing the temple demonstrated a principle of God's kingdom—that all have a right to God's kingdom. Luke 4:18 states that Jesus was anointed by the Spirit to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoner, to recover the sight of the blind, and to set the oppressed free. We must reach out to the poor in the same way that Jesus did.

REACT

1. How could the simple act of clearing the temple have had an effect on the religious leaders in contrast to how they treated the poor and oppressed?
2. What can we do to follow Christ's example in reaching out to the poor, oppressed, and overlooked in our communities?

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Exploration

The Golden Standard

Prov. 19:17

CONCLUDE

Indeed, Christ's greatest sermon was the life He lived. His life was a personification of service, sacrifice, forgiving, healing, teaching, and caring. This was especially true for the poor, sick, deprived, oppressed, and needy around Him. Such a life is the golden standard for all Christians.

In a world that discriminates, exploits, and subjugates the disadvantaged, the sweet embrace of Jesus engulfs those who are marginalized and outcast. In Luke 4:18 Jesus said He was anointed by the Spirit to proclaim good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoner, to give recovery of sight for the blind, and to set the oppressed free. Just like Mary Magdalene, the apostle Peter, the blind, the deaf, and the Jews who were blessed by Jesus, today as Christians we have a duty to share our gift of knowing Christ to those who are in spiritual need. This will enable those around us to experience Jesus' embrace too. Let us follow in the footsteps of Christ, the epitome of service, salvation, and sacrifice.

CONSIDER

- Identifying a local cause or charity near you and finding a way to contribute, whether as a volunteer or in some other way, in order to serve those who are in financial need.
- Coming up with an acronym, like WWJD (What would Jesus do?), that you can remember whenever you encounter a difficult situation in which you need to help someone. Use this acronym to make a wallpaper/background for your phone that can help you remember to help others.
- Challenging yourself to visit the imprisoned, volunteer to help at an orphanage, or care for someone who is sick next Sabbath afternoon. Try doing this each week for the next month.
- Identifying someone in your life who is in spiritual need and spending time with them. Together you can pray and sing a favorite Christian song.
- Putting together a simple care package of food, books, or other useful items and giving them to a family or friend who may be financially struggling. Small acts of kindness count the most. You may be an answer to a prayer!

CONNECT

Deuteronomy 15:7, 8; Luke 14:12–14; Acts 20:35.

Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 201, 202.

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