

Children's Talk and Sermon Notes
for Sunday, 23 January

Children's Talk: Daily Bread

- When you do something all the time it can get boring. When you do something only once in a long time it can be very special.
- What are some things that happen only once a year, and feel very special?
 - Christmas
 - Birthday
- What are some things that happen more often, maybe once a week?
 - Church
 - Special time with mom or dad
 - An outing
- What things do you do every single day?
 - Sleep
 - Get dressed
 - Brush teeth
 - Eat
 - Drink
 - Say hello
 - Walk
- The things we do every single day stop feeling so special or important. But one thing is so important we need to do it every day, no matter what. That is eating and drinking.
- Even if we eat and drink a lot one day, our body still needs us to get up and do the same thing again the next day.
- That is why in the prayer we ask the Lord for daily bread: we want the Lord to give us food every single day
- That's exactly what He did for the Children of Israel: they were in a wilderness with nothing at all to eat. So the Lord made a promise to them:
 - Then Jehovah said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." (Exodus 16:4-5)
- They wouldn't get bread once or twice; they wouldn't have to gather as much as they could so it would last; every day there was new bread to eat.
- The same is true of the Lord's love and wisdom: every single day, He gives us the love and the wisdom that we need. It might not be very exciting; it might not seem special because it happens all the time; but we NEED it.
- And so He gives it to us. Every single day.

Daily Repentance

A Sermon by Pastor Joel Christian Glenn
23 January, 2022

The last couple of sermons have dealt with how we address our own evils. In essence this is repentance: admit you did something wrong, stop doing it, and live a better life. Repentance happens on a grand scale when we have done something egregious or when we are battling a lifelong tendency. But repentance can also be something that we are working on in little ways every single day. That might sound daunting: repent every day?! But when we understand what it means we can embrace it as both a possibility and a blessing.

Repentance was part of the core message that the Lord taught. One way of addressing it was through the idea of facing the Cross: in other words, facing the challenge of giving up one's own life for the sake of the Lord. As Christians we are all called to follow the Lord and bear our own cross:

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? (Luke 9:23-25)

In this passage the Lord calls us to do three things: deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. This is the same as giving up our own lives in order to truly live, which is what we do through repentance.

Taking up our cross is the part that we will focus on. The Lord's Cross was of course a literal one: He faced His own torture, crucifixion, and death as the consequence of carrying out His mission. But even for the Lord the Cross was not just literal. The Cross embodied the spiritual struggle and combat against all of hell; the pain of it was not so much the bodily pain but the spiritual anguish over the state of human beings. But in spite of that anguish the Lord endured and gained victory against hell.

It's all well and good for the Lord to have done this. He's the Lord. It's different to think of us facing the same thing. Luckily we do not, like the Lord, have to confront the entirety of hell. We have our small portion to deal with and overcome, the Lord giving us the strength to do so the whole time. That is exactly what we do through repentance. Repentance is when we explore ourselves deeply, notice an evil that has taken root, condemn that evil, beg the Lord for help, refrain from acting on it, and then live a good life going forward. That process, or bearing that cross, can be excruciating. It takes self-discipline to even uncover the darker parts of our lives, much less openly acknowledge them, condemn them, bring them to the Lord, and cut them out of our life entirely. When done right it can leave us exhausted and worn out emotionally, but also content and happy with who the Lord is leading us to become.

But if we look back at the passage from Luke, the Lord did not say this was a one-time thing, or even a yearly or monthly thing. He said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me." How on Earth are we supposed to go through this process every single day? It is a daunting prospect, like the thought of running a marathon every day, for the rest of your life, with no end ever. And just as that would leave our bodies broken and

malfunctioning, spending all our time in a state of deep repentance would leave us spiritually drained and empty. The Lord's words about taking up our crosses daily must mean something that is doable, even if not always easy.

For one thing, although full repentance does take a deep examination of one's own thoughts and intentions, including the parts the world never sees, there is also an easier, simpler kind of repentance. The Teachings of the New Church explain this kind of repentance:

Therefore here is an easier kind of repentance: When we are considering doing something evil and are forming an intention to do it, we say to ourselves, "I am thinking about this and I am intending to do it, but because it is a sin, I am not going to do it." This counteracts the enticement that hell is injecting into us and keeps it from making further inroads. (*True Christian Religion* §535)

This notion is so simple and yet powerful: when you notice yourself thinking about or wanting to do something wrong, simply say to yourself, "That's a sin, so I'm not going to act on it." That simple act is repentance. That simple act is bearing your cross. And as the passage says, that simple act can prevent hell from making further inroads.

When we use words like "sin" and "repentance" our minds go right to the intensity. Yet they need not be overwhelming. Life is not only worthwhile when it is hard. If you notice you are about to say something unkind and hold back, you have repented of a sin. If you are on the verge of letting a little untruth go uncorrected, but then step up and tell the truth, you have repented of a sin. If you really resent being asked to help a needy friend, but shove aside the resentment to do them a favour, you have repented of a sin. Alternatively, if you reflect back on your day and notice that you've actually sinned in these small ways, then repentance would mean committing to not doing those sins again tomorrow. Every day, dozens of times a day, we have a chance to notice something off and do something about it. This is eminently doable. The Lord's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Part of what makes this possible is that repentance is not the only thing that takes place daily. The Lord's presence and provision of goodness and truth takes place continually to counteract every single evil that is experienced throughout the day. This is symbolized in the manna that fed the Children of Israel in the wilderness:

Then Jehovah said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." (Exodus 16:4-5)

Not only were the Children of Israel given bread, they were to gather only enough for that day, in the complete trust that the following day they would be supplied with sufficient food, and on every subsequent day thereafter. The same concept is present in the Lord's Prayer, when we ask for our daily bread.

The spiritual meaning of this bread is the goodness and truth that the Lord provides every single day. It is this daily goodness that allows us to face our daily sins and bear our cross daily and persevere. Were we to face those sins, daily, on our own, we would falter and fail. But the Lord never leaves us alone for a moment.

His goodness is flowing in constantly. Practically speaking this can bolster our belief in our ability to face whatever evils the day has in store for us. When the daily work of noticing an evil intent and rejecting it becomes overwhelming, I can say to myself, "I know that the Lord has provided what I need to face this; I have what it takes; I will not fail." Firmly believing that we can, or rather, that the Lord can, is the first step.

This kind of daily practice builds into something far greater. It is still essential that we deal with the bigger evils too, and practice the deep repentance that takes time and effort, but the daily growth is essential too. What we do every day becomes what we do to eternity. This is in fact the meaning of the idea of "today" or "daily" when it is found in the Word. When we think of eternity as day after day and year after year of grind, piling up on and on in endless drudgery, it does not sound particularly appealing. I remember as a child, and I think many people have experienced this as an adult as well, that living to eternity sounds rather boring: surely we will eventually have done everything there is to do and simply carry on by rote.

Eternity becomes more appealing when we centre it simply on what is true today. Eternity is not a very, very, very long time. Eternity, heavenly eternity, is simply receiving something good from the Lord today; and then doing the same thing again tomorrow; and then again. Even putting it that way in human language draws us back to this idea of day after day after day; but the reality is simply one of present moments, with no worry about the future. In heaven the angels constantly experience this way the Lord provides from moment to moment:

In heaven the Lord imparts this food to angels moment by moment, thus perpetually and eternally.... This is also what is meant in the Lord's Prayer by the petition, Give us today our daily bread... that is, in every moment for evermore. (*Secrets of Heaven* §2838)

Because they are given this spiritual food in every moment, angels have no care for the future and no worry about the past. Their eternity is spent enjoying the moment that the Lord has provided.

Not only does the Lord provide the necessary good and truth to deal with each of those little daily sins; it goes the other way too. The more we shun sins and repent regularly, the more good from the Lord we will be able to take in and the more spiritually fed we will feel. Far from being a chore, there is a kind of spiritual reward in repentance. Through repentance love and wisdom become as if our own, and we can enjoy the delights that go along with them. There is joy in knowing that you are stronger than your flaws, in seeing improvements in your life, in recognizing that through you the Lord is blessing others, in simply embracing the power that comes when you overcome and conquer a challenge. There is more happiness in these truths than in any amount of self-indulgence.

Every single day of your life there will be some evil or sin that rears its head in your life; and so every single day is an opportunity to repent. But in that reality never forget that there is more goodness and truth pouring in from the Lord every moment of every day than you can possibly imagine. Gather what He is giving you and use it. As you do you can come to see the possibility of eternal happiness contained in the present moment, the moment of victory and rest after labours. Repent daily, and receive eternal goodness from the Lord.

So I will sing praise to Your name forever,

That I may perform my vows day by day. (Psalm 61:8)