

# THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

“Don’t even think about it.” That is what Clint Eastwood might say to a villain who considers going for his gun. It’s also what a sage adviser might say to you about the future.

Those who grew up with the first King James version of the Bible will remember the words in the sermon on the Mount: “Take no thought.” More recent translations say “be not anxious” or “do not worry.” “Take no thought for the morrow” is rendered “Do not worry about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:34).

Worry and the future seem to be linked together. If someone asks the question, “What about the future?” immediately the smile on our face fades a little, and our brow betrays wrinkles of concern.

We might say that the future seems dark. In one sense the future will always seem dark. If we have no knowledge of something, by definition we are “in the dark” about it. So, the future seems ominous, because, being unknown, it calls up to our minds our ignorance and helplessness. We experience emotions that even affect our stomachs.

Let me share two passages with you from the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church which were written by Emanuel Swedenborg.

The first passage is about an honorable and God-fearing business man. “He thinks of the morrow, and yet does not think of it. He thinks of what should be done on the morrow, and how it should be done; and yet does not think of the morrow, because he ascribes the future to the Divine Providence and not to his own prudence” (*Doctrine of Charity* 167).

The other teaching is from the book *Divine Providence*. In speaking of an unhealthy craving to know the future, this passage says that when we believe in Providence, God gradually takes away this craving. In its place we are granted “a trust that the Lord is directing our lot” (paragraph 179).

I am reminded of a time when the disciples of Jesus were in a boat. It was the deepest part of the night. As the disciples gazed out into the darkened sea, they had the sensation that they were seeing ghosts. They were so troubled, they actually cried out for fear. But then they heard the voice of Jesus, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid” (Matthew 14:27).

Imagine being told on the deep and in the darkness to be of good cheer!

My advice is that if the images of the future coming to you are like a dark and vacant sea, deliberately try to invoke the presence of the One who declared himself to be “the light of the world.”

This may sound simplistic. For me, this simplicity has been the most helpful way to confront such feelings about the future. We have been given the hands and the minds to deal with today’s responsibilities. In using these to the best of our abilities, we may experience a feeling of hope. God in His providence loves our welfare and wishes us to be of good cheer.

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