



COVER ARTICLE

On watch with the Christ

By Janet Clements

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Remember Jesus' words to Peter in the garden of Gethsemane? After praying fervently the night before his crucifixion, Jesus found Peter and two other disciples sleeping instead of watching and praying with him. He asked Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Matt. 26:40).

Years ago, I faced that same question. Whenever I attended Sunday church services, I found it very difficult to stay poised and focused on the Lesson-Sermon. Everything but the wonderful message of that Lesson flooded thought: musings about other people, disquiet and fear, things to be done at home, anticipation of activities later in the day—a potpourri of distractions.

But those words of Jesus to his closest followers kept ringing in my heart. As I pondered them, I saw that one way of looking at our church service was to see it as an opportunity to keep watch with the Christ during that one hour, even to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5).

I understand the Christ to be the holy message from God, "voicing good" as Mary Baker Eddy explained, and stating the facts of reality and revealing man's spiritual nature and oneness with God. Certainly, each Lesson-Sermon is filled with the comforting message of the Christ that heals and frees us from all sorts of limitations, and I had a sincere desire to hear its message. Mrs. Eddy wrote: "Through the word that is spoken unto you, are you made free. Abide in His word, and it shall abide in you; and the healing Christ will again be made manifest in the flesh—understood and glorified." (Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896, p. 154).

Though, at that point in my experience, abiding "in His word" for any length of time was a tall order, and one I was obviously not fulfilling. I was rather like the disciples, falling asleep—or in my case, completely distracted—right when I needed to be the most attentive. So I decided that every day I

would practice keeping watch. I set aside an hour each day, actually timing myself as to how long I could keep every thought aligned with the Christ.

My first efforts came up very short. It took maybe only five minutes until my thought would wander in another direction. But I kept at it earnestly for an hour every day. The spiritual understanding I found in the Lord's Prayer, the 23rd Psalm, and "the scientific statement of being" and Daily Prayer by Mrs. Eddy were my mainstays. Steadily, I made modest gains, until after several months I found that for the hour my thought had been filled with nothing but the allness and goodness of God and the power of His Christ.

The goal Mrs. Eddy put before us became more doable: "To live so as to keep human consciousness in constant relation with the divine, the spiritual, and the eternal, is to individualize infinite power; and this is Christian Science" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 160).

What tenderly bridled my thought to the Christ wasn't human willpower, but my humbly allowing that Mind that was in Christ Jesus be expressed in me. I found great comfort from this revelation in the Bible: God "declareth unto man what is his thought" (*Amos 4:13*). I saw that my thinking was not some random functioning of intelligent matter that I was trying to keep focused, but the expression of God's knowing. God's thoughts are perfect, clear, inspired, wise, ordered, purposeful. As God's image and likeness, my thoughts were defined by divine Mind. The adhesion and cohesion of Mind held every thought to the ordered sequence of Principle, to the newness of Life, to the revelation of Truth, the heavenly inspiration and joy of Soul, even the reign of heaven, the realm of unerring Mind.

I thought about the dominion that God has given all His children. I discovered that one definition of *dominion* is "an order of angels." What a gift that is! Our conscious being is filled with countless angels, which Mrs. Eddy defined as "God's thoughts passing to man; spiritual intuitions, pure and perfect; the inspiration of goodness, purity, and immortality, counteracting all evil, sensuality, and mortality" (*Science and Health*, p. 581).

I saw that the angels of God's presence were counteracting every distracting thought that tried to lead me away from the message of the Christ, from the message of Truth. That which would distract or oppose was the opposite of the Christ, that sneaky serpent, if you will, that leads thought away from that which blesses, from that which heals, from that which enables us to advance spiritually.

The message of the Most High can never be lost, silenced, or incomplete, can never be obscured or misinterpreted. I could see that there was no anti-Christ called boredom, distraction, limited attention span, to divert thought, because as we find in the Bible, "Christ is all, and in all" ([Col. 3:11](#)). How glorious to rejoice in the universality of the Christ! I saw that no one could ever be left out of the pure and uplifting inspiration of the Christ.

In my prayerful work, I gave some thought to the Day of Pentecost, when folks with different languages, from various countries, gathered together in one place. The divine message that came to them that day was spoken in the Galilean tongue, yet everyone heard the message in their native language. What happened that day went beyond human communication and physical hearing. God was His own interpreter. Divine Love communicated the message to each one in such a way that no matter where they were from, or their walk of life, the message struck home to them. It resounded in their heart. No one was a foreigner in the congregation of listeners that day. All were of the household of God and "fellow-citizens with the saints" ([Eph. 2:19](#)). Each heard with clarity the sound of "the wonderful works of God" ([Acts 2:11](#)) that united them in harmony.

This amazing communication was the very activity of the Holy Ghost, an influx of inspiration proclaiming God's Word. Isn't each Sunday service an ongoing, continuous ribbon of this unbroken healing activity, of the fulfillment and fruition of the Holy Ghost and the Christ? The Holy Ghost is the divine force that unites the content of the message, the sharing of the message, and the receiving of the message into one glorious communication, where all are united in the revelation of the Word of God. The Lesson-Sermon is evidence of the rousing activity of the Holy Ghost, Divine Science, comforting, guiding, inspiring, healing, and teaching the reality of the unbroken harmony of God and the universe.

What a difference this new understanding made and continues to make in my Sunday church going! The order of the service was the same, but my thought about the service and what it invited me to do had changed. It wasn't so much what it would do for me, but what I could contribute and how we could all be of service to our community. I saw my presence as an acknowledgment to the community of my humble commitment of watching with the Christ and of my willingness to pray collectively for those present.

Recently, I shared some of these ideas at a church meeting, and later someone who had heard it took it to heart when she found that she had become incapacitated and unable to walk. Her movements were limited and she had to use a wheelchair to get around. She began her own

watching with the Christ for one hour, and her prayers brought complete restoration to her walking. She was fully healed.

Think about what that same watchfulness can do for you, and for our churches and communities. Think about the pure healing atmosphere, even the “sweet-smelling savour” of the Christ that would waft through church. Think about what healing impact it would have on the service and on those who attend! The possibilities for blessing and healing are immeasurable. Jesus founded his Church on the rock of Christ-healing. And the more we consistently align our thought with the Christ, the more we demonstrate this healing Church.

In healing the multitudes, wasn't Jesus seeing everyone's oneness with God as expressing the Christly consciousness in which no illness, discord, or limitation exists? This scientific understanding of the universal consciousness of the Christ, even the allness of Mind, opened the way for those bound with illusive thoughts of limitation to be immediately conscious of their God-given freedom. That resulted in healing. As we each watch with the Christ during the hour of church, we are holding up the light of the Christ for all those at the service to see the light and to walk free.

In an early *Christian Science Sentinel*, an article titled “Healing the Multitudes,” by Florence Clerihew Boyd, included this arresting statement: “Mrs. Eddy once said to a student that she longed for the day to come when no one could enter a Christian Science church, no matter how sick or how sorrowing that one might be, without being healed, and that this day can come only when every member of the church studies and demonstrates the truth contained in the Lesson-Sermon, and takes with him to the service the consciousness thus prepared” (July 1, 1916, p. 866).

Let us graciously accept that invitation.

Janet Clements is a Christian Science practitioner and teacher in Chicago, Illinois.