

CHARLES DICKENS

The Life of Our Lord
WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR HIS FAMILY

WITH NOTES & 4 REFLECTIONS

by

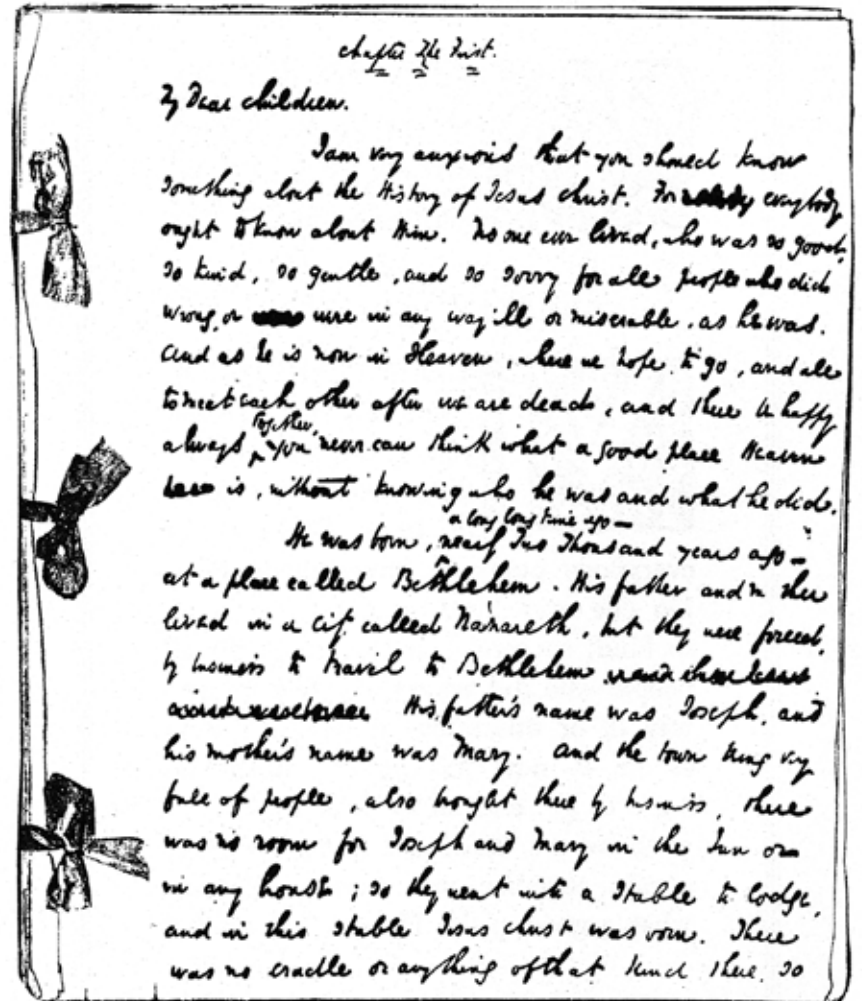
STEPHEN SKELTON

TO: _____

FROM: _____

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A facsimile of the first page of the manuscript of Charles Dickens' *The Life of Our Lord*



CHAPTER THE FIRST

My dear children, I am very anxious that you should know something about the history of Jesus Christ. For everybody ought to know about him. No one ever lived who was so good, so kind, so gentle, and so sorry for all people who did wrong, or were in anyway ill or miserable, as he was. And as he is now in heaven, where we hope to go, and all to meet each other after we are dead, and there be happy always together, you never can think what a good place heaven is, without knowing who he was and what he did.

He was born, a long long time ago—nearly two thousand years ago—at a place called Bethlehem. His father and mother lived in a city called Nazareth, but they were forced by business to travel to Bethlehem. His father's name was Joseph, and his mother's name was Mary. And the town being very full of people, also brought there by business, there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the inn or any house; so they went into a stable to lodge, and in this stable Jesus Christ was born. There was no cradle or anything of that kind there, so Mary laid her pretty little boy in what is called the manger, which is the place the horses eat out of. And there he fell asleep.

While he was asleep, some shepherds who were watching sheep in the fields saw an angel from God, all light and beautiful, come moving over the grass towards them. At first they were afraid and fell down and hid their faces. But it said, "There is a child born to-day in the city of Bethlehem near

here, who will grow up to be so good that God will love him as his own Son; † and he will teach men to love one another, and not to quarrel and hurt one another; and his name will be Jesus Christ; and people will put that name in their prayers, because they will know God loves it, and will know that they should love it too."

And then the angel told the shepherds to go to that stable, and look at that little child in the manger. Which they did; and they kneeled down by it in its sleep, and said, "God bless this child!"

Now the great place of all that country was Jerusalem—just as London is the great place in England—and at Jerusalem the King lived, whose name was King Herod. Some wise men came one day, from a country a long way off in the East, and said to the King, "We have seen a star in the sky, which teaches us to know that a child is born in Bethlehem who will live to be a man whom all people will love."

When King Herod heard this, he was jealous, for he was a wicked man. But he pretended not to be, and said to the wise men, "Whereabouts is this child?"

And the wise men said, "We don't know. But we think the star will show us; for the star has been moving on before us, all the way here, and is now standing still in the sky." Then Herod asked them to see if the star

Perhaps one point of inspiration for writing The Life of Our Lord was that Dickens detested so-called "children's books" that attempted to frighten the young with God. One such book was The Children's Friend by Reverend Carus Wilson (1791-1859), a collection of religious poems which featured the following passage:

It's dangerous to provoke a God
Whose power and vengeance none can tell;
One stroke of His almighty rod
Can send young sinners quick to hell

Ten years before writing The Life of Our Lord, Dickens wrote to the author of such a collection of "children's stories," with equal parts outrage and insight: "I think it monstrous to hold the source of inconceivable mercy and goodness perpetually up to them as an avenging and wrathful God who—making them in His wisdom children before they are men and women—is to punish them awfully for every little venial offence which is almost a necessary part of that stage of life."

† Dickens seems to indicate that Jesus was called God's Son because of his good nature. In fact, the Bible uses the term "Son of God" to denote the deity of Jesus (JOHN 5:18-25). However, Dickens strongly believed that the Christian religion compels action. Ever an advocate for the poor who were so often mistreated in his day, here Dickens is laying the groundwork for an emphasis on the ethics of Christ—as the defining example for his family of one who not only was good, but more importantly, actually did good.

Writing in his self-published magazine Household Words, Dickens described what Christmas meant to him as a child, mirroring what he hoped it meant to his own children as well: "An angel, speaking to a group of shepherds in a field; some travelers, with eyes uplifted, following a star; a baby in a manger; a child in a spacious temple, talking with grave men; a solemn figure, with a mild and beautiful face, raising a dead girl by the hand; again, near a city gate, calling back the son of a widow, on his brier, to life; a crowd of people looking through the opened roof of a chamber where he sits, and letting down a sick person on a bed, with ropes; the same, in a tempest, walking on the water to a ship; again, on a sea-shore, teaching a great multitude; again, with a child up on his knee, and other children round; again, restoring sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, strength to the lame, knowledge to the ignorant; again, dying upon a Cross, watched by armed soldiers, a thick darkness coming on, the earth beginning to shake, and only one voice heard, 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

was of no use. The soldiers with their swords killed all the children they could find. This dreadful murder was called the Murder of the Innocents, because the little children were so innocent.

King Herod hoped that Jesus Christ was one of them. But he was not, as you know, for he had escaped safely into Egypt. And he lived there, with his father and mother, until bad King Herod died.

would show them where the child lived, and ordered them, if they found the child, to come back to him. So they went out, and the star went on, over their heads a little way before them, until it stopped over the house where the child was. This was very wonderful, but God ordered it to be so.

When the star stopped, the wise men went in, and saw the child with Mary his mother. They loved him very much, and gave him some presents. Then they went away. But they did not go back to King Herod; for they thought he was jealous, though he had not said so. So they went away, by night, back into their own country.

And an angel came, and told Joseph and Mary to take the child into a country called Egypt, or Herod would kill him. So they escaped too, in the night—the father, the mother, and the child—and arrived there, safely.

But when this cruel Herod found that the wise men did not come back to him, and that he could not, therefore, find out where this child, Jesus Christ, lived, he called his soldiers and captains to him, and told them to go and kill all the children in his dominions that were not more than two years old. The wicked men did so. The mothers of the children ran up and down the streets with them in their arms trying to save them, and hide them in caves and cellars, but it

THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD (COVERING CHAPTER 1)

LUKE 2:8-11

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

At the birth of Jesus, many people recognized him as a king. Some rejoiced at this news—Joseph and Mary, the shepherds, the wise men. Others cringed at the news—King Herod and even Satan. However, many others did not recognize Christ at all. Indeed, the Jewish people, who had been waiting for centuries for their Messiah, failed to realize Jesus was their king because his kingdom was not an earthly one but a heavenly one. Today, if we are to recognize Christ, we must not only acknowledge Christ as king (even the devil did that), but also rejoice at this news and, most importantly, worship him as the ruler of our lives.

What does the birth of Christ mean to you?

What aspect of the story impresses you most?

How does that aspect influence how you live?

How can you tell others what the birth of Christ means?



CHAPTER THE SECOND

When King Herod was dead, an angel came to Joseph again, and said he might now go to Jerusalem, and not be afraid for the child's sake. So Joseph and Mary, and her son Jesus Christ (who are commonly called the Holy Family) traveled towards Jerusalem; but hearing on the way that King Herod's son was the new King, and fearing that he, too, might want to hurt the child, they turned out of the way, and went to live in Nazareth. They lived there until Jesus Christ was twelve years old.

Then Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to attend a religious feast which used to be held in those days, in the Temple of Jerusalem, which was a great church or cathedral; and they took Jesus Christ with them. And when the feast was over, they traveled away from Jerusalem, back towards their own home in Nazareth, with a great many of their friends and neighbors. For people used, then, to travel a great many together, for fear of robbers; the roads not being so safe and well guarded as they are now, and traveling being much more difficult altogether, than it now is.

They traveled on, for a whole day, and never knew that Jesus Christ was not with them; for the company being so large, they thought he was somewhere among the people, though they did not see him. But finding that he was not there, and fearing that he was lost, they turned back to Jerusalem in great anxiety to look for him. They found him, sitting in the

temple, talking about the goodness of God, and how we should all pray to him, with some learned men who were called doctors. They were not what you understand by the word "doctors" now; they did not attend sick people; they were scholars and clever men. And Jesus Christ showed such knowledge in what he said to them, and in the questions he asked them, that they were all astonished.

He went, with Joseph and Mary, home to Nazareth, when they found him, and lived there until he was thirty or thirty-five years old.

At the time there was a very good man indeed, named John, who was the son of a woman named Elizabeth—the cousin of Mary. And people being wicked, and violent, and killing each other, and not minding their duty towards God, John (to teach them better) went about the country, preaching to them, and entreating them to be better men and women. And because he loved them more than himself, and didn't mind himself when he was doing them good, he was poorly dressed in the skin of a camel, and ate little but some insects called locusts, which he found as he traveled, and wild honey, which the bees left in the hollow trees. You never saw a locust, because they belong to that country near Jerusalem, which is a great way off. So do camels, but I think you have seen a camel. At all events, they are brought over here, sometimes; and if you would like to see one, I will show you one.

There was a river, not very far from Jerusalem, called the River Jordan; and in this water, John baptized those people who would come to him, and promise to be better. A great many people went to him in crowds. Jesus Christ went too. But when John saw him, John said, "Why should I baptize you, who are so much better than I?"

Jesus Christ made answer, "Suffer it to be so now."

So John baptized him. And when he was baptized, the sky opened, and a beautiful bird like a dove came flying down, and the voice of God, speaking up in heaven, was heard to say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

Jesus Christ then went into a wild and lonely country called the wilderness, and stayed there forty days and forty nights, praying that he might be of use to men and women, and teach them to be better, so that after their deaths, they might be happy in heaven. †

† *Dickens does not go far enough here, likely because of his emphasis on doing good. It is true that Christ taught men to "be better" (Dickens really means "do better") so that they may enter heaven. But, more precisely, Jesus taught that the way we become better is to commit to him as our Lord and Savior (JOHN 3:16-18). In fact, Christ declared that no one could come to God except through union with him (JOHN 14:6).*

When he came out of the wilderness, he began to cure sick people by only laying his hand upon them; for God had given him power to heal the sick, and to give sight to the blind, and to do many wonderful and solemn things of which I shall tell you more bye and bye, and which are called the “miracles” of Christ. I wish you would remember that word, because I shall use it again, and I should like you to know that it means something which is very wonderful and which could not be done without God’s leave and assistance.

At the end of his novel Oliver Twist, Dickens instructs his readers that true happiness in life cannot be attained “without strong affection, and humanity of heart, and gratitude to that Being whose code is Mercy, and whose great attribute is Benevolence to all things that breathe...”

The first miracle which Jesus Christ did, was at a place called Cana, where he went to a marriage-feast with Mary his mother. There was no wine; and Mary told him so. There were only six stone water-pots filled with water. But Jesus turned this water into wine, by only lifting up his hand; and all who were there, drank of it. †

For God had given Jesus Christ the power to do such wonders; and he did them, that people might know he was not a common man, and might believe what he taught them, and also believe that God had sent him. And many people, hearing this, and hearing that he cured the sick, did begin to believe in him; and great crowds followed him in the streets and on the roads, wherever he went.



CHAPTER THE THIRD

That there might be some good men to go about with him, teaching the people, Jesus Christ chose twelve poor men to be his companions. These twelve are called the apostles or disciples, and he chose them from among poor men, in order that the poor might know—always after that, in all years to come—that heaven was made for them as well as for the rich, and that God makes no difference between those who wear good clothes and those who go barefoot and in rags. The most miserable, the most ugly, deformed, wretched creatures that live, will be bright angels in heaven if they are good here on earth. † Never forget this, when you are grown up. Never be proud or unkind, my dears, to any poor man, woman, or child. If they are bad, think that they would have been better, if they had had kind friends, and good homes, and had been better taught. So, always try to make them better by kind persuading words; and always try to teach them and relieve them if you can. And when people speak ill of the poor and miserable, think how Jesus Christ went among them and taught them, and thought them worthy of his care. And always pity them yourselves, and think as well of them as you can.

† Dickens believed that, with this miracle, Christ gave his blessing to the human desire to celebrate a joyous event.

† Here Dickens correctly teaches his family that Christ values all men, regardless of their station in life. However, in doing so, he again indicates that being good is the means to get to heaven. In fact, Jesus teaches that God alone is good (MATTHEW 19:17). Indeed, Christ came for those who knew they were sinners, not those who wrongly believed they were righteous (MATTHEW 9:12-13).

The names of the twelve apostles were, Simon Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son Alphaeus, Labbaeus, Simon, and Judas Iscariot. This man afterwards betrayed Jesus Christ, as you will hear by and bye.

The first four of these were poor fishermen, who were sitting in their boats by the seaside, mending their nets, when Christ passed by. He stopped, and went to Simon Peter's boat, and asked him if he had caught many fish. Peter said no; though they had worked all night with their nets, they had caught nothing.

Christ said, "Let down the net again." They did so; and it was immediately so full of fish that it required the strength of many men (who came and helped them) to lift it out of the water, and even then it was very hard to do. This was another of the miracles of Jesus Christ.

Jesus then said, "Come with me." And they followed him directly. And from that time the twelve disciples or apostles were always with him.

As great crowds of people followed him, and wished to be taught, he went up into a mountain and there preached to them, and gave them, from his own lips, the words of that prayer, beginning "Our Father which art in heaven," that

you say every night. It is called the Lord's Prayer, because it was first said by Jesus Christ, and because he commanded his disciples to pray in those words.

When he was come down from the mountain, there came to him a man with a dreadful disease called the leprosy. It was common in those times; and those who were ill with it were called lepers. This leper fell at the feet of Jesus Christ, and said, "Lord! If thou wilt, thou canst make me well!"

Jesus, always full of compassion, stretched out his hand, and said, "I will! Be thou well!" And his disease went away, immediately, and he was cured.

Being followed, wherever he went, by great crowds of people, Jesus went with his disciples into a house, to rest. While he was sitting inside, some men brought upon a bed a man who was very ill of what is called the palsy, so that he trembled all over from head to foot, and could neither stand nor move. But the crowd being all about the door and windows, and they not being able to get near Jesus Christ, these men climbed up to the roof of the house, which was a low one; and through the tiling at the top, let down the

bed, with the sick man upon it, into the room where Jesus sat. When he saw him, Jesus, full of pity, said, "Arise! Take up thy bed, and go to thine own home!" And the man rose up and went away quite well, blessing him, and thanking God.

There was a centurion too, or officer over the soldiers, who came to him and said, "Lord! My servant lies at home in my house, very ill."

Jesus Christ made answer, "I will come and cure him."

But the centurion said, "Lord! I am not worthy that thou shouldst come to my house. Say the word only, and I know he will be cured."

Then Jesus Christ, glad that the centurion believed in him so truly, said, "Be it so." And the servant became well, from that moment.

But of all the people who came to him, none were so full of grief and distress, as one man who was a ruler or magistrate over many people, and he wrung his hands, and cried, and said, "Oh Lord, my daughter—my beautiful, good, innocent little girl, is dead! Oh come to her, come to her, and lay thy blessed hand upon her, and I know she will revive, and come to life again, and make me and her mother happy. Oh Lord we love her so, we love her so! And she is dead!"

Jesus Christ went out with him, and so did his disciples, and went to his house, where the friends and neighbors were crying in the room where the poor dead little girl lay, and where there was soft music playing; as there used to be, in those days, when people died. Jesus Christ, looking on her sorrowfully, said—to comfort her poor parents—"She is not dead. She is asleep." Then he commanded the room to be cleared of the people that were in it, and going to the dead child, took her by the hand, and she rose up, quite well, as if she had only been asleep. Oh what a sight it must have been to see her parents clasp her in their arms, and kiss her, and thank God and Jesus Christ his Son, for such great mercy!

But he was always merciful and tender. And because he did such good, and taught people how to love God and how to hope to go to heaven after death, he was called our Savior. †

† As the basis for the title "Savior," Dickens highlights Christ's actions and teaching, perhaps because these two aspects provided practical applications that his family members could strive to emulate in their lives. However, the term "Savior" is actually applied to Christ because he saves us from our sins (MATTHEW 1:21). Jesus did not come to show us how to save ourselves. Rather, he came to be our Savior from the punishments of our own sinfulness.



CHAPTER THE FOURTH

There were in that country, where our Savior performed his miracles, certain people who were called Pharisees. They were very proud, and believed that no people were good but themselves; and they were all afraid of Jesus Christ, because he taught the people better. † So were the Jews, in general. Most of the inhabitants of that country were Jews.

Our Savior, walking once in the fields with his disciples on a Sunday (which the Jews called, and still call, the Sabbath), †† they gathered some ears of the corn that was growing there, to eat. This, the Pharisees said, was wrong; and in the same way, when our Savior went into one of their churches—they were called synagogues—and looked compassionately on a poor man who had his hand all withered and wasted away, these Pharisees said, “Is it right to cure people on a Sunday?”

Our Savior answered them by saying, “If any of you had a sheep and it fell into a pit, would you not take it out, even though it happened on a Sunday? And how much better is a man than a sheep!” Then he said to the

† Dickens is making a generalization about the Pharisees. Nicodemus (JOHN 3:1-21) and, likely, Joseph of Arimathea (MARK 15:43-47) were Pharisees and followers of Christ.

†† Dickens incorrectly denotes the Jewish Sabbath as Sunday. Rather, the Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening.

poor man, “Stretch out thine hand!” And it was cured immediately, and was smooth and useful like the other. So Jesus Christ told them, “You may always do good, no matter what the day is.”

There was a city called Nain into which our Savior went soon after this, followed by great numbers of people, and especially by those who had sick relations, or friends, or children. For they brought sick people out into the streets and roads through which he passed, and cried out to him to touch them; and when he did, they became well. Going on, in the midst of this crowd, and near the gate of the city, he met a funeral. It was the funeral of a young man, who was carried on what is called a bier, which was open, as the custom was in that country, and is now in many parts of Italy. His poor mother followed the bier, and wept very much, for she had no other child. When our Savior saw her, he was touched to the heart to see her so sorry and said, “Weep not!” Then, the bearers of the bier standing still, he walked up to it and touched it with his hand and said, “Young Man! Arise!” The dead man, coming to life again at the sound of the Savior’s voice, rose up and began to speak. And Jesus Christ leaving him with his mother—ah how happy they both were!—went away.

By this time the crowd was so very great that Jesus Christ went down to the waterside, to go in a boat, to a more retired place. And in the boat he fell asleep, while his disciples were sitting on the deck. While he was still sleeping, a violent storm arose, so that the waves washed over the boat, and the howling wind so rocked and shook it, that they thought it would sink. In their fright the disciples awoke our Savior, and said, “Lord! Save us, or we are lost!”

He stood up, and raising his arm, said to the rolling sea and to the whistling wind, “Peace! Be still!” And immediately it was calm and pleasant weather, and the boat went safely on, through the smooth waters.

When they came to the other side of the waters they had to pass a wild and lonely burying-ground that was outside the city to which they were going. All burying-grounds were outside cities in those times. In this place there was a dreadful madman who lived among the tombs, and howled all day and night, so that it made travelers afraid to hear him. They had tried to chain him, but he broke his chains, he was so strong; and he would throw

In his novel Dombey and Son, Dickens revealed his reverence for the Scriptures in describing the Bible as “the eternal book for all the weary, and the heavy-laden; for all the wretched, fallen, and neglected of this earth... the blessed history in which the blind, lame, palsied beggar, the criminal, the woman stained with shame, the shunned of all our dainty clay, has each a portion, that no human pride, indifference, or sophistry through all the ages that this world shall last, can take away, or by the thousandth atom of a grain reduce.”

himself on the sharp stones, and cut himself in the most dreadful manner: crying and howling all the while. When this wretched man saw Jesus Christ a long way off, he cried out, “It is the Son of God! Oh Son of God, do not torment me!”

Jesus, coming near him, perceived that he was torn by an evil spirit, and cast the madness out of him, and into a herd of swine (or pigs) who were feeding close by, and who directly ran headlong down a steep place leading to the sea and were dashed to pieces.

Now Herod, the son of that cruel King who murdered the innocents, reigning over the people there, and hearing that Jesus Christ was doing these wonders, and was giving sight to the blind, and causing the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk, and that he was followed by multitudes and multitudes of people—Herod, hearing this, said, “This man is a companion and friend of John the Baptist.” John was the good man, you recollect, who wore a garment made of camel’s hair, and ate wild honey. Herod had taken him prisoner, because he taught and preached to the people; and had him then, locked up, in the prisons of his palace.

While Herod was in this angry humor with John, his birthday came; and his daughter, Herodias, who was a fine dancer, danced before him, to please him. She pleased him so much that he swore on oath he would give her whatever she would ask him for.

“Then,” said she, “father, give me the head of John the Baptist in a charger.” For she hated John, and was a wicked, cruel woman. †

The King was sorry, for though he had John prisoner, he did not wish to kill him; but having sworn that he would give her what she asked for, he sent some soldiers down into the prison, with directions to cut off the head of John the Baptist, and give it to Herodias. This they did, and took it to her, as she had said, in a charger, which was a kind of dish. When Jesus Christ heard from the apostles of this cruel deed, he left that city, and went with them (after they had privately buried John’s body in the night) to another place.

† *Dickens confuses Herodias with her daughter Salome. Herodias unlawfully married Herod after leaving Herod’s half brother Philip. Her daughter, named Salome in Christian tradition, was the one who danced before Herod. Herodias told Salome to ask for the head of John the Baptist because John was critical of her unlawful marriage to Herod (MARK 6:17-29).*



CHAPTER THE FIFTH

One of the Pharisees begged our Savior to go into his house, and eat with him. And while our Savior sat eating at the table, there crept into the room a woman of that city who had led a bad and sinful life, and was ashamed that the Son of God should see her; and yet she trusted so much to his goodness and his compassion for all who, having done wrong were truly sorry for it in their hearts, that, by little and little, she went behind the seat on which he sat, and dropped down at his feet, and wetted them with her sorrowful tears; then she kissed them and dried them on her long hair, and rubbed them with some sweet-smelling ointment she had brought with her in a box. Her name was Mary Magdalene. †

When the Pharisee saw that Jesus permitted this woman to touch him, he said within himself that Jesus did not know how wicked she had been.

But Jesus Christ, who knew his thoughts, said to him, “Simon”—for that was his name—“if a man had debtors, one of whom owed him five hundred pence, and one of whom owed him only fifty pence, and he forgave them, both, their debts, which of those two debtors do you think would love him most?”

† *Dickens recognizes this woman as Mary Magdalene in accordance with a Christian tradition, however the woman is not identified by any name in Scripture (LUKE 7:36-50).*

Simon answered, "I suppose that one whom he forgave most."

Jesus told him he was right, and said, "As God forgives this woman so much sin, she will love him, I hope, the more." And he said to her, "God forgives you!" The company who were present wondered that Jesus Christ had power to forgive sins, but God had given it to him. And the woman thanking him for all his mercy, went away.

We learn from this, that we must always forgive those who have done us any harm, when they come to us and say they are truly sorry for it. Even if they do not come and say so, we must still forgive them, and never hate them or be unkind to them, if we would hope that God will forgive us.

After this, there was a great feast of the Jews, and Jesus Christ went to Jerusalem. There was, near the sheep market in that place, a pool, or pond, called Bethesda, having five gates to it; and at the time of the year when that feast took place great numbers of sick people and cripples went to this pool to bathe in it: believing that an angel came and stirred the water, and that whoever went in first after the angel had done so, was cured of any illness he or she had, whatever it might be. Among these poor persons was one man who had been ill thirty eight years; and he told Jesus Christ (who took pity on him when he saw him lying on his bed alone, with no one to help him) that he never could be dipped in the pool, because he was so weak and ill that he could not move to get there. Our Savior said to him, "Take up thy bed and go away." And he went away, quite well.

Many Jews saw this; and when they saw it, they hated Jesus Christ the more: knowing that the people, being taught and cured by him, would not believe their priests, who told the people what was not true, and deceived them. So they said to one another that Jesus Christ should be killed, because he cured people on the Sabbath day (which was against their strict law) and because he called himself the Son of God. And they tried to raise enemies against him, and to get the crowd in the streets to murder him.

But the crowd followed him wherever he went, blessing him, and praying to be taught and cured; for they knew he did nothing but good.

Jesus, going with his disciples over a sea, called the Sea of Tiberias, and sitting with them on a hill-side, saw great numbers of these poor people waiting below, and said to the apostle Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that they may eat and be refreshed, after their long journey?"

Philip answered, "Lord, two hundred penny-worthy of bread would not be enough for so many people, and we have none."

"We have only," said another apostle—Andrew, Simon Peter's brother—"five small barley loaves, and two little fish, belonging to a lad who is among us. What are they, among so many!"

Jesus Christ said, "Let them all sit down!" They did, there being a great deal of grass in that place. When they were all seated, Jesus took the bread, and looked up to heaven, and blessed it, and broke it, and handed it in pieces to the apostles, who handed it to the people. And of those five little loaves and two fish, five thousand men, besides women, and children, ate, and had enough; and when they were all satisfied, there were gathered up twelve baskets full of what was left. This was another of the miracles of Jesus Christ.

Our Savior then sent his disciples away in a boat, across the water, and said he would follow them presently, when he had dismissed the people. The people being gone, he remained by himself to pray; so that the night came on, and the disciples were still rowing on the water in their boat, wondering when Christ would come. Late in the night, when the wind was against them and the waves were running high, they saw him coming, walking towards them on the water, as if it were dry land. When they saw this, they were terrified, and cried out, but Jesus said, "It is I, be not afraid!"

Peter taking courage, said, "Lord, if it be thou, tell me to come to thee upon the water."

Jesus Christ said, "Come!" Peter then walked towards him, but seeing the angry waves, and hearing the wind roar, he was frightened and began to sink, and would have done so, but that Jesus took him by the hand, and led him into the boat.

Then, in a moment, the wind went down; and the disciples said to one another, "It is true! He is the Son of God!"

Jesus did many more miracles after this happened and cured the sick in great numbers, making the lame walk, and the dumb speak, and the blind see. And being again surrounded by a great crowd who were faint and hungry, and had been with him for three days eating little, he took from his disciples seven loaves and a few fish, and again divided them among the people who were four thousand in number. They all ate, and had enough;

In a public speech, uttered "out of my personal heart," to the Institutional Association of Lancashire and Cheshire, Dickens stated, "The Divine Teacher was as gentle and considerate as He was powerful and wise. You all know He could still the raging sea, and could hush a little child. As the utmost results of the wisdom of men can only be at last to raise this earth to that condition to which His doctrine, untainted by the blindnesses and passions of men, would have exalted it long ago; so let us always remember that He set us the example of blending the understanding and the imagination, and that, following it ourselves, we tread in His steps, and help our race onto its better and best days."

of what was left there were gathered up seven baskets full.

He now divided the disciples, and sent them into many towns and villages, teaching the people, and giving them power to cure, in the name of God, all those who were ill. And at this time he began to tell them (for he knew what would happen) that he must one day go back to Jerusalem where he would suffer a great deal, and where he would certainly be put to death. But he said to them that on the third day after he was dead, he would rise from the grave, and ascend to heaven, where he would sit at the right hand of God, beseeching God's pardon to sinners.

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD (COVERING CHAPTERS 2-5)

MATTHEW 15:30-31

Great crowds came to him [Jesus], bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Jesus performed miracles for two reasons: to help the afflicted and to reveal that he was God. In both cases, the miracles of Christ were offered as the evidence of his divinity. Even if some people would not believe his words, they could not deny these actions. Not only did Jesus enable the lame to walk, the blind to see and the dead to be raised to life, but he forgave sins! Yet even with all the power of God at his disposal, Christ chose not to come as an earthly conqueror. Rather, he chose to serve. While none of us possess the miraculous power of Jesus, we can still follow his example of serving others with what power we have, not for our glory but his.

What do you believe about the miracles of Christ?

How does this belief affect the way you live?

Have you experienced a miracle in your own life?

How is it within your power to serve others best?