

Jesus, *the* Master Teacher



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 8:22–25, 4:31–37, 6:20–49, 8:19–21, 10:25–37, Deut. 6:5.*

Memory Text: “And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority” (*Luke 4:32, NKJV*).

When Christ came to the earth, humanity seemed to be fast reaching its lowest point. The very foundations of society were undermined. Life had become false and artificial. . . . Disgusted with fable and falsehood, seeking to drown thought, men turned to infidelity and materialism. Leaving eternity out of their reckoning, they lived for the present.

“As they ceased to recognize the Divine, they ceased to regard the human. Truth, honor, integrity, confidence, compassion, were departing from the earth. Relentless greed and absorbing ambition gave birth to universal distrust. The idea of duty, of the obligation of strength to weakness, of human dignity and human rights, was cast aside as a dream or a fable. The common people were regarded as beasts of burden or as the tools and the steppingstones for ambition. Wealth and power, ease and self-indulgence, were sought as the highest good. Physical degeneracy, mental stupor, spiritual death, characterized the age.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 74, 75.

Against such a background we can better understand why Jesus taught the things that He did.

* *Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 30.*

The Authority of Jesus

As a physician and scholar, Luke was acquainted with the role of authority. He was familiar with the authority of philosophy in Greek scholarship and education. He knew the authority of the Roman law in civil matters and government function. As Paul’s traveling companion he knew the ecclesiastic authority that the apostle commanded with the churches he founded. Thus, Luke understood that authority is at the core of a person’s position, an institution’s role, a state’s function, and a teacher’s relationship to his or her followers. Having rubbed shoulders with all kinds of authority at all levels of power, Luke shared with his readers that there was something matchless about Jesus and His authority. Born in a carpenter’s home, brought up for 30 years in the little Galilean town of Nazareth, known for nothing great by worldly standards, Jesus confronted everyone—Roman rulers, Jewish scholars, rabbis, ordinary people, secular and religious powers—with His teaching and ministry. His fellow townspeople “marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (*Luke 4:22, NKJV*). He once brought hope to a widow in Nain by raising her dead son to life (*Luke 7:11–17*). The entire town went into a shiver of fear and exclaimed: “‘God has visited His people’” (*vs. 16, NKJV*). The authority of Jesus over life and death electrified not just Nain but “Judea and all the surrounding region” (*vss. 16, 17, NKJV*).

Read *Luke 8:22–25, 4:31–37, 5:24–26, 7:49, 12:8*. What do these texts reveal about the kind of authority that Jesus wielded?

Luke took time to record, not only for his friend Theophilus but also for generations to come, that Jesus, through His ministry, had established the uniqueness of His authority. As God in the flesh, He indeed had authority as no one else ever did.

Lots of people do things in the name of God, which would then of course give their actions a lot of authority. How can we be sure that when we say, “God led me to do this,” He really did? Discuss answers in class on Sabbath.

Christ's Greatest Sermon

The Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5–7*) is often hailed in literature as “the essence of Christianity.” Luke provides selections of the sermon in Luke 6:20–49 and elsewhere. Because Luke placed the sermon immediately after the “official” choosing of the disciples (*Luke 6:13*), some scholars have called it the “Ordination Charge to the Twelve.”

As presented in Luke 6:20–49, the sermon begins with four blessings and four woes and outlines other essential characteristics of the Christian way.

Study the following sections of Luke 6:20–49 and ask yourself how closely your life embraces the principles expressed here.

1. The Christian blessedness (*Luke 6:20–22*). How can poverty, hunger, weeping, and being hated lead to blessedness?

2. The Christian's reason for rejoicing in the midst of rejection (*Luke 6:22, 23*).

3. Woes to guard against (*Luke 6:24–26*). Review each of the four woes. Why should a Christian guard against these?

4. The Christian imperative (*Luke 6:27–31*). No command of Jesus is more debated and is considered more difficult to keep than the golden rule of love. The Christian ethic is fundamentally positive, not negative. It does not consist of what not to do but what to do. Instead of saying “Don’t hate” your enemy, it insists, “Love your enemy.” Instead of the law of reciprocity (“tooth for a tooth”), the golden rule demands the ethic of pure goodness (“turn the other cheek also”). Mahatma Gandhi developed out of the golden rule an entire political philosophy of resisting evil through good and eventually used this principle to win independence for India from British colonialism. Likewise, Martin Luther King Jr. employed the ethic of the golden rule to break the evil of segregation in the United States. Where love reigns, blessedness ascends the throne.

5. The Christian way (*Luke 6:37–42*). Note Christ's insistence on forgiveness, liberal giving, exemplary living, and tolerance.

6. The Christian fruit-bearing (*Luke 6:43–45*).

7. The Christian builder (*Luke 6:48, 49*).

A New Family

Great teachers before and since Jesus have taught about unity and love, but usually it is about love within the parameters of a single group; a family defined by the exclusivity of caste, color, language, tribe, or religion. But Jesus broke down the barriers that divide humans and ushered in a new family, one that made no distinction between the usual things that divide people. Under the banner of *agape* love—unmerited, nonexclusive, universal, and sacrificial—Christ created a new family. This family reflects the original, universal, and ideal concept enshrined in the Genesis creation, which attests that every human being is created in the image of God (*Gen. 1:26, 27*) and, therefore, equal before Him.

Read Luke 8:19–21. Without in any way minimizing the ties and obligations that bind parents and children, brothers and sisters within a family, Jesus looked beyond flesh and blood and placed both of them at the altar of God as members of the “whole family in heaven and earth” (*Eph. 3:15, NKJV*). The family of Christian discipleship ought to be no less close and binding than the ties of having common parents. To Jesus the true test of “family” is not blood relationships but doing the will of God.

What do the following texts teach about the walls that Christ tore down in regard to the distinctions that so often divide humans (and often with bad results too)?

Luke 5:27–32 _____

Luke 7:1–10 _____

Luke 14:15–24 _____

Luke 17:11–19 _____

The mission and the ministry of Jesus, His forgiving heart and embracing grace, did not exclude anyone but included all who would accept His call. His everlasting love brought Him in touch with the entire spectrum of society.

What are ways that, as a church, we can better follow this crucial principle?

Love Defined: The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Part 1

Of the four Gospels, only Luke records the parables of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25–37*). The first one illustrates the vertical dimension of love, the extraordinary love of the Father toward sinners; the second one shows us the horizontal dimension—the kind of love that should characterize human life, refusing to acknowledge any barrier between humans but living instead within Jesus’ definition of a “neighbor”: that all human beings are children of God and deserve to be loved and treated equally.

Read Luke 10:25–28 and reflect on the two central questions raised. How is each question related to the main concerns of Christian faith and life?

1. “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (vs. 25, *NKJV*).

Note that the lawyer sought for a way to inherit eternal life. To be saved from sin and to enter into God’s kingdom is indeed the noblest of all aspirations one can have, but the lawyer, like so many, had grown up with the false notion that eternal life is something one can earn by good works. Evidently he had no knowledge that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Rom. 6:23, NKJV*).

2. “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” (vs. 26, *NKJV*).

During the time of Jesus, it was the custom of prominent Jews, such as this lawyer, to wear a phylactery on the wrist. It was a little leather pouch in which were written some great portions of the torah, including the one that would answer Jesus’ question. Jesus directed the lawyer to what was written in Deuteronomy (*Deut. 6:5*) and Leviticus (*Lev. 19:18*)—the very thing that he might have been carrying in his phylactery. He had on his wrist, but not in his heart, the answer to His question. Jesus directed the lawyer to a great truth: eternal life is not a matter of keeping rules but calls for loving God absolutely and unreservedly and likewise all God’s creation—“the neighbor,” to be precise. However, either out of ignorance or out of arrogance, the lawyer pursued the dialogue with another query: “Who is my neighbor?”

What outward evidence reveals that you have truly been saved by grace? That is, what is it about your life that shows you are justified by faith?

Love Defined: The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Part 2

“But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (*Luke 10:29, NKJV*).

An expert in the Jewish law, the lawyer must have known the answer to the question. Leviticus 19:18, where the second great commandment is spelled out, defines “neighbors” as “children of your people” (*NKJV*). Hence, instead of providing an immediate answer to the lawyer’s question or getting into a theological dispute with him and those observing the episode, Jesus lifts the lawyer and His audience to a higher plane.

Read *Luke 10:30–37*. What are the key points to this story, and what do they reveal about how we are to treat others?

Notice that Jesus said that “a certain man” (*vs. 30*) fell among thieves. Why did Jesus not identify the man’s race or status? Given the whole purpose of the story, why did it matter?

The priest and the Levite saw the wounded man but passed him by. Whatever their reasons for not helping, for us the questions are: what is true religion, and how should it be expressed (*Deut. 10:12, 13; Mic. 6:8; James 1:27*)?

Hatred and animosity marked the relationship between Jews and Samaritans, and by the time of Jesus the enmity between the two had only worsened (*Luke 9:51–54, John 4:9*). Hence, by making a Samaritan the “hero” of the story, Jesus brought home His point, in this case to the Jews, even stronger than it otherwise might have been.

Jesus described the Samaritan’s ministry in great detail: he took pity, he went to him, bandaged his wounds, poured oil and wine, carried him to an inn, paid in advance for his stay, and promised to care for any balance on his way back. All these parts of the Samaritan’s ministry together define the limitlessness of true love. The fact, too, that he did all these for a man who was possibly a Jew reveals that true love knows no frontier.

The priest and the Levite asked themselves the question: *What would happen to us if we stopped and helped this man?* The Samaritan asked: *What would happen to this man if I didn’t help him?* What is the difference between the two?

Further Study: “In His life and lessons, Christ has given a perfect exemplification of the unselfish ministry which has its origin in God. God does not live for Himself. By creating the world, and by upholding all things, He is constantly ministering for others. ‘He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.’ Matthew 5:45. This ideal of ministry God has committed to His Son. Jesus was given to stand at the head of humanity, that by His example He might teach what it means to minister. His whole life was under a law of service. He served all, ministered to all. Thus He lived the law of God, and by His example showed how we are to obey it.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 649.

The parable of the good Samaritan is not an “imaginary scene, but an actual occurrence, which was known to be exactly as represented. The priest and the Levite who had passed by on the other side were in the company that listened to Christ’s words.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 499.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Go over the important question asked at the end of Sunday’s study. Who hasn’t heard people say that they did whatever they did because God told them to? What are ways that God does talk to us? At the same time, what are the dangers involved in invoking the authority of God in order to justify our deeds?
- 2 Go back over the “four woes” in Luke 6:24–26. How are we to understand what Jesus is saying there? What is He really warning us to be careful of in this life?
- 3 Think about the whole question of authority. What is authority? What are different kinds of authority? What kinds of authority trump other kinds? How should we relate to different kinds of authority in our life? What happens when the authorities over us clash?

Searching for Peace: Part 1

TAN, CHINA

Tan thought religion was just superstition, yet somehow he still felt a spiritual longing. One day he set out on a pilgrimage in search of peace.

He journeyed to a distant city, where he met a Christian pastor who introduced him to the Bible. For several days, the two studied together, and Tan felt drawn to the God of the Bible. But he decided to search further before committing himself. Two months later, Tan returned to the pastor, wanting to learn more. They resumed their Bible studies. This time, Tan decided to become a Christian.

Sometime later, Tan decided to return to his home village to share the gospel with his family and friends.

When he arrived at his village, he began sharing his faith, but the people were not eager to listen. Some rejected his message; others made fun of him. Tan fasted and prayed. “God, is there no one here who will listen?” Tan found no one—except a local troublemaker named Tao Yeh.

Tao belonged to a gang that terrorized the town. Four members of the gang were jailed, and another was killed during some of their more violent activities. Although Tao had a reputation as a hardened gambler, fighter, and drinker, Tan talked with him about his spiritual condition and offered to pray with him. But Tao laughed and said that if he ever needed God, he would let Tan know.

No one will listen to me, Tan thought. He decided to leave town and find some believers with whom he could study. As he started out, Tao saw him and fell into step beside him. As the two walked down the road, Tan felt impressed to pray for Tao. Tao tried to brush aside Tan’s request to pray, but finally he agreed. They stopped along the road, and Tan prayed.

Before they parted, Tan gave Tao a small Bible, hoping he would read it. Then they said Goodbye. Tan wondered whether he would ever see Tao again or whether he would hear that Tao had died in some fight.

Tan set off for a large city where he had heard there was a group of active Christians. When he arrived in the city, he was warned that he should return to his home province or risk being arrested. Although he bought a train ticket home, Tan decided to remain and try to find the Christians he had heard about.

He got a map and began searching. He found a Seventh-day Adventist church and met Pastor Xo [*shoh*] and several young people who were studying to become lay church leaders. Tan was delighted when Pastor Xo invited him to stay and study the Bible.

To be continued in next week’s Inside Story.

Adapted from a story by Charlotte Ishkanian.