

#15 Come Follow Me: Mt 18 and Lk 10 *Jesus Empowers Children, the Lost, Social Outcasts and Women*
INTRO

Many of the Lord's teachings and behaviors were radical in His culture. As Christians, we are so familiar with them, that we may not realize how outrageous they were in His day. This week's scriptural sections demonstrate Jesus making sweeping departures from the perceived norms regarding children, shepherds, forgiveness, Samaritans, neighbors, women, learning, service, and even ownership. Not only did Jesus think "outside of the box," he also taught with very innovative methods that pioneered a new life for those who followed Him. Interestingly, the teachings in the Book of Mormon seem less trapped by the traditions that developed after the Jewish Babylonian captivity (~597-538 BC), and more in keeping with Jesus' teachings (i.e. the worth and place of children in the kingdom of heaven, see Moroni 8:10-23).

Children's Humility is Jesus' Standard for Greatness (Mt 18:1-34; Mk 9:33b-50; Lk 9:46-50)

Mt 18:1, Mk 9:33; Lk 9:46 "Who is the greatest . . . ?" Jesus and the Twelve return to Capernaum and enter into "the house" (Mk 9:33). We are not told whose house this was, but possibly Simon Peter's mother-in-law's home (Mk 1:30).¹ Mk and Lk record that the Twelve were embarrassed to tell Jesus that they had been debating who was the greatest. But He perceives their thoughts. There was an enormous gulf or disparity between the Lord's thoughts and the disciples' thoughts.

Mk 9:34 "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" Jesus' kingdom turns the social ladder of hierarchy upside down; humble servants are the most honored, not the smartest or richest or those the closest related to royalty. Jesus explains that in the Kingdom of Heaven, the highest ranking goes to those who will serve the most. His consistent message honored the lowly humble servants -- including children and women--in various settings across each of the four Gospels.

- "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Mt 23:11)
- "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mk 10:45)
- "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Lk 22:26)
- "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (Jn 12:26)

The fact that the early Christians recorded these sayings, and included them in the Gospels, shows that they also wanted to emphasize and incorporate Jesus' message of encouraging servitude.

In contrast to Jesus' desire for all to love and serve, His ancient world had a hierarchy with the wealthy, educated, and masters on top and an inferior class of servants and slaves on the bottom. In the rabbinic literature of the day, women, children, and slaves are often lumped together in this class of servants.² But Jesus attacked this misconception by teaching the true value of a child.

Mt 18:2; Mk 9:35; Lk 9:48 "Jesus called a little child . . ."³ Jesus made abrupt changes to how children were treated. He acknowledged and welcomed them in public, encouraged them to come to Him, and honored

¹ Capernaum, a city of 1,000 or less at the time, became Jesus' home base after He was rejected in Nazareth (Mt 4:13). Perhaps He moved there to be away from Herod Antipas who imprisoned and later murdered JBpst in his frontier fortress, Machaerus (on the Jordan side of the Sea of Galilee). Mk 1:30 includes that Peter's mother in law had a home in Capernaum. Lk 8:3 says that many female disciples assisted Jesus' ministry monetarily and working alongside the apostles. Three are mentioned by name across the Gospels—Mary Magdala, Jonna and Susanna. Perhaps Susanna, hosted "the home" for Jesus in Capernaum, as I do not think the others held a permanent address in Capernaum. I assume Joanna lived near Herod Antipas' palace as her husband, Chuza, was Herod's steward; and Mary Magdalene was from Magdala (but she may have moved to Capernaum when Jesus did). The scriptures do not tell us where in Capernaum, or to whom "the home" belonged.

² Josephus, *Against Apion*. 2.25. Jacob Neusner, *The Economics of the Mishnah* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 27. "One should train for the job all those who are employed on the estate, whether slaves or children or women." David Sedley, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, XXV (Oxford, England: Oxford University, winter 2003), 213. Philo, *A Volume of Questions and Solutions to Questions which arise in Genesis*, I.29.

³ According to tradition, the little child called to Jesus was 3-year-old St. Ignatius (Catholics claim he followed Peter as Bishop of Antioch until his martyrdom in Rome under Trajan

them as the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. To appreciate what a drastic change this was in their society, it helps to contrast Jesus' liberation with the Judeo culture of the time.

Children in the Ancient Jewish Culture

Children were welcomed as a blessing from God, fulfilling the commandment, "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:22). Half of the children born alive, died by age ten. Juxtaposed to these two realities, children were seen as a public nuisance, and thus, should be unseen and unheard.⁴ Girls especially were kept indoors "for modesty sake."⁵

Fathers dictated how their children were educated, where they went, what they ate, what they vowed, and collected all payments they earned or found. Many were harshly disciplined: "Stripes and correction are at all times wisdom . . . loving fathers . . . [do] not spare the rod," and "break him in and beat him sound while he is still a child."⁶ Guardians kept strict control through age twelve, but by age "thirteen and one day," they were considered adults.⁷

Children shared work with slaves (one of the Greek words for young child, *paidon*, can also mean servant or slave). Both washed their father or master's face and feet, dressed and fed him, waited on him and took orders from him.

Girls were not educated beyond learning domestic skills at home, except for rare exceptions. By age five or six, Jewish boys could begin their formal education. However, "90-95 percent of the population of ancient Palestine would have been rural peasants," hence, both boys and girls were often needed to help contribute on the family farms.⁸ Even very little ones helped in vegetable gardens, gathering firewood, and with chores.⁹

Mt 18:3-4 " . . . be converted and become as little children" Little ones seem to have an innate gift to believe which is at the root of conversion. When Jesus asks his disciples to humble themselves like children, He implies the need to become more trusting, teachable, transparent, innocent, loving, forgiving, not prejudiced, etc. These positive traits are childlike not childish.

Mt18:5; Mk 9:37; Lk 9:48 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" (ESV) This is thought provoking—and it extends to all who interact with children with love from babysitters and teachers, to parents and grandparents.

God's Care of Children

Mt18:6; Mk 9:42 " . . . offend one of these little ones which believe on me" Jesus denounced vehemently anyone who hurt a child. The word for "offend /stumble" in Greek is *skandaloizo* / *scandalize* and also means to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way. In addition to hurting someone physically, the definition includes, "entrap, i.e., trip up . . . entice to sin, apostasy."¹⁰ In addition to abuse, Jesus also refers to those who cause a child to lose their innate faith or to distrust God. In this context, being a parent or caregiver who works with children is like being on a full-time mission with a golden contact. The Lord asks that those who work with children should never discourage the faith of these young investigators. Intentionally teaching children falsehoods and extinguishing their faith is a serious sin.

⁴ Ben Sira, *Ecclesiasticus*, 23:7-15; 42:10-11.

⁵ Philo of Alexandria, Pieter Willem van der Horst, trans., *Philo's Flaccus: The First Pogrom* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 70. The quote includes: "[Women] were always kept in seclusion and did not even appear at the house-door, and their unmarried daughters, who were confined to the women's quarter, women who for modesty's sake shunned the eyes of men, even their closest relatives."

⁶ Ben Sira, *Ecclesiasticus*, 22:6; 30:1, 2, 12; "He who disciplines his son will find profit in him."

⁷ Avraham Steinberg, ed., *Encyclopedia of Jewish Medical Ethics* (Jerusalem, Israel: Feldheim, 2003), 682.

⁸ Reta H. Finger, *Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 100. Also see, Daniel Sperber, *Roman Palestine 200-400, the Land: Crisis and Change in Agrarian Society as Reflected in Rabbinic Sources* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 1978).

⁹ Richard N. Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 2006), 117.

¹⁰ Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 81; Greek dictionary for "offend / *skandalizo*."

Mt 18:7-9; Mk 9:42-50; Lk 17:1-2 “Woe . . . cut it off” Jesus felt so strongly about not abusing children in any way that he used language that would have been extremely offensive to the Jews. Dismembering one’s body, or any form of harming the body, was *very* offensive to the Jews. Killing oneself was perhaps the worst thing one could do. Jesus used these strong words as an alarm to let them know how serious it is to offend little children.

Mt 18:10 “their angels . . . behold the face of my Father” Jesus explains that angels are given charge over children. Jews believed that God gave “His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psalm 91:10; also see Daniel 6:22). Although we do not know if God sends each infant to their second estate with angelic protection, we do know that the light of Christ is given to all who are born on the earth (D&C 84:44-48; Moroni 7:12). Modern prophets have discussed the idea of guardian angels including,

- Heber J Grant: “[Children] the Lord loves you. His angels are always near to help you. Your guardian angels stand by you to see that no harm shall touch you, no evil thought disturb you.”¹¹
- Joseph Fielding Smith: “We have often heard of guardian angels attending us and many patriarchs have spoken of such protection. There are times no doubt when some unseen power directs us and leads us from harm. However, the true guardian angel given to every man who comes into the world is the Light of Truth or Spirit of Christ.”¹²
- Pres. Harold B. Lee: “Those in the spirit world may be guardian angels to those in mortality. Who are guardian angels? Well, it would appear that someone who is quickened by some influence, not yet celestialized, is permitted to come back as a messenger for the purpose of working with and trying to aid those who are left behind. . . . It isn’t your [departed] father and mother who will be far away from you, children; it will be you who keep them far away.”¹³

Parable of the Lost Sheep (Mt 18:10-14; Lk 15:3-7)

Mt 18:11 “. . . cometh to save that which was lost” The JST adds a helpful transition between children and lost sheep: *“and to call sinners to repentance; but these little ones have no need of repentance, and I will save them.”*¹⁴

Mt 18:12; Lk 15:4 “a man has . . . sheep” Jesus describes this shepherd as a brave, mountain-climbing, self-sacrificing man. Yet in the Jewish world at the time, shepherds were considered socially unclean. They were not trusted and not allowed to stand as a legal witness in court. This tradition developed because some shepherds let their flocks graze on others’ property. Jesus, however, uses this image of a shepherd; to describe Himself because he was despised by many. As the “good shepherd,” He knows His sheep by name (Jn 10:14). A thousand years earlier, King David also describes the Lord as an attentive shepherd in Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want (23:1).

The Gospels include 37 verses about sheep (mostly in Jn 10:2-27). John and Jeannie Welch describe sheep as helpless. It is interesting to consider the parallels between fallen man and sheep:

Of all the animals in God’s kingdom, sheep rank among the most vulnerable. They are largely defenseless, lacking claws or most other means of warding off an attack from predators. They cannot even run quickly for very long. And not only can a lamb become lost, but because it lacks any homing instinct, it is quite helpless in finding its way back to the flock or the pasture. And once lost, it will frequently simply sit down and wait, not even bleating in distress. The best protection for sheep is to stay together in a group. Even then, the slightest noise can send them into a panic or cause a whole herd to stampede, sometimes to their death. The presence of their shepherd exerts an immediate claiming effect on the sheep.¹⁵

¹¹ Heber J. Grant wrote an official first presidency statement to children included

¹² Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:54.

¹³ Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, edited by Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1996), 58-59.

¹⁴ Hite, *New Testament with JST*, 102.

¹⁵ John W. and Jeannie S. Welch, *The Parables of Jesus: revealing the Plan of Salvation* (American Fork: UT, Covenant Communications, 2019), 97.

Mt 18:13-14; Lk 15:6-7 “likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” Jesus uses the parable of “the lost sheep,” to describe the importance of finding and leading sinners back to God’s fold. God finds joy and celebrates with every individual carefully brought back.

Reproving Another (Mt 18:15-18; Lk 17:3)

Mt 18:15 “between thee and him alone” Jesus teaches that the best way to approach a disagreement is to privately discuss the offense (also see Mt 5:25-26). Rabbis taught that even if full restoration were made, you would not obtain forgiveness until you ask for it from the person you have wronged. This is consistent with Jesus’ teaching.

Mt 18:16 “But if he will not hear thee . . .” If the offender refuses reconciliation, the Mosaic law called for two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). Christians, too, are familiar with the Lord using two or three witnesses to establish his truths (Mt 18:16; Jn 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19).

Mt 18:18 “bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” This verse does not seem to belong. Right in the middle of a discussion on forgiveness, we find a word-for-word repeat of Mt 16:19. Was it a mistake? Mt often repeats phrases as dividing points or organizational markers in his Gospel. If it were intentional, why do you think Mt has it here again? In Mt’s context of Jesus speaking to the Twelve about their service, perhaps it has to do with the returning sheep being sealed. Does this have anything to do with the keys that were given on the Mount of Transfiguration in Mt 17? Were the keys given to the other twelve apostles at this time? Were the twelve receiving instructions on sealing ordinances?

There Am I (Mt 18:19-20)

18:19 “that they may not ask amiss” (JST) Returning to the theme of two witnesses, the Lord promises the Twelve that if two of them ask for what is right (the stipulation added by the JST), the Lord will answer them. Interestingly, in the restoration context of binding and loosing, sealings are done in the presence of two witnesses.

Mt 18:20 “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I” The Lord expanded His direction from two or three of the Twelve, to include all of His disciples who come to worship in His name. When we gather in unity and truth, our Savior (or the gift of His Spirit) can be in our midst. I love this promise! Especially in light of the parable of the lost sheep and forgiveness, it . . . [explain the connection here]. The two or three gathered seems to parallel with the two or three witnesses needed for reconciliation [and two witnesses needed for an ordinance? or just take that part about ordinances out.]. Even a few who act in harmony with God’s will are blessed with His Spirit. Elder Bruce R. McConkie saw this verse as referring to those who have the Gift of the Holy Ghost:

All of those who have made covenant in the waters of baptism to serve the Lord and who have, as a consequence, been promised the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Such great blessings as are here promised are not given automatically or promiscuously; they are reserved for those who through faith and obedience are conforming their lives to the divine standard. . . .

Forgive (Mt 18:21-22)

Mt 18:21 “How oft shall . . . I forgive?” The Jewish rule said that someone only needed to offer unconditional forgiveness three times.¹⁶ This came from a reading of Amos 1:3, “for three transgressions . . . and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof.” In the D&C, as the Lord gives instructions to the Missouri saints during their persecution, he encourages them to turn the other cheek with forgiveness four times. These examples make Peter’s offer of forgiving seven times a very generous offer.

Mt 18:22 “seventy times seven” This number is both symbolic and real. It is a whole, complete, perfect level of forgiveness. Literally, $70 \times 7 = 490$, was a number familiar at the time as “ten jubilees (or seventy weeks of years).”¹⁷ I think it is significant that Jesus uses this number as it is used in Daniel 9:2, in association with the Messiah’s arrival. Now that Christ is on the earth, He implements the higher law of forgiveness that His atonement can offer. We are eternally indebted to our Redeemer and can certainly learn to be patient

¹⁶ W.F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Anchor Bible: Matthew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 223. This is quoting a later work, the Babylonian Talmud, compiled after the time of Jesus, but claiming ideas from the Second Temple.

¹⁷ Welch, *Parables*, 114.

and forgiving with others as we follow our Savior's example to forgive. It is a very different principle here than Peter understood: "forgiveness from Jesus is qualitative not quantitative."¹⁸ Jesus illustrates this important lesson with another story that Mt alone records.

Parable of The Unforgiving Servant (Mt 18:23-35)

Mt 18:23-35 "a certain king . . . take[s] account of his servants" Jesus' parable again seems to use exaggerated numbers, but they provide significant meaning. The first man owed the king ten thousand talents. That is equivalent to billions and billions of dollars today—in a day where no one had that kind of money. That is like saying one person was in debt for the gross net worth of all the companies of Silicon Valley combined (i.e. Google, Apple, Facebook, etc.) The price does seem to be significant as it relates to the Jewish nation. In the historical setting of Herod's Temple, Josephus records that the entire temple treasury was worth 10,000 talents. Jesus contrasts that price—as large as one can imagine—in comparison to 100 pence, or 100 days labor at minimum wage. A BYU Studies article suggested another view:

Thus, the unforgiving servant may in fact represent the king or the temple high priest into whose hands God had entrusted the keeping of that huge amount of sacred wealth. No one else in Judea could conceivably have held that kind of money. Thus, the political upshot of the parable may well be this: despite the great debts and offenses of the rulers of the temple against God, they can be readily forgiven by God, so long as they beg his forgiveness and worship him. When asked, however, to be generous to a commoner in need of a small amount, the rich rulers of the temple will be unmoved, and as a consequence, they will be held personally accountable for the loss of the entire temple treasury.¹⁹

Jesus uses the temple as a reference to value, but the main message embeds the relationship between God's forgiveness and our need to forgive others. I like Elder Robert E. Wells interpretation about this parable.

We're often critical of others but easy on ourselves. We often see clearly the faults of others but find it difficult to see our own. We say we're frank and honest when we speak critically of someone else, but feel offended, claiming that they are unfair, not tolerant or understanding, when others do the same about us. If we fail in anything, we produce half a dozen valid reasons why, which in others would be feeble excuses. The important lesson we learn in the parable of the unforgiving servant is that unless and until we have shown forgiveness to our fellowman, we can't receive forgiveness of God.²⁰

I presume that this parable would mean more to Peter soon when he will desperately need the Savior's forgiveness.

Jesus gives another parable that speaks to humanity's need for a Savior and Redeemer. It outlines the plan of salvation. It is found only in the Gospel of Luke

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

I have seen many old gothic cathedrals which use stain glass windows to tell biblical stories. Some depict OT stories in conjunction with NT stories. Accounts from Jesus' life often parallel or fulfill OT stories. For example, Noah's flood is often positioned next to Jesus' baptism, or Moses' manna with Jesus feeding of the 5,000. In a few cathedrals, I have seen the parable of the good Samaritan paired with the story of Adam and Eve. After researching this, John W. Welch found that many early Christian fathers and theologians throughout the middle ages interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan as an allegory symbolizing Christ himself saving fallen humanity from their sins. They saw it as a type and shadow of Christ's redemption of humanity from the fall.²¹

In this parable, Jesus again uses images that would have startled His listeners. Historically, inns were filthy and unhealthy. Jews saw Samaritans as their enemy, unclean, evil, and selfish. At the time of the NT, the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho was very dangerous. There are limestone caves that pot-marked the

¹⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 3rd ed. (McLean, VA: MacDonald, nd. Reprint of 1838), 125.

¹⁹ "Herodian Times and Historical Backgrounds," *BYU Studies*, vol. 36 (1996-97), Number 3.

²⁰ Robert E. Wells, *The Mount and the Master*, 165.

²¹ John W. Welch, "The Good Samaritan," *BYU Studies*, vol 38; number 2 (Provo, UT: 1999), 50-106. Some of the early church fathers include: Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Isidore, and Eliguius.

hillside and robbers lived there. No one with any sense would travel the road alone because of the robbers waiting to attack. Jericho was a famous resort town—even Herod the Great built a palace in there (and stayed there while dying). The highway between the “resort” town and the big city was well known.

When we consider these details and read the parable as instructions on being a good neighbor, it becomes the source of much kindness, acts of service, and not judging. This is good, but if that is all we see, then we miss God’s plan of salvation that is tucked into its message. The prophet Joseph Smith taught how to find hidden meanings in parables or scriptures: “I have [a] key by which I understand the scripture. I inquire, what was the question which drew out the answers?”²²

With this parable we often only see the last question, “who is my neighbor?” (Lk 10:29), but this was asked only to “justify” the lawyer. The question he asked first is also answered in the parable, but it takes a deeper level of understanding, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk 10:25). Answering this question ties back to the allegory that the early church fathers saw with Adam and Eve.

Allegorical view of the Text

Lk 10:30 “A certain man, came down” In the allegorical view, the “man” is either Adam from the garden of Eden, or all humanity. The word “man” in Hebrew and Aramaic is “*adam*.” The emphasis is on “coming down” from the holy city “**Jerusalem**,” or heaven. Jerusalem is always “higher” spiritually than any place in the world to a Jew, so it appropriately can represent the Holy City, heaven or the residence of God. That person leaves the presence of God with promises conferred from that holy setting. In the allegory the man goes from God’s city or a premortal realm in heaven—to life on earth. The man also comes voluntarily and alone.

“Jericho” The city of Jericho along with Babylon, Egypt, and Sodom and Gomorrah are used symbolically for worldliness. In opposition to the heavenly city, Jericho represents “the world.” It is the lowest city on the planet, 825 feet below sea level. In the allegorical view, it represents the fall, or coming to a fallen world for mortal life.

“Fell among thieves” The man “fell / *peripipto*,” meaning, “to fall in with” or “to fall into misfortunes,” not “to fall down / *pipto*.” The early Christians saw the thieves as “opposing forces or evil spirits of false teachers.”²³ In the allegory, the thieves are a deliberate pernicious group with a concerted intent, not random attackers, but devils with a plan. Similarly, all mortals on earth are faced with the opposition, temptation and false teachings of the devil.

“stripped him of his raiment” Early church fathers (including Origen, Chrysostom and Augustine), saw the man’s loss of his raiment as the loss of his “robe of immortality” or a “robe of obedience.” The thieves did not rob him of any money, but of his garment. What state do humans have in heaven that they lose coming to earth? When this raiment or robe is taken away, the man is wounded. Perhaps it is spiritual death and he is left without his spiritual awareness or memory on earth.

“wounded him . . . leaving him half dead” The wounds can be wounds to the spirit of humanity, but they do not kill him, he is only half dead. Something happened when leaving his heavenly home that hurt him so that on earth, he is missing his spiritual knowledge and now must walk by faith. However, the thieves can torment him only within certain bounds, not kill him (1 Corinthians 10:13). In the analogy of the plan of salvation, think of our first and second deaths (spiritual death and physical death) is this imagery of “half-dead” (Alma 12:31-32). We are born into a fallen world. Furthermore, the sin that we engage with as fallen mortals does leave us “spiritually dead.”

Lk 10:31-32 “A certain priest . . . [and] Levite” The early church fathers saw the priest as representative of the Law of Moses, and the Levite, the other sacred Jewish text, “The Prophets.” (Levites were lower-class temple workers—they helped as the butchers, janitors, policemen, and if they were lucky, musicians, at the temple.) In the allegorical view, neither the Law of Moses nor their other scriptures had power to save. Their law and their text was ultimately impotent.

“passed by on the other side” They come closer to the wounded man, but both men keep their distance themselves to retain ritual purity in order to work in the temple. In the allegorical view, they don’t convert

²² Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: reprint, 1964), 5.261. This statement is from Joseph Smith’s Journal, kept by Willard Richards, Jan. 29, 1843.

²³ Welch, “The Good Samaritan,” 76.

to the Gospel, but remain on their Mosaic course, unable to heal or help with eternal salvation because they do not accept the higher law.

Lk 10:33 “a certain Samaritan . . . had compassion” The Samaritan was seen by most of the early church Fathers to represent Christ. In Jn 8:48, antagonistic Jews refer derogatorily to Jesus as a Samaritan. Even though Isaiah’s chapters on the “suffering servant” describe the Lord as an outcast, the Jews were not expecting their Messiah to share those traits (Isa 49, 52, 53).²⁴ In this parable, Jesus chooses this image for Himself, speaking to how His colleagues thought of Him. He equated Himself with some of the Jews worst enemies for the past thousand years. Yet *this Samaritan*, Jesus, has compassion.

Lk 10:34 “bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine” The Samaritan comes up to the injured and binds up his wounds. He represents a divinely compassionate God. Clement saw God’s healing skills as faith, hope, and charity as the “ligatures . . . or salvation which cannot be undone.” Welch points out, as Abraham bound Isaac, our souls are bound to the Lord. We are bound to the Lord through covenants. The Lord begins to replace the lost garments by rebuilding spiritual protection through wine and oil. These represent the wine of Jesus’ atoning blood spilt in Gethsemane and on the cross. The oil, is healing as the “Anointed one / Messiah” administers it. The ordinances incorporating wine and oil become part of the healing process the Savior employs. Another translation reads, the wine and oil “gush” into the wound to disinfect and cleanse it.²⁵

“Set him on his own beast” Carrying the wounded on His own beast, is the image of Jesus as our Redeemer carrying humanity on and in His body. From the pains that caused His bleeding at every pour, to the wounds in His hands and sides, His body carried the debt of sin for each of us (Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:18; 1 Peter 2:21-24).

“brought him to an inn” The inn has long been interpreted as the church. Jesus carries us to salvation through His ministers and missionaries who work at the Inn / the church. The Samaritan takes care of the wounded victim Himself for the first night and day.

Lk 10:35 “on the morrow,” or after Christ’s resurrection, He leaves the work of careful healing hands to His established church. The Innkeeper may represent church workers, apostles, and others assigned to minister in the church (possibly?)

“Two pence” Several allegorical interpretations work here: The Father and Son, two instructions on charity, two days wages, symbolizing adequate provisions, temple tax suggesting fulfilled ritual obligations, and even after the time established by the Lord when he will come—after 2 more days Christ arose on the morning of the Resurrection.

“when I come again, I will repay thee” The workers at the inn will be rewarded for their service to wounded humanity. Jesus promises that whatever you spend, will be returned. They will be amply reimbursed for their sacrifices for the church and fallen humanity at either the Second Coming or when they meet the Lord on the judgement day.²⁶

Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan beautifully illustrates the plan of salvation. The early Christians allegorical interpretation fits nicely with the restored understanding of Adam and Eve’s fall and journey on earth to return to heaven. This interpretation answers the lawyer’s first question, “what is needed to inherit eternal life,” by showing the need to receive Jesus as our redeemer and exemplar in carrying out His work of healing and building the church.

Loving God: Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42)

Lk places these two stories next to each other as supportive theological messages (and without mentioning it, both near Jerusalem). Kent Brown sees Lk using the preceding parable on the Good Samaritan to show how to love one’s neighbor and this story to show how to love God.²⁷ Lk also uses both stories to break down other societal norms. Jesus’ restoration finds good in Samaritans and in educating women.

²⁴ Dating from the first and/or second centuries BC, the eighteen Psalms of Solomon, collect several ideas pointing toward the hope of their promised Messiah. No references to Isaiah’s suffering servant passages or any other sign of a messiah who will be rejected are found. It was not an image that the Jews were expecting.

²⁵ Welch, “The Good Samaritan,” 82.

²⁶ Ibid., 86. See Table 1 on <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/good-samaritan-type-and-shadow-plan-salvation>

²⁷ Kent Brown, *BYU New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 544.

Lk 10:38 “Martha received him into her house” Martha’s name means, “mistress,” and she lived up to her title by welcomes the whole group traveling with Jesus to her home (the JST adds disciples too, “they entered”). Lk does not identify the village, but the Gospel of Jn records that Mary, Martha and Lazarus live in Bethany, a village just 2.5 miles east of Jerusalem. By connecting this information, we find a hint in Lk that Jesus had traveled down to Judea and stay with His friends.

The JST also adds that it was Martha’s home. This was an unusual situation at the time, as women usually did not own property. It suggests that perhaps she is a widow and her husband left the house to her, or perhaps he is “Simon the Leper” (Mt 26:6; Mk 14:3). Simon the Leper also had a home in Bethany where Jesus came to eat. Perhaps it is the same home, but at due to Simon’s illness, he is removed from the public (to a leper’s colony?) and Martha is in charge of their home.²⁸

Lk 10:40 “Martha was cumbered about much serving” With the large group gathering for the dinner party in Jesus’ honor, Martha was distraught. Lk portrays Martha as an upright Jewess trying to prepare her home and a meal for her many honored guests. Her workload has led her to become frustrated with her sister’s lack of help. Even if she had servants or children to help (which she probably had even though it says, “serve alone”²⁹), as the hostess, Martha’s workload felt overwhelming. The Greek word for “cumbered” is “diverted” and means “kept being distracted.”³⁰ This detail brings the story into our lives, as we too experience stress that can alter our perspective.

“my sister hath left me to serve alone” It is as if Martha is saying: “Jesus don’t you see how burdened I am?” From the perspective of most Jews of the day, Mary—not Martha—was out of line. She sat at Jesus’ feet to learn from Him which broke two laws: Women were not to speak to men and they were not to learn the Law. Some rabbis believed that a woman speaking to a man was so egregious that it was sufficient cause for a divorce.³¹ Also, it was obvious that Mary neglected her domestic responsibilities before the dinner. Yet Jesus did not agree. This became a perfect setting for Jesus to knock down another false culture practice.

Lk 10:41 “. . . thou art careful and troubled about many things” Jesus noticed that Martha was frustrated and even “anxious” about her sister’s lack of help (ESV). His response to Martha sounds like a reminder of priorities to the modern reader, but to that ancient society, His response would have been completely shocking. In Greek it communicates that she is anxious and distracted of mind. The problem is not serving, but the timing and divided priorities.

Lk 10:42 “But one thing is needful” When we look at life from an eternal perspective, the mortal fluff falls away and we are left with the need to “come unto Christ and be perfected in Him” (Moroni 10:32). Even daily bread and a shelter is superfluous compared to our relationship with our Heavenly Parents and the Savior.³²

In this way Jesus emancipates those burdened by cares of the world, to seek for the better and best.

“Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” Jesus’ last remark is especially touching in the context of the era. Jewish women owned nothing—everything they owned belonged to their fathers or guardians before marriage, and husbands after. That included their clothing, food, and children. Even their lives could be sold into slavery if their father or husband thought it necessary. Jesus’ statement shows that women can own what they learn. Mary’s experience will develop more faith and knowledge and

²⁸ Another overlapping evidence that Simon the Leper was part of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus’ family or home connections is based on the fact that at the supper in Bethany recorded in Mt 26:6; Mk 14:3, a woman anoints Jesus’ head with pure nard, while Jn 12:3 speaks of a dinner at Bethany with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus when Mary uses pure nard to anoint Jesus.

²⁹ Wilson, *Emancipation*, chapter 8. The average middle-class household in the Greco-Roman at the time had 8 servants or slaves. The Jewish world probably had less.

³⁰ Brown, *Luke*, 542.

³¹ *Mishnah, Ketuboth* 1:8.

³² Jesus’ example honors women in their education and respects them as equal partners. The same view is seen by modern apostles like, Elder Richard G. Scott: “In some cultures, tradition places a man in a role to dominate, control, and regulate all family affairs. That is not the way of the Lord. In some places the wife is almost owned by her husband, as if she were another of his personal possessions. That is a cruel, mistaken vision of marriage encouraged by Lucifer that every priesthood holder must reject. It is founded on the false premise that a man is somehow superior to a woman. Nothing could be farther from the truth” (*Ensign*, Nov 2008; “Honor the Priesthood and use it well,” 46).

give her a richer life. Also, she will own her knowledge beyond this life: “Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection” (D&C 130:18). What Mary (and each of us) learns and experiences will be hers (ours) for an eternity.

Jesus’ revolutionary endorsement of interacting with women, and encouraging their learning was radically novel. Jesus was not speaking against the need for service nor to avoid household duties. Rather, His message was that learning of Him should be our priority. He also demonstrated that women may join in the world of the spirit and mind. Lk also wanted to share this message with the early church, and added it to his Gospel.