

## THE OIL OF HUMAN KINDNESS

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*Lessons: Luke 10:25-37; Charity 46-48, 50-52*

The Lord gave us the commandment to love our neighbors the way that we would like to have them treat us.

But sometimes we hear of *bad* people, thieves and robbers, or people who laugh at what is right and do what is wrong. We might like to be kind to them, but how can we love people like that? How can we think of someone as our neighbor if he or she is not acting like a good neighbor?

When the Lord was in the world, a man came up and asked Him, "Who is my neighbor whom I am supposed to love?" And the Lord, in answer, told a story about a traveler who was robbed and beaten and lay by the road, helpless and bleeding. Three men saw him: the first and second—a Jewish priest and a Levite—went by quickly, perhaps too lazy or too selfish to take the time to help him. But the third, who was a Samaritan, a stranger, stopped and bound up the man's wounds and took him to an inn and left money to pay for his keep until he would be well again.

So, when the Lord had finished the story, He asked, Now who do you think proved to be a neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?

Of course there could be only one answer. We could not call the robbers good neighbors, nor the priest, nor the Levite. The good neighbor—the person we would love and admire—was the Samaritan who showed mercy and helped the wounded man.

Therefore the Lord added: "Go and do likewise." Help others who are in need of help, and then you, too, will be a good neighbor, a person whom others can rightly love, someone who will go to heaven some day where everyone is a good neighbor.

The Word tells us that we should give to the poor, help the lame and blind, look after the sick, the fatherless and the widow, be kind to those in trouble. "Go and do likewise." Probably neither you nor I will ever come across some one who has been robbed or wounded by thieves. But we can help in other ways. Many years ago, when this country was at war, all who wanted to be good neighbors banded together into a Red Cross society to help the wounded soldiers, to send ambulances and nurses and bandages and medicines to soldiers hurt in battle. And when there are floods or disasters, epidemics and

famines, that society still sends help and food and clothing to refugees or homeless people.

And even those who have no money can help others who are in trouble. It takes no money to be kind and helpful. All it takes is a loving and unselfish heart.

You remember that the Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the man who had been hurt. The wine was to cleanse the wound, so that it would not fester and bring on a fever. The oil was used to take away the soreness and pain.

There are many different kinds of oil. There is oil that is used to make machines run smoothly so the gears and wheels won't screech and rust and wear out. There is oil that you can burn in an oil lamp. And there is oil that is good to eat, and lard and butter to use in cooking, and also various kinds of oil that are used for medicines. All these oils help to make things run smoothly or to give comfort, warmth, and pleasure to people.

But there is nothing that gives more comfort and warmth to a person's heart than kindness and good-will. And therefore we sometimes speak of "the oil of human kindness."

Now we know that the Word was written for angels as well as for people on earth. And when angels read the story of the good Samaritan, they do not think at all of any man traveling between Jerusalem and Jericho and being attacked by robbers on that desert road. Instead, they think of someone who is in sadness and temptation and doubt, and who feels forsaken by his friends and even by the angels, and who feels "wounded" in spirit. When evil spirits attack a person, he comes into great sadness. His feelings are hurt. He feels as if he was left all alone, as if everybody was against him and he had no place to go. Perhaps you have felt that way sometimes. And how glad you would be then if some good neighbor, some friend or sibling, or a parent perhaps, or even somebody whom you had never met before, stopped and poured oil on your wounded feelings and made you feel less alone and not so hopeless, until you cheered up again.

Would you not think that the Lord and the angels had sent that good neighbor and put it into his heart to help you out of your trouble or your temptation, your sick-hearted feeling? Would not you say that *there* was a friend, who did not tease you or blame you or make you feel worse and did not pass you by with a shrug of the shoulder, but whom you could really love for his thoughtfulness and kindness?

And would not you hear, then, the words of the Lord ringing in your ears, "Go and do likewise," help others, the way they have at times helped you?

The older you grow, the more you can help, the more you will notice people around you who are in some trouble, who are worried or bewildered. You will meet people whose dear ones have just died and whose hearts are sore and wounded because they know nothing about the other world, and so they dare not hope that they will ever see their loved ones again. If you then told them what the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church reveal about the life of heaven, it would be as if you had poured wine into their festering sores and refreshed them. If you were sympathetic and helpful to them in their sorrow, it would be like oil which relieved their pain. And, if you actually brought them a faith that the Lord does provide a heaven for all good people and caused them to think about spiritual things, about the Lord and His care of all things, it would be as if you put them on your own donkey and brought them to an inn for food and rest and healing. The New Church with its teachings is just that kind of an inn. We are all travelers here on earth, here only for a short time. We travel from babyhood up to old age, and we do not find our real home until we get to heaven. But the Church is like an inn on the road, where our minds can be refreshed. There we can be told about the right and safe road to take in our journey and about where that journey ends and what provisions we will need for our next day's travel. The Church will provide what we need, like the Good Samaritan and the inn did in the parable.

We cannot love the thieves and the robbers. We cannot love the hard-hearted priest and the indifferent Levite. But we love the good Samaritan, because anyone who cares for his fellow-person is a good neighbor. We should love him because *through* people like this the Lord shows us His mercy and pity. And we love the Lord when we ourselves go and do likewise.

*Therefore the good and truth in a man is the neighbor that is to be loved. Set before your eyes three or ten persons whom you are choosing for some domestic employment. Do you choose otherwise than according to the good and truth in them, whence man is man. If you are choosing one among the ten for the performance of some service, do you not inquire into his will and understanding? The one who is chosen is your neighbor who is to be loved. Charity 46-48*