

Home Worship for April 2018 – Revd Becky Jarratt

1st April 2018 (Easter Day)

“He is not here – He is risen!”

Read Luke Chapter 24: 1 – 12

Easter Day is seen as being a great celebration in the Christian church. Jesus was crucified, yet he rose again on the third day. For many Christians, Easter is an even more important part of their spiritual life than Christmas Day.

Easter is often seen as a symbol of fresh beginnings. The Easter eggs that we exchange reflect the image of the cycle of new life, and the beauty of spring is often in full flow by the time we celebrate this festival.

Yet for the disciples and other followers of Jesus, this was indeed a challenging time. They believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but He had been crucified. Now His body had disappeared from the tomb. What could be going on? It is likely that they were in mourning for the leader that they had lost, and concerned for their own fates as those in power might seek out Jesus’ followers and punish them.

And what of Jesus’ message? He taught us to love the Lord our God and to love one another. Everyone had listened to Jesus – even those who hated Him knew what He taught. Now that Jesus was gone, would His message also be lost?

I have heard a lovely analogy about Jesus’ death. It won’t be long before people in this country find dandelions growing in their lawns and in other places around them. When the dandelion has finished flowering, we see what is known as a “clock”. The plant is left with a downy seed head, which little children love to blow off to see if they can tell the time of day.

The Jewish leaders may have tried to crush Jesus’ message, but they were unable to stop it spreading. If you blow on a dandelion head, the seeds spread far and wide. It is almost impossible to pick them up before they start seeding elsewhere. The despondent followers of Jesus may have despaired at His loss, but His words were carried to almost every corner of the globe. We can share this message of love to everyone we meet by our dealings with other people. We can treat them with kindness and compassion, and the ripples that we have started may reach far further than we realise.

Prayer *Dear Lord Jesus, we thank You for the gift of love that you shared with the world. We pray that we can be a positive influence on those around us and share Your gift willingly and freely with all we meet. Amen.*

8th April 2018

“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening.”

Read Luke 24:13 – 35 and 2 Samuel 12:1-14

Have you experienced someone unexpectedly coming into your life and changing your perception of the way you view things? Or has someone turned your world upside down?

I feel that I have met certain people at particular times because that was when I needed them to help me on my journey. For the most part, the lessons that I have learnt have been happy ones, but there have also been occasions where I might have preferred not to have had that experience!

David needed Nathan’s story to show him how his behaviour was unacceptable. Nathan used a parable to demonstrate this, as David was up in arms about the treatment of the poor neighbour by

the rich man. It enabled him to look at the way he was conducting himself, yet it needed Nathan to illustrate this to him. Sometimes we need a real shock to remind us that we have turned away from the Lord and our original motives. It is easy for us to move away, little by little, and to forget our good intentions. It can be a stranger that helps us work this out, or someone closer to home. We may not like it being brought to our attention, but it helps us in the long run.

The disciples that were walking with the stranger on the road to Emmaus seemed keen for him to stay with them, even though he had told them that they were foolish. Did they want to hang on to him because they felt he knew more about Jesus than they did, and may eventually reveal this to them? Or had something deep inside of them been awakened? *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”* (v 32)

It is not always easy to identify why someone who challenges us has been brought into our lives at the time. It may only be afterwards that we realise that they have opened our eyes to something that we were not aware of. It might be that we have been focussing on ourselves and not on what the Lord asks us to do. We may have been suffering from an attack of pride, and we needed taking down a peg or two to keep us from straying too far from the path. Or perhaps we were looking inward and had forgotten what our original intentions had been.

Prayer *Lord, help us to realise when we have strayed from Your path. Allow us to have our eyes opened by those around us, and to graciously accept the truth when we need to be reminded. Help us to forgive ourselves when we are truly sorry. Amen.*

15th April 2018

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Read John 20:19-29

My daughter twisted me into knots this morning. She asked if unicorns were real. I said that they were not, and was told that just because I hadn't seen one in the flesh didn't mean that they did not exist.

She was quite right in one respect. I do not have to see something to believe it is there. Just because I cannot prove that the Lord is real does not mean that I do not believe in Him. I think it would be harder for me to believe if I did not see the results of His work in my life and in the world around me.

No matter what hand we feel we have been dealt, or how challenging things are for us at times, we are still blessed. The Lord provides opportunities for us to see His influence but we need to open our minds and hearts to appreciate His love.

This week, take some time to think about the world around you. Choose some or all of the things on the list below, and see if you can experience the Lord's blessings in your life that day.

- Look out for a wild flower growing where you least expect it.
- Witness the innocent joy in a child's face as they play.
- Give someone your full attention while they talk to you.
- Smile and greet a stranger with warmth in your eyes.
- See the miracle of new life through growth in nature at this time of spring.

Prayer *Heavenly Father, help me to feel the blessing of Your work in everything around me. Help me to appreciate that Your influence is always there, even when I do not expect it. Amen.*

22nd April 2018

“It is the Lord!”

Read John 21:1-14

Many of the disciples were fishermen, so it was only natural that they would want to resume their fishing after the death of Jesus. It would bring them comfort and a sense of stability to be back in a situation that they knew well. Jesus had said He would meet them in Galilee, so this is where they fished. That they were able to collect fish after the stranger had told them to put their nets on the right side of the boat when before they had caught nothing for hours was clearly miraculous to the disciples.

Again, the disciples believed that the stranger they saw was indeed their beloved Jesus. Perhaps they needed to see the miracle to be able to believe. We do not have miracles performed for us, and yet we know that the Lord our God is our Saviour and Redeemer.

Read the words below from True Christian Religion, and meditate on how we can believe in the Lord without having seen his physical manifestation.

Faith is like a bubble in the air. It was beautifully coloured in the first and second ages, but was in danger of bursting in the third and following ages because no one saw God. Therefore to preserve our faith about him, faith in him, and faith from him, it pleased Jehovah God to come down and take on a human manifestation. He did this to bring himself into view and to convince us that God is not a figment of our imagination; he is the absolute being who was and is and will be from eternity to eternity. God is not a three-letter word; he is everything real from alpha to omega. Therefore he is the life and salvation of all who believe in him as a God who can be seen, although he is not the life and salvation of those who say they believe in a God who cannot be seen, because believing, seeing, and recognising are one. This is why the Lord said to Philip, 'Those who see and recognise me, see and recognise the Father.' This is also why the Lord says elsewhere, 'The Father's will is for them to believe in the Son. Those who believe in the Son have eternal life. Those who do not believe in the Son will not see life; in fact, God's anger remains upon them.'

TCR 159:7

Prayer *Heavenly Father, we thank you for demonstrating Your unending love for us in tangible ways. Help us to be like the fishermen in Galilee, trusting in You with all of their hearts and minds. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer.

29th April 2018

“Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Read John 21:15 – 25

Isn't it infuriating when we have worked hard at something, only for someone else to receive the credit? This happens at times without any intended malice – others don't always realise how much we have worked in the background, but there are times when others deliberately steal our thunder.

I remember quite clearly a disagreement that happened when I was at school. A special student teacher was about to move on from the school, and our class were getting her a present. One student suggested buying a glass ornament for her to remember us by, and another agreed to purchase it. When the time came to present the gift, the child who had made the suggestion in the first place was left sobbing at the back while the beloved teacher praised the seemingly thoughtful girl who handed it over.

In the passage from John, Peter appears to be troubled by the presence of *“the disciple whom Jesus loved”*. It feels almost as if Peter is jealous. The very expression describing this disciple could be enough to raise the hackles of Peter, who had just been asked repeatedly if he loved Jesus. Peter was always spoken of as the first of the disciples, but there was one that Jesus loved more. Peter must also have been struggling with his conscience as he had denied his affiliation with Jesus three times before He was crucified. Peter, along with many of the disciples, found it difficult to understand what Jesus was teaching them. He said that he believed, but there were times that his faith was not strong enough, and he felt that he had let himself and Jesus down.

And yet in John 21 Jesus gave him the opportunity to repent and to follow Him again. Our pride sometimes gets in the way of our spiritual development. We may wish to be the one who is recognised for the good deeds, rather than being content to work quietly in the background while someone else gets the glory. It takes courage and times of reflection to realise that this is going on within us. Realising that it is actually the Lord working through us when we do something good can also be a hard pill to swallow, but we need to remember this in order to truly follow Him.

Besides the passages in the Word where deeds and doing are mentioned, there are also a great number where love and loving are mentioned; and by loving is meant the same as by doing. For he who loves also does. For to love is to will, because everyone wills what he inwardly loves; and to will is to do, since everyone does that which he wills, when he is able. A deed, moreover, is nothing else but the will in act.

Apocalypse Explained 785:6

A challenge for us all in the coming week:

- Help another person without being asked and without expecting gratitude.

Prayer *Risen Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, we thank You for the opportunities You give us to come back to You when we have turned away. We pray that we can keep in our minds the fact that our good comes from You. Allow us to be humble in our deeds and dealings with others. Amen.*

Blessing. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Home Worship for May 2018 by the Revd Jack Dunion

May 6th

The river of life

Read Revelation 22:1-6 and John 4: 7-15

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God." Revelation 22:1

Water is such an amazing substance, it can somehow morph into three different forms; a solid, a gas and a liquid. As a gas it is in the air and when it cools it turns into a liquid and runs into deep crevices in the earth. It can then freeze into a solid and as it does so it swells out causing huge sections of rock to split apart and this helped shape the landscape we see today. As a liquid it also seeps into the earth releasing nutrients for plants and flowers to drink up through their roots. Water is vital for many other things and up to 78% of the human body consists of water.

The usefulness and life giving qualities of water make it the perfect representative for the Lord's life giving truths. As water means truth, then a river means an abundance of truths flowing from the Lord's Word. The Lord has now revealed the inner spiritual sense of His Word: which gives life to the letter. In the book *Apocalypse Revealed*, paragraph 932, we read: "By 'the pure river of water of life bright as crystal' is signified the Divine truth of the Word in abundance translucent from its spiritual sense, which is in the light of heaven."

Reading the Word in the light of the spiritual sense, causes its literal sense to be translucent and its internal truths flow out from it like a river.

Those who read the Word in the light of its internal sense and apply the truths from it in their lives are therefore likened to trees along a riverbank.

"Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream." Jer 17:7-8

These internal truths strengthen us against self-love and love of the world. They confirm for us the reality of our divine creator, a life after death, a purpose to all creation. And so the Lord said,

"Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst." John 4:14

By drinking the water of life, which the Lord gives us, means we are applying the truths of His Word to our own living and so making them a part of who we are in spirit.

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God." Revelation 22:1

Lord Jesus Christ, give me the courage and strength to grow as a tree watered by the life giving truths of your Word, which flow from you that I might be refreshed in spirit.
Amen

May 13th

The Light of the World

Read John 8:12-19

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Light is of course responsible for our sense of sight. Throughout history people have used lack of light as a symbol of evil. Darkness can bring a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty regarding our surroundings. Darkness perhaps also highlights in us our deep fear of the unknown.

I'm sure as a child we all remember times when we were convinced someone was standing in our room when the lights were out only to find that when the lights go on it was something silly like a coat hanging on the door or a Hoover with clothes draped over it. When light is introduced, all becomes clear and what we looked upon with fear becomes almost laughable. It is no wonder that there is this linking of darkness with evil. We know there are two kinds of light. There is light that enables us to see with our physical eyes, and light that enables us to see with our understanding. This is why we often say, "I see what you mean" or "Let me shed some light on the subject."

The light which helps us see with our physical eyes is of course natural light from the sun. But the light which helps us see with reasoned understanding is spiritual. We have natural light and spiritual light and they correspond and it is because natural light corresponds with spiritual light, that we can easily know the nature of spiritual light. As light and darkness correspond to spiritual light and darkness then all the related effects correspond too. So, for example, if natural darkness causes us fear then spiritual darkness will cause spiritual fear too. And since the effect of a light coming on clarifies things: there must also be a spiritual light that clarifies things spiritually. That light is the Lord because He Himself is truth which clarifies and manifests the divine love. The divine love is called in the Word "the Father" and this is why the Lord said in many places He was sent from the Father. Matt. 10:40. Luke 10:16. John 4:34, 5:24, 5:30, 5:37 etc.

The world we are born into is like that room without the lights on. We have many fears in this world. Many things are yet unknown to us. The Lord said, "*I am the light of the world.*" Whenever we do what we do from the Lord, it brings spiritual light from the Lord into our natural life, dissipating fear and darkness. It is worth remembering that darkness is by default; we need the Lord's light before spiritual darkness is dissipated.

"All the light of truth is from the Lord, and all darkness is from man." *Arcana Caelestia* (AC) 1321

That which switches on our spiritual light is love, which we acquire by doing as the Lord teaches, because the Lord Himself is pure love and pure truth. When we live from the Lord by doing what He commands, He is then in us and we see in the light of His truth, and darkness and fear have no place in our lives.

Recommended reading: AC 1321, 3223

Lord, lead me from the darkness of my ignorance and fears to the light of your truth. May it shine light on my fear, reminding me that you are with me. I need not fear for I am not alone. Your strength can overcome where I am helpless and fail. I know I can always turn to you. Your light will always guide me, reminding me of your love and bringing me back to you to save me.

May I keep following you, doing as you teach and guided by your light on my path. May I so live that your light will shine out of me bringing your brightness into the world's darkness. Amen

May 20th

Crossing the Jordan

Read Joshua 1:1-11 and Matthew 3:1-6

"Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them." Joshua 1:2

The children of Israel had wandered about in the desert for 40 years. But why not just go straight to Canaan? Well it's because the literal story is only a means through which a spiritual story can be told. The deeper message of these wanderings tell us about the temptations someone goes through once they commit themselves to following the Lord. So from a natural and worldly state they begin to move towards a more spiritual and heavenly state. From a life lived from self and the world, to a life lived for the Lord and the neighbour.

Before we embark on this spiritual journey, we are slaves to our own natural desires; they pull us down, they oppress us and they cause problems in our lives which we don't want. The Lord asks us to follow Him

and trust Him so He can free us and lead us away from living in a selfish and worldly state. The destination is Canaan, which represents the heavenly state we are promised at the end of the journey, a journey away from self-living: it's the Promised land. But to get there, we first need to remove the things of self and the world. The journey in the desert represents the refining process that we must go through before we can become more loving and more heavenly people.

We need to go through this process before we can cross to a more heavenly life. This requires a cleansing of the soul and is signified by the crossing of the Jordan River. The Jordan River forms from the melting snow, the rain and the dew which descends upon the mountains above. This pictures how the truths of heaven descend upon the higher regions of our minds down into the natural mind, cleansing our lives of evils and falsities. This of course is why people were baptised in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, in preparation for the Lord's coming. John the Baptist said, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.*" (Matthew 3: 2

Repentance helps us to get ready to cross over into a more heavenly life by identifying and removing evils and falsities. Only then are we ready to receive the Lord's goodness and truth which will flow in and bring life giving truths for our salvation. "'Crossing of the Jordan' means introduction into cognitions of good and truth".

AC 6536

"Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them." Joshua 1:2

Lord Jesus, help me to be aware of when I am seeing only from my perspective and am not taking into account how others might see things. I am sorry for my shortsightedness. Teach me your way, and lead me to your heavenly kingdom. Amen

Day 27th

Lord in the human

Read Exodus 3: and Judges 6:11-24

I wonder if you have ever been speaking with someone and they mention something you apparently said to them a long time ago. You may have forgotten you even said it. But for them it has somehow been of enormous value - life changing even: yet you may even doubt it was you who said it at all. Or it may be that someone has said something meaningful to us, and we have taken it on board in a deep and meaningful way, yet they may not even remember saying it. What is it in such a statement that has inspired us so much?

In the book **Heaven & Hell** we read that "To be inspired is in fact to be inserted into angelic communities." HH 69. If we take this beyond just the way in which the prophets were inspired to write the Word of God then perhaps a person who speaks to us and says something which inspires us has actually introduced us into an angelic community! Wow! Now that is quite profound! But isn't it interesting that the person who does this is completely unaware that they did so?

In many places in the Word we know the Lord Himself inspires people through angels: for example, in Exodus, *"Where the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush... When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush..."*

God said to Moses, "I am who I am." Exodus 3:2, 4, 14

"From these verses it is evident that it was an angel who appeared to Moses as a flame in the bush and that he spoke as Jehovah, because the Lord or Jehovah was speaking through him." AC 1925.2

Why else would the angel of Jehovah suddenly be called Jehovah Himself unless Jehovah was speaking through the angel? Again in AC it is explained how the Lord communicated His Word to the prophets. We read:

"So that man may be spoken to by means of articulated sounds heard in the natural world, the Lord employs angels as His ministers by filling them with the Divine and by rendering unconscious all that is their own, so that for the time being they know no other than that they themselves are Jehovah." AC 1925.3

Here is another clear example from the book of Judges of an angel being addressed as the Lord (Jehovah):

When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!" But the Lord said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." Judges 6:22-23

Clearly then the Lord employed angels so He could be seen and heard in ultimates when he spoke to the prophets. Their spiritual eyes would of course need to be opened to see the angel through whom the Lord spoke. But when the Lord Himself came into the world, He assumed a human form of His own. He then made His whole human divine; and we read in Apocalypse Explained 619.15 that the Lord "glorified or made Divine His whole Human, even to its natural and sensual". So the Lord can now speak to us through anyone around us. It shouldn't matter whether it comes through a good person or a bad person; the Lord can speak to us through anyone, anywhere at any time.

So the next time someone says something to us which holds great meaning for us we might want to think about who really said it! *"Ah, Sovereign Lord!"*

Read Genesis 2: 15-17

Think of your favourite piece of music, it may be an enduring tune that means something significant in your life or it could be the latest and most recent 'favourite' in a long line of enjoyment which will soon be displaced by something else.

The latest music is always evolving and changing – the sounds I enjoyed in my teens can easily remind me of those years but I can't claim it all sounds as exciting when I listen to it now. It was very much what was around at the time and each new generation finds its own expression or voice which can often seem designed to annoy or even challenge the previously accepted boundaries.

Spiritually there are always challenges, and while life evolves and discoveries change the way the world functions, there are some timeless values and desires we still recognise from the earliest parts of the Bible. They are still uncomfortable challenges for us too.

Genesis 2: 16-17:

And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

The newly formed 'celestial man' in this part of the Bible is told to rely on the Lord, with the trees in the garden being the perceptions explained in **AC 80**: *He is also permitted to acquire a knowledge of what is good and true by means of every perception from the Lord, but he must not do so from himself and the world, nor search into the mysteries of faith by means of the things of sense and of memory-knowledge which would cause the death of his celestial nature.*

Human nature has of course meant we live with the consequences of eating that forbidden fruit and the celestial state mentioned here is lost. Human life clearly goes on and changes, evolves and develops and the Bible leads us into new ways of discovering the Lord's presence with us and His love for us. Trying to 'go back' in our life and undo previous actions is often tempting, but impossible. The world keeps going forward, be it music or any other arena we care to reflect on. We find our own ways and live accordingly. All around us others are finding and developing their own understanding which may be harmonious with or discordant to our way of life. Finding how to adapt to new ways is a constant challenge in life; the Lord knows our nature and provides for it all under His Divine care and mercy.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, as we work to live our daily life may we listen closely for your guidance and recognise that change and development take many forms. You can use it all to further the growth of a heaven of angels from the human race, help us to trust your Providence at all times and be faithful in following the things we know and continue to discover from Your Word. Amen.

Read Genesis 3: 1-24

The passing of time is a tricky thing to deal with as our memory allows events, or memories of them, to fade or be revisited in ways we can't always control. The way a piece of music, scent or a touch can instantly take us back to a place or time, from perhaps many years before, is something science does not fully explain. Yet it is a real experience for many people and can have powerful force and impact when it happens.

Swedenborg confirms that absolutely everything is retained in our memory somewhere; the Lord doesn't allow any part of us to be lost and therefore the idea it can be rediscovered fits very well with our experience. It also helps with the idea of there being a benefit in reflecting on and reviewing our life, if we are honest with ourselves and are willing to truly learn lessons from our actions, including the mistakes.

The decisions we made, the (sometimes flawed) logic we applied, the enthusiasms which inspired us are all there to be checked off and reassessed when the process of self-assessment takes place. The Lord knows human nature and even as early as Genesis 2 it is there. Hiding in the garden the man blames the woman, the woman blames the serpent. It is always 'someone else's fault'; and so it goes on with the history and prophecy of Old Testament writers highlighting problems and the conflicts, which provide a mirror into our own internal battles and conflicts, as well as a sense of the Lord's presence in the midst of it all.

Our journey through life is to enable us to freely choose to become angelic and to reject the hellish choices we are surrounded by. The Lord uses many ways to prompt us, to awaken conscience and challenge us. Yet at no time does he remove our own free will and eventually we enter the next life as spirits when our true inner natures can be revealed. Accepting our mistakes and then recognising the need to change is the beginning of each individual and ongoing act of repentance that leads on to our spiritual regeneration and development.

HH 422 *A state of heaven for us is the union of what is good and true within us, and a state of hell is a union of what is evil and false within us. When the good in a spirit-person is united to the true, that individual arrives in heaven, because that union is heaven within us. On the other hand, when the evil is united to the false within us, then we arrive in hell, because that union is hell within us.*

Prayer. Lord Jesus, keep us mindful that although the kingdom of heaven is within us the hells are found there too. Enable us to choose wisely and reject the things we know to be wrong in thought or action. Sustain us in difficult and challenging times and give us courage to reflect deeply on the life we are leading, to accept the mistakes we make, and to honestly acknowledge our failings and do what we can to follow You more closely. Amen.

Read Daniel 7: 13-14; Revelation 11: 15-19

After the completion of this book, the Lord called together His twelve disciples, who had followed Him in the world; and a day later he sent them all forth throughout the spiritual world to preach the Gospel, that the Lord Jesus Christ is king, and His kingdom shall be for ever and ever, as foretold by Daniel (7:13-14) and in Revelation (11:15).

Blessed are they who come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Rev 19:9

This happened on the nineteenth of June in the year 1770. This was meant by the Lord's saying: And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matthew 24:31

This is paragraph 791 at the end of True Christian Religion and 19th June is known as New Church Day. Some of our New Church denominations and congregations mark or celebrate this day with a degree of formality; others hardly recognise it in their worship life. Whatever level of recognition we accord this date the things written here give us a very clear sense of the Lord setting something in motion and we can place it in our calendar.

That the spiritual world is being brought into an order and a pattern not seen before is quite a claim; yet it is part of the things that set New Church teachings in a different place. Around this period in history it is possible to see changes in the way the world was understood and advances were made in many fields. Trying to link that to a spiritual change as reported above is perhaps a leap too far for many – and it is a tricky area to use to start a conversation or introduce a newcomer to Swedenborg's ideas.

Holding the idea that it is spiritual rather than worldly things that are 'real' is perhaps an easier concept to look at. Recognising that we will remain locked in a mind-set which relies entirely on this world, unless we allow changes to our own spiritual understanding and way of thinking to take place, is setting us on a road to search for deeper and more profound messages.

The Lord is continuing to reach into this world, this reordering and opening up of what is spiritual to enable us on earth to have new insights and better understanding. To be part of that spiritual process and progress is something that is offered to each of us, if we will allow it in our life.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to recognise again the gift of life and the opportunity for understanding and wisdom to grow in us. The love that is truly heavenly can be better expressed in our daily life. As our spirits are nourished these things grow and become more deeply established within us. You set before us all these gifts yet never compel us to accept them. Enable us to see that the best use of our freedom is to seek to follow You and read or listen again to Your Word. Amen.

Read Matthew 6: 25-34; Luke 12: 22-34; Exodus 16: 13-21

Thinking about the day we have in front of us, and not getting too fussy about things that have already passed us by and can't be changed, or anticipating the possibilities for the future is quite a skill. A bit of organisation and planning can help us structure and shape things, but the tendency to worry, to let ideas rattle around inside our thoughts isn't easy to clear out.

Young children seem to move from joy to temper and back to harmony again in a moment, as their interest shifts quickly and their attention span is limited. If only we could be so 'in the moment' with other aspects of our own life. So much time and effort goes into anticipating something, maybe words like dreading or fearing may be closer to how our nervous tension can build up. Yet in the midst of it all we are told very explicitly by the Lord himself not to worry. **Matthew 6: 25-34** and **Luke 12:22-34** both remind us of the lilies of the field and how splendidly they are clothed and in **Exodus 16**, particularly in v19-20, the people are told not to hoard manna from one day to the next as it is given under the Lord's provision for their daily needs.

The inner sense of the Word goes deeper still. Sensible and appropriate forward planning or structured anticipation of the possibilities can be both realistic and helpful to us having some order in life. But spiritually speaking there is more than the day to day organisation of life involved.

AC8478.2 *People are concerned about the morrow when they are not content with their lot, do not trust in God but in themselves, and have only worldly things in view, not heavenly ones. These people are ruled completely by anxiety over the future, and by the desire to possess all things and exercise control over all other people. That desire is kindled and grows greater and greater, till at length it is beyond all measure. They grieve if they do not realise the objects of their desires, and they are distressed at the loss of them. Nor can they find consolation, for in times of loss they are angry with the Divine. They reject Him together with all belief and curse themselves. This is what those concerned for the morrow are like.*

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you know the way our minds like to feel the sense of control over the things we intend to happen and plan for. Help us to step back enough to accept our plans may need to change, and events that happen under your Providence will eventually lead us into the heaven you have created us to live in. Keep us mindful of Your care while we seek Your guidance to live our lives in the ways that seem best at the time, and within the light of circumstances we can understand or appreciate. As our trust and wisdom increase, may we learn to see the things of daily life in new and more heavenly ways. Amen.