

The Sermon on the Moment
Rev. Kent Rogers; October 21st, 2019

If I were to say to a group of people that life is perfect, and especially that each and every moment is perfect, many would disagree. In fact, some would scoff like the mourners who did not believe when Jesus said the girl was not dead, but asleep. Sometimes we cannot believe that any life can be resurrected from those moments we receive with despair, rage, fear or agony. Still others may actually be insulted that someone would say life is perfect when there are tragedies and unspeakable atrocities throughout history, in current events, and in our own lives—a fatal car accident for example.

Scorn and indignation are not only valid, but noble responses. They reveal that love for what is good, and concern for the wellbeing of others is the soul animating the heart. Yet the perfection I speak of does not diminish the tragedy and horror of harm to what is good and precious. Nor does it negate the validity of the heart's upset when this happens. There is another perfection, one revealed by the angels ascending and descending on the ladder that stretches from earth to heaven, and from the Divine back to earth.

Jacob was not the only man to see these angels. Nathanael doubts that Jesus of Nazareth could possibly be the Messiah- "What good can come from Galilee?" But he is willing to go and look, and what he experiences shocks him into saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God!" The Lord miraculously sees Nathanael resting under a fig tree, a symbol for natural good, and the Lord calls him an Israelite in whom there is no guile. He also calls that part of us which, without guile, is in an honest search for truth coming from a desire to serve and bless others in concrete ways. The Lord calls us to come and see the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man, the Logos, the Word.

Most of today's readings relate to vertical movement and change. The paper that held the words, "The marriage of good and truth" changed as it descended from heaven, from shining gold brilliance, to rust, to totally invisible. When the angel returned to heaven, the paper once again shone with a light that dispersed the clouds and bathed the dark earth with its brilliance. The message here is that when our mind is grounded in natural states, we cannot see the truth—it is invisible. We do not see that cradled within all that is, lies the union of Divine Love with Divine Wisdom.

When the Lord mercifully raises our minds up into a state of deep and true love for the wellbeing of all derived from grateful devotion to our Savior, reality takes on a radically new and incomparably superior appearance. This is precisely like the difference between seeing a terrain from within a valley and seeing the entire valley, like Moses, from the mountaintop. However, we cannot gain this perspective of reality except by first ascending, and we cannot ascend except by elevation of motivation, and consequent clarity of vision.

This ascending process of our spiritual lives is slow and takes place in stages, each stage serving as a foundation for the next, the same way our natural lives progress from childhood to adulthood. Miraculously, by the Lord's mercy, He is able to rest His ladder upon the soil of

the utter void of love and darkness of sight in which we begin—our comprehensive selfishness and consequent blindness.

Like the descending paper in the angel's hand, he adapts truth to our state until we can accept it. These accommodated Divine Truths are the rungs of the ladder by which we ascend. The first such rung is the idea that love originates in the self. This is a falsity, but it implies that we are to love others. Good enough for now. It raises us up just a little bit out of "I should love myself only." Rung by rung we are raised into higher loves and consequent clearer vision until in His mercy, the Lord lifts us out of our old selfish heart and instills within us a new, living heart of selfless love. Now we see from the mountaintop, and the scene is stunning.

Within this grand miracle of regeneration, a smaller, subtler, but still amazing miracle occurs: The truth that raises our mind to *see* life is perfect, is the same truth that *makes it to be* perfect. The Lord takes the terrible—the depraved self—and uses it as a foundation upon which to rest His ladder that rises all the way up to Himself in heaven. This is Samson's riddle: "Out of the eater comes something to eat; out of the fierce comes something sweet" (Judges 14:14). What the lower self judges as useless and evil, the Lord makes to be useful.

The same process occurs in each moment of time; be they joyful or terrible, they are the stuff from which the Lord draws up spiritual life within us, and we into the life of His love. They serve as the foundation for the ladder rising to heaven. When I lived in Nepal, a powerful 7.9 earthquake occurred, killing nine-thousand people, injuring 22,000, and leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless. It was terrible. Yet the outpouring of love I witnessed in the months that followed was overwhelming. Planes full of relief materials from around the world brought in aid day and night. Vans, busses, trucks and helicopters full of aid scoured the land looking to serve those in need. And though they had lost all they had, when we arrived to help with a van full of rice and tarps, they smiled and gave us tea, and loved us. And in the evening of the earthquake, there was actually a festive mood out in the field where hundreds from our neighborhood gathered and pitched makeshift tents. They even sang happy birthday to my nephew James. The event was terrible, the tears and horror valid, and not diminished. But the Lord rested His ladder upon it and raised up a spiritual bounty. The truth is that some took to crime at this time. Nevertheless, I know that the Lord will use even this, somehow, to yield a spiritual harvest.

Like a ladder, there are levels of mind, which are in fact the heavens, each having a higher perspective of the same reality, derived from higher forms of love. The lowest natural level, love for self, judges each moment according to how it affects sense of self. Pleasure is good. Pain is bad. A higher level is born from a genuine concern for the natural wellbeing of others. This too judges each moment, now according to how it affects the natural wellbeing of others. Both of these levels are bound within, and judge according to the natural senses. Both of these levels are fraught with despair and riddled with fear. And yet, both are important loves that, once subordinated to higher loves, are healed.

A still higher state of mind exists in which judgement of reality is no longer based on perception of the natural world. Rather, it is based on the understanding of the things of

spirit. The Lord conquered the hells, reordered the heavens, and saved the human race. The Lord is all loving, omniscient, and omnipotent. The sorrow of earth is as the birth pain from which is born a new eternal life in heaven. Pain to the self is still unpleasant, the suffering of others is still sorrowful, but we no longer judge good or bad according to these experiences. We know that no matter what, life is good, because God is real. Our personal perception of reality acquired by the senses does not easily align with these doctrines. The doctrines are at odds with the judgments arising from the senses. There is struggle in this stage.

This can be illustrated. The man in the valley has been lost for days, thirsty and hungry. He trips on a bramble, tumbles down into a gorge, and in the process gets wounded. When the man on the mountain calls and says, "Everything is going great, just perfect," he may be met with some choice words. The man in the valley doesn't know that just around the bend is a village with a warm meal, a warm bed, and warm hearts. He also doesn't know that had he not endured hardships, he would not have felt the rush of gratitude and relief when he stumbles into the village. Nevertheless, before he sees the village, if the man in the valley says, "This is a terrible, painful time!" the man on the mountain will say, "Yes, and I feel for you." The pain isn't negated or dissipated by the doctrine of life's perfection. Life still hurts, but the hurt no longer determines what is good and what is bad. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is no longer eaten.

The fruit of the Tree of Life is that life is alive with the Lord's love. This is what the Most Ancients perceived. This was their Eden—not a place, but a state of mind; a state of mind available to us. Once there, we too will find ourselves in an idyllic paradise described as the Holy City New Jerusalem. Unlike Eden, it is walled because we have struggled and learned how to live and see this way by choice as if of self, and once learned from this, we are strong against the serpent of the senses, tempting us to judge life according to its dictates, and so bite that deadly, forbidden tree.

The highest perspective is love from the Lord, to the Lord. From this highest rung, we see the Lord, and to see the Lord is to know that the Lord is victorious from eternity to eternity. His love triumphs. There is no more struggle. Divine Love binds all souls to itself, and it binds all events into its purpose, the salvation of all souls. All events, by some method, are employed by Divine love to spread and amplify Divine love. Eternal joy trumps the turmoil of time. We cast down our crowns and bowing sing, "Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty, Who Was and Who Is, and Who Is to Come!"

There is great freedom in this Sabbath state, and great calm. From this top of the ladder, the angels descend back down, to touch the events of time to which our sense of self is tethered. We are filled with gratitude and joyful generosity to serve others both naturally and spiritually. For in others, we see the Lord, and we know the most perfect translation of the Word, the Logos, is that of living love in action.

We now recognize that the pain we feel when loved ones or the self are harmed, are of the Lord's, because only love can grieve when what is good is harmed, and love is the Lord's alone. These reactions have been reorganized and tempered by the highest truths at the top of the

ladder, the truth of the Lord's victory, which is to say, the Lord is real. If the Lord is real, He is victorious. The two cannot be separated. The mind that meets the events of space and time with this highest truth becomes the channel by which the Lord gains victory over the sorrows of temporal life. The angels descend back to earth, and bless us. We respond to each moment with love rather than fear. We cause each moment to serve the purposes of love. And so, each moment is perfect, even when terrible.

To gain entrance into this state we must live a certain way. Nathanael is said to have no guile, and to have been resting under a fig tree—a symbol of natural good. We must be honest with ourselves, and be living for the sake of serving others. If we do these two things, we will notice when we are secretly motivated by selfishness, and we will turn away from it. If we do this, the Lord will appear in our lives and we will recognize Him with the words, "Truly, You are the Son of God!" Apocalypse Explained 866 states that guilelessness, and so access to the ladder, requires two things: belief in the Divine Human, and obedience to His precepts.

Let's take a closer look at the Lord's Divine Human. We deny the divinity of the Lord's human when we deny that the love within us is anything other than the Lord. The love working within us is the Divine working within us in human form. When we grieve for a loved one, it is the Lord's love, and so the Lord. The tears are the Lord's tears. This love which grieves, causes us to search for meaning and answers. This search is the Lord's and is the Lord. The answers we find are the Lord's, and are the Lord.

This is the glorification process occurring within us. Divine Love, when not in contact with these highest truths, causes us to pray for help and for enlightenment—but in fact, it is the Lord praying. The Lord is at this time in a state of humiliation. When this yearning brings about enlightenment, the Lord is in a state of glorification. This process is what propels us up the ladder, and it is solely the Lord. The Mary human is the illusions created by sense of self and its selfishness, in which the Divine Love is wrapped. When the yearning of love for truth dispels the illusion, the Mary human has been put off, and the Divine Human is reified. The Divine Human exists to the extent Divine Love is united not to the limited perspective of the self, bound in space and time, but to Divine Truth, which though impervious to the events of space and time, reaches down into space and time through a human being, to bless others and amplify the presence of love on earth.

Nathanael was given to see the angels rising and descending on the Son of Man—the Lord, the Logos. The Logos, or Word is where we find the Divine Truths that satisfy the longing of Divine Love manifesting within us. We are the arena where the Divine marriage of Divine Love and Divine Truth is able to take place. The events of time are nothing more than the field of grass upon which the Bride and Groom walk towards one another. That time and space are given to support their passing feet causes each and every blade of grass, each and every moment, to be holy and perfect when seen from this highest perspective.

We cannot believe or live from this highest perspective without believing that all love we feel and do is the Divine, and all Truth acquired by that Love is also the Divine. We must believe in the Divine Human. And we cannot say we believe in the Divine unless we live by His precepts,

which are the rules by means of which love is reified into action. If we fail to see that it is the Lord's glorification process occurring within us, we ascribe to the self that which is Divine. When we do this, the self is in charge. The perspective of the self is that life is not perfect, and thus we cannot rise the ladder.

When the angel rose, the paper which said, "The marriage of good and truth" began to glow bright until it burst through and dispersed the clouds, causing the whole earth to be bathed in its brilliance. We adore You Lord, for the light of Your mercy.

"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty, Who Was, and Who Is, and Who Is to Come!"