

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 316

All gifts I give my brothers are my own.

Sarah's Commentary:

This Lesson follows on Lesson 315, "**All gifts my brothers give belong to me.**" Now we are told, "**All gifts I give my brothers are my own.**" (W.316) We are One with all our brothers. All the gifts of forgiveness my brothers give, I receive, and all the gifts I give, I also receive. There is only One Mind we share. Gifts come through us as blessings when we forgive. And what is forgiveness but the clearing away of egoic thoughts that block the light in us. When we connect with that light, we become a channel for God's love and experience the blessing of recognizing our sameness. As the thoughts keeping us in darkness are released, the mind recognizes its own inner light. Who we are and who our brothers are is recognized when we forgive them for what they did not do. Now, instead of seeing them through our judgments as guilty, we see their innocence and accept it as our own.

"Each one [gift of forgiveness] allows a past mistake to go, and leave no shadow on the holy mind my Father loves." (W.316.1.2) This is important because as we read in Lesson 314, our past mistakes are what we drag into the future and are what carry the burden of guilt. We want to be free of the mistakes that weigh us down with feelings of guilt and shame. The means given us for the release of past mistakes is to bring the gift of forgiveness. With each gift we give, a past mistake will go. Therefore, every time we let go of a grievance or guilt that we have held onto, we release ourselves from our past mistakes. The shadows that haunt us as a result of these mistakes are then lifted from our holy minds. All that is required is a willingness to take our brothers off the cross and release them, so we too can be released and come to know that our only Source is love.

Recently, I was helped to see how I was feeling a deep level of guilt and responsibility for my mother's happiness. This translated to the feeling that I was responsible for making others happy. I could not experience myself as "good" if I was not successful at making others happy. Of course, this is an impossible agenda that I was holding onto and translated into people pleasing. With my mother, it became apparent that she could readily defeat me by showing me how miserable she is. Thus, I would feel anger and resentment toward her. Until I became aware of this agenda, I did not realize that the kindness and care I expressed to my mother was, to a large extent, based on guilt. I became aware that it was a long-standing pattern that left me feeling like I could never be enough, give enough, or do enough. My commitment now is to give my mother to God, recognizing that it is her journey and not my responsibility. My responsibility is to give over the guilt and protect the child within that has tried so hard to be good only to be devoured by the demands placed on her. This has been such a helpful revelation but not one I would have readily uncovered on my own.

"My treasure house is full, and angels watch its open doors that not one gift is lost, and only more are added." (W.316.1.4) There are many references to our treasure and the treasure house in the Course. Our treasure house is the right mind and it is always full of God's gifts! The answer to everything that troubles us is within us, waiting to be claimed. Behind every cloud is the sun, waiting for our acknowledgment. Until we recognize this, we look for treasures in the world where they don't exist. When we realize where our real treasure lies, we are motivated to give our brothers the gifts of forgiveness in every situation where we encounter difficulties. The treasures we seek in the world will no longer hold our interest or attention. We no longer see them as the source of happiness. We see that there is only one Source and that is God. This is where our freedom and happiness can be found.

There is no real safety or security in anything we seek in the world. Our only security is in knowing ourselves as we were created. While we still seek treasures in the world, we are asked to notice our attachments to these things and not to make ourselves even more guilty for pursuing what we still think we want. God has given us the freedom to make these decisions for ourselves. It is only when we come to recognize that there is no happiness, safety, nor security in anything in the world that we choose to turn our attention more and more to returning to our true Source of happiness and peace within our own minds.

"Nothing you give is lost to you or anyone, but cherished and preserved in Heaven, where all of the treasures given to God's Son are kept for him, and offered anyone who but holds out his hand in willingness they be received." (T.25.IX.2.4) (ACIM OE T.25.X.79)

"Each time today you tell your frantic mind salvation comes from your one Self, you lay another treasure in your growing store." (W.P.I.96.12.1) (ACIM OE W.PI.96.17)

"Every time you spend five minutes of the hour seeking Him Who joins your mind and Self, you offer Him another treasure to be kept for you." (W.PI.96.11.5) (ACIM OE W.PI.96.16)

The gifts are always there and can't be lost even if we are not aware of them. The treasure house is where Christ dwells within us, and through forgiveness, we recognize that the truth has always been there, waiting for our acknowledgment. As long as we keep seeking the "treasures" of this world, we will not be aware that we already have everything. Through forgiveness, we realize where the real treasure is.

Even though we may not be aware of the treasures in our right mind, Jesus assures us that this makes no difference. They are still there whether we are aware of them or not. Imagine how different our lives would be if we were aware of all these treasures in our storehouse. Would we ever feel deprived again? Would there be any reason for loneliness, self-recrimination, sadness, jealousy, anger, loss, or distress of any kind? Would we ever feel superior to anyone? Would there ever be a need to try to make ourselves feel good? If we knew how rich we really were in God's abundant love and support for us, we would only know a deep abiding peace and joy that does not depend on anything outside of us. It is all available to us and only a decision away. If we don't experience these gifts, it is only because we have chosen to rely on our limited ideas of ourselves, on the decision to be right about who we think we are, and on who our brother is.

We are like the homeless person who believes he must beg for money to support himself and all the while he is dragging a bag full of treasures behind him. He has chosen to forget that he is already abundant. He refuses to see what is there, has always been there, and will always be there, available to him whenever he chooses. We are not ready to look at what is there if we tenaciously hold onto false beliefs about ourselves. Jesus tells us that we need not live with this sense of loneliness and lack. We can take hold of the gifts in our treasure house whenever we are willing to look within and let go of the false beliefs that we tenaciously hold onto. The Holy Spirit has laid these gifts in our treasure house, and **"Here the door is never locked, and no one is denied his least request or his most urgent need."** (W.159.6.4)

Nothing in this world can offer us any real satisfaction, any true happiness, or anything of lasting value. When our lives are devoted to forgiveness, we receive the miracles we give. The world is now seen as a classroom for the undoing of that which is false. Thus, even events we judge as difficult and painful offer us the perfect teaching-learning opportunities to let go of what is holding us back. We can only be imprisoned by our own thoughts.

Everything that seems to happen to us has come with our own invitation. We are not victims of any circumstance. **"The day you want you offer to the world, for it will be what you have asked for, and will reinforce the rule of your adviser in the world."** (T.30.I.16.7) (ACIM OE T.30.II.31) In everything we do, we choose between the ego and the Holy Spirit for guidance and which one we turn to determines what we receive. **"You choose God's peace, or you have asked for dreams."** (W.PI.185.9.4) It is all about choice. Nothing happens by accident. **"Your holy mind establishes everything that happens to you."** (T.10.IN.2.6) (ACIM OE T.9.VIII.60) What we receive is what we want.

"Let me come to where my treasures are, and enter in where I am truly welcome and at home, among the gifts that God has given me." (W.316.1.5) When we extend forgiveness to our brothers, it is a gift to ourselves, as our own minds are thus released from self-condemnation. This is how we become acquainted with our own holiness. We see evidence of the beauty of who we are when it is reflected back to us through our brothers. By releasing our judgments, our opinions, our comparisons, our unworthiness, or our sense of superiority, we recognize that we are not alone and separate, but One with all there is.

The only way we can access the treasures in our mind is to be willing to look at the blocks that keep the treasures from our awareness. We can only know ourselves as the love we are when that love is extended through us and reflected back to us. Yet we must acknowledge how we are the ones who are holding the love back. To the ego, it is all about what we can get from someone, but Jesus reminds us, **"You learn first that *having* rests on giving, and not on getting."** (T.6.V.C.6.1) (ACIM OE T.6.Vc.90) Special relationships are all based on bargaining while **"To bargain is to limit giving, and this is not God's Will."** (T.7.I.4.4) (ACIM OE T.7.II.4)

What would this look like in our lives? It is easy to be loving and gentle with those with whom we are in an easy and loving relationship. But the people that make up our special relationships are the ones who often bring the most pain. When I feel unjustly accused or treated badly, I feel justified in responding in an unloving and attacking way in return. "How dare he say those things to me?" It is when we are tempted to respond with attack that we are called to stop and recognize that we are, in that moment, choosing to close the door to our treasure house.

The ego tells me that he deserves to be attacked for his bad behavior, but Jesus teaches us that when we blame our brother, we are trying to purchase our innocence at the cost of his guilt. This is false innocence and does not mirror the innocence of God, which is our true innocence waiting to be claimed. We can't claim it when we attack a brother by blaming him and projecting our guilt onto him. This is what the ego counsels us to do all the time. When we listen to the ego, we happily blame our brothers without realizing that we lock ourselves into the prison of the ego.

Yesterday, as I struggled with these thoughts of retaliation in my mind, the Holy Spirit reminded me that I could choose peace. He reminded me that the power of this choice was in my own mind. He reminded me that the gift of peace was my choice to give and thus to receive at the same time. It meant that I must choose not to listen to the obsessive thoughts of the ego urging me to make my brother guilty. I chose to release my perspective on the situation and to see that I was wrong in the way I perceived him. Did I really want to see it my way or was peace more important to me? Did I want to continue to chew on the hatred and the judgments? Was this more valuable to me than peace? This should be an easy decision, yet we struggle with it because of our stubborn investment in the separate self. What a joy to experience the miracle when we choose to change our minds! When we do, it affirms to us that the gentleness of God's love is ever-present and simply hidden by our thoughts.

Daily we choose to turn away from love in the face of betrayal, conflict, and attack, but this does not make us guilty. If we beat up on ourselves when we experience disappointment in ourselves, we will not be available to heal our misperceptions. The ego relishes guilt, as guilt is the nature of the ego and keeps it alive. Instead, we are invited to welcome all of these situations as further opportunities for healing. Because we have invited the healing, the perfect people and situations show up for that purpose. Welcome it all. We make mistakes and we choose to forget, but we can always choose again.

The prayers in these Lessons invite us to enter fully into the spirit of the Lesson, appealing to our Father to help us, relying on His treasure placed in our right minds, and trusting that we cannot fail. When we step out in trust, releasing the ego cycle of defense, attack, and retaliation, and instead choose to let go of our thoughts, recognizing we are always wrong, then the blessings, miracles, peace, and love behind the clouds emerge in our awareness just like the sunshine that always shines behind the clouds. All it takes is our willingness. We can't lose when we let go of our perspectives. Everyone gains.

I write these commentaries only as a reminder to my own mind of what I truly want. When I let the truth of this teaching enter deeply into my mind, I convince my resistant mind to apply what the Lesson asks me to do. Step-by-step, moment-by-moment, day-by-day, and year-by-year the mind becomes more focused, committed, and disciplined, and the results of applying the teachings are evidenced in more harmony in my relationships and more peace in my experience. In other words, it works! It just takes constant willingness and dedication. If we are not ready for such vigilance, we are nevertheless innocent and always loved.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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