

A Heaven From The Human Race: Readings

John 15:1-11: I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bring forth fruit, He takes it away; and every one that brings forth fruit, He prunes it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Already you are clean through the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bring forth fruit from itself, unless it remains in the vine, no more can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one brings forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you have remained in Me, and My sayings have remained in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done to you. In this My Father is glorified, that you bring forth much fruit, and you shall become My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall remain in My love, as I have kept the commandments of My Father, and remain in His love. These things have I spoken to you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be filled full.

Divine Providence 27: “Because heaven arises from the human race, and heaven is a dwelling with the Lord to eternity, it follows that the Lord had this as the end in creation; and because it was the end in creation, it is the end in His Divine providence. The Lord did not create the universe for His own sake, but for the sake of those with whom He would be in heaven. For spiritual love is such that it wishes to give what it has to another, and to the extent this is possible it is in the enjoyment of its being, its peace, and its bliss. Spiritual love derives this characteristic from the Lord's Divine love, which is infinitely of such character. It follows from this that Divine love, and consequently Divine providence, has as its end a heaven consisting of people who have become or who are becoming angels, to whom it is possible for the Lord to impart all the blessings and felicities connected with love and wisdom, and to impart these from Himself in them.”

Divine Providence 28: “Heaven is not heaven owing to the angels, but owing to the Lord, for the love and wisdom which angels possess and which make heaven heaven come not from them but from the Lord. Indeed love and wisdom are the Lord in them. Moreover, because love and wisdom are the Lord's and are the Lord in heaven, and love and wisdom form the angels' life, it is apparent also that their life is the Lord's, indeed is the Lord. The angels themselves confess that they have their life from the Lord. It can be seen from this that heaven is conjunction with the Lord.”

Divine Providence 33: “The Lord can conjoin Himself more closely to a person only as a love of evil has been removed, together with its affections, which are lusts....Therefore a person ought to remove evils...as though of himself; and to the extent then that he does remove them, the Lord draws nearer and conjoins Himself with him. Everyone can see in accord with reason that lusts with their delights obstruct and close the doors to the Lord, and that the Lord cannot cast these lusts out as long as the person himself keeps the doors closed....That a person himself has to do the opening is apparent from the Lord's words in the book of Revelation: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20) It is apparent therefore that to the extent anyone abstains from evils as diabolical and as obstacles to the Lord's entrance, the more and more closely he is conjoined with the Lord, and most closely someone who abominates them as being so many dark and fiery devils.”

A Heaven From The Human Race

A sermon by Rev. Matthew Genzlinger

“The Lord’s Divine providence has as its end a heaven from the human race.” (DP 27)
This is the title of the second chapter in the book, Divine Providence. It’s a reminder that everything the Lord does and everything the Lord asks us to do, revolves around His paramount desire, which is to lead us to heaven. Just remembering this eternal truth can have a tremendously positive impact on a person’s life. It can provide us with an important perspective during more difficult times. It can assist us in focusing on things that truly matter and in living our lives with real purpose.

To help us better appreciate this beautiful adage, we’re going to do something that is perhaps a bit unusual. As I said, this beautiful adage – The Lord’s Divine Providence has as its end a heaven from the human race – is actually the title of the second chapter of the book, Divine Providence. This morning, I am simply going to take us briefly through the five subsections of this chapter, with the hope that this will inspire every one of us to go home, and to read this chapter on our own.

1. The first subsection in this chapter is labeled: Heaven is conjunction with the Lord. There are many different ways to think about and define heaven. And yet, one of the most important things we need to understand is that a person is in heaven to the extent that they are conjoined to the Lord. And the reason for this is relatively simple.

From the time we are little children, we learn that not only did the Lord create all things, but that everything that is good and true continually comes from the Lord and the Lord alone. Life itself continually flows into us from the Lord alone; and more specifically, the love and the wisdom that essentially define and make up who we are. We are simply vessels who receive the gift of life from our Creator. And again, this is something we learn as children and that we are hopefully teaching our own children.

Because the love and wisdom that make up our very life, come from the Lord alone it makes sense that heaven is defined as a state of being conjoined with the Lord. And so we read in this first subsection: “Heaven is not heaven owing to the angels, but owing to the Lord, for the love and wisdom which angels possess and which make heaven heaven come not from themselves but from the Lord. Indeed love and wisdom are the Lord in them. Moreover, because love and wisdom are the Lord's and are the Lord in heaven, and love and wisdom form the angels' life, it is apparent also that their life is the Lord's, indeed is the Lord. The angels themselves confess that they have their life from the Lord. It can be seen from this that heaven is conjunction with the Lord.” (DP 28)

In a general way, think about this teaching in relation to your own life. Do you someday want to go to heaven? Hopefully the answer to this question is yes! If we do desire heaven for ourselves, we need to recognize that on a very basic level, we are “in heaven” when we are conjoined to the Lord. Heaven IS conjunction with the Lord. And of course, the Lord Himself reveals this in the gospel of John: “Remain in Me, and I in you....He who remains in Me, and I in him, this one brings forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5)

2. The second subheading in this chapter is labeled: Human beings have been so formed from creation that they can be conjoined more and more closely with the Lord.

For me, this is such an inspiring statement. When the Lord created you, He created you in such a way that you can be conjoined to Him more and more closely to eternity. On the one hand, this reminds us that being conjoined with the Lord does not happen overnight; it's a gradual process. But on the other hand, this also reveals the incredibly inspiring truth that life to eternity is never going to get boring! Because we can continually be more and more closely conjoined with the Lord, this means that we will never stop growing. We will never reach the limit of what we can achieve. To eternity, we can always learn to receive the Lord's Divine Love and Wisdom in new, fuller, more useful and exciting ways. And so, we read in this subsection, "This conjunction can grow in its closeness to eternity, and also does so grow to eternity in angels." (DP 23)

Now this section of the chapter also deals with the important question of how we conjoin ourselves to the Lord. It's wonderful to reflect on the reality that heaven is conjunction with the Lord. But how do we actually accomplish this conjunction?

For starters, Divine Providence number 33 sums this up for us in a single sentence: "This is accomplished not by knowledge alone, nor by intelligence alone, not even by wisdom alone, but by a life in conjunction with these." (DP 33) So, on a very basic level, the Lord is able to conjoin us to Him as we work to learn or gain wisdom from His Word, AND as we work to live according to it. The fact that being a spiritual person and preparing yourself for heaven is not just about what you know but how you live, is a common theme throughout the Heavenly Doctrines and the Scriptures. The Lord Himself says in the gospel of Matthew, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21) Elsewhere in the book Divine Providence the Lord is talking about the nature of the life after death and He makes this wonderful statement: "In the spiritual world, into which every person comes after death, the question that is asked is not, What was your faith, or what was your doctrine? But, What was the nature of your life?" (DP 101)

Now another fascinating and vital thing that is emphasized in this section, is that more than anything the life that does conjoins us to the Lord, is a life where we are choosing to shun evils as sins. The Lord along with His life of love and wisdom is always flowing into us, wanting to be conjoined with us in every way possible. However, the only way this conjunction can take place is if we are taking it upon ourselves to remove the evils and the hellish things within our own hearts and minds that are obstructing and preventing it. In the book of Isaiah the Lord teaches us that we must cease to do evil in order to learn to do good. (Isaiah 1:6) In the Gospel of John the Lord says that if we keep His commandments, which teach us the evils we must shun, then He will make His abode with us. (John 14:23) And in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord declares, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8) Here and in many other places the Lord is reminding us that if we want to be conjoined with Him – if we want to prepare well for the kingdom of heaven – one of our main jobs is to commit ourselves to a life of shunning evils as sins. You might say that your job is to simply make room for the Lord in your life by removing obstacles. The more you remove the obstacles that are standing in His way, the more the Lord can then conjoin you to Himself and form you into the person that He created you to become.

We could have a series of sermon on this one doctrine. But for now I just want to read again from Divine Providence 33: “The Lord can conjoin Himself more closely only as a love of evil has been removed, together with its affections, which are lusts....Everyone can see in accord with reason that lusts with their delights obstruct and close the doors to the Lord, and that the Lord cannot cast these lusts out as long as the person himself keeps the doors closed and pushes and shoves against them from outside to keep them from being opened. That a person himself has to do the opening is apparent from the Lord's words in the book of Revelation: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20) It is apparent therefore that to the extent anyone abstains from evils as diabolical and as obstacles to the Lord's entrance, the more and more closely he is conjoined with the Lord.” (DP 33)

3/4. The third and fourth subsections in this chapter are similar. Subsection three is labeled: The more closely a person is conjoined with the Lord, the wiser he becomes. And subsection four is labeled: The more closely a person is conjoined with the Lord, the happier he becomes. Now, because we don't have more time, I'd like to just quickly point out two teachings that show up in both of these subsections.

First, in each of these subsections in turn the Lord encourages us to really reflect on the difference between the way He is defining the process of achieving wisdom and happiness, verses how the world tends to define these processes. In the world today, the Lord tells us that so few people know what real wisdom and happiness are; let alone how to achieve them. So often we fall into this trap of trying to find wisdom and happiness in places that ultimately will lead us into a state of spiritual stupidity and misery. It takes time and effort to achieve real wisdom and happiness; but the Lord wants us to start by simply recognizing that genuine wisdom and eternal happiness will increase with us, only to the extent that we choose to be more closely conjoined with Him. That's really a profound reality.

And second, when it comes to genuine wisdom and genuine happiness the Lord also reminds us in each of these subsections that because wisdom and happiness increase as we become more closely conjoined with the Lord, they also only increase to the extent that we are actively shunning evils in our lives. Especially when it comes to genuine wisdom, I love this idea that we do not become wise by simply knowing a lot of things or when we can eloquently pontificate on seemingly profound topics. We become genuinely wise when we live a life that allows us to be conjoined with the Lord. We become wise and we become happy, when we shun evils as sins, making room in our lives for the one and only true source of genuine wisdom and heavenly happiness. Both of these subsections have much more to say about this.

5. The fifth and final subsection in this chapter is labeled: The more closely a person is conjoined with the Lord, the more distinctly does he appear to himself to be his own person, and the more clearly does he recognize that he is the Lord's. This is very interesting! This whole chapter in the book Divine Providence revolves around the teaching that heaven is conjunction with the Lord. And when we think about being conjoined with the Lord we might be tempted to think that the closer we get to the Lord the less we will be our own person. God is limitless! All life and everything that is good and true comes from Him alone! We are nothing, specs of dust, compared to His omnipotence and infinity! With all these things being true – and they are true – surely being conjoined with the Lord, being conjoined with the infinite creator of the universe, would involve somehow losing ourselves. Some of the major religions of the world, teach just this; that ultimately as we progress spiritually our unique personality, or self, will get swallowed up in the Oneness that is God.

On one level, it's easy to see why some people may think this. But the Heavenly Doctrines offer a different perspective. Because God is love itself, we need to remember that what He wants is to take what belongs to Him and give it to us. When you love someone, you want to bless them in part by sharing your things with them. Well, with the Lord, because He is love itself, He wants nothing more than to give us the experience that His life is our own; that His Divine Love and Wisdom is our personal love and wisdom. Think about that! So, the more closely we become conjoined with the Lord, the more fully He is able to grant us this gift. Listen to the way Divine Providence 43 explains this: “[When a person is conjoined to the Lord] He appears to himself more and more distinctly to be his own person because Divine love is such that it wills what it has to be another's, thus to be a person's or angel's. This is the nature of all spiritual love, especially Divine love.” (DP 43)

Now interestingly, this same subsection teaches us that while we more distinctly appear to be our own person the more closely we are conjoined with the Lord, we also at the same time more clearly recognize that we are in fact the Lord's. As we become more closely conjoined to the Lord, we may be receiving this wonderful gift that allows us to experience His life as our own; and we should accept and rejoice in this gift. But at the same time, let's remember that the more closely we are conjoined with the Lord, the wiser we also become. And that wisdom that is also increasing within us, has as one of its chief acknowledgments that in reality all life and all love and all wisdom really is the Lord's.

So, it seems like an impossible dichotomy; but as we shun evils as sins and choose to be more and more closely conjoined with the Lord we will both experience a greater sense that His life is our own, AND a more profound perception that all life flows into us from the Lord. Going back to the story we read from the Gospel of John, you might say that the highest angels in heaven are like branches who are 100% in heavenly freedom, experiencing life as their own; and yet they are also 100% in the perception that they are attached to The Vine; and that without that Vine they can do nothing.

This week spend some time reflecting on the general idea that the Lord's chief goal is a heaven from the human race. Everything the Lord does and everything the Lord asks us to do, revolves around this paramount desire He has to lead us to heaven. But this week also reflect on the profound teaching that in its essence heaven is conjunction with the Lord. The more you are conjoined with the Lord the more you are literally in heaven. This means that learning to be conjoined with the Lord is the whole purpose of life in this world. And learning to be conjoined with the Lord is what the Lord's church on earth is here to help us achieve.

Now usually we don't expect to get homework when we come to church on a Sunday morning, but today I'd like to give you a little. Today we talked about the five subsection in a wonderful chapter in the book Divine Providence called: The Lord's Divine Providence has as its end a heaven from the human race. Your homework is to simply find some time this week to read this chapter for yourself. And as you read it, ask yourself how these wonderful new ideas might change the way you understand what heaven is and, more importantly, what we must do to prepare for it. We'll end by reading from the very last paragraph in this chapter: “Since the Lord's Divine providence has as its end a heaven from the human race, it follows that it has as its end a conjunction of the human race with Him. Also, that it has as its end that a person be conjoined more and more closely with Him, for the person then has heaven in him more interiorly. So too, that Divine providence has as its end that a person through that conjunction

become wiser, and that he become happier, because a person gains heaven as a result of wisdom and in accordance with it, and through it also happiness. And finally, that Divine Providence has as its end that a person appear to himself more and more distinctly to be his own person, and yet recognize more clearly that he is the Lord's. All of these are objectives of the Lord's Divine providence, because they all constitute heaven, which it has as its end." (DP 45)