

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 161 **Give me your blessing, holy Son of God.**

Sarah's Commentary:

This is a powerful Lesson that focuses on forgiveness. The Lesson can perhaps be called an abstraction of the entire teaching of the Course, addressing our anger, projection, the specifics of the body, and the world of form. It also offers a powerful forgiveness practice. Jesus reminds us that we can **"welcome in the Christ where fear and anger had prevailed before."** (W.161.1.3) In other words, in the previous Lesson, fear and anger were described as the stranger that invaded our pristine home where Spirit dwells. When we no longer choose to listen to the stranger, space is made in the mind for the truth to prevail.

We have been given very specific instructions for our practice and are told: **"Today we practice differently, and take a stand against our anger, that our fears may disappear and offer room to love."** (W.161.1.1) This is the way we make room for love and choose not to let the stranger continue to reside in our home. Now is the time to take a stand against the ego, not by fighting it or resisting it but simply by not attending to it. This means we must be vigilant in watching our thoughts and monitoring our feelings so we can recognize when the ego is holding court. When we focus on differences and engage in a competition where we try to win at our brother's expense, we are listening to the ego. The ego promises that "getting" will fulfill us and "defending will protect us," but through these tactics, we accumulate more guilt and feel very vulnerable. When we turn to the Holy Spirit, He reminds us of our innocence, our completion, and our invulnerability. There is nothing to defend.

I received a vignette today of what happens when we defend. The story goes that on the Star Trek series, the crew of the Starship Enterprise faced a tough dilemma because every time they held up their force-field shields to ward off attack, the ship would lose power. Their shields drained the energy from the ship. The only way the ship could be moved was to drop the shields and find another way to triumph. In the same way, any energy we invest in defense robs us of our creative power and ability to move forward. It is about bringing the darkness that we hide, even from ourselves, to the light in order to liberate the Self we are.

"Complete abstraction is the natural condition of the mind." (W.161.2.1) Another way to say this is that the natural condition of the mind is only love and nothing else. The mind has no boundaries and no limits, but we can't understand abstraction with our current way of seeing. Jesus tells us, **"One brother is all brothers. Every mind contains all minds, for every mind is one."** (W.161.4.1-2) While it may sound good to us and the words are appealing and may even resonate as the truth, Jesus says that we don't get it. **"The mind that taught itself to think specifically can no longer grasp abstraction in the sense that it is all-encompassing."** (W.161.4.7) This is because a part of the mind is no longer in its natural state. We no longer look on everything as One, but instead, we see everything in parts. We focus on

specifics and now see concrete fragments of the whole, meaning we see everyone as separate and different. In the world of specifics, abstraction no longer exists. The ego set it up this way because we need specific people on whom to project our guilt.

The physical world serves this purpose for us, as there are a lot of people and situations in the world where we can project our guilt. It is our way of proving that separation is a fact. We make others responsible for destroying the Oneness of Heaven because we don't want to be responsible for having done this ourselves. We blame others in the hope that God will punish those we deem guilty, instead of us. Now we believe we can keep our separate state, but make someone else responsible. While this is not in our conscious awareness, this thought system is in our minds. We witness it when we notice how much we focus on those who are guilty so that we could see ourselves as innocent by comparison.

Jesus now introduces the idea of the body as a specific. Here he says, **"It seems to be the body that we feel limits our freedom, makes us suffer, and at last puts out our life."** (W.161.5.1) Yet he says that the fact is, bodies are not real and can't make us suffer. Suffering can only come from our wrong-minded choice. In that choice, we let the stranger into our pristine home. In other words, we chose the ego and with it came all our pain, anger, suffering, attack, guilt, and fear. **"Yet bodies are but symbols for a concrete form of fear."** (W.161.5.2) They provide a concrete symbol on which we could dump our own fear, attack, anger, and hatred. Without a specific target, what would we do with all these feelings? What would we do if there were no one to blame? We would have to take total responsibility for our condition and we are not willing to do that.

Think about your own fear, anger, and attack. Recognize how it is always focused on specific bodies. These are our targets for attack. How could we attack if we didn't have something specific on which to project our anger? The body's **"sight presents the symbol of love's 'enemy,' Christ's vision does not see."** (W.161.6.4) Only when we use our senses and judge our brother do we see the body. He says, **"You have many times been urged to look beyond the body. . ."** (W.161.6.4) He is not saying we should deny that we are seeing bodies in front of us, but he is asking us to turn to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to give us His interpretation of who our brother really is beyond his body. **"Bodies attack, but minds do not."** (W.161.6.1) Because the mind is One, there is nothing outside of Oneness to attack; however, as long as there are attack thoughts in the mind, the mind will direct the body to do its bidding, and thus it is **"the seat of fear."** (W.161.6.7) It is important to recognize that the attack thoughts in the mind are not real. In fact, nothing in this projected world is real.

Jesus tells us, **"Hate is specific."** (W.161.7.1) Projection makes perception. Thus, I am able to see my own self-attacking thoughts in my perception of another. This is why the way we see anyone is the way we see ourselves. The ego's clever trick is to have us pretend that we could get rid of our own guilt and hatred by seeing it in others. Because we don't want to take responsibility for our sins and because the guilt would be overwhelming, the ego's grand plan is for us to find the guilty ones "out there." It has promised us that attack will deliver safety and happiness, but what it does instead, is accumulate more guilt in the mind. Its plan at the end is for our own death; although, our hope is that God will see our enemies as the ones who should be punished, rather than ourselves. Meanwhile, we take on what Jesus calls, **"the face of innocence."** (T.31.V.2.6) (ACIM OE T.31.V.44) This is our self-image where we see ourselves as trying to make our way as best we can in an unjust world. We try to respond to the attacks coming at us by defending ourselves. We want to satisfy our great need to be innocent, so we try to buy our innocence at the expense of our brothers, but this is not true innocence.

Although we project our own anger and attack onto our brothers, we now see them as the attackers! As the "innocent ones," we justify our righteous anger and attack under the ruse that we are only defending ourselves. Because of the clever way the ego has set up this whole drama, we don't see how it all starts in our own minds. We don't want to admit that we actually attack because we want to. We make it seem like we are victims of an attacking world where we are constantly defending against seemingly unjustified attacks. We are not willing to see that it is our own attacks, bouncing back at us. **"[W]hat he beholds is his own fear external to himself, poised to attack and howling to unite with him again."** (W.161.8.2) **"Mistake not the intensity of rage projected fear must spawn. It shrieks in wrath, and claws the air in frantic hope it can reach to its maker and devour him."** (W.161.8.3-4) It takes great courage to look at the extent of our murderous thoughts as they fill the mind with horror and accept that these thoughts are beneath the face of innocence.

We all want to see ourselves as benign, sweet, and loving beings, who only attack when provoked. Our face of innocence, behind which we hide these hateful thoughts, is the image we try to show to the world. The fact is that we actually want our enemies to be killed, rather than having God kill us. This is what we need to acknowledge, if we are to take responsibility for our own attack thoughts, and bring these dark thoughts to the altar within the mind to be shined away. When we take responsibility for everything we see in our brother as projected from our own minds and see that none of what the ego has made up is true, then the healing process can start. We no longer identify fully with the character in the dream. We increasingly take the place of the observer and see the play for what it is—constructed by the ego so we would forget who we really are.

When I am able to accept that there is no one doing anything to me and that there is only my mind to heal, I become willing to take responsibility for my projections, recognizing that they are an opportunity for me to see what has been obscured in my mind. It takes a level of courage and great honesty to acknowledge the viciousness of the ego thought system. Although it is illusory, it cannot be healed while it is hidden from our awareness. This requires that we give up our heavy layer of denial and defense that we hide behind. When we recognize that the way the ego has set it all up and that the initial attack on God never happened except in dreams, we can escape from the ego's program. It is all a myth made up by the ego; although, while we believe in it, we must engage in the process of going through the layers of darkness. It takes great willingness, yet we don't go there alone. Our part is to look at what is coming up in our thoughts and feelings.

Jesus cautions us, **"No one can escape from illusions unless he looks at them, for not looking is the way they are protected. There is no need to shrink from illusions, for they cannot be dangerous. We are ready to look more closely at the ego's thought system because together we have the lamp that will dispel it, and since you realize you do not want it, you must be ready. Let us be very calm in doing this, for we are merely looking honestly for truth. The 'dynamics' of the ego will be our lesson for a while, for we must look first at this to see beyond it, since you have made it real. We will undo this error quietly together, and then look beyond it to truth."** (T.11.V.1.1-6) (ACIM OE T.10.VI.39)

Think about how this shows up in your own life. Anytime you make someone responsible for how you feel, and who you are, by blaming them for your lack of happiness and wholeness, you are playing the ego's game. It may be your parents, teachers, ministers, partners, friends, or politicians you blame for your lack of wholeness. In effect, you are saying, **"I am the thing you made of me, and as you look on me, you stand condemned because of what I am."** (T.31.V.5.3) (ACIM OE T.31.V.47) Isn't this the basis of all our stories? And when we see our brothers as responsible for how we are and what we feel and experience, we don't see that their

reality is same as ourselves—someone that Heaven cherishes and the angels love. We don't see their perfection as God created them. **"And in Christ's vision is his loveliness reflected in a form so holy and so beautiful that you could scarce refrain from kneeling at his feet."** (W.161.9.3)

Forgiveness is the answer for our separated condition. For now, we are given a forgiveness exercise that must focus on specifics because that is what we have made. The Holy Spirit will employ these specifics for a purpose, which is different from our own. What we made for sinful purposes can be used by the Holy Spirit to heal our minds, so they can ultimately return to their natural condition of abstraction. The truth is our brother was created perfect, holy and beautiful beyond all form. Jesus asks for us to put our own salvation in our brother's hands because through him love can be **"revealed to you and set you free."** (W.161.9.9)

Each brother gives us an opportunity to see what is in our own minds, mirroring back to us either our choice for the ego or for the Holy Spirit. As we pay attention to the way we perceive anyone, it will reveal to us what we are choosing to believe about ourselves. Yes, it is the brother who we are currently angry with, hate, don't trust, feel betrayed by, feel hurt by, or fear, who helps us recognize our own self-attacks that we have projected onto him. We ask that he not symbolize our fear, but rather set us free. With forgiveness, our underlying sameness is revealed.

When a brother triggers a reaction in us, we are given an opportunity to look at what is unhealed in our own minds. We can see where we are attacking ourselves and bring our own self-hatred to the inner altar to be shined away. We ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to undo all that we willingly bring to His attention. He is the Light in our right minds, Who shines away our dark thoughts. But He can't shine anything away that we withhold from Him and defend against. It is up to us to bring awareness to our blocks to love. As we heal, we are no longer triggered by what our brothers seem to do to us. Their seeming attacks are now seen as calls for love and understanding. Now there is no place in us where these attacks could land. Our peace is no longer affected. The Holy Spirit interprets everything a brother does as love, or a call for love. Thus, we choose not to interpret any behavior we see that seems to be attacking as anything but a mistake, rather than a sin that demands punishment. All mistakes can be corrected. They have no effect on our reality. Now, instead of attack, we receive a blessing. This is the choice we can make in each encounter and with each brother. Will we see him as a symbol of our fear, or as a symbol of Christ's love and as our savior? It is up to us.

Jesus says that while we attempted this forgiveness practice earlier, in Lessons 78 and 121, we are now even more ready for success. **"Your readiness is closer now, and you will come today nearer Christ's vision. If you are intent on reaching it, you will succeed today."** (W.161.10.2-3) Our willingness will be strengthened to overlook what our eyes show us about any brother who seems to provoke us. Why would we want to hold onto the fear and hatred when we have such an opportunity to remember, instead, the beautiful ancient melody that calls us home? So today, we choose to do the practice, remembering that our brother is not the symbol of fear we see, but instead a spiritual being like ourselves, before whom, if we saw the truth of his Being, we could **"scarce refrain from kneeling at his feet."** (W.161.9.3)

We are asked today to:

"Select one brother, symbol of the rest, and ask salvation of him. See him first as clearly as you can, in that same form to which you are accustomed. See his face, his hands and feet, his clothing. Watch him smile, and see familiar gestures which he makes so frequently. Then think of this: What you are seeing now conceals from you

the sight of one who can forgive you all your sins; whose sacred hands can take away the nails which pierce your own, and lift the crown of thorns which you have placed upon your bleeding head. And ask this of him, that he may set you free:

"Give me your blessing, holy Son of God. I would behold you with the eyes of Christ, and see my perfect sinlessness in you. " (W.161.11.1-7)

While we are asking the blessing of a brother, there is no one outside of our own minds. The blessing is ultimately for ourselves. With each day of practice, we come closer to undoing the blocks and experiencing the truth of who we are, as an abstract Mind of pure Love.

Love and blessings, Sarah

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