

## Home Worship for July 2021

Revd Becky Jarratt

4<sup>th</sup> July

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.'

Read Revelation 1:9 – 2:7

The book of Revelation is a special one for the New Church because we have the insights from what the Lord has revealed to us in the Heavenly Doctrines to help us understand it. This book describes a series of visions that were given to John, an early Christian, probably a Jew, who wrote his prophetic words around AD 90. In chapters 1-3 of Revelation, we hear letters written to the angels of seven churches. If we look into their inner meaning, these letters explain to us different traps we can fall into when we forget to keep the Lord and His Word central to our lives.

John was asked to write to the seven churches, telling them what he saw. Who were these churches? They were seven major churches of early Christianity, located in Asia Minor, which is now known as Turkey. Each church was doing well in some areas, but development was needed in others. John was commissioned to tell them where improvement was needed, and what the dangers were in not heeding this guidance. He also told them of the blessings they would have once they had overcome the stumbling blocks.



Even though these letters were written many, many years ago, we can apply the teaching contained in them to areas of our own lives. We are all on a spiritual journey, and sometimes we go forwards, other times, backwards. Through these letters we may be able to see which part of our spiritual lives need attention at the moment.



The first letter is to the church in Ephesus. The letter to each church follows a similar pattern. They are told what is blocking them from heaven, what they need to do to overcome this obstacle, and what their reward will be for doing so. As *"The ultimate purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race"* (Divine Providence 323), I would like us to think of ourselves as angels in training. In order to be the best we can be when we enter the spiritual world, we need to develop certain qualities.

The first letter is to the church in **Ephesus**. The people of Ephesus were focussed intently on learning truths and ideas. However, they were not putting them into action and so they had knowledge for knowledge's sake and had neglected charity and goodwill. It is no good for us to merely know the truth. If we do not act upon it, this helps no-one. It would be like knowing a beautiful story but keeping it to yourself, rather than sharing it with others. The people of Ephesus were told to put what they had learnt to use or risk losing the enlightenment they had from learning about these truths.

*"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."* (Rev 2:7) To eat means to assimilate, so to understand the inner truths and wisdom that come from the Lord. If they incorporated their learning into their attitude and behaviour, they would truly understand what the Lord wanted from them, and would be able to act upon it.

**Task:** Spend some quiet time re-reading Revelation 2:1-7. Can you identify a time in your life when you forgot what your goal was, and instead concentrated too hard on the journey? Having read this passage from the Word of God, is there anything you would have done differently?

**Prayer** Heavenly Father, we ask for Your loving wisdom in using Your truths to help other people. Help us to develop a love for the use of truths, and to put this into practice. Amen

11<sup>th</sup> July

**‘These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.’**

Read Revelation 2:8–17

The next letter we read is to the church in **Smyrna**. Again, the Lord wants to warn the people of this church that although they may think they are doing the right thing, there is something missing. These people are committed to doing good and caring for others, but are not doing it for the right reasons. They do not think of God as someone to take guidance from, so are full of false ideas as they do not have the truth.

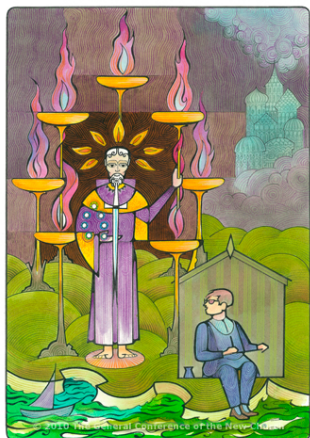


Have you ever wanted to do good, but were not sure what was the right path to take? There has been an increasing number of rough sleepers in the cities near where I live, and it has been of concern to my family. My children have been quite disturbed by this, and cannot understand why, as a first-world country, we struggle to help those who have fallen on hard times.

We discussed whether it is right to give money directly to the homeless, or whether we would set up a regular donation to a supportive charity. The advice from the charities at the time was not to give to those begging as it may fuel an addiction. It can be hard to walk past those in need as it looks uncaring, and they do not know we are making a monthly gift. We also made a decision to offer them food, rather than give them cash, and took turkey sandwiches out with us after Christmas. In that way, we could offer support but were safe in the knowledge that we were not making the situation worse. As our teachings confirm, there are dangers of handing out cash without knowing how it will be spent.

Are we willing to acknowledge that all good comes from the Lord? Yes, we had to make the right decision in order to perform the good action, but the suggestion of what to do was not ours. We are constantly under attack from the hells, and if we take the glory for our actions, rather than giving thanks that the Lord has enabled us to do them, we invite those hells in. We cannot be released from false ideas until we genuinely wish that to happen, so continue to suffer the attacks from the hells. If we overcome the false notion, we will be rewarded by not buckling under this pressure later on.

The letter to the church in **Pergamum** starts: *“These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.”* In modern-day language, a double-edged sword means something that has both positive and negative consequences. A practical, natural example of this is how when the sun shines strongly for a number of days we can enjoy the warmth, but are also in danger of getting sunburnt.



In Arcana Caelestia 2799:3 we read: *“A sharp two-edged sword’ plainly stands for truth engaged in conflict, which was therefore represented as ‘a sword going out of His mouth’.”* The Lord can dispel evils and falsities in us through the truths in His Word. The people of Pergamum have a lot to do with the church in regards to good works, but are not interested in learning doctrinal truths. They dismiss or ignore them. They are living in darkness as they do not see the light from truth.

If we are able to open our hearts and minds to the Lord’s Word, it is like a lightbulb coming on. We are no longer trapped. The good intentions that we have cannot get out without knowledge from the Word. If we read the Word, draw from it doctrinal truths, and turn to the Lord, we overcome the trap we have fallen into, and are promised “hidden manna”. This means that we will have a private wisdom that we live out, rather than retaining that wisdom in

our memories. Being given a “white stone” represents truth that is supported by and united with good. We will receive from the Lord a quality that we did not have before, which, again, we will live out in our lives.

**Task:** Think about whether there has been a time in your life when you have not wanted to be led by the Lord. What stopped you from listening and following His instructions?

**Prayer** Lord Jesus, help us to remember to come back to Your Word, even when times are good. Help us realise that without You, we are effectively living in darkness. Let us allow Your light to shine on all of our thoughts and feelings so that we can behave wisely. Amen

18<sup>th</sup> July      “He who has an ear, let him hear.”

Read Revelation 2:18 – 3:6

The letters that John was commissioned to write were to early Christian churches. From these letters we can see that the people who set them up and led them were just like us. We are all prone to making bad choices; we're also inclined and to make decisions based on how we will be affected by the result. In the Gospels it was easy to see that the twelve apostles, who were Jesus' closest friends and followers, frequently struggled to understand his teaching. It was inevitable that when the Christian church started to follow Paul's letters, rather than what Jesus Himself taught, people would go astray. These seven churches not only have their strengths, but also their weaknesses, because the people leading them were human. The Lord made promises to the churches that they would be rewarded if they overcame these faults and shortcomings.

As ever, the Lord always gives us the option to listen and understand, or, as the messages are fairly cryptic, we can continue in ignorance for the time being. “He who has an ear, let him hear” is at the end of every letter, giving us this choice.



The fourth letter is to the church in **Thyatira**. The people the Lord is addressing here are those that are guided by religious beliefs but may separate them from basic love for others. Some of the people will be acting from good, but others will have their own gain at the centre of their decisions.

This letter is warning us that there is a great danger in separating faith from our love for those around us. If we do this, we distort faith in a terrible way. It is this type of thinking that allows people to behave in a barbaric way in the name of their religion. This has happened throughout history, and we can see it

happening in a number of areas of the world at this time. Not only do we sever the concepts we have learnt about having love for other people, but we also put off others seeking faith themselves and realising their full spiritual potential.

To help us avoid this danger, we can regularly stop and ask ourselves what our motives are. Are the teachings I hold as central to my being helping to make me a better person, or am I holding on to them so that I can justify behaving in a selfish way? For those who are able to fight these evils and falsities by acknowledging our failings and striving to change, the Lord promises that we will have power over the influences from the hells that affect us all, and that divine truth from the Word will govern our lives. We will receive intelligence and wisdom.

Many of us will have started to go to church as children because that was what our parents wanted us to do. Or we may have gone as adults out of a sense of duty. Hopefully, over time, what we learnt will have become part of ourselves and we will have learnt to love it. The people of the church of **Sardis** represent those who outwardly pray and appear to be living a life of faith, but what is inside is very different from the outside.



Taking those truths that we learn from the Word, loving them and living them is what is important. We cannot just pay lip-service to it by going to church on a Sunday, then not act in way that supports our fellow human beings. If we do this, we are not making the truths a part of us. We run the risk of depriving ourselves of a heavenly afterlife because, if we do not live out our faith, it does not become a true part of us and so will not stick to us when we die. We are warned in this passage that we need to wake up, and that we will not know what time the Lord will come to us.

The Lord gives us every opportunity to live what we are taught. He truly wants this to happen! And if we listen to Him and obey His instructions, we will be able to live in heaven because our character and quality has the ability to receive heaven.

**Task:** Sit quietly and spend some time with the Lord. Are you willing to make His teachings part of your being? Allow His love and truth to fill you completely.

**Prayer** Lord, give us the strength to open our ears and take on board Your teachings. Help us to reach the true potential that only You know of. Amen

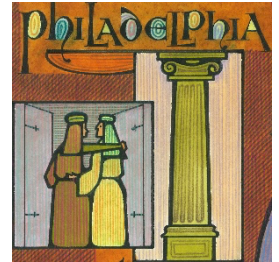


## 25<sup>th</sup> July “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.”

Read Revelation 3:14-22

In each letter, we hear the same words: “I know your deeds”, or “I know your works”, depending on which translation you are reading. This is not a threat, or the Lord spying on us! The Lord knows what is blocking us from eternal happiness because He can see our inner and outer qualities at the same time, and He is the only one who can help us to progress on our spiritual journey.

The letter to the church in **Philadelphia** is, perhaps, the most pleasant to read. The Lord is praising the people who live there for allowing themselves to be guided by truths that spring from the Lord's goodness. They were living their lives as they were supposed to, and the warning the Lord gives them is that they need to keep it up! It can be all too easy to let our good intentions slide when things are going well.



In *Apocalypse Revealed* 178, we read: *“For you have little strength.” This symbolically means, because they know they have no power of themselves.*

These people, rather than of actually having little strength, acknowledge and appreciate that everything comes from the Lord. This makes them far stronger than they would be by having a false belief in their own ability. The reward for continuing with best efforts is that they will have Divine truth written on their hearts. By being made *“a pillar in the temple of my God”*, the truths they have learnt, which spring from goodness that comes from the Lord, sustain the Lord's church in heaven and they will remain in that wonderful place to eternity.

What do we know about the people of the church in **Laodicea**? “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!” From what we read in the Word, being “lukewarm” is certainly not a compliment. We can read about the Laodiceans in *Apocalypse Revealed* 198: *“These words are illustrating how people in the church who base their beliefs sometimes on their own thinking, sometimes on the Word, profane holy things.”* To “profane holy things” is to know what is good and true, but to go against it.

The people of the church of Laodicea believed in God and in the teaching that came with being a Christian, but were unwilling to really live this in their lives. They were chastised the most heavily of all the churches, but were also promised the highest reward. This is because the fault they needed to overcome was the hardest.



Have you ever been aware of feeling that you know a lot about the Lord and His Word, and that this is enough? The feeling that you have improved in certain areas of your life, and any more development is unnecessary? Or that the Lord is calling you to make a change, be a more rounded person, but that you don't really want to listen? We are lukewarm when we don't really try to do what the Lord is asking of us, but take the easiest path whenever we can.

In the passage we have just read there is one of the most well-known sentences in the Book of Revelation: *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me.”* (Rev 3:20) The Lord is always knocking. We may hear

– but we may not want to open the door. It is like young children – they do not want to listen to their parents when they know they have been naughty. The Lord lets us keep the door closed, but if we open it, we will need to go through spiritual trials so that we can continue to learn and to be purified from the faults we have within. When we do so, we are promised a continuing close relationship with the Lord, during life on this earth and in heaven. This is the highest reward we could ever wish for.

**Task:** Can you think of any teaching you have heard that you wish you hadn't learnt about? What stopped you, or is currently stopping you, to living it in your life?

**Prayer** Lord, help us to remember that all of Your teaching is important. Thank You for the knowledge that we can ask You for strength when following Your instructions seems too difficult. Help us to remember not to become complacent, and to know that Your door is always open. Amen

## August 2021 Home Worship by Revd Christine Bank

### Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021

**Genesis 24: 3-4** I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.'

**2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be yoked together with unbelievers

In Genesis 24 we have Abraham sending a trusted servant on a journey to his family homeland in search of a wife for his son Isaac. In the fullness of time Isaac's own son Jacob will also find a wife from among that same distant community. The idea of marriage with a local Canaanite woman is not appropriate. The wife should be found from among Abraham's own people, which holds the idea of a spiritual compatibility rather than geographical convenience at its heart.

Our biblical history includes the practical considerations of marriage but also, and more importantly, it contains a deeper meaning. Nations correspond to different aspects of spiritual life and priorities, there is a powerful warning against marriage with anyone from the 'wrong' nation. Correspondences reveal that marriage joins together the innermost qualities and when these spiritual dynamics are united and joined together they become fruitful and productive (represented by the birth of children).

Paul, in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians, charges those who follow Jesus to be careful of who they associate with in general terms and also urges care with the choice of marriage partner so those trying to live the Christian life are aware of keeping themselves free from spiritually distracting or even destructive influences.

#### Prayer

Lord Jesus you give us the freedom to choose our friendships. May our desire to follow you give us wisdom and discernment as we choose people who share our deeper values and priorities to be our closest companions. We thank you for the blessing of having those people we love in our life and hold them always in our hearts. Amen.

### Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2021

**AC 3024** All joining of truth to good is effected by means of affection, for no truth ever enters the rational part of a person's mind or is joined to it except by means of affection.

Last week we saw Abraham making a considered choice in arranging the marriage of his son. We know the Biblical nations correspond to different spiritual states and qualities; in this early part of the Bible we are following not only a family saga but a Divinely inspired way of understanding more of our own spiritual life. Precious details of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is contained within the literal text among deeper levels of meaning. These inner levels are of developing and deepening spiritual life, a progress not always obvious in the appearance of the literal to-ing and fro-ing of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's stories.

So when marriage leads to new generations we read their complex family life; but at the same time are being led to consider how aspects of truth (generally represented by the man) and love or affections (generally represented by the woman) join together and new truth (boys) and love/affection (girls) can result.

As we think of the joining being not of two separate people but of aspects of our own individual life, the things we know and what we love or are drawn to, then the stories can apply more personally to our own daily living. Think of how things we choose to prioritise in life can become a real joy and blessing or act as a drain on life and energy if we choose badly. We are always invited to be willing to reflect on our daily priorities or our current situations. Prayerful consideration as we seek to make wise choices

will enrich us as our growing affection for, and love of, the things of heavenly life join together and produce 'spiritual children' or bear 'spiritual fruit' in our life.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, our heavenly Father, your Word uses the language of family life to show us so much. The possibility of 'happy families' and the tensions of relationships which are under strain reflect not only the dynamics of life but guide us to understand more heavenly states of peace and harmony. This peace can only arise when the love of You and the neighbour are placed above personal and worldly things. We have so much to learn; help us to see how our choices and decisions can be filled with heavenly and unselfish love. Amen

### **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

Abraham's son Isaac was sent 'back home' to find a wife for himself when the time came. **Genesis 28: 1-2** Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

The importance of the wife being sought from the family line and not from Canaan is again stressed with even more specific detail as to the place and the household where the bride should be found. It is clear that Jacob, who is identified as the successor to Isaac and Abraham in the spiritual line, is to be married into those who share deep spiritual roots and that the resulting children include the twelve sons who become the founders of the tribes of Israel. A similar pattern with new outcomes perhaps?

The Bible quite often has historical narratives which seem to be mirrored in a new generation or patterns which repeat in someone's life. Perhaps this makes more sense if we step back from it being about named people and instead it becomes a spiritual journey with times when new developments are happening and fresh insights and understanding are being formed before some more obvious progress to a next stage takes place.

We all experience and have some sense of spiritual progress and as we reflect on how far we have come there are likely to be times when we feel a situation has cropped up for us more than once. What appears to be the same difficulty arises and we find a new way to cope or adjust in some way that has hopefully learnt from experience. In the same way new developments and a real sense of making progress can arise and we can find similarities in how we grasp new ideas and move on. Every situation is different, but the same basic patterns are there because the same process needs to happen more than once in our life.

We don't expect to only ever buy one pair of shoes – as children our feet grow and then as adults a pair will eventually wear out and need replacing. Going to buy shoes is an activity we expect to do at various times and in the same way perhaps we can think of spiritual journeys which bring us to similar places which then need to be addressed afresh. It is not exactly the same each time, but a new development needs to be accommodated and old habits can be refreshed, renewed and given new energy to continue forwards once again.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, each day you give us new opportunities and challenges. Help us to recognise the patterns we repeat and revisit throughout our life and to choose and build on the good and loving qualities which are being presented to us in so many ways. Amen

### **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2021**

#### **Luke 8: 27-39.**

*v39: "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.*

The man had been released from many demons and had asked to accompany Jesus in future, this verse is the reply he receives. There are times when our 'own house' doesn't seem the place for us for

whatever reason but there is a phrase that suggests we can 'grow where we are planted' or in other words it is time to make the best of situations and persevere with things in the best way possible.

The man in the story has been greatly blessed by Jesus and wants to follow Him. Yet he is sent home to his own house to share the news there instead. The spiritual idea of a house encompasses all we'd expect of the sense of it being a place for the things we love to be gathered together just as an earthly house has our family and the possessions we value within it.

This ordinary and everyday life place is where we can share and live our spiritual life; it isn't a separate life to be taken out for church or occasions but is exactly where the great and wonderful things the Lord does for us find expression in the daily routines and habits.

This man shares his own story among the whole city; maybe that feels uncomfortable to take literally but every conversation or encounter with a person is a time when something of ourselves is shared. It maybe paying for groceries in a shop for a minute or a whole day in someone's company, but each is a chance to display the best rather than the worst aspects of ourselves. That involves giving others a view of how we conduct ourselves in situations. Are we polite, patient, frustrated, even rude? Showing the Lord is not always literally speaking His name, this from Swedenborg's writings is the opening to Doctrine of Life, a useful reminder of daily life being infused with our religion.

**All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good.**

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, when the sense that following You may be leading us towards a new direction, we need to be attentive. Your guiding inspiration is powerful and motivates us, but our own desires can and do intrude and have a presence in our responses. Help us to listen and to obey Your voice; to be faithful to You in our own homes and cities and in the small things of routine as well as at the times of major significance and change. Amen.

## **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

### **Luke 8: 40-56 a dead girl and a sick woman**

This follows the passage from last week; Jesus stops in the street to spend time with the woman who touched his cloak while on his way to heal the sick daughter of Jairus. When he gets there the girl is dead. Jesus limits those who can be in the house with him, restores the girl to life, returns her to her grateful parents and says not to tell anyone.

In this reading the house is a place of miraculous healing and in a practical sense there is no way the miracle would not be spoken of and shared if only because the girl was known to be dead. She could hardly then reappear in full health without it being wondered at and rejoiced over.

This story contains the idea that things we love will fail and 'die' yet in the Lord's power, not in our own, a new life based on spiritual changes and restoration under His care is possible.

Yet until we know this by our own experience we struggle to believe or comprehend.

Even if others share their own story of being uplifted and transformed then part of us won't take it in as applicable to us and relevant to our situation. So the astonished family are told not to tell anyone what happened as it links to the idea of those hearing spiritual messages can only truly understand and receive if they themselves are in an appropriate state of receptivity and willingness to listen.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you support and restore our spiritual health in so many ways. When we recognise our difficulty and approach You there is a way forward and new situations unfold. Deepen our faith, strengthen our resolve to follow You and may we learn to trust Your timings and order as we face the challenges of life. Amen

## September 2021 Home Worship by Revd Gillian Gordon

Home Worship for Sunday September 5<sup>th</sup> 2021 Reverend Gillian Gordon

"Thus says the Lord God of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand, because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zechariah 8:4,5).

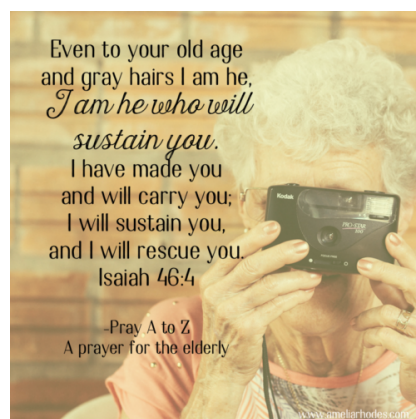
Imagine the scene: old men and old women filling the streets of Jerusalem. Because of their great age it says they are carrying staffs in their hands, today we would think of walking sticks. And then the picture continues: alongside these old men and women are boys and girls playing, elderly people and young children together in the streets of Jerusalem. And the Lord looks at this picture and says it is marvellous in His sight. It is marvellous in His sight because it is a picture of a community that is whole and well, a community that is alive. And why? Because *all* ages are present and valued.

It is interesting that the teachings of the New Church divide our lives into four stages: our childhood, our youth, adult age, and finally, the last step is said to be old age. Our childhood is said to be a time of instruction (that's when we learn); adulthood is said to be a time of intelligence; but old age is said to be a time of wisdom. Old age is a time of wisdom, and a wisdom that comes from innocence. It is a willingness to be led by the Lord as a young child is led by a loving, wise adult.

True wisdom is not just a matter of learning, but a matter of life. True wisdom is not in our head, but it is in our heart. True wisdom comes from the life-long journey of walking hand in hand with the Lord. It is the life-long experience of discovering who the Lord is, the experience of finding that we can trust Him to be with us every step of the way. It is the experience of seeing for ourselves the truths of the Lord's Word on earth in the uses and activities of our lives. In that process of bringing truth into our lives, over a lifetime we make that truth our own.

Finally, the wisdom of old age is the magnificent realization that we can't do it alone; the realization that without the Lord we are nothing. In old age we look back over our life and see that the Lord has been there all the while even when we thought He had abandoned us, for His love and care for us never fails.

From the Writings: "Old age is the last age, when earthly and corporeal things begin to be put off and the interiors of a man begin to be enlightened" (AC 3492).





“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” John 15:13-15.

Do you use the word “friendship” to describe your relationship with Jesus? For me to even say Jesus is my friend seems impertinent in the extreme – for He is perfection and I fall so far short of that. Often we think of Jesus as our teacher, guide, counsellor, saviour all sorts of titles but do we *truly* believe He is our friend- are we even *worthy* to be His friend? Yet He Himself tells us that is what He desires. Amazing isn’t it? There He is standing at the door to our hearts, souls and minds knocking just waiting for us to open it for Him to join us and be with us. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me”.

Friendship or partnership with Jesus is far more than a casual acquaintance, something thought about only on Sundays; it is a deep and intimate relationship, deeper even than any relationship we have on earth. But how do we get to know Jesus?

We can do this by reading the Bible gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. As we meditate on the Bible accounts of Jesus’ life, we come to love and respect Him because of the kind way He taught and dealt with people. For instance, even though He was their Master, He did not treat his disciples as slaves. Instead, He revealed His inner thoughts and feelings to them. ([John 15:15](#)) Jesus shared their pain and cried with them. ([John 11:32-36](#)) Even His opposers acknowledged that He was a friend of those who responded to His message. ([Matt. 11:19](#)) When we try to imitate Jesus in the way that He dealt with his disciples, our relationships with others improve, we feel more content and happy, and our appreciation for Christ grows. We start to become closer in our friendship with the Lord when we find ourselves full of the joy of His love when we unselfishly do something good for others.

Communication on a regular basis is the way to form friendships and grow relationships. This is true between the Lord and mankind. Do you know this saying? “a problem shared is a problem halved.” As the hymn and the Bible tells us, we should take both our joys and our problems and share them with our friend The Lord. When we pray our friend The Lord shares and supports us in our burdens and worries and thus diminishes them for we know we are not alone in them. So it is very important to pray. Prayer is communication with the Lord and it is important.

Jesus said that we are His friends if we obey His commandments and love one another. And if we are His friend we can then share in His work to bring others to His heavenly kingdom and to know His wonderful love. In good times or bad Jesus is always there as our dearest most loving friend, for He is love itself.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for loving us and wanting to be our friend. Help us to do our best to imitate You in our dealings with and attitudes to others and to be worthy of your friendship. Amen

Be still and know that I am God

*Jesus said, "Learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart"*

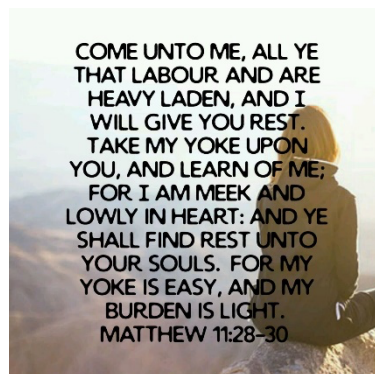
Reading : 1 Kings 19 v 11 – 13 <sup>11</sup> The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

During the Lord's ministry on earth He pointed out the truth to those Jewish religious leaders who oppressed the people with their unreasonable laws, using those laws like a stick to beat the faithful and being proud, arrogant and boastful in their ways and parading of the streets. Jesus reacted in a different way during conflict with those leaders and others and it is helpful for us to learn from Him how to react within situations of conflict ourselves. Jesus was quiet and gentle during conflict, being silent and still when He could have been powerful, forceful and destructive

In Matthew 12 verse 19 and in Isaiah 42.2 it says "He will not cry out, or raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." Also in Isaiah, the old testament book which Jesus quoted most, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth". (Isaiah 53.7). The Lord said "I have held my peace a long time; I have been still and restrained Myself. verse 14.

In Swedenborg's book the Spiritual Diary 4422 he says that when the Lord came into the world He "was able to compel men to receive His words and Himself but [yet] compelled no one." (SD 4422) The Lord could compel people to do His will but He does not since He wants us to come to Him voluntarily from love.

So perhaps the lesson for us is that when we feel we want to argue, scream and shout in frustration or anger we should think of The Lord and how He dealt with opposition, insults and accusations – with quietness and stillness, with the peace of God that passes all understanding. Peace in the still small voice of God. For He tells us "Learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart".



COME UNTO ME, ALL YE  
THAT LABOUR AND ARE  
HEAVY LADEN, AND I  
WILL GIVE YOU REST.  
TAKE MY YOKE UPON  
YOU, AND LEARN OF ME;  
FOR I AM MEEK AND  
LOWLY IN HEART: AND YE  
SHALL FIND REST UNTO  
YOUR SOULS. FOR MY  
YOKE IS EASY, AND MY  
BURDEN IS LIGHT.  
MATTHEW 11:28-30

"Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside...some fell on stony place...and some fell among thorns....But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt. 13:3-8).

Traditionally Harvest Festival services are held in September or early October often based on the above Gospel quotation. The parable of the sower teaches us about the kingdom of heaven. The sower is the Lord, and the seed is the Word or truth. The ground in which the seed is sown is the mind and life of people. The kinds of ground reflect the types of attitudes which we can have toward the Lord's Word and toward others.

"And as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them."

The wayside is ground which is packed down very hard and is dry; it could even be said to be just rock with no soil at all (see AC 5096). There is no way that seed can take root on this type of ground. It represents people with a confirmed set of false ideas that cannot be persuaded otherwise

"Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away."

This is like people who like the Truth just to appear intelligent or wise but there is no depth in them so they do not change their lives to live the truth rather than just recognise it to boost their ego.

"And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them."

This verse describes the state of those who have let evils or bad habits take control of their lives. As the Lord's unfolding of the parable to His followers described, "these are those who hear the Word, and the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and they become unfruitful."

"But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

The seed which fell on good ground describes what happens when we love the truths that are in the Lord's Word and genuinely try to live them. The important thing is that when we are doing good we are bearing some fruit which can be of use. When this happens, we will be brought into closer contact with the angels of heaven, and they will give us help and strength to work and to till the field of our mind. And thus closer to the Lord. And what could be better than that for us?

Prayer:: We bless you, God of Seed and Harvest, and we bless each other, that the beauty of this world, and the love that created it, might be expressed through our lives and be a blessing to others, now and always. Amen