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Luke: the Gospel of Hospitality and Christian Science Nursing

DEAR FRIENDS,

In November's newsletter, we shared reports of the April 24, 2016 Annual Meeting of the Christian Science Nurse Service of New Hampshire. Now we would like to share with you excerpts from the talk that was given at that meeting by Douglas N. Keith, a Christian Science practitioner from Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Luke: the Gospel of Hospitality and Christian Science Nursing by Douglas N. Keith, C.S.

Mary Baker Eddy gives us important instruction in how we should read the Bible.

"She affirmed that the Scriptures cannot properly be interpreted in a literal way. The truths they teach must be spiritually discerned, before their message can be borne fully to our minds and hearts." *Miscellaneous Writings* by Mary Baker Eddy, 169:14-17

"Spiritual teaching must always be by symbols." *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, 575:13-14 Spiritual

Keeping this in mind we will take a look at the idea of hospitality in the book of Luke. Hospitality meant that one took a stranger into his home, fed him, clothed him if necessary, and even protected him under dire circumstances. Under this kind of hospitality, the stranger becomes a guest. People walked long distances in those days, so one of the courtesies involved was providing water for the washing of feet. And for very honored guests, anointing the head with oil.

There are probably hundreds of instances of hospitality in the Scriptures. The first instance we have is in Genesis, chapter 18 and it involves Abraham, who welcomes three "strangers", one of whom he addresses as Lord. Abraham's spiritual sense made that declaration. He offers them water for their feet; encourages them to rest under the tree and offers to feed them. He was doing what one was supposed to do – taking the strangers in and to look after them. Paul, in the book of Hebrews, gives us a hint as to their identity:

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:2

Mary Baker Eddy makes mention of this incident in *Science and Health*:

"Angels are God's representatives. ... By giving earnest heed to these spiritual guides they tarry with us, and we entertain 'angels unawares.'" *S&H* 299:11

When Abraham bowed himself to the ground to greet them he was seeing spiritually these

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Christ's charity."

*Science and Health
with Key to the Scriptures*
by Mary Baker Eddy, p. XII

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angels' relation to Life, Truth, and Love. And in referring to one of them as Lord, he might have been seeing what Mrs. Eddy saw where she writes:

"Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and the prophets caught glorious glimpses of the Messiah, or Christ, which baptized these seers in the divine nature, the essence of Love." *S&H* 333:23-26

In giving hospitality to our Lord, as Abraham did, Christ Jesus' words are fulfilled in a very meaningful and practical sense:

"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward;" Matthew 10:41 (to ;)

What is the reward for receiving a prophet – for giving hospitality to a prophet? In this case, it was the first recorded healing in the Bible, – the healing of Sarah's barrenness during this meeting.

Now to confirm this connection of giving hospitality to a prophet and the reward that is received (which is healing), let's look at the 20th chapter of Genesis.

"Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, ... restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live:...So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children." Genesis 20:2 Abimelech, 3 (to 2nd), 7 restore (to :), 17

So, Abimelech gives hospitality to Abraham, a prophet, receives him in the name of a prophet and he and his household experience the second healing in the Bible, the healing of barrenness.

There are two other exceptional examples of receiving a prophet, though the two women did not know at first that they were prophets; and then receiving a prophet's reward. These are the widow of Zarephath, who received Elijah, and the Shunammite woman who received Elisha. The widow and her son were spared from starvation, and then her son was raised from the dead. What remarkable rewards for receiving a prophet! And the Shunammite's son was raised from the dead by Elisha.

Looking at the word "prophet," we see that both the Hebrew and the Greek languages have two definitions: "to predict, to foresee an event; and an inspired speaker or writer."

Mary Baker Eddy recognized this twofold definition of a prophet where she writes in *Science and Health*:

"Acquaintance with the Science of being enables us to commune more largely with the divine Mind, to foresee and foretell events which concern the universal welfare, to be divinely inspired, – yea, to reach the range of fetterless Mind." *S&H* 84:14

So, it is the acquaintance with the Science of being which enables us to become prophets!

Have you ever thought about whether Mary Baker Eddy was a prophet? Was she an inspired speaker and writer? Most assuredly. Listen to her own words on the subject:

"The works I have written on Christian Science contain absolute Truth, and my necessity was to tell it; ... I was a scribe under orders; and who can refrain from transcribing what God indites, and ought not that one to take the cup, drink all of it, and give thanks?" *Mis.* 311:23-24 (to ;), 26

The word "indite" means to dictate, to cause to be written. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* is God's Word. When we receive a prophet, Mary Baker Eddy, in the name of a prophet, then we receive a prophet's reward – healing. When we open that book, God is speaking to us through her. And what does she say about the book?

"If the reader of this book observes a great stir throughout his whole system, and certain moral and physical symptoms seem aggravated, these indications are favorable. Continue to read, and the book will become the physician,..." *S&H* 422:5-9 (to .)

One hundred pages of the chapter Fruitage bear out that prophecy – "...the book will become the physician."

Are we giving hospitality to divine Science, to *Science and Health*? Are we receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet? We most certainly are because when we have healings in the practice and living of Christian Science, then we are receiving a prophet's reward.

Now there are many other examples of hospitality in the Bible:

- the parable of the Good Samaritan, where nursing takes place
- Jairus' daughter restored to life

- on the way to Jairus' home, the healing of the woman who had an issue of blood 12 years
- the meal at the home of Martha and Mary
- the parable of the prodigal son, or as I like to refer to it, the parable of the loving Father
- Jesus at Zacchaeus' home, and the healing that resulted
- the parable of the marriage supper
- the five wise and the five foolish virgins, and the marriage
- the Last Supper where Jesus was the host – and what did he do when he fed them – he washed their feet. He was giving hospitality to his disciples.
- the walk to Emmaus
- the morning breakfast on the shores of Galilee

Another beautiful example of hospitality happened in June, 1903, when Mary Baker Eddy invited her followers who had attended Annual Meeting to come to Concord to see her. Ten thousand strangers showed up and she greeted them with the following words:

“Beloved Brethren: – Welcome home! To your home in my heart!” *The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany*, 170:12-2

What more tender and loving metaphors than those two words, “home” and “heart”. What greater hospitality could there be than that tender love welcoming those ten thousand into the sanctuary of divine Science. This is echoed in these words from *Miscellany*:

“The ‘secret place,’ whereof David sang, is unquestionably man’s spiritual state in God’s own image and likeness, even the inner sanctuary of divine Science.” *My*. 244:15-17 (to 2nd,)

Her home in her heart was just that inner sanctuary of divine Science and it was filled with love. Her heart reveals man’s spiritual state in God’s own image and likeness. Is there a better, a more welcoming home, a more loving hospitality than that?

We have wonderful insights and accounts of what took place at that moment when she spoke to her thousands of guests. One of them, is from Herbert Boucher, who reported that others experienced healing when Mary Baker Eddy said, “Welcome home! To your home in my heart!” from her Pleasant View balcony: He writes,

“A lady who was present when the balcony picture was taken said that she received an instantaneous healing the moment our Leader appeared and said to the waiting throng ‘Welcome to your home in my heart.’ This lady told us that she had left a sick bed in order to be present and that she was healed of extreme weakness and fatigue at that moment.”

Many wonderful examples of healing resulted from these welcoming words of Love.

What does this all have to do with Christian Science nursing?

Let’s look at how Mary Magdalene’s giving hospitality to Christ Jesus gives us an insight into Christian Science nursing. This incident between Mary and Jesus occurs only in Luke’s gospel. It was reputed that Luke was a physician. There is more healing in Luke’s Gospel than in all the other gospels.

This account of the Magaladen washing Jesus’ feet and then anointing them with oil is where she is giving hospitality to the Christ. Mary Baker Eddy thought that the qualities of thought that Mary Magdalene showed forth were significant for she opens the chapter, “Christian Science Practice”, with this account of her hospitality. A Christian Science nurse is always practicing Christian Science in giving hospitality to the patient. The demand for the nurse, in the face of mortal testimony, is to be cheerful and full of faith, – receptive to Truth and Love. If the nurse goes to the patient and is overcome even for a moment by the testimony of mortal sense, we know that would not be helpful to the patient. Mrs. Eddy writes:

“The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, — receptive to Truth and Love.” *S&H* 395:18-20

And this statement in the *Church Manual* by Mary Baker Eddy clearly puts a nurse in the practice of Christian Science:

“...a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice,....” *Man*. 49:9-11 a (to,)

This chapter on “Christian Science Practice” emphasizes genuine Christianity in the practice of hospitality. It is the very heartfelt qualities of the tenderness and compassion of Mary Magdalene that start out this chapter. The qualities that Mary Baker Eddy mentions in that chapter that are foundational to our practice of Christian Science are genuine repentance, reformation, ineffable affection, unfeigned reverence, contrition, meekness, adoration. These are all qualities that Mary Magdalene expressed.

What are some of the points of this hospitality that she gives us?

It shows us how to visit the patient – “Did the careless doctor, the nurse, the cook, and the brusque business visitor sympathetically know the thorns they plant in the pillow of the sick and the heavenly homesick looking away from earth, – Oh, did they know! – this knowledge would do much more towards healing the sick and preparing their helpers for the ‘midnight call,’ than all cries of ‘Lord, Lord!’ ” 364:32-6

How to feed the patient – “The poor suffering heart needs its rightful nutriment, such as peace, patience in tribulation, and a priceless sense of the dear Father’s loving-kindness.” 365:31

How to diagnose the patient – “A physical diagnosis of disease--since mortal mind must be the cause of disease – tends to induce disease.” 370:20

How to reach the patient – “If the Scientist reaches his patient through divine Love, the healing work will be accomplished at one visit, and the disease will vanish into



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its native nothingness like dew before the morning sunshine.” 365:15-19

What the attitude of the physician should be – “The physician who lacks sympathy for his fellow-being is deficient in human affection, and we have the apostolic warrant for asking: ‘He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?’ Not having this spiritual affection, the physician lacks faith in the divine Mind and has not that recognition of infinite Love which alone confers the healing power.” 366:12-19

A Christian Science teacher said this about hospitality: “Christian Science strongly emphasizes that scientific or spiritual hospitality begins by entertaining the Christ, Truth. Medical practice begins by giving hospitality to matter, to the sick patient and his disease. It starts with the material body – the error. Christian Science starts with Christ’s body, divine Truth. Traditional medical care ministers to a patient’s physical body, thus ignoring hospitality to Christ’s body, the divine Truth that reveals and restores the strength and integrity of the patient’s immortal life.”

The many healings in Luke’s gospel, through giving hospitality to the Christ, is what the Christian Science nurse does today with that same ministry of hospitality. The nurse, in ministering to the body of Christ through love, expresses the hospitality of the Christ to the patient, and the “reward” is the healing of the sick.

This talk can be found on our website in its entirety –
www.csurseservicenrh.org.