

Understanding the Sermon on the Mount

Excerpt from The Great Gospel of John, vol. 01
revealed to Jakob Lorber in 1860

Right after the Wedding of Cana, Jesus travels to the town of Sychar in Samaria where He meets the woman at the well of Jacob. There it is the first time that He openly tells somebody that He is the Messiah. (John 4, 26) Jesus stays in Sychar for several days and then goes to the mountain to deliver His famous sermon.

After the sermon some people together with the high priest criticize Jesus saying that the content of the sermon is too harsh and impractical:

(The High Priest:) "There is hardly a tenable argument against such precepts, but they are too severe and hardly anyone will be able to practice them.

"Who can love his enemy, who do good to the one who harms him maliciously and who can bless those who hate him and speak only bad about him? And if a person wants to borrow something from me, I must not turn away and refuse to listen to him, nor steel my heart against his words, even if I see clearly that the borrower will never be able to return what he has borrowed? Ah, what a silly thing. If the lazy ones and the shirkers hear about it, will they not promptly go to the wealthy and borrow from them as long as they possess something? Once they have in this way – and nothing is easier than that – lent everything to the poor, who can never return what they have borrowed, and in the end have nothing left themselves, the question arises: who will in the future be working and from whom will the poor then receive a loan?" (GGJ.01.40)

Jesus knows of course that these priests have a rare open mind and will accept an explanation. So He advises the High Priest to turn to His disciples for interpretation. (GGJ.01.42)

Chapter 42

The Sermon on the Mount clearly explained by Nathanael (1/42)

Here **the High Priest** turns to Nathanael and says to him: 'Following your Master's direction, I now happen to turn to you. Will you, therefore, explain to me at least the most difficult point of the teaching of your master? But please do use only clear and pure words, for with a haze over a haze, a room cannot be illuminated. And now do speak.'

[2] Replies **Nathanael**: 'Are you of such a closed mind that you cannot grasp a clearly given teaching in its true sense? Have not practically all the prophets predicted that Christ would open His mouth to speak to the people only in parables?'

[3] Says **the High Priest**: 'Yes, you are right, that is how it is written.'

[4] Continues **Nathanael**: 'Well, since you as one versed in the Scripture know that why then do you call the Lord a fool because according to the Scripture He opens His mouth in parables? You may, of course, implore the Lord for a light to help you understand them, but not call Him a fool if you do not understand His allegorical speech, since you are still ignorant in such divine matters.'

[5] See, all things in nature have their order and can exist only in their specific order. Thus have also the things of the spirit their specific order, beyond which they cannot exist nor be imagined or expressed in words. However, between the natural and the spiritual things, since the former have gone forth from the latter, there is and exists an exact correspondence which, of course, only the Lord knows in all detail.

[6] Thus, when the Lord tells us – who are all still within the fixed order of natural existence – of purely spiritual things, He can do so only by using images. To be able to understand these properly, we must strive to awaken our spirit through observing God's commandments. Once this awakening has taken place, openly then shall we understand all that the Lord has said and revealed in such a corresponding parable, and that is wherein his divine Word will forever differ from our human word.

[7] But now pay good attention. What the eye is to the natural man, is to the spirit the ability to view the divine and heavenly things, which alone suit the nature of the spirit for its most blessed, everlasting existence.

[8] However, since the spirit, according to the most necessary divine order, has to be for a certain time imprisoned in the matter of the flesh of this world, so that it may become firm in its freedom and almost total independence of God without which it would never be able to see God, let alone exist in, beside and with God - (but when the spirit is maturing within matter and becoming firm in freedom and independence of God, it is exposed to the quite unavoidable danger of being swallowed up by matter and perishing together with it, from which death is an awakening to life in God and must be extremely hard and painful) – the Lord said, not to the physical man, of course, but to the spiritual man: "If your eye offends you, tear it out and fling it away, for it is better to enter the Heavens with one eye, than Hell with both," which is to say as much as: If you find the light of the world too tempting, make an effort and turn away from such a light, which would draw you into the death of matter. Deprive yourself as spirit of the empty gratification that enjoyment of the world can offer and turn with your soul to the purely heavenly things, for it is better for you to enter the realm of eternal life without much worldly knowledge than be swallowed up by the death of matter – too worldly wise on the one hand and too little spiritually wise on the other hand.

[9] If the Lord here spoke of two eyes, hands and feet, He thereby did not mean the two eyes and the two hands and feet of the body, but only the obviously dual ability of the spirit to see, act and progress. He does not warn the flesh, which has no life, but the spirit not to concern itself with the world, when it feels too much attracted to it. In that case it is better to enter eternal life without knowledge of the world than be in the end swallowed up by the necessary judgment of the world because of too much worldly knowledge.

[10] The spirit shall, of course, also see the world and get to know it, but it shall not take pleasure in it. Once it begins to feel that the world attracts it, it should promptly turn away from the world as danger is already threatening. See, this necessary turning away is expressed by the corresponding picture of the tearing out of an eye and He who is able to give us such an appropriate image must surely be well-versed in all man's spiritual and material circumstances. In my opinion, this could be possible only to Him through whose power, love and wisdom all things spiritual and material have been created. I think you will now have understood me and realize how flagrantly you have sinned against the One who carries yours as well as all our lives in His almighty hand.'

Chapter 43

Further explanation of Nathanael

Here **the High Priest**, as well as many others, is quite startled and says after a while: 'Yes, yes, now I do understand it. But why did not the Lord speak right away as plainly as you have now spoken? Then I would surely not have sinned against Him.'

[2] Says **Nathanael**: 'If a seven year old boy would ask me that, I would not be at all surprised, but I do wonder how you, one of the principal sages of this place, could ask like that.'

[3] Would you not also like to ask the Lord why he put into the grain of seed the limitless forming and developing ability of the tree that will be going forth from it? Why the tedious development of a tree from the grain of seed and following that the long wait for the ripe fruit? Just look how foolish you still are.

[4] The Lord's word and teaching is like all His works. He gives us His teaching in seed-pods. These we have first to sow into the soil of our spirit, which soil is called love. Then the seed will sprout and grow into a tree of true knowledge of God and ourselves, and from this tree we shall then in due course be able to gather fully matured fruit for eternal life.

[5] Love is the principal thing. Without it no fruit of the spirit can thrive. Sow the wheat into the air and see whether it will grow and bear fruit for you, but if you put the grain of wheat into good soil, it will grow and bear multiple fruit. The right love, however, is a proper soil for the spiritual grain of seed which we receive from the Lord's mouth.

[6] This is the reason why the Lord has now for all of you abolished the harsh Mosaic law of punishment, so that you may soon grow richer in good soil in your hearts. For he who punishes according to the law has little or often no love at all and the divine word-seed will, therefore, develop in him only poorly. The one who is being punished is anyway in the judgment in which there is no love, since judgment is the death of love.

[7] Therefore, it is better if you do not immediately see your fellowmen's faults, but are forbearing and patient. And if they in their weakness ask something of you, you shall not withhold it from them, so that love may keep growing in yourselves and also in your

weak brothers Once this is present in abundance in you as well as your brothers, the divine seed will thrive within you and the weak will then in his strength look upon you with good will and reward you many times over for what you did for him when he was weak.

[8] But if you are stingy and hard where your weak brothers are concerned, you yourselves will never attain to a divine fruit within you and the judgment of the weak will in the end drag also you into destruction.

[9] When the Lord said: "Give the one who asks you for your shirt also the coat," He only meant to point out that you who are rich and have many possessions should give abundantly to the poor when they come to you. Thereby you will also gain much soil in your hearts and thus be blessed with the possession of such true soil, and the poor will truly bless you, for from your hearts they will receive the most effective sermon of God's true Gospel and thereby become strong for your own eternal support. But if you give miserly and calculate when and how much to give, you help neither yourselves nor your poor brothers, and because of it these will never become a support for you.'

Chapter 44

Symbolic eyes, arms and feet

Says **the High Priest**, who has listened to this speech most attentively: 'Everything is now in order and I think that I understand all this pretty well. There is just one thing I still want to mention: The Master actually speaks only of tearing out the right eye and cutting off the right hand. Only in my searching zeal I added also the feet, but look, you have now also explained to me the cutting off of the feet just as you did the eye and hand about which alone the Lord spoke as far as I know. You said that there existed correspondence only in the Word of the Lord who speaks to man's spirit. How come then, that you found also correspondence in my addition?'

[2] Says **Nathanael**: 'You are wrong. The Lord spoke also of the right foot, but He hinted to the scribes to omit that about the foot because those who have directed their inner vision heavenward and have activated their love-will – which corresponds to the left arm as the hand of the heart – in accordance with God's will after getting rid of the right arm or right hand, by which the purely worldly motivation is to be understood, no longer need to rid themselves of the right foot. Once the eye is in the right light and the hand, or rather the will, is acting correctly, the progress into the regions of eternal life is automatically there or the right foot, denoting worldly progress, already automatically severed and a special effort is no longer needed.

[3] You Samaritans could as well start with the foot, for although your sight is now directed toward the divine and your hands are engaged in the right action, your foot or your eagerness for progress is directed towards the world. You expect of the Messiah something quite different from what you should expect of Him in accordance with the predictions by all the prophets, and that, spiritually seen, is your right foot which you should sever, so that you can set out on the right road to the Kingdom of God. Only because of you the Lord had spoken also of the right foot, but did not have it recorded because the future followers of the Lord's teaching will know very well where and

wherein the kingdom of the Messiah is and consists and what has to be done to enter it. Is there anything else you wish to query?’

[4] Says **the High Priest**: ‘Now everything is clear to me as far as I am able to grasp it but, notwithstanding the fact that I now do understand it, I must add that your teaching, the way it is given, is a severe and hard to understand teaching and you will find that many will be taking offence at it.

[5] Not that I wish to make a bad prophet for you, yet I tell you that with the arrogant Jews you will not achieve what you have achieved with us, notwithstanding our stupidity in many points. We do believe now, although still as if in a dream. The prominent Jews, however, will not believe you like this. They will ask for signs and will in the end even persecute you because of the signs. We did not ask you for signs, but you nevertheless worked them voluntarily.

[6] We do not believe you because of the signs, which partly could also be worked by men, but purely because of the teaching since it has now been explained to us. Therefore, you should stay with us, for with the proud Jews and Greeks you will have little success.’

Chapter 45

Not everyone can follow the Lord physically

Says **Nathanael**: ‘This far I had to instruct you, from here on everything is in the Lord’s hand. What He wills, we also shall will and do, for all of us are spiritually still very poor. Therefore, we must remain with Him, so that we may gain the Kingdom of Heaven. We will bear together with the Lord all suffering and persecution, so that with and in Him we shall have the proper comfort. In His name let us be meek in all our thoughts, opinions, wishes and desires, also in all our actions, so that we may be able to take real possession of the true soil which is the pure love of God in our hearts.

[2] We shall not shun the land where conditions are harsh and unjust either, we shall be hungry and thirsty for true justice, since we have the One with us who can truly satisfy us everlastingly.

[3] And we ourselves will be most merciful towards everyone, be he just or unjust in his dealings with us, so that in the eyes of the Lord we may be considered worthier of God’s great mercy.

[4] We will also everywhere, just as here before you, guard our hearts as much as possible against impurity, so that the Lord may not turn away from us when we face Him. For with an impure heart one cannot approach God and in spirit contemplate in all truth His countenance and the abundant wonders of His works.

[5] If we are of a pure heart, we must be peaceful, patient and gentle toward everyone, for an angry heart can never be pure, since anger always grows out of the ground of pride. But if we are of a peaceful heart, we may confidently approach as children the

One who brought us the sonship of god and taught us Himself to pray to God as our Father.

[6] It is of no importance, my friend, if, as you believe, we shall be persecuted in other lands and places on account of our most righteous cause, for we have Him and through Him the Heaven of Heavens. And thus we are happy already here, supremely happy, whether people love us or scorn and persecute us for His sake, because He is Lord over all and over everything. We serve Him above all, whom all the Heavens obey and are always prepared to serve, as we could convince ourselves yesterday and on earlier occasions, and this alone is our highest reward and greatest honor. Therefore, do not be concerned about us, for we know and recognize what we have to reckon with.

[7] **The High Priest** was quite surprised at this speech so full of determination and said: 'Truly, if I were not needed here and did not have wife and children and some other responsibilities, I would go with you.'

[8] Says **Nathanael**: 'We have left wives, children and other things and have followed Him, and our wives and children are nevertheless living. I tell you what I think about this: whoever cannot in this world, for the love of Him, leave whatever it may be, is not worthy of His grace. Whether it offends you or not, this is the position. My heart tells me so, and in the heart everything is truth once the spirit within it has awakened to the living thinking in God. He does not need us, but we do need Him.'

[9] Have you ever helped Him to raise the immense sun above the vast horizon and spread its celestial light across the wide Earth? Or have you ever seen, let alone forged, the shackles the Lord puts on the winds, how He constrains the lightning and the mighty thunder and the sea in its depths? Who can claim ever to have helped the Lord in anything? And if this is so, who, when he is called by the Lord to follow Him, can still think of his wife, his children and his things and not follow unconditionally – Him, the Lord of all life, of all the Heavens and all the worlds, for whom we have waited so long to come and who has now come exactly in the way all the prophets and patriarchs had predicted?'

[10] Says **the High Priest**: 'If I only were not the high priest, I would in truth do what all of you have done. But I am the high priest and since you, as I have heard, will stay here only for one more day, these people, who are so weak in faith, need me like the eye for seeing. So you will understand that I have to remain here, not so much because of my wife, my children and things, but rather because of these weak believers, who for quite some time yet will be unable to completely relinquish their set idea of old about the nature of the Messiah and the purpose of His coming. It will cost me a great effort, but what can I do?'

[11] I now believe firmly that your Master is the promised Messiah, but what about my flock? You have seen how already during the sermon many left. These are of a vexed unbelief which they will now diligently spread and many who still remained and yesterday fully believed have now their doubts, too, and do not know what to believe.

[12] Imagine what a job I, being an oracle to all of them, shall have. But if I do not convert them, they will remain to the end of the world whatever you can imagine, but not what they are supposed to be. And look, that is the main reason why I have to stay

here, and I am convinced that the Lord will not deny me His grace because of it. Even if I am not bodily in His company, I shall remain so spiritually forever and endeavor to serve Him as a most faithful servant and shepherd in full accordance with His here proclaimed teaching, and I think that He will agree to this.'

[13] Say I: 'Yes, I would like that and it suits Me very well. You shall be an excellent tool for Me in this community and your reward in Heaven shall once be great. But now evening has come. Let us go home again. So be it.'

End

GGJ = Great Gospel of John

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