

Wayside House, Victoria, BC

2025

"...as I have loved you."

We all know the story Christ Jesus told about the good Samaritan, don't we? As he was traveling, a Samaritan saw a man on the side of the road who had been badly beaten. He stopped, gave the wounded man needed nursing care, and took him to an inn, where he could continue to be nursed and cared for as needed. You will recall that Jesus told this story to someone who had asked, "*Who is my neighbor?*" in response to the law that read, in part, "*...Love your neighbor as yourself.*"

Clearly, this loved parable is a simple affirmation of the idea that we really should give simple nursing care to those who are in need. And let's remember that the original question Jesus was answering was this: "***What must I do to inherit eternal life?***" So, simply put, to inherit eternal life, nurse those who need it.

I am so grateful that I have had the opportunity to serve as a nurse. Nursing is one precious way in which we can follow the example of our dear Master, Christ Jesus, striving to love as he loved. Willingness to follow Christ's example of love brings wonderful blessings. For 50 years I was privileged to serve as a Christian Science nurse and as the administrator of Fern Lodge, a Christian Science nursing facility, and I am deeply grateful for that experience.

I've been attending a Christian Science church most of my life. My earliest memories include time in Sunday School. As a young adult I dedicated myself more fully to understanding the teaching and healing done by Christ Jesus. I still remember reading the Gospels and thinking a lot about what Jesus meant when he says in Luke 9:23, and this is from the *J.B. Phillips New Testament*:

"If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself, carry his cross every day and keep close behind me."

Have you ever asked, "What is this cross?" Clearly, I am not--none of us are--in the same situation Christ Jesus was in, facing the same challenge that led to his arrest and his crucifixion. What in our lives today corresponds to the cross of which Jesus spoke?

Over 100 years ago, Mary Baker Eddy provided an answer to my question. It's on page 50 of her book, *Science and Health*. She writes, "*The real cross, which Jesus bore up the hill of grief, was the world's hatred of Truth and Love.*" She goes on to explain that Christ Jesus was doing all he could to guard against, as Mrs. Eddy puts it, "*...the possible misapprehension of the sublimest influence of his career.*" And

she continues to clarify her meaning when she writes, *“His consummate example was for the salvation of us all, but only through doing the works which he did and taught others to do.”*

I’m coming to see more clearly the extent to which our individual spiritual progress, and also the progress of our churches in communities around the world, depends on each one of us being willing to take up today’s cross, and to face--with determination, confidence, and love--whatever may come.

Years ago a Christian Science nursing facility was the object of a vengeful verbal and legal attack by an employee. The facility management prayed! And in answer to prayer, they were able to respond calmly and lovingly, with honesty and affection. They knew that God, the Father-Mother of all, loved them, and loved this individual, too. They could truthfully say that they loved her and wished for her the comfort and care of Christ. And they knew, too, that God could redeem the situation so much better than the facility could through merely human self-defense. Here was a precious opportunity to prove that “perfect love casts out fear.”

Each person who called or came to the facility to investigate the charges saw they were unfounded, and each one went away with a new-found appreciation for Christian Science, and Christian Science nursing. The court refused to hear the suit. And the person who had complained acknowledged the Christian love expressed at the facility.

I’m coming to see more clearly the extent to which our spiritual progress, as well as the progress of our Church, depends on each one of us being willing to take up the cross, *the world’s hatred of Truth and Love*, and to face with determination, confidence, and love whatever may come. The attack by a vengeful employee was nothing more than an apparent expression of the world’s hatred of divine Love, and the facility’s response was nothing less than the persistent demonstration of the presence and power of Love. They grasped Mrs. Eddy’s assurance, *My 166:15-20*.

“Life’s ills are its chief recompense; they develop hidden strength. Had I never suffered for The Mother Church, neither she nor I would be practising the virtues that lie concealed in the smooth seasons and calms of human existence. When we are willing to help and to be helped, divine aid is near.”

Willing to help and to be helped, --doesn’t that sound like a description of Wayside House and other Christian Science homes? And what a promise...***divine aid is near***. This simple concept of helping and being helped reminds me of the Last

Supper. Jesus gathered his disciples together, shared a meal, and followed it with a sweet, tender act of care: he washed their feet. And he made it clear that they needed both to let themselves be washed and to wash others, and then he gave them a new commandment.

He was about to leave them, and he gave them the guidance they would need, to follow him, imitate his example, endure through the coming storms, and establish Christianity. Jesus told them (John 13:34 NEB) ***“I give you a new commandment: love one another; as I have loved you, so you are to love one another.”*** This commandment wasn’t just for those disciples. John repeated it in his first letter. And Mrs. Eddy, speaking for our time, writes in *Science and Health* 572:6: *“Love one another” ...is the most simple and profound counsel of the inspired writer.* To love each other is not just a nice thing to do. It is Christ Jesus’ **commandment**.

We know Jesus insisted on obedience to the commandments Moses had given. He said these were sufficient for eternal life and the source of all law and prophecy. So, why did he give his followers a *new* commandment? What was lacking in the Pharisees’ demand for strict obedience to the letter of the law? Christ's Love! A practical love that would reach out to men and women and show them the redeeming, healing power of God in their daily lives. This was the love that characterized Jesus’ ministry, and it was intended to define Christ's church through the ages to come.

We might wonder today how the Pharisees could have gotten it so wrong. But we should take care in our judgment. They honored God in the best way they knew. Let's think about our lives, ask if our stand for Principle ever causes us to withhold practical affection, or if another’s shortcomings lead us to judge or criticize him.

To avoid the mistakes of the Pharisees, Jesus told his disciples that they needed only to follow his example. The “new” part of his commandment was, *“In the same way I loved you, you love one another” (The Message)*. It’s like he is saying, “Look, it really isn’t complicated, just do what you’ve been watching me do. To get it right you’ll have to take your religion beyond repeated rituals, such as reading the Bible Lesson every day and going to church on Sundays, and even on Wednesdays. You’ll have to practice your religion with spontaneity, inspiration, and trust in God every moment, every day.”

The Master set a standard for all generations of his followers. ***Love one another as I have loved you.*** So, how did Jesus love his disciples? I recommend that we all regularly re-read the gospels and keep a thorough list. After all, this is the

guidebook for Christians; I learn a lot each time I look at how Jesus loved. I've noticed in every situation that Jesus remained completely unimpressed by physical appearances, assured of the presence and power of God to establish and maintain harmony. Let's look at one example more closely.

You remember when Jesus and the disciples were in a boat and a storm came up. The disciples were afraid for their lives, while Jesus slept, Mark 4:38, 39. *...they roused him and said, "Master, we are sinking! Do you not care? He awoke, rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush! Be still!" The wind dropped and there was a dead calm (NEB).*

He rebuked the wind, calmed the sea! What a comforting story. How often do we feel like we are on a turbulent sea, dealing with circumstances that seem to be out of control? Turning to this story we can feel the presence of Christ in our little ship—our daily life--and affirm what we know to be true. Christ stilled storms for the disciples, and Christ can still them for us today. Then we are able to pray with renewed hope, trusting that we are safe, and will be led to do the right thing.

But to love as Christ Jesus loved requires more from us, doesn't it?

Jesus also rebuked his disciples, Mark 4:40, *"Why are you such cowards? Have you no faith even now?"* He told them that their fears, which I'm sure seemed very reasonable to them, were unfounded, and that he expected them to know that already. Hadn't he shown them the present power of God? Had they not seen wonderful healings, heard the Sermon on the Mount? Jesus expected his followers to know that the storm did not have control over them, and to stand up and rebuke it. To love as Jesus loved includes refusal to believe in the storms of evil, and active affirmation of the truth that specifically replaces the error that appears.

- Where there seems to be the devastation of weather or other physical forces of nature, there actually is the peaceful permanence of spiritual substance.
- Where there seems to be sickness, there actually is health.
- Where there seems to be insanity, there actually is mental well-being.
- Where there seems to be violent aggression, there is reassuring affection.
- Where there seems to be poverty, right there is abundance.
- Where there seems to be hunger, there is fulfillment and satisfaction.
- Where there seems to be bigotry or intolerance, there actually is the expression of the harmonious unity of man—female and male—all in the image of God.

As followers of the Master, loving as he did, we trust and demonstrate these truths. Without demonstration, the words are hollow, lacking substance and power.

Today I want to emphasize the importance of fulfilling our responsibility to follow the Christ example in urging others to take up their own work, too. Yes, it's essential for us to help and to heal others, but to show them that they have the capacity to help themselves and others is also a vital part of our ministry.

As I drove up from my little country home near the California coast to start work as a nurse aide at Fern Lodge, I stopped to talk with the administrator of Twelveacres, a nearby Christian Science care organization. I wanted some clue about what I was getting myself into. I learned a lot in the hour or so we chatted, and one thing he said to me has stayed with me since that day in 1975. It's from Mrs. Eddy's *Message to The Mother Church for 1902*, and it reads in part, **"...conscious worth satisfies the hungry heart, and nothing else can."**

Throughout every aspect of my practice of Christian Science, as a nurse and healer, as a family and church member, as a friend and employer, I have seen the truth of Mrs. Eddy's statement. I'm sure you have, too. The need is especially great in retirement homes and Christian Science nursing facilities. So often people who come to these places believe they have outlived their usefulness—their family members are grown and living elsewhere or passed away; they no longer have a job; their ability to do volunteer or charitable work may be curtailed. Under these circumstances the temptation for people to feel that their lives have no meaning, no purpose, may be overwhelming, and that feeling is frequently accompanied by failing health, declining mental acuity, and feelings of hopelessness.

This is like the disciples in the boat, saying to Jesus, "don't you care that we're going to sink and drown?" instead of "let's do something about this storm." And if the situation isn't met with powerful assurance of people's individual worth, the decline may just continue. Our ministry includes helping these dear people find or regain their sense of value, and helping them to demonstrate that value through their prayers and activities. Remember, some of them have done so much for the Cause of Christian Science and for our churches.

What is our worth, and how is it expressed? *"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and...that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than...silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."* (Prov 3:13-15). *"Much interest is awakened and expressed on the subject of metaphysical healing, but...the vastness of its worth [is] not understood"* (Mis 4:19).

The individuals we live and work with bring with them a wealth of faith, wisdom, understanding, love, and devotion to metaphysical healing, and their worth is beyond measure. One of our tasks is to recognize that worth and to help each one realize it, and its potential for good. We never should underestimate the blessings that come through the faith, hope, and prayer that is going on in Christian Science homes. Healing is primary among these blessings. Here's an experience that illustrates the value of a facility to its community, and to our church.

A high school student who knew nothing of Christian Science came to work part-time in the kitchen. One day she had a physical problem at work. She asked me, "How would Christian Science deal with a problem like this?" She was curious, she did not ask for treatment or expect healing. I knew she had a genuine, honest desire to know the truth so I prayed something like this: "Dear God, please let me say something that will help her know Your love for her." And then I said whatever came to thought. As we were talking the young woman was completely healed. She is now a class-taught student of Christian Science who has served as Superintendent of her branch church Sunday School.

There is an urgent need for the practice of Christian Science in our communities, for right thinking, and the healing that goes along with it. The phenomena of the weather, earthquakes and other so-called "natural disasters" require our specific prayer. Disaster is natural to mortal mind, but not to God, divine Mind. Destructive storms, fires, earthquakes, happen wholly in mortal mind, and therefore they can be dealt with in prayer. Let's not be complacent. These issues are not just sad situations in which many people are adversely affected for a while. No, these issues indicate the basic error that Christian Scientists are dedicated to correcting. That error is, of course, mortal mind, with all its beliefs and opinions. This error is a fundamental misunderstanding of God. A recent news poll indicated that many people believe that storms and other disasters are deliberate acts of God—warning signs, mysteries, tests of faith, or even punishments.

What are we to do when we hear about tsunamis and hurricanes, tornados, fires and earthquakes? What about the claim of COVID; hunger in Gaza, the Middle-East, and Africa; on-going aggression and war? We could go on, couldn't we. In the news every day are reports of danger, disaster and suffering somewhere in the world, sometimes close to home. Let's never forget that each of the conditions described, whether it's of disease in the body or destruction on the earth, is taken in by seeing or hearing about a physical situation, a disarrangement of matter, and then believing that these material conditions are true and dangerous.

Well, if we believe what we see and hear, we really don't have any choice or chance. In *Science and Health*, p.298, we read this plain statement: "*What is termed material sense can report only a mortal temporary sense of things...*" Gratefully this isn't a hopeless situation, as we all know, because, as Mrs. Eddy continues, "*...spiritual sense can bear witness only to Truth.*" Our daily work, in faithful obedience to Christ Jesus' example and to our Leader's teaching, is to pay heed to spiritual sense as we deny the false evidence of the material senses. Let's remember Mrs. Eddy's assurance, "*The chaos of mortal mind is made the stepping-stone to the cosmos of immortal Mind.*" (*Unity of Good*, 56:1)

We can correct and destroy false beliefs effectively only through persistent, confident prayer, as Christ Jesus dealt with the storm that appeared to threaten him and his disciples. And we need to be persistent and untiring in our prayer and our work. Nothing will change until Truth replaces error in consciousness, until the Science of being informs and reforms the so-called sciences of meteorology, geology, physiology, and so on, in our lives. Let's remember, "*To material sense, the unreal is the real UNTIL this sense is corrected by Christian Science.*" The world is in need of prayer to uplift the understanding of health and healing, weather, supply, relationships, every aspect of human life. Our dear friends in our communities deserve progressive, spiritual influences in the atmosphere of thought where we all live together.

Here is a response Mrs. Eddy made to the same needs of the world in her day, "*Three times a day, I retire to seek the divine blessing on the sick and sorrowing, with my face toward the Jerusalem of Love and Truth, in silent prayer to the Father which "seeth in secret," and with childlike confidence that He will reward "openly." In the midst of depressing care and labor I turn constantly to divine Love for guidance, and find rest. It affords me great joy to be able to attest to the truth of Jesus' words. Love makes all burdens light, it giveth a peace that passeth understanding, and with "signs following." As to the peace, it is unutterable; as to "signs," behold the sick who are healed, the sorrowful who are made hopeful, and the sinful and ignorant who have become "wise unto salvation"!*" (*Mis 133:22*)

Wayside House, and in fact each Christian Science home, facility, or center for care, should be a nucleus of prayer, radiating the light of Truth and Love, expressed in right thinking and acting. We can encourage each other, "*reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine,*" as the verse from 2 Tim (4:2) says. As you may know, this verse is chiseled in stone on the wall of The Mother Church Extension, right behind the Readers' platform.

I know of no better way to foster conscious worth in a Christian Scientist than to help her or him remain aware of the significance and power of their own prayers. When I work with patients, friends, and church members, I find it helpful to remind them, and myself, of the work our Leader did, and her confidence in the effectiveness of that work. She writes, *"From the interior of Africa to the utmost parts of the earth, the sick and the heavenly homesick or hungry hearts are calling on me for help, and I am helping them"* (My 147:26-30). We can help them, too.

Prayer that affirms the true facts of Life, that springs from our reflection of divine Love and is expressed in practical affection, is the most valuable commodity available today. Each one of you, and everyone you live with, who fulfills the responsibility to pray, seriously, joyously, thoroughly, lovingly, every day, will be conscious of his or her worth, and the reward will naturally follow: ***"...conscious worth satisfies the hungry heart, and nothing else can."***

Let's continue in earnest to help mankind grasp the fact that God's creation is spiritual and is ALL, and that divine Love, practiced, heals all ills. Let's preach the gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead.

Remember, when Mrs. Eddy wrote that the *"...cross which Jesus bore...was the world's hatred of Truth and Love."* She refers to Truth, with a capital T, and Love with a capital L, and we know from our study of Christian Science, that these are specific names for God. Remember the story of the Samaritan. The wounded man on the road was a Jew. A priest and a Levite, leaders in religion and politics, had seen the man, and both ***"passed by on the other side."*** The Samaritan represented a culture that frequently was antagonistic to the Jews, but he stopped and he nursed. Remember, too, the assurance in *Science and Health*, (p. 13) ***"Love is impartial and universal in its adaptation and bestowals."***

Unless they have heard the Gospel message, mankind may not realize that each individual, everywhere, is a spiritual idea, created as the reflection of divine Truth, worthy of divine Love.

I am humbly grateful for the loving care offered by the staff at Wayside House. As I am sure you know, there are many similarities between care in a Christian Science residence or facility and serving our Church, not necessarily in decision-making roles, but in our homes and in hidden, humble gratitude for all that Mary Baker Eddy, and the Science she shared with a suffering world, have done for us.

We here today are providing and working in the quiet sanctuary of a home. We are working with those who have publicly declared themselves as Christian Scientists; let's consider always what that means. The students of her March, 1889 class "presented their teacher with an elegant album costing fifty dollars, and containing beautiful hand-painted flowers on each page, with their autographs."

Mrs. Eddy's response was, *"Among the gifts of my students, this of yours is one of the most beautiful and the most costly, because you have signed your names. I felt the weight of this yesterday, but it came to me more clearly this morning when I realized what a responsibility you assume when subscribing to Christian Science"* (Mis 280-281). Surely every Christian Scientist deserves our respect, assistance, and love.

We are working with individual consciousness as it seeks a deeper trust in God and a clearer understanding of man's oneness with our Father-Mother. Our work involves defending the atmosphere of human thought from the aggressive suggestions that would have us believe we are material mortals, subject to various human ills, shortcomings, and personality problems. Whose thought are we working with? Our own! It is enough for us to change our consciousness of any situation for that situation to change completely. To love each other "as I (Christ) have loved you," includes the responsibility for stilling storms, wherever they may be, whatever form they may take, and for helping each other in this work.

We have many different people to deal with. First of course, there are the dear residents we live with and serve. There are the faithful workers, on whom we rely for so many things throughout each day. There are those we think of as having some authority over us. And there are many others, family and friends, board members, volunteers, visitors, vendors, government employees, and so on. I don't know about your experience, but the most challenging aspect of my work has always been working with other people. The rest is easy! But oh, those people with their demands and requests, their habits and opinions, their annoying personalities! And, of course, I remember to include myself in the list of difficult people I have to deal with. Help!

Are the individuals we get to work with "personalities," with whom we have to contend? Can we work effectively and harmoniously with them through the efforts of our own personality, our so-called human mind?

No! Human thought isn't involved at all, and never should be.

From *Science and Health*, "...*Christian Science ...excludes the human mind as a spiritual factor in the healing work*, (185:18); "...*the human mind ...is not a factor in the Principle of Christian Science.*" (x:3-9) "*Human thought never projected the least portion of true being.*" "...*the human mind never produced a real tone nor sent forth a positive sound*" (126:8); and, "*Erring human mind-forces can work only evil under whatever name or pretence they are employed*" (186:7-9).

Also in *Science and Health*, we find these directives: "***We solemnly promise to watch, and pray for that Mind to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus***" (497), and in faithful obedience to that promise, "***...we have the mind of Christ***" (1 Cor 2:16). So, we can think of ourselves and others with the same grace that characterized our Master: we can love others, "***as I have loved you,***" as Christ Jesus loved his disciples. This will allow Love and grace to take care of our work and our homes.

I'll close with a prayer from Mrs. Eddy's poem, "***Christ My Refuge,***" and a benediction from one of her letters to a branch church.

*My prayer, some daily good to do to Thine, for Thee;
An offering pure of Love, whereto God leadeth me.*

*"May the divine light of Christian Science that lighteth every enlightened thought illumine your faith and understanding, exclude all darkness or doubt, and signal the perfect path wherein to walk, the perfect Principle whereby to demonstrate the perfect man and the perfect law of God. ...St. John says: "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."
May the grace and love of God be and abide with you all," My 187:6-17.*

Thank you!
George Strong