

The Beatitudes (7)

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God'

'Peace' it has been said 'is the greatest blessing that Humanity can enjoy'. And peace here is not the peace of the world, such as the world gives, but the inner peace of mind and tranquility of spirit into which it is possible for every person to come. It is the peace so often spoken of either in connection with the Lord or by Him. 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.' John 16:33 And so also the first words He spoke to the disciples after His resurrection. 'Peace be with you.' Luke 24:36.

Above all things, peace is a state of mind, an inner calmness and a sense of quiet blessedness which is quite distinct from the external and outward circumstances in which people may find themselves.

But peace isn't something into which we come without previous effort. Clearly it is something for which we must strive. 'Turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.' Psalm 34:14. Peace has to be made. It has to be achieved. It requires definite, positive action on our part. And this is what is referred to in the seventh Beatitude 'Blessed are the peace makers', those who have made peace in their lives. 'for they will be called the children of God'

It is obvious when we stop and think about it, that at the beginning we do not enjoy a state of peace within ourselves, not peace in the real sense. Rather, it is a matter of conflict, conflict between what on the one hand we would often like to do and what on the other hand our conscience tells us should not be done. There are two natures within every person, an internal and an external, a higher and a lower, the one at variance with the other, each struggling for control over us. The reality is 'continuous tension, continuous inner debate'. Ideally there should be harmony between the two, between what we know within ourselves should be done and what we actually do. But this is not so at first.

What is required of us is the resolution of this conflict. It is easily spoken of and only gradually achieved. The evil loves, false ideas and wrong habits which rise up in opposition to our efforts to live according to the Lord's teaching must be removed.

The self interest and self regard which is so often in our thoughts and behind our actions must be driven out of our lives. We must be prepared to wage spiritual warfare as the necessary prelude for an enduring peace. 'Blessed are the peace makers', those who make it possible for the Divine peace to come to them 'for they will be called the children of God.'

The object of regeneration is that in time the two sides of our nature, the internal and the external person, as Swedenborg refers to them, should be brought into harmony with each other. It is always intended by the Lord that they should both work together, that the external should be the compliant servant of the internal, our thoughts and our actions genuinely reflecting what we know and believe. And this can become so. The strife and opposition of which we are all familiar with at times, does not always have to be. The spiritual enemies of our evil tendencies, can be overcome.

Swedenborg wrote of peace as being, 'the heavenly joy which is from conjunction with the Lord by love' *Apocalypse Explained* 365. He said, 'it is with those who are in the conjunction of good and truth from the Lord' and it flows into a person's life 'when the evils which originate from the love of self and of the world have been taken away, for these are the things which take away peace. *Arcana Caelestia/Heavenly Secrets* 5662

'Heavenly peace, which is protection against the hells, lest evils and falsities should arise from them and assail people, may be compared in many respects to a state of natural peace. It is like the peace which follows war, when every person enjoys security against their enemies and lives in safety in their own city, in their own home and in their own fields and gardens. It may also be likened to recreation of the mind and rest after heavy toil and to the consolation mothers feel after they have brought forth, when their mother love begins to manifest itself.' *True Christianity* 304

It was the belief of the Jews that as a race, a chosen people, they in particular were the children of God. Doubtless the disciples entertained something of this notion also. And here the Lord showed them otherwise. Racial descent has got nothing to do with it at all. The true family of God consists of those who do His will. They are His children who love Him as their heavenly Father and who strive to order their lives according to His teaching. He who strives to overcome his evils, who is reborn of God, is truly a child of His.

Even though we are born into the loves of self and of the world, we can be reborn into the love of God and the love of our neighbour. There is possible the emergence of a totally new person within us. A person who has overcome evils and selfishness. A person for whom meanness and hurtfulness are a thing of the past and with whom evils no longer intrude and disturb. These are those who are rightly called "the children of God."

Earlier in this series of talks on the Beatitudes, I briefly spoke of the connection which exists between them and of the way in which, when rightly understood, each one leads on to the next. The Beatitudes are useful when considered on their own and separately, yet we must not overlook the fact that we have been given here in outline, the whole step by step process of moving from being an unregenerate person to becoming regenerate. They take us through each of the successive stages which are involved.

The first of those stages is a recognition of the state we are in, an acknowledgment of our spiritual poverty and a realisation that by ourselves we can think no truth and do no good without the Lord. And this is what is spoken of in the first Beatitude. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. Then follows the next stage, which is one of sorrow as we come to terms with the unregenerate thoughts and desires we discover in ourselves. This is what is described in the second Beatitude. 'Blessed are those who mourn: for they will be comforted.' Arising out of this sorrow, if it is genuine, will be a desire to be led by the Lord and a willingness to submit our thoughts and actions to His guidance.

Hence the third Beatitude, 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.' However to be led by the Lord we must go to His teaching. We must seek justice and order, actively pursuing it with all the powers of our will and understanding. The fourth Beatitude, which expresses this, reads, 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.'

In the following three Beatitudes what is spoken of is the manifestation of that righteousness in our lives. These speak of us as being merciful, as being pure in heart, and as peacemakers. As for the latter, this means the integration and harmonising of the two, so we are no longer buffeted this way and that, pulled in one direction by our evil tendencies and in another by our understanding of what is right and good, but a person in whom evil is no longer exercising influence and in whom there is inner tranquility and quiet joy from the presence of the Lord.

The person at peace with God, filled with His Spirit, radiates peace and brings their fellows into touch with heaven. He/She is an unconscious but powerful influence for good, and through them the Kingdom of Heaven is extended. He/She, a child of God, although they may gain no recognition, and never be mentioned in the chronicles of a people, is a great one in heaven, and their gift to the eternal wellbeing of mankind will remain when the monuments erected to the memory of the great ones of the earth have crumbled into dust.

(C.A. Hall, *The Blessed Way*, p.90)

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