

# Jesus Teaches His Disciples

*“He went up into a mountain: and when he was set [down], his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them.”*  
—Matthew 5:1,2

**SOON AFTER JESUS BE-**gan his earthly ministry and selected his disciples, he invited them to follow him. “He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matt. 4:19) Our featured scripture provides the background for his

first lessons after being baptized by John at the river Jordan. Having separated himself from the multitudes, he thus gathered his disciples together to teach them valuable lessons that would assist them in their new walk in Christ Jesus.

## **MARKS OF CHARACTER**

Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3) The characteristic of being ‘poor’ in the spirit of self marks those Christians who see weakness in their own character and lives, and realize a much needed dependency upon our loving Heavenly Father and his beloved Son, our Lord and Savior. They are not of the proud,

haughty, or high-minded class among the fallen human creation. God can thus deal with those who possess a low, humble esteem of themselves. "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."—Matt. 23:12

Our Lord continues, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." (chap. 5:4) To 'mourn' means to grieve, and those endowed with this attitude of heart realize the present condition of the sin-sick human family and long for Christ's future kingdom of righteousness. Under the administration of that glorious kingdom, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Rev. 21:4

Those who are willingly submissive to the will of God are next identified by Jesus. He taught, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5) They are not among the arrogant or self-assertive of mankind, but are ready to wait upon the Lord and forbear even under injury or other obstacles. "Let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."—I Pet. 3:4

## **SEEKING RIGHTEOUSNESS**

In the Master's next lesson, he said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6) To 'hunger and thirst' suggests a very strong and passionate desire to know and serve our loving Heavenly Father and to learn the ways of Truth and righteousness. To be righteous, suggests giving diligence when striving after those things that are right and good. The thought behind the expression 'shall be filled'

points to the child of God who will be abundantly satisfied with whatever God provides for his people.

The psalmist addressed this special mark of character, when he wrote, “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.”—Ps. 15:1-3

## **THE MERCIFUL**

What a wonderful trait of Christian character is mercy. Jesus brought this to his disciples’ attention, when he told them and us, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. 5:7) We must learn to be ‘merciful’ even as God is merciful. In proportion to our willingness to be merciful toward others, will God be merciful to us.

David wrote, “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 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.”—Ps. 103:8-14

Jesus addressed the matter of being merciful in a very meaningful parable that he taught on another occasion. He said, “Therefore is the kingdom of

heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”—Matt. 18:23-27

The parable speaks of a king who was taking account of his servants. This is directed to those who have a special relationship with their Lord and are members of the household of faith during the present Gospel Age. The sum of money owed is very large, suggesting the great debt that the true child of God owes his Heavenly father by the provision of grace and forgiveness of sin—a special gift through Jesus. The king’s servants could never pay the debt without the mercy of God on their behalf.

Jesus then focused his lesson on the servant’s lack of mercy even toward others who were closely associated with him. “The same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.” (vss. 28-30) The sum of money owed to the servant by his ‘fellowservant’ was paltry in comparison to what he had in turn owed to his master. This lesson teaches

the importance of remembering our own weaknesses according to the flesh, and our readiness to be especially sympathetic toward our fellow servants according to the common faith which we share.

The conclusion of Jesus' parable should be sufficiently clear to all who are striving to know and serve our loving Heavenly Father during the present Gospel Age calling in Christ Jesus. We read, "When his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."—vss. 31-35

## **HEART CONDITION**

Continuing with Jesus' lessons to his disciples, he next said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8) To have a pure heart is a very necessary mark of the Lord's true people. We must be cleansed in will and spirit, and, as far as possible, in our words and thoughts. The Apostle Paul wrote to his beloved Timothy and encouraged him to greater faithfulness. He said, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling."—I Tim 1:5,6

The consecrated child of God should be identified as a person of peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (Matt. 5:9) Peacemaking starts within the very heart of the individual. It means that one will not stir up strife, cause trouble or dissention, because these are works of the flesh. The Apostle James says, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."—James 3:13-18

## **SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS**

When ending the list of beatitudes, Jesus speaks of suffering at the hands of those who would oppose the true followers of Christ. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."—Matt. 5:10-12

Jesus cautioned his followers and warned them about the reality of suffering, when he said, "Behold,

I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”—chap. 10:16-20

“The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.”—vss. 21-24

In concluding his wonderful lessons to his disciples, Jesus spoke these most treasured words. “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”—Matt. 5:13,14

Salt helps to preserve and purify in the midst of a sin-sick and polluted society. Light comes from God’s Word that shines in the hearts of his people and illuminates their pathway. Let us strive with diligence to be light bearers in a very dark world.■