

# Parables

Earthly stories with heavenly meanings

## Week 1: Why the Lord Taught in Parables



So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and rise up, while he is unaware. (Mark 4:26-27)

(with highlights)

# Contents

Day One: Why the Lord Taught in Parables .....	3
Day Two: The Seed Growing Secretly .....	6
Day Three: Salt, Light, City, Lamp .....	9
Day Four: Keep Praying!.....	12
Day Five: Not what goes into the mouth defiles man. ....	15
Day Six: The Unjust Steward .....	18

*One use of parables is to protect people from profaning good and truth. Because they do not know the spiritual things the Lord is teaching, they cannot profane them.*

## **What is profanation?**

AC 8148:4e. Profanation is the acknowledgment of truth and good and yet a life contrary to them.

AC 1327:3. No one can profane what is holy except one who is in possession of the knowledges of faith, and who acknowledges the truth of them.... The case in this respect is the same as it is with a man who does what is evil, but does not have in mind what is evil. To him the evil that he does cannot be imputed, just as it cannot be imputed to one who does not do it of deliberate intention, or to one who is destitute of reason. Thus a man who does not believe that there is a life after death, and yet performs external worship, cannot profane the things that belong to eternal life, because he does not believe that there is any such life; but the case is quite different with those who know and who acknowledge these things.

## Day One: Why the Lord Taught in Parables

### **Psalm 78:2, 13**

I will open my mouth in a parable<sup>1</sup>;

I will utter enigmas from ancient times....

He split open the sea, and caused them to cross through;

And He made the waters to stand up as a heap....

### **Matthew 13:10-17, 34-35**

And the disciples coming said to Him, Why dost Thou speak to them in parables? And He answering said to them, Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens; but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whoever has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

On this account I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who says,

By hearing you shall hear and shall not understand,

And looking you shall look and shall not see.

For the heart of this people has become gross,

And with their ears they hear heavily,

And their eyes they have closed,

Lest at any time they should see with the eyes,

And hear with the ears,

And understand with the heart,

And be converted, and I should heal them.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally "prophetic-enunciation" (see SS 103), but this Hebrew word in Isa. 14:4 and elsewhere is translated *parabola* in the Doctrine; e.g., AC 1326, 3901.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 6:9-10

But happy are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For amen I say to you, that many prophets and just men have longed to see what you look upon, and have not seen, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard.

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled what was declared by the prophet, saying,  
I will open my mouth in parables;  
I will pour forth things which have been hidden from the founding of the world.<sup>3</sup>

### **John 16:12-13, 25**

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when it shall come—the spirit of Truth—it will guide you into all truth; for it shall not speak from itself, but whatever it shall hear, it shall speak; and it shall announce to you things to come....

These things I have spoken to you in parables; but an hour comes when I will no more speak to you in parables<sup>4</sup>, but will announce to you openly concerning the Father.

AC 3898:2. The reason why the Lord spoke in this manner was in order that the people might not understand the Word, lest they should profane it. For when the church has been vastated, as it then was with the Jews, if men understood it, they would profane it. Therefore, for the same reason the Lord also spoke by parables, as He Himself teaches.... For the Word cannot be profaned by those who do not know its mysteries, but by those

---

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 78:2, as above

<sup>4</sup> Not the common word for parable, but *paroimia*, used only in John & 2 Peter.

who do... and more by those who appear to themselves learned than by those who seem to themselves unlearned.

AC 3898:3. But the reason why the interiors of the Word are now being opened, is that the church at this day has been so far devastated (that is, it is so devoid of faith and love) that although men know and understand, still they do not acknowledge, and much less believe... except a few who are in the life of good and are called the “elect,” who can now be instructed, and with whom a New Church is to be instituted. But where these are, the Lord alone knows. There will be few within the church. It has been among the Gentiles that previous new churches have been set up....

### Questions and Comments

1. In Psalm 78, the stories of the plagues in Egypt and the wandering in the wilderness, beginning with the crossing of the Red Sea, are told; and they are called “parables.” All the stories of the Word are parables, even those that are also historically true.

2. Jesus quoted the prophecy from Isaiah. Why was it a good thing that they would not understand and be healed? See AC 3898:2-3.

3. In the Heavenly Doctrine the spirit of Truth has come to guide us into all truth. The Lord no longer speaks to us in parables, but announces to us openly concerning the Father—which signifies His Divine Love. “Since therefore man lives after death, and then lives to eternity, and a life awaits him according to his love and faith, it follows that the Divine, out of love towards the human race, has revealed such things as may lead to that life, and be conducive to man’s salvation. What the Divine has revealed, is with us the Word.” (NJHD 251)

What are some things the Lord now teaches us openly?

## Day Two: The Seed Growing Secretly

### Mark 4:26-29

And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and rise up, while he is unaware. For on its own the earth bears fruit, first a blade, then an ear, then full wheat in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe<sup>5</sup>, straightway he sends in the sickle, because the harvest stands ready.

AE 1006. When a man is in life from the Lord he is in wakefulness; but when he is in life from himself he is asleep; or what is the same, when a man is in spiritual life he is in wakefulness, but when he is in natural life separated from the spiritual he is asleep....

AE 917. "The kingdom of God" means the church of the Lord in the heavens and on the earth. And the implantation of it with all who receive truths and goods from the Lord, not from self, is described by these words, every particular of which corresponds to spiritual things and signifies them.... For "seed" signifies the Divine truth, "to cast seed into the earth" signifies the work of man, "to rise day and night" and finally "to put in the sickle" signifies in every state. The rest signifies the Lord's work; and the "harvest" the implantation of the church in particular and in general.

For it is to be known, that, although the Lord works all things, and man nothing from self, yet He wills that man should work as if from self in all that comes to his perception. For without man's cooperation as if from self, there can be no reception of truth and good, thus no implantation and regeneration. For to will is the Lord's gift to man; and because the appearance to man is that this is from self, He gives him to will as if from self.

---

<sup>5</sup> Literally, "delivered up"

AC 5212:4. The “blade” is the first memory-knowledge; the “ear” is the memory-knowledge of truth thence derived; the “wheat” is the derivative good.

AE 1153:9. How all these things flow in and flow through, man knows nothing; and yet he lives, if only he knows what he needs to do and does it.... Moreover, of what consequence is it for a man to know how seed grows up, provided he knows how to plow and harrow the land, to sow the seed, and when he reaps his harvest to bless God?

AC 9587. Through freedom, He bends [man] away from evil; and, through freedom, He bends him to good, leading him so gently and silently that the man knows no otherwise than that everything proceeds from himself.

AE 864. And yet man ought to believe, as the matter really is in itself, that he does these things not from himself but from the Lord; and this is why it is said that he must act not *of himself* but *as if of himself*.

### **The nature of the Lord’s parables**

AC 4637. It is very evident that each and all things the Lord spoke in parables are representative and significative of the spiritual and celestial things of His kingdom, and in the highest sense, of the Divine things with Him. And therefore the man who does not know this must suppose that the Lord’s parables have no more in them than ordinary comparisons....

The things which the Lord spoke in these parables appear in the outward form like ordinary comparisons; but in their inward form they are of such a nature as to fill the universal heaven. For there is an internal sense in every particular, which is of such a nature that its spiritual and celestial [*i.e., its truth and good*] diffuses itself through the heavens in every direction like light and flame. This sense is quite uplifted above the sense of the letter, and flows from the several expressions, and from the several words, even from every jot.

**Parables are accommodations to the people hearing them.**

SD 3356-3357. THAT THE THOUGHTS AND SPEECH OF ANGELS, ALSO OF ANGELIC SPIRITS, FALL INTO PARABLES.

It was further shown, that [their ideas] fall into representations of paradises, vineyards [and] feasts, entirely in accordance with the genius of the people; for it is otherwise with one than with another. Therefore the Lord spoke nearly everything by parables, to [suit] the nature of those who are in the world. He likened heaven to feasts, because they placed heavenly joy in feasts; [it would have been] otherwise for others.

Questions and Comments

1. What's another example, like the seed growing secretly, where the Lord does amazing things that we only see in retrospect?
2. AE 1006: What's an example of being in natural life separated from the spiritual, when we're asleep to what is real?
3. AE 917: Why is the ability to will as if from self "the Lord's gift to man"?
4. AE 1153:9. Why is it essential for us to bless God for all the good things in our lives?
5. AC 4637: What is different about the Lord's parables as compared with allegories, similes and comparisons in great literature?



## Day Three: Salt, Light, City, Lamp

### Matthew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt become saltless<sup>6</sup>, with what shall it be salted? After that it is of no use, except to be cast out, and to be trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city that is laid out on a mountain cannot be hidden. Neither do they light a lamp and put it under the bushel, but on the lampstand, and it shines for all who are in the house. So let your light shine in front of men, so that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens.

### Mark 9:49-50

For everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt become saltless, with what shall you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.

### Salt

AC 9207:2. By “the salt of the earth” is meant the truth of the church which longs for good. By “the salt that has lost its saltiness” is meant truth without any longing for good. That such truth is profitable for nothing is described by “the salt that has lost its savor being thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot.” To long for good is to long to do what is good, and in this way to be conjoined with good.

AC 9207:3. “To have salt in oneself” denotes to have this longing.

AR 122. All the quality of good is from the truths that are united to it. For good without truths is like bread and food without wine and

---

<sup>6</sup> Literally in the Greek, “become foolish (or senseless)”; the Latin word also means “be made foolish” or “tasteless” (AC 9207:2, 4; AC 10300:3). Doctrine of Charity 190 speaks of salt that has “lost its saltiness.”

water, which do not nourish; and also like fruit in which there is no juice. It appears also like trees stripped of the leaves, on which there hang a few dry apples left from the autumn. This is also meant by these words of the Lord:

For everyone shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, with what will you season it? Have salt in yourselves (Mark 9:49-50).

Salt here is the desire of truth.

### **Light, City, Mountain**

AE 405:32. "The light of the world" means the truth of the church. That it is not the truth unless it is from good is signified by "a city that is set on a mountain cannot be hid," "a city on a mountain" meaning truth from good.

### **Parables: natural base for the spiritual sense**

SS 5. *In the Word there is a spiritual sense, hitherto unknown.*

**SS 27. The sense of the Letter of the Word is the basis, the containant and the support of the spiritual and celestial senses.**

**SS 33. The Word without the sense of its letter would be like a palace without a foundation, a palace in the air instead of on the ground, a mere shadow which would vanish away.** Again, it would be like a temple, containing many sacred things, whose central shrine had no protecting roof or dividing wall, which are its containants. If these were lacking, or were taken away, its holy things would be carried off by robbers, and violated by the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air, and thus destroyed. It would be like the tabernacle, in the inmost of which was the Ark of the Covenant, and in the center the golden lampstand, the golden altar upon which was the incense, and the table upon which was the bread of faces, which were its holy things, without its outermost things, namely, the curtains and the veils.

**Indeed, the Word without the sense of its Letter would be like the human body without its coverings, called skins, and without the support of its bones: without these all the inward parts would fall apart. It would also be like the heart and lungs in the thorax without their covering, called the pleura, and their supports, called the ribs; and like the brain without its covering, called the dura mater, and without its general covering, containant, and support called the skull.**

Thus would it be with the Word without the sense of its Letter. Therefore, it is said in Isaiah, “Jehovah will create upon all the glory a covering” (Isa. 4:5).

*SS 37. Divine Truth, in the sense of the Letter of the Word, is in its fulness, its holiness, and its power.*

SS 40. The truths of the sense of the Letter of the Word are, in some cases, not naked truths, but appearances of truth, being, as it were, similitudes and comparisons taken from such things as are in nature, accommodated and adequate to the apprehension of simple people and children. But because they are correspondences, they are the receptacles and abodes of genuine truth. They are like vessels which enclose and contain, as a crystal cup holds noble wine, or a silver dish nourishing food. They are like garments which serve as clothing, like swaddling clothes for an infant, and a pretty dress for a maiden. They are also like the knowledge of the natural man, which comprises the perceptions and affections of truth of the spiritual man. The truths themselves unveiled, which are included, contained, clothed and comprised, are in the spiritual sense of the Word, and goods unveiled are in its celestial sense.

#### Questions and Comments

1. From the spiritual sense, what does the Lord mean by “salt of the earth”? We think of people who are honest, reliable, down-to-earth, humble.... Salt was very precious, even used as a soldier’s “salary.” Do you see how the common and the spiritual meanings fit together?
2. What if we did not have the parable of the salt, but instead we only had the spiritual sense: “You are the truth of the church that longs to do what is good. But if the truth loses its longing for good, with what will that longing be rekindled?”

## Day Four: Keep Praying!

### **Luke 11:5-8**

And He said to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey has come to me, and I do not have anything to set before him." And he from inside answering shall say, "Don't make me labor! The door is already shut, and my little children are with me in bed; I cannot stand up and give thee." I say to you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his pleading he will stand up and give him as many as he needs.

### **Luke 18:1-8**

And He spoke also a parable to them, to the end that men ought always to pray, and not be weary, saying, There was a certain judge in a certain city, who did not fear God, and had no respect for man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, "Avenge me of my adversary!" And he was not willing for a time. But afterwards he said in himself, "Though I do not fear God and have no respect for man, yet since this widow belabors me, I will avenge her, lest in the end by coming, she wear me down."

And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God do vengeance for His chosen, who cry day and night to Him, and He bear with them? I say to you that He will avenge them quickly. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

## **The Need for Prayer**

AR 376. It is common in all Divine worship for a person first to will, desire, and pray, and for the Lord then to reply, instruct, and do. Otherwise, a person does not accept anything Divine.

### **A friend asking for bread** *(not explained in the Doctrine)*

AC 7776. The signification of “midnight” is when the thick darkness is most dense, that is, when there is mere falsity; for “night” signifies a state of falsity... and the middle of it denotes the highest.

AC 6000:4. “Midnight” also denotes the last time of an old church, when there is nothing of faith because nothing of charity, and also the first time of a new church.

TCR 702. Bread means the Divine Good of the Lord’s Love, and also all the good of charity.

AC 430:2. An “infant” and a “little child” denote innocence and charity.

AC 7354. The signification of a “bed” is that which is inmost.

### **The judge and the widow** *(little explained in the Doctrine)*

AC 4844:6. A father of the orphans, and a judge of the widows, is God in the habitation of His holiness (Ps. 68:5). “Widows” denote those who as adults are in truth but not yet in good, whose judge is said to be the Lord, because He leads them, and this through good into truth, that is, into the truth of intelligence; for by a “judge” is signified one who leads. Good without truth, which is the “orphan,” becomes the good of wisdom through the doctrine of truth; and truth without good, which is the “widow,” becomes the truth of intelligence through a life of good.

AC 9314. The signification of “adversaries” is the evils from which are falsities, because in the spiritual sense these evils are adversaries against the goods from which are truths.

AE 63:5. When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)

This means that when Divine truth shall be revealed out of heaven it will not be believed. Here also, “the Son of man” is the Lord in respect to Divine truth. The coming of the Lord is the revelation of Divine truth at the end of the church.

### The senses in the Word

AE 1066:3. There are in the Word four senses, one outside of the other, from the highest heaven down to the world, or one within the other from the world up to the highest heaven. These four senses are called the celestial, the spiritual, the natural from the celestial and the spiritual, and the merely natural. This last is for the world.... All four senses make one through correspondences.

#### Questions and Comments

1. The parable of the friend asking for bread comes right after Jesus teaches us to pray. Why is it so important for us to keep on pleading with the Lord like the friend or like the widow? Notice the very last sentence, and AE 63:5.
2. AC 7776, 6000: “The darkest hour is just before the dawn” is a familiar saying. States of dense darkness are when we most need to pray. What should we especially pray for? (See TCR 702, AC 430.)
3. Spiritual “adversaries” are evils—evil lusts and habits—that lead us to accept falsities as truths, causing confusion and pain. We need the Lord to be the Judge, to free us from such an adversary.
4. Of the four senses mentioned in AE 1066, which seems most like the Heavenly Doctrine?

Day Five: Not what goes into the mouth defiles man.

**Matthew 15:1-11, 15-20** (see also Mark 7:1-23)

Then there came to Jesus the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem, saying, "Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

But He answering said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor thy father and mother'; and 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him die the death.'<sup>7</sup>

But you say, 'Anyone may say to father or mother, "It is a gift to the temple, whatever thou mightest have profited by me.'" And he in no way honors his father or his mother. And you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

This people is near to me with their mouth,

And honors me with their lips,

But their heart is far away from me,

And in vain do they serve Me,

Teaching teachings which are the precepts of men.<sup>8</sup>

And calling the crowd, He said to them, "Hear and understand: Not that which enters into the mouth defiles the man, but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles the man" ....

And Peter answering said to Him, "Explain to us this parable."

---

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16; Exodus 21:17

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 29:13; see also Psalm 78:36

And Jesus said, "Are you also yet without understanding? Do you not yet consider that everything going into the mouth departs into the belly, and is cast out into the latrine? But the things going out from the mouth come forth from the heart, and these defile man. For out of the heart come forth evil reasonings, murders, adulteries, harlotries, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

AE 622:5. [This parable] means that whatever enters into the thought of man's understanding from without or from the outside, whether from objects of sight or from objects of speech or from objects of the memory, does not render him unclean, but so far as it does not belong to his affection or will, it is separated and cast out, as what is taken into the belly is cast out into the latrine.

The Lord explained these spiritual things by natural things, since the foods that are taken into the mouth and thus pass into the belly signify such things as man takes in spiritually and with which he nourishes his soul. This is why the "belly" corresponds to the thought of the understanding and signifies it. The "heart" signifies the affection of man's will.... Only that which is made a part of a man's affection or will is appropriated to him.

Evidently spiritual, not natural, things are meant here, for the Lord says that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, whoredoms, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies." Since the falsities and evils that enter from the outside into the thoughts enter from the hells, and if not received by man with the will's affection are cast back into the hells, it is said that "they are cast out into the latrine," for the "latrine" signifies hell. And this is for the reason that in the hells all things are unclean, and those who are there have been cast out of heaven, which is like a man in form. Heaven is therefore called the Greatest Man and also corresponds to all things of man, while the hells correspond to what is cast out of the belly of the Greatest Man or heaven. This is why hell is meant in the spiritual sense by the "latrine."



*[In this parable as told in Mark 7:19,] the “belly” is said “to purge all foods,” because the “belly” signifies the thought of the understanding... and “foods” signify all spiritual nourishments, and the thought of the understanding is what separates unclean things from what are clean, and thus purges.*

### **How the parables serve the heavens**

AE 1066:4. The ultimate sense of the Word, which is the sense of its letter, and the fourth in order, contains in itself the three interior senses, which are for the three heavens, when a man on the earth is reverently reading the Word. Therefore, the sense of the letter of the Word is that from which and through which there is communication with the heavens, also from which and through which man has conjunction with the heavens. The sense of the letter of the Word is the basis of Divine truth in the heavens, and without such a basis the Divine truth would be like a house without a foundation; and without such a basis the wisdom of the angels would be like a house in the air. It is the sense of the letter of the Word in which the power of Divine truth consists. It is the sense of the letter of the Word through which man is enlightened by the Lord and through which he receives answers when he wishes to be enlightened. It is the sense of the letter of the Word by which everything of doctrine on the earth must be confirmed. In the sense of the letter of the Word is the Divine truth in its fullness. In the sense of the letter of the Word the Divine truth is in its holiness.

#### Comments and Questions

1. How does this parable and its explanation help us with the evil lusts and false notions that the hells are continually streaming into our minds? What is our responsibility?
2. The Lord gives us a mind where we can distinguish unclean things from those that are clean.
3. Another interpretation of Mark 7:19 is that the Lord is here doing away with the Israelitish dietary laws.
4. In AE 1066, what is our responsibility? What can we do for the heavens?

## Day Six: The Unjust Steward

### Luke 16:1-13

And He said also to His disciples, There was a certain rich man, who had a steward, and this man was accused to him that he was wasting his belongings. And he called him and said to him, "What is this that I hear of thee? Render an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst not be steward any longer."

And the steward said in himself, "What shall I do? For my lord takes away from me the stewardship; I do not have the strength to dig; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I am removed from the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses."

So he called for every one of his lord's debtors, and said to the first, "How much dost thou owe to my lord?" And he said, "A hundred baths<sup>9</sup> of oil." And he said to him, "Take thy bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty." Afterwards he said to another, "And how much dost thou owe?" And he said, "A hundred cors<sup>10</sup> of wheat." And he said to him, "Take thy bill, and write eighty."

And the lord praised the unjust steward because he had done prudently; for the sons of this age are in their generation more prudent, above the sons of light. And I say to you, Make friends for yourselves of the mammon<sup>11</sup> of injustice, that when you fail, they may receive you into eternal tabernacles.

---

<sup>9</sup> A Hebrew liquid measure (AC 2252:5), 8 or 9 gallons each

<sup>10</sup> A Hebrew dry measure, 10 or 12 bushels each

<sup>11</sup> Wealth personified

He who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unjust mammon, who shall entrust you with the true? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is yours? No house-servant can serve two lords, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

### **The sons of this age are more prudent than the sons of light.**

AE 763:2. Sensual men have the ability to think, speak, and act craftily, because all evil has its seat in man's sensual, and in it cunning is as predominant as intelligence is in the spiritual man. This has been made evident to me by the cunning of the infernals, which is such and so great that it cannot be described; and in the hells all are sensual. This is the meaning of the Lord's words....

### **Make friends of the mammon of injustice.**

DP 250:5. By the mammon of injustice are meant the rational conceptions of truth and good possessed by the wicked, which they employ solely to acquire for themselves dignities and wealth. It is these knowledges of which the good or the sons of light are to make themselves friends, and which shall receive them into everlasting habitations.

### **No house-servant can serve two lords.**

TCR 437. At the present day it is believed that charity is simply doing good, and that then one does not do evil; consequently, that the first of charity is to do good, and the second not to do evil. But it is wholly the reverse. The first of charity is to put away evil, and the second to do good. For it is a universal law in the spiritual world and from that in the natural world also, that so far as one does not will evil he wills good. Thus so far as he turns away from hell, from which all evil ascends, so far he turns towards heaven, from which all good descends. Consequently also, so far as

anyone rejects the devil, he is accepted by the Lord. One cannot stand with his head vibrating between the two and pray to both at once.

### Questions and Comments

1. We are stewards of talents, knowledge, energy, etc. that belong to our Master. We tend to attribute these good things to ourselves. "The Lord joins Himself to people by means of appearances. For the appearance is that it is from himself that a person loves the neighbor, does good and speaks the truth; and except for this appearance a person would not love the neighbor, do good, and speak truth, thus would not be joined with the Lord" (DP 219:5).

2. It seems the steward gave away his commission to reduce the debts of his master's debtors. Perhaps this represents acknowledging that none of our gifts are our own, but the Lord's with us. Meanwhile the sense that these gifts are our own is a stepping-stone on the way to heaven, a mediate good.

3. What might be an example of the spiritual mammon of injustice, i.e., rational conceptions of truth and good possessed by the wicked? (DP 250)

4. What might be an example of acting on the thought that charity is simply doing good, versus acting on the teaching that the first of charity is to put away evil? Think of a friendship, or a job situation, or a marriage, or parenting....

5. How might believing that charity is simply doing good without bothering to get rid of evil be a way of serving the wrong lord?