

Bible Characters for Your Weekly Bible Study

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For Thanksgiving 2011

White, James Terry, “**A Thanksgiving Greeting**,” POEM, Journal, Vol. 11 (January 1894), p. 457.

WITHIN our hearts what happy memories dwell
To-day, and a new love in us compel!
 The by-gone years return, with only their
 Remembered tenderness, and, unaware
Of age and change, the old-time love re-tell.

But while we feast, we cannot quite dispel
Regret for lost ones whom we love so well.
Yet why thus grieve? There is no vacant chair
 Within our hearts.

Oh! friends, does not this constant love foretell
A *future greeting* for each last *farewell*?
 Even *to-day* we tread the Heavenly stair,
 And *now* their immortality we share,
If our beloved ones *thus ever dwell*
 Within our hearts.

GOLDEN TEXT: A hymn of thanksgiving (Ps 95: 1 [to !], 2)

RELATED SCRIPTURE: Ps 81; 89: 26; 94: 22; Heb 4: 7

TIME LINE AND AUTHOR: “The Mishnah [the first major written redaction of the Jewish oral traditions called the ‘Oral Torah’] regarded the psalm as a New Year psalm.” (Psalms, OT Library), written c. 1000 BC.

“The first part [vv.1,2]...falls into two subsections each of which opens with a liturgical call. The call that is made upon the congregation in the hymn to ‘come before the face of God’ with a testimony and songs of praise reflects the mood of joyful surrender to God which is meant to be offered to him when he appears in the sanctuary to bring salvation to his people.” (Psalms, OT Library)

Hixon, Helen, “**In every thing give thanks**,” Sentinel, Vol. 27 (25 April 1025), p. 666.

--A young boy, who had attended a Wednesday evening testimony meeting in a Christian Science church for the first time, commented to a friend, “Wasn’t it strange that every one who spoke kept saying, ‘I’m so grateful’?”

--Thanksgiving is not reserved for any special season; but every day should be a thanksgiving day.

• In whatever circumstance we may seem to be, whatever clouds of disease, lack, sorrow, or unhappiness may seem to try to obscure our path, we may find many things for which to be grateful. And, above all, we may be grateful for knowing that “*the Lord God omnipotent reigneth;*” that His

creation is the only reality; that all good is ours now, since man is the reflection of the Most High; and that His promises endure “*unto all generations.*”

--The Bible abounds in admonitions to thankfulness. Prophet and Psalmist continually urged the people to rejoice, to “*come before his presence with thanksgiving,*” to lift up their voices in praise to God as the Giver of all good. Our Master is our great example in all things.

SECTION II: True greatness is to humble oneself as “a little child” (Matt 18: 2-4)

RELATED SCRIPTURE: Mark 9: 35,36; 10: 15; I John 3: 11-18

TIME LINE: The Year of Opposition (Jesus’ 3rd year of ministry)

“a little child”

Jesus was in Peter’s house so this could have been one of Peter’s children. “Tradition, however, says that it was Ignatius, the martyr, afterwards bishop of Antioch [**southwestern Turkey**].” (Dummelow Commentary)

“The Sermon on Community Relations begins with the disciples’ question about the greatness in the kingdom of heaven, a question found frequently in Matthew (and in a different context in Mark 9:33,34).” (Eerdmans Commentary) “The disciples were disputing their rank and precedence in the Kingdom. Jesus denies that they are in it at all. They have turned their backs on it altogether. Only by reversing their course and embracing humility, can they hope even to enter it.” (Dummelow Commentary)

“Matthew rewrites Mark 9: 35-36 by having Jesus make the child an object lesson of the saying Matthew has rewritten [*And Jesus called a little child*, v.2] (or, more likely, has an older form of) from Mark 10: 15.” (People’s NT Commentary)

To “*become as little children*” [v.3] is how Jesus characterized conversion.” (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

Jesus set a little child before them, solemnly assuring them, that unless they were converted and made like little children, they could not enter the kingdom. Children, when very young, do not desire authority, do not regard outward distinctions, are free from malice, are teachable, and willingly dependent on their parents. “A little child has no pride [v.4], knows nothing of worldly rank or position, and is simple, teachable, and loving.” (Dummelow Commentary) This makes the child a proper emblem of the humble mind of a true Christian. “In using such an object lesson, Jesus showed [his] greatness as a teacher.” (Ibid)

Batchelor, Maud Alice, “**Jesus Called a Little Child**,” POEM, Sentinel, Vol. 54 (10 May 1952), p. 796.

And Jesus called a little child
And took him on his knee,
Saw him innocent and mild,
Glad with humility.

O ye arrogant and proud,
The truth shall make you free.
O ye sick and weeping crowd,
Love’s healing ye shall see.

Jesus said,
Like a little child must be
All those who come to me.

Eddy, Rev. Mary B.G. (Discoverer, Founder, and Pastor), “**Christian Science,**” *Journal*, Vol. 3 (November 1885), p. 139.

--What is the principle and rule of Christian Science?

- Infinite query, wonder in heaven and upon earth!
---Who shall say?

- The immaculate Son of the Blessed, God who is Love: listen, and he illustrates the rule. "*Jesus called a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*"

---Harmony is heaven.

- Science brings out harmony, but this harmony is not understood unless it produces a growing affection for all good, and disaffection for evil, all hypocrisy, evil-speaking, lust, envy, hate.

---Where these exist, Christian Science has no sure foothold; they obscure its divine element, and extinguish it.

- Even the life of Jesus was belittled and belied by individuals possessing these defacing deformities. Only the devout Marys, and such as lived according to him, understood the strong character of him who taught by the wayside, in humble homes, to itching ears, and to dull disciples, the words of Life.

SECTION III: The healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt 15: 21-31 *Jesus*)

PARALLEL GOSPEL: Mark 7: 25-30

TIME LINE: The Year of Opposition and Development (Jesus' 3rd year of ministry), summer 29 AD in the region of Tyre and Sidon; then to Galilee.

“This event "followed the death of John the Baptist and further rejection by the religious leadership of Israel. Thus, Jesus actually left the country and went into parts of Tyre and Sidon [v.21] leaving Herod's jurisdiction to retire to Phoenicia for a time of seclusion which was interrupted by the woman of Canaan." (King James Bible Commentary)

“How did [the woman] know that Jesus was descended from David [*thou son of David*, v.22]?....Probably because the fame of Jesus, and the popular title by which [he] was known, had spread far beyond the confines of Galilee.” (Dummelow Commentary)

His first response was silence [*he answered her not a word*, v.23], which would have been considered the proper response according to Jewish custom and not rude at all.

"By children [vv.26-28] the Lord means Jews, and by dogs, Gentiles. Our Lord's attitude was intended to test the woman's faith, which was rewarded by a miraculous healing." (King James Bible Commentary) "The lost sheep of the house of Israel must be fed before the 'little dogs.'" (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

"This miracle is interesting as one of the rare cases in which the ministrations of Jesus were extended to a pure heathen." (Dummelow Commentary)

“He actually travels north from Tyre to Sidon [*unto the Sea of Galilee*, v.29] and then cuts a wide path around the eastern shore of Galilee to Decapolis (Mark 7:31), a primarily Gentile region” to heal the multitudes. (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

"a woman of Canaan"/The Syrophœnician Woman

“In contrast to the tradition-rooted opposition of the Jerusalemites stands the faithful persistence of a Canaanite woman, the only person in the Gospel to best Jesus in a verbal contest (15:22-28). Her great faith compels Jesus for a moment to loosen his focus on the people of Israel, so that her daughter can be healed. Again, faith crosses boundaries, even Jesus’ boundaries, and leads to the manifestation of God’s liberating power..” (Theological Bible Commentary)

“...Mark calls her ‘a Greek, a Syrophœnician by race’; i.e. she spoke Greek, but belonged by race to those Syrians who dwelt in Phœnicia. The Phœnicians were of Canaanite descent.” (Dummelow Commentary) “There is no contradiction here because the term Greek was commonly used to distinguish Gentiles from Jews.” (All the Women of the Bible)

"Like Mark, Matthew omits the woman's name; rather than an indication of sexism, anonymity is characteristic of those for whom Jesus performs mighty works." (Women in Scripture)

"Although she is a pagan from a faraway place and probably has been fully absorbed by the care of her child, she has "heard about" Jesus." (Women in the New Testament) She asked Jesus to heal her daughter who was “vexed with the devil.” The Jews had been bidden to exterminate her nation, and was therefore more hateful than an ordinary heathen. However, "this woman is humble. She is willing to be called a dog, and to acknowledge the Jews as masters." (Dummelow) Jesus granted her request.

"her daughter"

"Unnamed, like most beneficiaries of Jesus' miracles, the daughter is 'severely possessed' (15:22; contrast Mark 7:25's 'unclean spirit'; Matthew avoids implications of impurity). Like the ‘ruler’s’ daughter (9:18-26) and epileptic boy (17:14-20), she requires parental intercession; a Gentile, like the centurion’s son or servant (8:5-13)...” (Women in Scripture) “She was healed instantaneously by Jesus, though [he] did not even see her.” (All of the Women in the Bible)

Bucher, Herbert, "**Present or Absent Treatment**," *Sentinel*, Vol. 55 (11 July 1953), p. 1202.

--A practitioner of Christian Science was asked by a friend newly interested in Science, "Which is more efficacious, present or absent treatment? The friend was assured that Christian Scientists know from experience that both are equally effective.

--In "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" Mary Baker Eddy says (p.179), "*Science can heal the sick, who are absent from their healers, as well as those present, since space is no obstacle to Mind.*" It must be clear then, that the distinction made by Christian Scientists between what they term absent and present treatments simply indicates either the absence or the presence of the patient, not of the treatment itself; nor does it indicate the place from which it is given.

--It is worthy of note that nowhere in her writings does our revered Leader use the term absent treatment or present treatment. In the true scientific sense, treatment is always present, for the healing Christ is everywhere and heals irrespective of the mortal belief in place, space, or time.

There is no absence of Mind or of Mind-power. A Christian Science treatment declares the eternal, spiritual perfectness of man in the image and likeness of God.

--Truth is instantaneous. Love dissolves distance.

“**Taking a Good Look**,” Monitor (5 March 1990), p. 17.

--Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, at one point speaks about taking up ontology, “*the science of real being.*” “*We must look deep into realism,*” she says, “*instead of accepting only the outward sense of things.*” [S&H 129]

--Jesus’ disciples wanted to turn away a woman whose daughter was “*grievously*” ill.

- But she persisted in asking Jesus for mercy, and he gave it, saying “*O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*” [Matt 15:28]

---Her daughter was healed.

--We can become ontologists, no longer simply accepting the material, outward sense of things.

- Man is the image of God, and to understand something of what this means is to enter into a calling—to be a servant of God. This service will change things and eventually give worth and purpose to our lives.

Reynolds, Georgia H., “**Faith and Healing**,” Journal, Vol. 49 (October 1931), p. 380.

--The faith which Christ Jesus demonstrated with boundless ability and proficiency was born of God, to whom he gave complete and undivided allegiance.

- The Nazarene was versed in the teachings of the Scriptures.

---The consecrated lives of the patriarchs and prophets, whose main objective was to walk with God, were undoubtedly a source of inspiration to him from earliest childhood and throughout his earthly career.

--The Master quickly discerned faith in those with whom he came in contact, and commended it as essential to the healing of the individual.

- When the woman of Canaan besought him to heal her afflicted daughter, her words of wisdom and meekness brought forth the response, “*Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*”

Bunting, Ellen Wiles, “**And the Multitudes Glorified God**,” Sentinel, Vol. 48 (13 April 1946), p. 623.

--When Jesus spoke the word and healed...[the multitudes] glorified God!

- What a beautiful tribute to Jesus’ spirituality, to his selfless love! No pride, no greed for personal power or dominion, governed his actions. He did God’s work aright, and he showed mankind how to follow his example.

---To do God’s work aright, all sense of personal pride or personal glory must be absent.

In deep humility and love we work for God. In quiet places, in patient obedience, we seek Him out, and learn how to show forth His praise so that the multitudes will glorify God.

--How sorely needed is the quality of selfless service which Jesus rendered without surcease throughout his entire ministry!

--Only an omnipotent and omnipresent God could so revivify and revitalize one’s human experience.

SECTION IV: The Privileges of Sonship: God bestows His love on man—His child (I John 3: 1-3)

RELATED SCRIPTURE: Eph 1: 3-6

TIME LINE AND AUTHOR: Written by John from Ephesus to the Churches of Asia Minor, 90-95 AD.

"The related themes of the love of God and being children of God are taken up and expanded upon in 3:1-3. Although the readers have already been addressed as children, now for the first time John considers what it may mean to be children of God." (Interpretation series, I John)

“This outburst of wonder [*what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us*, v.1] introduces the third feature of the believer’s hope in 2:28—3:3. The believer’s hope is strengthened by the fact that God’s love initiated His salvation (Eph 1: 3-6).” (MacArthur Bible Commentary)

“The uncertainty implied by our not knowing what we shall be (v.2) is more than offset by the assurance that we are already (‘now’) God’s children.” (Interpretation series, I John)

Mahone, Lydia Chin, "Sons of God," Sentinel, Vol. 59 (20 July 1957), p. 1250.

--The man of God's creating is spiritual. He cannot be defined as of material or mortal origin. Sometimes one who does not understand the real, incorporeal nature of man may argue that there are those who cannot be looked upon as the sons of God. He may say, "I just cannot see how I am going to love this individual; he seems to have so far to go before he demonstrates his divine sonship."

--To accept such an argument is to believe that in addition to the spiritual there is another creation—a material creation. John said (I John 3:2,3): "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*"

--Every time a student of Christian Science prayerfully studies the Bible Lesson, outlined in the *Christian Science Quarterly*, reads the Christian Science periodicals, or attends a lecture on Christian Science, he is aiding in purifying his thinking so that he can show forth more of this sonship with God to which John referred.

--Mrs. Eddy makes this very clear to us in this passage from “The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany” (p. 279): “*God is Father, infinite, and this great truth, when understood in its divine metaphysics, will establish the brotherhood of man, end wars, and demonstrate ‘on earth peace, good will toward men.’*”

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

The Bibliography is provided only in the first Sunday’s Lesson each month.

*The weekly Bible Lessons are made up of selections from the King James Version of the Bible and the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science.

The Golden Text is from the *Contemporary English Version* (CEV).