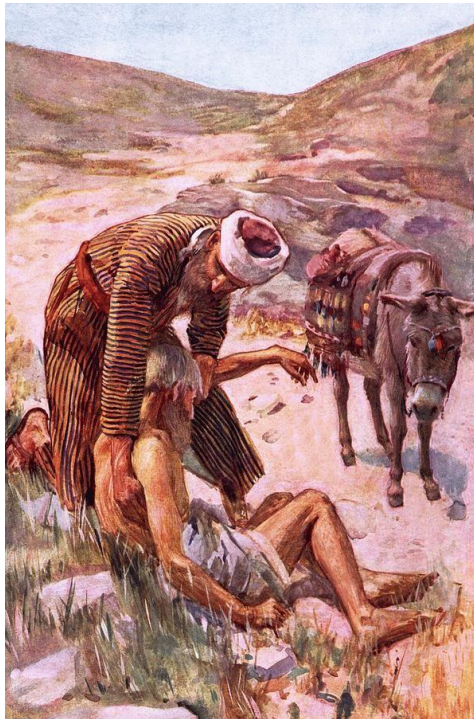


Parables

Earthly stories with heavenly meanings

Week 6: Love Toward the Neighbor



Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbor to him who fell among robbers? And he said, He who did mercy with him. Then Jesus said to him, Go, and do thou likewise.

(Luke 10:36-37)

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One use of parables is to provide an earthly image of a spiritual concept. The parables for this week focus on loving the neighbor.

How do these parables help us be a loving neighbor?

TCR 419. The man who loves good because it is good, and truth because it is truth, loves the neighbor eminently, because he loves the Lord who is good itself and truth itself. There is no love of good and love of truth from good, that is, no love to the neighbor, from any other source. Love to the neighbor is thus formed from a heavenly origin. It is the same thing whether you say use or good. Therefore performing uses is doing good; and according to the quantity and quality of the use in the good, so far in quantity and quality the good is good.

Day One: The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37 (see also Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34)

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up tempting Him, and saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

And He said to him, What is written in the Law? How readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God out of thy whole heart, and out of thy whole soul, and out of thy whole strength, and out of thy whole mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.

And He said to him, Thou hast answered rightly; this do, and thou shalt live.

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man came down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who having stripped him and having inflicted blows on him went away, leaving him when he was half dead. And by chance, a certain priest came down by that way, and seeing him, passed by on the other side. And likewise also a Levite, when he was at the place, came and saw, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came upon him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion. And coming near, he bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and he set him on his own beast of burden, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And going out on the morrow, he set out two denarii, gave them to the host, and said to him, Take care of him, and whatever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbor to him who fell among robbers? And he said, He who did mercy with him. Then Jesus said to him, Go, and do thou likewise.

AE 444:14. [The parable of the good Samaritan] shall here be explained, because it treats of charity towards the neighbor, and because the Lord there spoke from beginning to end by correspondences, which have until now been unknown....

This treats of charity towards the neighbor, and of good works by which charity is in its effect and in its fullness. "Jerusalem" here signifies the church where there is true doctrine, and "Jericho" the church where there are knowledges of truth and good; so the "priest" signifies those who have no love to the Lord, and the "Levite" those who have no charity towards the neighbor, such as those were who were in Jerusalem at that time. But the "Samaritan" signifies the nations [or gentiles] that were in the good of charity.

The "man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" signifies those who wished to be instructed in the truths and knowledges of the church. The "robbers among whom he fell" signify those in the perverted church, such as the Jewish church was at that time. "They stripped him and smote him, and left him half dead," signifies that they deprived him of truths and imbued him with falsities, and thus injured him as to [his] spiritual life to such a degree that scarcely any spiritual life remained, "to strip" signifying in the Word to deprive of truths, "to smite" signifying to injure the mind and spiritual life by falsities, and "to be half dead" signifying to be almost destitute of that life.

"To be moved with compassion" signifies mercy and charity from within, mercy and charity also forming a one. "To bind up the wounds and to pour in oil and wine" signifies providing a remedy against the falsities that have injured his life, by instructing him in the good of love and the truth of faith, "oil" in the Word signifying the good of love, and "wine" the good and truth of faith. "To set him on his own beast" signifies according to his understanding so far as he was able, "horse" (in like manner as beast), signifying

the understanding. “To lead him to an inn and to take care of him” signifies to lead him to those who are better instructed in the knowledges of good and truth, an “inn” being a place where foods and drinks are bought, which signify the knowledges of good and truth, thence spiritual nourishment which is communicated by instruction. “He gave to the host two denarii, and said to him, Take care of him, and whatever thou spendest more, when I come back again I will repay thee,” signifies all things of charity in the measure of his ability and capacity.

Questions and Comments

1. How can we make sure we are not like the priest and the Levite in this story?
2. What might be an example of finding a person in the spiritual state represented by man who fell among robbers, or by the Samaritan?
3. ““To bind up the wounds and to pour in oil and wine’ signifies providing a remedy against the falsities that have injured [a person’s] life” (AE 444:14). How might we provide such a remedy?

Day Two: The Unforgiving Servant

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter, coming to Him, said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times? Jesus says to him, I say not to thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven.

Therefore, is the kingdom of the heavens likened to a man, a king, who willed to take account with his servants. And when he had begun to take it, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But he not having anything to pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and it be paid.

Then the servant, falling down, worshiped him saying, Lord, bear with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

But that servant, going out, found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a hundred denarii, and taking hold of him choked him, saying, Pay me what thou owest. Then his fellow servant, falling at his feet, implored him, saying, Bear with me, and I will pay thee all. And he was not willing; but going away, cast him into prison, until he should pay what was owed.

But his fellow servants, seeing what was done, sorrowed greatly; and coming, they gave their lord to understand all things that were done.

Then his lord, calling him, says to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, since thou didst implore me. Shouldest thou not also have had mercy on thy fellow servant, even as I had mercy on thee?

And his lord, being angry, delivered him up to the tormentors until he should pay all that was owed to him. So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, unless every one of you forgive his brother from your hearts their trespasses.

Forgiving fully

AE 257. "To forgive seven times, if he should turn again seven times," means to forgive as often as he turns, thus every time.... "Seventy times seven" means always, without counting.

Charity toward an adversary

TCR 409. Before the Lord came into the world scarcely anyone knew what the internal man is or what charity is, and this is why in so many places He taught brotherly love, that is, charity; and this constitutes the distinction between the Old Testament or Covenant and the New.

That good ought to be done from charity to the adversary and the enemy the Lord taught in Matthew:

You have heard that it has been said to them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that hurt you and persecute you; that you may be sons of your Father who is in the heavens (Matt. 5:43-45).

And when Peter asked Him how often he should forgive one sinning against him, whether he should do so until seven times, He replied:

I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven (Matt. 18:21, 22).

And I have heard from heaven that the Lord forgives to everyone his sins, and never takes vengeance nor even imputes sin, because He is love itself and good itself; nevertheless, sins are not thereby washed away, for this can be done only by repentance. For when He told Peter to forgive until seventy times seven, what will not the Lord do?

Forgiving our brother

AE 746.15. "Brother" [in the parable of the unforgiving servant] means the neighbor in general, thus every man; but in particular it means one who is in the good of charity and thence in faith from the Lord, whoever he may be; for these passages treat of the good of charity, since to forgive one who sins against you is of charity.

Questions and Comments

1. AE 257 says to forgive, without counting. Are we really forgiving if we are counting?
2. What does the Lord's prayer say about forgiveness? How can saying the Lord's prayer help us when we are struggling to forgive?
3. Is there someone we need to forgive? Does this parable help us to work harder to seek out the Lord's help in forgiving that person?

Day Three: The Workers in the Vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16

For the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a householder, who went out in the morning to hire workers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the workers for a denarius¹ a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And going out around the third hour, he saw others standing in the market idle; and he said to these, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatever is just, I will give you. And they departed.

Again coming out about the sixth and ninth hour, he did likewise.

And going out about the eleventh hour, he found others standing idle, and says to them, Why do you stand here all the day idle? They say to him, Because no one has hired us. He says to them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatever is just, you shall receive.

And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard says to his steward, Call the workers, and pay them the hire, beginning from the last to the first.

And when they came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius.

And when the first came they supposed that they should receive more, and they also received each a denarius.

And receiving, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have done one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the weight of the day, and the heat.

¹ A very small silver coin (AR 315)

But he answering said to one of them, Fellow, I do not treat thee unjustly; didst thou not agree with me for a denarius? Take thine own and go thy way; but I will to give to this last one even as to thee. Is it not permitted for me to do what I will with what is mine? Is thine eye wicked, because I am good?

So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few chosen.

Third, sixth, ninth and eleventh hours

AE 194.2. "Hour" signifies state, because all times in the Word, as a day, a week, a month, a year, an age, signify states of life; so likewise "an hour." The reason for this may be seen in the work *Heaven and Hell*, n. 162-169, where Time in Heaven is treated of. But as "hour" means both time and state, where "hour" occurs in the Word, it can scarcely be known that it signifies anything except time. As in Matthew:

A householder hired laborers into his vineyard, who labored from the third hour, the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh, and received equal reward (Matt. 20:1-16).

These "hours" mean, in the world, times, but in heaven, they mean states of life, since in heaven there are no hours, because times there are not measurable and divided into days and these into hours, as in the world. Consequently instead of these times, angels perceive the states of life of those who die as old men, men, youths, or children, and who have equally acquired for themselves spiritual life. "Laboring in the vineyard" is acquiring for oneself spiritual life by the knowledges of truth and good from the Word applied to the uses of life. The "third," the "sixth," and the "ninth hours" signify a like state of life, for all numbers in the Word are significative, and these numbers have a similar signification. That a "vineyard" in the Word signifies the spiritual church, and with man spiritual life, see *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 9139, 3220. That "three" signifies a full state, or what is complete even to the end, see n. 2788, 4495, 7715, 8347, 9825; likewise "six" and "nine."

But "eleven" signifies a state not yet full, and yet a receptive state such as there is with well-disposed children and infants. The

“twelfth hour,” to which all labored, signifies truths and goods in their fullness, n. 577, 2089, 2129, 2130, 3272, 3858, 3913.

Thinking of reward

AC 8002.8. That it is so often said by the Lord that they who do what is good shall “have their reward in heaven” (as in Matt. 5:11, 12; 6:1, 2, 16; 10:41, 42; 20:1-16; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23, 35; 14:14; John 4:36) is because before he is regenerated a man cannot but think of reward. But it is otherwise when he has been regenerated. Then he is indignant if anyone thinks that he benefits his neighbor for the sake of reward, for he feels delight and blessedness in imparting benefits, and not in recompense.

Questions and Comments

1. Is the householder in this parable being fair to the workers he hires at the various times of day?
2. Does it matter how long it takes on earth to acquire a spiritual life?
3. How can thinking of heaven as a reward be useful?

Day Four: Take the Lowest Seat

Luke 14:7-14

And He spoke a parable to those who were invited when He observed how they chose out the first places to recline, saying to them, When thou art invited by anyone to a wedding, do not recline in the first places to recline, lest someone more honorable than thou be invited by him, and he who called thee and him, coming, shall say to thee, Give this man a place; and then thou begin with shame to have the last place.

But when thou art invited, go recline in the last place, that when he who invited thee comes, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory before those who sit with thee.

For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

And He said also to him who invited Him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, do not call thy friends, nor thy brothers, nor thy kinsfolk, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite thee back, and a recompense be made thee.

But when thou makest a reception, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be happy, for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Charity without remuneration

NJHD 104. Charity therefore is an internal affection, from which man wills to do good, and this without remuneration; the delight of his life consists in doing it. With those who do good from internal affection, there is charity in each thing which they think and speak, and which they will and do. It may be said that a man and an angel, as to his interiors, is charity, when good is his neighbor. So widely does charity extend itself.

AC 6393:3-4. That they have heaven who do what is good without the end of reward, the Lord teaches in Luke [in the parables above]. The “recompense in the resurrection of the just” is internal happiness from doing well without reward, which they receive from the Lord when they perform uses. And those who love to serve without recompense, the more they love it, the more noble are the uses to which they are appointed; and they are in fact greater and more powerful than others.

Those who do good works for the sake of recompense say the same things, because they know from the Word that they should desire to be the least in heaven. But at the time they are thinking that by so saying they will become great; thus there is the same end in view. But those who do what is good without recompense really think nothing about being eminent, but only about being of service.

Making a dinner or supper

AE 695:6. “To make a dinner and a supper and to call [people] to them” has a similar signification as giving to eat and drink, or bread and wine, namely, doing good to the neighbor, and teaching truth, and being thus consociated in love. Those who do this for the purpose of being recompensed do it not for the sake of good and truth, thus not from the Lord, but for the sake of self and the world, thus from hell. On the other hand, those who do this not for the purpose of being recompensed, do it for its own sake, that is, for the sake of good and truth, and those who do it for the sake of good and truth do it from good and truth, thus from the Lord, from whom are good and truth with man. The heavenly blessedness that is in such deeds and thence from them is the “reward,” and it is meant by “it shall be recompensed to thee in the resurrection of the dead.”

The poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind

AC 4302:5. The Ancient Church distinguished into classes the neighbor or neighbors toward whom they were to perform the works of charity. And they called some “maimed,” some “lame,” some “blind,” and some “deaf,” meaning those who were spiritually so. Some also they called the “hungry,” the “thirsty,” “sojourners,” the “naked,” the “sick,” the “captives” (Matt. 25:33-36); and some “widows,” “orphans,” the “needy,” the “poor,” and the “miserable.” By them they meant no others than those who

were such as to truth and good, and who were to be suitably instructed, led on their way, and thus provided for as to their souls.

But as at this day charity does not make the church, but faith, what is meant in the Word by these people is altogether unknown. And yet it is manifest to everyone that it is not meant that the maimed, the lame, and the blind are to be called to a feast, and that it was not commanded by the master of the house that such should be brought in, but that those are meant who are spiritually such; also that in everything spoken by the Lord there is what is Divine, consequently a celestial and spiritual sense.

Questions and Comments

1. NJHD 104 describes the delight that comes from doing good. How does this passage compare to your experience?
2. AC 6393:3-4 describes a sort of false humility. How can this passage help us be more genuinely charitable?
3. How can we invite the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind to dinner spiritually?

Day Five: The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

And there was a certain rich man, and he wore crimson and fine linen, making merry splendidly every day. And there was a certain pauper named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate with sores, and longing to be satisfied from the crumbs which fell from the table of the rich man; but even the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass that the pauper died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell, lifting up his eyes, being in torments, he sees Abraham from far off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

And calling out he said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am grieved in this flame.

But Abraham said, Child, remember that thou didst receive thy good things in thy life, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, but thou art grieved. And besides all these things, between us and you a great gulf is fixed, so that they who will to pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they cross over from thence to us.

And he said, I beseech thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham says to him, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. And he said, No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead went to them, they will repent.

And he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise again from the dead.

The rich and poor

AC 10227:20. Those who do not know that by the “rich” are meant those who possess the knowledges of truth and good, thus who have the Word; and that by the “poor” are meant those who do not possess these knowledges, but who nevertheless desire them, cannot know otherwise than that by the “rich man who was clothed in crimson and fine linen,” and by the “poor man who was cast forth at his entrance” (Luke 16) are meant a rich and a poor man in the common meaning of these terms; when yet by the “rich man” is there meant the Jewish nation which had the Word. By the “crimson” with which he was clothed is meant genuine good (n. 9467); and by the “fine linen,” genuine truth (n. 5319, 9469, 9596, 9744). And by the “poor man cast forth at the entrance” are meant those who are outside the church and do not have the Word, and yet long for the truths and goods of heaven and of the church.

AC 9231:3. By “the rich man clothed in purple and fine linen,” is signified those who are within the church. “The purple and fine linen” with which he was clothed are the knowledges of good and truth from the Word. By “the poor man” is signified those within the church who are in but little good by reason of their ignorance of truth, and yet long to be instructed (n. 9209). That he was called “Lazarus” was from the Lazarus who was raised by the Lord, of whom it is said that the Lord “loved him” (John 11:1-3, 5, 36), that he was the Lord’s “friend” (John 11:11), and that he “reclined at table with the Lord” (John 12:2). His “desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table” signified his longing to learn a few truths from those within the church who had abundance of them. “The dogs which licked his sores” are those outside the church who are in good, although not in the genuine good of faith; “licking sores” is healing them by such means as are within their power.

Heaven and hell in scripture

LJ 19. That heaven and hell are from the human race, the church might have known from the Word, and made it a part of its doctrine, if it had admitted enlightenment from heaven, and had

attended to the Lord's words to the robber, that today he should be with Him in paradise (Luke 23:43); and to those words which the Lord spoke concerning the rich man and Lazarus, that:

The one went to hell, and spoke from there with Abraham, and that the other went to heaven (Luke 16:19-31).

Also to what the Lord told the Sadducees respecting the resurrection, that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matt. 22:32).

And furthermore they might have known it from the common faith of all who live well, especially from their faith in the hour of death, when they are no longer in worldly and bodily things, in that they believe they will go to heaven as soon as the life of their body departs. This faith prevails with all, so long as they do not think, from the doctrine of the church, of a resurrection at the time of the Last Judgment. Inquire into the subject and you will be confirmed that it is so.

Questions and Comments

1. *Heaven and Hell* 1 says that "The man of the church at this day knows scarcely anything about heaven and hell or about his life after death, although all these matters are set forth and described in the Word." What are some things this parable teaches about life after death?
2. What does this parable teach us about the eternity of the hells?
3. What does this parable teach us about how the Lord protects our freedom?
4. It seems some people have dreams about others who have died, or near-death experiences, and these can have a big impact. How can those situations be reconciled with this parable?

Day Six: The House on the Rock

Matthew 7:24-27 (see also Luke 16:46-49)

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man, who built his house on the rock. And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and they fell upon that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, who built his house on the sand. And the rain descended, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and the fall of it was great.

The prudent and the foolish

AC 44. It is the office of the understanding to hear the Word, and the office of the will to do it. To hear the Word and not to do it, is like saying that we believe when we do not live according to our belief. In that case we separate hearing and doing, and thus have a divided mind, and become of those whom the Lord calls “foolish” in [the parable above].

AC 9239. Men speak of believing in God, and of believing those things which are from God. Believing in God is the faith that saves. But believing the things which are from God is a faith which without the former faith does not save. For believing in God is knowing and doing; whereas believing the things which are from God is knowing and not yet doing. Those who are truly Christians both know and do, thus they believe in God. But those who are not truly Christians know, and do not do. These are called by the Lord “foolish,” but the former are called “prudent” (Matt. 7:24, 26).

The importance of deeds

DP 128. Everyone knows from the Word that the life allotted to each after death is according to his deeds. If you open the Word

and read it, you will see this clearly; but while doing so take the thoughts away from faith and justification by faith alone.

The few passages that follow testify that the Lord teaches this everywhere in His Word:

Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them (Matt. 7:19, 20).

Many will say to me in that day, Lord... have we not prophesied in Thy name ... and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And then I will profess to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity (Matt. 7:22, 23)....

[The parable above is also quoted.]

TCR 375. Charity and faith are only mental and perishable things, unless they are determined to works and coexist in them when possible. Does not a man have a head and a body which are joined together by a neck? And in the head is there not a mind that wills and thinks, and in the body is there not power that performs and executes? Therefore, if man merely wills well, or thinks from charity, and does not do good and thus perform uses, is he not like a head only, and thus like a mind only, which apart from a body cannot continue to exist? From this is not anyone able to see that charity and faith are not charity and faith so long as they are merely in the head and its mind but not in the body?

For they are then like birds flying in the air without any resting-place on the earth, or like birds ready to lay, but having no nests, in which case they would drop their eggs in the air or upon the branch of some tree, and the eggs would fall to the ground and be destroyed.

There can be nothing in the mind that does not have some correspondent in the body, and its correspondent may be called its embodiment. So when charity and faith occupy the mind only, they have no embodiment in the man, and may be likened to those aerial beings called specters, like Fame as painted by the ancients with a laurel about her head and a horn in her hand. Being such specters, and still being able to think, they cannot help

being disturbed by fantasies, which are caused by reasonings from various kinds of sophistry, almost as reeds in marshes are shaken by the wind, while beneath them shells lie at the bottom and frogs croak on the surface.

Who cannot see that such things come to pass when men merely know from the Word some things about charity and faith, but do not practice them? [The parable of the House on the Rock is then quoted].

Questions and Comments

1. AC 44 defines what it means to be foolish spiritually. Does the parable of the House on the Rock help explain why it is foolish to hear the Word and not do it? Does what happens in the literal sense of this parable help us see what will happen spiritually when we are foolish?
2. AC 9239 says “believing in God is knowing and doing.” How does “doing” relate to believing in God?
3. TCR 375 provides several analogies to help us understand what faith and charity are like when uses are not performed. What do you think of these analogies? Are they helpful? Confusing? Some more helpful than others?