**More Like the Master**

In His Humility and Forgiveness

Lesson 21

*““Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”*

(Luke 23:34)

**“I’ll Forgive, But I Won’t Forget”**

 As our modern society grows farther and farther away from godly principles, we see many worldly attitudes and actions displayed all around us that lead to terrible problems. There are more and more people puffed up with pride and arrogance. These people are going to do what they want regardless of what anyone (including God) says. There are more and more people who want to fight and be contentious instead of resolving their problems with love and gentleness. There are fewer and fewer people who are willing to forgive. They find it easier to harbor malice, hatred, and bitterness in their heart.

 We can either follow the example of the world and be led into a life of enmity, strife and division, or we can follow the humble and forgiving example of Jesus into a life of blessing. Instead of acting harshly like the world, we need to appeal to others each day in *“the meekness and gentleness of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:1). Instead of harboring malice and bitterness like the world, we need to be forgiving *“even as the Lord forgave you”* (Colossians 3:13). In this lesson we will study how Jesus was both humble and forgiving. We will learn how we can be “More Like the Master” in his humility and forgiveness.

**Jesus and His Humility and Forgiveness**

 Jesus was meek and humble.

 ***He preached meekness and humility.*** Jesus taught that everyone who wishes to enter into God’s kingdom must learn to be meek and humble. He taught in the Sermon on the Mount: *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5). Jesus taught that one must be humble like a child in order to be great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-4). He taught that a person who humbles himself before God will be exalted (Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14). Jesus preached that one should not be like the proud, self-righteous Pharisees, but one should be humble and penitent (Luke 18:9-14).

 ***He practiced meekness and humility.*** Jesus not only preached meekness and humility, but he also practiced these things himself. Jesus was meek. He invited others to come to him and learn from him saying, *“I am meek and lowly in heart”* (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus came into Jerusalem, *“Meek and riding upon an ass”,* in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 (Matthew 21:5). Following Jesus’ example, Paul entreated others by *“the meekness and gentleness of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:1; see also 1 Corinthians 4:21).

 Jesus was also humble. Paul writes that Jesus came from heaven and *“emptied himself”* and *“humbled himself”* becoming obedient to the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus humbled himself by giving up the grandeur and glory of heaven to come to earth and live a lowly life of service and suffering (Mark 9:12; Romans 15:3). Jesus did not selfishly grasp the glory of heaven, but gave it up. He humbly gave up heavenly riches to become earthly poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). He who was God became man (Hebrews 2:9-18) and obediently suffered on our behalf (Hebrews 5:8-9). He who was a preeminent master became a lowly servant (Philippians 2:7). He who was a somebody became a nobody (Isaiah 53:2; Philippians 2:5, *“made himself of no reputation”*). We can have the blessings of salvation from sin because Jesus humbled himself. Jesus humbled himself and then he was honored when he returned to heaven (Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 12:2-3). Proverbs 15:33 reads: *“Before honor goes humility”*. God will exalt the humble and give them a place of honor.

 Jesus was gentle and forgiving.

 ***He preached gentleness and forgiveness.*** Jesus taught his disciples to be gentle and forgiving of others. If they expected to be forgiven by the Father, they would have to be forgiving themselves (Matthew 6:12-15; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 11:4; 17:1-4). However, Jesus also taught that one can become so hardened against the words of the Holy Spirit and reject the Holy Spirit that he will never be forgiven (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10). Using the parable of the Sower, Jesus taught that a person can understand God’s word, repent, and be forgiven (Mark 4:12). Jesus taught forgiveness in the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus also taught that sin must be rebuked and when it is repented of, it must be forgiven (Luke 17:3-4). Jesus taught the importance of forgiveness when Peter asked Jesus how often one should forgive another. Jesus taught that one should take the initiative in forgiveness, if possible. He should go to the offender and point out his sin and try to clear up the matter (Matthew 18:15-17). Jesus used the parable of the unmerciful servant to teach Peter that he must be forgiving of others if he himself expects to be forgiven by the heavenly Father (Matthew 18:21-35).

 ***He practiced gentleness and forgiveness.*** Jesus was a gentle person. Yes, he was able to stand for truth and give a scathing rebuke to the Pharisees when they needed it. But, Jesus was also gentle and mild. He did not bully or browbeat people into obedience. He practiced strength under control. Matthew records: *“He shall not strive, nor cry aloud; neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, And smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory”* (Matthew 12:18-20; a quotation from Isaiah 42:2-3). We find in the ministry of Jesus his gentleness and tenderness displayed toward men, women, and children who were weak, poor, helpless, and outcast. Isaiah wrote that the coming Messiah would *“gently lead those that have their young”* (Isaiah 40:11). Jesus as our High Priest can *“bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity”* (Hebrews 5:2).

 Jesus was a forgiving person. Remember, he was “Jesus” (meaning “savior”) and he came to save mankind from their sins (Matthew 1:21). He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He said to others, *“Thy sins are forgiven”* (Matthew 9:2,5-6; Luke 7:48). Jesus, as the divine Son of God, had authority on earth to forgive sins and he did so on one occasion after seeing the faith of the palsied man. In this case, an obedient faith was rewarded with a divine forgiveness (Matthew 9:2-6; Mark 2:5-10; Luke 5:20-24). When Jesus was anointed by a woman in the home of Simon, he forgave her of her many sins because she sacrificed and showed her love toward Jesus (Luke 7:36-50). When the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, Jesus was willing to forgive her (John 8:1-11). He first exposed their hypocrisy and then he said to the woman, *“Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more”* (John 8:11). He forgave Zacchaeus (Luke 19:9). Even while hanging on the cross, Jesus had a forgiving spirit toward the Jews who crucified him. He said, *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). Jesus’ request would later be granted to these Jews on the day of Pentecost after they met the conditions of forgiveness: repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38).

**The Christian and Humble Forgiveness**

 Christians are to follow the example of Jesus and be meek, humble, gentle, and forgiving. These traits are not encouraged in our modern society, but they are traits that we must have nonetheless if we are to be pleasing to God. We must not look to the proud, harsh, and unforgiving world as our example, but to Jesus.

 We are to be meek and humble.

 ***Christians need to be meek.*** This does not mean that Christians are weak and without any sense of self-worth. It does not mean that they walk around cowering in fear of men and not standing for anything (meek does not mean weak). It means that Christians are submissive and compliant to the will of God. They know their place and willingly accept it in the sight of God. We must put on a heart of meekness with our brethren (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12) and we must exercise meekness when we work with others in difficult situations (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 3:2). Meekness is necessary in receiving God’s word (James 1:21) and living a life of wisdom (James 3:13). Meekness will help us to influence unbelievers with the truth, whether it be our own spouse, or anyone who asks a reason of the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:4, 15).

 ***Christians need to be humble.*** We are to be humble like Christ. We do not need a false or fake humility (Colossians 2; 18, 23), but a true, humble and contrite spirit. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). So, what do we need to do? We need to humble ourselves in the sight of God and under his mighty hand, so that he will exalt us in due time (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Peter writes: *“Finally, be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humble minded”* (1 Peter 3:8).

 “Lowly” is another word used in scripture to describe humility. Paul served God with all *“lowliness of mind”* (Acts 20:19) and then later wrote: *“Be of the same mind one toward another. Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to things that are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits”* (Romans 12:16). Christians are to put on lowliness as they count others better than themselves (Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:12)

 What can turn a person’s pride into humility? Often when people are robbed of their good fortunes in life, they turn from being proud to being humble (robbed by natural disasters, illness, financial crisis, scandals, foolish behavior, etc.). When things are going great in their life, they are proud. When those great things are taken away from them, suddenly they become humble. A good example of this is found in the prodigal son who at first proudly said, *“Give me…”* (Luke 15:12), and then later humbly said, *“Make me…”* (Luke 15:19). The first statement was made in pride (leaving home with everything) and the last statement was made in humility (returning home with nothing). What happened between the two statements was the removal of the good and great things of life. God has a way of making a proud person humble again.

 We are to be gentle and forgiving.

 ***Christians need to be gentle***. Christians are not to fight or be contentious with others (verbally or physically). They are not to act harshly toward others. Christians are to restore their erring brethren with a *“spirit of gentleness”* (Galatians 6:1). Elders are to be gentle (1 Timothy 3:3). Paul wrote that the Lord’s servant must not strive (fight), but be gentle towards all (2 Timothy 2:24). Gentleness coupled with meekness makes one effective in correcting others (2 Timothy 2:25). A Christian must not be contentious, but gentle (Titus 3:2).

 ***Christians need to be forgiving.*** First, Christians have the responsibility of preaching the gospel of forgiveness. Jesus came to establish a new covenant of forgiveness (Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:15; 10:1-4, 16-18). Jesus’ apostles went out and preached the gospel of forgiveness (John 20:23; Acts 5:31; 13:38-39; 26:15-18). We need to preach this same gospel and not change the terms or conditions of forgiveness in any way. Jesus’ blood forgives (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14) and we contact that forgiving blood in baptism (Colossians 2:12-13). The erring Christian can be forgiven when he repents and prays (Acts 8:22; James 5:15; 1 John 1:9). Second, Christians have the responsibility of maintaining a forgiving spirit (Matthew 6:14-15). We need to be willing to forgive others when they repent (Luke 17:1-4). We need to forgive and comfort our erring brother when he repents (2 Corinthians 2:7, 10). We are not to have a heart of bitterness and resentment, but a heart of forgiveness. We forgive others as the Lord forgave us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

**More Like the Master in His Humble Forgiveness**

We live in a proud and arrogant world. Will we follow the world’s pride or Jesus? Jesus was meek. Will we follow his example of meekness and bear our own meekness as one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23)? Jesus was humble. Paul wrote about Jesus’ humility and said, *“Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2:5). What mind? The *“lowliness of mind”* found in verse 3 and the *“humbled”* mind of verse 8. Will we have the mind of Christ in us – the mind of humble service?

 We live in a harsh, cruel, and unforgiving world. Will we follow the world’s contentious spirit or Jesus? Jesus was gentle. Will you have the gentleness of Jesus necessary to approach others and be approached by others? James writes: *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated…”* (James 3:17). Jesus was forgiving. He forgave, he forgave much and many, he took the initiative in forgiving, and he placed forgiveness at the center of his life. Will you forgive like Jesus? Let us all be “More Like the Master” in his meek humility and his gentle forgiveness.

**Questions**

1. How do people of the world often act differently from Jesus in the areas of humility and forgiveness?

2. What did Jesus teach about meekness and humility?

3. What were some things that Jesus did that showed he was a meek and humble person?

4. What did Jesus teach about forgiveness?

5. What where some things that Jesus did that showed he was a gentle person?

6. What were some things that Jesus did that showed he was a forgiving person?

7. What is meekness and what are some NT scriptures that teach the importance of it for a Christian?

8. What is humility and what are some NT scriptures that teach the importance of it for a Christian?

9. What is gentleness and what are some NT scriptures that teach the importance of it for a Christian?

10. What are two responsibilities that Christians have regarding forgiveness?

11. What choices does a Christian have between the world and Jesus with reference to humility and forgiveness?