

Matthew 18; Luke 10 – Ep 198: CFM

Matt. 18.1-35; Mark 9.33-50; Luke 9.46-50: Jesus teaches regarding Humility, Service, and Forgiveness

“Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?” (Matt. 18.1)

Some Jewish texts speak of different rewards and ranks in the kingdom. Rank and status were issues that members of ancient society confronted daily. Jewish sources valued the virtue of humility, often extolling rabbis who humbled themselves, for example, before other rabbis or before their parents. Yet such humility was rarely expressed toward children or by exalting children.¹

How to handle offenses and protect the Innocent (Matt. 18.1-14)

Dealing with offences – Note the progression. First, we save the person who is harmed (Matt. 18.1-6). Next, we save the body, or the body of Christ, meaning the Church (Matt. 18.7-10), by cutting out that which is destroying the body. Finally, we also focus on saving that which is “lost” (Matt. 18.11-14). You see, even those which harm others, at least to God, are “little ones” (Matt. 18.14) in need of saving. All sheep matter to the Good Shepherd.

Children

Like my Brethren, I have traveled all over the world. Like my Brethren, I have held positions of trust in education, in business, in government, and in the Church. I have written books, and, like them, have received honors, degrees, certificates, plaques. Such honors come with the territory and are undeserved. Assessing the value of those things, the one thing I treasure more than any of them—more than all of them put together—the thing of most value to me is how our sons and daughters and their husbands and wives treat their children and how, in turn, our grandchildren treat their little ones.²

“Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18.10)³

Jewish readers would generally recognize here the concept of the guardian angel; it was typically believed that every Jewish person had one (cf. Tobit 5:22; Pseudo-Philo, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 11:12; 59:4; Tosefta *Shabbat* 17:2-3; *Sifre Numbers* 40.1.5). Further, angels received their orders from God’s throne; but unlike lower angels and mortals, the very highest angels (normally not thought to be guardian angels) regularly saw God’s glory. Those who mistreated these “little ones” would hence be reported directly to God by the greatest angels, and the report would stand them in bad stead in the day of judgment.⁴

“Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” (Matt. 18.15)

Litigation

Elder Oaks taught⁵:

¹ Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#), IVP Academic, 2014, p. 89.

² Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May 2002, 10.

³ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτῶν ἐν οὐρανοῖς διὰ παντὸς βλέπουσιν τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς “their angels in the heavens, they do always see the face of my Father in the heavens.” (my translation)

⁴ Keener, p. 90.

⁵ Dallin H. Oaks, [The Lord’s Way](#), chapter 6 “Litigation,” Deseret Book, 1995.

Before Latter-day Saints initiate litigation they have a duty to pursue the settlement of grievances personally or with the aid of a mediator. This duty is grounded in the same eternal principles used to counsel the Saints against conflict and controversy... Since litigation almost inevitably involves contention and is prevented by reconciliation and forgiveness, these teachings stand as a strong direction for Latter-day Saints to use every reasonable means to compose their differences and avoid litigation with their fellow members or others.

The Savior taught that we should be reconciled to our brother before we make a gift at the altar, and that we should turn the other cheek when we are wronged. (See 3 Ne. 12:23-24, 39.) He also taught that we should settle our grievances directly: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." (Matt. 18:15.)

In modern times, the Lord has again commanded that his people seek reconciliation with one another: "If thy brother or sister offend thee, thou shalt take him or her between him or her and thee alone; and if he or she confess thou shalt be reconciled." (D&C 42:88.)

The early leaders of the restored church were strong in teaching the need for private settlement of disputes. In an address given in 1852, Brigham Young said: "I have no fellowship for men who are guilty of . . . contending with each other, and going to law before Gentile or Bishops' courts to settle their difficulties. There is a better way of settling difficulties than either of these. . . . When a difference of judgment exists between two parties, let them come together and lay their difficulties at each other's feet, laying themselves down in the cradle of humility, and say 'Brother, (or sister,) I want to do right; yea, I will even wrong myself, to make you right.' . . . After taking this course, if you cannot come together, then call in a third person and settle it."⁶

Elder Maxwell taught:

There are no guarantees; the risks of such openness are real. Yet, significantly, we are not to wait and pout, but are to seek (in the spirit of love and candor) to communicate what we believe are our legitimate concerns of injury to him who has offended us. It is not always that he whom we believed has erred will be wrong. Confrontation can improve our own perceptions of the other person; it can make us aware of extenuating circumstances which otherwise would never be known to us. Finally, even though our feelings initially are those of injury, the fact that we care about improving our relationship with the other person can eventually mean something to him. Caring enough to complain is often evidence of deep and loving feelings. In fact, expressing our feelings of disappointment may be more helpful to others than to present an antiseptic, intellectual analysis of failure. The latter can be challenged and rationalized, but honest statements of feelings can make the reprover and the reprovèd feel enough concern to focus on what needs to be done.⁷

Jewish Culture

⁶ *Journal of Discourses* 6:319.

⁷ Neal A. Maxwell, [*A More Excellent Way: Essays on Leadership for Latter-day Saints*](#), Deseret Book, 2009, p. 78.

This procedure reflects standard Jewish custom; the Dead Sea Scrolls, the rabbis and others demand that one begin with private reproof. Publicly shaming someone unnecessarily was considered sinful, and Jewish teachers stressed the importance of receiving reproof.⁸

Forgiveness – The Unmerciful Servant and the 10,000 Talents (Matt. 18.23-35)

Donald Parry⁹ explains:

Some parables are given to us without any clear context. This is not the case with the parable of the unmerciful servant. At one point Jesus taught his disciples essential principles concerning handling offenses and offering forgiveness. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee," he said, don't let it fester and don't gossip about it. Instead, "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15).

Shortly after receiving this instruction, Peter approached Jesus and asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matthew 18:21).

Peter no doubt thought he was being generous. The rabbis prescribed forgiveness for the first, second, and third offenses only.

But Jesus had a higher standard in mind. "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21–22).

This may harken back to Lamech's terrible statement in Genesis 4:24, after he has taken revenge on his enemy: "If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." Lamech wanted unlimited vengeance. But the Savior tells us to grant unto one another unlimited forgiveness.

The numbers seven and ten are both symbolic of completion. Seven times ten times seven (or "seventy times seven") seems to symbolize a perfection of completion, or an infinity thereof. God's goodness and forgiveness are infinite, and we ever seek to be like him.

This parable tells a simple, yet incredible, story. A man owes a tremendous sum of money to his king and hasn't paid it in a timely manner. The king nearly sells the man and his family into slavery in an attempt to recoup part of the money. But when the man pleads for more time, the king instead forgives him the entire debt.

Much relieved, the man leaves the presence of the king. Not long after he searches out a "fellobservant" who owed him a relatively small amount of money. The first man literally attacks the second man, taking him by the throat and demanding immediate payment. When the second man pleads for more time, his creditor refuses and has him thrown into prison.

When the king finds out what his servant has done, refusing to grant a small mercy when such a great mercy was offered to him, he revokes his previous magnanimous offer and has the servant also thrown into prison.

⁸ Keener, p. 90.

⁹ Jay A. Parry and Donald W. Parry, [Understanding the Parables of Jesus Christ](#), "The Unmerciful Servant," Deseret Book, 2010.

This is a principle that governs the Lord's kingdom, Jesus taught. We must forgive one another from our very hearts if we hope to be forgiven by our Heavenly Father.

10,000 Talents (Matt. 18.24)¹⁰

The sum of 10,000 talents was nothing less than astronomical. In fact, the number 10,000 and the measure of a talent were "the highest magnitudes in use"—"10,000 is the highest number used in reckoning, and the talent is the largest currency unit in the whole of the Near East." In other words, the Lord was using figures specifically designed to emphasize the outrageous magnitude of the debt. A talent represented a particular weight in gold or silver, rather than a denomination of money. That weight could equal different values at different times. However, during the first century A.D., it is estimated that 10,000 talents equaled 100,000,000 denarii. One denarius was a typical day's wage for a common laborer. If that laborer worked three hundred days a year, it would take about 33 years for him to be able to purchase one talent. And it would take over 300,000 years to earn 10,000 talents, the sum of the servant's debt. To give it another perspective, Josephus recorded that a year's combined taxes for all of Judea, Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea at the time of the death of Herod the Great (4 B.C.) came to only 800 talents.

How could the servant have accumulated so much debt? The answer is that it would not be possible—if we are talking about worldly debt. But the Lord intended us to see beyond the earthly example to the heavenly truth. Given all we owe him, our debt to God is beyond measure and really beyond all reckoning.¹¹

One meaning of the parable

The message of the parable is that we should forgive others just as God has forgiven us. The king in the story represents Jesus Christ, who has forgiven us of our sins as we repent and come unto him. The unmerciful servant represents those who refuse to forgive others, despite being forgiven themselves. The parable shows that when we refuse to forgive others, we are essentially rejecting God's forgiveness and inviting judgment upon ourselves. As the Prophet Joseph Smith emphasized, "The nearer we get to our Heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs."¹² As Ann Madsen stated, "I think that's a great barometer to test ourselves to see how close we are getting to God. The closer we are to our Heavenly Father, the more we have these feelings of compassion and desire to forgive and forget."¹³

The parable also teaches that the forgiveness we offer to others should be as complete and total as the forgiveness God offers to us. Jesus' message is that we should be merciful to others because we have received mercy from God, and that we should not hold onto grudges or refuse to forgive others who have wronged us. This is a fundamental challenge in Christianity, and by no means do I believe that it is

¹⁰ A talent was a weight varying in different places and times. The Attic talent was equal to 60 Attic minae or 6000 drachmae. A talent of silver in Israel weighed about 100 pounds (45 kg). A talent of gold in Israel weighed about 200 pounds (91 kg).

¹¹ Parry, "The Unmerciful Servant."

¹² *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 241.

¹³ Ann N. Madsen, *As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women's Conferences*, 160.

easy! By forgiving others, we demonstrate the love and compassion of God, and we open ourselves up to receive God's forgiveness and blessings in our own lives.

I see a connection here between Jesus' statement to Peter regarding forgiveness (which was the question that drew out the parable – Matt. 18.21-22) and D&C 64. In D&C 64:9-10, we read the following:

"Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men."

This scriptural passage emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and reminds us that we must be willing to forgive others in order to receive forgiveness from God. The parable of the unmerciful servant and D&C 64 both teach us to be forgiving and merciful to others, as we have been forgiven and shown mercy by God.

Luke 10.1-12: Jesus sends out the Seventy¹⁴

"Go not from house to house" (Luke 10.7- compare to Luke 9.4)

They were not to go from one house to another seeking better entertainment, nor should they expect or desire to be feasted, but they should accept what was offered, eating that which was set before them, thus sharing with the family... As their mission was urgent, they were not to stop on the way to make or renew personal acquaintanceships.¹⁵

Because of the mission's importance, it is not surprising to find that His instructions to them closely paralleled those He had given the Twelve earlier. Their ministry, too, was limited to healing and preaching. Their message was that God's kingdom, with its attendant laws and ordinances, had now come, and their hearers must repent and come into the kingdom or suffer severe judgments.¹⁶

The disciples were to "search out" a worthy house. The idea behind the text is not so much a house of righteous souls but rather one that could afford the expense of keeping them.¹⁷ A worthy person, therefore, was one who had the means and was willing to provide hospitality for the necessary length of the disciples' stay.

They would be able to tell where to lodge through the spirit of discernment. They were to salute the chosen house—that is, they were to invoke God's peace upon it. If the household deserved their gift of

¹⁴ The manuscripts are evenly divided between "seventy" and "seventy-two" both here and in verse 17. Arguments from context can be made for either number. Many editions deal with the impasse by placing [-twol in brackets. This translation chooses "seventy" because it coincides with the image of Jesus as the prophet like Moses which is so important thematically for Luke. Moses picked seventy elders (Num 11:16-17) to share his work with the people, and they shared the spirit of prophecy (Num 11:25). In Exod 24:1,9-14 the seventy elders also accompany Moses on the mountain. In light of the clear allusion to Num 11:26-30 in Luke 9:49, so close to the present passage, the choice for seventy seems reasonable. Luke Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, The Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 167.

¹⁵ Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 204.

¹⁶ Richard Draper, "Counting the Cost: The Apostolic Mission of the Twelve and Seventy," *Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ*, volume 2 (Thomas Wayment and Richard Holzapfel [editors]), Deseret Book, 2006.

¹⁷ The Greek *Axios* carries the idea of being suitable or fit for a task because it has the necessary value or worth.

peace, they would feel that peace rest upon it; otherwise, the servants would sense that their invocation was void and were to leave.¹⁸

The disciples were to accept whatever the family had to offer and not expect special treatment or favors. The Lord showed that “subsistence, but not profit, was the rightful expectation of those who preached the gospel” (see 1 Corinthians 9:18).¹⁹

Matt. 10.20-24; Luke 10.13-16: Jesus chastises Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum

Luke 10.13-16 is part of Jesus' rebuke of the towns that did not receive him or his message. In these verses, Jesus pronounces woe upon three towns: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they did not repent despite seeing his miracles and hearing his teachings.

Jesus here is emphasizing the importance of responding to the gospel message with repentance and faith. The three towns mentioned had been privileged to witness the works of Jesus and to hear his teachings, yet they still refused to repent. Jesus pronounces woe upon them because they had the opportunity to hear the good news and receive salvation, but they rejected it.

Furthermore, Jesus says that those who reject him are rejecting not just him, but also the one who sent him (meaning Heavenly Father). This statement highlights the unity of purpose between Jesus and the Father and reinforces the idea that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Another way to read this passage is as a future warning. It seems as if Jesus is using these pronouncements of woe as a warning to the people of his time and to future generations. By pronouncing judgment upon the three places, Jesus is warning people about the consequences of rejecting his message of salvation. He is also indicating that the rejection of the gospel will have severe consequences, both in this life and in the life to come.

Matt. 11.25-30; Luke 10.17-24: The return of the Seventy

“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10.18)

"Lucifer, then, becomes a factor to be reckoned with in the persecution of the Saints. In heaven he opposed the gospel of Jesus Christ; cast out into the earth will he not oppose it there? Herein lies the real cause of the persecution of the Christians...So long as the inhabitants of the earth were content with the pagan superstitions, wherein there was no power of God unto salvation; so long as they were content with conflicting pagan philosophies, wherein was no power of God unto salvation, it was a matter of indifference to Lucifer whether they worshiped Jupiter Olympus, or Isis; Apollo, or Minerva; or bowed at the philosopher's shrine of the Unknown God-all were equally barren of saving power and left the kingdom of Lucifer undiminished in its strength and numbers...But when the Christ and His apostles came preaching repentance and the coming of the kingdom of heaven; making known the origin of man and his relationship to Deity; making known the purpose of God to redeem him from his fallen state; establishing His Church as the depository of divine truth, and the instrumentality for conveying to man divine instruction-then Lucifer saw cause for alarm, for it was evident that the days of his dominion were

¹⁸ Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 204.

¹⁹ Draper, “Counting the Cost.”

numbered; his kingdom must decline if Christianity prevailed; his sway over the kingdoms of the earth must be broken if Christ was preached."²⁰

“Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you” (Luke 10.20)²¹

Luke 10.20 is part of Jesus' instructions to his disciples when he sends them out on a mission to proclaim the kingdom of God. In this verse, Jesus says to his disciples, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

There are different interpretations of this verse, and thus but one interpretation is that Jesus is cautioning his disciples against putting too much emphasis on the miracles they were able to perform, such as casting out demons or healing the sick. Instead, he is reminding them that their true source of joy and security is not in their ability to perform miracles, but in the fact that their names are written in heaven.

The phrase "written in heaven" may refer to the concept of the book of life, which is mentioned in several places in the Bible (e.g., Psalm 69.28, Philippians 4.3, Revelation 3.5, Revelation 20.15). This book is thought to contain the names of all those who belong to God and will inherit eternal life.

Reading his words in this way invites us to see the Savior urging the Seventy to prioritize their relationship with Heavenly Father, rather than focusing on the miracles that they are experiencing. This interpretation can be seen as a reminder to Latter-day Saints to keep their focus on their relationship with God and the things that matter most, rather than getting too caught up in the temporary successes and failures of this world.

In this podcast, Bryce mentioned a song by Shawna Edwards called “The Miracle” that teaches these ideas. You can listen to her song [here](#).

Luke 10.25-37: The Allegory²² of the Good Samaritan

The parable of the Good Samaritan can be seen as a type or allegory for the fall of Adam and the redemption of man through Christ. In the story, the beaten and left-for-dead man represents humanity in a state of sin and death, after the fall of Adam. The lack of care and compassion shown by the priest and Levite represents the inability of the law to save and redeem humanity. However, the Good Samaritan represents Jesus, who comes to save and redeem humanity by showing compassion and love. Just as the Good Samaritan takes the beaten man (who can represent Adam and Eve in their fallen condition) to an inn and pays for his care, Jesus takes on the sin and death of humanity and pays the

²⁰ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 3: LIX-LX.

²¹ πλὴν ἐν τούτῳ μὴ χαίρετε ὅτι τὰ πνεύματα ὑμῖν ὑποτάσσεται χαίρετε δὲ μᾶλλον ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐγγράφη ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς “But rather in this do not be joyful, because [the spirits submit to you](#), but it is better to be joyful that your names are written in the heavens!” (my translation)

²² Because of its complexity, the story of the Good Samaritan is better described as an allegory, which is a more complicated configuration than a parable. An allegory portrays a larger picture, puts numerous pieces of an intricate structure into place, and helps to define relationships between various parties or human affairs. In an allegory, “each metaphorical element of the narrative is meant to correspond to a specific counterpart” or to function organically within a conceptual structure. John Welch, [The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation, *BYU Studies*](#), 38:2, page 50.

price for our redemption through his death on the cross and the power of his resurrection. In so doing, he can accomplish what man cannot: complete restoration, and a return into Father's presence.

In this way, the parable of the Good Samaritan serves as a powerful reminder of God's love for all people and his plan to redeem humanity through the work of his Son Jesus Christ. It shows that Heavenly Father's love and redemption is available to all people, regardless of their race, religion, or background, just as the Good Samaritan showed compassion to the beaten man, despite the fact that Samaritans had no dealings with the Jews in the context of Jesus' culture. This story teaches us that Heavenly Father desires that all his children show respect and love towards one another, giving forth compassion and kindness to all people, especially those in need, just as Jesus showed compassion and love to all people, especially those who were lost and in need of redemption.

John Welch²³ explains:

The roots of this allegorical interpretation reach deeply into the earliest Christian literature.²⁴ Writing in the second century AD, Irenaeus²⁵ and Clement of Alexandria²⁶ both saw the Good Samaritan as symbolizing Christ himself saving the fallen victim from the wounds of sin. Origen, only a few years later,

²³ Welch, *The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation*, *BYU Studies*, 38:2, page 50.

²⁴ Leslie W. Barnard, "To Allegorize or not to Allegorize?" *Studia Theologica* 36 (1982): 1–10; Jean Daniélou, "Le Bon Samaritain," in *Mélanges bibliques: Rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* (Paris: Bloud and Gay, 1956), 457–65. It exceeds the scope and purpose of this article to analyze in detail the differences between the readings of the Good Samaritan that can be found in the writings of the early Christian fathers, let alone to describe their broad theological stances that influenced each particular allegorization of this parable. It is sufficient at this point to recognize that the tale of the Good Samaritan was understood from very early times as more than a simple story.

²⁵ All quotes of Irenaeus in this article come from: *Contra Haereses*, 3.17.3, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, ed. J.-P. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857–1900), 7:930–31; or *Against Heresies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to a.d. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1950–57), 1:445.

Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 202) was one of the first to comment on the Good Samaritan. Writing in opposition to certain heresies in the second century a.d., he used the story to buttress his point that God had conferred his Spirit upon the church, like the dew from heaven, protecting church members from being consumed by the heretical fires of the devil. For Irenaeus, this assuring point was proved by the fact that the Good Samaritan (symbolizing Christ himself) gives to his disciples the image and superscription of the Father and the Son, represented by the "two royal denaria [coins]" mentioned in Luke 10:35. In particular, Jesus' description of the Samaritan giving the innkeeper the two coins symbolizes God giving his image to the leaders of the church, who give the image to the man, restoring him to the image and likeness of God in which he was originally created. Irenaeus's argumentative use of the Good Samaritan in this way may give evidence that his orthodox readers already understood the story in a broad authoritative allegorical sense; otherwise, he could not very well have assumed that this allegorization would have carried much weight in rebutting his heretical opponents.

²⁶ All quotes of Clement in this article come from: *Τις ὁ σωζόμενος Πλουσίος*, 27–29, in *Patrologiae Graecae*, 9:633–36; or *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:599.

Clement of Alexandria (died c. 215), writing in the second and third century, argued generally that man should love God (as required under the first great commandment) and should likewise love Christ (because he was the neighbor who helped the victim in the narrative in Luke 10 and, therefore, must be loved under the second great commandment). For Clement, the answer to the lawyer's question "Who is my neighbour?" is none other than "the Saviour Himself," who pitied us, was put to death, and is the only physician who cuts out our sinful "passions thoroughly by the root." In Clement's view, the main conclusion to be drawn from the story of the Good Samaritan is that "we are therefore to love [Jesus Christ] equally with God," and we do that by helping our neighbors.

stated that this interpretation came down to him from “one of the elders,” who read the elements of this story allegorically as follows:

The man who was going down is Adam. Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The robbers are hostile powers. The priest is the Law, the Levite is the prophets, and the Samaritan is Christ. The wounds are disobedience, the beast is the Lord’s body, the *pandochium* (that is, the stable), which accepts all [pan-] who wish to enter, is the Church. And further, the two denarii mean the Father and the Son. The manager of the stable is the head of the Church, to whom its care has been entrusted. And the fact that the Samaritan promises he will return represents the Savior’s second coming.²⁷

While we cannot be sure exactly how far back into early church circles this fascinating interpretation can be traced,²⁸ it is obviously very old.

“A Certain Man” (Luke 10.30)

Ἄνθρωπός τις κατέβαινε ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Ἱεριχὼ “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho” (Luke 10.30).

A certain man. The early Christian Fathers mainly identified this man specifically as Adam. Indeed, the Aramaic word for man (*adam*) may have stood behind the Greek “a certain man” (*anthro-pos tis*), suggesting that this story alluded to Adam much more obviously in the ordinary Jewish language of Jesus’ day than it does in modern languages. The Hebrew *adam*, however, also means “man, mankind,” “men,” as well as “Adam” as a proper name.²⁹ Similarly, the Greek word appearing in Luke 10:30, *anthro-pos* (man, person), encompasses each human being in general, both men and women. The more specific Greek word for man (*ane-r*) is generally used to designate males only.³⁰

“From Jerusalem” (Luke 10.30)

The story depicts the man going down from Jerusalem, not from any ordinary city or place. Because of the sanctity of the Holy City, early Christian interpreters readily sought and found significance in this element of the allegory. For Chrysostom, Jerusalem represented paradise or heavenly living and thoughts. For Augustine, it represented “that heavenly city of peace.” For Isidore, it was not the paradise

²⁷ Origen, quoted in Joseph T. Lienhard, trans., *Origen: Homilies on Luke, Fragments on Luke*, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, vol. 94 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1996), 138.

²⁸ Because Origen attributed all the rudiments of this interpretation to one of “the elders,” who for Origen and other early Fathers were “rigorously” associated with the earliest Jewish Christians (Daniélou, “Le Bon Samaritain,” 458, citing also Irenaeus, Papias, and Clement), one may conclude that this reading may well have been known in the original circles of Church leaders. The precise meaning of the word *elders* in second-century Christianity, however, is unfortunately obscure and in flux. R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, Studies of the New Testament and Its World, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1994), 210–35. In the second century, Papias declared that whenever possible he would ask people what they had heard from “the elders,” by whom he meant by name Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or “any other of the Lord’s disciples.” *Fragments of Papias*, 1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:153.

²⁹ Leonard J. Coppes, “‘ādām,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:10; Fritz Maass, “‘ādām,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:75–87.

³⁰ Welch, p. 73.

of the Garden of Eden on earth, but “the paradise of heaven,” and for Eligius it represented “man’s high state of immortality,” perhaps even implying man’s premortal existence.³¹

“To Jericho” (Luke 10.30)

The person in the story is on the road that leads down to Jericho, which the Christian interpreters readily identified as this world or, as Eligius said, “this miserable life.” **The symbolism is fitting, for at 825 feet below sea level, Jericho and the other settlements near the Dead Sea are the lowest cities on the earth.** Jericho’s mild winter climate made it a popular resort area where Herod the Great built his most splendid, luxurious vacation palace.³²

“And he fell among thieves”³³ καὶ λησταῖς περιέπεσεν (Luke 10.30)

The early Christian writers saw here a reference to “the devil” (Irenaeus, Chrysostom), “the rulers of darkness” (Clement), “hostile powers” (Origen’s elder), “opposing forces or evil spirits or false teachers” (Origen), “angels of night and darkness” (Ambrose), “the devil and his angels” (Augustine), “angels of darkness” (Isidore), or “evil spirits” (Eligius).³⁴

Luke 10.38-42: Mary has chosen the good part

You are troubled

In the account recorded in Luke 10:38-42, we find a powerful lesson concerning the importance of listening and learning from the Lord through our interactions with others. Martha, a woman of great hospitality and industry, became distracted and worried with much serving. On the other hand, her sister Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening intently to His teachings and receiving His gospel. The Lord’s gentle rebuke of Martha highlights the eternal significance of prioritizing our relationship with Him above all else.

The principle taught by the Savior in this encounter with Martha and Mary is one that is particularly relevant in our fast-paced, ever-changing world. It is all too easy to become caught up in the things of this world and lose sight of the things that truly matter. However, we must remember that the things of

³¹ Welch, p. 74.

³² Welch, p. 75.

³³ Welch explains, “Latter-day Saints may want to add a further dimension to this discussion, for these thieves (or rather bandits or robbers, such as the Gadanton robbers) are **not casual operators but organized outlaws acting as a band of robbers** (*le-istai*). The traveler is assailed not only by random devils or various wicked spirits, but by a band of highwaymen, a pernicious society that acts with deliberate and concerted intent.” See also: See [John W. Welch](#), “[Legal and Social Perspectives on Robbers in First-Century Judea](#),” in [Masada and the World of the New Testament](#), ed. John W. Welch and John F. Hall (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1997), 141–53. I see Welch’s point here. The Greek is using a stronger word for theft, a word denoting a pirate or brigand. A more common word for thief in Greek would be κλέπτης. In classical Greek, the words “κλέπτης” (*kleptēs*) and “ληστής” (*lēistēs*) had slightly different meanings. “κλέπτης” referred to a thief, someone who steals property or goods, while “ληστής” referred to a bandit, a more violent type of thief who not only steals but also uses force or intimidation to do so. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the man who was beaten and left for dead on the side of the road was robbed by “ληστής” (bandits), implying that they used violence in addition to theft. This emphasizes the helpless and vulnerable state of the man and underscores the compassionate and selfless act of the Good Samaritan, who went out of his way to help someone in need, even though the man was a stranger and from a different community.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

God should always take precedence over the things of man. This does not mean that we should neglect our responsibilities, but rather that we should seek to understand and prioritize the things of God in our lives. Through the example of Mary and her willingness to learn and listen, we can be reminded to prioritize our spiritual development.

Culture

People normally sat on chairs or, at banquets, reclined on couches; but disciples sat at the feet of their teachers (see Luke's other use of the expression in Acts 22:3). Women could listen to Torah teaching in synagogues and occasionally one might listen to a rabbi's lectures, but they were not disciples sitting in the dust at sages' feet. Mary's posture and eagerness to absorb Jesus' teaching at the expense of a more traditional womanly role (10:40) would have shocked most Jewish men.³⁵

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: A few in the Church are needlessly laden with programmed hyperactivity. They unwisely and unnecessarily exceed their strength and means, running faster than they are able (see D&C 10:4; Mosiah 4:27). Their fatiguing, Martha-like anxiety should yield more often to a Mary-like sense of proportion about what matters most; then the good part will not be taken from them (see Luke 10:41-42).

Much more burdening than that avoidable fatigue, however, is the burden of personal frailties. Almost all of us as members fail to lighten our load for the long and arduous journey of discipleship. We fail to put off the childish things—not the tinker toys, but the temper tantrums; not training pants, but pride. We remain unnecessarily burdened by things which clearly should and can be jettisoned. No wonder some are weary and faint in their minds (see Hebrews 12:3).³⁶

The Trouble Tree

The carpenter I hired to help me restore an old farmhouse had just finished a rough first day on the job. A flat tire made him lose an hour of work, his electric saw quit, and now his ancient pickup truck refused to start. While I drove him home, he sat in stony silence. On arriving, he invited me in to meet his family. As we walked toward the front door, he paused briefly at a small tree, touching tips of the branches with both hands. When opening the door, he underwent an amazing transformation. His tanned face was wreathed in smiles and he hugged his two small children and gave his wife a kiss. Afterward he walked me to the car. We passed the tree and my curiosity got the better of me. I asked him about what I had seen him do earlier. Oh, that's my trouble tree," he replied. "I know I can't help having troubles on the job, but one thing's for sure, troubles don't belong in the house with my wife and the children. So I just hang them up on the tree every night when I come home. Then in the morning I pick them up again." "Funny thing is," he smiled, "when I come out in the morning to pick 'em up, there ain't nearly as many as I remember hanging up the night before." (Source Unknown)

³⁵ Keener, p. 208. This, to me, shows how Jesus regarded women: as equals.

³⁶ Neal A. Maxwell, [*Men and Women of Christ*](#), Deseret Book, 1991, p. 3.