



Fern Lodge Focus

April 1992

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God's Outstretched Arm — Our Readers Respond

We want to thank those who wrote or called to express support for the thoughts in our last *Focus* about health insurance and Medicare/Medi-Cal. Here are excerpts from responses we received.

"The inspired article, *God's Outstretched Arm*, has touched my heart. (It) made me realize how important it is for all of us to support each other and to know that it really is coming from God. With a husband who relies on the medical and has his health care programs, I have wondered what I should do. Now I know: the only health insurance I need is the assurance that I am under God's government, today and every day. As Clerk of (my church) I have seen that members of the Care Committee and other interested members have seen your article. You have done the field a great favor and a tremendous service. Thank you."

"I so appreciated the article, *God's Outstretched Arm*. Thank you for the enlightenment it brought. I agree with your position on Medi-Cal and Medicare. 'In God We Trust,' must be our motto."

"Words can't express my gratitude for your recent *Fern Lodge Focus*. The article, *God's Outstretched Arm*, is outstanding. For nearly 50 years Christian Science has met my every need. My health insurance has been and is our daily lesson. What better insurance can one have than faith and trust in God as good and All?"

"My husband, who is new to Science, and I are grateful for the position Fern Lodge has taken in regard to Medicare, Medi-Cal and insurance."

"I appreciated ... *A Perspective on Insurance*. This is a subject seldom addressed in Christian Science and yet a very important one."

"What a heartening message in your last bulletin. Christian Science does heal!"

From the Fern Lodge Directors

How can we address concerns about insurance and government funding, while effectively helping those in need? Our answer comes through prayer to deepen our understanding of God's care, to broaden our expression of Christianity, and to witness the coincidence of demand and supply.

Mrs. Eddy wrote in *Science and Health*, speaking of the ability of philanthropists to accomplish humane labors, *The spiritual demand, quelling the material, supplies energy and endurance surpassing all other aids, and forestalls the penalty which our beliefs would attach to our best deeds*. The spiritual demand for care supplies resources to provide care — energy and endurance, affection and generosity — and there is no penalty of weariness, depletion or poverty.

Generous contributions and bequests have enabled us to meet monthly expenses and begin to

repay what we borrowed earlier from individuals. We appreciate your continued prayer, affirming that God's care for His children is whole, sufficient to meet every aspect of every human need. We continue to pursue the *Fund for Care*. Individuals who apply to this fund will not need to stay in a facility in order to receive financial aid.

Thank you for your encouragement and care!

The Directors of Fern Lodge:

Betty Ames, Piedmont
Robert Burch, Moraga
Betty Dempsey, Castro Valley
Dorothy Griffin, San Leandro
Dick Kearney, Walnut Creek
Audrey Patterson, Oakland
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Blessed Are They ..., A Fresh Look at the Beatitudes

In January Connie Stricklin, a biblical scholar from Massachusetts, presented a series of four different talks on the Scriptures. Monday evening, January 27, in Walnut Creek, Connie shared insights and information about the Beatitudes. Here is a summary of that program.

Jesus took his disciples apart from the crowd to give them their first lessons on what it means to be a disciple of Christ. He had just chosen them, but they did not know what that meant. They did not know what they were to do, or how they were to think, so he told them. The Beatitudes were intended for Jesus' disciples then and now, through all ages and for all time to come.

The word *beatitude* comes from the Latin word for blessed, which is the first word in every couplet. The Beatitudes don't have anything to do with material well-being, or the good life. Jesus is talking about spiritual happiness and spiritual well-being. One cannot be truly happy and inwardly serene without thinking right and happy thoughts. Because Jesus knew that happiness wells up from within he never intended for his followers to look outside of themselves for their contentment and well-being but to look within their state of thought.

Jesus demanded right attitudes as the condition for the blessing in each Beatitude. It wasn't easy then to be a Christian, but it wasn't meant to be, and we might say the same thing today. It's not easy to uphold the highest standards of Christianity as followers of the master.

The Commandments are the foundation for the Beatitudes. The decalogue is exactly what was needed for that earlier time. And the Beatitudes are exactly what is needed for a more advanced age. The difference between the Commandments, negatively phrased, and the Beatitudes, positively stated, is the difference between the childhood of the Hebrew people in their worship of God and the more developed spiritual

faith in God in the later age. We can't just maintain the status quo; we must find a higher demonstration of the truths contained in the Bible and strive for a deeper understanding of what is demanded of us as disciples of Christ.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

This describes those who recognize their need of what they have not, whose thoughts are receptive and open to the things of the spirit. The Hebrew word *poor* indicated humility and piety, and this quality of being poor in spirit, this sense of devoutness, humbleness, and readiness to hear what God had to say, was held to be the only proper attitude before God. The spirit is that element in man which perceives, reflects, feels, desires and is not bound by material concerns.

The spirit of God is His effective divine power, which is invisible and immaterial, and can be known only by its manifestations. The spirit of man is divine inspiration, the breathing in of the divine influence which has its source in God.

Matthew's organization gives balanced parallels — in the first clause, virtue, and in the second clause, reward. In the first Beatitude the virtue is that attitude of thought which seeks to learn more about the things of the spirit, and the reward is the kingdom of heaven as a present possibility, not just a future hope.

To the Jews of the first century, to possess the kingdom meant to inherit the promised land. For Jesus, it meant proclaiming that the Christ has come, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

*Blessed are they that mourn:
for they shall be comforted.*

We have to see this beatitude in political terms. The mourning is a national mourning, a deep sorrow because of the condition of the world and the Jew's suffering for their cause. In Judaism it was, and still is, an obligation to join in

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crusades for righteous causes, especially for those oppressed. The Jews must help deliver the stranger from oppression because God had released them from bondage in Egypt.

The promise which follows for this attitude of mourning for the condition of the world, is that God hears their prayers and sends the comforter, the Christ, into the world. All who are oppressed will be comforted.

*Blessed are the meek:
for they shall inherit the earth.*

The meek are those who eschew any thought of self-righteousness or self-importance because they recognize that all good comes from God. The meek stand firm in the face of all evil, and obey God's command no matter what the consequences. The Greek word for *meek* means gentleness, and reverence and humility before God. Meekness is an inward grace. Its exercise is first and chiefly towards God. We accept God's dealings with us as good, without disputing or resisting. Meekness is related to self-control and describes a condition of mind and heart.

No wonder then the reward is that they shall inherit the earth. The earth is often used in the Bible as the metaphor for human experience, one's earthly life. The promise that the meek will inherit the earth means that they will receive infinite good right here right now in their human experience, not simply look forward to it in the world to come, or the hereafter.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst
after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.*

In a land surrounded on the east and south by vast stretches of desert, to hunger and thirst for something has special intensity. It means striving for it as though one's very life depended on it.

Righteousness in the Biblical sense means the quality of being right with God. God is always

right and always just. For man, righteousness means to be in a right relation to God. Being right with God means not only being obedient to the letter of the law, but more importantly to the spirit of the law. The reward is that such as these shall be filled up full, completely satisfied. *Made full with all the fullness of God*, is how Paul explained it. This spiritual condition of being in a right relation to God carries with it the promise that all one's earthly needs will be met to the fullest extent, with no lack or limitation in one's life.

*Blessed are the merciful:
for they shall obtain mercy.*

The Hebrew word translated *mercy* meant love, constant, steadfast, enduring and unchangeable love — the kind of love God has for His children. Mercy implies compassion so great as to enable one to forbear punishing even when justice demands it. To have mercy in the Christian sense means to banish all feeling of revenge and ill-will out of our hearts, and cultivate an attitude of love toward all mankind. Mercy never can be indifferent; it has to be aware of the needs of all mankind, of their suffering and of their need of healing. Mercy is not selective; it can't choose those it will love and those it won't. The demand is to live love.

If mercy characterizes God's attitude towards His children, then according to Jesus' teachings it must also delineate man's obligation to his fellow man. The supreme act of love on God's part was the sending of His Son to be the saviour of the world, and it is this Son who is giving these lessons, enjoining his disciples to be merciful. He promised that they would obtain mercy if they would show tangible evidence of God's love in their lives by giving their love to all their fellow men. In their own everyday experience they must express God's love toward all men. The promise is that all who love are always loved. Perhaps not always by man, but always by God.

*Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.*

To all ancient peoples the heart was the seat of intelligence and feeling, and stood for the thoughts of man. The heart thus came to stand for the innermost thoughts and intents of the man, the complete character, the whole man.

The word for pure is *katharis* in Greek, and it means cleansed, clean, free from anything that would defile, purged from anything that would contaminate. When man is pure in heart, then he has the true nature of God revealed to him. When his own life is made pure and high in every respect, then he certainly does see God, and sees himself as the likeness of God. The specific word used here for *see* has nothing to do with physically seeing. *Seeing* refers to spiritual perception, seeing beyond the physical or the material to the spiritual. To see God in this way is to comprehend with spiritual understanding the true nature of God, His wholeness, His perfection, His allness. Only the pure in heart can express that wholeness and perfection in themselves, because they are like God.

*Blessed are the peacemakers:
for they shall be called
the children of God.*

The Hebrew word *shalom* is usually translated peace, but it's impossible in one word to convey the full range of its meaning in English. *Shalom* indicates a state of total harmony, of complete well-being that includes economic prosperity, a good family life, good relations with others, tranquility, serenity, equanimity of mind, health, wholeness and soundness of mind and body, order and perfection in one's life, and of course, peace.

A peacemaker in its widest sense is one who never entertains a false estimate of anyone, never insinuates or circulates an untruth about another, never undermines another's character, or intentionally or unintentionally believes a lie about

anyone. He is one whose whole life and every thought expresses harmony and well-being and who sees his fellow beings in the same way. When you say *shalom* you are affirming that everything is right with you, and hoping that everything is right with those you greet.

The best example of how this word *shalom* works is found in the story of the Shunammite woman. Her long-yearned-for and only son died suddenly. She purposely did not inform her husband of the child's death. When he said, "Where are you going? It's not a feast day or festival day, how come you are going to see the man of God?" She simply said, "All is well." Then she raced as fast as she could to find Elisha, the man of God, on Mt. Carmel, about 30 miles away. He saw her coming and sent his servant to find out what was wrong, instructing him when he got to the woman to ask her, "Shalom? How is it with your husband? How is it with your child?" To each of these questions, she very confidently asserted in Hebrew: "Shalom — all is well." The King James translators showed spiritual perception here; they did not put this answer just "peace." "Peace" wouldn't have given the true sense at all. The woman showed her unshakable faith in God's steadfast love by answering, "It is well" — not "shall be," but "is" — showing her absolute refusal to accept or acknowledge any imperfection in her life. And Elisha's firm refusal to give in to what appeared as evidence of death for the child resulted in the raising of her son to life again.

Aren't peacemakers really healers? Aren't they those who make well, those who restore to complete harmony? They are indeed rightfully called the children of God. Those healers, those nurses, those practitioners who spend their whole lives healing, are the children of God. In that sense we are all children of God, because we are all in the healing business.

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*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake:
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Blessedness as the result of persecution seems a dubious favor. As we have seen, righteousness means being in a right relationship with God, living in obedience to His laws and forsaking all worldliness. But the world loves the worldly. Those who live above its accepted social customs and moral standards are not loved by the world. Every advanced spiritual development has been accompanied by intense opposition. The Jews were persecuted in antiquity and right up to modern times. The early Christians were tortured and killed in massive numbers. During the Protestant reformation followers of the new dispensation were terribly persecuted by the religious authorities; even the Bible translators were put to death. And it's no different today.

Jesus took great care to prepare all Christians for the thorny path which lay ahead. He never promised us a rose garden, but at the same time he reassured us that our work is not without reward. Note that here the reward is the same as in the first Beatitude — *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. God's kingdom is come because Christ is here. So we have come full circle. This is a literary device which signals the reader that the unit is now complete. It stresses again that the theme of the Beatitudes is the kingdom of God as a present reality within the believer, not without and not having to do with the human condition. As it is said in Luke, *the kingdom of God is within you*.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Here are progressive degrees of persecution. *Revile you* means to harass by verbal abuse; *persecute you* means to inflict harm by physical abuse; *say all manner of evil against you falsely* refers to false accusations, or character assassination, the worst kind of abusive treatment. All three of these were perpetrated against Jesus.

Jesus didn't try to gloss over the severe trials which awaited those called to identify themselves as followers of Christ. This last Beatitude does not begin, *blessed are they*; it now says, *blessed are YE*. Jesus here is addressing himself specifically to the twelve Apostles, the ones he would send forth to carry on his mission. This was the exclusive message of warning and comfort for his own closest associates, those he had appointed to go into all the world and spread the gospel. Jesus is saying that they are prophets, spokesmen for God, for Christ; they spread the word.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

"When the time comes that you have to endure persecution," he tells the twelve, "rejoice! Don't feel sorry for yourself; rejoice exceedingly." No matter what trials might be encountered, it is a blessed privilege to follow in the prophet's footsteps. There would be no place in the leadership of Christ's Church for timid or faint-hearted prophets. The new day unfolding demanded the most dedicated, loyal, fearless of followers. It always requires exceptional moral courage and spiritual fortitude to speak openly the word of God, as a prophet does. But Jesus says the blessings are abundant without measure.

Moses the Lawgiver founded the Israelite religion on the divine laws revealed to him by God and preserved in the Torah. The basis of the law is summarized in the Commandments. Christ Jesus founded the Christian church on his new interpretation of the law, preserved in the Sermon on the Mount. The basis of his doctrine is summarized in the Beatitudes. Together these are the foundation on which we build today. Neither can be dispensed with nor deemed irrelevant if we are to preserve our faith for future generations. So rejoice, and be ye exceeding glad. God's blessings are bountifully bestowed on us always, in all ways, and under all conditions. The kingdom of heaven is ours right here and right now.

Christian Science Nursing Seminars

Fern Lodge is hosting a seminar series on Christian Science nursing to assist individuals who wish to learn more about how to help others. These seminars are not designed to teach nursing, but rather to allow opportunity for discussion focused on specific nursing activities and the ideas that form their foundation.

We welcome those with no nursing experience and those who have nursed, either in the nurses training program or their own life experiences.

Christian Science nurses from our community introduce and lead each discussion. Emphasis is on the questions, comments and experiences of those who attend. The seminar series is part of the introduction we offer those new to nursing who would like to work on our nursing staff. These programs are offered free of charge, and we plan to repeat the series in the fall.

The current series began February 18, and will run through May 12. One of the following topics is considered each Tuesday afternoon.

- The role of Christian Science nursing in Church
- The ethics of Christian Science nursing
- Environment and personal care
- Food preparation, modification and feeding
- Mobility
- Care for a bedfast person
- Cleansing and covering wounds
- Activity — relating to others
- Mental needs
- Support for Christian Science study and prayer
- Considerations working in someone's home
- Christian Science nursing and the community

To sign up for any or all of them call Pat Alvarez or George Strong at (510) 886-2448.

Volunteers — A Note from Evelyn Spelman, Activities Director

I have been thinking about the spiritual basis for volunteer work and wanting to spiritualize my concept of this useful service. I started with the dictionary and was arrested by this definition of volunteer: *To give ... on one's own initiative. To enter into ... a venture of one's own free will.*

I asked myself, "Since God is the only Cause, do we have our *own* initiative?" "Of course not," was my response. And what does Mrs. Eddy say about one's own will? It's *the motive-power of error; mortal belief; ... Will, as a quality of so-called mortal mind, is a wrong-doer.*

The Lord's Prayer gives a proper understanding of will, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*, with its spiritual interpretation, *Enable us to know, — as in heaven, so on earth, — God is omnipotent, supreme.* My prayer became, "Enable me, Father, to know what is mine to do at Fern Lodge."

If you think about volunteering, you might ask yourself, "Is this activity mine to do? Does it represent God's will for me?" We welcome those who would like to read to our guests, help with a party, show slides or share a hobby or talent.

Since demand and supply are one, we trust Mind to bring activity and those who perform it together in just the right way. When workers respond to our heavenly Father's prompting, there is always a blessing in store for everyone. If you come we will welcome you gladly, for one or two visits or for a longer term.

We are not just interested in specific activities; we care that you are answering a spiritual calling. We are grateful for your talents and will enjoy seeing how you use them in Soul's service. If you are feeling nudged to broaden your healing activity, please call me at (510) 886-2448. Together we can bear witness to God's will.

Annual Meeting, 1992

We hope you will join us at the next Fern Lodge Annual Meeting. It will be held this fall on Sunday, September 27.

Mrs. Nola Cook, a Christian Science practitioner and teacher from Ohio, will speak to us on a topic that relates to Christian Science nursing as a natural expression of the Motherhood of God.

Also at this time you will hear plans and reports of progress from the Fern Lodge Board, Administration, and Nursing Department.

The time and location of the meeting will be announced in our Summer *Focus*. We look forward to sharing with you the joy of this inspiring time.

Garden Party

Friday, May 1 will be a garden work day at Fern Lodge. We will start in the morning and continue through the day, so feel free to join us any time. You are welcome to have lunch here, and in the afternoon we'll serve strawberry shortcake.

If you plan to come please call Evelyn Spelman at (510) 886-2448 to let us know.

Fern Lodge Focus

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address correction requested

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