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The Pyramid of the Sun

The Great Parable Series

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BELOVED CENTURION:

The principles set forth in this lesson are not new but they bear repeating for they can be more far-reaching in their effect on our lives and the lives of others than any other force which we will ever encounter as we go on through life.

The state of our relations to others, which we call human relations, is the subject closest to my heart, because it is my firm belief and conviction that happiness can only come to us in one way and that is through our attitude toward others.

The sorrows of others should be our sorrows, and their joys our joys; and until we learn that truth, and put it into practice in our lives, we shall never be at peace with ourselves. In the smallest things, we should think of others and be ready to help. I count the day lost if I do not feel in my heart that in some way, small or large, I have contributed something to someone who needs help, and I would like for every member of the Mayan Order to make this a dedicated policy in their lives - to help someone each day. Your life will be richer for it.

As members of the Mayan Order, I know that many of you know this to be true, and you have already put this plan to work in your own lives, thereby deriving great benefit from the good it has brought you. You have found harmony with others, where before you were not able to live harmoniously. Many members have even found that their health is greatly improved through bringing about a change in their human relations.

Recently, your instructor had an experience with an acquaintance. That acquaintance was having some trouble and I was very concerned over the misfortune and did what I could to help. My sympathy was very deep and I am sure that sympathy must have transferred itself to this acquaintance because later on she told me she so deeply appreciated it that it made her feel for me a very strong friendship, where before had been only an acquaintanceship, and that it was because she could feel within her being the depth of my sincerity in her trouble.

I give you this example, Beloved Centurion, because it all comes back to the one great quality in living which supersedes every other condition - that is love, our love of God, our love of our fellow man, and our complete unselfishness as we manifest that love. It is the greatest power for good on earth.

Love is one of the hardest lessons in Christianity, and because of that we should try most diligently to learn it.

Please meditate on the following thoughtfully, remembering that love is the greatest thing God can give us, for He is Love.

HUMAN RELATIONS. Luke 10; 25-37.

THREE NEIGHBORS

PLEASE read the parable of the good Samaritan before beginning this lesson, and again after it is finished. There is always something new in such a story. It begins with a lawyer's question as to how to inherit eternal life. The Master countered with another question, in answer to which the lawyer quoted the ancient commandment of Moses, adding to it a provision Jesus approved as making it a commandment on which hung all the law and the prophets.

But the lawyer was not yet satisfied. A lawyer develops a literal type of mind. In law one must go by the book, and since law is technical a lawyer's viewpoint becomes the same. This makes it harder for him to understand spiritual principles, so it was not unnatural that this lawyer should want the matter made wholly clear. Who is one's neighbor? he asked. The Master's reply was this parable.

The very setting of the story is impressive. A certain man was on his way from Jerusalem, where the tribes of Israel had long before established their political and religious capital, down the sloping road ever afterward made famous by this story, to Jericho where Joshua's host had seen the walls of the city fall at a trumpet blast on the seventh day. Important things had happened on that road, and other important ones were yet to happen there.

The Master chose that day to make the Jericho road famous forever by making it the appropriate setting for one of the world's greatest problem stories, a drama in one act, the story of the good Samaritan.

That story is now commended to you as the great parable of human relations. It sets forth the principles by which, sooner or later, the peoples, nations, and races of the earth will have to learn to live in the same world and cooperate in making it a good home for all.

More and more we must think of the planet as a neighborhood. Faster means of transportation and communication have shrunk its size to that of a small state in which no one lives very far away from anyone else. The people of the whole planet are as conscious of each other's presence as the neighbors in a community once were. That forces us into the relationship of neighbors, and makes it necessary for us to be real ones if we are to get along happily and successfully. It is important, then, to find out what a neighbor really is. Knowing this, and carrying it into action, is the secret of good human relations.

We all travel the Jericho Road. There we are certain to meet with, or overtake, or come upon, those who need a friend. Sooner or later we are likely to need a friend ourselves. All this indicates the need for real neighbors. This is the story of two who failed to meet the requirement, and one who succeeded in doing so.

NEARNESS IS NOT THE TEST

WE are now to observe how each of these three men reacted to the need of a fellow human being. The first to come up to the helpless man lying on the road was a priest. One would have thought that of all people he would be most certain to stop and see what he could do. The victim was a person in need, the traveler was a representative of God, and they were fellow countrymen. But the priest was in a hurry, or had something on his mind, or feared he might soil his clothes, or something else urged him past. Anyway he looked the other way and passed on.

The helpless victim waited, and in time another traveler appeared. This time it was a Levite, another fellow countryman, with all the background of the law and prophets behind him. The Levite was not necessarily a priest, but the members of his tribe from the time of Moses had been closely associated with religion and worship. He had heard more about the ways of God and had more to do with them than most, but he too found reasons for looking the other way and passing on.

Both these men were connected with the victim by blood ties and by common loyalties and interests. By the tests of space and family they were neighbors, - but neither of them saw fit to act like it that day.

After awhile, another traveler appeared - a Samaritan, a stranger, one of a people looked down on by the Hebrews, possibly a man who had himself at some time suffered indignities at their hands. But this did not matter now. This was a case of human need, and that was all that was important. The man lying in the road was not merely a Jew. He was a human being with a claim for help on any other human being. That was all that mattered just then. The details of the complete and selfless aid he gave, you will read in the parable itself.

Having completed the story of all this, the Master climaxed it with one of those masterful questions with which he was accustomed to stimulate the minds of listeners to find the answer for themselves, which they usually did. The question asked which of these three men who came by was really a neighbor to this man.

Place of residence had nothing to do with the answer, nor did blood relationship. Both the men who passed by on the other side were more closely connected with the victim in these respects than was the man who stopped and helped him. Neighborliness is a matter of spirit and attitude, and need and the response to it is what puts it to the test. In time of need anyone should be a neighbor. The priest and the Levite would have been concerned about what custom and tradition suggested. The Samaritan took no time for that. His concern was a man's welfare, even his life.

He too could have passed by, leaving this man lying in the road, but he could not have done so and been at peace with himself. He had the social viewpoint. He was one with mankind, who knew that loving one's neighbor is a part of loving one's self. The happiness or pain of someone else was his own joy or discomfort. He could not rest well at night without knowing that everything was

right that he could put right. That is being a neighbor. That is maintaining good human relations.

SHEEP NOT OF THIS FOLD

TO people with a narrow viewpoint of human brotherhood, Jesus once remarked that he had sheep that were of other folds, and that he must bring them also. The good Samaritan would have understood that. The priest and the Levite might not.

It is told that ten lepers once appealed to Jesus for healing. The request was granted. Then nine of the lepers walked away without a word of thanks, while one remained to express his gratitude. The Master remarked how the nine who failed to realize any obligation for the blessing they had received were his own countrymen, while the one who waited to give thanks was a Samaritan, as Jesus said, a stranger. Qualities either good or not so good may be found in any heart anywhere. Nearness of residence has nothing to do with them.

In telling the story of the Good Samaritan, why did Jesus choose one of that particular land to be the hero? He might easily have chosen a character more popular with the people, but he did not. Why? Because the situation presented too good an opportunity to remind his hearers that with God there are no despised peoples, and that the spirit of a good neighbor recognizes no dividing lines.

Though the Samaritans also were Semites, recognizing and living by the laws of Moses, the Jews held them in disdain. Jesus was showing up the prejudice which wrecked the friendship of the two peoples, which ruins neighborliness anywhere, and which could have no place in the quality of human relations necessary to the kingdom of justice, peace, and happiness. He was talking to Jews, so he made the hero a Samaritan. If he had been talking to Samaritans, he might have made the hero a Jew.

The point was and is that any dividing lines that alienate us from each other are lines we set ourselves. They are not of God's making. Children in any family differ. They have varying features, complexions, characteristics, and names, but they are all members of the household, and each is entitled to the good will and if necessary the helping hand of any or all the rest. The whole family and each individual member of it will be happier and better off if each is affectionate and considerate toward all the rest, and if each is ready to come to the aid of any other one in case of need. In a neighborhood it is the same, and the world is a neighborhood.

We set up divisions of all kinds, and some of them break human hearts. One counts another out because he belongs to a certain family, or is on another economic level, or goes to a certain church, or has a certain racial ancestry. A Jew may hate an Englishman because he is English, or an Englishman may hate a Jew because he is a Jew. A poor man may dislike a rich man because he is rich, or a rich man may scorn a poor man because he is poor. A farmer may distrust a city man because he thinks he is proud, or a city man may disdain a farmer because he thinks he is inferior. One person may count another out because he

thinks he is inferior. One person may count another out because he does not like the way he looks, or the way he dresses, or because of any of the countless hates that rise from unforgiven personal differences.

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To all this the attitude of Jesus is made clear in this parable and in other of his teachings as well. Not to be a good neighbor is not good psychology, human relations, or common sense. It makes against everything the kingdom of heaven includes or implies. It bars the progress of the human race to the realization of its deepest wish and its dearest hope.

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The kingdom ideal is to erase the words "stranger" and "outsider" from our vocabularies, and to think of the human race as one fold with one shepherd, or better yet one great family. To the goodness of our common home each must make his own contribution, and a good way to begin is to be a good neighbor.

A REMEMBERED NEIGHBORHOOD

A CERTAIN neighborhood nestled among the hills in a certain state. There have been many like it, but this one can be described from memory by one who knew it well. It was a humble place, but it had the spirit of neighborliness.

As is true of most neighborhoods, it had a few people who were well to do, many who were in moderate circumstances, and a few who were quite poor.

It had very few people in it who were not honest, earnest, industrious, and kind. All strangers and newcomers were treated with courtesy, but those who loved evil never stayed long because they did not like the atmosphere. Some who remained longer mended their ways because it made them feel more at home. When they did that they began to find themselves in step. Transgressors were treated with disarming patience, and black sheep in families were treated with a consideration which implied faith in their better selves, a faith that in most cases was finally justified.

Most of the people were religious in one way or another. The few who were not, respected the faith of those who were, and even worshipped and engaged in good works with the rest. Even the neighborhood atheist was tolerant of the believers, and was such a good neighbor that they were also tolerant of him.

The people mingled much and pleasantly, enriching their lives with church, school, and family gatherings. The aged were honored with birthday dinners to which everyone came and brought enticing food to spend the day. Old and young mingled happily in all kinds of gatherings.

Few doors were ever locked, and some never were; but no house theft had

occurred within memory. If one neighbor wanted to borrow something from another and the owner was not at home, he took it, used it, and returned it, expecting the other to do the same with him. If one came home and found something gone, he did not worry. He knew it would soon be back. When anyone was ill, the neighbors saw that he did not lack for care or any needed thing. When anyone passed away neighbors took care of everything except professional services, laying the dead to rest in the little cemetery kept up for the use of any family without cost.

If a house burned, the men got together and built a new one, furnishing it if the furnishings also had been destroyed. If a man died and left a widow and orphans unprovided for, the community saw that they got along till they could take care of themselves with credit and goods provided free or at low cost. Jobs were found for the needy and deserving, and ambitious young people were helped to go to school if they needed it. Yet there was no boasting, and nothing was done for show.

To a gradually diminishing number that neighborhood is an old memory now, but it is a precious one. It remains an example of how happy good neighbors can be, - neighbors ready in any case of need, to be good Samaritans.

STRAINED TIES

THE bonds of neighborliness are often put under strain, and learning the lesson of this parable would make these strains far fewer and less violent.

A certain community was rocked by a family feud that ran on and caused heartaches for several years. It started over the kind of foolish thing so often responsible for hatreds, a small and needless jealousy.

Two families had daughters who played the organ well. One day one of them was selected to be the organist of the little country church. The other family stiffened in resentment. The next year the other daughter was selected. Then the first family bristled in hostility. The battle was on.

The two families continued going to church, but they sat apart, avoided each others' eyes, and spoke coldly if at all. Other families took sides till the whole neighborhood was embattled. It detracted much from the peace of the community and the helpfulness of the church.

Preceding a Christmas Sunday the thought of the young minister was directed to the way in which all sorts and conditions of people meet at the feet of the Christ Child, as did the wise men and the shepherds. He had no thought of his feuding members when he decided to use it for a sermon theme. He was more surprised than anyone else when at the close of the sermon that Christmas Sunday morning one of the fathers walked to the chancel with tears streaming from his eyes and began to speak. He told how sorry and ashamed he was of his unneighborliness, how much he wanted to be a good man, and how he wished to put away all jealousy and animosity.

By that time the other father was there and they were clasping hands. The two mothers had met in an aisle and were renewing the affection they had so rashly thrown away. The young minister looked for the two daughters. They were at the organ smiling at each other. Neither of them had ever taken much part in the strife.

When the service closed, the whole congregation began shaking hands. Some were weeping, some were laughing, but all were happy. The community dear to them had become neighborly again. What small things make bad neighbors out of good ones, and vice versa!

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

LET us pause now and take another look at the great commandment itself. We all know the words well, but now let us try to see beneath the surface and between the lines of what the lawyer quoted and Jesus approved, - the formula on which the Master once said hung all the laws and the prophets.

It is one of the most magnificently worded statements ever put into language, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." The lawyer quoted it correctly. He had read his book carefully, as lawyers do; and, as lawyers do, he wanted to argue about it.

It shows us that the good life begins with love to God in answer to His love for us. It begins nowhere else, and cannot. The second step follows, but it cannot precede - love for one's fellow men.

These days there is a tendency to emphasize the human side more and more at the expense of the divine side. It is sometimes said that to love one's fellow men is enough. There are two reasons why this is not true. One is that there is no religion without the divine element. The other is that only through knowing God do we even know what love is. Love for one's neighbor can be worthy of the name only when it grows from one's love for God.

Think of the adjustment of the soul as a triangle. The perpendicular side reaches from the individual up to God. The base line reaches from the individual out to mankind. The thing to do is not to choose between them but to connect them. So we slant a hypotenuse from the one to the other, and we have the symbol of a complete and balanced relationship - the love of God and the love of man related to each other and to ourselves. Without any one of the sides you have no triangle, nothing to tie the love of God and man together in your life.

Notice how many facets our love for God is to have, one for each phase of our conscious lives. We are to love God with all our hearts, that is with all the power of our emotional lives. We are to love Him with all our souls, that is with all our spiritual perceptions. We are to love Him with all our strength, that is with all the force of our convictions and abilities. We are to love Him with all our minds, that is with all the light of our powers of understanding.

The love of God is no small matter. No wonder it is such a transforming force, once it gets under way in a human life.

The prime result of loving God is loving one's neighbor, and the measure of our love for others should be our love for ourselves. Love for God is the root, and love for one's neighbor is the fruit of the good life. That keeps character and personality in balance.

This is a formula that would set the world to rights, and take the woe and peril out of human conditions, and open the way to peace and happiness for all. Your part in the new world life may be one thing or another, but if it is based on this principle it will be a great part, and it will be a successful one. When this becomes your plan, you will have solved the problem of human relations so far as you are concerned, made it easier for others to solve them so far as they are concerned with you. The proof, of course, is in the doing, and there is nothing to prevent or delay a laboratory test.

THINGS

IN closing this lesson let us seek to find what it is that gets into the machinery of our lives and the world life, and causes friction, confusion, and breakdown. There are several things, chief among which are envy, covetousness, malice, and contention. These not only wreck the works of man's hands, but they also embitter the attitudes of his heart, so they are the things that make maladjustments and render peace and happiness impossible.

This applies to contention all the way from the smallest personal quarrel to the most destructive war. The cause of world unrest and of strife between men and nations is simple and plain enough. It grows from a single human tendency, and will disappear when that tendency is overcome. It would disappear with the general adoption of the great commandment as a formula for living. The trouble rises from exaggerated emphasis on material values, in plain terms, things.

The Apostle James, who grew up in the family with Jesus and must have understood his viewpoint better than most, has stated the problem and its solution in the fourth chapter of his epistle, the first three verses. He tells what causes the wreck of good human relations and what to do about it, in our own lives at once and in the world life as rapidly as the influence can be made strong and widespread enough.

This is a paraphrase in simple English of what he says: "What causes wars and fightings among you? Do they not come from the desires that war in you and among you? You want, and do not have. You kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain. You fight and war because you have not, yet you have not because you have not asked. You ask and you do not receive, but you do not ask in the right way, that you may consume things upon your desires."

That is the problem - envy of power, place, and possessions, and the struggle to get them away from those who have them. The removal of that lust for temporal values would make a new world in a day, and its removal would restore us

to sanity and normal living as nothing has within the memory of men. Lowell understood it when he wrote in "The Vision of Sir Launfal":

"At the devil's booth are all things sold.
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold.
For a cap and bells our lives we pay.
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking.
'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
And only God may be had for the asking."

"Shall I not be ambitious, then?" you ask. Certainly, be ambitious, but be ambitious for the right things, the worthwhile things, the lasting things, the necessary things. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all the secondary needs will be supplied.

Be assured that squaring your life with the great commandment and remembering the Master's teaching about what a neighbor is, will not be a loss to you, but a gain. As the Samaritan said to the landlord of the inn, whatever it costs will be made good.

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As we come to the finish of this lesson, let me give you a thought which was given us by Aristotle, when, on being reproached for giving to an unworthy person, he said, "I did not give to the man, but to humanity." Now let us repeat together the following prayer:

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I realize that earthly unhappiness rises from our failure to love Thee and each other as we should. Forgive us, and make us all good neighbors, beginning with me. Amen.

YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR.

The next lesson in this series is entitled THREE WAYS OF BEING LOST, and in it we take up the following subjects:

BEING LOST
LOST THROUGH CURIOSITY
OUT OF ADJUSTMENT
THE LOST COIN

OUT OF CIRCULATION
THE LOST BOY
TWO KINDS OF DISCONTENT
PRAYER

