

# LESSON 10: Transcendence of the Religion of Jesus

The religion of Jesus transcends all our former concepts of the idea of worship in that he not only portrays his Father as the ideal of infinite reality but positively declares that this divine source of values and the eternal center of the universe is truly and personally attainable by every mortal creature who chooses to enter the kingdom of heaven on earth, thereby acknowledging the acceptance of sonship with God and brotherhood with man. That, I submit, is the highest concept of religion the world has ever known, and I pronounce that there can never be a higher since this gospel embraces the infinity of realities, the divinity of values, and the eternity of universal attainments. Such a concept constitutes the achievement of the experience of the idealism of the supreme and the ultimate. 160:5.7

## JESUS' RELIGION

To Jesus, mortal life had dealt its hardest, cruelest, and bitterest blows; and this man met these ministrations of despair with faith, courage, and the unswerving determination to do his Father's will. Jesus met life in all its terrible reality and mastered it—even in death. He did not use religion as a release from life. The religion of Jesus does not seek to escape this life in order to enjoy the waiting bliss of another existence. The religion of Jesus provides the joy and peace of another and spiritual existence to enhance and ennoble the life which men now live in the flesh. "If religion is an opiate to the people, it is not the religion of Jesus. On the cross he refused to drink the deadening drug, and his spirit, poured out upon all flesh, is a mighty world influence which leads man upward and urges him onward. The spiritual forward urge is the most powerful driving force present in this world; the truth-learning believer is the one progressive and aggressive soul on earth.

On the day of Pentecost the religion of Jesus broke all national restrictions and racial fetters. It is forever true, 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' On this day the Spirit of Truth became the personal gift from the Master to every mortal. This spirit was bestowed for the purpose of qualifying believers more effectively to preach the gospel of the kingdom, but they mistook the experience of receiving the outpoured spirit for a part of the new gospel which they were unconsciously formulating. 194:3.3

## THE OLD AND THE NEW RELIGION

And all this clearly indicates the difference between the old religion and the new. The old religion taught self-sacrifice; the new religion teaches only self-forgetfulness, enhanced self-realization in conjoined social service and universe comprehension. The old religion was motivated by fear-

consciousness; the new gospel of the kingdom is dominated by truth-conviction, the spirit of eternal and universal truth. And no amount of piety or creedal loyalty can compensate for the absence in the life experience of kingdom believers of that spontaneous, generous, and sincere friendliness which characterizes the spirit-born sons of the living God. Neither tradition nor a ceremonial system of formal worship can atone for the lack of genuine compassion for one's fellows. 180:5.12

## Religious Living

“The marks of human response to the religious impulse embrace the qualities of nobility and grandeur. The sincere religionist is conscious of universe citizenship and is aware of making contact with sources of superhuman power. He is thrilled and energized with the assurance of belonging to a superior and ennobled fellowship of the sons of God. The consciousness of self-worth has become augmented by the stimulus of the quest for the highest universe objectives—supreme goals.

“The self has surrendered to the intriguing drive of an all-encompassing motivation which imposes heightened self-discipline, lessens emotional conflict, and makes mortal life truly worth living. The morbid recognition of human limitations is changed to the natural consciousness of mortal shortcomings, associated with moral determination and spiritual aspiration to attain the highest universe and superuniverse goals. And this intense striving for the attainment of supermortal ideals is always characterized by increasing patience, forbearance, fortitude, and tolerance.

“But true religion is a living love, a life of service. The religionist's detachment from much that is purely temporal and trivial never leads to social isolation, and it should not destroy the sense of humor. Genuine religion takes nothing away from human existence, but it does add new meanings to all of life; it generates new types of enthusiasm, zeal, and courage. It may even engender the spirit of the crusader, which is more than dangerous if not controlled by spiritual insight and loyal devotion to the common place social obligations of human loyalties.

“One of the most amazing earmarks of religious living is that dynamic and sublime peace, that peace which passes all human understanding, that cosmic poise which betokens the absence of all doubt and turmoil. Such levels of spiritual stability are immune to disappointment. Such religionists are like the Apostle Paul, who said: ‘I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else shall be able to separate us from the love of God.’

“There is a sense of security, associated with the realization of triumphing glory, resident in the consciousness of the religionist who has grasped the reality of the Supreme, and who pursues the goal of the Ultimate.” 100:6.3

## JESUS' RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Of Jesus it was truly said, ‘He trusted God.’ As a man among men he most sublimely trusted the Father in heaven. He trusted his Father as a little child trusts his earthly parent. His faith was perfect but never presumptuous. No matter how cruel nature might appear to be or how indifferent to man's

welfare on earth, Jesus never faltered in his faith. He was immune to disappointment and impervious to persecution. He was untouched by apparent failure. He loved men as brothers, at the same time recognizing how they differed in innate endowments and acquired qualities. 'He went about doing good.'

Jesus was an unusually cheerful person, but he was not a blind and unreasoning optimist. His constant word of exhortation was, 'Be of good cheer.' He could maintain this confident attitude because of his unswerving trust in God and his unshakable confidence in man. He was always touchingly considerate of all men because he loved them and believed in them. Still he was always true to his convictions and magnificently firm in his devotion to the doing of his Father's will.

The Master was always generous. He never grew weary of saying, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Said he, 'Freely you have received, freely give.' And yet, with all of his unbounded generosity, he was never wasteful or extravagant. He taught that you must believe to receive salvation. 'For every one who seeks shall receive.'

He was candid, but always kind. Said he, 'If it were not so, I would have told you.' He was frank, but always friendly. He was outspoken in his love for the sinner and in his hatred for sin. But throughout all this amazing frankness he was unerringly fair.

Jesus was consistently cheerful, notwithstanding he sometimes drank deeply of the cup of human sorrow. He fearlessly faced the realities of existence, yet was he filled with enthusiasm for the gospel of the kingdom. But he controlled his enthusiasm; it never controlled him. He was unreservedly dedicated to 'the Father's business.' This divine enthusiasm led his unspiritual brethren to think he was beside himself, but the onlooking universe appraised him as the model of sanity and the pattern of supreme mortal devotion to the high standards of spiritual living. And his controlled enthusiasm was contagious; his associates were constrained to share his divine optimism.

This man of Galilee was not a man of sorrows; he was a soul of gladness. Always was he saying, 'Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.' But when duty required, he was willing to walk courageously through the 'valley of the shadow of death.' He was gladsome but at the same time humble.

His courage was equaled only by his patience. When pressed to act prematurely, he would only reply, 'My hour has not yet come.' He was never in a hurry; his composure was sublime. But he was often indignant at evil, intolerant of sin. He was often mightily moved to resist that which was inimical to the welfare of his children on earth. But his indignation against sin never led to anger at the sinner.

His courage was magnificent, but he was never foolhardy. His watchword was, 'Fear not.' His bravery was lofty and his courage often heroic. But his courage was linked with discretion and controlled by reason. It was courage born of faith, not the recklessness of blind presumption. He was truly brave but never audacious.

The Master was a pattern of reverence. The prayer of even his youth began, 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.' He was even respectful of the faulty worship of his fellows. But this did not deter him from making attacks on religious traditions or assaulting errors of human belief. He was reverential of true holiness, and yet he could justly appeal to his fellows, saying, 'Who among you convicts me of sin?'

Jesus was great because he was good, and yet he fraternized with the little children. He was gentle and unassuming in his personal life, and yet he was the perfected man of a universe. His associates called him Master unbidden.

Jesus was the perfectly unified human personality. And today, as in Galilee, he continues to unify mortal experience and to co-ordinate human endeavors. He unifies life, ennobles character, and simplifies experience. He enters the human mind to elevate, transform, and transfigure it. It is literally true: 'If any man has Christ Jesus within him, he is a new creature; old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new.' UB 100:7.7 Acts 20:35; Matt 10:8; John 14:2; Luke 11:10; Luke 2:49; Matt 5:12; Ps 23:4; John 2:4; Luke 12:7, 32; Luke 11:2; John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:17.

## THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT

The religion of the spirit means effort, struggle, conflict, faith, determination, love, loyalty, and progress. The religion of the mind—the theology of authority—requires little or none of these exertions from its formal believers. Tradition is a safe refuge and an easy path for those fearful and halfhearted souls who instinctively shun the spirit struggles and mental uncertainties associated with those faith voyages of daring adventure out upon the high seas of unexplored truth in search for the farther shores of spiritual realities as they may be discovered by the progressive human mind and experienced by the evolving human soul. 155:5.11

## Religious Growth

The experience of dynamic religious living transforms the mediocre individual into a personality of idealistic power. Religion ministers to the progress of all through fostering the progress of each individual, and the progress of each is augmented through the achievement of all.

Spiritual growth is mutually stimulated by intimate association with other religionists. Love supplies the soil for religious growth—an objective lure in the place of subjective gratification—yet it yields the supreme subjective satisfaction. And religion ennobles the commonplace drudgery of daily living. 100:0.1

Give every developing child a chance to grow his own religious experience; do not force a ready-made adult experience upon him. Remember, year-by-year progress through an established educational regime does not necessarily mean intellectual progress, much less spiritual growth. Enlargement of vocabulary does not signify development of character. Growth is not truly indicated by mere products but rather by progress. Real educational growth is indicated by enhancement of ideals, increased appreciation of values, new meanings of values, and augmented loyalty to supreme values. 100:1.3

Spiritual growth is first an awakening to needs, next a discernment of meanings, and then a discovery of values. The evidence of true spiritual development consists in the exhibition of a human personality motivated by love, activated by unselfish ministry, and dominated by the wholehearted worship of the perfection ideals of divinity. And this entire experience constitutes the reality of religion as contrasted with mere theological beliefs. 100:2.2

## THE BELIEVER'S SURETY

Jesus portrayed the profound surety of the God-knowing mortal when he said: 'To a God-knowing kingdom believer, what does it matter if all things earthly crash?' Temporal securities are vulnerable, but spiritual sureties are impregnable. When the flood tides of human adversity, selfishness, cruelty, hate, malice, and jealousy beat about the mortal soul, you may rest in the assurance that there is one inner bastion, the citadel of the spirit, which is absolutely unassailable; at least this is true of every human being who has dedicated the keeping of his soul to the indwelling spirit of the eternal God.

After such spiritual attainment, whether secured by gradual growth or specific crisis, there occurs a new orientation of personality as well as the development of a new standard of values. Such spirit-born individuals are so remotivated in life that they can calmly stand by while their fondest ambitions perish and their keenest hopes crash; they positively know that such catastrophes are but the redirecting cataclysms which wreck one's temporal creations preliminary to the rearing of the more noble and enduring realities of a new and more sublime level of universe attainment. 100:2.7

## RELIGION AND THE RELIGIONIST

Early Christianity was entirely free from all civil entanglements, social commitments, and economic alliances. Only did later institutionalized Christianity become an organic part of the political and social structure of Occidental civilization.

The kingdom of heaven is neither a social nor economic order; it is an exclusively spiritual brotherhood of God-knowing individuals. True, such a brotherhood is in itself a new and amazing social phenomenon attended by astounding political and economic repercussions. 99:3.1

Religionists, as a group, must never concern themselves with anything but religion, albeit any one such religionist, as an individual citizen, may become the outstanding leader of some social, economic, or political reconstruction movement.

It is the business of religion to create, sustain, and inspire such a cosmic loyalty in the individual citizen as will direct him to the achievement of success in the advancement of all these difficult but desirable social services. 99:3.15

Genuine religion renders the religionist socially fragrant and creates insights into human fellowship. But the formalization of religious groups many times destroys the very values for the promotion of which the group was organized. Human friendship and divine religion are mutually helpful and significantly illuminating if the growth in each is equalized and harmonized. Religion puts new

meaning into all group associations—families, schools, and clubs. It imparts new values to play and exalts all true humor.

Social leadership is transformed by spiritual insight; religion prevents all collective movements from losing sight of their true objectives. Together with children, religion is the great unifier of family life, provided it is a living and growing faith. Family life cannot be had without children; it can be lived without religion, but such a handicap enormously multiplies the difficulties of this intimate human association. During the early decades of the twentieth century, family life, next to personal religious experience, suffers most from the decadence consequent upon the transition from old religious loyalties to the emerging new meanings and values.

True religion is a meaningful way of living dynamically face to face with the commonplace realities of everyday life. But if religion is to stimulate individual development of character and augment integration of personality, it must not be standardized. If it is to stimulate evaluation of experience and serve as a value-lure, it must not be stereotyped. If religion is to promote supreme loyalties, it must not be formalized.

No matter what upheavals may attend the social and economic growth of civilization, religion is genuine and worth while if it fosters in the individual an experience in which the sovereignty of truth, beauty, and goodness prevails, for such is the true spiritual concept of supreme reality. And through love and worship this becomes meaningful as fellowship with man and sonship with God. 99:4.1

## THE NEW COMMANDMENT

The time has now come for the Son of Man to be glorified, and the Father shall be glorified in me. My friends, I am to be with you only a little longer. Soon you will seek for me, but you will not find me, for I am going to a place to which you cannot, at this time, come. But when you have finished your work on earth as I have now finished mine, you shall then come to me even as I now prepare to go to my Father. In just a short time I am going to leave you, you will see me no more on earth, but you shall all see me in the age to come when you ascend to the kingdom which my Father has given to me.'

After a few moments of informal conversation, Jesus stood up and said: 'When I enacted for you a parable indicating how you should be willing to serve one another, I said that I desired to give you a new commandment; and I would do this now as I am about to leave you. You well know the commandment which directs that you love one another; that you love your neighbor even as yourself. But I am not wholly satisfied with even that sincere devotion on the part of my children. I would have you perform still greater acts of love in the kingdom of the believing brotherhood. And so I give you this new commandment: That you love one another even as I have loved you. And by this will all men know that you are my disciples if you thus love one another.

When I give you this new commandment, I do not place any new burden upon your souls; rather do I bring you new joy and make it possible for you to experience new pleasure in knowing the delights of the bestowal of your heart's affection upon your fellow men. I am about to experience the supreme

joy, even though enduring outward sorrow, in the bestowal of my affection upon you and your fellow mortals.

When I invite you to love one another, even as I have loved you, I hold up before you the supreme measure of true affection, for greater love can no man have than this: that he will lay down his life for his friends. And you are my friends; you will continue to be my friends if you are but willing to do what I have taught you. You have called me Master, but I do not call you servants. If you will only love one another as I am loving you, you shall be my friends, and I will ever speak to you of that which the Father reveals to me. UB 180:0.3 John 13:34, 35; 15:12.

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