



2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 8 Mission to the Needy

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read memory text:

- “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:40 NIV84).

In the parable these words are spoken to a certain group of people at a certain time in human history—who hears these words and when?

- “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matthew 25:31-32 NIV84).

So when are these words being spoken? At the end of time, when Jesus comes, this is the final conclusion of what determines who is saved and who is lost, who is going to heaven and who is not.

And what did Jesus say makes the difference, what is the separating factor?

Jesus lists many specific items that separates the sheep from the goats. Note what Jesus recites:

- “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’” (Matthew 25:34-36 NIV84).

What are the elements Jesus recites? Every element is an act of love, of beneficence, of giving to bless, heal, uplift, another person.

Did Jesus list any of the following as determining who is among the sheep or goats:

- You have had the right ceremonial baptism?
- You partook of the right ceremonial communion wafer?
- You engaged in ceremonial foot washing before taking the ceremonial wafer?
- You didn't wear any jewelry?
- You didn't eat flesh foods?

- You accepted the seventh day Sabbath and closed your business and started going to church on the Sabbath?
- You accepted the 28 fundamental beliefs and publicly declared me as your Savior?
- You were a member of X denominational church?

Why did Jesus list what Jesus' listed and why do so many Christians focus upon things like ceremonies, doctrinal correctness, diet, dress, or organizational membership?

Can everyone of the items I listed be done from fear and selfishness without being reborn, without love in the heart, without actually knowing God?

But do people genuinely sacrifice their time and energy to uplift others without love in their heart?

Again, Jesus reveals God's kingdom is the kingdom of truth, love, and freedom, built by God upon design laws that are functional, that life itself is constructed to operate upon. God does not run His universe like a Roman dictator, like a creature, with made up rules requiring external infliction of punishment.

But because Christianity became Romanized when it accepted Rome's version of law, almost all of Christianity teaches that God's law is imposed and God's justice is legally enforce through His use of external power to punish sinners, and salvation is legal adjustment through external application of some blood payment to an account in heaven, and that we participate through a faith-based claim, but then must start keeping the rules—so Christianity becomes a doctrinal battle of various Bible scholars to analyze the Scripture and determine what are the true legal requirements that apply, what laws are still “on the books” and what laws has God rescinded, amended, or revoked.

It is really a sad state of affairs because it keeps Christianity divided into over 41,000 different groups arguing this text and that text, this requirement and that requirement, all focused on self, and fear of missing something, of not knowing some fact, remembering some sin, doing the ceremony the wrong way, or believing the wrong doctrine.

But when Jesus comes back—there are only two groups—the sheep and the goats, and all the saved are among the sheep, and all the sheep will not be from one earthly denominational church, all the sheep when Jesus comes will not have participated in communion in the same way, will not all have been baptized in the same way, will not all dress in the same way, or have eaten the same diet, or gone to church on the same day—but they will all have been reborn to live out God's law of truth, love, in freedom in how they treat others.

Jesus said,

- The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20, 21 NIV84).

I am suggesting that Satan's true end-time deception is not about a wrong doctrine it is in getting Christians to adopt his false methods and principles, regardless of doctrinal purity.

Consider those religious leaders who crucified Christ; their primary issue wasn't that they had a different Sabbath, Bible, feast days, diet, or dress code than Jesus. What was different was their methods and principles. They were driven by fear and survival drives and, thus, accepted the methods and principles of this fallen world, which is might makes right, survival of the fittest, the strongest survive, those with power win, so right is to impose one's will through law and law enforcement and justice is to punish rule breakers—and Jesus was a rule breaker.

And what did those religious leaders do? By their methods and motives, “it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:50 NIV84). The ends justify the means.

The Jewish leaders who rejected Christ did not do so because of a disagreement over a list of doctrines. They did so because they hated His methods of truth, love, and freedom. They hated Jesus' compassion, His grace, His forgiving of sinners, His healing of the unclean, His method of Sabbath observance, and His treating women and foreigners as having equal value as human beings. They hated His shift away from behavioral and doctrinal rules to character development based upon love for God and others.

As we approach the second coming of Christ, Satan will not limit his attacks upon the saints to false doctrines. It will not simply be a question of whether one claims faith in Jesus, observes a day of worship, or practices a certain method of religious ceremony. **The final test will be about whether we maintain loyalty to Jesus by being *like Jesus* in the methods we practice in how we live and treat others!** When at the second coming the King separates the sheep (saved) from the goats (lost), He specifically tells us what makes the difference—how they treated others!

Are we the type of people who, while claiming to be followers of Jesus, would use the power of our position to intimidate, coerce, or pressure people to violate their consciences—to do what we believe is right what they believe is wrong? What if it were to “save lives”—perhaps even an entire nation? Isn't it better for one man to die for the people than for the nation to be destroyed? Isn't it better for a few healthy, symptom-free employees to be forced to take a medicine they don't want than for the business to be fined, closed, or for people to die?

Satan's final deception will be along these lines: Attacking the saints with a false allegation that threatens our reputations, livelihoods, status, or income—all designed to incite fear and our desire to survive, to protect ourselves, to protect our reputations, to lash back, to attack and destroy the enemy who is falsely accusing us. We will be tempted with anger, resentment, and a desire to take revenge, to “punish” our enemies. However, if we do that—even when the other party is in the wrong—whose methods are we practicing, whose kingdom are we advancing, whose character are we forming? Thus, Paul advised:

- Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ... If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14, 20, 21 NIV84).

And Jesus said:

- You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:43–48 NIV84).

When we are wronged, we have to decide how we will respond, whose method, law, principle will we apply to ourselves in our response to injustice? Will we apply to our own hearts and minds faith/trust in Jesus, choose to love our enemies and trust Jesus with righting the wrongs, closing the lions’ mouths, shielding us from the flames of persecution, or do we seek to use the methods of the world kill or be killed?

What happens in our hearts and minds if we retain resentment, bitterness, anger, or a desire for payback against those who have wronged us? And what happens if we justify those desires by seeking payback through human law and human justice? Have you seen the various groups fighting around the world for greater political power in order to enforce their version of what is right upon others? And what is happening to the people who do this? What is happening in such communities? Do you see the destruction that comes when we seek to achieve our understanding of righteousness through the methods of imposed law and coercive enforcement?

But what happens to our characters if we choose to accept Jesus, choose to reject fear and survival drives, and, instead, choose to bless those who persecute us and to love our enemies?

The final deceptions will be how do we treat those who we believe are wrong, who worship on the wrong day, who believe in the wrong god, who don’t eat the right foods, who are not part of our community—it will not be proving our position right, but loving people who we believe are wrong.

For it is about whether we have had God’s character, His living law restored within us and whether we love like God loves in how we govern ourselves, and this determines which law is written upon our hearts.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the story of friends bringing the paralytic man to Jesus and lowering him down through the roof. Read second paragraph,

- By bringing their friend to Jesus, these men took on the responsibility to care for him. God is calling us to be like this man's friends—to lead the needy to Jesus Christ. This work requires faith, action, patience, and a willingness, if need be, to be unconventional. The men came to Jesus but encountered barriers. They could not bring their helpless friend to Jesus through traditional means. They did not give up; instead they found an innovative way of getting the man to Jesus Christ. Dropping their friend down from the roof! Yet, according to Luke, Jesus approved of what they did (see Luke 5:20). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 65).

I am not sure what the lesson means by the first sentence, "By bringing their friend to Jesus, these men took on the responsibility to care for him."

What do you think they mean by this? It seems confusing to me? Are they saying that if Jesus didn't heal the man that they were taking responsibility for his lifelong care? That his family were not going to care for him, or only that they took the responsibility to get him to Jesus? But that seems like a weird way to say it, why not say, they took the responsibility to get him help, to get him to Jesus?

Are they suggesting that if we help someone who is wheelchair bound by giving them a ride to the doctor that we take on the responsibility to care for them from that point onward?

I am not understanding what they are saying, it must mean something else?

If they mean that they took the responsibility to get him to Jesus—okay that makes sense, in that context, because Jesus was physically right there and it was within their power to bring the man physically into Jesus' presence. And the lesson highlights the creative way they did it.

If that is what they mean, how do we apply those insights to our lives today?

Do we have a responsibility to share Jesus with people, to creatively do things to place the gospel, the truth about Jesus, within the reach of people, and to invite people to meet and know Jesus by sharing our experiences with Jesus, the lessons we have learned in nature and Scripture, valuable resources etc.?

What are ways you have found effective in leading people to Jesus?

Read the third paragraph,

- Jesus' desire is for us to bring our helpless friends to Him. The Bible refers to Jesus as the Great Physician who longs to forgive and heal those who are suffering, whoever they are. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 65).

Does Jesus forgive only those who come to Him, or does Jesus forgive everyone, but only those who come to Him receive the forgiveness that He has already chosen and enacted from His heart? And it is only by receiving into our hearts the love, grace, forgiveness of God through Jesus that we are won to trust and open the heart for healing.

So, yes Jesus does long to heal everyone, and Jesus actually forgives everyone—but not everyone accepts and experiences His forgiveness and thus even though forgiven by Him, they remain in fear, selfishness, rebellion, and dying from the terminal sin condition.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the methods of Jesus in reaching people and highlights four steps or actions that Jesus took that we are to employ in our mission to others:

- He mingle, socialized, and got out with people actually connecting and meeting them
- He showed sympathy
- He ministered to their needs
- He won their confidence

This certainly makes sense, it is hard to help people if we never connect with them in some way, and it is hard to help people if we don't sympathize or care about them, and people will often reject any helpful intervention if they don't trust or have confidence in the one offering to help.

So it makes sense that we need to connect with people, care about them, sympathize with their situation, and build some basis for them to have confidence in us enough to consider and try whatever we are offering to help them.

But that begs the question—what does it mean to help someone?

It is enough to meet them, sympathize with them, and truly and genuinely want their best interest, and therefore win their trust in order to be able to actually help them, or is something more needed?

Well on a purely emotionally relational level if you meet someone, care about them, and empathize with them—there is a benefit to doing that and nothing more. So it is helpful for people to know they are valued, cared about, loved as the person they are, so that will always be helpful. But does that mean the specific need or problem will be resolved by our connecting, sympathizing and engendering trust?

What else is needed to move beyond the human connection compassion benefit?

Possessing and administering truth—it requires that we understand God’s design laws for life and health, and we examine the individual and their circumstance through the lens of how God built life and health to operate and that we diagnose accurately what is the cause of the problem, and then we bring to bear—as we are able—interventions that are in harmony with God’s design laws to restore the person to wellness.

In other words, we meet, we care for (love), we are genuine and honest i.e. trustworthy—thus build rapport, build a therapeutic alliance, but we must also have something to offer that is objectively, factually, true—reality based and not fantasy, false, mythical, magical, fake, wrong, or in any other way violating the protocols life and health are built upon.

Like the doctors who treated George Washington’s pneumonia—they met him, sympathized with him, won his confidence, and then bled him and leeches him to bleed out the evil humors. Were they trying to harm him? No! They were trying to help, their consciences were clear, they did not seek to harm, or exploit, or abuse. They were acting in love, but they were not acting with truth and thus they harmed him.

Can this be done on a spiritual level, people meet others, sympathize with them, win their trust and then intervene with some spiritual intervention that harms rather than heals? How? Because they introduce something that violates some aspect of God’s design law for life and health.

Can you think of any examples?

Jesus said to the Jewish evangelists of His day,

- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.” (Matthew 23:15 NIV84).

Winning people to false systems of theology, views of God that are wrong, that incite fear, that crush love do not bring healing, such falsehoods damage and destroy.

The methods of mingling, showing sympathy, ministering to real needs, and engendering trust can not only be done by good hearted and innocent people who love but are ignorant of the truth like the doctors who treated George Washington, but these same methods can be used by people who do not love, cult leaders, fanatics, and purveyors of evil. The difference between the good and evil is that the good not only love but they also possess and advance truth.

So the point is that what Jesus did is absolutely right—but Jesus also brought truth to bear as well as healing the person physically, he told the man after healing him:

- “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” (John 5:14 NIV84).

This particular man’s condition was a result of his lifestyle choices; we are not told specifically what his sin was, but there are sinful choices that can result in paralysis. Jesus is saying, now that the consequences of sinful living have been removed, stop choosing to injure yourself in this way.

It would be like an alcoholic in liver failure getting a liver transplant—and if they want to avoid liver failure again, then they need to stop drinking and live in harmony with the laws of health. If the alcoholic doesn’t stop drinking no legal or medical authority will impose punishment on them, but they will destroy their health again.

Likewise, if this man that Jesus healed went back into sinful living, God would not impose legal punishment upon him, but he would again destroy himself, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

TUESDAY

The lesson is about refugees and immigrants—any thoughts about this?

In God’s universe, in the way God looks down on earth—there is only one human race all descended from Adam and Eve, and every single person born into this world is born as a part of that biological family tree.

And every single person is born with a terminal sin condition and is destined to eternal death from what we inherit from Adam...but God loved the world too much to let us die, so He sent Jesus to be born into this very same sick and dying family tree and to open a new door, a new path, a new branch of the human family tree that leads to eternal life with a new head a second Adam. And because of Jesus there are now two human family trees—the family born of Adam, born in sin, conceived in iniquity, and the family reborn of God, born of Jesus, restored, recreated, and renewed in righteousness.

The human beings born of Adam have the law of sin and death written upon their heart. The human beings reborn of God have the law of God, the law of life written upon their hearts.

Thus, on Earth today there are only two human races—the saved and the lost, the healed and the terminal, the sheep and the goats—those who have been reborn with Jesus as their head and those who have rejected that opportunity and retained fear, selfishness, rebellion, sin as the inheritance from Adam.

The two antagonistic principles, God’s principles of truth, love, freedom are at war against lies, fear based selfishness, and coercion. It is like two different operating systems driving the function of people. And it is these two systems, methods, motives, that divide society.

The first set of brothers, Cain and Abel, were not united in godly love but were divided in sin—in fear and selfishness—which inflamed envy and jealousy in Cain, who murdered his righteous brother (Genesis 4:8).

There has been a division in the human family ever since—a division between those who, despite being born in sin and conceived in iniquity (Psalm 51:5), have been won back to trust in God and reborn with righteous hearts and those who have hardened their hearts against God and become solidified in selfishness and sin.

At the time of the Flood, only one righteous man remained on the earth with his family. The rest of the human population had solidified into a worldwide rebellion against God. In mercy, in love, as a therapeutic act to keep open the avenue for the Messiah and fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15, God put that rebellious world to sleep in death.

But shortly thereafter, the rejectors of God’s mercy began to unite again in a unified rebellion against God, seeking to build a tower into heaven. So, once again, God therapeutically intervened by confusing the languages and scattering the people around the world (leading to the distinct racial divisions we see today), steps designed by God to slow the lies of Satan and impede humanity’s rebellion against heaven and, thereby, allow the plan of salvation to be completed (Genesis 11:8, 9).

These language, tribal, racial, national, and ethnic differences are not evil; these differences are not sinful—they have no bearing on our worth as human beings, they have no value in determining good or evil, but God did foresee that these differences along superficial characteristics would work to keep the sinful human race from uniting in a worldwide rebellion against Him and heaven, like the people did at the time of the Flood.

In God’s kingdom we do not divide ourselves based on race, tribe, language, national or ethnic differences.

But there is to be an intelligent and purposeful division that we as Christians actively seek to create and promote among all people.

The Bible recognizes this division as the only one that righteous people are to act upon—the division between good and evil. The Bible describes this division between the righteous and the unrighteous in these terms:

- The sheep and the goats
- The wheat and the tares
- The fruitful vine and withered vine
- The pure woman and the harlot
- The faithful and unfaithful
- The holy and the unholy
- The saved and the lost

Dividing along these lines is godly. Differentiating the righteous from the unrighteous in order to wisely discriminate regarding whom to associate with, date, marry, hire, place on our boards, and allow to be our friends is a very godly approach to life.

- Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate” (2 Corinthians 6:14–17 NIV84).

We are called to discriminate the honest from the dishonest, the loyal from the disloyal, those who love others from those who are selfish and exploit others. We are to actively discern the wise from the foolish, the kind from the cruel, and the merciful from the vengeful.

The apostle Paul taught that as we approach the second coming of Christ, we are to be purposeful in disassociating ourselves from certain people:

- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. **Have nothing to do with them** (2 Timothy 3:1–5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We are to be discriminating in our associations, relationships, hiring, and friends because, as Paul also wrote, “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV84).

God created human beings to be united in love and trust, but humanity became divided when Adam and Eve sinned. The natural state of this sinful world is selfishness, and Jesus did not come to unite with sin and selfishness but to set people free from sin and restore them to righteousness and eternal life. This necessarily means separating people from all that is unholy and ungodly.

Jesus cannot provide eternal life to people who refuse to leave sinfulness behind.

Therefore, Jesus seeks to separate people from sin—and all associations that keep sin active in their lives!

But Satan works to get people to embrace the fear, selfishness and sin and to divide society based on race, ethnicity, language, national origin and other innocuous differences.

Satan knows he cannot win if Jesus is uplifted, if the gospel is made central. Therefore, he actively opposes it. The evil one does not want people to focus upon Jesus and then recognize the righteous divide between truth and lies, love and selfishness, good and evil, so he has a two-step trap to keep people from turning to Jesus and thereby inflame evil divisions.

Step One: Satan replaces the godly dividing line between moral and characterological good and evil with some other superficial difference occurring among people groups—race, gender, language, ethnicity, national origin, etc.—and causes people to attribute value, privilege, and superiority/inferiority to those differences, thereby inflaming fear, selfishness, jealousy, envy, hate, and violence and inciting acts of injustice against those deemed inferior.

In step one, he deceives some people into believing the lie that skin color or gender or national origin makes some people inferior or less valuable or worthy. This lie leads to the creation of various caste systems (including the historical notion of “divine right” of rulers and the lie that there is an actual difference between people in the royal class and commoners). And these false divisions cause people to inflict real injustice upon the innocent—slavery, Jim Crow, aristocratic oppression of the commoner, and many other forms of exploitation, abuse, and restrictions of human freedom.

His step-one lie has divided society for millennia—and people still fight over this lie today. But as evil as Satan’s step-one deception is, his step-two lie is even more diabolical.

Step Two: Satan’s second step to ensnare people into becoming like him and dividing society is by tricking good people who recognize his step-one lie into seeking to rectify the step-one injustices by *using Satan’s methods*.

This means that rather than pursuing justice by advancing the gospel and placing Jesus and God’s methods of doing right at the center, Satan tricks people into placing the various injustices of the wicked at the center. Racism, sexism, and various other wrongs are focused upon, which inflames anger, outrage, and our sense of injustice—and then Satan offers his solution, “social justice,” by the application of law, coercion, and external power to force behavior change, rather than winning people to love and trust. This two-step deceit keeps society divided, inflicts more layers of injustice upon more innocents, and actively keeps Jesus out of heart and mind, obstructing the only solution to racism and all other forms of human injustice.

What makes this so diabolical is that this method of seeking “social justice” causes people to feel good, to feel they are doing right, to even believe they are advancing God’s kingdom—after all, they are opposing evil—but all the while, they are advancing Satan’s kingdom, practicing his methods, spreading more evil, corrupting their own character, obstructing the gospel, and inciting greater societal division.

The only solution for division is to cut fear, selfishness, and sin out of human hearts. And the only way that can happen is to place Jesus Christ at the center. We must advance the gospel of Jesus Christ and practice His principles of truth, love, and freedom in how we treat others.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on helping the hurting...what does it mean to help?

If the government shows up and says they are here to help—do you feel immediate relief?

What is genuine help?

I have patients say all the time about some loved one, “I just want to help them.”

But, what often happens is that the person seeking to help actually interferes with the health of the one they claim they want to help. Why and how?

Because many people are motivated by sympathy and empathy—they see someone they love hurting, struggling, in some form of pain—and they seek to help—by relieving the pain, the suffering, the immediate distress—but not the cause and often that action removes the impetus for the hurting one to get well.

Like removing the pain of someone with a cavity, but not filling the cavity. It is the pain that motivates the person to go to the dentist. Without the pain the cavity will grow.

What about a person doing physical therapy and they cry because it hurts—do you help them by doing the exercises for them?

What if it isn't physical therapy but psychotherapy, working through some past trauma—can you do that work for another? And do we help by focusing only on relieving the pain?

What about if a child is really struggling to learn math, they are angry, frustrated, throwing a temper tantrum—do we help the child by sitting down and basically doing their homework for them?

How much help is helping with a child writing a paper for school or doing other projects?

Where is the line between helping and infantilizing?

Remember God's design laws, if we want any ability to get stronger we must exercise it. If we want our children to develop skills we must give them opportunities to exercise those skills without us intervening to do it “better.”