

# LESSONS

## 1<sup>st</sup> Lesson: Genesis 5: 1-24

1. This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. 2. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. 3. And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. 4. After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. 5. So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died. 6. Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begot Enosh. 7. After he begot Enosh, Seth lived eight hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters. 8. So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died. 9. Enosh lived ninety years, and begot Cainan. 10. After he begot Cainan, Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years, and had sons and daughters. 11. So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; and he died. 12. Cainan lived seventy years, and begot Mahalalel. 13. After he begot Mahalalel, Cainan lived eight hundred and forty years, and had sons and daughters. 14. So all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died. 15. Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot Jared. 16. After he begot Jared, Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters. 17. So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died. 18. Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. 19. After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. 20. So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died. 21. Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. 22. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. 23. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. 24. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Lesson: Mark 8: 22-26

22. Then He came to Bethsaida: and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. 23. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. 24. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." 25. Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. 26. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Lesson: Divine Providence 278:6

Every person in respect to his spirit is in some society – in a society of heaven if he is impelled by an affection for good, but in a society of hell if impelled by a lust for evil. The person is not aware of this while living in the world, but yet he is, in respect to his spirit, in some one or other of them. Without this he could not live, and through it he is directed by the Lord. If he is in a society of hell, the Lord can lead him out of it only in accordance with the laws of His Divine providence. Among them is one that requires a person to see that he is there and wish to get out, and make the effort himself, of himself, to do so. This a person can do when in the world, but not after death, for he then remains to eternity in the society into which in the world he introduced himself.

# S E R M O N

## The Lord Leads

A Sermon by  
Rev. Michael E. Ferrell

So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of town. Mark 8: 23

### Blindness – Damnation:

Unable to see, a blind person cannot enjoy the spectacular wonders of the world such as beautiful sunsets, colorful flowers, or the smiling faces of family and loved ones. A blind person engages the world by means of the other senses and the assistance of other people. Our lesson about the Lord healing a blind man touches upon the deeper spiritual reality involving the Lord leading us so He may heal our spiritual blindness. The Lord is guiding us to see truths in order that we may then live according to what He has commanded.

In the Apocalypse Explained we learn that the “blind whom the Lord restored to sight signified the spiritually blind, who are those that do not know and understand truths (AE 239: 20). The “blind” describes a monumental problem with humanity stemming from the fact that man “does not know what good is, and this because he does not know what charity is” (AC 4818:5, NJHD 24). Therefore the Lord came to Bethsaida where He healed a blind man. The Lord coming to Bethsaida is an image of His coming to us.

It is because we are in Bethsaida that the Lord comes that He may lead us out. Bethsaida represents “a state of damnation on account of not receiving the Lord” (AE 239:20). Whenever we close ourselves from receiving of the Lord and His Word we will fall into states of blindness and become unable to see truths. If we do not see truths we cannot live according to them. Consequently, when we do not live the good that truth teaches we drift into states of damnation. But in His mercy the Lord will not leave us in Bethsaida.

### They Brought A Blind Man:

When the Lord came to Bethsaida “they brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him.” And now a question: who are “they” that brought the blind man to the Lord? They were people in Bethsaida who perhaps knew the blind man and the poor quality of his life. They had enough compassion for him that they were willing to bring Him to the Lord for healing. As the people in Bethsaida responded well to the Lord by bringing the blind man to Him the same can hold true for us. But again, who are “they” who bring us before the Lord?

As we answer our question, consider this teaching in the Heavenly Doctrine that “a man is thus introduced by the Lord into truth and good by affections, and one man altogether differently from another, each one according to his disposition” (AC 2878). We have affection for what is good and true when we are inspired to receive these from the Lord. We have affection for what is good and true when, from our love of them, we allow the Lord’s

good and truth to motivate us to living a heavenly life. So who are “they” who bring us to the Lord? It is our affection for what is good and true. Our affection for what is good and true opens our mind to the Lord. Then we may become willing to allow Him to lead us.

### The Lord Leads:

The people pleaded with the Lord so He “took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town.” This act of mercy is descriptive of the Lord’s love for everyone. In the Word of the Divine Providence we’re told that “the human race throughout the whole world is under the Lord’s auspices and each person from infancy even to the end of his life is led by the Lord” (DP 203). Imagine the Lord leading the blind man through the town, down one street, then another. He steadfastly holds onto the Lord’s hand. Although his world is one of darkness, the blind man can hear the voices of people talking or perhaps the laughter of children playing or maybe the songs of birds chirping in the trees. He may feel the soft breeze of the wind upon his face or the smell of food that is cooking.

The blind man did not resist. Like a child he held on as the Lord led him through Bethsaida. The hope is that we may likewise trust the Lord. We’re quite familiar with the teaching that people “who trust in the Lord continually receive good from Him; for whatsoever happens to them, whether it appears to be prosperous or not prosperous, is still good, because it conduces as a means to their eternal happiness” (AC 8480:3). This teaching often describes us. It is truth that we have trusted the Lord. We can rest assured that all is well and that in His providence the Lord provides well for us. But it is in times of trouble that we must find strength to remain content with our lot in life.

### Men Like Trees Walking:

After the Lord led the blind man out of Bethsaida, He spit on his eyes, put His hands on him, and asked him if he saw anything. The man looked up and said, “I see men like trees, walking” (Mark 8:23-24). And while we’re not given how many men he saw, visualize a forest filled with an abundance of trees. As we turn to the Word we learn that “trees” signifying knowledges (AE 239:20). Trees represent knowledge of all sorts that we learn and accumulate as we grow up in the world. And knowledge has its use. The Heavenly Doctrine says that “it is utterly useless for a man to know many things [because it counts for nothing] if he does not live according to what he knows. For the sole purpose of knowledge is that by means of it a person may become good” (AC 1100).

As knowledge serves the use that by it we many become good, consequently, the blind man saw men “walking.” From our lesson in Genesis we see that “Enoch walked with God.” This image in the literal sense of a man walking with God is one we can visualize. On a deeper level the spiritual meaning of “to walk with God” is “to teach and live according to the doctrine of faith” (AC 519). To live according to the doctrine of faith is to live a heavenly life. Our walk with God takes form when, from our love of the Lord, we live a heavenly life in performing uses that serve our neighbor.

But notice that the blind man did not see right away. He saw “men like trees, walking” which according to the Word means “obscure perception of truth” from the Word about how to live (AE 239:20). We know that the truths in the Word provide the foundation of how we must govern ourselves. This miracle of the Lord healing the blind man can demonstrate the

wonderful work of the Lord in gradually dispelling our blindness. The Lord can help us realize what to do in any given situation. It is true that we have dedicated ourselves to study of the Word. But sometimes the right thing to do is not always clear to us.

Consider a challenging problem in your relationship with a family member, a friend, or any other person. Or consider seeking to resolve a difficult problem when you can choose from a range of possible solutions. We may pause momentarily to reflect upon the Word. But we might not have an answer right away. Even so, we can restrain ourselves from taking hasty action. The Lord tells us in the Heavenly Doctrine that “the first of charity is to shun evils as sins” (Charity 11). Perhaps our blindness may obscure our vision. In any situation, however, we should first shun evil and not do harm to another person. Even though our vision may be “obscure” and all we see are “men like trees, walking” we can strive to do what is good. Meanwhile, the Lord is still leading us.

#### Seeing Clearly:

It is when we allow the Lord to lead us out of damnation (represented by Bethsaida) that we make it possible for Him to gradually dispel our darkness and help us to see more clearly. In our lesson we see that the Lord put His hands on the blind man’s eyes again and made him look up. And the man was restored and saw everyone clearly. According to the Word “seeing clearly” means ability to understand truths after instruction and illustration from the Lord (AE 239:20). Seeing clearly can represent a person’s spiritual progress along the path of regeneration. The Lord leading us out of damnation is not an instantaneous event that occurs in just one moment in time. As long we are patient and cooperate with the Lord by shunning evils and living a good life in obedience to His Word, He will softly lead us out of damnation.

Over a period of time the Lord gradually reshapes our loves and instills truths. Inasmuch as a person inclines toward hell, we learn in the Heavenly Doctrine that “the Lord by His providence is constantly diverting him and drawing him back from there, first to a milder hell, then out of hell, and finally to Himself in heaven (DP 183). Yes it is true the Lord can lead us out of Bethsaida. He can lead us out of the damnation of hell.

But again, at first our vision may be obscure. On the first occasion when the Lord touched him, the blind man looked up and saw men like trees, walking. As said before the first thing to do, which is the first of charity, is to shun evils as sins. As this is practiced we are developing good habits that are conducive to our spiritual growth. The doctrine is clear that truth is from good. Truth is from the *doing* of good. When we do what is good we gain insights into how to improve in doing what is useful. When we do what is good the Lord miraculously helps us to see more clearly how we can continue along the path of living a good life. Like the blind man, we may then see more clearly.

#### Don’t Go Back:

After healing the blind man the Lord sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town” (Mark 8:26). This seems unusual. We would think that the Lord would want the blind man to rejoice and reveal to everyone what the Lord had done for him. Perhaps more people could be inspired to believe in God if the blind man proclaimed through out all the land that the Lord healed him.

We know that Bethsaida signifies damnation (AE 239: 20). Therefore we may conclude that once the Lord delivers us from any sin or disorder, we should not revert back to it. This would be like going back into the town of Bethsaida or back into a state of not knowing truths or how to use them because we have rejected the Lord. Going back to Bethsaida is to revert back into states of damnation. Remember the Lord said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62).

The Lord is telling us not to return back to our own false ideas about life. He said, “go to your house.” In other words, continue living according to truthful ideas that the Lord has taught us; keep doing good from the Lord. Do not return to Bethsaida.

As He instructed the blind man not to return to Bethsaida the Lord sent him away to his own house. And likewise the Lord sends us to our house but not the house we live in here in the natural world. We have another house. Our house is our mind. It is within our mind where the Lord’s love and truths have their dwelling place. Our mind is our spiritual house, the world of our loves, thoughts, and life that we live. In the Heavenly Doctrine the Lord says that by a “house” is signified the good which is of the life (AC 4981). Therefore as the Lord leads us out of the blindness of damnation let’s not fall back into sin and disorder. Instead let’s allow the Lord to continue leading us to serve heavenly uses and ultimately to heaven.

#### Concluding Ideas:

The Lord is coming to our town of Bethsaida to help us overcome the difficulty we sometime experience in seeing what it is we must do. The Lord is coming to teach how to us. He is coming to heal our spiritual sicknesses. But like the blind man we must be willing to allow the Lord to lead us.

The Lord wants to open our minds so that we may see more clearly kind of person we should become. His sole objective is to softly fashion us into angels of heaven. We have the capacity to become angels so as long as we continue yielding to the Lord’s guidance. Let’s allow the Lord to lead us because, as said in the Word, “every person has thus been created to enter heaven; this is the end [or purpose] of creation” (DP 324:7).

*Amen.*