

People That Nobody Feels Are Important



SABBATH—AUGUST 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 5:2–16; Matthew 5:38–48; Luke 10:25–27; Luke 16:19–31; Matthew 25:31–46.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The King will reply, “What I’m [I am] about to tell you is true. Anything you did for one of the least [not very] important of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” ’ ” (Matthew 25:40, NIV).

JESUS showed that He cared about other people His whole life. He cared very much about people who were hurt. He cared about people who did not know about God. So, we should expect that Jesus has a lot to say about why we should take care of other people.

Jesus' teaching shows us how we should live as followers of God. Jesus wants us to be fair and kind to people. Jesus wants us to show people mercy. That is what Jesus did when He was on this earth. We must follow Jesus' example. Then we will help others just as Jesus did.

Jesus also talked about the kingdom of heaven. Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is real. It is something we can be part of right now. The kingdom of heaven is a way of life. The kingdom of heaven has different rules than we see in the kingdoms on this earth. Jesus' teachings show us God's plan for the kingdom of heaven. God's plan shows us that our serving God is important. His plan also shows us that we must be kind to other people and help them. We must take care of other people. It is one way we can serve God right now.



Jesus wants us to show people mercy.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Matthew 5:2–16)

Jesus' longest sermon is the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon is three chapters long. In this sermon, Jesus talks about God's kingdom. He starts His sermon by talking about some very special teachings of God's kingdom. These special teachings are named the Beatitudes.

Read about Jesus' nine special teachings in Matthew 5:2–16. What is the same about all these nine teachings?

These nine teachings are deep spiritual truths. They also will change the way we live. Jesus says that we must understand that we are poor. That is why we need the riches God gives us. Jesus also talks about obeying God and being fair to other people. He also tells us we should not be filled with pride. We should show mercy to people. We should try to live in peace. We should have clean hearts and minds. When we do these things, we will make a difference in the lives of other people. Jesus also told His followers to be the same as salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16). Then we will be a blessing to people too.

Salt and light make a difference when we add them to things. Salt makes food taste good. It also helps food stay fresh longer. Salt is a word picture for the good that we should do and be for the people around us. In the same way, light is a word picture. Light shines in the darkness. It shows us the dangers hidden in the dark. Light makes a house or city safe. It helps us find our way home at night. Jesus told us to be the same as a light on a dark night. He said, " 'You should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven' " (Matthew 5:16, ERV).

Both salt and light show us what we must do as Jesus' followers. We must help to make the lives of the people around us better. We are salt and light when we are sorry for sin. We are salt and light when we have clean hearts that are not filled with pride. We also are salt and light when we show mercy, make peace, and suffer for Jesus.

In what ways is your church the same as salt and light in your community? How is your community a better place because your church is serving there?



Salt is a word picture for the good that we should do and be for the people around us.

FIGHTING EVIL WITH GOOD (Matthew 5:38–48)

“We must remember something important when we study Jesus’ teachings. It is important to know about the people He talked to and how they lived. Large crowds came to hear Jesus preach (read Matthew 4:25; Matthew 5:1). Some of the people were rulers and religious leaders. But many people who came to see Jesus were not famous, rich, or powerful. Their lives were hard. They did not have many choices for a better life. They paid heavy taxes. Their religious leaders told them they had to do many difficult things to be saved.

Jesus taught people a better way of life. He wanted them to live with courage and hope, even when bad things happened. We can read about some of Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 5:38–48. Jesus says you should “ ‘Turn your other cheek’ ” (Matthew 5:39, NIV). He also tells us, “ ‘If anyone wants to sue you in court and take your shirt, let them have your coat too’ ” (Matthew 5:40, ERV). He also says, “ ‘If a soldier forces you to walk with him one mile, go with him two’ ” (Matthew 5:41, ERV). We know these sayings very well. In these sayings, Jesus teaches us some very important lessons.

Jesus preached to people who were hurt badly by their masters. Many of these people owed a lot of money. They lost their land and homes to the people who gave them loans. Roman soldiers often forced these poor people to work for them. Jesus taught the people to be kind to the ones who hurt them. We cannot control what powerful people do to us. But we can control how we act when they hurt us. Jesus taught the people that they always had the freedom to choose what to say and do. When they chose to be kind, then their kind acts helped other people to understand God’s love.

Read about the important rules in Matthew 5:38–48 with Romans 12:20, 21. In what ways can we make these important rules part of our lives?

Jesus talked about a special rule named the Golden Rule. He said the Golden Rule showed the whole meaning of the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. Prophets are God’s special messengers. The Golden Rule is: “ ‘Do for other people the same things you want them to do for you’ ” (Matthew 7:12, ICB).

In what ways, right now, can you do what Jesus commands us to do in the Golden Rule?



“ ‘If a soldier forces you to walk with him one mile, go with him two’ ” (Matthew 5:41, ERV).

THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:25–27)

Read Luke 10:25–27. The teacher of the law asks Jesus a question: What shall I do to get everlasting life? Jesus answers, “ ‘What is written in the law? What do you understand from it?’ ” (Luke 10:26, ERV). The teacher says that the law commands us to love God and love other humans. How are these two commands connected?

People often asked Jesus questions. But He did not always give them the answer they expected. Luke 10:25–27 shows us that the religious leaders in Jesus’ day spent a lot of time arguing about Leviticus 19:18. Leviticus 19:18, ERV, says, “ ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ” The religious leaders argued about who your neighbor is. They also talked about how much love they must show people.

Jesus wanted His followers to love their neighbors. He also wanted His people to do good to everyone. So, Jesus wanted His followers to fully understand what the word “neighbor” meant. “ ‘But here is what I tell you. Love your enemies. Pray for those [people] who hurt you. Then you will be children of your Father who is in heaven. . . . He sends rain on those [people] who do right and those who don’t [do not]’ ” (Matthew 5:44, 45, NIV).

Why did the teacher of the law ask Jesus a question? The teacher wanted to give Jesus a test. The teacher wanted to see how much Jesus knew about the law. Jesus gave the teacher a good answer. So, the teacher asked Jesus another question: “ ‘Who is my neighbor?’ ” (Luke 10:29, ERV). Jesus answered the question by telling a story. Jesus’ story about the good Samaritan shows the answer to the question the teacher asked. Jesus says that our neighbor is anyone who needs our help (read Luke 10:36, 37).



Jesus says that our neighbor is anyone who needs our help.

Read Jesus’ story about the good Samaritan in Luke 10:30–37. Jesus talks about three men who see someone hurt on the side of the road. What does each man do when he sees the man who needs their help? What lesson was Jesus trying to teach about what we should do when we see someone in need?

“In the story about the good Samaritan, Jesus shows us true religion. . . . It is doing acts of love. It is doing as much good as we can do for other people.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 497, adapted.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke 16:19–31)

Jesus tells the picture story about the rich man and Lazarus (read Luke 16:19–31). Jesus compares the lives of these two men. He shows us their lives are very different. One man is rich. The other man, Lazarus, is poor. In Jesus' day, poor people begged for money outside the homes of rich people. The people in Jesus' day expected the rich to help the poor. But in this story, the rich man "is selfish. He does not care about the needs of Lazarus."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 261, adapted. Later, both men die. Then God is their Judge. What does God decide to do? He changes everything that was not fair on this earth between them. God decides that the rich man shall lose everything. But Lazarus gets everlasting life.

Compare the story in Luke 16:19–31 with the story in Luke 12:13–21. What is the same and what is different in the two stories? What do both stories teach us?



Jesus taught us that riches can pull us away from His kingdom.

There is no hint in both stories that the men became rich by doing anything wrong. Maybe both men worked hard and were good managers. And God blessed them both. But something goes wrong. They have the wrong thoughts and feelings about life, God, money, and other people. They pay the price by losing their everlasting life.

The picture story about the rich man and Lazarus teaches us an important lesson. The choices we make in this life help God decide what will happen to us in the next life. How do we show what is important to us in this life? By our choices. Our choices show what we feel is important.

Jesus taught that riches can pull us away from His kingdom. Our love for money can cause us to be selfish. Worse, it can make us feel that we do not need God's help. Jesus asks us to put His kingdom first. He asks us to share the blessings He gives us with other people around us. He asks us to help people who are in need.

Rich or poor, what can you do to not let love for money control your life?

**PEOPLE THAT NOBODY FEELS ARE IMPORTANT
(Matthew 25:31–46)**

In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus preaches a sermon. This sermon is Jesus' answer to another question. This time, Jesus' followers ask Him the question. Jesus gives them an answer that is different from the one they expected. Here is what happened. Jesus' followers come to Him. They ask Him when the temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed and when Jesus will come back (see Matthew 24:1–3). Jesus' answer is the sermon in Matthew 24 and the picture stories in Matthew 25. After His sermon, Jesus talks about feeding the hungry and thirsty. He also says we should welcome strangers as guests. What else does Jesus say we should do? He says we should give clothes to the naked. We should take care of the sick. We should visit people in prison. Then Jesus tells His followers, "Anything you did for one of the least [not very] important of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40, NIV; read also Matthew 25:45).

Here, Jesus' words help us see His last work as our Judge. In Matthew 24, Jesus answers His followers' questions about the end times. He tells them about the signs that will happen in the last days. He warns them that the temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed. Jesus tells them they need to be careful. They must not let anyone trick them about what will happen before He comes back. In the first part of Matthew 25, Jesus tells His followers the picture story about the wise and foolish girls. Jesus uses this story to show His followers that they must be ready for Him to come back. Also, Jesus may not come back when they expect. So, they also need to be ready for a delay. The picture story about the three managers shows us how we should live while we wait for Jesus to come back. The picture story about the sheep and goats shows us the work we should be doing as God's people.

Read Matthew 25:31–46. What is Jesus telling us in these verses? What do His words teach us about what it means to be saved by faith?

Jesus says that the things we do for other people, we do for Him. This truth should change all our friendships and family connections. It should change all our thoughts and feelings too.



Jesus says we should welcome strangers as guests.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Good Samaritan,” pages 497–505, and “ ‘The Least of These My Brethren,’ ” pages 637–641, in *The Desire of Ages*; “ ‘A Great Gulf Fixed,’ ” pages 260–271, “ ‘Who Is My Neighbor?’ ” pages 376–389, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*.

“Jesus breaks the wall that separates humans from God. This wall is built from selfishness. It is made of the false pride that we feel in belonging to our country. Jesus teaches us a love for all the human family. He lifts men up from selfishness. He ends all separations between rich and poor people and people from different countries. In Jesus’ eyes, neighbors and strangers are the same. So are friends and enemies. Jesus teaches us to look on every person in need as our neighbor.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 42, adapted.

“The Golden Rule is the true rule of the Christian religion. Anything that causes us to feel that we do not need to follow it is a lie. Jesus gave Himself for humans. So, each person is worth a lot. False religion causes people to say that humans are not worth much. False religion causes us to not care about human needs or sufferings. When we do not care about the needs of the poor, the suffering, and sinners, we show that we are not Jesus’ followers. Men say that they are Christians. But they do not act the way Jesus acted. That is why the Christian religion has so little power on this earth.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pages 136, 137, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Which is your favorite verse or verses we studied this week? Why?
- ② Ellen G. White writes, “False religion causes us to not care about human needs or sufferings.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 137, adapted. Yes, the truth is important. But why also is it important to remember that we must live the truth?
- ③ Read again the verses in Thursday’s study. What does our having the truth really mean?



“Jesus breaks the wall that separates humans from God.”