

The Compassionate (Merciful) Savior



SABBATH—AUGUST 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 1:14; John 3; John 4; John 9:1–7; Ephesians 4:32; 1 John 2:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he felt deep concern for them. They were beaten down and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: Jesus always ministered (worked for; helped) to the needs of the people. What can we learn from His example that can help us do the same?

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY are written these famous words from a poem called “The New Colossus”¹ by Emma Lazarus: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses [crowds] yearning [wanting] to breathe free.” Her words echo (repeat) the ministry (work) of Jesus, who said, “‘Come to me, all of you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls’ ” (Matthew 11:28, 29, NIV).

Compassion (mercy) was the reason for every part of Christ’s ministry. Jesus ministered to all kinds of people. Their social class, sex, or race did not matter. Jesus showed full love and forgiveness through His life and His death on the cross. He used Himself to pay the penalty (punishment) for our sins.

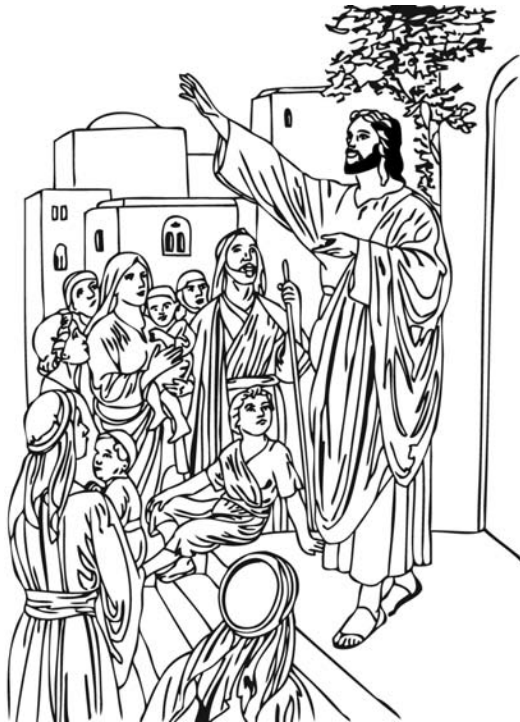
This week we will look more at Jesus and how He ministered. We will learn what we can that will help us minister to other people too.

1. Colossus—a very large or important person or thing.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 3**REACHING THE CROWDS**
(Matthew 4:25)

What two special points do Matthew 4:25 and Luke 6:17 make about how people reacted (acted) to Jesus' ministry? Also, what do those points tell us about how helpful Christ's ministry was?

There were no subways, trains, or buses in Jesus' time. No one jumped on a plane, in a car, or even on a bicycle to visit Jesus. Travel back then was slow and very dangerous. But that did not stop "great multitudes [crowds]" from coming to Jesus.



Great crowds came to learn from Jesus.

What do Mark 5:25–29; John 12:9; and John 6:15 tell us about why crowds of people came to Jesus?

The crowds had different reasons for following Jesus. Some had heard that He had the words of life. And they hungered after spiritual (godly) food. Others were looking for physical (having to do with the body) healing for themselves or for friends or family. Some wanted to learn for themselves if He was the promised Messiah who would free them from Roman rule. Still others were just curious. One time the crowd was so large that Jesus had to get into a boat and teach them from the sea (Matthew 13:2). The crowds grew so big that the Pharisees² said, "Look how the whole world is following him!" (John 12:19, NIV).

Write out a paragraph answering this question, What is my reason for following Jesus? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

MONDAY—AUGUST 4**THE PERSONAL TOUCH**
(John 9:1–7)

People were attracted to Jesus. Mark says they listened to Him "with delight" (Mark 12:37, NIV). They were "amazed [surprised] at His teaching" (Mark 1:22; Mark 11:18, NIV). Jesus often spoke and ministered to large

2. Pharisees—a religious group of Jesus' day who believed a person must keep God's laws to be saved.

crowds. But this was only part of Christ's ministry.

What is the one thing that John 3; John 4; and John 9:1–7 all have in common? What important message does this send to us about ministry?

The key to Jesus' ministry was meeting people in person. "After this, Jesus traveled around from one town and village to another. He announced the good news of God's kingdom" (Luke 8:1, NIV).

Not long after Jesus' return to heaven, His message had spread throughout the known world. But it happened for one reason—the Master's hand had personally touched lives. And those lives, and the lives of His disciples, went on to touch others personally.

The disciples had seen Jesus mix with people. They had seen the way He spoke words of comfort and encouragement to those who were "beaten down and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36, NIV). They heard Jesus say, "'Come to me all of you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls. Serving is easy, and my load is light.'" (Matthew 11:28–30, NIV).

What more attractive message could there be for people today who are stressed, burned out, and looking for comfort and peace?



Jesus promises to give us rest for our souls.

Why is the personal touch so important? How have you been blessed by those taking time to help you in person? Think about ways you can use your gifts and time to minister, one on one, to the needs of someone else.

TUESDAY—AUGUST 5

FORGIVENESS (Matthew 18:21, 22)

Compassion (mercy) was responsible for everything Jesus said and did. Note how often the Gospel writers³ say He was "filled with compassion [mercy; great love]" or "had compassion." Sometimes this meant strongly criticizing sin. At times Jesus did scold the religious leaders. But He always did it in love.

And the important part of compassion is forgiveness. So often Jesus taught and showed forgiveness. The basic teaching of the Christian religion is that we are sinners in need of

3. Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels. The four Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life and His teachings.

God's forgiveness. So, it is no surprise that it is such a powerful theme (topic; subject) in Jesus' life and teachings.

What do Matthew 18:21, 22; Luke 23:34; John 8:1–11; Ephesians 4:32; and 1 John 2:12 teach us about forgiveness?

Jesus often compares⁴ His grace⁵ to being forgiven a great debt. Suppose you owed someone one million dollars, and they canceled the debt. Imagine how you would feel. That is what God's grace is like. And the reason that debt has been canceled is that Jesus paid it for us.



Jesus teaches that His grace is the same as receiving forgiveness for a great debt you cannot pay.

Also, again and again, Jesus taught that those who have been forgiven must forgive others. An unforgiving Christian would not be an example of

a good Christian. Think of the parable⁶ of the unthankful servant (Matthew 18:21–34). This is the story of Mary and Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36–50). The Lord's Prayer says, " 'Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone who sins against us' " (Luke 11:4, NIV). Think about what happened at the cross. Think what it cost God to be able to forgive us our sins. Then it is not that hard to understand why it is important for us to learn to forgive others. Think about our world and how different a place it would be if we learned how to forgive others. Think how world politics and our social relations would be very different if we were willing to forgive people who hurt or did wrong to us.

How much anger and bitterness are still in you because you still refuse to forgive? How can you better learn to forgive those who have done you wrong?

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 6

GOD WITH US (John 1:14)

What wonderful idea does John 1:14 suggest? What does it tell us about the character of God?⁷ Think about how great the universe⁸ is while you think about your answer.

4. compares—shows how two things are the same.

5. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

6. parable—a short, simple story that teaches a truth.

7. character of God—who God is; understanding and having the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God's laws (Ten Commandments) show us His character.

8. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces of nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

In the 1700s and the 1800s, an idea grew out of the scientific revolution.⁹ It was called deism. Deism taught that God created us. But then God left us to care for ourselves. According to this view, the world was like a clock that God wound up and then left. God created His natural laws.¹⁰ And we have to live within those laws the best we can. It is like a parent who raises a child until that child is 18. Then the parent says, “OK, Sonny, you are on your own. I will never see you again. Good luck.”

But that god is not the true God of the Bible. That is not Jesus Christ. Jesus became one of us, lived among us, and took upon Himself our human¹¹ frame (body; form). And in that human form, He died for our sins. Jesus is the God pictured in John 1:14.

The Greek word translated “dwelt [lived]” is *skenoō*. In John 1:14, *skenoō* means to “pitch one’s tent” or “live in a tent.” When Jesus came to this world, He did not live far from the people. Jesus “pitched His tent” among them. He lived and worked among them. He related to them at their level.

Matthew quotes Isaiah’s prophecy¹² about a virgin¹³ giving birth to a son named Immanuel. He uses it to mean Jesus. Matthew even translates the

meaning of Immanuel. Immanuel means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23, KJV).

Jesus came to die as a substitute¹⁴ for us. He also came to earth to show us exactly what God is like. In one event Philip asked Jesus, “ ‘Show us the Father.’ ”

How did Jesus answer Philip? (John 14:8–11). What does Jesus’ answer tell us about what God is like? What parts of His character come through very clearly? Are there some that trouble you or confuse you? If so, what are they? Bring your concerns to class.

THURSDAY—AUGUST 7

SPEAKING IN PARABLES (Luke 15:8–10)

Jesus knew how to communicate with people. His speech was given at their level. Jesus did not use deep philosophical¹⁵ and theological (religious) language. But He spoke the deepest truth. Jesus spoke with simple words that everyone could understand. He spoke of things that people could use in their lives.

Jesus used things from nature and simple household items to help

9. scientific revolution—a time in history that began in 1543 and involved great changes in ideas about the planets, stars, life, medicine, and many other areas of science.

10. natural laws—rules set in place by nature that govern (rule over) the way people live.

11. human—having to do with men, women, and children.

12. prophecy—a message from God about what will happen in the future.

13. virgin—a person who has never had sex.

14. substitute—someone or something that takes the place of another person or thing. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

15. philosophical—having to do with the study of human thought about the meaning of life, how mind relates to matter, and the problems of right and wrong.

explain His teachings. He spoke about coins (Luke 15:8–10), farmers sowing seed (Mark 4:26–29), yeast and flour (Matthew 13:33), sheep (Matthew 18:12–14), fig trees (Mark 13:28–32), and many other things that the people could understand.

Pick a few of the parables listed above. Read them. What was the point Jesus was making in each parable? Why were those examples very good? Ask yourself this: If Jesus were walking as a human among us today, what examples might He have used to make those same points?

As you read those parables, perhaps you noticed how most of them would be just as useful today.

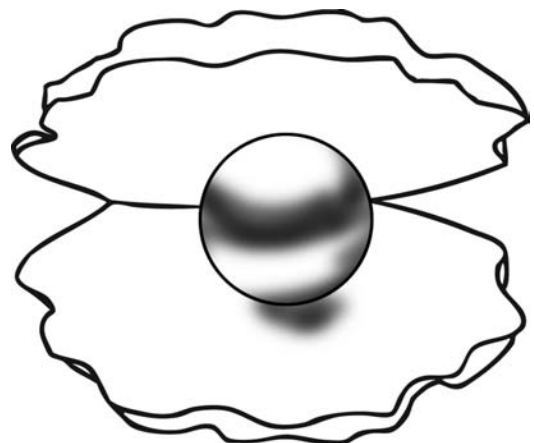
The parables of Jesus are as timeless (ageless; lasting) as His message. How does this help us understand why Jesus used those special examples to help people understand His teachings?

In the book of Matthew, Jesus uses several short parables to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like. He said that the kingdom of heaven is like:

- “‘a mustard seed’ ” (Matthew 13:31, Nlrv)
- “‘yeast’ ” (verse 33, Nlrv)
- “‘treasure that was hidden in a field’ ”(verse 44, Nlrv)

- “‘a trader who was looking for fine pearls’ ” (verse 45, Nlrv)
- “‘a net’ ” (verse 47, Nlrv)
- “‘the owner of a house. He brings new treasures out of his storeroom as well as old ones’ ” (verse 52, Nlrv)
- “‘a man who owned land. He went out early in the morning to hire people to work in his vineyard’ ” (Matthew 20:1, Nlrv)
- “‘a certain king, which made a marriage for his son’ ” (Matthew 22:2, KJV)

Which one of those examples works best for you? Why would Jesus use so many different examples to make the same point? What message could the Lord be sending us through different examples that could help us learn how to witness to others?



The kingdom of heaven is like a trader looking for fine pearls.

FRIDAY—AUGUST 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Go Teach All Nations,” pages 818–828, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“In all true teaching the personal touch is important. Christ in His teaching dealt with people, person by person. He personally trained the Twelve. It was in private, often to one listener, that He gave His most special instruction. To the honored rabbi [Nicodemus] at the night conference [meeting] on the Mount of Olives, to the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, He opened His richest treasures. In these hearers Jesus saw the heart, the mind, and the spirit that are open to His word. Even the crowd who followed Him was not to Christ just a large crowd of people. Jesus spoke directly to every mind and touched every heart. He watched the faces of His hearers. Their brightened-up faces and eyes told Him that truth had reached the soul. Then His heart was filled with great joy when people accepted His teachings.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 231.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Since 1983, many new Adventist church groups around the world have been established by Global Mission

pioneers.¹⁶ (For more information, visit www.adventistmission.org.) These Adventist lay people¹⁷ live among the people they are working with at the same social and economic level. Why do you think they have had so much success?

❷ As a class, discuss your answers to the questions at the end of Sunday’s and Wednesday’s daily studies.

❸ As we saw, it was the personal touch that was so important to Jesus’ ministry. In what ways did someone’s personal touch influence¹⁸ you to accept Jesus? Share your stories and then ask yourself this question: How can we as a local church work better to minister to people’s needs on the personal level?

❹ Because of Jesus’ example of love and acceptance, should we accept anybody to worship in our church—no matter what their lifestyle?

SUMMARY: Jesus the compassionate (merciful) Savior hated sin and loved sinners. His method of ministering to people one to one, or in groups, should be the model (example) for our witness today. Because we have received salvation¹⁹ through Jesus, we can share His love and forgiveness with others too.

16. pioneers—people who are the first to do something; the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were the first Seventh-day Adventists.

17. lay people—regular church members who are not ministers (preachers).

18. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

19. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.