

Jesus:
The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit

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Part VII
Continuation of "True Prayer" (*The Song of Prayer*, S-1.1)

Let's look now at the famous parking space example—I'll give another example after that. The parking space is a favorite one—you hear about it all the time in *Course in Miracles* circles: "A *Course in Miracles* gives me parking spaces." "The Holy Spirit gives me parking spaces." People's experience is that as they are driving downtown into a crowded area, they ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit for a parking space, and, lo and behold, they turn the corner and there's a parking space. So they add up two and two, and get five—"The Holy Spirit gave me the parking space."

Aside from what has really happened, which I will get into shortly, the real mistake in all this is in settling for far too little. Even if Jesus did give us the parking space, what's the big deal? That's not going to get me one step closer to the Kingdom of Heaven—and that's what I really want. Getting a parking space is not going to awaken me from the dream. If anything, it could seduce me into wanting to be in this dream even more, because it shows me what a wonderful world this is—where the love of Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes down and solves all my problems for me. It makes much more sense to ask Jesus to help us with the *anxiety* that is engendered by not finding a parking space. That is something that he *can* help us with.

There's an instructive passage in the text that deals with this issue, without, of course, mentioning parking spaces. The immediate context of this passage, which came relatively early in the dictation, was Helen's asking Jesus to take her fear away. She was always in a state of high agitation and fear. And she figured that that was what Jesus was "paid to do": take away her fear. [laughter] Perhaps in part she felt that she was paying *him* by taking down his damned course, so the least he could do for her in return was to remove a little of her fear. [laughter] But that is not what he did. And so he said to her:

The correction of fear *is* your responsibility. When you ask for release from fear, you are implying that it is not. You should ask, instead, for help in the conditions that have brought the fear about. These conditions always entail a willingness to be separate. At that level you *can* help it (T-2.VI.4:1-5).

Jesus was telling Helen that whatever the specific thing was that she was afraid of, it had to do with some aspect of the body, some aspect of form. Helen was asking Jesus to help her not be so afraid of getting sick, or of her husband getting sick, or of this or that terrible thing happening. She was asking him to help take that fear away. And he was saying, "There's nothing I can do for this, because I am not here in the world. I am in your mind." On the chart, the upper level or box is the mind—which is where Jesus really is—and the level of form is where we experience him—which is in the body. He is saying, "I

am in your mind. I am not in your body. And the problem is not the specific object of your fear. The problem is that you have separated yourself from me."

Again, as Jesus says here, the conditions that led to the fear "always entail a willingness to be separate." In the ultimate sense, it is the willingness or the choice to be separate from God. Within the dream, the decision to be separate from God is expressed in the decision to be separate from Jesus or the Holy Spirit—that's the problem. And so Jesus was telling Helen:

I cannot help you with the object of your fear. I cannot help you with your fear of not finding a parking space. But I can help you with the decision you made to be separate from me. And I help you simply by being alive and present in your mind. My presence will remind you that you are the one who chose to be separate from me. Therefore, you are the one who can choose to rejoin me.

The problem then was not that Helen was afraid. Whatever she thought she was afraid of, the real cause of her fear was being separate from Jesus—that was the cause. Jesus makes the same point again to Helen a couple of pages later in the text. (This was written down a day or two later, when she was still fearful.) He began this next section saying, "You may still complain about fear, but you nevertheless persist in making yourself fearful" (T-2.VII.1:1). Jesus was telling Helen, "Don't blame me because you're frightened." He said it much more gently than that, but that is basically what he was saying to her—"It's not my fault. You're the one who is choosing to be fearful."

Continuing with that paragraph, Jesus told her,

I have already indicated that you cannot ask me to release you from fear. I know it does not exist, but you do not. If I intervened between your thoughts and their results, I would be tampering with a basic law of cause and effect, the most fundamental law there is. I would hardly help you if I depreciated the power of your own thinking. This would be in direct opposition to the purpose of this course. It is much more helpful [and this is a very important line that tells us what Jesus does] to remind you that you do not guard your thoughts carefully enough (T-2.VII.1:2-7).

In the previous section he had said, "You are much too tolerant of mind wandering" (T-2.VI.4:6). So Jesus is reminding all of us that the problem is that *we* are the ones who have wandered from him. *We* have wandered away from the thought of love that he represents and symbolizes in our minds, and we have wandered into the ego's thoughts of fear, separation, guilt, anxiety, pain, and suffering, etc. Therefore, Jesus shines like a lighthouse in our minds, simply calling all those ships—all those thoughts in our minds—that are wandering in the darkness, back to him. That is how he helps us.

Now our parking space: So here I am driving downtown to a meeting and I begin to get concerned about not having a space to park my car. Maybe I'm already a few minutes late, and I'm feeling that something terrible will happen if I walk into the meeting late. Or maybe I'm thinking that if I ask Jesus for a parking space and get it, I can tell my *Course in Miracles* group tonight what a wonderful *Course in Miracles* student I am, how very special I am to the heart of Jesus, because the heart of Jesus opened up to me and showed me where to go for a parking space.

The specifics of my concern about finding a parking space do not matter. Once I am asking Jesus to get me the parking space, I have very nicely done an end-run around him. I have walked right into the ego's trap. What I *really* want help with is not that I find the parking space and undo the fear of not finding a space. But rather, I really want help with the fact that I obviously believe I am driving downtown *alone*,

and that Jesus is no longer in the car with me. *That* is the problem. If I knew he were in the car with me, what difference would a silly parking space make? How could any of us in this world, experiencing the Love of God within our minds, have any possible concern, anxiety, or wish to find a silly parking space? The parking space becomes very important when we forget that there is someone with us. We have dropped his hand and kicked him out of the car, and now we believe we are on our own—that is where our anxiety is coming from. My concern for not having a parking space for my car is nothing more than the reflection of my real concern that I have lost my "parking space" in Heaven, and that when I finally get back home, God will say, "I'm very sorry—all the spots are filled." [laughter] *That* is the fear. Otherwise, no one on earth would ever be concerned about a parking space, or a place in line at the supermarket, or anything else that we get crazy about.

Our concern for there not being enough space or room for us, or for somebody pushing ahead of us, etc., is really the symbol of our anxiety and fear that somebody has stolen our place in Heaven. This is exactly what the ego tells us—God is so angry at us because of what we have done and what we have stolen from Him, that He will never let us back in. So we really want help with undoing the *cause* of the anxiety about the parking space, not with the *form* of the parking space. That is what Jesus is saying in this passage. "You don't want the echo, you don't want the overtones, you don't want the harmonics. You want the song. You don't want the parking space. You want to re-experience my love, which you believe you have thrown away." So we do not ask for help with the parking space. We ask for help in letting go of the anxiety that automatically comes when we feel separate from his love. *That* is the problem.

Now to be separate from Jesus' love and to experience his love is also an illusion, because the Love of Christ is not separated into Jesus and me. However, within the illusion, within the dream, this is the most helpful thought I could ever have. Experiencing his love more and more of the time will help me realize ultimately not only that I am never *separate* from his love, but that I *am* that love. And how could I be separate from my own Self? There is a passage in the text where Jesus speaks of how ridiculous it would be for nature to roar at the wind, declaring that it no longer is a part of itself. The wind is part of nature. So how could part of God be at war with itself (T-23.1.4:7-9)? Joining with Jesus, while it is a symbol, is the only *meaningful* symbol for us in this world that reflects what the Love of God is. And that is what we want. That is the whole point—not to ask for specifics, but to ask for the love that is beyond the specifics.

Let me say something now, in the context of this example, about a concern students have expressed with regard to what they experience as failure in prayer. Suppose I do not get the parking space today. When I drove downtown yesterday, I got this wonderful parking space. But today I didn't get one. And I feel awful. And not only do I feel awful, but as a good healthy ego I don't blame myself. I don't even blame the other cars. I blame Jesus. Thus my thoughts are: "Where are you? You helped me yesterday and it was great, but now you're not here." The problem in all this is that my whole attention is focused on the form. And I begin to think that the only way I'll know that I am loved by God, that I'm a worthwhile person, and that I'm not guilty, is if something good happens to me. So I'm now using the parking space as a way of proving that I'm either a worthy person or a worthless person. Maybe the value for me today of not getting a parking space is that I would realize that my self-worth does not depend on whether I get the parking space—that the love of Jesus is with me whether I get the parking space or not. But the ego is always ready to jump in and tell me that I'm a failure, or that I'm a success because of what has happened.

As a way of elaborating on this, let me tell another story, involving Helen. This is a helpful story for contrasting our *experience* of Jesus' help with the *reality* of that help. It will also help us to understand what is really happening with the parking space, with physical healings, or whatever.

The story is about Helen and an eyelash. Many years ago—around 1975 or 1976—Helen, Bill [Thetford], Judy [Skutch], and I were on the West Coast. One afternoon, Helen and I went to a church—Helen liked to go to churches. This was a lovely chapel built by the brother of a good friend of ours, a nun. Our friend had told us that when we were in San Francisco, we should see this chapel that her brother, an architect, had built. So we went. We sat down on one of the benches and were about to pray. Suddenly Helen stopped and said, "I have an eyelash in my eye." And she added, "Jesus always takes the eyelash out for me." Now Helen was not a simple-minded person—she was in fact rather brilliant—and her spirituality was not on a simple-minded level. But that is exactly what she said: "Jesus takes the eyelash out for me all the time." And I said, "Oh, that's interesting." Then she explained, "What I do is I close my eyes, and I ask him to remove it. And then I open my eyes and the eyelash is always out." So I said, "Well, that's great. Let's do that." So we did. We closed our eyes and then, within a few minutes, we opened them. And sure enough, there was an eyelash on Helen's cheekbone. "That always happens. He always does that for me," she said. And that is the end of the story.

If we simply take the story at face value—if we simply take what Helen experienced as fact, it would mean that Jesus stuck his finger into her eye and took the eyelash out. For, sure enough, one minute there was an eyelash in her eye, the next minute it was on her cheekbone. Obviously, though, Helen did not really think Jesus did that. *I* did not think he did that. But that was her experience. She experienced herself as having nothing to do with the eyelash—which is our usual experience exactly. We think we have had nothing to do with getting the parking space, with healing our bodies of cancer, with anything that has happened to us. *Jesus* has done it for us, we think.

Now I want to explain what *really* happened. This example with Helen is particularly instructive for contrasting the *experience* of what happens with what *truly* happens—the difference between the symbol and the reality. We don't want to confuse the two. But in order to explain this, I have to say a little about how Helen would defend herself against Jesus. One of her favorite ways was to attack her eyes. In the Course—and this is true for many other spiritualities—vision is a major symbol. The Course has a tremendous amount about sharing perception with the Holy Spirit, looking through His eyes, seeing with the vision of Christ, etc.

In her mind, Helen not only could hear the voice of Jesus, but she also had all kinds of visions, from the time she was a little girl. Vision for her was always a very powerful symbol. Helen expended a great deal of energy and effort in her life trying to separate herself from Jesus and from God. In one way or another, she was always trying to resist Jesus and his message, trying not to do what she was told—before, as well as during and after the time the Course was coming through. There was always a theme in her life of resisting Jesus. One of the ways in which she expressed this resistance was by attacking her eyes. At one point when Helen was taking down the Course, she went through two or three days when she literally could not see. She actually lost her physical vision. She was very concerned and so went to the Eye Institute, which was part of the Medical Center where she worked. They did a thorough checkup of her and found nothing physiologically wrong with her eyes. Within a day or two her vision returned.

The *Psychotherapy* pamphlet talks about how understanding the form that a symptom takes will help in understanding the form of unforgiveness that is in the mind (P-2.VI.5:1-3). That idea is not new to the

Course—psychoanalysts have known for years that the form that a symptom takes physically will often mirror the conflict in one's mind. Since Helen was afraid to see what Jesus was showing her in the Course and to share his vision, obviously, one way of expressing that fear and resistance was to attack her physical sight. One of Helen's morbid fears all of her life—and certainly in the last period of her life when I knew her—was the fear of getting a detached retina. Then in the last couple of years of her life, she actually did have a detached retina. A part of her mind was always tempted to attack her vision as a way of expressing in form her attempt to attack Jesus by keeping him away.

Jesus often tried to help Helen look at him on the cross. As I've said, she was a very visual person. Many times he would say to her, "Look at me on the cross." The whole point was that if she looked at him on the cross, she would not see a suffering, dying person. She would see someone who was not in any pain at all. Jesus' suffering on the cross was something we made up. Obviously, that is a major theme in the Course. But Helen could never look. I remember many times being with her and trying to help her look at him head-on. But instead she would take the image of Jesus on the cross and quickly shift it to the lower left-hand area of her visual field, so that she could not look at him directly. She was afraid of what she would see. Her ego told her that she would see some expression of hatred, guilt, and murder. Of course, she really would have seen an expression of God's Love.

The fear of looking is another major theme of the Course. Two sections in the text address it—"Looking Within" (T-12.VII) and "The Fear to Look Within" (T-21.IV). The latter section says that "the ego tells you not to look inward [within your mind], for if you do, your eyes will light on sin, and God will strike you blind" (T-21.IV.2:3). And then it explains that the ego is really afraid that we will look within and see there is no sin (T-21.IV.2-3). That is the real fear. That was Helen's fear. And that is everyone's fear.

So Helen would attack her eyes as a way of expressing this fear of looking—not only of looking at Jesus as he really is, but also of looking at his message. The major way she expressed this fear was in getting a detached retina or having a kind of psychological blindness. The minor way was in having an eyelash fall into her eye—her eyelashes were very long and were often falling out. All of these problems with her eyes expressed this impediment to really looking at and accepting Jesus' message.

Returning now to our story of Helen—the thought that underlay her getting the eyelash in her eye was her fear of, and resistance to joining with Jesus. So before we sat down on the bench to pray, a part of Helen's mind that she had repressed said to Jesus, "I'm too afraid of you. I'm too afraid of feeling your love. I'm going to keep you away." That thought then became expressed in the form of the eyelash falling into her eye. In other words, the eyelash in her eye expressed the decision her mind made to separate from the love of Jesus. She was the one who put the eyelash in her eye. She was the one who had the thought of wandering away from the love of Jesus—a love which she was always very, very close to.

If we paraphrase Jesus' message to Helen that we read earlier, in this situation Jesus is telling Helen, "Don't ask me to take your eyelash away from you—out of your eye. Ask me rather to help you remove the conditions that have led to the eyelash in your eye." Helen was the one who made the decision to turn away from Jesus, resulting in the eyelash falling in her eye. When she then said to me, "But I know if I ask Jesus for help, he will take the eyelash out," she was changing her mind. She was saying to Jesus, "Now I will join with you. However, I cannot join with your love as it is. I can only join with a *part* of your love. I can only experience an eyelash worth of your love, not the totality of your love, because that's

too frightening. The only way I can accept your love is to hold up this little glass to your love to fill." And the form it took for Helen was removing the eyelash.

So Helen made a decision to rejoin with Jesus on the level of form, with the express desire and specific need to have the eyelash out of her eye. But she was the one who made the decision to join with him. When she did that, she undid the *cause* of the eyelash in her eye—dropping Jesus' hand. Asking him for help was taking his hand again, in a form she could accept. In that instant, she undid the cause of the eyelash in her eye. She then opened her eyes and the eyelash was on her cheek. *She* did all the work. Jesus did nothing. What was there that had to be done? He remained as he always is—a loving, constant, steady presence of love and light in our minds. Helen wandered off and then came back. That process occurred on the level of thought in her mind. There is nothing else. But since Helen believed she was a body, her thought of wandering away from him expressed itself in the eyelash coming into her eye, impeding her relationship with him. Her decision and change of thought—returning to him and taking his hand—then expressed itself in that same symbol. The eyelash had been in her eye by her choice. Now by her choice the eyelash was out of her eye. Jesus did absolutely nothing. She did everything. She wandered away. She wandered back. That is the reality.

Helen's *experience* however was totally different, just as our experience every day, as I mentioned earlier, that the sun rises and sets is not its reality. We all know that the earth rotates around the sun—the sun does not rotate around the earth. But that does not stop us from perceptually experiencing the sun rising and setting. Knowing in a part of our mind that the reality is different does not stop us from writing beautiful poems about it, or painting beautiful paintings of it, or having wonderful spiritual or religious experiences around a sunrise or a sunset. Similarly, the challenge in working with the Course is to be faithful to our experience, because that is where we believe we are. At the same time, however, we continue to grow towards our reality.

The cause of all of our unhappiness is not the form—it is not anything external. The cause is that we have forgotten Who we are because we have forgotten the one who reminds us of Who we are. That is the problem. And once we are clear about the problem, the solution is obvious. I simply remember Who I am by taking the hand of the one within my mind who symbolizes Who I am—that is the role of Jesus. He is simply the reminder or the symbol within our dream of Who we are—just as the Holy Spirit is. But the Holy Spirit is abstract. Jesus is a form we can relate to and identify with in the dream, where we believe we are.

This explanation does not invalidate Helen's experience with the eyelash, which was extremely important for her. But it would have helped her if she had been able to recognize consciously what was really happening. And it can help all of us if we generalize from her experience to our own and realize that Jesus is available to us all the time. It is also instructive to see how Helen encapsulated her experience of Jesus into very specific categories. She would let him help her get an eyelash out of her eye. She would let him help her by telling her where to go to shop, or what street corner to stand on to get a taxicab. She accepted his help with things that were very circumscribed and very specific—almost all of them having very much to do with the body.

Helen was not able to let Jesus' love become the only thought in her mind, which would have taken care of all her anxieties, concerns, and fears. Instead, she would say to him, "I will accept your love in a little thimble, because I'm too afraid of the immensity of it." This pamphlet began as a special message for Helen, in which Jesus says to her, "What you have done is not wrong, but I could help you even more."

And then Jesus basically said, "We will now have a series of lessons in this." The pamphlet became the series of lessons. Similarly, the Course began twelve years earlier with Jesus telling Helen and Bill, "I will now give you a series of notes—[He always referred to the Course as notes] a series of notes which will answer your question, 'What is the other way of relating?'"

The Song of Prayer pamphlet was a microcosm of that same process. But it was not meant just for her, any more than the Course was meant just for Helen and Bill. Its purpose is to help us recognize that we do not want the *form*, we want the *content*. We do not want the echo or the overtone, we want the whole song.