

Quotes from the Word: Being a Good Neighbor

OLD TESTAMENT

Observe mercy and justice,
And wait on your God continually.
(Hosea 12:6)

He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly, to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?
(Micah 6:8)

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Execute true justice,
Show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother.
(Zechariah 7:9)

You shall not hate your brother in your heart...
You shall not take vengeance,
nor bear any grudge against the children of your people,
but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.
(Leviticus 19:17-18)

How precious is Your loving kindness, O God!
(Psalm 36:7)

“If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you,
then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.”
(Leviticus 25:35)

NEW TESTAMENT

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set

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him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:30-37).

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends (John 15:12-13).

"Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" (Matthew 18:33)

"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:34-46).

HEAVENLY DOCTRINE

WHAT IS CHARITY?

By charity is meant the good that a person does to the neighbor (*Charity* 202).

The fundamental requirement of charity is to act in an upright and just way in everything connected with one's duty or function (*Arcana Coelestia* 4730:3).

The first thing of charity is not to do evil to the neighbor; and to do good to him holds the second place.... Willing evil and doing right are two essentially opposite things; for evil belongs to hatred towards the neighbor and good belongs to love towards the neighbor (*True Christian Religion* 435).

Charity consists in an inward affection for doing what is true, and not in an outward affection without an inward one. Charity equally consists of performing services for their own sake and its nature depends upon the services performed.... True charity seeks no reward, because it comes from inward affection, so from the pleasure of doing good (*Last Judgment* 39: 9, 12).

A person is born that he may become charity. But he cannot become charity unless he perpetually does the good of use to the neighbor, from affection and delight (*Charity* 126).

Charity is a person's spiritual life (*Last Judgment* 39: 9).

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The adherents to faith separated from charity can have no other belief than that the works of charity consist solely in giving to the poor and helping the distressed.... But in fact the works of charity consist in each person doing what is right and fair in his employment, from a love of what is right and fair, and of what is good and true (*Arcana Coelestia* 4783:5).

No one can have charity from the Lord unless he shuns evils as sins.... Anyone can do good to the neighbor, an evil as well as a good person. But no one can do it from good in himself unless from the Lord (*Charity* 202).

It is believed by many, that love towards the neighbor consists in giving to the poor, in assisting the indigent, and in doing good to everyone; but charity consists in acting prudently, and to the end that good may result. He who assists a poor or indigent evil doer does evil to the neighbor through him, for through the assistance which he renders, he confirms him in evil, and supplies him with the means of doing evil to others. It is otherwise with him who gives support to the good (*New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Doctrines* 100).

CHARITY IS LIKE...

Faith separated from charity is like light in wintertime, and faith joined to charity is like light in springtime. Light in wintertime, being light without heat but combined with cold, completely strips the trees of their leaves, kills off the grass, makes the ground hard and freezes water. But light in springtime, being light combined with heat, makes the trees grow, putting forth first leaves, then flowers, and finally fruits. It opens up and softens the ground, to bring forth grass, plants, flowers and shrubs, and it also melts the ice so that water flows from springs. It is exactly the same with faith and charity: faith separated from charity makes everything die off, and faith combined with charity makes everything come to life (*True Christian Religion* 385:1,2). The doctrine of faith, apart from the doctrine of love and charity, is like the shade of night. But the doctrine of faith, from the doctrine of love and charity, is like the light of day; because the good which is of love and charity is like flame, and the truth of faith is like the light from it (*Arcana Coelestia* 9409:4).

The whole of the Word is a lesson in love and charity (*Last Judgment* 39: 9).

A person resembles a garden when charity and faith are linked in him, a desert when they are not (*Last Judgment* 39: 13).

USES OF CHARITY

All goods which are of love to the neighbor or charity are uses, and all uses are goods (*Charity* 127).

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There is no charity apart from works of charity; it is in its practice or use that charity consists. Therefore a life of charity is a life of uses. Such is the life of the whole heaven; for the kingdom of the Lord, because it is a kingdom of mutual love, is a kingdom of uses. Consequently the angels have happiness from the Lord according to the essence and quality of their use (see *Arcana Coelestia* 997).

True worship of the Lord consists in performing useful services; and such services during a person's life in the world lie in a proper fulfillment of his function by each person, whatever his own position, that is, in serving his country, its communities, and his neighbor with all his heart. They also lie in honest dealings with fellow human beings and in the diligent discharge of duties, with full regard for each person's character. These useful deeds are the principal ways of exercising charity and the principal means of worshipping the Lord (*Arcana Coelestia* 7038).

The proper and genuine uses of charity are the uses connected with any one's function or administration. When any one carries them out from spiritual faithfulness and honesty—and all do this who love their uses because they are uses and who believe that all good is from the Lord—then their uses become goods of charity in which love to the Lord has existence, or with which that love is conjoined.

But in addition to these uses, there are other general uses as well, namely, faithfully loving one's married partner, duly bringing up one's children, managing one's domestic affairs with prudence, dealing equitably with domestic servants. These works become works of charity when they are done from a love of use, and in respect of a married partner, when they are done from mutual and chaste love. These uses are uses that are of charity, in connection with the household.

There are other general uses, too; such as making suitable and due contributions towards the functioning of the Church, which good works become uses of charity in so far as the Church is loved as neighbor in a higher degree. Amongst general uses, too, is the expenditure of money and labor on the building and maintaining of orphanages, hospitable lodges, educational establishments and other institutions of the kind; not all of these are obligatory.

Rendering assistance to the needy, to widows and to orphans, merely because they are needy, widows or orphans, and giving to beggars, merely because they are beggars, are uses of external charity.... They are not uses of internal charity except in so far as they are actuated by the use itself and by a love of it (*Divine Wisdom* 11:5).

Charity itself is acting justly and faithfully in the office, business, and employment in which a person is engaged, because all that such a person does is of use to society, and use is good, in a sense abstracted from person is the neighbor.... The priest who teaches truths from the Word, and thereby leads to good of life, and so to heaven, because he consults the good of the souls of those of his church, is eminently in the exercise of charity. The judge who judges according to law and justice, and not for reward, friendship and relationship, consults the good of society

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and of each individual.... The merchant who acts from honesty and not from deceit, consults the good of his neighbor with whom he has business. It is the same with a skilled workman, if he does his work rightly and honestly (*True Christian Religion* 422).

WHO IS THE NEIGHBOR TO BE LOVED?

A person is to be loved according to the quality of the good that is in him. Therefore good itself is essentially the neighbor (*True Christian Religion* 410).

The common saying goes that each person is his own neighbor; but the doctrine of charity teaches us how we ought to understand this. It means that each person should procure for himself the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, somewhere to live and many other things demanded by the society in which he lives. These he should procure not only for himself, but for his people; and not only for the present, but also for the future. For unless a person provides himself with the necessities of life, he is not in a position to exercise charity, being in want of everything (*True Christian Religion* 406).

HOW TO LOVE THE NEIGHBOR

To love the neighbor as oneself is: not to hold him in light esteem in comparison with oneself, to deal justly with him, and not to pass evil judgments upon him (*True Christian Religion* 411).

To love God and to love the neighbor is nothing else than doing goods, for love in its essence is to will, and in its existence it is to do. For what a person loves, that he wills, and what he wills from love, that he does (*Apocalypse Explained* 7972:4).

The person immersed in self-love is one who despises his neighbor in comparison with himself, and who regards his neighbor as an enemy if he is not favorably disposed towards him and does not defer to him (*Arcana Coelestia* 7370).

Those who are in the faith of charity observe what is good, and if they see anything evil and false, they excuse it, and if they can, try to amend it in him.... Where there is no charity, there is the love of self, and therefore hatred against all who do not favor self. Consequently such persons see in the neighbor only what is evil, and if they see anything good, they either perceive it as nothing, or put a bad interpretation upon it.... They who are in charity scarcely see the evil of another, but observe all his goods and truths, and put a good interpretation on what is evil and false (*Arcana Coelestia* 1079).

Charity means love towards the neighbor and compassion, for anyone who loves his neighbor as himself also has as much compassion for him in his suffering as he does for himself in his own (*Arcana Coelestia* 351).

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When people who are perceptive have feelings of compassion they know that they are being alerted by the Lord to offer help (*Arcana Coelestia* 6737).

That he who loves, or who feels compassion, continually intercedes, can be seen from examples. The husband who loves his wife wishes her to be well received and well treated by others. He does not express his wish in actual words, but it is constantly in his thinking, so that he is silently requesting it and interceding for her. Parents do the same thing for their children whom they love. It is likewise what a person governed by charity does for his neighbor, and what one moved by friendship does for a friend. These examples show that intercession is present unceasingly in all love. The same is true of the Lord's intercession for the human race, especially for those with whom the goodness and truth of faith are present; for towards them Divine...love is shown and Divine...mercy (*Arcana Coelestia* 8573:2).

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

That the neighbor is according to the quality of the good, is plain from the Lord's parable of the man who fell among thieves, whom, while half dead, the priest passed by, and also the Levite. But the Samaritan, when he had bound up his wounds and poured in oil and wine, set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him; and he, because he exercised the good of charity, is called the "neighbor" (Luke 10:29-37). Hence it may be known that they are the neighbor who are in good. They who are in evil are indeed the neighbor, but in quite a different respect; and for this reason they are to be benefited in a different way (*Arcana Coelestia* 6708).

A certain Samaritan as he journeyed, and seeing him who had been wounded by thieves, was moved with compassion, wherefore coming to him he bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine (Luke 10:33, 34). "Pouring in oil and wine" symbolizes that he performed the works of love and of charity (*Arcana Coelestia* 6377:7).

By "the Samaritan" in the internal sense is meant one who is in the affection of truth, by "binding up the blows" is meant the healing of this affection when injured, by "pouring in oil and wine" is meant the good of love and the good of faith, and by "setting him on his own beast" is meant uplifting him by virtue of his own intellectual. Thus by these words is described charity toward the neighbor...naturally in the sense of the letter, and spiritually in the internal sense (*Arcana Coelestia* 9057:2).

The Samaritan..."came to the man who was wounded by thieves, and bound up his wounds and poured in oil and wine" (Luke 10:33, 34). Here are not meant oil and wine, but the good of love and of charity, by "oil" the good of love, and by "wine" the good of charity and of faith; for the subject treated of, is the neighbor, thus charity toward him (*Arcana Coelestia* 9780:6).