

- I. As we begin week three of our resilience series, looking at the Joseph story, we finally get to a story where things go right for Joseph on the outside. In weeks one and two we've seen him hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, put in prison, lied about, and forgotten by those who could help him
 - A. Joseph responded remarkably well in these times, rising to positions of responsibility, and giving the credit and glory to the Lord for what he could do
 - B. Resilience is our ability to respond to adversity, and Joseph did this
 1. In week one we looked at mindfulness: Noticing the good and the bad in our lives as a precursor to being able to choose the good
 2. In week two we look at learning to re-see our lives, just as Joseph chose to turn to the Lord and attribute all things to Him in circumstances where many of us might have fallen into self pity and bitterness.
 3. These are skills of spiritual resilience
 - C. Today we see the story going well. Joseph has interpreted Pharaoh's dream and is put in charge of all Egypt, tasked with gathering grain during the seven years of plenty so they will have stores for the seven years of famine to come
 1. The resilience theme for this week is gratitude, and specifically gratitude toward the Lord for the good He brings to our lives
 2. It describes a time when we can stop and notice what is good, and appreciate the Lord for it. As one teaching says, "Thanks means all worship" (AR 249).
- II. For Joseph, his rising to a position important for the survival of the whole region, and ultimately of his family, would be so much sweeter because of the contrast with the 13 years of slavery and imprisonment.
 - A. This is also true of us. We learn by contrasts
 - B. "What good is, and indeed what blessedness and happiness are, nobody with even the sharpest mind is able to perceive unless he has experienced the state of being deprived of good, blessedness, and happiness. It is from this experience that he acquires a sphere of perception; and he acquires it to the same degree that he has experienced the contrary state, for the sphere of perception and how far it extends are determined by his experience of the two contrary states. These, in addition to many others, are the reasons for vastation or desolation." (AC 2694:2)
 - C. We may lament our hard times when in them, yet we need them, not only to grow, but also to appreciate what we have in the present.
 - D. Another teaching makes this point strongly talking about angels' ups and downs
 - E. "I have been taught from heaven why there are changes of state there. The angels said that there are many reasons. First, the delight of life and of heaven, which they have from love and wisdom from the Lord, would gradually lose its value if they were in it continually, as happens with those that are in allurements and pleasures without variety. A second reason is that

angels, as well as people, have what is their own [proprium], which is loving self; and all that are in heaven are withheld from what is their own, and so far as they are withheld from it by the Lord are in love and wisdom; but so far as they are not withheld they are in the love of self; and because everyone loves what is his own and is drawn by it they have changes of state or successive alternations. A third reason is that they are in this way perfected, for they thus become accustomed to being held in love to the Lord and withheld from love of self; also that by alternations between delight and lack of delight *the perception and sense of good becomes more exquisite*. The angels added that their changes of state are not caused by the Lord, since the Lord as a sun is unceasingly flowing in with heat and light, that is, with love and wisdom; but the cause is in themselves, in that they love what is their own, and this continually leads them away.” (HH 158)

- F. When things are going well in a relationship we sometimes want to hold onto those precious moments, especially as we feel them slipping away. Yet the Lord in His wisdom knows we need to cycle to lower states to truly appreciate the blessedness of love and trust. We learn and appreciate from contrasts
- III. During this time Joseph had two children. The first he named “Manasseh,” which means forgetfulness. As I’ve said in the past it’s ironic to name a child forgetfulness because it reminds you of what you are trying to forget.
- A. But the meaning is clear. Although aware of our past suffering, we forget it in that it’s not present. And in that state we move on to the next son, Ephraim, which means fruitfulness. The two are part of one whole. The reminder of pain that is passed united with an exquisite awareness of joy in the present.
 - B. As the 35th Psalm says, “Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue me from their destructions, my precious life from the lions. I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.” (Ps 35:17-18)
- IV. Most of the Psalms of thanks and praise are actually thanks for deliverance from something people could not have survived without the Lord’s help. And perhaps there’s a recognition there on not quite deserving all that help, which makes the gratitude so intense.
- A. That gives rise to a humility of spirit that is always grateful. Consider parts of the 136th Psalm, which combines thanks with awareness of the Lord’s mercy on us. Mercy applies to the way the Lord deals with us when we are going down the wrong path. So thanks and mercy go hand in hand

Ps 136 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy is forever.
Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy is forever....
To Him who alone does great wonders, for His mercy is forever;
To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, for His mercy is forever;
To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, for His mercy is forever....
To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, for His mercy endures forever;
And made Israel pass through the midst of it, for His mercy is forever;
But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, for His mercy is forever;
To Him who led His people through the wilderness, for His mercy is forever....

Who remembered us in our lowly state, for His mercy endures forever;

And rescued us from our enemies, for His mercy endures forever;

Who gives food to all flesh, for His mercy endures forever.

Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever.

V. Perhaps this is why we're told that keeping the three main feasts each year means "enduring worship of the Lord and thanksgiving on account of deliverance from damnation" (AC 9286).

A. Our most intense thanks to the Lord come when we realize we have been in over our heads, doing things that are deeply hurtful and wrong

B. What gratitude to be able to be free, and to see the Lord's abundance!

C. "Weeping may endure for the night but joy comes in the morning." (Ps 30:5)

D. "These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

VI. Joseph took the abundance of grain and stored it away for future use

A. Our reading described that the way the Lord stores up states of goodness and truth in our inner self for future us, especially in times of temptation

B. In hard times we might wonder how we can get through the day or the week, but the Lord has it planned. He has a storehouse of goodness and truth that He releases in just the right measure to enable us to survive and even thrive in times of spiritual famine.

C. In the New Church we often speak about remains as what little children receive because of some powerful teachings about them

D. But in reality, "all states of good and truth" we ever experience remain with us (AC 561). That includes the deep affectional trust that came from being held as a child, sung to, laughed with, protected, and such

E. And then as we become adults they include all truths we learn with affection – truth from good, as our reading said.

F. One of our tasks is to build storehouses of goodness and truth, which happens when we experience truth with affection

1. So when you read something that moves you, that remains

2. When you sing a song of praise to the Lord that remains

3. When you pray and feel protection, that remains

4. This happens most especially when you put any truth into action

5. In hard times it's more challenging to notice what is good, but there are chances. One of the reasons the Lord gives us a Sabbath each week is to encourage us to stop, to rest, to find what is good and true so He can build us up for another week of labor and doing all our work.

G. In this sense, gratitude to the Lord, and toward others when we see the Lord acting in and through them, is not just a fun reward; it is a fundamental job of building the storehouses for our future.

H. States of joy and peace are not just the blessing and reward of trying to be good people but they are the food for each further stage of development

I. So noticing with deep gratitude and humility each good thing that the Lord is

- giving you, each true thing that He says is essential for our spiritual growth
- VII. The Hebrew word for thanks means to confess, and it is used mostly when we confess to the Lord the wonderful things He has done for us
- A. The Lord gives us countless moments when we can do this. They are the pauses in our lives when the veil parts and we catch a glimpse of a heavenly state, similar to the almost unearthly glory of an amazing sunset, or of a peaceful moment with someone we love
- VIII. The Lord wants our thanks, but not for His sake.
- A. We read: "The Lord does, it is true, demand humility, worship, thanksgiving, and much else from a person, which seem like repayment, so that His gifts do not seem to be free. But the Lord does not demand those things for His own sake, for the Divine derives no glory at all from a person's humility, worship, or thanksgiving. It is utterly inconceivable that any self-love should exist within the Divine, causing Him to require such actions for His own sake. Rather, they are required for man's own sake, for if someone possesses humility he is able to accept good from the Lord, since in that case he has been parted from self-love and its evils which stand in the way of his accepting it. Therefore the Lord desires a state of humility in a person for that person's sake, because the Lord can flow in with heavenly good when that state exists in him. The same applies to worship and thanksgiving." (AC 5957)
- IX. The Lord shower blessings down on all of us, and He wants us to rest in the safety of those blessings
- A. "Blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8)
- X. We began with the opening sentence of blessing the Lord. In another passage we read, "To bless the Lord' is to sing to Him, to proclaim the good tidings of His salvation, to preach His wisdom and power, and thus to confess and acknowledge the Lord from the heart. Those who do this cannot but be blessed by the Lord, that is, be gifted with those things which belong to blessing, namely, with celestial, spiritual, natural, worldly, and corporeal good; these, when they follow each other in this order, are the goods in which there is happiness. (AC 1422:2-3)
- A. What can each of us do to ensure that we bless the Lord this week, proclaiming His goodness, confessing and acknowledging Him, embracing His goodness and the beautiful truth He offers?
- XI. Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations. (Ps 100)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

Gen 41:37-57 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders...."

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck....

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath.... Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food....

When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

AC 5342. 'And laid up food in the cities' means that it stored truths linked to good in the interior parts.... The idea that truths linked to good are stored in the interior parts of the natural mind, and are preserved there for use subsequently in life, in particular for use in temptations when a person is being regenerated, is an arcanum known to few at the present day. Therefore the nature of this secret must be stated. The seven years of abundance of grain mean the truths multiplied initially, and the storage of grain in the cities, in the midst of them, means that those truths linked to good were stored away in a person's interior parts. The seven years of famine and the sustenance provided by the bunches that had been gathered means the state of regeneration effected by means of the truths that had been linked to good and stored

away in the interior parts.

[2] The secret is this: During the time from earliest infancy through to early childhood a person is led by the Lord into heaven; indeed he is placed among celestial angels who serve to keep him in a state of innocence.... At the beginning of childhood a gradual shedding of that state of innocence takes place; but even so, the person is kept in a state of charity through the charitable affection which he and his companions feel for one another. During this state, which with many people lasts through to adolescence, he is among spiritual angels. Because he begins at this time to think from what is within himself and to act in accordance with this, he cannot be kept any longer in charity, as he was previously; for now he calls on hereditary evils and allows them to lead him. Once this state has arrived the goods of charity and innocence adopted by him previously are banished, to the extent that forms of evil are present in his thinking and are reinforced by his actions. Actually those forms of good are not banished but are withdrawn by the Lord to interior parts where they are stored away.

[3] But because he does not as yet know any truths, those goods of innocence and charity which he has adopted during those two states do not possess any qualities as yet; for truths give good its qualities, while good gives truths their essence. From this time of life onwards therefore he is being equipped with truths by means of the teaching he receives, and especially by means of his own thoughts about and consequent verification of those truths. Insofar as he is moved at this time by an affection for good, the Lord joins truths to good in him, and stores them away for [future] use. This is the state that is meant by the seven years of abundance of grain. These truths linked to good are the ones which in a proper sense are called remnants. In the measure therefore that a person allows himself to be regenerated, the remnants serve a useful purpose; for the Lord draws in the same measure on that store of remnants and returns them to the natural. As a result a correspondence of exterior things with interior ones, or natural things with spiritual ones, is brought about; and this happens in the state that is meant by 'the seven years of famine'.