

Children's Talk and Sermon Notes
for Sunday, 19 July

Children's Talk: Seeing Things Differently

- How we see things is not always how they are
- We can look at something and not really “see” it
- We can do this with pictures:
 - What do you see at first? What do you see if you look a little longer or from a different angle?
 - Optical Illusion pictures:
 - Faces/Cup
 - Rabbit/Duck
 - Horse/Frog
 - Landscape with animals
 - The picture does not change; but when you turn it or look for a little longer you can see something that you didn't see at first
- The same can be true of the Lord

- Jesus met two of His disciples on the road; and even though they could see Him, they did not recognize Him:

Luke 24:13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

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Luke 24:30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

- They “saw” Jesus the whole time
- But only truly saw Him in breaking the bread
- Breaking and sharing bread stands for sharing love
- You probably all know something about the Lord. You might even know a lot about the Lord.
 - You know that He is here all the time
 - You know that He cares for us and protects us
 - You know that He gives us all kinds of blessings
 - You know that He made the whole world
 - And many more things.
- But we really see and know Him when there is love
 - You can tell the Lord is here when you feel love for someone, or feel loved by them.
 - You can tell the Lord cares for us when your parents take care of you and look after you and you don't feel any fear
 - You can tell the Lord has blessed you when a friend supports you and helps you when you need it.
 - You can tell the Lord made the whole world when you look at a beautiful garden and feel love for all the beauty.
- We can learn about the Lord with our minds; but we see the Lord when we feel love.

Order within the Chaos

A sermon by Pastor Joel Christian Glenn

19 July 2026

Life is often messy. Many people struggle to stay on top of all their obligations, much less all the other bits and pieces of life. With this experience it can start to appear that there is no real order or purpose to life, no strand tying it all together. Yet even in the chaos the Lord's order is present. In His eyes, every piece is accounted for, every event foreseen, and every possibility planned for. Even within the chaos, there is order; the Lord's Divine Order.

In the Word there are many illustrations of the obscure, dim, limited view that we have of anything spiritual while we are in this world. The Lord's Disciples demonstrate this truth time and time again. Here they were living with the Lord in the flesh, learning directly from His mouth. And yet even their lives were mired in confusion. When Jesus spoke in parables they were just as mystified as anyone else (Mark 4:13); when storms on the sea arose, they accused Him of not caring about their fate (Mark 4:38); when Jesus was arrested, they all "forsook Him and fled" (Mark 14:50). The very people who knew His power most intimately had lives of chaos and confusion.

We might hope that by being involved in Church we would be able to avoid this confusion. Yet that does not seem to be the case. We are mystified by the challenges of applying the Lord's teaching to an infinitely complex world; we are tossed and battered by the storms of life; we crack under pressure and abandon the Lord. What we see in front of us is chaos. There is too much to keep track of all at one time. I know at times I feel as if bringing order to my life is forever just around the corner, but never actually attained. Likewise our internal worlds can be chaotic. We don't always have the best grasp on the hodgepodge of motives, intentions, desires, and thoughts that swirl through our heads every day. No matter how put together of a person we become, we cannot get a handle on everything that is going on. At it's worst we may relate to the experience of drowning, as we read in the Psalms:

Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to my soul.
I sink in deep mire,
Where there is no standing;
I have come into deep waters,
Where the floods overflow me.
(Psalm 69:1-2)

Thankfully, this experience does not mean something has gone wrong. It is simply the nature of the world that the Lord has created. The very confusion that we yearn to be free of is part of a process that shapes us into a better person. The Teachings of the New Church explain that the purpose of disorder and confusion is to bring about order and clarity:

But this is to the end that they may be reduced to order, for whatever is to be reduced to order is at first in this state of confusion. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3316)

There are examples of this process in the world around us. Sometimes a bone has set wrong, and so needs to be broken before it can heal properly. When working on an art project at times it's easier to start over from scratch, to erase all the progress made up to that point, in order to move forward. It is sometimes more worth it to destroy an old building and replace it altogether than to try to repair it.

In our own lives we need a certain amount of chaos in order to make progress as well. We are by our very nature stuck in our ways. Furthermore, we are by our very nature selfish. The very fact that we cannot fully comprehend our lives, the very fact that we cannot hold it all together, breaks down that selfishness and forces us to confront our own inadequacies. How can we remain selfish when it is so obvious that we cannot even hold the little things together, much less the big ones? We have to rely on and trust in the Lord; and this reliance and trust can only be built up once the self-reliance and self-confidence have been torn down and swept aside. And so our lives are confusing, muddled, messy, and chaotic, so that we can become the loving, wise, useful people that the Lord intends for us to become.

In spite of the apparent chaos of our lives however, there is actually real order and stability provided by the Lord. Our point of view is what prevents us from seeing this order, and although it is necessary that we have this point of view, as said, so we can grow, the Lord ensures that at every moment of our lives we are given what we need. The Teachings of the New Church compare this reality to the building material for a house:

[2] Consequently it is apparent that the Lord's Divine providence is universal because it operates in the least particulars, and that this is an infinite and eternal creating, which the Lord has provided for Himself by the creation of the universe.

A person sees nothing of this universal providence, and if he were to see it, it could appear to his eyes only as do scattered heaps and assembled piles of materials to passers-by, the materials out of which a house is to be built. But to the Lord it appears as a magnificent palace constantly being built and enlarged.

Where we see a jumbled mass of unrelated building material, the Lord sees how each and every thing fits together to produce a beautiful palace. Where we see a life that has too much going on, too many pieces all clashing, too many conflicts and competing priorities, too many people making demands even as we ourselves have unmet demands, where we see all this chaos, the Lord sees how each and every thing fits together to produce a beautiful and heavenly life.

Just because life feels chaotic does not mean that there is no order or purpose governing it. We simply do not have the perspective to be able to see that order or that purpose. To give just one example of how a mass of unrelated things might actually be part of a well-ordered process: The Lord sees exactly how your children will stretch you in ways that will make you more tolerant; He sees how that tolerance will come into play when a friend is going through a hard time and demanding a lot of you; you then falling apart because you don't have any more to give to said friend will lead to you putting in much needed boundaries; from those boundaries you weather the interference of in-laws when they move in to be cared for towards the end of their life; and having weathered that storm you find that you have loved them more than you ever would have when younger. You might see yourself in parts, or all, or even none of that story. But although it is made up, it

reflects the reality of every last thing that happens in your life: it is all part of how the Lord is leading you, no matter how random and disconnected it feels while going through it.

That doesn't mean that we have no role to play. We should strive to see a purpose where we can, to understand the Lord's leading when it becomes more clear. The Teachings of the New Church compare this leading, or Providence to a stream:

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[4] Be it known that the Divine Providence is universal, that is, in things the most minute; and that they who are in the stream of Providence are all the time carried along toward everything that is happy, whatever may be the appearance of the means; and that those are in the stream of Providence who put their trust in the Divine and attribute all things to Him; and that those are not in the stream of Providence who trust in themselves alone and attribute all things to themselves, because they are in the opposite, for they take away providence from the Divine, and claim it for themselves.

The stream of the Lord's Providence flows unceasingly, and yet we can also let ourselves be led along or resist. Either way it carries us along; but we will find much greater happiness in cooperating than in resisting. The way we cooperate though is not perhaps how we might expect: we might expect to have to first figure out where we are being led, and then go there! But as we have already established, life is far too chaotic, and the Lord's leading far too hidden, for that to work very often. Notice rather that what puts us into the stream of Providence is to "put [our] trust in the Divine and attribute all things to Him."

Whatever happens, trust that the Lord is in charge. Whatever happens, acknowledge that the Lord is leading and directing all things, even down to the tiniest details. When you are loving and compassionate, and do your best, and succeed, the Lord is directing all that to a good end; and, when you totally mess up and do the completely wrong thing and have a meltdown, the Lord will also use that just as much to lead to a good end. Whatever happens, good or bad, easy or challenging, clear or chaotic, all of it, every last detail, will be used by the Lord to support the trajectory of your life towards something better. If we trust and acknowledge that this is so, we will cope with the confusion and the overwhelm of life.