

My name is Jason Drury and I have been tasked with the pleasure of providing readings for you for the month of July, I am a first-year theology student studying at Avondale College. Our family has attended Central Coast Community church for many years now and it is an honour to be a part of this wonderful family of believers.

I have adapted this month's studies from the book "Christ Object Lessons" by Ellen G White. I have added the link just below if you don't have a copy or you can download a free App which will give you access to all her writings.

<http://www.whiteestate.org/books/col/col.asp>

Christ brought a straightforward message to people from all walks of life, in a way that they all could understand. Each parable is a source of inexhaustible wisdom and knowledge, to the willing ear a message of hope and encouragement can be found.

There is an option for further reading if one so desires and I have put down the page numbers of the specific reading for that day.

Blessing to you as you study this month.

1/7/17: Teaching in Parables

Verses: Matt 13:34,35; Ps 78:2; Matt 13:13-15

Christ connected with men using what they were familiar with, Adam and Eve learnt about God through reflecting upon creation. After the fall, all of creation became corrupted and marred by the effects of sin, what Christ did was to lift the veil and restore the order of the things which had been lost. Christ spoke in a language that could reach any heart, leaving them without any misunderstanding. Each parable directed the eyes of men away from the sin marred world to the beauty and glory of heaven and his Saviour.

"Christ sought to remove that which obscured the truth. The veil that sin has cast over the face of nature, He came, to draw aside, bringing to view the spiritual glory that all things were created to reflect. His words placed the teachings of nature as well as of the Bible in a new aspect, and made them a new revelation."
{COL 18.3}

Reflection: God is speaking to each of us through nature and our world around us, ask God today to open your eyes and your heart to hear His voice.

Further reading: Christ object lessons chapter 1 "Teaching in Parables" (17-32)

2/7/17: The Sower Went Forth to Sow

Verses: Matt 13:1-9, 18-23; John 5:24, 6:63

The parable of the sower is about the reception and cultivation of the gospel message, all will hear but not all will respond in the same way. The condition of the ground upon which the message falls is representative of the way in which we receive it. The reality is the gospel message will break our hearts and turn our lives upside down, will we respond like the pharisees and religious leaders of the time and let pride be our stony ground or will we be willing soft soil, always ready to receive truth and ever ready to let God remove any weed that may spring up.

“All who come to Christ for a clearer knowledge of the truth will receive it. He will unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and these mysteries will be understood by the heart that longs to know the truth. A heavenly light will shine into the soul temple, and will be revealed to others as the bright shining of a lamp on a dark path.” {COL 35.3}

Reflection: Where do you see yourself in this parable? It’s easy to be disheartened, if we were to be honest with ourselves, most of us would recognise with the thorny ground. I challenge you today look to Christ the one who can replant us in the good soil.

Further Reading: Christ object lessons p33-61

3/7/17: First the Blade, then the Ear

Verses: Mark 4:26-29; Eccl 11:6; Zech 4:6

Yesterday we read about the soil, today’s reading narrows in upon the seed itself. From the planting to harvest, the sower has a vested interest in the plant at every stage of its growth. The soil represented our response to the gospel message, the seed therefore is the work and power of God in the soul. There is a relationship that exists between the soil and the seed whilst man has no power to cause the seed to grow we can inhibit growth. We cannot of ourselves bring about righteousness, without faith in Christ we could not grow. The responsibility we have in our personal relationship with God and to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ cannot be underestimated, we need to support and encourage each other.

“There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centred in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal, Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of unselfish love and labour for others—you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. More and more you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely.” {COL 67.3}

Reflection: What are some things that may inhibit growth in our spiritual lives? What do we allow to stand between us and God?

Further Reading: Christ’s object lessons p62-69

4/7/17: Tares

Verses: Matt 13:24-30, 37-43

Wheat and tares are indistinguishable until harvest time, the fruit of the tare is black and if consumed a person will become violently ill. If a farmer were to remove what he thought were tares prior to harvest time, wheat would be pulled up also. Tares represent those in the church with unsanctified hearts, sown by Satan to discredit God and cause damage to the church. This is one of those moments where we often question why, for instance how could Judas betray Jesus? We cannot answer such questions but we can know that God is greater than any challenge we may face as a church. It's no surprise that the devil will do anything to discredit God and to draw the faithful few away from their Saviour. We must remember who the Lord of the harvest is, not taking matters into our own hands live to be the wheat and love the tares as children of God perhaps even these may be touched by the gospel message and be saved.

"The world has no right to doubt the truth of Christianity, because there are unworthy members in the church, nor should Christians become disheartened because of these false brethren. How was it with the early church? Ananias and Sapphira joined themselves to the disciples. Simon Magus was baptized. Demas, who forsook Paul, had been counted a believer. Judas Iscariot was numbered with the apostles. The Redeemer does not want to lose one soul; His experience with Judas is recorded to show His long patience with perverse human nature; and He bids us bear with it as He has borne. He has said that false brethren will be found in the church till the close of time." {COL 72.3}

Reflection: God doesn't ask us to go on a witch hunt and weed out all the tares He asks us to follow Him and trust Him for the harvest is His, put your faith in Christ alone and what He says in His word.

Further Reading: Christ's Object Lessons p70-75

5/7/17: In reflection and small group discussion.

Verses: Heb 12:1-2; Col 3:8-11; Phil 2:8

The progression of these parables begins with the soil, then a focus on the seed itself after that we see the nature of the harvest. In all of this we see the hand of God at work, in the sowing, the growth and the harvest He is lord of all. In this reading, we will be reflecting upon the nature of the Good soil and the work of Christ in our lives.

1. Our perfection comes through Christ and what He has done for us, it's about living a life in Him. Read Heb 12:1-2 How does knowing it all begins with Christ change your perspective on living a Christian life? (Discuss this in a group or with a family member)
2. What we cultivate and allow to lead us will influence our lives, read Col 3:8-11 Why does Christ ask us to put aside harmful behaviors?
3. Look at what Christ did for mankind to secure their salvation, without such a weighty outpouring man would have no hope. How does this impact your faith and what you choose to do with it? (Phil 2:8)

Further Reading: There is no further reading today.

6/7/17: Like a Grain of Mustard Seed

Verses: Matt 13:31,32; 1 Cor 1:26, 2:5

The Israelites were wondering how Christ was to establish His kingdom, it appeared that He had nothing to establish it with. In representing His kingdom as a mustard seed, He wanted them to see that it wasn't a kingdom built on earthly might but heavenly wisdom and beauty, showing them also that the true power in the universe is not the might of great men. To a nation that wanted justice and revenge for centuries of slavery and persecution, Christ pointed them to a much greater kingdom and something so much more than their hearts desired.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:26-28); "that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5). {COL 79.2}

Reflection: What is our expectation of God and His Kingdom come? Justice and revenge are natural desires, what do you think Christ's attitude was towards His enemies as He spoke these words?

Further Reading: Christ's Object Lessons p76-79

7/7/17: Like unto Leaven

Verses: Matt 13:33; Luke 12:1; John 3:3-8

Leaven operates as an invisible agent that dramatically changes its host from within, so intertwined that the result of its work is the only visible sign of its presence. After the fall of man sin became so deeply entrenched in every fibre of our being, just as leaven causes the dough to rise so is the effect of sin in our lives. We try so hard to "fix" ourselves before coming to God, this is the attitude Christ condemned in the Pharisees and religious leaders (Luke 12:1). The result of persistent self-help is we will walk further away, becoming hard-hearted through our own misguided efforts. We are to let the word of God permeate every fibre of our being, through a life sanctified in Christ and the inner working of the Holy Spirit.

"As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. No mere external change is sufficient to bring us into harmony with God. There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart." {COL 97.1}

Reflection: Christ Gives us a new heart and the Holy Spirit to give us the power to live for Him. Ask God for a new heart today and every day, don't let your past mistakes hold you back from letting Him transform your life.

Further Reading: Christ's Object Lessons p95-102

8/7/17: Other Lessons from Seed-Sowing

There is no reading for today however Christ object Lessons p80-94 ties everything we have learnt this week together bringing it to a practical application in our everyday lives. Enjoy your Sabbath day and find a nice quiet place to read and prayerfully reflect upon any points that stick out to you as you read, God speaks to us through His word this way.

Further Reading: Christ's Object Lessons p80-94