

Tending the land and gardening with the Lord

July 1

Adam and Eve

Please read Genesis 2: 4-7

Adamah (Biblical Hebrew: אַדָמָה) is a word that translates as ground or earth, and occurs in the above Biblical account of creation. The connective link between the word **adamah** and the word **adam** is used to reinforce the link between humankind and the ground, illustrating both the way in which man was created to cultivate the world, and how he originated from the "dust of the ground".

In Arcana Coelestia 29 Swedenborg emphasises this connection:

The Lord is He who sows, the "seed" is His Word, and the "earth" is man, as He himself has deigned to declare (refers to the Parable of the Sower in: **Matt. 13: 3-9, 18-23, 37-39**).

Please read the verses of the Parable of the Sower indicated above.

Creation of vegetation

Next read Genesis 1: 11-12

Returning to Arcana Coelestia 29, Swedenborg comments on these verses in Genesis as follows: When the "earth" or man, has been thus prepared to receive celestial seeds from the Lord, and to produce something of what is good and true, then the Lord first causes some tender thing to spring forth, which is called the "tender herb;" then something more useful, which again bears seed in itself, and is called the "herb yielding seed;" and at length something good which becomes fruitful, and is called the "tree bearing fruit, whose seed is in itself" each according to its own kind.

Closing prayer:

Dear Lord, we too plant seeds with our actions.

Let them be watered by your truths, blessed by your light.

May we feel the warmth of your love for us, that we may bring forth fruits. **Amen.**

July 8

The Gardener

In John's Gospel after the resurrection, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and she mistakes Jesus for the gardener. **Optional suggested reading John 20: 10-16.** At a deeper level is she really mistaken? Can we see Jesus as the agency for our regeneration, as he turns over the earth of our nature like a faithful gardener?

Please read Matthew 13: 31-32 The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Reflecting on this, please read the following from Swedenborg's Spiritual Experiences [or Spiritual Diary]

SE 1436. About the seeds of faith taking root

Seeds of faith that have taken root in a person on earth, a soul, a spirit, and also in an angel, by means of enlightened knowledge [implanted] and then branching and sprouting in different directions, are of the following nature:

When a religious truth has been implanted, then gradually it grows out into many truths, as if taking over the whole space, and falsities are gradually consumed. For a truth of religion once conceived begets many, like rivulets of water from a spring, or roots of a tree in the earth; or like a tuberous root that has gone deep down, and at length takes up space by expanding, and consumes anything in its way.

First, evils are wiped away in the person, otherwise [religious truth] cannot be implanted. Evils are the "tares" that put forth roots widely, obstructing the roots of the good seed. After that comes conviction of the truth of religion, which gives birth to derivative convictions joined with other enlightened knowledge. Next comes the love of truth. Thus that seed reproduces and bears fruit beyond measure.

Closing prayer:

Patient and loving Lord,

You build times of waiting into the cycle of nature and into our lives.

Although we struggle to see the wisdom sometimes in the waiting,

help us face the bits of ourselves that need the firm yet gentle touch of your pruning.

Increase in us the good fruit so that to those around us we may be vibrant and attractive signs of your presence. **Amen.**

July 15 Growing and pruning

Reflect on the extract below from Isaiah 61 - The Year of the Lord's Favour

For as the soil makes the sprout come up

and a garden causes seeds to grow,

so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

Please read John 15: 4-8

Go outside and take a long loving look at the natural world around you. Do this in silence, asking the Lord to be present, perhaps even imagining Him walking or sitting beside you as you look at creation.

Linger over anything that holds your attention, letting yourself be absorbed in the detail, colour and mystery before you. When you are ready record your thoughts in your journal if you keep one, or silently speak to the Lord in your heart about what you have noticed.

Please read the following extract from Swedenborg's Divine Providence which forms a nice reflection to your earlier reading from John 15.

DP 332: In the Word, we are in fact described as trees, and our wisdom, which arises from love, is described as a garden. This is exactly what the Garden of Eden means. Actually, we are bad trees right from our seed, but we are granted a scion or graft from shoots taken from the tree of life, through which the sap rising from our old roots is changed into a sap that brings forth good fruit.

Closing prayer:

Dear Lord, give us we pray, a fresh awareness of your life expressed through the natural world, so that with opened eyes, we may see this world for what it is: your precious gift to us. **Amen.**

July 22 Palms and cedars

Read the following extract from Psalm 92 - read it slowly several times and think how it might apply to your life. Write up any reflections in your journal or speak to the Lord in your heart about things you have discovered.

Psalm 92:12-15 (NIV)

¹² The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
¹³ planted in the house of the Lord,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.
¹⁴ They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
¹⁵ proclaiming, "The Lord is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."

We can gain insights into this extract from Swedenborg's Arcana Coelestia 8369⁽³⁾:

Here 'a palm tree' stands for good and 'a cedar' for truth. Since 'a palm tree' means good it also means wisdom, for wisdom is the discernment of good. The palm trees which were carved along with the cherubs and flowers on the walls of the temple were signs meaning such wisdom.

William Worcester in his Plants of the Bible has the following to say about cedar trees:

In looking for the corresponding relationship to our mental growth when considering this noble tree, our attention must be drawn to what is represented by those successive platforms of branching growth, mounting higher and higher into the heavens, which are the most striking characteristic of the tree. In Swedenborg's journey to the heaven of the Golden Age, the heaven nearest the Lord and most filled with His influence, he came at length to a grove of tall cedars, with some eagles on their branches.

Seeing them the angel said, "We are now on the mountain, not far from its summit."

That the cedars reached to that inmost heaven, represents the ability of the regenerated mind to understand the inner spiritual truth taught by the outer form - as seen in the Word of God in the Bible and within the kingdom of nature.

Closing prayer:

Dear Lord we know we cannot abandon life because of its storms. The strongest trees are not found sheltered in the safety of the forest; rather they are out in the open spaces - shaped by the winds of all seasons. We pray you provide us deep roots for our wide-spreading branches. **Amen.**

July 29

Eden Restored

Please read Revelation 22 1-2

During his ministry Jesus would go out and about in the country healing and speaking to people who would simply sit on the ground to listen to Him. In fact we read very little about the Lord within the setting of the temple. He also prayed outdoors - and for us, simply being outside in the countryside can act as a way of healing by connecting with Him through the face of nature. Praising the Lord for the beauty and majesty of creation is a powerful way for us to link to Him.

Take one of the following readings out into a green open space - a garden or park:

He is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings the grass from the earth. 2 Samuel 23: 4

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. Isaiah 35: 1-2

- Finding a quiet spot - sink into the beauty of all that surrounds you.
- Come to the present moment, by letting go of any tension in the body and day-to-day concerns - allow yourself to just 'be'.
- Begin by praying that the Lord will help you to understand his Word as you sit and reflect upon the passage you have chosen. After 10-15 minutes you can write up any insights in your journal or simply share the thoughts of your heart with the Lord.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, you hold out a branch of love and protection and draw us to where the ground is good. Bless us in your garden of life. **Amen**