

## Our Gratitude to God

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
*Foundation for A Course in Miracles*  
Temecula CA

*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

### Part XIV

We continue with Helen Schucman's prose poem "The Gifts of God," page 119.

**Each hand that finds its way to mine will take Your gifts from me, and as we look together on the place whereon I laid your worthless gifts for you, [he is addressing us at this point] we will see nothing but the gifts of God reflected in the shining round our heads.**

The place where we bring our ego's gifts is our mind, which Jesus refers to elsewhere as an altar. At that point we look on them with Jesus' love next to us and let them go. In their place are the gifts of God, the gifts of love. Then Jesus becomes for us a repository of those gifts.

If you are not comfortable with Jesus as a symbol, use the Holy Spirit or any other symbol that works for you. It is important to at least recognize there is another teacher in your mind who represents God for you. At that point we see nothing but the effects of the gifts of love, which in the language of *A Course in Miracles* would be Christ's vision. This is not anything we see specifically or physically; rather it becomes an attitude or a thought system within our minds that is now extended through us. Others can still be doing all the hateful, murderous things they were doing before, but now we will not experience them that way. We will experience what they are doing as a call for the love and the light within them that they have forgotten. Through the love that is now within us, we will see that love. It does not mean we will see it physically, but we will experience that love and that light within us. That is the "shining round our heads."

**Holy are we who know our holiness, for it is You Who shine Your light on us, and we are thankful ...**

Again, the expression of thanksgiving and gratitude is simply the acceptance of God's Love. It does not mean that we turn to God and say, "Thank you." What it does mean is that we turn to God and stop saying, "No thank you." That is what the Course means when it says that "the task of the miracle worker thus becomes *to deny the denial of truth*" (T-12.II.1:5). You do not have to tell God that you love Him; you stop telling Him that you hate Him. You take the denial of truth, which is that we hate God because of what He has done to us, and you deny that. You say that that is not the truth. The denial of truth is the ego's use of *denial*. To "deny the denial of truth" is the Holy Spirit's use of denial, which simply means that we deny that we denied the truth.

Gratitude is really the undoing of the negative. The way we would express that is in thanking God, because that is a symbolic way of undoing all of our "No thank you's" to Him. Our telling God that we love Him is simply a way of saying for ourselves—not to God, because God does not hear words—that we no longer hate Him. Then the experience of love would become reality for us.

By the same token, telling Jesus that we love him is not necessary for Jesus' sake; it is necessary for *our* sake because we spent so many lifetimes and eons running away from him. To tell him that we love him and we are grateful for his help and the ongoing presence of his love in our mind is an expression of our turning away from the ego and towards him.

**What we thought we made of You has merely disappeared, and with its going are the images we made of Your creation gone as well.**

This is referring to the images of God that we have made—this wrathful, vengeful, bloodthirsty Father Who wants only for us to be destroyed. The images are all the fearful projected images we have made of everyone else. First we made up this awful image of God as a Person Who is going to destroy us. The terror involved with that is so absolutely awesome that there is no way of dealing with it. Therefore, we just split it off, deny it, project it out, and then make up a world in which everyone else is out to get us. That paranoia is simply a reflection of the original paranoid thought that God is going to destroy us. If we make God into a hateful Father and Creator, then we must also do the same thing with His creation. Every living thing in the world then becomes a symbol of God's hatred. We secretly believe that every living thing is out to get us. Even those people we judge to be our friends we do not trust. Once we can really express our gratitude to God for being our Source, then the image of Him must change, but also the image of the world must change for us, too.

**And it is finished. For we now commend into Your Hands the spirit of Your Son who seemed to lose his way a little while but never left the safety of Your Love.**

These lines are taken from the scene in the gospel, where Jesus is on the cross and is reported to have said, "It is finished," commending his life into his Father's Hands. The ego told us right at the beginning that if we get too close to God and place ourselves in His Hands, He will destroy us. So in no way are we going to commend our spirit into the Hands of God, as that would be instant death. Thus, Jesus' statement here undoes and corrects those insane beliefs, reflecting the theme of Lesson 194, "I place the future in the Hands of God." We do not have to be afraid of God's punishment or His wrath, because God loves us.

The Son of God "seemed to lose his way a little while," but he never left the safety of God's Love. In the language of the parable of the Prodigal Son, which is used later in this prose poem, the Son of God seemed to wander in a far country, a long, long way from home. Then, as the Course explains, we simply dream of exile, but we have never left our Home and God (T-10.I.2:1). The Course would teach us that the ego says we lost God and Heaven. What that really means is that we have lost the *awareness* of God and Heaven. Losing something does not mean it is gone; it means we do not know where to look for it. The Love of God has not been taken from us; it is not lost forever. We just forgot where to look, because the ego tells us if we look within our mind, we are not going to find the Love of God; we are going to find the enormity of our sin and guilt, and we will be destroyed. The ego says not to look within for our salvation; look without in the world.

We thus keep looking in the world for what will save us and make us feel good. We feel grateful when we get what we want and not grateful when we do not get what we want. And even when we do get what we want, after a while we will find it was not enough anyway. We always need something else, something more. Salvation is always seen as some form of the body. Anything that we feel will make us happy involves something of the body, whether we are talking about the physical body or the

psychological body. It is something that the world can offer us. That is why A Course in Miracles says we "cannot even think of God without a body" (T-18.VIII.1:7). All of our notions about God are not about the real God, because the real God is totally abstract. The real God does not even know about us. That actually is good, because if He did know about us, He would be as insane as we are, because we are not even here. Remember, the definition of insanity is believing in something or seeing something that is not there. If He knew about us here in this world, He would be insane, because there is no world. How can you know about something that does not exist?

Our images of God certainly depict Him as knowing about us. Either He is angry at us and wants to punish us, or He feels sorry for us and then requires payment. We thus strike a bargain with Him where we will give Him something. We will tell Him how wonderful He is, we will read His holy books, say His holy prayers, and do His holy rituals. In exchange, He will forgive us and welcome us back home, but only on condition that we do what we are supposed to do. This obviously has nothing to do with the real God, but it does have to do with the ego's God.

An important part of the Course's entire thought system is that even though God does not know about us and cannot enter into our insanity with us, the memory of His Love came with us into the insanity of separation. When we fell asleep and began this whole insane dream, we took with us into the dream the memory of God's Love. That is what the Course means by the Holy Spirit. The memory of God's Love is always there waiting for us. When we join with that memory, which is another way of talking about joining with Jesus, it gradually becomes who we are. Just as we so identified with the ego's system that we became the ego's system, the other side works the same way. As we increasingly identify with the Holy Spirit's vision, the Holy Spirit's Atonement principle, the Holy Spirit's Love, we *become* that Love. When we attain the real world, we become like Jesus, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. There is one passage in the Course where Jesus talks about himself as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and he asks us to be his manifestation in the world (C-6.1:1; 5:1-4).

When we have looked totally at the ego system and laughed at it, it disappears, and all that is left is the Love of God. That is the memory, not only of God's Love, but of our Identity as Christ. We become that Christ. In that sense, we can use the word *Jesus Christ* to define Jesus, because he has no other last name. We have a lot of other names, which are all the different identities we take as egos, but he has no other name. He becomes the Christ, just as we can become the same Christ and will become the same Christ when we awaken.

Another way of understanding why we should feel grateful to him is that he holds out to us the memory of who we are. We not only have forgotten, but in some part of our mind we believe we will never get that back. There is a line in the *Psychotherapy* pamphlet that says, "And who could weep but for his innocence?" (P-2.IV.1:7), which means regardless of its seeming form, the source of all of our pain and suffering is our belief that we have thrown away the innocence of Christ and will never get it back again. That is what the ego has told us, and that is why we just keep searching endlessly and hopelessly in this world for something that will make us feel good. We never truly succeed.

Our gratitude should be to the one who tells us that we will never succeed because we are looking in the wrong place. Jesus tells us, "Come over here with me, and when we look together, we will find it." In that case, we seek and we *do* find. As the Course explains, the ego's maxim is seek and do *not* find (T-16.V.6:5), which is what we always do. We are always seeking to regain that lost innocence, but we are looking in the place where it can never be found. The world was specifically made so that we would

never find the innocence of Christ. The innocence of Christ is not buried in the world, and it is not buried in our brother's body. The laws of chaos talk about our belief that the reason I am not innocent is that *you* are, and you stole it from me. Then as the Course says, you hid it in your body because I would never think to look for it there; but if you have hidden it in your body, then I am justified in killing your body and stealing my innocence back. (See T-23.II.9-11)

That is what we do, and just keep doing: I steal from you, and you steal from me. Whether we talk about the innocence of Christ or the power of Christ (another form that goes on in the world), we are always trying to get power in order to steal power. This goes on whether a person does it as a dictator, a general, a president, in a spiritual context, or in an economic context in order to be the richest person in the world and therefore control the world. There are all different ways of trying to get power outside as a way of compensating for the power of Christ that we believe is gone. Of course, it is never enough.

No dictator is ever satisfied. Hitler took the Sudetenland; then he wanted Czechoslovakia; and before long he wanted all of Europe, and then the whole world. We know, too, that no matter how many billions of dollars someone gets, it is never enough because we always need more and more. No matter how many times you tell me that you love me, it is never enough, because that is fine today, but I have to hear it again tomorrow. It can never be enough, because it can never fill up the hole inside because the hole is bottomless. The only way to get out of the hole is to rise about it, to rise above the battleground, look back on it, and realize that there is no hole there. There is no lack; there is nothing deficient in us; there is nothing that is incomplete. The whole thing is made up.

Once again, our gratitude is to God Who represents the truth that none of this ever happened, and that we have the abundance of Christ because He created us. Our gratitude is to Jesus who represents for us the thought system that corrects the one we made. And finally, we are grateful to each other, because the projections of our self-hatred onto others give us the opportunity to realize it is not others that we hate; it is ourselves. It is at that point that we can accept the experience of gratitude, that as the passage says, "The gifts of fear, the dream of death, are done." All that kept the gifts of fear and the dream of death alive was our belief that they were true. When we can look at them and realize they were simply childish toys and had no effect at all, they are gone. Imagine Jesus as the little boy in the fairy tale who looks at the emperor and says the emperor has no clothes on. That is the ego—the emperor—and it has nothing on. It is a thought system that is literally based on nothing. Recall from the clarification of terms that the ego is nothing and is nowhere (C-2.6). We all believe that the ego is something and is some place: some place is in this world, and the something is the reality of our thought system. Those are the clothes that the ego puts on: the clothing of judgment, ingratitude, hatred, fear, loneliness, misery, death, suffering, pain, etc. Then Jesus comes along and says, "Look, you guys. Look. There is nothing there. You made it all up." That is why the world had to kill him—because the world is the emperor's clothing, and so to be told there are no clothes is to be told there is no world. Our egos do not like to hear that, but that is what *A Course in Miracles* says, and that is certainly what Jesus did. In fact, you can understand what Jesus did in terms of his own life, because the most powerful suit of clothing that the emperor has is death. That is what proves the body is real. Therefore Jesus tells us there is no death—it does not mean anything. And the world said, Okay, big shot, we will see if it does not mean anything. So they killed him, and nothing happened.

That is what the message of the Course is. Jesus is saying to us, "Look, the emperor has no clothes on. All the terrible things you thought you did, or that the world has done to you, have had no effect

whatsoever." That is the same message we are supposed to give to each other when people seem to attack us, betray us, be treacherous to us, steal from us, be unfaithful to us, criticize us, judge us, and do all the awful things that people do all the time. Instead of saying, "Behold me, brother, at your hand I die" (T-27.1.4:6), what Jesus would have us say is, "Behold me, brother, at your hand I live" (T-27.1.10:7). In other words, nothing you do has any effect upon the life of Christ or the life of love within me. In that sense, we should feel grateful to each other for giving and receiving that message. This means we must abandon our investment in this thought system, of always being right, and a feeling that we have been unfairly treated by the world.

That is how the passage closes: "And we give thanks. And we give thanks, Amen." The gratitude is the gratitude that comes from the letting go of our investment in the ego's gift.