

# Jesus Desired (Wanted) Their Good



## SABBATH—AUGUST 6

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Jonah 3:4–4:6; Luke 19:38–42; Matthew 5:43–47; 1 Corinthians 13; Mark 8:22–25; Philippians 2:3–5; James 2:14–17.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘Jerusalem! Jerusalem! You kill the prophets [special messengers] and throw stones in order to kill those who are sent to you. Many times I have wanted to gather your people together. I have wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. But you would not let me!’ ” (Matthew 23:37, NIV).

**IN AN EFFORT TO CURB (CONTROL; LIMIT) THE RISING YOUTH CRIME RATE,** a city government built a park to have a place where young people could be involved in healthful exercise. When the youth center and skateboard park were finished, the government wanted a church group to hold its worship services in the community youth center. The community leaders felt that a church might have a positive moral<sup>1</sup> influence on the youth who used the park. The community leaders invited several church groups to participate (take part), but only one accepted. It was the church that had Sabbath School and worship on Saturday morning.

These Adventist church members were excited about moving into the center because the skateboarders were part of the group they wanted to reach.

This local church's idea of “church” is a community of believers that does not serve only itself. This standard (rule) should be the goal for all our churches too.

### DEFINITIONS

1. moral—of or relating to what is right and wrong in human behavior (actions).

## JONAH IN NINEVEH (Jonah 3:4–4:6)

**Read Jonah 3:4–4:6. What serious attitude<sup>2</sup> problem does this prophet have?**

In Jonah 4, the prophet Jonah sits down east of the great city of Nineveh. He has delivered the message of doom that God has entrusted to him. He thinks about his trip, his unwillingness to come to Nineveh, and his efforts to run away from God. Jonah also remembers that God set him back on track to finish his mission. He remembers his three-day experience in the fish and the long journey inland from the coast. And for what? *For God to turn around and show His grace<sup>3</sup> on these very bad people?* The people repent (turn back to God), but Jonah now feels betrayed. He feels dishonored and used. Jonah's hope had been that the destruction of this heathen (not godly) city (Nineveh) of 120,000 people would show that God favored Israel and that Jonah was right to hate the Ninevites.

**Read Luke 19:38–42. What is happening here? And what is Jesus' attitude toward the city of Jerusalem?**

Eight hundred years after Jonah, Jesus rides on a donkey over the top of a hill overlooking Jerusalem. Shouts of praise to the "King who comes in the name of the Lord" are heard. Also heard are echoes of hope, saying, " 'Peace in heaven and glory [praise and honor] in the highest!' " (Luke 19:38, NIV). In the midst of this victorious entry, Jesus stops and cries, saying, " 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace' " (Luke 19:42, NIV).

Note the big difference. Jonah unwillingly obeys the command of God. He does not care for the good of the people of Nineveh. Jesus nears Jerusalem with one burden on His heart: that the people of the city might have the salvation He offers, and at such a high cost.

Two cities: Nineveh and Jerusalem. Two messengers: Jonah and Jesus. The difference is clear. Jesus is the perfect example of the unselfish, caring attitude that desires the good of the people. Through God's grace, may we show that same attitude as Jesus did toward the lost.

**How might selfishness play into the attitude that leaves someone not caring about the salvation of others?**

## DEFINITIONS

2. attitude—the way a person thinks or feels about something.

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

THE “ANYWAY” PRINCIPLE<sup>4</sup> (2 Corinthians 12:14, 15)

**Jesus calls us to show love and to be kind to people, even if they hate us or are our enemies.**

## DEFINITIONS

4. principle—a moral rule or belief that helps you know what is right and wrong and that influences your actions.

5. resurrection—return to life from the dead.

6. basis—reason for doing something.

7. benefits—to be useful or helpful to someone or something.

A leper comes to Jesus and begs for healing. Most people in Jesus' day would say that this man should be kept away from people. But Jesus, the clean One, touches him and heals him *anyway* (Matthew 8:1–4). Peter denies Jesus three times during His trial (John 18). After the resurrection,<sup>5</sup> Jesus searches Peter's heart and uses him in His service *anyway*, even though Peter betrayed Him (John 21). God's church in Corinth does not appreciate Paul's authority and influence. But Paul serves them *anyway* (2 Corinthians 12:14, 15).

This principle of “anyway” is very important for showing the character (thoughts; feelings; actions) of God.

“Millions upon millions of human souls are about to die. They are chained to sin. They have never heard of Christ's love for them. If we were in their place, what would we want them to do for us? So, all these things we must do for them. Every one of us must stand or fall by Christ's rule of life in the judgment. This rule is, ‘In everything do to others what you would want them to do to you.’ Matthew 7:12, NlrV.”  
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 640.

This “golden rule” is an important basis<sup>6</sup> for ministry (work done for God). Such ministry thinks first of what is good for the ones we are serving instead of what benefits<sup>7</sup> us.

**Read Matthew 5:43–47; Luke 6:27, 35; 23:34. What important point has Jesus shown us here about our attitude toward a certain group of people?**

Jesus is calling us to show love and to be kind to people, even if they hate us or are our enemies. Notice, too, that Jesus joins these acts and attitude with the character of God Himself. “‘But love your enemies. Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then you will receive a lot in return. And you will be sons of the Most High God. He is kind to people who are evil and are not thankful. So have mercy, just as your Father has mercy’” (Luke 6:35, 36, NlrV).

**How do we understand the idea that God is “kind to people who are evil and are not thankful”? How does this answer, for example, the question, “Why do the wicked sometimes succeed?” How does Romans 2:4 help us to understand the question, too?**

**LOVE NEVER FAILS (1 Corinthians 13)**

According to Jesus, the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love one's neighbor (Luke 10:27, 28). He also showed us who our neighbors are (Luke 10:29–37). No question, too, that Jesus' life, from beginning to end, was an example of the pure love of God, who Himself is love (1 John 4:16). So, if we are to show the character of God and who He really is, we are to show love.

Think about it another way. One of the greatest "excuses" that people use for not accepting Jesus and Christianity is the poor examples of people who claim to be Christians themselves.

**What are some examples you can find in history, or even today, of how "Christians," or at least people claiming to be "Christians," have done some terrible deeds (actions), sometimes even in the name of Jesus? Does not even the book of Daniel (read Daniel 7:24, 25 or Romans 2:24) warn that there would be such people in the church?**

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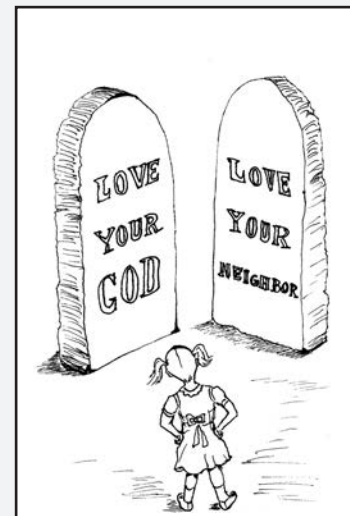
It is no wonder that many people throughout history, and even today, have been turned off by Christianity as a whole. So, the need for showing Christ to others through our own lives is stronger than ever. And nothing can do this more powerfully than showing in our own lives the kind of love Jesus showed for others.

**Read 1 Corinthians 13. What does Paul say love is? What does he say love is not? What does he say love does? What does he say love does not do? In short, how should we as Christians show love in our lives? And how does love fit in with how we are to be witnesses to our community? More important, what changes do you need to make to show this kind of love?**

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## THE SECOND TOUCH (Mark 8:22–25)

**Read Mark 8:22–25. What spiritual lesson can we learn from the fact that Jesus’ first healing touch does not fully heal the blind man?**



**After Jesus gives us spiritual sight, we might be tempted, like the blind man Jesus healed, to see people as trees, or as objects. We are still blind to them as real people with real needs.**

After Jesus “spat” on the man’s eyes, He touches him and asks, “Do you see anything?” (Mark 8:23, NIV). Why does Jesus “spit” on his eyes? Ancient (very old) books show examples of the use of saliva by doctors. The miracle of Jesus’ healing this blind man is very much like the healing in Decapolis not long before that of the man who could not hear or talk. (Read Mark 7:31–37.) Unlike His other recorded healing miracles, the cure for the blind man is done in two parts.

**Reread Mark 8:23, 24. How do you understand the man’s answer to the question, “Do you see anything?”**

“ ‘I see people. They look like trees walking around’ ” (Mark 8:24, NIV). That is, he could tell the difference between people and trees only by the fact that the people were able to move around. In a spiritual sense, what might this event mean in our own lives? It might be that after Jesus gives us spiritual sight, we are not totally restored.<sup>8</sup> We might see people as “trees,” as objects (things). This could mean that we are still blind to them as real people with real needs.

**Reread Mark 8:25. In this case, why might Jesus have healed the man in two parts?**

This story shows that just before this healing miracle, Jesus was dealing with another kind of blindness: His disciples did not understand the meaning of His statement to “watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees<sup>9</sup> and that of Herod’ ” (Mark 8:15, NIV). They thought He meant that they did not have enough bread for their boat ride. Jesus called them blind: “ ‘Do you have eyes but fail to see?’ ” (Mark 8:18, NIV).

People outside the church are not the only ones who need Jesus’ healing touch. There is blindness inside the church. Many church members see people as statistics<sup>10</sup> and objects and will not care or notice that many new babes in Christ slip out the back door of the church. Church members need Jesus’ second touch so they will see everything more clearly and will come to love others as Jesus did.

**DEFINITIONS**

8. restored—to return something to an earlier or original (first) condition by repairing it, cleansing it, and so on.

9. Pharisees—members of an ancient (very old) Jewish group that followed Jewish religious laws and teachings very strictly.

10. statistics—data and its interpretation.



**THE OTHERS-CENTERED CHURCH (Philippians 2:3–5)**

**“Don’t [do not] do anything only to get ahead. Don’t [do not] do it because you are proud. Instead, be free of pride. Think of others as better than yourselves. None of you should look out just for your own good. You should also look out for the good of others. You should think in the same way Christ Jesus does” (Philippians 2:3–5, NIV). In what ways should the principles shown here rule our lives and influence how we relate not just to church members but to our community?**

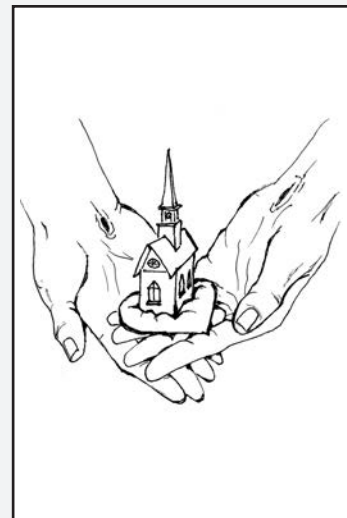
When He was on earth, Jesus was not thinking about Himself. His goals were wanting good for others and serving them. Much of His ministry involved dealing with people who stopped His work to ask for His help. For example, Jairus asked Him to rush to his house to heal his dying daughter. On the way there, Jesus also was stopped by a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. (Read Mark 5:21–43.)

Christ’s church is His heart and hands on earth.

Churches have programs and goals, and that is good. An unlimited love for humans will sometimes help to free us from plans that cause us to forget to show God’s love to others. For many churches, baptisms are high on the “to-do” list. Baptisms are wonderful. Baptisms fulfill Matthew 28:19. But what is your church’s real reason for baptisms? Is it self-serving? Is it to make the church look good and bring praise to its pastor? Or is it because your church really wants people in your community to enjoy the full life found by accepting Christ (John 10:10)?

A church was running a much-needed soup kitchen in a poor, run-down area of town. The pastor was heard saying, “We must close this soup kitchen because no baptisms are coming from it.” Another church group had just built a new church building. They were very proud of it. The pastor suggested inviting the community to come inside the church for such events as Vacation Bible School or health-screening tests. But the church worried about the new carpet getting dirty and worn. And the new bathroom walls might get marked with drawings. Compare<sup>11</sup> these two churches with the church that was meeting in the skateboard park described earlier in this week’s lesson.

**Read over the verses for today. How well do they show your own attitude toward others? How can we learn to experience the death to self that is needed to show the love and unselfishness of Christ in our lives?**



**Christ’s church is His heart and hands on earth.**

**DEFINITIONS**

11. compare—show how two or more things are the same or different.

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Our Example,” pages 17–28, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “‘One Thing Thou Lackest,’ ” pages 518–523, in *The Desire of Ages*; “A Social Life,” pages 186–188, 190–192, 194–196, in *My Life Today*.

“To reach all kinds of people, we must meet them where they are. This is because they will not reach out to us on their own. Not alone from the pulpit<sup>12</sup> are the hearts of men and women touched by God’s truth. Christ awakened their interest by going among them as one who desired their good. He looked for them in their daily work and showed a sincere interest in their everyday events.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *My Life Today*, page 186. How true that many people today, for different reasons, do not look for us on their own. Just as Jesus came down and reached us where we are, we need to do the same for others. On one level, this should not be so hard. There are so many people out there with so many needs. The world is a broken place with broken people who want someone to listen to them, someone to talk to, and someone who cares. And, of course, as a church body we should be able to give them some of the help that they need. We need to be careful not to be guilty of what James warned about: having faith but not the deeds (actions) that show our faith.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read James 2:14–17. How can you help your church make sure that it is not guilty of doing what James warns about?
- ② Think about some people in the Bible who showed unselfish and caring service. For example: “In Joppa there was a believer named Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good and helping poor people” (Acts 9:36, NIV). What is your church doing to help others in modern “Joppa”?
- ③ It is easy to do good things when you are praised and held up as an example of “good works.” But what about doing things for others that no one knows about, hears about, or even cares about other than perhaps the persons helped?
- ④ Someone asked a Christian, “What is the purpose of your life?” He answered, “To give, and ask nothing in return.” How well does this answer show what our attitude as Christians should be?

### DEFINITIONS

12. pulpit—a raised platform where a preacher stands when leading a worship service.