

Wheat and other grains are small, light plants which need to be grown together in large numbers to thrive and be of use. Grains are hard and dry and less attractive than succulent fruit, but are important on a daily basis as a basic food source. *from Soul Symbols*

When sowing seeds, you hope that they germinate and grow – but so too do a lot of other seedlings – weeds. Often you can't weed them out for fear of uprooting the plants you want to grow. Otherwise you will lose those as well. You have to wait until you are sure which seedlings are weeds and those that are not. [Tares (a ryegrass) which looks much like wheat in its early stages of growth. Roman law prohibited sowing ryegrass among the wheat of an enemy, suggesting that the scenario presented here is realistic.]

And all this is a mirror of our spiritual life.

The story of the wheat and tares tells us that the kingdom of heaven within each of us is like a field ready to receive spiritual seeds and produce great abundance. However, there is also work to be done separating out the spiritual weeds also growing there.



Imagine for a moment a bare field prepared and ready for sowing – this is a picture of the ‘field’ of our outer mind. When there is the presence of openness then the Lord can develop and grow the spiritual seeds he has sown in the innermost part of us.

What has been planted in your life that is a true guide and sustains what is for the good of all?

However, alongside the spiritual seeds are weeds. Weeds as we have seen appear with the seed that is sown. They seem to sow themselves – just pop up taking advantage of the fertile prepared earth.

What needs to be weeded out in your thoughts and intentions?

When are we spiritually asleep?

To become aware of what is living in our minds and hearts is essential. It is the *servants of the Lord* that notice and recognise the *weeds* growing alongside the wheat.

What ‘serves’ and helps us to discern a true direction in living a spiritual life?

What is the ‘enemy’ of what is good for all and of what is heavenly, that allows false seeds to be sown in us?

When is what the Lord sows within us ‘ripe’ for the ‘harvest’?

Look at how the Lord reacts. ‘It’s the enemy,’ he says. ‘Wait until harvest otherwise the wheat might be uprooted as well.’

Just as in the natural world the farmer waits for the wheat to be ripe – so it is spiritually. Wait until the time is right. Only the Lord knows this. He knows when we are ready to turn away from purely self-orientated things and allow his loving goodness and wise perception to dwell within us.

It is according to Divine Order that things, which in the end are to be separated, should grow together; so that when they come to an end, separation may happen more easily, and spontaneously, or of its own accord. paraphrased from Apocalypse Explained 911:7

August 12 The Kingdom of Heaven is like a net: Matthew 13: 47-52

A Dragnet - a heavy net that is pulled along the bottom of a river or area of water when searching for something



Bible History Online

How do you decide what is wholesome or what is 'fishy'?

A Net - Our mouth and nostrils etc. help us to discern good food from bad. So too, does the lowest level of our mind help us discern what is spiritually good for us and what is bad. In spiritual terms, **the net** symbolises our perception of what is true and good, that sifts and sorts out what we will choose to enter our mind and change our life.

How do you make choices about what is best for the good of all?

Fish - gathering knowledge from the world

Fish are like our natural curiosity, gaining knowledge wherever we go. Think about the way fish eat up everything in their path, and how excited pet fish are when they are fed.

We can be like fish when we do research, gather knowledge about how to do a project. It might be finding out how to fix the car or a new skill.

We can also 'fish for knowledge' in our spiritual lives. We can search for spiritual ideas and knowledge to help put things into perspective and to see our place in the world. It can help develop our spirituality within the world we live in.

adapted from Soul Symbols

What spiritual knowledge has helped you in your life?

Storehouse

In order that the spiritual mind may be opened up it must have a storehouse from which it may draw its supplies; since unless a person has such a storehouse he/she is empty This storehouse is in the natural mind and its memory. Here, everything we have learnt and know is stored up to be recalled when needed. Spiritual knowledge and experiences of loving goodness need to be stored in each person ready for the development of the person's inner spirit. *based on AE 790[3]*

End of the age

Can you identify times when a door closed in order for a new beginning to dawn?

To allow new spiritual life to be born in us we go through many cycles of learning spiritual ideas, trying to live them out, going through conflicts and difficult times that test our resolve to live following the Lord's guidance. In a sense, we need to come to the end of our own resources - to

turn and ask the Lord to give us a life lived lovingly and truthfully. All the truth we know and use has no other meaning than to bring the love of God into the world to help others.

Prayer: Dear Lord, teach me to discern what nurtures the growth of your kingdom in myself and other people. Help me to let go of all that is contrary to your love and wisdom. Amen

August 19 The Wedding Feast is ready: Matthew 22: 1-14

Today we will be focusing on getting prepared for a wedding feast. In this parable, we hear how the invitation to come to the wedding is sent out three times before the guests respond.

The wedding feast is ready are we open and receptive?

When the Lord invites us to a wedding feast of his providing, he wants us to hear his invitation and accept him and all that he can give us. This is what he offers freely to us: to make his dwelling place within us.

As we read in Psalm 84: 'How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!'

It is hard to put into words what the Lord is offering to us in this invitation to a wedding feast – to his heavenly kingdom. Suffice it to say it takes us out of the superficial and mundane, it transforms what are the ordinary activities of life into pure joy and bliss.

This invitation is made freely to all people – the Lord yearns to come and eat with us and have us eat with him. He earnestly desires it.

The parable however tells us what our various responses might be to this invitation. Be aware that all these reactions are at one time or another part of our experience. The *servants* are the angelic messengers who are with us constantly.

- Those who refused to come – **Can you identify times when you don't want to listen to the promptings of conscience?**
- The Lord offers the nourishment that he only can offer – the oxen and fatted calf. These spiritual loves for others whose lives we touch – the kind and loving intention that we can choose to act upon. **But at times we have other priorities we don't want to change. This could be many things, status, power, our happiness above others.**
- The *servants* are killed off. **In fact, our own values are so important to us – we want to kill the angelic and heavenly influences that come and invite us to the wedding feast – these we want to rubbish and destroy, to ignore and silence.**

The consequences of all of the above are clearly shown in the story. In spiritual terms these choices bring spiritual death and the destruction of all that we have built up in terms of values, priorities and belief structures. There is no eternal life or nourishment in these.

However, the Lord never gives up on us; he tries again – he can only reach and connect with those things in us that are his.

What does the story tell us? That the Lord sends his servants -angelic messengers to the 'street corners' – we now get into the difficulties with translation. In various translations we have the alternatives of highways, crossroads and thoroughfares

The translation used by Swedenborg is as follows:

Verse 9: 'Go to the ends of the ways, and whomever you find, summon to the wedding.' (As in AC 10422) **What do the words 'the ends of the ways' evoke for you?**

Is it coming to the end of the road, the end of the ways we have been focused on in life?

The thoughts that came to me are:

- Getting to the end of our tether so we can no longer carry on in the same manner as before
- or a dawning awareness of the direction of our choices
- or a realisation of the consequences of our present intentions or loves.

August 26 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Matthew 25:1-13

This parable begins with the phrase 'the kingdom of heaven will be like' and describes this in terms of ten virgins taking their lamps and going out to meet the Bridegroom. This is not ten women but ten virgins, so to learn what the heavenly life is like we need to look at the spiritual significance of being a virgin. We remember Mary, a virgin, who had not been married or conceived. We use the term 'virgin' to describe something that has not been developed or impregnated. We use phrases such as 'virgin territory' or 'virgin earth'.

And spiritually speaking 'virgin' describes a part of us that has not had a relationship with the Lord. An aspect of us that has not received his life and so it lies outside of the heavenly life.

What does that mean? We all at times keep our faith and life within a boundary our selfish side feels comfortable with. We allow the Lord to be present only so far and keep control of what we allow him to influence. There are always parts of us that are virgin spiritually. But the heavenly life is all or nothing. The Lord loves us and desires to be with us in all aspects of our mind, heart and life. There are no half measures if we wish to be united with the Lord.

When we look at this parable we are presented with the contrast of what is 'wise' and what is 'foolish'. The wise had lamps and oil. The foolish had only lamps. If we wish to receive a heavenly life from the Lord, we are wise when we are prepared, and this involves having two essentials in our life. A lamp and oil.

A Lamp

In the time of Jesus there was no electric light: the only light was provided by what they had – oil to burn, that could be lit, and a container for that oil made out of clay. Nothing elaborate – everyday things made from clay and fruit of the olive tree.

A lamp that acts as a container, a container for the oil which can be ignited. In spiritual terms this lamp is what our outer mind learns about the Word of God. As we read the Word we gain containers of knowledge in our memory. These memories, experiences, are containers that if we are open can be a source of enlightenment – they can be ignited by the Lord to give us a different way of looking at life. Then light can shine in our mind and bring a new understanding.

*Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119: 105
You, Lord, are my **lamp**: the Lord turns my darkness into light. 2 Samuel 22: 29*

What shines in spiritual darkness and gives you light – guidance and direction in your life?

For the lamp to be lit there needs to be oil. Olive oil is a precious commodity – it was used as part of the sacrifices in the Tent of meeting and the Temple. It was an integral part of worship. Oil is the symbol of love, associated with joy, with the touch of healing and with the anointing of priest or king. The word 'Messiah' means literally 'anointed with oil'. The Messiah is love giving light to the world. **See:** Exodus 27:20, Psalm 18:28, Luke 12:35, Luke 10:34, Mark 6:13, Psalm 45:7, Psalm 23:5

In the inner sense of this parable the oil is love to the Lord. This is an essential part of being wise and therefore prepared for heaven - to act inwardly from the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, to use them to love wisely. We use oil to 'oil the hinges' to ease the opening of doors – and it is love that can open inner doors in us and others. It opens heaven to us and others. We cannot buy this from others – as we need to allow this loving goodness to transform and regenerate our mind and heart. The foolish virgins know the truth (and have a lamp) but live and act from selfishness. Hence in the parable it says that the door is shut. Make no mistake the Lord never shuts the door of heaven on us – but we choose to shut it from our need for our own delights and happiness.

Now take a few moments to reflect and bring before the Lord what needs his presence, the flowing in of his love and wisdom at this time.