

## LESSON 187 • JULY 6

**“I bless the world because I bless myself.”**

### **Practice instructions**

**Purpose:** To bless yourself by looking upon the purity in you, and then to bless the world with that same purity. To give the world the lilies of forgiveness you find on the altar within you, and then to find those lilies returned to you, thereby dispelling your belief that giving is sacrifice.

**Morning/evening quiet time:** At least five minutes; ideally, thirty or more.

This is another meditation aimed at experiencing the purity within you, like Lessons 181 and 182. The lesson speaks of this using the imagery of a holy altar within you, and you may want to use this imagery in your meditation. Quiet your mind and go to find that holy altar in you. You might imagine, as other lessons suggest, that you are traveling through thick fog, until it clears and you reach the altar. Be unafraid to look upon it. There on the altar, you will see the lilies of forgiveness your brother has given you and you have given him. There before the altar, you stand united with all your brothers. With them, repeat the Name of God, for this altar is the place in you that is perfectly devoted to your Father. How can you possibly fear Him when such purity abides in you? This is your true nature, which is so pure and so blessed that looking on it will leave you enraptured. You will forget about all earthly gifts, as the gift of your holiness becomes the only thing you want.

**Remarks:** This is how you bless yourself, by looking on this holy altar. Now that you have received blessing, you can give it. “Now we are blessed, and now we bless the world” (11:1). So spend the day taking the lilies of forgiveness from your inner altar and giving them to your brothers. The lesson expects that this will often take concrete form: giving of your time, your abilities, and even your material means. If you fear that this is sacrifice, you can afford to laugh at that thought, for whatever you give you receive. Picture the outer gift you are giving as a lily of forgiveness, and realize that this lily will then be laid on *your* altar, as further testament to your purity. From there, this lily will manifest in your life in the “form most helpful” to you (5:7).

**Hourly remembrance:** One or two minutes as the hour strikes (reduce if circumstances do not permit).

Do a short version of the morning/evening exercise. Close by asking for God’s guidance for the coming hour and thanking Him for His gifts in the past hour.

**Response to temptation:** When tempted to believe you are making a sacrifice.

Repeat the idea and then take the blessing you have been given within, and give it to your brother. All thought of sacrifice will vanish in the face of the receiving and giving of blessing.

### **Commentary**

We find it easy to understand that in order to give a thing, you first must have it. That’s obvious. We find it more difficult to believe that giving actually increases what you have.

The key to understanding this, says the lesson, lies in the fact that “things but represent the thoughts that make them” (2:3). To understand how giving away what we have increases it, we have to begin to recognize that “things” are not real; what is real are the thoughts behind them. This is not necessarily saying that if I give \$100 to a brother in need I will immediately receive \$200 in return from some other source. However, it is saying that when I give \$100 away knowing that money is just an idea, I will be increasing the thought that brought money to me in

the first place. Therefore, that will eventually result in more money, or more “wealth and abundance” in some form. The form may be identical or it may not:

Perhaps the form in which the thought seems to appear is changed in giving. Yet it must return to him who gives. Nor can the form it takes be less acceptable. It must be more. (2:5–8)

In other words, what is returned is always greater than what is given.

I have begun to learn this by giving away ideas directly, in my study group and in my writing. I have indeed found it true that as I give away these ideas, they increase in me. I get at least as much, if not more, benefit than anyone who is “receiving” from me. I am quite aware that I am blessing the world because I am blessing myself; I am doing this for my own benefit.

It is harder when it comes to material things. It is not so easy to make the connection that money is just an idea, or a tape is just an idea, a book is just an idea, a car is just an idea. I learn in little ways. I give away newsletters that cost me money, believing that it will return to me eventually. I give hours of my time to the study group, believing that the return will come. I still *feel* that as basically giving it away. The return has only just begun.

I think when I learn this lesson fully it will be no big deal to give up the idea of ownership entirely and to share everything I possess with anyone who needs it. But I am a long way from that as yet.

The next paragraph is very important:

Ideas must first belong to you, before you give them. If you are to save the world, you first accept salvation for yourself. But you will not believe that this is done until you see the miracles it brings to everyone you look upon. Herein is the idea of giving clarified and given meaning. Now you can perceive that by your giving is your store increased. (3:1–5)

To give salvation I must first accept it for myself. But to know I have it, I have to give it away. That must mean that I have to start giving before I know I have it! The gift that giving brings is knowing that I have the gift I give.

The lesson advises us to protect what we have by giving it away. It warns, “Yet value not its form” (4:3). In other words, you may not get it back in the exact form you give it. If I give \$100 cash, I may receive a gift in a different form: a tape player, computer software, a burst of physical energy, or whatever. If I give away a particular book, I may not ever receive that particular form again, and I have to learn not to value the form, but the thought behind the form. It is foolish to value forms. “No form endures” (4:5). Remember:

What [the giver] seems to lose is always something he will value less than what will surely be returned to him. (5:8)

Every gift I give is always a gift to myself. I never lose! I gain, and so does the recipient of my gift, especially if he or she learns from me to give again. “Who understands what giving means must laugh at the idea of sacrifice” (6:2). Laugh, because there is no such thing as sacrifice. What I give is given to myself; I never lose, I always gain. How can that be called sacrifice!

The lesson clearly applies this to all forms of “giving” and all forms of “sacrifice,” including pain and loss, sickness, grief, poverty, starvation, and death. When I “give up” a relationship in the form I thought I wanted, according to this lesson I receive something I will value far more. Perhaps I may learn to accept the gift of self-sufficiency, for instance.

I’m sure the same will be true as I make other “sacrifices.” Mistakenly I fear the “loss” I will feel with these things absent from my life. There will be no loss, no sacrifice. What I gain will far exceed the apparent loss. And in reality I lose nothing except a false identification.

For instance, I think I get a certain satisfaction and comfort from eating a nice meal. The pleasure of the taste; the pleasure of being full. I falsely identify these feelings with the object, the food. But pleasure, satisfaction, and comfort are just the ideas behind the food. If I were to dissociate food from those ideas, I would not be giving up those ideas; I would be affirming them. I retain them, and they grow. There will be pleasure, satisfaction, and comfort in other forms, more lasting and more generalized. I have gained the general form by giving up the specific identification of those ideas with “food.”

In general, we will go through many iterations of apparent giving up, apparent sacrifice, until we learn that the thing is not the idea, that no particular form can be identified with the idea behind it. We will learn, eventually, to hold on to no form, but to always value not the form, but the thought behind it.

Ultimately we go beyond the idea of many different thoughts to see only one Thought—the innocent Son of God, the Christ. We see that Thought within ourselves, and “what we have looked upon we would extend, for we would see it everywhere” (11:2). “To ensure this holy sight is ours, we offer it to everything we see” (11:5).