

Canterbury Crest 2009 Annual Meeting Inspirational Address

Hearing the call...awakening to the Truth

By Marsha Pecaut, C.S. of Corvallis, OR

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Hymns 5, 412, 374

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. (Matt 7:7-12)

Being a Christian Science practitioner, I often receive thoughtful gifts from patients, and one day I was given a copy of the testimony of Commander C.H. Lightoller, a Christian Scientist who wrote in the *Journal* in 1912 about his protection while on the *Titanic* the night it sank. His testimony was reprinted in 1997 in the *Sentinel*. It is the perfect example of practicing the scripture above from Matthew.

Asking God for guidance and direction, CDR Lightoller explains that he received ideas; seeking, he found a way to be helped and to help others; and knocking, the way of safety was opened up.

The *Titanic* went down at midnight in the North Atlantic. After doing everything he could on board, CDR Lightoller, with the help of others, cut adrift the last lifeboat though they were not able to open it up. After doing so, from the bridge he walked right into the “penetratingly cold” water. Overcoming fear and cold and drowning, he credits his survival to the divine power that he called upon and relied on. After being sucked under twice, he came up to find the same unopened lifeboat he had cut adrift which had been launched on the other side of the ship. As the ship sank, the tower fell and he, the lifeboat and other survivors were thrown about twenty feet clear of the ship keeping them safe from possible suction with the sinking of the ship. Upon his rescue in the morning, CDR Lightoller had no reaction or effects from the immersion. He writes, “A doubt never entered my mind as to the possibility of my surviving; in other words, of the ability of the divine power to save me. ...with this thought all fear left me, and I commenced again to realize the truth of being” (*Christian Science Journal* vol 30 (1912): 415).

Every day brings change...new ideas and situations, new challenges and new conclusions. No one had planned on the *Titanic* sinking.. In this relative experience we will have change and probably many changes. My brother, an environmental scientist, once explained to me that the earth must change with its movement sometimes including earthquakes and hurricanes, because the earth is alive. We love life and want to be alive and yet change is often one of the most feared and disliked concepts in our lives. So, how then can we look at this from a spiritual perspective? It is important that we realize that the one thing that never changes is God. God is always good. God is always Love. God is always Life. God is always Truth. And because God never changes, good is always present. So when we stay with God, we are able to handle changes in our day-to-day living, such as CDR Lightoller accomplished.

This is when the acronym A.S.K. becomes important. Jesus instructs us in the Sermon on the Mount: Ask. Seek. Knock. In other words, “Initiate the prayer and place the call!”

Our Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, writes,

Christians and clergymen pray for sinners; they believe that God answers their prayers, and that prayer is a divinely appointed means of grace and salvation. They believe that divine power, besought, is given to them in times of trouble, and that He worketh with them to save sinners. I love this doctrine, for I know that prayer brings the seeker into closer proximity with divine Love, and thus he finds what he seeks, the power of God to heal and to save. (’01 18:30-19:8)

We ready oneself for the call by cherishing and choosing God. CDR Lightoller first chose God. He was a student of Christian Science and he wrote that when he went into the water, he thought, “Now I’ll see how much I’ve learned in Christian Science.” He then had the opportunity to demonstrate and could walk confidently into the water. When we choose God, as he did, we can step into any situation confidently. This readies us to hear God’s call and help others and ourselves. We manifest God’s love for one another by supporting and looking after one another in our individual practice and desire to serve all mankind.

Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt 22:37-39).

Being involved in Christian Science nursing is an avenue to serve God and man and has played a very important role in my life. One of my first jobs was working as a clerk at Sunland Home, a Christian Science nursing facility in San Diego, CA. I was very much a part of my mother’s experience when she took the nurses training course at Arden Wood, a Christian Science nursing facility in San Francisco, CA.

As a practitioner, I sometimes work with Christian Science nurses on the case and find a harmonious natural healing outcome with everyone working together...practitioner, nurse and patient. Some of the nurses I have worked with have been Christian Science nurses and others have had the uplifted thought like a Christian Science nurse. In one situation, I encouraged a medical nurse who was the wife of a patient, to continue in her faithful prayer and cheerfulness in the loving care of her husband. He trusted in the all-power and presence of God as his life and together with God we quickly demonstrated over a long time claim of a degenerative disease, with the patient completely free.

The bedside manner and attitude of anyone attending to a patient plays an important role in the healing. I am well acquainted with Dr. Michele Canis, professor at U.S.C., who teaches intern doctors the calm and encouraging protocol for bedside manner and the importance this has on alleviating fear and on supporting the spiritual regeneration of a patient. Mrs. Eddy instructs us, "The nurse should be cheerful, orderly, punctual, patient, full of faith, — receptive to Truth and Love" (*S&H* 395:18).

So how does this "spiritual regeneration" or healing come about? What are we nurturing when we call upon God for our divine strength? We learn in Christian Science that, "self-knowledge, humility, and love are divine strength" (*Mis* 358:14-15), as conveyed in "The Way" by Mrs. Eddy in *Miscellaneous Writings*.

The first stage of mental development is self-knowledge. "Error found out is two-thirds destroyed, and the last third pierces itself, for the remainder only stimulates and gives scope to higher demonstration" (*Mis* 355:13-16).

"The second stage of mental development is humility. This virtue triumphs over the flesh; it is the genius of Christian Science. One can never go up, until one has gone down in his own esteem" (*Mis* 356:22-25).

"The third stage of mental growth is manifested in love, the greatest of all stages and states of being; love that is irrespective of self, rank, or following" (*Mis* 357:19-21).

Ultimately, we need to start with God and trust in God's goodness and His Truth, because this is the only reality. God, the only cause and creator, has not made anything unlike Himself. Being only good, God knows nothing of evil, just as light knows nothing of darkness. So let's consider the lessons we learn from light. When I teach Sunday school at church or in the prison, I explain to the students the correlation between light and darkness and good and evil. If we try to capture darkness in our hands and we peek inside, we can see darkness. It seems very real. But, opening your hands, darkness disappears and we know not where it goes. On the flip side, when we take a walk at night and bring our flashlight, we have enough light to lighten our path. Although there might be a great deal of darkness, we don't worry about the amount of darkness or any possible power of darkness, because we know that is immaterial. Our light cannot be put out by darkness. To light there is no darkness. Darkness is a suppositional absence of light as proven in physical science.

Just as to good there is no evil and to light there is no darkness, to truth there is no lie or error. No matter how big a lie or how powerful a lie seems, a lie can never destroy the truth. Truth is the only real and it cannot be removed. In fact, Mrs. Eddy has taught us “Truth is always the victor.” Hence, the importance of awakening to God who is Truth and who is All-in-all. God takes care of each and every one of us as He guides, governs and heals, enabling us to see the falsity of the lie of sin, sickness and death and to realize its false premises and its false promises. If we choose to trust in a good, loving God, we have tapped into the power of Truth. Anything less than Truth is unreal. In Christian Science we are learning how Truth invalidates a lie. The students always seem so enlightened by how they can practically use this information in their own lives in destroying any lies that they have generated or accepted or identified with for themselves. This changing of thought helps to choose God.

When my children were small, one of the stories I would read to them was called *The Big Fat Enormous Lie*, by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat and illustrated by David McPhail. I found it the other day when I was cleaning out some boxes and it helps to illustrate this idea so I thought I might share it with you today:

A little boy tells a lie when asked by his father if he had eaten the jar of cookies. He said he had not, but he *had* eaten all the cookies. He was afraid that his father and mother and sister would have gotten mad. Now he felt stuck with a lie. And this lie manifested itself as an ugly green glob of a monster. And as the story goes on, the monster lie grows in size and the boy tries everything to get rid of it. He screams at it, tries to buy it off, is convinced it is nothing and tells it so, talks to it even though he can't see it and feels its enormity, calls it ugly and dumb and realizes that he is smart so he is confused how he got stuck with this monster lie. He suggests that the lie go bother someone mean and rotten and not a nice kid like he is. After the monster lie sits on him, the boy can't stand it anymore and he gives up. He runs to tell his father and mother that he had lied and that he had eaten all the cookies. As the boy tells the truthful story, the lie begins to shrink and fade to nothingness and the boy joyfully realizes the lie is gone. The boy doesn't know where the lie went, but he knew he didn't have it anymore. The story ends with the words, “And that's the absolute and total truth.”

The importance of rejecting a lie with the truth is necessary in our lives. It is effective for nursing and for metaphysically supporting one another and ourselves. When we are able to correct our thought and reject a lie with the truth, we find healing. We are each capable of destroying the lie or the suggestion of evil or the “*Titanic*” challenging us today, and awake to what's true, for God has endued us with the Christ, Truth.

As the words state in Hymn 5:

A voice from heaven we have heard,
The call to rise from earth;
Put armor on, the sword now gird,
And for the fight go forth.
The foe in ambush claims our prize,
Then heed high heaven's call.
Obey the voice of Truth, arise,
And let not fear enthrall.

We are already equipped; we already have on the whole armor of God. Let's remember what that includes as we...

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph 6:14-17)

What will we do today when we hear God's call?

What did Samuel do? As a child he was called three times and came to realize that God was calling him. He grew up courageously trusting in God and so earned respect and honor from the people of Israel whom he advised and judged and chose King David to rule over them.

What did Jesus do? As a child he heard God's direction and growing up he whole-heartedly followed God's will, teaching and preaching and healing everywhere.

What did Mrs. Eddy do? As a child she was called and at one point was afraid of the call, but grew steadfastly trusting in God and in His love for all of his children. She dedicated her life to healing and wrote her discovery of the law of divine Science and its healing efficacy to help all mankind.

How did these three and others who have gone before us hear God's call and experience guidance and healing? They chose God. Just like CDR Lightoller did. They didn't believe the lie; they affirmed the truth. And in their humility and innocence, they heard the call.

Everybody is called upon, for God is no respecter of persons. So everyone is entitled to spiritual regeneration and the healing touch of the Christ, Truth. Choosing God, we live love in whatever way we are led to serve God and our fellow man, within our families, churches, communities and world. Mrs. Eddy reminds us, "Work out your own salvation,' is the demand of Life and Love, for to this end God worketh with you" (S&H p.22: 11-12).

Challenged, needing to change my thought, I had to handle a "titanic" experience and work out my salvation. And with this experience I learned how important it is to choose the goodness and all power of God's love in my life. It also reinforced the importance of nursing when one is in need of calm and reassuring assistance.

Five years ago I accepted an offer from Wayside House, a Christian Science nursing facility in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, for a free three-day stay. This gift was for Camp Bow-Isle practitioners before their work began for two weeks at camp. My husband and I were just divorced and I needed to take some time for study prior to working at camp. Preparations were all set to drive and ferry to Victoria B.C., but in trying on my heavy backpack, I realized I didn't have the strength to lift it, let alone wear it. The menstruation I was experiencing felt painful and now my body felt weak. I called my teacher and asked him to give me Christian Science

treatment to support my prayers while I drove seven hours to Canada. As I drove, I began listening to *Science and Health* on tape. I was able to drive all the way and I had had some relief, but upon arriving at Wayside House I experienced a complete breakdown. I seemed to be struggling for my life. The hemorrhaging increased so much so that I was awake round the clock. During this wakeful time I continued to listen and read *Science and Health* there in my room.

From the moment this challenge presented itself, I knew that I would somehow make it to camp and be at my post as camp practitioner. As I struggled with a humanly “titanic” challenge, I realized how this problem seems to plague womanhood. Handling the lie that woman could be cursed to suffer helped me see the perfect Father-Mother that I imaged. This was not the situation I wanted to be in and so I needed to choose God. Though I was on my own, I realized I could never actually be alone for I could never be separated from God who is all good. I was “undivorced from Truth.” I felt the presence of the Christ, Truth as I listened to each word in *Science and Health*. I was so grateful for the nurses who brought me my meals. I could feel their support with their grace and love expressed to me. On the third day the hemorrhaging stopped and I was able to take a long walk along the water’s edge. I remember it being a glorious day with a rainbow over the bay and a quiet peace and calm was felt within me.

I had realized that life was not in or of matter, but that God was my life and that I could never be “cut off” from Love. I felt strengthened and renewed. And I realized I couldn’t be harmed because of my love for God and my willingness to serve others. As I heard God’s call, I awakened to the Christ, Truth of wholeness and completeness and strength and inspiration. Wayside House and its staff overflowed with this unconditional Christly love. I felt like I had been placed in the arms of divine Love reassuring me that I could make it in this changing relative experience in my life and that in choosing God, He would guide me every step of the way.

So, I was ready to proceed to camp. When I arrived, I was able to apply what I learned through this experience and I remembered the love expressed to me during my time of need. I was physically able to do all of the camp activities. Inspired to prayerfully serve God and the camp, I was even able to successfully jump off of a platform to a trapeze 30-40 feet up in the trees. Today I remain completely free of any problems in that regard. My heart is filled with gratitude for the spiritual atmosphere conducive to healing that I am sure many others have been able to experience with those that “hear the call” and how the Wayside House heard my call, that they provided me with a place to work out my salvation.

We are all working out our own salvation, whether we are Christian Science nurses, practitioners, or patients, or whether we are brand new to the Life that is Spirit. Mrs. Eddy states,

Thus it is that our ideas of divinity form our models of humanity. O Christian Scientist, thou of the church of the new-born; awake to a higher and holier love for God and man; put on the whole armor of Truth; rejoice in hope; be patient in tribulation, — that ye may go to the bed of anguish, and look upon this dream of life in matter, girt with a higher sense of omnipotence; and behold once again the power of divine Life and Love to heal and reinstate man in God's own image and likeness, having "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (*Peo* 14: 10)

No challenge is too big for our all-loving, all-knowing Father-Mother God. Have we had or are we currently challenged by a “*Titanic*” in our life? What seems to be threatening us today? Are we turning to God and asking Him for help? We’re being asked to be humble and patient in our prayers. Remembering to A.S.K. and to nurture self-knowledge, humility, and love, develops a consciousness conducive to listening and hearing the call from God. Choosing God, He chooses us. And we are given a promise from God where in Romans we read, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).
