

# Twelveacres' 2012 Annual Meeting Address

## God Is Speaking — Are We Listening?

A talk given for Twelveacres' Annual Meeting by Jill Grimes, C.S., of Tucson, Arizona

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We're going to be doing a lot of moving this afternoon. But this moving requires an inner stillness. Because this moving moves thought. Moves thought beyond the ground level conversation so you can hear what God is saying.

Years ago a man was standing on the starboard side of a sinking ship. All the women and children had been taken off in life boats. He'd been praying with the 91st Psalm and the 23rd Psalm. As he stood there with all the men passengers he was taking refuge in the spiritual truth of those comforting verses in the Bible. Right away a rumor went around among these men on the top deck that they would be taken off on the port side of the ship. It seemed to be authentic and nearly all moved to the port side. But this man, Lawrence Beesley, felt it more in harmony with the spiritual sense of the 91st Psalm just to *be still and know that I am God*. Avoid the crowd and remain quiet on the starboard side until an opportunity of escape presented itself. He said it was some time later that there were repeated calls for women on the deck below, where the boats were being filled, and looking over the edge of the top deck he saw a life-boat almost full. All the women and children were in lifeboats so a crew member told him to jump in; there was room for one more. This ship was the Titanic and you can read about this man's experience in the *Christian Science Sentinel*, December 20, 1913.

Think about it, his spiritual listening, being still, separated him from the crowd of opinions and actually provided his rescue.

Okay — Are you ready to be still? Are you ready to listen beyond your opinions, doubts and fear? Are you ready to listen with your heart and not your intellect — so that you hear in your own spiritual language? Not just to me, who you think knows something you don't, or does something you can't.

It's like the Psalmist, David, says: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints:" (*Psalms* 85:8). You can hear God speaking!

Learning how to mentally move away from the crowd and to trust that the love of God is guarding and guiding you is what Christian Science is all about. The study of this book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, moves thought beyond the ground-level view of any problem. And God's all-inclusive laws of love, clarity and dominion are not only felt but seen as healing. These laws demonstrate what is spiritually true, and communion with God reveals them as facts.

It's provable. Healings result from an inspired understanding and application of the power and presence of God. This spiritual presence and power can be proved by anyone; you don't even have to change your religion. But you do need to change — to change thought and cultivate a desire for a fuller, deeper concept of God and a willingness to mentally walk away from the beliefs, theories, laws and conversations that argue that matter is the only cause and that you're helpless.

That's why I'm here today — to help you open mental doors, the doors of your heart, and to move thought to a fuller concept of God so that you hear in your own language this spiritual love that is all-inclusive.

Are you ready — are you listening?

Now the starting point for moving thought is that God is All. Yes, I mean it, God IS all. It's God's reality. In the Bible, in the New Testament, John tells us, that God is Spirit and God is love, so this reality is God's spiritual love. God's reality is what is spiritually true. And in order to be the Love of God, it's pure—no dogma, opinion or personality attached to it; it's complete spiritual love—nothing missing, no one left out; it's present—right now; not omni-past or omni-future. This all-inclusive Love is power. Not "a" power, but Power with a capital "P"—it is the dynamic force for good.

This Love that is good is not good in a physical sense, but spiritual supreme goodness. Good itself. This present spiritual love that is God's goodness is the foundation for moving thought to understand your individual connection to God. This connection can be experienced in different ways, but many make it through prayer.

Think about how you pray. Do you begin your prayer pleading with God to solve your problem, to heal or fix it? Do you pray by praising God? Or do you pray with some sacred text and put it on your problem, like a spiritual Band-Aid? And then spend time checking under the Band-Aid to see if it's healed?

There are many ways to pray. Prayer is very personal and very individual. But the next time you pray, give attention to how you begin your prayer and begin with God's reality, the present pure power of all-loving good. This will help loosen your thought from any problem, and you'll begin to understand God's love and your relationship to this divine Love. Mary Baker Eddy didn't make this starting point with God arbitrarily. It is directly from Jesus teachings, the Lord's Prayer. How many verses in the Lord's Prayer? Eight. The first four are all about God, then three about us, ending the prayer with God. That's what this book, *Science and Health*, is all about. It's a teaching textbook based on Biblical teaching. I know it's a teaching textbook.

My grandmother took my ill grandfather to see Dr. William Mayo of the Mayo Clinic. He passed on. But Dr. Mayo had opened his desk drawer and given my grandmother *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. She began reading it. She already loved the Bible and now reading *Science and Health* showed her how to understand the Bible and Jesus' teachings and how to heal. My mother used to tell me, as she left for junior high school, people would bring their sick family members for my grandmother to heal and that it was embarrassing to have her friends see this as they walked to school. Then after work, they would pick these family members up, healed.

Because of Dr. Mayo, my grandmother found Christian Science and became a spiritual healer. Now my grandchildren are experiencing spiritual healing as 5<sup>th</sup> generation Christian Scientists. Our family has experienced hundreds of healings of diseases and broken bones without medical help, as well as business, financial and relationship problems through the spiritual understanding of God's presence and man as the spiritual embodiment of this spiritual power.

This book represents decades-long research, study and investigation of the entire Bible and the teachings of Jesus. Mary Baker Eddy, its author, then spent years proving the spiritual principles for healing she learned from this Bible study with hundreds of documented cases of healing. *Science and Health* was published in 1875 in order that everyone could learn how to heal. The next 35 years she continually prayed and listened and revised her writings, which included over 400 printings of this book so the language of the Science of Christianity was clear, accurate and accessible to anyone who read it. The last 100 pages were added later and include healings experienced by people as they read this book. They tell how their thought moved to understand God. And were healed of everything from suicide, hate, addiction and insomnia, to cataracts, deafness, kidney disease, tuberculosis and cancer. Always the foundation for this healing prayer is a fuller understanding of God. Knowing what has always been true. God's loving spiritual reality.

Mrs. Eddy not only addressed her fellow man's spiritual needs. Her Christianity was practical. After her church was founded, she was always contributing to causes that helped her fellow man. Her Christian compassion was developed over her lifetime study of the Bible. She said it was her chart of life. As it is for us today.

Many Bible characters show us to listen and hear God's guidance. Let's consider Noah, that ordinary guy in Genesis, who, the Bible says, walked with God and knew His voice. He knew God's voice so well that he heard that there would be a flood and he was to build an ark of gopher-wood for the safety and preservation of his family and all the animals. Now nothing in his story tells us that he was a boat-builder, yet he heard God's voice clearly enough to build — not an ordinary boat, but one that would sufficiently house and feed men, women and children, as well as an entire floating zoo. There's been extensive investigation into Noah's story. One source says that it took him 120 years to build the ark. And the finished ark was about half the size of an aircraft carrier and could hold as much cargo as 330 railroad cars. Noah was in that ark for a little over a year.

I know that not all Bible historians and scholars agree regarding the details of this story. But the symbolism of Noah is basic to Jewish, Christian and Muslim theology. And Noah's story has relevance today—it's a lot more than just "we're all in the same boat." From this story we learn how to experience safety and supply during our own floods of loneliness, doubt or disease.

The Bible says the water-sealant used for this Biblical ark was pitch. But not what we ordinarily think of as pitch. This is the only place in the Bible where the word "pitch" comes from the Hebrew word "kapher", which translates to English as atonement. Atonement is the reconciliation of man to God—a bringing together.

Therefore Noah's atonement, at-one-ment with God, his Godlike walk and receptivity, was the glue that kept this Biblical family together. Could we say that the ark, then, is more than a construction of gopher-wood? It's the structure of consciousness where spiritual oneness, as safety and supply, is experienced.

This ark-consciousness helped me keep afloat when my daughter called for help from her college dorm. She was starting off alone, on a 10-hour drive. She had a horrible sore throat, she could hardly swallow and her face was swollen. She asked me to pray. Prayer was normal for her to use for health. She had learned to trust God through her attendance at a Christian Science Sunday School. She'd experienced many spiritual healings through understanding her own relationship to God. But when I hung up the phone I was overwhelmed by fear. I was so far away, I just wished I was closer to at least drive with her. But I knew how to pray, so I began to pray the Lord's Prayer, out loud, in order to quiet my thought.

"Our Father which art in heaven." Did you hear the word *our*, like I did? It stood out like it never had before. I'd prayed that prayer thousands of times and I had never heard the word "our." So I quietly listened for what it meant at that moment. Our Father, present spiritual all-inclusive love, without judgment or opinion.

That's when I remembered Noah. And how he heard God's voice and how it resulted in safety for his family. So, thought-by-thought, my mental ark began to take form. The framework: this fresh understanding of God's spiritual fatherhood. That presence which gives courage and strength to motherhood and childhood as well. This mental ark building showed me how to walk away from the fear and feel the peace, the spiritual law, of our always present, eternal Father-Mother God. I could see that this spiritual Love, that included my daughter, was more powerful than any human love. And that it was always present guarding and guiding both of us. That my daughter wasn't an immature college student alone on a highway suffering with pain, but actually the very child of God's love and care. And she could hear every right idea that would keep her safe and reveal her health.

I felt calm. I knew my daughter was protected. Our individual arks were pitched — sealed — by the forever presence of God's love. And like Noah's family, I could float over the flood of fear and doubt.

Eventually I heard from my daughter. She arrived safely. The drive had been uneventful, but what was special — the pain was gone with no more swelling. She could swallow normally. She was healed! Both of us rejoiced in the immediacy of God's loving presence. But in thinking it through later, I realized this was as much my healing as it was my daughter's. Because I found the Noah *within me*. I would always know this ark, my unity with spiritual ideas that guard and guide. This experience illustrates Mrs. Eddy's statement, "Atonement is the exemplification of man's unity with God, whereby man reflects divine Truth, Life, and Love" (*Science and Health* 18:1).

We don't need to search for the right words to connect with divine Truth, Life and Love. It's the natural result of our godlike walk, no matter how long we've been walking the path or how long we've been off the path, or even if we've

never known there was a path. Humble prayerful listening enables us to hear, in our own spiritual language. The opening line of the Lord's Prayer was my language. Yours will be individual to you.

It isn't denominational or cultural. God speaks to all. But why didn't everyone hear God's voice? Why was Noah the only one who started building?

Ahh, because Noah was listening. Are we listening? That's important. Because just *talking about* spiritual unity doesn't change anything. It doesn't make us unafraid. It doesn't change sickness to health. It doesn't make a trip safe. But as the Noah within us walks with God and prayerfully listens, we'll hear, in our own words, what we need to know. It probably won't be to build an ark. But ideas will come that are exactly what you need. With any healing it looks like circumstances have changed and they have. But what has happened is thought has moved beyond the ground-level conversation — the problem — and what is spiritually real becomes visible, is made manifest.

Prayer, as explained in this book, isn't about changing physical conditions or human circumstances. It isn't about just a safe trip or a healthy body. Prayer is the spiritual affirmation and understanding of the power, control and life that is God. It gives proof that all things are possible to divine Love. Mrs. Eddy says that we demonstrate God as divine Life, Truth, and Love, and they give us our supplies; we do not demonstrate material things.

Even a five-year old can pray effectively (*Christian Science Journal*, Jan. 1890). Let me tell you about Morrie. He lived in Colorado in the early 1900's. He lost the coal shovel to his mother's stove — she would need it the next morning. It couldn't be found anywhere.

Later that day his mother found him in his room, unusually quiet, and asked him what he was doing.

"I'm praying."

"How are you praying?"

"You said I must find that shovel, so I am praying for understanding."

"Will you pray out loud so I can hear it?"

"Yes."

This was his prayer: "God is my understanding. He knows all things, and whenever I quit trying to know for myself, then I will know, because God knows." He then ran outside to play. Later, his mother asked if he had found the shovel. He was surprised and said, "Why mamma, you must wait till the time comes, and not try to know for yourself." Of course, early the next morning he came running in saying, "The time has come; here it is."

Think about this little guy's prayer: He started with God not the problem (God is my understanding — He knows all); he stated his relationship to God, simply, but thoroughly (Quit trying to know for myself, God will tell me); he concluded with the spiritual fact (God knows). Then he went to play— great confidence in the power of his prayer. We can have that same confidence no matter what we're praying about, especially in these tough economic times.

I know financial floods. I felt like I was drowning as a single parent. People were saying I had no specific or formal qualifications for work. And I agreed with them.

But I knew the power and authority of God's presence. I had demonstrated it many times before. So I began to pray acknowledging this control and power of God's love.

After weeks and weeks of being afraid and praying I learned several things. First, I realized I was compartmentalizing my prayer. What do I mean, compartmentalizing prayer? I had been praying just for a job. I would search for healings of those who had applied God's law for their own successful employment. I realized I needed to enlarge my worship of God and apply it in every direction of my life, all my activities. And not just use it as a spiritual Band-Aid covering the need for a job. Second, I realized I was developing spiritual stamina, because not all healings are quick. Some, like this one, required prayerful perseverance. Spiritual stamina.

But again weeks went by without any job and still lots of fear, and, as I got very still and again listened for spiritual direction, I read this from the New Testament, Paul's directive to the Corinthians, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." (*II Cor. 8:12-14*).

This biblical law of equality spoke to me. I heard it deeply and clearly and I changed my prayer. I stopped defining myself as lacking something, and started being grateful for my abundance. I had much: understanding and confidence in God's care; a wonderful family and a home; patience, integrity, intelligence, compassion, joy and perseverance.

And finally the fear totally dissolved. I felt peace, knew I was on the right spiritual track. I listened, and listened, and listened some more for my answer. It took a while, but finally I connected with someone who owned their own business and was willing to pay for my special training. It was a perfect fit for each of us. The owner and I became friends and I even helped run the office. All those weeks and months of prayer allowed me to finally hear God's voice in a language that really spoke to me and guided my prayer.

But how do we know that the human solution is the result of prayer and not just coincidence or good timing? I've found effective prayer gives me an inner peace that transcends the problem and uplifts my thought about everything. So whatever transpires after that genuine calm, is more than coincidence, it's proof of God's care.

What I'm talking about here isn't the wave of some kind of prayer-wand that gets jobs or puts dollars in the bank. But when we're scared stiff and on our mental knees, we're finally willing to listen beyond the conversation of our reasons, explanations and blame for the problem. We're willing to mentally walk away from what we think we need to get and humbly begin to listen and acknowledge what we already have.

Having enough isn't about getting something more or something else. It's the recognition of what's already present and understanding the source of this present good. It's about responding with humility and gratitude to what God has already provided. This opens those mental doors for practical human solutions that benefit everyone.

Through thought-moving prayer my business life improved. And I demonstrated the law of equality as the spiritual balance of supply with demand. Do you think that's the only time I've had to demonstrate this balance between supply and demand? No, I've had many opportunities since this time to put this spiritual law of equality into practice and it's always been effective.

Now what makes this connection between God and man and brings practical solutions is the Christ, as explained in *Science and Health*? If you've ever felt an unexplained confidence or peace come over you when struggling with a problem or decision—you've felt the Christ. If you've ever had a profound experience that defied any human explanation—you've experienced the Christ.

Susan, a friend of mine, had such an experience. Driving on a two-lane highway at dusk in the Rockies, intent on making her destination by dark, she was flying along, listening to her music, when a voice yelled in her head, "Slow down right now!!" Without even thinking about it, she slammed on her brakes. And then crawling along, afraid someone would rear-end her car, she wondered why she heard that. As she rounded a blind curve, there, right in front of her, was a herd of elk. She knew then why she had slowed down. If she'd been going at her previous speed the results would've been disastrous.

The Christ is spiritual clarity that guides to practical solutions. It's a deep feeling of genuine peace that moves thought beyond despair or depression. It's when you know all is well even though nothing has changed.

The Christ, then, isn't a physical body, but a spiritual concept that brings light and peace to thought. The Christ is what Jesus, the man, demonstrated in every healing. He knew and lived the Christ as God's all-inclusive love. And this divine Love was more real to him than storms, disease and even death itself. Jesus is the clearest human expression of the Christ. He was the most spiritually scientific man that ever lived. He taught us this Christ.

Mary Baker Eddy's gratitude and love for Jesus, and her extensive study of his teachings, are the very heart and soul of Christian Science. This study prepared her to understand and uniquely explain this two-fold nature of Jesus as the Christ. She writes that the Christ is the true idea voicing good and that this Christ speaks to our human consciousness. And about Jesus she says, he is the Master, who founded his system of metaphysics on Christ, Truth.

This understanding of Jesus as the Christ clarifies the Master's own statements when he said: "Before Abraham was, I am; and I am with you always..." Because it's the Christ-spirit, Jesus' true nature, that can be before Abraham and at the same time present—that is, always with us. It's this Christ that redeems us with love. This Christ is our Savior, showing us how to love and be loved.

We can experience Christ, our Savior in many ways. Everything that voices good is the Christ speaking. Every act of loving support of another is the Christ. When there is humility and forgiveness, it's the holy presence of the Christ.

The Christ is without a defined process—it's divine immediacy. That's why healings can be instantaneous. An idea heard clearly immediately moves thought. Then circumstances change too. This activity of the Christ

restores, comforts and heals unconditionally. The Christ is Immanuel—God with us. This Christ speaks to our heart, not our intellect. Remember when I asked you at the beginning, to listen with your heart and not your intellect? Because this is when you hear God. As you listen with your heart, Christ-like peace is felt and your individual spiritual language speaks in a way you can understand.

Learning to reason spiritually and to understand the Christ sufficiently to heal, comes from the study of these books. The Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. Think about it! This Pastor is always available to guide and give loving support. 24/7, 365 days a year, in the middle of the night, no matter where we are. This Pastor is without opinion or agenda but always speaking to us about our goodness, always lifting our thought beyond the conversation of doubt, fear or pain. Always saying, I am God and there is none else. You are My loved child, I am with you. I invite you to get to know this Pastor. To read and study these books—to expand your understanding of God. To explore your individual relationship to God. To discover the Christ within you.

Mary Baker Eddy made Christianity practical in her day and we can do the same today. We can contribute to the victims of the hurricane that hit the northeast recently and we can build an ark around our government so that no matter whether we're red or blue we can understand that the government is upon the shoulders of the divine, all-loving Mind that is God. So that all of us can keep afloat in the spiritual truth of man's oneness with good.

Now some of you may be thinking, "this is all well and good, but it won't (doesn't) work for me." Maybe you're feeling intimidated by a small or new understanding of God. Maybe you think your problems are too big to heal, have too much history or there are too many people involved. Maybe you don't think you're even worthy of healing.

Stop! You ARE worthy! Nothing is too complex for divine Love, and remember what the Master said, A little child shall lead them. Now let the Christ move your thought. Because there isn't enough light in the best human thinking to heal. It isn't your personal human ability that heals and it isn't human inability that prevents healing. Ability is communion with God—listening beyond anger, fear and pain. It's spiritual listening not intellectual reasoning.

Healing glorifies God in your body and your life. Healing is: starting with God, not the problem; listening and hearing God in your own spiritual language; identifying yourself at-one with God; feeling Christ-like love and peace; thinking beyond personal ability or inability. Healing glorifies God.

Now your thought is moving, you're separated from the crowd of opinions. You're in your ark, the structure of God's loving care. You're safe and supplied, and so is everyone you care about, including your animals. This ark-consciousness isn't denominational, it isn't cultural, and it isn't located in a building or on a map. It's within you—you can experience it right here, right now. It's God's love—and that's always been the truth.

So, are you ready? Are you listening? Yes, you are! You CAN hear God, in your individual spiritual language—it's the language of healing.