

# Holy Supper and Redemption

A Sermon by the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith

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## Readings

*Psalm 18 (excerpts) (Kempton Translation, modified)*

To the victor. A Psalm of David the servant of Jehovah, who spoke to Jehovah the words of this song in the day that Jehovah rescued him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said,

- 1 I will love You, O Jehovah my strength;
- 2 Jehovah is my Rock, and my Bulwark, and my Deliverer;  
My God, my Rock, in Him I will confide;  
My Shield, and the Horn of my Salvation,  
my High Tower.
- 3 I will call on Jehovah, who is to be praised;  
And from my enemies I shall be saved....
- 5 The cords of hell surrounded me;  
The snares of death confronted me.
- 6 In my adversity I called upon Jehovah,  
And cried out to my God;  
He heard my voice from His temple,  
And my outcry before Him came into His ears.
- 7 And the land tottered and quaked,  
And the foundations of the mountains trembled, and they tottered,  
For He Himself was incensed....
- 9 And He bowed the heavens and came down;  
And dense darkness was under His feet.
- 10 And He rode on a cherub and He flew;  
And He soared on the wings of the wind....
- 13 And Jehovah thundered in the heavens,  
And the Most High gave forth His voice,  
Hail and coals of fire....
- 16 He sent from on high, He took me;  
He drew me out of many waters.
- 17 He rescued me from my strong enemy,

- And from those who hated me,....
- 19 And He brought me forth to a broad place;  
He set me free, for He delighted in me....
  - 30 As for God, His way is perfect;  
The sayings of Jehovah are refined;  
He is a shield to all who confide in Him.
  - 31 For who is God, besides Jehovah?  
And who is a rock, except our God?
  - 32 The God who girds me with valor,  
And makes my way perfect....
  - 34 He teaches my hands for the war;  
And sets down a bow of bronze in my arms.
  - 35 And You have given to me the shield of Your salvation;  
And Your right hand sustains me,  
And with Your meekness You have multiplied me....
  - 46 Jehovah lives; and blessed be my Rock;  
And exalted be the God of my salvation,....
  - 48 He delivers me from my enemies....

*John 12:27-36 (Kempton Translation, modified)*

27 [Jesus said,] "Now is My soul disturbed, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this came I to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name."

Then came a voice from heaven: "I both have glorified it, and will glorify it again."

29 Then the crowd, standing and hearing, said that it thundered; others said, "An angel spoke to Him."

30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but because of you. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast outside. 32 And I,

if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself.”<sup>33</sup> And this He said, signifying by what death He was about to die.

<sup>34</sup> The crowd answered Him, “We have heard from the Law that Christ remains for ever; and how do You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?”

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Yet a little time is the Light with you; walk while you have the Light, lest darkness take you; and he who walks in darkness does not know where he goes.”<sup>36</sup> While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may be sons of Light.” Jesus spoke these things, and departing, was hidden from them.

### ***True Christian Religion 2***

THE FAITH OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND OF THE NEW CHURCH IN ITS UNIVERSAL FORM is as follows: The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human. Without this no mortal could have been saved, and those are saved who believe in Him.

### ***True Christian Religion 3:2***

The particulars of faith on a person’s part are:

- (1) God is one in whom is the Divine Trinity. He is the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ.
- (2) Saving faith is to believe in Him.
- (3) Evils must not be done because they are of the devil and from the devil.
- (4) Goods must be done because they are of God and from God.
- (5) These things must be done by a person as if from himself, but it must be believed that they are from the Lord with the person, and by means of him.

### ***True Christian Religion 717***

The whole of the Lord’s redemption is present in the Holy Supper; for where the Lord is wholly present, there too is the whole of His redemption. For, as regards His Human, He is the Redeemer, and so also redemption itself. .... On this account all those who worthily attend Holy Communion become His redeemed. Because redemption means being freed from hell, conjoined with the Lord and saved..., those benefits are assigned to the person. This happens, not to the extent that the Lord wishes (for from His Divine love He wishes to assign everything to people), but to the extent that the person receives them. The person who receives them is redeemed to the degree that he receives them. These facts establish that the effects and benefits of the Lord’s redemption come to those who worthily approach the Holy Supper.

## Introduction

- When the Lord first taught His disciples to have Holy Supper it says that He "...took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me'" (Luke 22:19).
  - One of the purposes of Holy Supper is to *remember* the Lord Jesus Christ – to remember who He is, what He has done for us, and what He can do for us, if we let Him.
- The way we're going to do that today is go through the 5 particulars of faith on a person's part that we read in our recitation.
  - Those are from the beginning of a book called *True Christian Religion*, the last book published of the teachings of the New Church.
  - We're going to go through them one by one and see what they remind us of about the Lord.

### ***Remembering the 5 Particulars of Faith***

- These 5 specific things of faith are pretty important so let's take a minute to work on memorizing them.
    - There are hand motions that you can do to help you remember, if you'd like.
  - (1) [1 Finger Pointing Up; Finger Pointing Down and Forward] - God is One. He is Jesus Christ.
    - There is 1 God and that same 1 God is the God who came down into the world as Jesus Christ to save us.
  - (2) [Tied hands; Praying Hands] - Saving faith is to believe in Him.
    - Without the Lord we are enslaved to hell.
    - We can be saved by Him if we work to believe in Him and follow Him.
  - (3) [Grab arm] - Evils must not be done.
  - (4) [Hands Out] - Goods must be done.
  - (5) [Hands Out, Look Up] - These things must be done as if on our own, but believing that they are from the Lord.
- Now, let's go through these one by one.

### **(1) God is one in whom is the Divine Trinity. He is the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ.**

- [1 Finger Pointing Up; Finger Pointing Down and Forward]
- This statement significant because some people believe that the Father and the Son were two different Persons from eternity [1 finger on each hand pointing up] and that Jesus was one of those 2 persons who came into the world while God the Father stayed in heaven [1 finger stays up; on finger goes down].
  - This is understandable because there are passages, like the one we read in the lesson from the Gospel of John where we see Jesus talking to His Father and then there's a voice from heaven.
  - In this particular instance, when people are trying to figure out what the voice was, Jesus said to them that the voice came because of the people" (John 12:30).

- Jesus didn't need that voice from heaven: the people needed to hear a voice from heaven speaking to Him.
- We don't know for sure but it seems like the point of the voice from heaven was to help people come to see that Jesus was not some ordinary man, He was Divine – He was connected with God in heaven.
  - What that connection is like became more clear as time went on.
  - Two chapters later in John, Jesus says to his disciple Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father.... I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.... [T]he Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:9, 10).
- There is only 1 God, and that 1 God came into the world as Jesus Christ.
  - That's what that phrase from our lesson means – "The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world...." (*True Christian Religion* 2).
  - As Psalm 18 says,
    - "For who is God, besides Jehovah? And who is a rock, except our God?" (31).
    - "And He bowed the heavens and came down...." (9).
- There is a Divine Trinity but that Trinity is *in* the 1 person of Jesus Christ.
  - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all in Jesus Christ, like the trinity of soul, body, and activity in a regular person (see *True Christian Religion* 163ff).
- There is, obviously, a whole lot to talk about here and I'd be happy to talk about this more with any of you after the service or over coffee next week.
- But, when we are having Holy Supper in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can remember that He is the one God of heaven and earth who bowed the heavens and came down to save us.

## (2) Saving faith is to believe in Him.

- [Tied hands; Praying Hands]
- We need to be saved by the Lord – saved from the influence and control of hell.
  - The Lord said, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34).
  - We all would have become slaves of sin and slaves of hell if the Lord hadn't come into the world when He did.
- The first part of one of our lessons said, "The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human. *Without this no mortal could have been saved, and those are saved who believe in Him*" (*True Christian Religion* 2).
  - The Lord came into the world to save us from hell and redeem us.
    - Our lesson told us that "redemption means being freed from hell, conjoined with the Lord and saved" (*True Christian Religion* 717).

- And this is how Psalm 18 talks about it:
  - The cords of hell surrounded me;  
The snares of death confronted me....  
He rescued me from my strong enemy,  
And from those who hated me.... (5, 17).
- Another passage explains a bit more about how the Lord did this.
  - [The Human which the Lord took upon Himself in the world] enabled Him to enter, overthrow and conquer the hells, as well as to impose order on the heavens. It was by this that He redeemed men and angels, and He continues to do so for ever (*True Christian Religion* 136:4).

### ***A Comparison***

- This might be kind of hard to relate to and so let's use a comparison.
  - Imagine that you got the chance to meet and have dinner with a war hero.
    - You can imagine someone who got a medal for getting injured while bravely protecting his fellow soldiers.
      - It would be an honor to get to have a meal with a person like that.
    - Now imagine that that person was an even bigger hero.
      - They didn't just protect their fellow soldiers, they did something to protect a whole city from being bombed – they saved millions of lives.
    - Now imagine that that person did something to protect the whole Earth from being destroyed – they saved billions of people's lives.
  - Getting to have supper with the Lord is an even bigger honor than that because it's getting to have supper with the Person who saved every single person who has ever lived and every single person who will ever live.
    - That incredible Hero wants to have a meal with you.
    - It can be hard to remember that *that* is who the Lord is.
      - Saving faith is to believe in Him.

### ***What Does Believing in Him Mean?***

- To believe in the Lord does not just mean something that we think in our head – it's not just that we believe that the Lord exists.
  - Just thinking something will not save us.
- If we keep on committing sin, then we keep on putting ourselves back in slavery to hell.
  - But, if we believe in the Lord, that means that we trust Him and that we entrust our lives to Him and that we do everything we can to follow Him; and that *does* lead to Him saving us.
    - Or, this is how *True Christian Religion* puts it:
      - Believing in [the Lord] means having confidence that He is the Savior; and since only those who lead good lives can have such confidence, this too is meant by believing in Him (2:3).
- We can see the importance of living good lives in the next two particulars of faith.

### **(3) Evils must not be done because they are of the devil and from the devil.**

- [Grab arm]
- We all have something in us that wants to break the commandments, that wants to use other people, control other people, treat them as our enemies, destroy them, etc.
  - That's from the devil which means that it's from the influence of all the evil spirits in hell.
- Believing in the Lord means believing that we must not do those things.
  - We must stop ourselves from acting on those harmful and selfish inclinations.
  - When we do act in a hellish way we need to see it, acknowledge it, pray to the Lord for help, and try to begin a new life.
- When we take Holy Supper we remember our responsibility to repent.

### **(4) Goods must be done because they are of God and from God.**

- [Hands out]
- This is the point, right?
  - To be a loving, useful, kind, caring human being.
  - To experience the joy of serving other people, of being part of a loving, mutually supportive family and community.
  - Doing good things that are actually good – what a blessing!
- Psalm 18 says,
  - And He brought me forth to a broad place;  
He set me free, for He delighted in me. (19)
- When we stop doing evil, we are set free in a broad place to do all sorts of useful and rewarding things.
  - When we eat the bread in Holy Supper, we are remembering the Lord's love and goodness that He freely gives to us so that we can freely give it to other people.

### **(5) These things must be done by a person as if from himself, but it must be believed that they are from the Lord with the person, and by means of him.**

- [Hands out; Look up]
- This combination of the fact that we need to act as if we're acting on our own and that it is the Lord who actually does it for us is beautifully captured in Psalm 18.
  - The Lord is the one who gives us the strength and weapons to fight the good fight against our evil and sinful inclinations.
    - He teaches my hands for the war;  
And sets down a bow of bronze in my arms.  
And You have given to me the shield of Your salvation;  
And Your right hand sustains me.... (34,35)

- And it is the Lord who gives us the ability to do good.
  - As for God, His way is perfect....  
For who is God, besides Jehovah?  
And who is a rock, except our God?  
The God who girds me with valor,  
And makes my way perfect.... (30-32)
- This dynamic is also beautifully illustrated in taking Holy Supper.
  - We have to bring ourselves to Holy Supper and take the bread and the wine and eat them and it feels the whole time as though we are acting on our own.
  - But it is the Lord who miraculously makes our bodies able to take that bread and wine and make it part of us.

## Conclusion

- When we have Holy Supper, let's try to do it, remembering all of these things about the Lord our God.
  - (1) That He is the 1 God, in whom is a Divine Trinity, who came into the world as Jesus Christ.
  - (2) That we are in slavery to sin but can be saved by Him if we believe in Him and follow Him.
  - (3) That we have to stop ourselves from doing evil.
  - (4) That we have to work on doing good.
  - (5) And that really it is the Lord Jesus Christ, our loving God who freely gives us the ability to do any and all of this.
- *Amen.*

If you would like to talk more about this topic, get in touch with Malcolm at [malcolm.smith@brynathynchurch.org](mailto:malcolm.smith@brynathynchurch.org).