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# SALVATION AND THE CHURCH

How the Church is Transformed by God's Love  
and Shares This Love With the World

LESSON SIX



## SOURCES

### Texts

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### Art

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## Serving Christ in Others

Jesus' teaching about the judgment of the nations contains a vitally important message for the church. Speaking to those who have lovingly served others, Jesus explains how closely related God is to the poor and suffering in the world when he says,

Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me (Mt 20:34–36, 40, NRSVUE).

Christians are called to serve the world in love, and in so doing we serve the God who fills the world with his loving presence. In this booklet we will find examples of Christians growing together in worship and service, ministering to the needy, and delighting in the holiness of all God's creation. In the end, as it says in St. Patrick's Breastplate, we are called to experience and love God in everyone and everything.



# Scripture

The Bible shows that the church should live and grow in love, and share this love with the world.

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,  
Christ in the fort,  
Christ in the chariot seat,  
Christ in the poop [deck],  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.



# The Breastplate of St. Patrick

Patrick of Ireland  
(c. 8<sup>th</sup> Century)

This excerpt from a hymn attributed to Patrick of Ireland demonstrates a desire for God and divine love to pervade all of creation.

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:44–47, NRSVUE).

So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone; in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God (Eph 2:19–22, NRSVUE).

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Heb 10:24–25, NRSVUE).

Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse, but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. For “Those who desire to love life and to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Pet 3:8–12, NRSVUE).



## A Prayer for the Church

Walter  
Rauschenbusch  
(1910)

In keeping with his Social Gospel theology, Rauschenbusch prays God will empower the church to engage in ministry to the world.

Praise be to Thee, O Lord, for all Thy creatures and especially for our brother the sun who gives us the day and who shows for Thy light. Fair is he and radiant with great splendor. To us he is the symbol of Thee, O Lord.

Praise be to Thee, O Lord, for our sister the moon and for the stars. Thou has set them clear, beautiful and precious in the heaven above.

Praise be to Thee, O Lord, for our brother the wind, for the air and the clouds, for the clear sky and for all weathers by which Thou givest life and the means of life to all Thy creatures.

Praise be to Thee, O Lord, for our sister water who is so serviceable to us, humble also, precious and chaste.

Praise be to Thee, O Lord, for our brother fire, by whom Thou givest us light in the darkness; he is beautiful and bright, courageous and strong.

Praise be to Thee, O Lord, for our mother the earth, who sustains us and nourishes us, bringing forth divers fruits, flowers of many colors and the grass.

# The Canticle of the Sun

Francis of Assisi  
(1225)

In this excerpt from *The Canticle of the Sun*, Francis praises God for the wonders of the created world.

God, we pray for thy Church, which is set to-day amid the perplexities of a changing order, and face to face with a great new task. We remember with love the nurture she gave to our spiritual life in its infancy, the tasks she set for our growing strength, the influence of the devoted hearts she gathers, the steadfast power for good she has exerted. When we compare her with all other human institutions, we rejoice, for there is none like her. But when we judge her by the mind of her Master, we bow in pity and contrition. Oh, baptize her afresh in the lifegiving spirit of Jesus! Grant her a new birth, though it be with the travail of repentance and humiliation. Bestow upon her a more imperious responsiveness to duty, a swifter compassion with suffering, and an utter loyalty to the will of God. Put upon her lips the ancient gospel of her Lord. Help her to proclaim boldly the coming of the Kingdom of God and the doom of all that resist it. Fill her with the prophets' scorn of tyranny, and with a Christ-like tenderness for the heavy-laden and down-trodden. Give her faith to espouse the cause of the people, and in their hands that grope after freedom and light to recognize the bleeding hands of the Christ. Bid her cease from seeking her own life, lest she lose it. Make her valiant to give up her life to humanity, that like her crucified Lord she may mount by the path of the cross to a higher glory.



## The Benefits of Worshiping Together

Jacob of Serugh  
(Late 5<sup>th</sup>-Early 6<sup>th</sup>  
Century)

The great Syriac Christian reminds us of the wonders and benefits we can experience in a church service.

There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have our treasure chest, it is not made up of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary. These gifts are, as it were, piety's deposit fund. For they are not taken thence and spent on feasts, and drinking-bouts, and eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in the prisons, for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's Church, they become the nurslings of their confession. But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, how they love one another, for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves will sooner put to death.



## The Generosity of the Early Church

Tertullian  
(197)

Tertullian describes the early church's practice of collecting money and distributing it to those in need.

The Church in the world is a great harbour, full of peace; whoso toileth, let him come in and rest at her table, Her doors are open, and her eye is good, and her heart is wide. Her table is full, and sweet is her mingled (cup) to them that are worthy. Ye lovers of the world, come in from wandering in the evil world, and rest in the inn that is full of comfort to him that enters it...

Mercy hath brought thee in to this house that is full of profit; think it not loss if thou remain long herein. Be patient and listen to the sound of the Psalms which the finger of prophecy played to the words of David. Hearken to the Hymns sung by chaste women with voices of praise, which the wisdom of the Highest has given to the congregations. Hear the Prophets who, as it were through pipes of choice gold, pour forth from their mouths life into the ears of men. Hearken to the Apostles who, like the channels of rivers, are opened and water the King's garden with lofty streams. Bend thine ear to the pulpit of the Godhead, and receive from it precious pearls. Learn and give assent to the (two) Testaments, rivers both which hold for thee life unending. Hear the New, and hearken to the Old; and see that in both one truth is spoken unto thee. Lo, thou hearest from the Old of the four rivers which flowed from the blessed source of Eden; and again in the New (thou hast) the Apostles like four rivers, who went forth into the four corners (of the world) and watered them.



# Work Together

Ignatius of Antioch  
(Early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century)

Ignatius encourages believers to work together in living and promoting the Christian life.

**L**abour together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God. Please Him under whom you fight, and from whom you receive your wages. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism endure as your arms; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as a complete panoply. Let your works be the charge assigned to you, that you may receive a worthy recompense. Be long-suffering, therefore, with one another, in meekness, as God is towards you. May I have joy of you for ever!

