

FEBRUARY 2010

SERMONS AND MEDITATIONS OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

OUR DAILY BREAD



LOVE BEYOND FEAR

Invitation

You are invited to use *Our Daily Bread* as a source of inspiration and as a guide for personal meditation and reflection. It is also a resource for home, small group, and church worship. Each issue has a theme, with weekly sermons focusing on various aspects of that theme. Daily meditations provide food for thought throughout the week.

Our Daily Bread has been published by the Swedenborgian Church since December 1949. May you be fed with spiritual nourishment as the Lord gives us this day our daily bread.

Prayer

I bind unto myself today the power of God to hold and lead;
his eye to watch, his might to stay, his ear to hearken to my need;
the wisdom of my God to teach,
his hand to guide, his shield to ward,
the word of God to give me speech,
his heavenly host to be my guard.

- attributed to Saint Patrick

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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

Disasters, whether the earthquake in Haiti, rampant poverty worldwide, or the ongoing genocide occurring in several locations around the globe, make us sad and fearful. They also make us question God's nature and power. Our minds race and our hearts ache with all sorts of questions: If God is love, then what can he be thinking? How can a loving God use fear to motivate his creation? Does God want us to be afraid?

Fear shows up all over the place in the Bible. By and large, however, two types of fear manifest in both sacred scripture and daily life: outer and inner fear. Outer, or natural, fear usually springs first to our minds; it is the fear of pain or punishment. Inner, or holy, fear, on the other hand, we do not always identify as fear; it springs from an abhorrence of hurting something or someone we love and respect—whatever it is we hold sacred.

Both of these types of fear play important roles in our lives. Often, fear helps protect us and those whom we love. But outer, natural fear can also paralyze us, cloud our judgment, or even twist love and fellow feeling into hate and destructiveness. It is our holy fear, our desire to protect what is beautiful and good and true, that prevents natural fear from ruling the day.

Though we cannot always sense it, there is always love beyond fear. We may love something or someone so much that our feelings transcend a situation's terror. Or we may realize that, however dark or evil the circumstances, ultimately Divine love and wisdom rule the universe. Love indeed abides, above, within, and beyond all fear.

Many blessings,

Leah Goodwin & Kevin Baxter

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FEB 7 Fear is Irrelevant

— The Reverend Andy Stinson

Jeremiah 31:27-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. In those days they shall no longer say: “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Luke 12:24-34

Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest?

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much

more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Divine Providence 139

The reason no one is reformed in a state of fear is that fear takes away our freedom and rationality, or our "freeness" and our "reasonableness." Love opens the inner reaches of the mind, but fear closes them; and when they are closed, we do very little actual thinking, being conscious then only of what is impinging on our feelings or our senses. All the fears that beset our minds are like this.

This month we celebrate George Washington's birthday. He would have been 279 years old this year—and probably a little worse for wear, were he still with us on the earthly plane.

Last weekend I had the chance to be in New York City, where Washington fought his first in a long series of losing battles with the British army. That's right: he lost in both Manhattan and Brooklyn, and he would go on to lose again and again and again. And yet, in the end he would still be victorious in the cause of freedom.

As Washington lay dying (of an infection in his throat that made his windpipe close up, so that he had only a short amount of time and very little breath to say what we can imagine he knew would be his last words) he whispered these raspy words: "Be not afraid."

How is it that, of all the wisdom George Washington accumulated, of all the things he could have left us as a legacy, he chose this oft-repeated Biblical phrase, something we might consider a cliché: “Be not afraid”?

I believe Washington favored this phrase because he knew the depths of the truth that our scripture offers us today, which is that fear is illusory. In the heavenly life, and in heaven’s light, fear is irrelevant.

I looked at every reference to fear in *Heaven and Hell*. In every case fear was used as a restrictive agent, as a reason to hold people back, often from evil—but in any case, as a restraining force.

If we know anything about the universe or about God, it is that we are called to be an expansive, abundant force. God does not restrict. God unleashes radical and abundant love, unleashes radical and abundant life—we only have to look at a blade of grass growing out of a sidewalk to see how much God loves new life and growth. Even in tiny, uninhabitable spaces, God brings life. In the most uninhabitable spaces of the human heart, God brings life, too.

The passage from Jeremiah offers a gloriously beautiful promise about how we are made: that God’s love for us is written on our hearts, and that God’s wisdom for us is written in our minds. We can’t separate ourselves from it. And this promise comes after many chapters of difficulty and pain, difficulty and pain, difficulty and pain. The Israelites, enslaved in a foreign country and even condemned by God himself, arrive at this place of redemption to discover that God places within them the very cornerstone of passion and love that is the Divine in the world. God places this very wisdom in their minds. No longer will they be held hostage by images of fear.

God unleashes radical and abundant love, radical and abundant life.

The passage really sums it up with that seemingly throwaway portion, the one that comes before we read that God has written love on their hearts: “They will no longer know the sour grapes of their parents.” Have you ever eaten sour grapes? They really pucker every orifice in your body. This image sums up every aspect of fear, of how it closes you up.

But that experience of puckering, of sourness, does not keep us from our life's nourishing moments. Sure, we may eat a sour grape now and again, but it doesn't change what nourishes us. It doesn't change the love written on our hearts. It doesn't change the truth of our minds. We may have that great, fearful puckering experience, but that experience is irrelevant to who we are and who we are called to be as people of God.

When we align with the love God has written upon our hearts, the old fears lose their power—perhaps not immediately, but they do, and forever. The old voices telling us that we aren't good enough for or don't deserve or have no right to joy and happiness lose their power before the truth of God's love written on our heart.

I'm not saying fear isn't real, and I'm not claiming that it doesn't have its uses in particular times and places.

But fear by any measure is a restricting feeling, whether it slams shut our hearts and minds or kicks into gear our adrenal glands.

***We are called to live
in courage and joy.***

Fear restricts us, and if the gospel lesson teaches us anything, it is that this world is abundant and love is prepared for us. We can't run out of love. We can't run low on truth. All we have to do is look at a sunrise to watch the grand operation at work. We only have to look at the smile on a Wal-Mart greeter to know that love lives, that it's not diminishing, and that we as a people of love are not called to be a diminishing people, a restrictive people—we are called to live in abundance, to live in courage and in joy.

I love this gospel reading: "Do not worry. Look at the birds, the flowers; do not worry." There's one line in the middle where Jesus just nails it: "Do not worry about what you're going to eat." If we consider the correspondence of what Jesus is speaking about, he's not talking about burgers and fries; he's talking about the spiritual food that is the very energy and joy of our lives. "Don't worry about what you will eat," he says, "because we can't help but be people who are full of desire and want and love and passion."

One of my friends made a sharp remark once and I said, "Oh, that's pretty smart. There's no 'off' on the genius switch." Likewise, there is

no way to stop the divine love that is coming into us right now. If it is true that we do not have to worry about what we will feast upon, that we will be continually fueled by new loves and desires, we will always live in abundance. The real question will only be whether we let it happen.

Fear, then, is that constricting feeling that tells us in a thousand diabolical ways it cannot be so—that we cannot live in abundance, we cannot live in joy, we cannot live in health, we cannot heal from wounds. Fear is the great manifestation of the “cannot.” Because the love is already there, the desire is already present. We are simply called to permit God’s love and truth to reign where we are afraid to go.

If you’re a part of this church, and you’ve been a part of this church for any length of time, you most likely did not decide one day to say, “Oh, I’m going to go be a part of a small, esoteric Christian tradition.” Something resonated in your heart, in your soul, in your being, that said, “This is the way I want to move through the world. This is the way that helps me make sense of God and my place with God—where I come from, where I am, and where I am going.” That resonance in your heart had nothing to do with you and everything to do with the Lord. That excitement, that joy, that peace that you experience in this tradition and in the living of it flows from a divine source that you are connected to. And yet, is not of you.

Have you ever tried to change how you feel about something? Have you ever succeeded at that? I believe God can change how we feel about certain things, but that when we stand up and say, “I now refuse to feel angry or sad,” those gifts come upon us as gifts from the Divine, as food to nourish us. And those treasures dwell in our hearts, regardless of whether we are afraid of them or not. Because fear is irrelevant.

Excitement, joy, and peace flow from a divine source that you are connected to.

The Rev. Dr. George Dole can speak and read languages whose names I can barely pronounce. At the age of 70ish he still enjoys running 10 or 20 miles a week. Now, I’ve never enjoyed running 10 or

20 miles a week, and though I may say “Fear is irrelevant,” when we start talking about ancient languages and me, my whole body puckers with fear. Those loves that George so brilliantly brings into this world were implanted in him long ago, and through his willingness to permit them they come into full being. By the way, many times willingness does come in the form of hard work, but it does so as a labor of joy and not a labor of drudgery. Such love and passion are manifestations of heaven in this world.

I get excited by anyone who has an ardent passion in this world and brings it into being for the larger good. Swedenborg describes heaven as “perfect,” meaning complete, so often—and yet he also says that every time a new angel joins a heavenly community, that angel, forged in this world through the living of the loves flowing through his or her heart, makes heaven more perfect.

Brothers and sisters, we are called this day to set aside the arguments of fear, and even the relevance of fear in our lives, to make a more perfect world and a more perfect heaven. Whatever it is that God has written on your heart, whatever it is that God has implanted in your mind, know that those lies that tell you “You cannot, you are not, you will not” are irrelevant to the love God has for you, the love that will feed and sustain you and be the very salvation of the world, if you are only willing to permit it.

This month we celebrate George Washington’s birthday, and my hope and prayer for you is that you will hear his last words as if for the first time, and truly “be not afraid.”

The Rev. Maj. Andy Stinson is
Chair of the Council of Ministers, a
chaplain in the U.S. Army, and the
Pastoral Care Coordinator for Pen
Bay Health Care.



Daily Meditations

Monday, February 8

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, *Psalm 91:1*

The Life itself that proceeds from the Lord and fills heaven and the world, is the life of His love, and in heaven this appears as light, and because this light is life it enlightens the minds of angels, and enables them to understand and be wise.

Apocalypse Explained 186.11

Tuesday, February 9

Will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust." *Psalm 91:2*

The reason why "a rock" means the Lord in respect of the truth of faith is that "a rock" is also used to mean a fortress that withstands falsities. The actual fortress is the truth of faith, for this is what the battle against both falsities and evils is waged from. *Arcana Coelestia 1788*

Wednesday, February 10

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence; *Psalm 91:3*

Furthermore, all who are governed by good begin to experience fear when falsities are seen in the light received from good, for they fear falsities and want to have them rooted out. But they cannot be rooted out if they are well established, except by divine means provided by the Lord. *Arcana Coelestia 4256*

Thursday, February 11

He will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. *Psalms 91:4*

The truths by which the man of the spiritual church defends himself, and respecting which he disputes, are from the doctrine which he acknowledges. *Arcana Coelestia 2709*

Friday, February 12

You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in
darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.
Psalms 91:5-6

He who is tempted is brought into anxieties, which induce a state of despair as to what the end is to be. The very combat of temptation is nothing else. He who is sure of victory is not in anxiety, and therefore is not in temptation.

Arcana Coelestia 1787

Saturday, February 13

A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you. *Psalms 91:7*

Men who are in divine truths from the Lord have a like power against evils and falsities, and consequently against cohorts of devils, who, regarded in their essence, are nothing but evils and falsities. *True Christian Religion 87*

FEB 14 Of Serpents and Saviors

Ms. Eli Dale

Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food."

Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us."

So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

John 3:14-21

[Jesus said,] "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light,

so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who has come by night to meet with this unruly rabbi, to try to make sense of him.

The first thing we hear Jesus say in today’s reading is, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up. . .”

Jesus is comparing himself to a snake? What is the deal with the snake?

Let’s go back to this Old Testament reference and see what’s going on.

The people, the congregation of Israel, made it to the edge of the Promised Land; but because they were too afraid—or untrusting—of the Lord to go up against the land’s inhabitants, they condemned themselves to wandering about in the wilderness until the last of the current generation had passed away. The journey to the Promised Land—and now away from the Promised Land—has been filled with grumbling. Many times, the people have turned against Moses and proclaimed, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!” Notwithstanding that they have been in the presence of God the entire time, what they focus on is material stuff. And as happens in other instances of grumbings, the Lord “becomes angry,” something bad happens to the people, the people confess their faithlessness and ask Moses to intercede (which he does), and the Lord responds.

But today’s response seems wildly out of character for a God who has said, “You shall not make an idol.” What do you call a snake on a stick that effects magical cures?

More than 1,200 years later, Jesus refers to this mysterious, “lifted up” serpent figure and associates himself with it!

The first several times I read this passage, I allowed this “snake-on-a-stick” image to float right by me. After all, this passage is full of love and light. John 3:16 is a passage many people know by heart: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Many a Christian lifts up their faith with these words. But the snake thing is just too weird—why would Jesus equate himself with a snake on a stick? So even though it is jarring, one can quickly jump to an image of Christ on the cross and just leave the snake out of the picture.

But there is snakesness in this passage. It is undeniable and unavoidable.

Snakes get a pretty bad rap. Many people fear them. After all, a serpent plays the role of the first major bad guy in Holy Scripture. Indeed, in their coarser roles, serpents are described by Swedenborg as representing the qualities of deceit, falsity, low things associated with evil intent, and seducers. But the more moderate, and accessible, description is that serpents are things we can sense: touch, see, hear, smell, and taste. In other words, serpents are just plain natural, material things and qualities.

I would like to say something at this point about “ultimates” and “evil.”

“Ultimate” simply means “the furthest reaches,” “the last thing,” “the farthest out thing.” In Swedenborgian cause-and-effect cosmology, creative forces come from the spiritual world and find their expression in the material world, in what we call “creation.” The spiritual world causes the material world. If everything has its beginning in the spiritual world and flows “outward” or “downward,” then we would say that spiritual force ultimately finds itself manifested in the material world. So, when we say that serpents correspond to natural, material things and qualities, we are actually saying that they correspond to the ultimate expression of the spiritual world. That doesn’t sound like such a bad role to play. So why do they have a reputation for being evil?

The spiritual world ultimately finds itself manifested in the physical world.

“Evil” is a state that occurs when God is left out of the picture. Since God is in everything, God is not really left out of anything. But God can be left out of our understanding or relationship to a thing or an idea. Conscious evil, which is the exclusive province of human beings, comes about when we forget our connection to the spiritual world and to God. It’s a very easy state to be in. Each of us enters evil several times a day! How often do you notice God? Constantly and consistently? I doubt it.

***Real death comes
as a result of
separation from
God.***

So the bad rap for snakes comes about because, ultimately, we mistake what we know via sensory means for reality and leave God out of the ultimates, thus creating evil.

And our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? He is the source, not the ultimate, isn’t he? What is his relationship to the snake? Well, our Lord and Savior is the source, but that guy Jesus was the ultimate. There were things in his life that he could touch, taste, hear, see, and smell. He, too, had a body, and a life as a carpenter, and friends, and a need to eat and drink. He bled when you cut him. That guy Jesus was like us, mostly.

Let’s go back to the wilderness and look at Moses’ snake for a minute. Real live snakes were coming out and biting people, killing them. Moses was told by God to make a brass (or bronze) serpent and elevate it, so that the people would live. The inner meaning of brass is “natur-al good.” So Moses used brass—natural good—to make a snake—a natural thing. The healing serpent had the substance of natural goodness and the form of a material, sensory thing.

We see here that what was killing the people was the fact that sensory things—things they could touch, taste, hear, see, and smell—had become the focus of their lives. They left the spiritual heart out of their daily rounds. Death came as a result of separation from God. Believing more in their bodies than in their Lord, the people began to perish. When Moses could show them goodness as the real body and materiality as the mere form, they began to live.

We can make this concept more concrete. Bad and evil people in movies and plays are often portrayed as ugly. The physical, the “ultimate,” when devoid of goodness, is ugly. We use that as an icon. Think of someone right now whom you consider physically unattractive. How well do you like that person? Or respect that person? Or want to spend time with that person?

***Things change
when we infuse the
material with the
spiritual.***

Now think of someone you care deeply about who is also physically unattractive. Do you hear yourself start to defend them? They look pretty good to you, don't they? There are people in my life who would be paid to leave a beauty contest, but because I care about them, I see beauty. (Or I can see their inner beauty, which improves my opinion of their external form.) Things change when we infuse the material with the spiritual.

Think of something really bad that has happened to you. I don't mean deep sorrow that causes grieving—that is another category of events, one that is sad but not mean. Think of some great unkindness that was done to you, or of a very bad accident. How are you responding? Are you letting it bite you? Keeping its poison in your veins? Seeing it as a low-down thing? Does it leave a bad taste in your mouth? Does it just stink? Maybe you are one of the fortunate few who find a way to turn the bad and painful events of your material life to a healing, life-giving bent. If you can steep the pain of misfortune with good, with spirit, and raise it up toward heaven, you can find healing.

One of the most shocking stories I ever heard along these lines was about a young man who slipped into an industrial-strength wood chipping machine, which quickly chipped off both his legs. He managed to prop himself up on the rim with his hands and throw himself out of the hopper before it chipped the rest of him, but obviously, his ultimates were not just in a very bad way, they were gone.

While he was in rehabilitation, someone came to him and said, “I know you are not going to believe me now, but one day you will see the good in this.” The young man did not believe that. But he was

then forced to begin his life anew, to find meaning and value in a life lived from a wheelchair, stigmatized as a cripple, unable to do what he used to do. He turned his life toward counseling others who had also had traumatic accidents, mending lives that had been torn. He, and God, did turn a bad situation to the good. He took his material self and filled it with spirit and found life—and not just for himself: he led the way for others as well.

Stories abound about people who have rebuilt their lives after great loss. Tell those stories to each other, to remember, to inspire, and to bring life.

Jesus had a body, too. He spent his entire life infusing it with spirit. He spent his life—and gave his life—transforming his human self into a divine self, transforming his material body into a glorified body. This is what Swedenborg calls “the Divine Human,” and that is the God we know. That guy Jesus became fully the Christ, the Redeemer of humanity, in those final moments on the cross, when he was raised up like the life-restoring brass serpent of the Old Testament. Once a man, he had saturated his ultimates with the godly goodness that was his inner substance. Moses invited the snake-bitten to look up to the brazen serpent. Jesus invites us to look up to—to have faith in—the glorified Christ.

If you are tempted to separate your physical, material, humdrum, everyday life from your spiritual life; if you are tempted to think that your pretty face or your stubbed toe or your ability to smell both roses and sewage, to feel both sandpaper and a baby’s soft bottom, to hear both screeching tires and a sublime symphony, are not fully spiritual, then you are being bitten by poisonous snakes. We cannot do exactly what Jesus did, but we can do what humans can do. Make your material life, even to the most mundane and physical aspects, a container for spiritual presence. Look up to the Lord and see the glory of heaven in the form of a man. Live your material life as an expression of spiritual truth.

*Jesus spent
his entire life
transforming his
human self into a
divine self.*

Jesus' last words to Nicodemus here are, "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." Jesus tells us to "do truth." We must make our hands (as well as our eyes, ears, and mouths)—the activity of our lives—available to God so that our deeds are done by God. God's will is for spiritual energy to flow into the ultimate reaches of creation, into the corners of the material world, into what we encounter with our senses, making it "raised up," exalted, and participating in heavenly intent—in love. Be there.

Blessed be the Lord.

Prayer

Lord, I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me employed for you or laid aside for you;
exalted for you or brought low for you;
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing;
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.

- John Wesley

Eli Dale preached this sermon
at the Elmwood New Church on
March 30, 2003.



Daily Meditations

Monday, February 15

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. *Revelation 15:1*

In this end, man knows no other than that evil is good and falsity truth, for he loves them from the delight he feels in them, and therefore confirms them. *Apocalypse Revealed 658*

Tuesday, February 16

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. *Revelation 15:2*

Spiritual truths are of faith from charity. Their being seen to have harps, and heard to sing the song afterwards mentioned, was a representative of confession springing from the faith of charity. *Apocalypse Revealed 661.2*

Wednesday, February 17

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. *Revelation 15:4*

All who are in the good of love and charity will acknowledge the Lord alone as God. *Apocalypse Revealed 5608:9*

Thursday, February 18

And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. *Revelation 15:5-6*

The Word is in heaven, and is deposited in the inmost part thereof, which is called the sacred repository, and... the light there is flaming and bright, exceeding every degree of light that shines without in the other parts of heaven *Apocalypse Revealed 669.2 and Heaven and Hell 280*

Friday, February 19

And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. *Revelation 15:7*

Evils and falsities are exposed in no other way than by truths and goods; for these are in the light of heaven, but falsities and evils are in the darkness of hell; and in darkness nothing is exposed, because nothing but evil and falsity appears there. *Apocalypse Revealed 673*

Saturday, February 20

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. *Revelation 15:8*

But by light from heaven all things are exposed, because in that all things appear; for the light of heaven is the Divine truth of the Lord's Divine wisdom. *Ibid.*

Mine Enemies

The Reverend Eric Hoffman

21 FEB

Judges 2:1-5, 11-23

Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land that I had promised to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. For your part, do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my command. See what you have done! So now I say, I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become adversaries to you, and their gods shall be a snare to you." When the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the Israelites, the people lifted up their voices and wept. So they named that place Bochim, and there they sacrificed to the Lord.

Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and worshiped the Baals; and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They abandoned the Lord, and worshipped Baal and the Astartes. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them to bring misfortune, as the Lord had warned them and sworn to them; and they were in great distress.

Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord; they did not follow their example. Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord would be moved to pity by their groaning

because of those who persecuted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they would relapse and behave worse than their ancestors, following other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They would not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and he said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant that I commanded their ancestors, and have not obeyed my voice, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died." In order to test Israel, whether or not they would take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their ancestors did, the Lord had left those nations, not driving them out at once, and had not handed them over to Joshua.

Luke 1:68-79

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

I find it intriguing that, of the one hundred fifty psalms included in the Bible, fully one third of them are concerned with deliverance from one's enemies—either personal or national.

In fact, the presence of "enemies" threads throughout the biblical narrative, in both the Old and New Testaments. The period of the exodus from Egypt had laws that governed proper attitudes toward

one's enemies. Israel, under Joshua, infiltrated the Holy Land believing their enemies included the very real gods of other groups. The prophets warned repeatedly against adopting the customs of the enemies of Israel. Jesus taught us that enemies are to be loved. Today, we even say when entering into worship, "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies," which to my playful ear has always made us sound like some sort of spiritual underground group.

But given the frequency of the word "enemy" in the Bible and in worship, the question that occurs to me is, "Who are we talking about? Who is the enemy?"

To the nation of Israel during the period of the judges, the answer to that question was fairly straightforward. In fact, the third chapter of Judges lists the Canaanites, Sidonians, Hivites, Philistines, Hittites, Amorites, Perezites, and Jebusites specifically as enemies. These were all distinguishable cultural groups residing in Canaan who worshiped other gods—and because of this religious difference, the Israelites felt compelled to either convert them, slaughter them, or kick them out of the Holy Land for good (a goal, incidentally, which they never achieved). I can just picture an Israelite father from the tribe of Judah standing on a ridge with his son, saying, "Do you see that caravan of people down in the valley? Those are Amalekites, son; those people are your enemies."

Who is the enemy?

If this statement rings a little familiar, it may be because you've heard it before—maybe not in so many words, but in the subtle lessons that our elders or our society teach us as we grow. Perhaps you've learned to see people of different cultures as your adversary—people of a different nationality or different skin pigmentation. I've heard that people trained to survive in the business world learn to see their colleagues as adversaries, since only the best in the business survive. I'm not necessarily speaking of groups of people that you feel at war with; I'm thinking of those groups or individuals you would rather avoid. If you have to interact with them, you erect an emotional barrier between the two of you so you don't get any closer than you have to.

As a personal example, I tend to make adversaries out of the folks involved in telemarketing campaigns. Whenever I receive a call from a complete stranger who begins to read to me from a script telling me how they can fulfill a need I wasn't even aware I had, I enter a competitive frame of mind. Only one of us is going to "win" this conversation, and if I can say no even after hearing all their paragraphs written to convince me to reconsider, then I've won this particular little war.

Making enemies out of others is a costly thing to do in terms of personal energy.

I am not proud of this tendency in myself. I set up an unnecessarily adversarial relationship by assuming this "me-against-them" frame of mind. I would be even less proud if I turned this attitude toward a nationality or religion or race. Making enemies out of others is a costly thing to do in terms of personal energy. It is spiritually damaging, as well, because it inhibits the flow of love and concern from God through me to others. It may seem that we have as many enemies as the Israelites had other nations to pick on, but I don't believe that any outside agency is an adequate answer to the question "Who are our enemies?" I don't believe those are the enemies that all those psalms are really talking about.

Let me share with you a poem by Leslie Brandt that I believe really gets to the heart of this issue:

Deliver me, O God, from the enemies of my soul.
I am no longer afraid of men who stand in my way,
even of those who obstruct your purposes
and who deceive their fellow men with their
arrogant and clever cliches.
They anger me, but they do not frighten me.
My pain and confusion come by way of my
own weaknesses and faithlessness.

I strive for success, and am fractured by failure.
I reach for ecstasy and am clobbered with depression.
I wait for guidance and your heavens are gray with silence.
I ask for infilling and am confronted with emptiness.
I seek opportunities and run into stone walls.

I overcome these pernicious demons in the morning—
Only to face them again when day turns into night.
They refuse to die, these persistent devils.
They plague my days and haunt my nights and
Rob me of the peace and joy of God-motivated living.

And yet, O Lord, You have surrounded my life like a great fortress.
There is nothing that can touch me save by your loving permission.

This poem, which is Leslie Brandt's paraphrase of the 59th psalm, brings to light a very important truth—that the real "enemies" are the enemies within. What lessons have you learned in life that separate you from your fellow human beings? What attitudes do you harbor that prevent you from openly sharing God's love with others? What pain do you carry that keeps you from living life to its fullest? These are the enemies that we, through the words of the psalmist, ask the Lord to help us to overcome. The judges and the prophets cautioned Israel not to adopt the ways of its enemies, and through the Word they likewise caution us against incorporating the ways of our inner enemies into our thoughts and feelings toward others.

The Israelites fought with swords and slings and arrows, but the most effective weapon we can employ to grow out of our inner enemies is peace, the peace of wisdom in our thinking love in our hearts—the peace that is ours for the asking when we honor our covenant with the Lord. If we live our lives the best way we know, our adversarial tendencies will be revealed to us bit by bit, and, working with God, we will feel the support through our struggles that God granted the "conquerors" and settlers of the Holy Land. As it is written in the Gospel of Luke, we will be "rescued from the hands of our enemies" if only we will allow the Lord to "guide our feet into the way of peace."

*What lessons have
you learned in life
that separate you
from your fellow
human beings?*

Prayer

Lord, we come to you this day mindful that much in this world separates us from others and from you. Though this way of life is comfortable in its familiarity, we need to find a better way. Help us to search within and see clearly our inner enemies—those ideas and feelings that hamper our spiritual well-being, things we've made a part of us because we did not know how to resist them. Lend us divine strength and patience so that we may make peace with our enemies and free ourselves from their hurtful influence, for we desire sincerely to grow closer to your loving presence and to make a path for your love in this world.

Lead us, O Lord, in your righteousness, because of our enemies; make your way straight before our face. Amen.

The Rev. Eric Hoffman is the
pastor of the Virginia Street
Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.



Daily Meditations

Monday, February 22

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. *Psalm 23:1*

He who leads and teaches is called a “shepherd” and those who are led and taught are called the “flock.”

Arcana Coelestia 343

Tuesday, February 23

He makes me lie down in green pastures
he leads me beside still waters; *Psalm 23:2*

“Waters” signify truths, and, specifically, natural truths, which are knowledges from the Word. *Apocalypse Revealed 50*

Wednesday, February 24

He restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake. *Psalm 23:3*

Those who are to be regenerated... [are first] in a state of tranquility, or in a state of external peace (for external peace, or peace in externals, is called “tranquility”); and the same is produced from the Divine state of peace that is inmost within it; and it comes forth into the externals through the removal of cupidities and falsities; for these are what cause all unrest. *Arcana Coelestia 3696*

Thursday, February 25

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me. *Psalm 23:4*

For he who teaches faith, and not charity, is unable to notice the higher or interior things of the church; because he has nothing to guide him, and to dictate whether this or that is of faith, or is true. But if he teaches charity, he then has good, and this is to him a dictate and guides him; for all truth is from good and treats of good, or what is the same, everything of faith is from charity and treats of charity. *Arcana Coelestia 4715*

Friday, February 26

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. *Psalm 23:5*

The goods of the celestial kingdom, or of the celestial church, are the good of love to the Lord and the good of mutual love; and the goods of the spiritual kingdom, or of the spiritual church, are the good of charity toward the neighbor and the good of faith. *Arcana Coelestia 9780*

Saturday, February 27

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long. *Psalm 23: 6*

All truths of good and goods of truth are holy, because they are from the Lord alone. *Arcana Coelestia 9300*

Holy Fear

Ms. Leah Grace Goodwin

28 FEB

Matthew 25:14-30

“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

“After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

“Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing,

even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This parable is one of those passages that make fellow preachers wince when they come up in conversation. It is the kind of passage that makes clergy people pat you sympathetically on the shoulder. It is the kind of passage that makes a person think twice (or maybe thrice) before they offer their perspective on it from the pulpit.

I could offer a straightforward sermon on the correspondential meaning of this parable. I could speak for twenty minutes on the classical Swedenborgian interpretation of this passage—the interpretation we find in *Apocalypse Explained* and *Arcana Coelestia*, that we must procure good and truth in this life in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, that we all have capabilities we can only expand upon and develop in this physical life, because at the point of our physical death we have pinpointed the heavenly community in which we will reside.

Or I might preach something similar to what I preached on this topic once before. I might put a more positive spin on this terrifying passage, give to you the perfectly adequate and legitimate interpretation that we all have talents, abilities, uses—and that we are called to put them to work in the world and make a heaven out of the human race.

“The word of God... does not change, but we change.”

But I am coming back to this passage after three years away from it, and things are different now. The Reverend Peter Gomes points out that “the word of God as it is written on the page does not change—but we change.” This is what it means to say that the word of God is a living Word—that, as the United Church of Christ puts it, “God is still speaking.”

The question for all of us is, then, “Are we listening?”

This parable does not say to me what it said on previous readings—and Swedenborg’s correspondential exegesis of the parable no longer

seems quite so cut-and-dried. Jesus is making a different point, I think, with this parable. He is telling us about the thing that, for better or for worse, frequently motivates us: fear. He is trying to show us—by contrast, in this parable, not by example—the difference between natural fear and holy fear.

*There is a difference
between natural
and holy fear.*

This passage is situated very near the end of Matthew's gospel, which is to say that the parable comes from a point very near the end of Jesus' ministry. He has entered Jerusalem on the donkey, in that passage we read every Palm Sunday, and has created an uproar with his dramatic healings and the crowds that follow him. He has overturned the tables in the temple, enraging both the government authorities and the religious leaders who are interested in keeping what peace they are able to hold onto. He has been confronted by these leaders and is now in deep trouble, because he has parked himself in the temple to teach. That is where we find the Lord as he gives us this parable: sitting in the Jerusalem temple, irritating the you-know-what out of a number of important people.

Which is why it seems to me that we are missing the point if we see this parable as exemplifying either the nature of God or the kingdom of heaven. You may have noticed that the story does not start with Jesus saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like this." Instead, it begins with another, more ambiguous phrase: "It is as if..."

What is "it"?

The "it" here is not the kingdom of heaven—because, I think, the kingdom of heaven is nothing like what Jesus describes. This parable is not a snapshot of the way things work in God's realm.

No, the "it" here is a dystopia—a dark picture of a world ruled by the exact opposite of the ideas Jesus is teaching. This is a world in which people do things because they are afraid of the consequences, in which people are driven by a desire to please tyrants who have the power to destroy them. It's worth noting that what the "good and faithful slaves" did to please their master actually violated an important ethical code; lending at interest was considered a sin according to ancient Jewish law. So this is a world in which people

are willing to commit the sin of investing and lending at interest—usury—in order to please their master. Their motivation is fear—fear that spurs them to take a risk, to invest the huge amounts of money with which they have been entrusted—in order to keep from being punished.

And the slave who earns nothing? He too is motivated by fear. But he takes another tack, ensuring the safety of his single talent (no small

Do we actually think that God is like this ruthless master?

sum, mind you—a talent equaled a year’s wages for a worker) by burying it. When the day of reckoning comes, he is honest with his master. We have no reason to think that this slave is treacherous or sneaky at all. In fact, he is painfully honest.

“Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”

And the master replies, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was mine with interest.”

This story takes everything that’s wrong in the world—all the abuses of power and runaway greed in our culture—and boils it down and distills it into this dreadful slaveowner and the amoral reasoning he gives for his conduct. Is that really what we think is true about God’s creation—that the only way to avoid being left out in the cold is to get everything we can grab? Do we really think it’s true that powerful people can do whatever they want for as long as they want? Do we really think that the ruthless masters of this world are the ones who know what’s really important?

Here’s the most important question. Do we actually think on some level that God is like this ruthless master? Do we think that when the time comes for us to meet God, the question we’ll be asked is, “So, what have you done for me lately? And it better be impressive!”

If that were what God is like, if that were where the world is headed, then the climax of history and the coming of the Son of Man would really be bad news, not the gospel's good news—something to whisper about fearfully, not proclaim joyfully.

Swedenborg tells us that “‘fear’ stands for holy fear as it exists in people who by means of the truth of faith are being introduced into the good of love. But the more there is of fear present in worship, the less there is of faith, and still less of love. Conversely, the more there is of faith present in worship, and even more so of love, the less there is of fear... holy fear is not so much a fear of hell and of damnation, as a fear lest anything whatever be done or thought that is contrary to the Lord and contrary to the neighbor, thus anything whatever that is contrary to the good of love and to the truth of faith. It is an abhorrence which on the one side forms the boundary of the holiness of faith and of the holiness of love.”

If there were what God is like, then our holy fear would be the fear of hell, damnation, mistreatment—in short, the kind of fear we see operating in every single slave in this parable. None of the slaves acts out of love for his master or his neighbor. They all act out of self-preservation.

*Jesus' whole life
speaks of God's
limitless mercy.*

But that isn't what God is like. That's not where the world is headed. Matthew follows up the story of the ruthless master—his story of what happens when powerful people rule unchecked out of fear and greed—with the parable of the sheep and the goats, a description of what it will look like when Jesus' work among us is completed. The contrast between the two stories could not be more marked. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him” (Matthew 25:31), this following parable says, he will separate people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The hungry and those who fed them, those without clean water to drink and those who gave them water to drink, the strangers and those who welcomed them, those without clothes and those who clothed them, and convicts in prison and those who visited them, are gathered in toward the center, to enjoy God's kingdom.

In other words, the Jesus who is coming to judge the living and the dead is the same Jesus whose whole life—his teaching, his healing, his breaking bread with anyone who would eat with him, and most of all his willingness to die rather than retaliate against those who sought to kill him—speaks of his limitless mercy.

But who do we really say is Lord? Is it the ruthless master of the parable? If that were so, if the “way of the world” such masters set

What fear motivates you? Is it holy fear? Or are you afraid that God has it in for you?

up were really the way things are always going to be, then the most sensible course of action would probably be to do what those who served the parable’s ruthless master did: Keep your head down. Work hard. Line the master’s pockets, and maybe there will be something in it for you, too.

But this Sunday’s gospel, for all the dark images that we hear—and that we should take to heart—proclaims good news to God’s people. God is not a ruthless master. The ruthless masters of the world do not have the last word. Jesus does. In fact, Jesus already has—the kingdom is spread out among us; we have only to see it and work toward it to bring it into the light.

The completion of the Lord’s vision for the world, in which “the least of these” and those who worked for justice for them are finally vindicated, is nigh. The signs are all around us, though many of us don’t recognize them any more than the kings of the earth recognized the one true Lord when he was a baby, or a homeless man, or a convict on a cross. But Jesus is Lord nonetheless—Lord of the world and Lord of history itself, its beginning and its end.

So, what fear motivates you? Is your fear holy fear—fear that comes from compassion, fear that springs from love of the neighbor and love of God? Or are you afraid that God has it in for you, or that other people have it in for you? Does your life say that life and light belong to those with wealth and power and the might to take it away from others if necessary? Is that where you believe your salvation lies? In economics, they call this attitude “the scarcity mentality,” the belief that there are not enough resources to go around, that we must fight to get what we need and deprive others in order to gain. This is fear

that kills, fear that enslaves. This is not holy fear—because holy fear liberates us. It frees us to be good to both ourselves and others. It frees us to do the work we need to accomplish—bringing the kingdom of God into the light, into the visual field of this world.

Swedenborg tells us that “‘to fear’ means that a holy change is taking place.” He goes on to say that “holy fear is that which accompanies reverential awe of the Divine and also love... In general, the more love anyone has for what is good and true, the more fear he has lest what is good and true will suffer harm, though the less that fear manifests itself as fear.” When we fear for what is right, we understand it less as fear than as a desire to protect what is good.

As winter gives way to spring, I pray that all of you will know the holy change Christ’s coming brings. Wherever fear enslaves you in its darkness, wherever the light of God’s mercy has not penetrated your soul, I pray that it will disappear in the holy fear which is not really fear at all. I pray that you will come to know—and live—the awful, awe-inspiring power of God’s transforming, unconquerable, compassionate love. Amen.

Prayer

Break my bonds, O God, and raise my heart. Keep my whole being fixed on you. Let me never lose sight of you, and while I gaze on you, let my love for you grow more and more every day.

- Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-90)

Leah Grace Goodwin is an editor of *Our Daily Bread* magazine and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School. She preached this sermon in Cambridge, MA in 2005.



Daily Meditations

Monday, February 28

And Jacob dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring." *Genesis 28:12-13*

There are lowest truths and goods, and also highest truths and goods, and steps between them as on a ladder.

Arcana Coelestia 3699

Tuesday, March 1

"Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." *Genesis 28:15*

Divine truth is Divine good appearing in heaven before the angels, and on earth before men; and although it is an appearing, still it is Divine truth, because it is from Divine good; just as light is of the sun. *Arcana Coelestia 3712.3*

Wednesday, March 2

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." *Genesis 28:16-17*

Speaking generally, "fear" is of two kinds—fear in what is not sacred, and fear in what is sacred; fear in what is not sacred is the fear in which are the wicked; but fear in what is sacred is the fear in which are the good. *Arcana Coelestia 3718*

Thursday, March 3

So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. *Genesis 28:18*

Good in a person without truth..., is such good as there is in little children, who as yet have nothing of wisdom...; but insofar as a child in his advancement to adult age receives truth from good,... he becomes an adult. *Arcana Coelestia 3726*

Friday, March 4

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, *Genesis 28:20&21*

Thus when in a holy state a man thinks of bread, ...the angels who are with him as an objective representative for thinking about the good of love which is from the Lord. *Arcana Coelestia 3735*

Saturday, March 5

"and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you." *Genesis 28:22*

"Tithing," and "tithes," are the goods and truths which are stored up by the Lord in man's interiors, and which goods are called "remains." *Arcana Coelestia 3740*

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The Swedenborgian Church bases its teachings on the Bible as illuminated by the works of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a Swedish scientist and theologian. Swedenborg envisioned a new Christianity coming into being that was revitalized by the Spirit of the Lord.

We believe that there is one God, known by many names. We worship Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God, who made himself known to us through his life as the divine human Jesus of Nazareth, and whom we continue to know through his Holy Spirit, which operates through and around us.

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that in its pages we find two parallel stories: the account of people, places, and events; and within that account a spiritual reflection of our individual and corporate journeys. The Bible, with its infinite depth of meaning, is truly a living Word, guiding us as we strive to make ourselves temples for the Lord by loving and serving others. We believe that, above all, "all religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." The Swedenborgian Church exists to help people be open to the Lord's presence and leading, and to facilitate their spiritual well-being. We invite you to participate with others who are seeking to deepen their inner life and pursue their spiritual journey.



IN-LOVING-MEMORY-OF
SEYMOUR-HOWELL
MT-MORRIS-NY-HARVARD '92
DIED-IN-HIS-JUNIOR-YEAR
CHOSEN-FOR-HEAVEN



IN-LOVING-MEMORY-OF
FRANCES-H-SEYMOUR
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A-RARE-AND-LOVELY-LIFE
GIVEN-TO-THE-NEW-CHURCH

The stained glass windows on the west wall of Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, MA. As memorials, they remind us of the love the Lord has for us, which goes beyond the fears of this world.

***Our Daily Bread* is a ministry of the Swedenborgian Church**

Our Beliefs in Brief:

- God is pure love, pure wisdom, and pure creative power.
- God became human in Jesus Christ and dwells with us.
- The Bible is God's Word, and has many levels of meaning.
- God loves and saves people of all religions.

*All Returns to:
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