

A CORN OF WHEAT

Rev. William H. Clifford

Lessons: John 12:20-26, Matthew 28:1-15

Verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: But if it die, it brings forth much fruit (John 12:24).

Four times a year we have special celebrations in the church: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and June nineteenth. Each of these celebrations is supposed to be a time of great joy and thanksgiving. At Thanksgiving time, we thank the Lord for all the good things that He has given us throughout the year, and we are happy because He has given us these things. At June nineteenth we rejoice in the fact that the Lord has raised up a New Church that can help us to live a good life, and we thank the Lord for all the blessings that He has given to us through this New Church.

Christmas and Easter are also times to be thankful to the Lord, and to rejoice in what He has done for us. But Christmas and Easter are also occasions to remind us of the life which the Lord lived while He was in the world. For at Christmas we celebrate the Lord's coming into the world by being conceived of His Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. At Easter we celebrate the Lord's resurrection. But why did the Lord come into the world? Why did He have to die and be resurrected? We need to know the answers to these questions if we are going to worship the Lord and be really thankful for what He has done for us.

The Lord came into the world to help us because He loves us and wants to make us happy. This also is why He created us. The Lord created us so that we could be good to one another, for when we are good to each other, then everyone is happy. This is the way in which the angels live in heaven. But many thousands of years before the Lord came into the world, some people began to enjoy being evil. They enjoyed hurting other people, stealing, and lying, and they got other people to be evil. As these evil people died, they entered the world of spirits, and they continued to be evil. They wanted to hurt all the good people on earth, so they began to block the influx of good and truth from the Lord into the minds of men on earth. As the people on earth received less and less good and truth from the Lord, it became harder and harder for people to live a good life. The evil spirits were like a dark, black cloud that blocks the heat and light flowing from the sun.

In order for the Lord to make us happy, He had to remove this dark cloud of evil and falsity, for no one can be happy without the Lord's good and truth. In

order to remove this dark cloud, the Lord had to fight with these evil spirits. However, the evil spirits could not attack the Lord as He was, Just as we cannot attack the sun. So the Lord chose to be born on earth. In this way He put on a human body (just like ours), and a human mind (just like ours). This human mind, the evil spirits could attack, and did attack. Do you remember the Lord's temptations in the wilderness, His temptation in the garden of Gethsemane, and His temptation upon the cross? Because the Lord was born on earth and had a human mind, the evil spirits could attack Him and try to get the Lord to do evil. But the Lord never gave in to these temptations; He never did anything evil. By resisting the attacks of these evil spirits, the Lord gained power over them, and He removed them from the world of spirits and placed them in hell. In this way He removed the dark cloud of evils and falsities that blocked the influx of His good and truth into our minds. Thus the Lord gave us back our freedom to do good, which the evil spirits had tried to take from us.

But why did the Lord have to die? Why couldn't He have stayed on earth to teach us? The answer to these questions is in the words of our text: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: But if it die, it brings forth much fruit."

The Lord allowed the Jews to crucify Him. His human nature had to die if He were to bring forth much fruit. If the Lord had stayed here on earth, how many people could He have taught and helped? As long as He was in this world He could talk to only a few people at one time, just as we can talk to only a few people at any one time. But if the Lord put off His merely human nature, and put on a Divine nature, then He could flow into everyone's mind at the same time. Instead of talking to people from without, as you and I do, the Lord can now talk to each of us from within. Whenever we read the Word, looking to the Lord for His help, He comes into our minds and helps us. He gives us spiritual light so that we can see His truth, and He gives us spiritual heat so that we can love doing His good. But if the Lord had stayed in the world, He could not have done these things.

The Lord allowed His human mind and His human body to die on the cross so that He could be resurrected with a Divine mind and a Divine body, just as our natural bodies must die so that the Lord can resurrect us with a spiritual body. The Lord didn't really die; He just put off His natural body so that He could put on a Divine Body. Similarly, a seed does not really die when it is buried in the ground; it just changes its form. In order for a seed to become a plant that will bear much fruit, it must be buried in the ground and, in a manner of speaking, must die. So, too, the Lord's human nature had to die, if He was to bear much fruit.

This is why we celebrate Easter. We rejoice, not in the death of the Lord's Human nature, but in the resurrection of His Divine nature. For by this

resurrection Jesus Christ became our God and Savior. Thus we celebrate Easter for the fruit, the Good, that the Lord gives to us by means of His resurrection. This is the point of the Lord's words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: But if it die, it brings forth much fruit." *Amen.*