

**Jesus:
The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit**

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part XIV

Commentary on "Does Jesus Have a Special Place in Healing?" (M-23) (conclusion)

(4:5) Remembering the name of Jesus Christ is to give thanks for all the gifts that God has given you.

This is not referring to any gifts that we receive within the world of form, but rather to the gifts that God has already given us—the gift of God's Love, the gift of God's eternal life, the gift of God's Spirit, the gift of God's freedom. We already have all these gifts. Truth is already present in us. You may recall that at the beginning of the workshop we discussed how education for Plato involved helping the student remember what was already present in his mind. Jesus' approach is the same. He reminds us of the gift that we already have and already are. If I see that gift only in him and not in me, I have missed the whole point of his message. I am then seeing him as different and making him into an idol. And a part of me will want to destroy him—but that thought of destroying him is so horrid to me that instead I pretend I love him. I tell everyone how much I love him—all I ever think about is how much I love Jesus. If I really love someone, I do not have to say it all the time. I simply experience it. My always having to affirm and reaffirm my love is reminiscent of the line I quoted earlier from Hamlet, "The lady doth protest too much methinks."

(4:6) And gratitude to God becomes the way in which He is remembered, for love cannot be far behind a grateful heart and thankful mind.

Gratitude is another major theme in the Course. We should feel grateful to Jesus, not because of what he gives us but simply because of what he reminds us of. And if I feel grateful to Jesus, I must feel grateful to God—which is how we undo the ego thought system. The ego is never grateful to God. The ego said to God, "I can do better than you did. Why should I be grateful for the gifts and the life that you offer me—they're second best. You're the best, and I'm only second best. Why should I be grateful for that? So I will take matters into my own hands—I will make up a world and a self and I'll be first in my world. And I'll be grateful then to myself for what I've done. I don't have to be grateful to you."

Our egos do not feel grateful to Jesus. In our ego minds we hate him, because we are in competition with him. He seems better than we are, and so we hate him for it. As I said before, we cannot love or be grateful to someone we perceive as separate or different from us. Being grateful in this world for the gifts others give us is an attack. We should be grateful for the love that is the content of the gift. I am not saying that you should not feel grateful for an exchange of material gifts, for example, at Christmas time. But we really want to be grateful for the love that is the *content* of the gift—a love that mirrors the love already within us. So it is a joining of love with love.

This idea is reflected in the section in the text entitled "The Attraction of Love for Love" (T-12.VIII). The love in you is attracted to the love in me, and vice versa. The love in you is sharing that love with me. We do that sharing through material form while we believe we are bodies. So I am not saying anything is wrong with giving or exchanging gifts, or with being grateful for gifts. But be aware that we are really grateful for the love that underlies the material form. If I perceive the love to be in you and not in me, then I am really perceiving hatred in you, masquerading as love. I can only be grateful to you if I see you mirroring the love that is in me. It is love sharing with itself. It is impossible really to understand what that means in Heaven. Basically, God is sharing His Love with Christ and Christ is sharing His Love with God—that is the song that goes back and forth. But, since we believe we are bodies in this world, we need a symbolic way of expressing that love. So we have the illusion of giving love in various forms to one another.

But the content underlying the form—the reality underlying the appearance of the gift-giving—has nothing to do with the form of the gift. The content is the love, which is the source of the gift. And so we are grateful to Jesus that he reminds us of the love that is in both of us.

It is important to remember, though, that we first must become aware of the ways in which we block recognition of that love. The idea is simply to look at the differences, the specialness, the hatred and say, "What's the big deal?" And when they stop being a big deal, we stop calling them sin in our minds. We stop feeling guilty about them and let them go. To put this another way, we stop making Jesus into a big deal. People make him into a big deal. Everybody and his brother wants to channel Jesus, because he is the big Macho—you have everything then [laughter]. So there is a hierarchy of who channels whom, and it misses the whole point. Everybody wants to make Jesus into a big deal, but in the Course he really tries to help us not see him as a big deal.

Now, calling on the name of Jesus does not mean actually saying the words "I call upon the name of Jesus Christ." The words are irrelevant. We just have a thought. The idea of calling on Jesus' name or taking his hand is not to be taken literally. An example may help: I am driving home, getting upset or anxious as the weather worsens or getting angry at another driver who cuts me off. And then I think of the workbook lesson, "I could see peace instead of this" (W-pl.34). That is the same idea—we are only talking about words and symbols. The thought underneath—"I can make another choice"—is what I want to get to. That underlying thought is what we want to call to mind, whether we do it by saying, "I can make another choice," "I could see peace instead of this," "I could see Jesus instead of this," or "I must have dropped Jesus' hand because I'm feeling anxious, so I can take his hand again." I simply use whatever set of symbols works for me.

And looking objectively at my reactions to an event really means looking at them with Jesus. It is just one group of symbols, so it means watching myself drive home, getting upset and realizing that my upset is not a result of the conditions of the road or what another driver has done, or the fact that I am two hours late, or whatever. I am upset because I feel separated from God. And then I displace that anxiety and guilt onto the external situation.

Whatever process helps us recognize the choice we have is what we should use. And what I use will be different from what you use. We do not want to get caught in the form. That is why we want to see Jesus as a symbol and see the words we use as symbols. We want to get to the meaning underneath—that we are responsible for what we are feeling, and we can change it. Whatever words we use become irrelevant.

Back now in the manual:

(4:7) God enters easily, for these are the true conditions for your homecoming.

The true conditions for our coming home are our experiences of gratitude. So we are grateful to Jesus—not because he gives us what we want, not because he saves us from sin, not because he is a magical figure who does all these things for us, but because he reminds us of Who we are. We are grateful to him because he reminds us that we are the cause of all of our distress and, because we are, we can change the cause. That is what our gratitude is for. And then we are able to let go of all of our feelings of competition, separation, and differences, which allows us to experience our gratitude to God as our Creator and our Source.

None of us in this world is grateful to God. If we were, we would not be here. The very fact that we are here is saying to God, "I can do this better than You," which is basically how the authority problem began. We thought we could make a better world than God, or we could do better at saving the world than Jesus. And in our lives here, we think we can be better parents than our parents, and better bosses than our bosses—always better than everybody else.

So experiencing our unity with Jesus and being grateful that he reminds us of that unity undoes all the barriers of guilt, separation, and competition that prevent us from feeling really grateful to God as our Source. And with that undoing, the whole thought system of the ego disappears.

(5:1-2) Jesus has led the way. Why would you not be grateful to him?

Again, no one in this world is grateful to him. If we were grateful to him, we would become like him—and we would not be in this world. But we believe we are here and take seriously our being here—we feel that life and death, pleasure and pain, are a big deal. Everything that goes on in our world—all the specialness in our lives that is such a big deal—is telling us we are not grateful to him, because he stands for the end of specialness. And so, as he explains earlier in the text, we feel threatened by him. By threatening our thought system—he represents its opposite—we believe he is threatening us (T-6.V-B.1:5-8).

As long as we have an investment in specialness and in being right rather than happy, we cannot be grateful to Jesus and we cannot love him. We can only love him by seeing that we are the same as he is, which means that our thought system is the same as his. When we realize that, we gladly let go of what we had believed to be our thought system, because it is not loving and it is not bringing us peace.

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(5:5) But in his eyes your loveliness is so complete and flawless that he sees in it an image of his Father.

That is why we hate him—our whole identity is built upon a self that is not the Self of Christ. It is an identity filled with flaws, filled with guilt and sin and ugliness, and hidden in darkness. Yet, as miserable as that identity might be, we are comfortable with it, because it is what we believe we are. And Jesus, simply by his very being, shines a light into that darkness, which threatens it. The darkness then masses against the light, which is why Jesus, his message, and his love have to be killed. Forgiveness and healing—letting go of our ego perceptions—are threatening because they represent the end of the self

we believe we are.

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(5:7) To you he looks for hope, because in you he sees no limit and no stain to mar your beautiful perfection.

Obviously, this is not how we think of it—no one in this world believes it. We think *we* look to Jesus for hope. We believe that only Jesus—and no one else—is perfect. But this is just one more way we hold onto our own guilt. The ego calls it humility but, as the Course explains in many places, it really is the height of arrogance—the arrogance of believing that I could make myself different from the way that God has created me and that I know better than Jesus. So Jesus says, "I look at you and I see the mirror of myself—the mirror of God and the perfection of His holiness." And we say, "You must be doing something wrong. You're looking at this wrong." We believe, in our arrogance, that we know better than he does. Except it does not look like arrogance—it looks like humility. Everybody wants to bow down at Jesus' feet.

At the climax of a wonderful vision Helen had, she saw Jesus step out from behind an altar and come towards her. Her first inclination was to bow to him. He stopped her and instead came to her side, where he knelt with her and Bill before the altar to God. But Helen's first impulse, which would be our first impulse too, was to bow before him. That is not loving—it is hateful. As part of the same Christ, we want to bow down **with** him before the One Who created us.

(5:8-11) In his eyes Christ's vision shines in perfect constancy. He has remained with you. Would you not learn the lesson of salvation through his learning? Why would you choose to start again, when he has made the journey for you?

Very often we have the arrogance of believing, "I can do this by myself. I don't need him." And so we say, "I don't need a symbol. I don't have to take anybody's hand. It's all in me anyway." We want to jump from the nightmare right into God's Arms. And Jesus is saying here, "Don't try to do this without my help because, if you do, you would really be separating yourself, not only from me, but from the love that I represent for you." What seems to be humility is really the ego's arrogance.

Jesus' plea is, "Don't try to jump from hell into Heaven. You need an intermediate step. And for you, I am that intermediate step. I am that bridge." It makes no difference whether we think of Jesus or the Holy Spirit or any other symbol we want to use as that bridge. Near the beginning of the text, when Jesus says that he stands beneath God and above us (T-1.II.4:3-5), he means he is like a bridge between God and this world. And the exact same idea is expressed in the Course's teaching on the Holy Spirit as the Communication Link between God and His Sons. The Holy Spirit is the Bridge between perception and knowledge, and we need a bridge.

The Holy Spirit is an abstract thought and Jesus is the manifestation or the symbolic expression of that thought. Jesus is telling us that we need something or someone to bridge the gap from our nightmare world of illusions to the reality of God—he is that bridge. So he asks, "Why would you not want to take my hand? Why would you not want to let me teach you? And why would you not let my love be the intermediate step so you learn gradually and gently and peacefully not to be afraid of God's Love?"

It is a real trap to say, "I can do it on my own." Obviously this is nothing more than a reflection of the original ego thought, "I can do it on my own." If we could do it on our own, none of us would be stuck here. And we are stuck here because we did think we could do it on our own—this is just another expression of the authority problem. We are saying that we don't need any authorities—we can learn everything by ourselves. But we *need* authorities—and especially a loving authority like Jesus—to reflect back to us what we have denied and repressed, and do not know is there. We need Jesus to reflect back to us the truth about Who we are—a truth we are terrified of. So this is a plea from him that we not see him as unimportant or irrelevant. Let me read that last line again: "Why would you choose to start again, when he has made the journey for you?" Taking his hand and learning from him will speed us on our path.

Eventually, we would realize that when we reach out for help, we are really reaching out to ourselves. But the point I making now is that we do not know that we are reaching out to our Self. So we need someone who represents that Self for us, because we are so terrified of it. If we try to do it without Jesus, pretending to ourselves that we are really much more adult and mature than we are, then we are really doing it, not with the Christ Self, but with our ego self. But we think it is really the Christ Self.