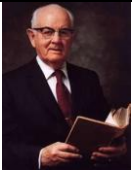















	<p>Presentation by Suzanne Peterson, former LDS Seminary Instructor</p> <p>Instructions: Have these 2 pictures on the screen at the front of the class as students enter the classroom.</p>
	<p>Play a recording of a Christmas carol softly in the background. This will invite the spirit and help the class prepare for the lesson.</p>
	<p>Teacher explains:</p> <p>We are having a special Christmas lesson about the Savior. The lesson will be an article entitled “Jesus of Nazareth” by President Spencer W. Kimball.</p>
	<p>Isn't it wonderful to celebrate the birth and life of the Lord Jesus Christ at this season of the year? This is an opportunity to show our grateful that Jesus was born.</p> <p>You and I must be praying and yearning and striving and working to cultivate a Christlike character if we hope to receive the spiritual gift of charity--the pure love of Christ so that we may also resist temptation.</p>
	<p>When that Savior said to the Nephites “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” He meant that we must be like Him and possess Christlike love or the gift of charity.</p>
	<p>Let's look how the gift of charity helped Jesus resist the 3 temptations in Matt. Chapter 4 verse 3.</p> <p>Jesus had spoken of his Father-Son relationship. Lucifer determined to test that Jesus' Father-Son relationship.</p>
	<p>Hungry after a long 40 day fast, Jesus needed sustenance, and the cruel question came hurling at him: “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Bread would have tasted so good at that moment but it would only satisfy Jesus' hunger and He would not be able to feed us spiritually and complete His Divine mission.</p> <p>The gift of charity will help us control our appetites.</p>

	<p>Continuing on with verse 6 the next temptation. On the pinnacle of the temple, Satan planted an ugly selfish thought. Let's look at verse 6.</p> <p>“If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for [the angels] shall bear thee up,”</p> <p>Perhaps the Lord fully sensed his unlimited power, but to use it for himself and to satisfy Satan's devilish challenge would be wrong and selfish.</p>
	<p>The third and final test was on the exceeding high mountain where could be envisioned the wealth of nations, the power of kings and emperors, the glory of affluence, the satisfactions of every urge, desire, want and passion, came the appealing promise. Consider this temptation in verse 9. “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Charity seeketh not [just] her own.</p> <p>The key word is “THEE.” Satan wanted Jesus to focus on Himself and what He could have and not to consider the consequences of His actions to others. In today's language it sounds like this, “it's my life I can do what I want.”</p>
	<p>Listen to the Savior's response.</p> <p>“Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.”</p> <p>Whom did Christ mention? His Father. Wasn't He considering the impact His actions would have on His Father? Don't you wish more children had charity and treated their fathers and mothers like this?</p> <p>Paul stated in 1 Cor. Chapter 13 verse 4, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.”</p> <p>It says "Then the devil leaveth him.”</p>
	<p>Look at Matt chapter 4 verse 11. Now go down to the bottom of the page and find the Joseph Smith Translation in the footnotes. This footnote changes everything about this verse. Instead of angels ministering to Jesus what happened? Jesus knew that John was cast into prison, and he sent angels, and, behold, they came and ministered unto him (John)."</p>

	<p>It is important for us to recognize that Jesus in the midst of His own challenge recognized and appropriately responded to John--who was experiencing a similar but lesser challenge than that of the Savior's. Think about the character of Christ for a moment. His character was manifested as He reached outward and ministered to one who was suffering--even as He himself was experiencing anguish and torment.</p> <p>The gift of charity helps us reach outward even though we are going through tough times.</p>
	<p>How difficult it must have been for him, who could wither a fig tree with a single command, to restrain himself from cursing his enemies. Rather, he prayed for them. To retaliate and fight back is human, but to accept indignities, as did the Lord is divine love, the gift of charity.</p> <p>How could He pray for the well-being and unity of others immediately before His own anguish? Because Christ had the gift of charity.</p> <p>What enabled Him to seek comfort and peace for those whose need was so much less than His? Because Christ had the gift of charity.</p> <p>As the fallen nature of the world He created pressed in upon Him, how could He focus so totally and so exclusively upon the conditions and concerns of others? Ask the class to say their name in the place of Christ's name and say it out loud together.</p> <p>Because (your name) has the gift of charity.</p> <p>How was the Master able to reach outward when a lesser being would have turned inward? Because? Let the class finish the sentence. (Christ had the gift of charity.)</p>
	<p>Consider the scene as Jesus emerged from His awful suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. Having just sweat great drops of blood from every pore as part of the infinite and eternal Atonement, the Redeemer encountered a multitude.</p>
	<p>Given the magnitude and intensity of Jesus' agony, it perhaps would have been understandable if He had not noticed and attended to the guard's severed ear. But the Savior's character activated a compassion that was perfect because (ask the class to say the answer in unison) Christ had the gift of charity. Ask the person to your right or left what his or her name is. Now say that person's name in the sentence like this. (Your neighbor's name) has the gift of charity.</p> <p>Note His charitable response to the guard as described in verse 51: "And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him (Luke 22:51)</p>

	<p>With twelve legions of angels at his command, (one roman legion was 6,000) legions of angels would 10's of 1,000s) he yielded himself and disarmed his courageous Apostles at his side. He accepted this manhandling and the indignities without retaliation. Had he not said, "Love your enemies"? (Matt. 5:44.)</p>
	<p>In quiet, restrained, divine dignity he stood when they cast their spittle in his face. He remained composed. Not an angry word escaped his lips. They slapped his face and beat his body. Yet he stood resolute, unintimidated because Christ had the gift of charity. Now let's say our name in the sentence. Because (Suzanne) has the gift of charity.</p>
	<p>Literally did he follow his own admonition when he turned his other cheek to be also slapped and smitten. And yet, he did not cringe, gave no denials, offered no rebuttals because Christ had the gift of charity.</p>
	<p>"Pray for them which despitefully use you"? (Matt. 5:44.) What dignity! What mastery! What control! Because Christ had the gift of charity so He had self-control.</p> <p>Even when he, the perfect, the sinless, the good, the Prince of Life, the Just, was weighed on one side of the scales against the murderer, the seditionist, the insurrectionist, Barrabas—and Barrabas won, thus winning his liberty at the price of Christ's crucifixion—yet Because Christ had the gift of charity the Savior said not a word of condemnation to the magistrate who made the unjust decision.</p>
	<p>Bless them that curse you," he had taught. (Matt. 5:44.)</p> <p>Neither did he say anything to the people who called, "Release unto us Barrabas." (Luke 23:18.) Even when they cried for his blood, saying, "Crucify him, crucify him" (Luke 23:21)—yet because Christ had the gift of charity.</p> <p>He showed no bitterness nor condemnation. Only tranquility. This is divine dignity, power, control, restraint.</p>
	<p>Barrabas for Christ! The unjust for the just; the Holy One crucified, the malefactor released. Yet no revenge, no name-calling, no condemnation came from him whom they condemned because Christ had the gift of charity.</p> <p>No lightning struck them, though it could have done. No earthquake</p>

	<p>came to save him, though a severe one could have come. No angels sped to him with protective weapons, though legions were ready. No escape was asked for, though he could have been translated. He stood and suffered in mind and body.</p>
	<p>Yet still further tests came. Though pronounced innocent, he was scourged. Unworthy men lashed him, the pure and the Holy One, the Son of God. One word from his lips and all his enemies would have fallen to the earth, helpless. All would have perished, all could have been as dust and ashes. Yet, in calmness because Christ had the gift of charity, he suffered.</p> <p>Even when delivered to the soldiers to be crucified, he prayed for them who despitefully used him ". . . forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).</p>
	<p>How he must have suffered when they violated his privacy by stripping off his clothes and then putting on him the scarlet robe! Because Christ had the gift of charity.</p>
	<p>Then, the crown of thorns. Blood from the thorns seemed to be what they wanted. For had they not just said, "His blood be on us and on our children"? (Matt. 27:25.) Now nothing could stop them. They hungered to satisfy their blood lust. Only the crucifixion would do that, but first they must satisfy their appetites for sadism and cast their spittle in his holy face.</p> <p>With a reed in his hand, a scarlet robe over his shoulders, and a crown of thorns on his head, he was made to suffer indignity: they laughed and mocked and jeered and challenged him. Taking the reed from his hand, they would strike him on the head. Yet he stood there, the model of long-suffering because Christ had the gift of charity...charity suffereth long and is kind.</p>
	<p>Still they moved about him. In base mockery they feigned worship, praying mockingly to him, doing him false reverence, joking, laughing. Was all their ugliness, all their pent-up grievance against mankind, all their bitternesses against acquaintances and enemies loosed upon this one so pure, clean, and worthy? "Charity is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."</p>

	<p>When would they get their fill? How base can man become—he who may be but a little lower than the angels, he who is created in the image of God. What would they do when their victim could suffer no more and no more satisfy their depravity?</p> <p>Throughout His mortal ministry, and especially during the events leading up to and including the atoning sacrifice, the Savior of the world turned outward--when the natural man or woman in any of us would have been self-centered and focused inward. “Charity endureth all things.” Do you see how important it is to strive for the gift of charity? Look how much you can overcome.</p>
	<p>They would have his sore and bruised and bloody body carry the cross, the weighty implement of his own death. Their strong backs unburdened, they watched him sweat and heave and strain and pull, a helpless victim. Or was he helpless? Were not the twelve legions of angels still at his command? Did they not still have their swords unsheathed? Were they not still agonizing, yet restrained from coming to the rescue?</p>
	<p>Surely Lucifer, who had tempted him in the wilderness, on the mountain, and on the pinnacle of the temple—surely he had done an efficient work in prompting his underlings.</p> <p>They now used the same tactics, the same words: “If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.” (Luke 23:37.) The thief on the cross taunted him, “If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.” (Luke 23:39.) All around were others only little less criminal in their persecution. The swaggering clergy in their long embroidered robes, the leaders of the people—base, low, degraded—they also were to mock and jeer.</p>
	<p>His hour had come. He was alone, yet among crowds of people. Alone he was, with eager angels waiting to comfort him. Alone, with his Father in deepest sympathy but knowing that his Son must walk alone the bitter, tortuous path. Alone, drained, feverish, dying, he called out: “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46.) Alone he had been in the garden—praying for strength to drink the bitter cup.</p>
	<p>He had said, “Love your enemies.” Now he proved how much one can love his enemies. He was dying on the cross for those who had nailed him there because Christ had the gift of Charity he was able to think of others during His agony.</p> <p>As he died, he experienced agonies that no man had ever before or has since experienced. Yet he cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34.)</p>

	<p>Was this not the last word—the supreme act? How divine to forgive those who were killing him—again that’s charity--- those who were clamoring for his blood! He had said, “Pray for them which despitefully use you,” and here he was praying for them. --- that’s charity. His life met perfectly his teachings.</p>
	<p>You and I must be praying and yearning and striving and working to cultivate a Christlike character if we hope to receive the spiritual gift of charity--the pure love of Christ.</p> <p>Charity is not a trait or characteristic we acquire exclusively through our own purposive persistence and determination. Indeed we must honor our covenants and live worthily and do all that we can do to qualify for the gift; but ultimately the gift of charity possesses us--we do not possess it (see Moroni 7:47).</p>
	<p>The Lord determines if and when we receive all spiritual gifts, but we must do all in our power to desire and yearn and invite and qualify for such gifts.</p> <p>As we increasingly act in a manner congruent with the character of Christ, then perhaps we are indicating to heaven in a most powerful manner our desire for the supernal spiritual gift of charity. And clearly we are being blessed with this marvelous gift as we increasingly reach outward when the natural man or woman in us would typically turn inward.</p>
	<p>It is well that at this time of the year we pour out our hearts in prayers of love and thanksgiving to our Father in Heaven: Pres Kimball offers this prayer--- We are grateful, Father, that we know so positively that thou dost live; that we know the babe born in Bethlehem was in reality thy Son; grateful that thy plan of salvation is real, workable, and exalting. We know thee, Lord. We love thee, and will follow thee. We pledge again our lives, our all, to thy cause.</p>
	<p>At this beautiful season, we invite all people everywhere to join us in our prayers of joy and love and gratitude for the life and teachings of our Lord and Savior, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. May we have the gift of Charity that we may be like Him.</p>