

## “Summertime with God”

LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian

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### **Scripture**

Genesis 8:15-22

Luke 21:29-33

### **Hymns/Songs**

“Jesus Loves Me” 169

“It Is Well With My Soul” 705

“Lord of All Hopefulness”

### **Genesis 8:15-22**

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup> “Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. <sup>17</sup> Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” <sup>18</sup> So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. <sup>19</sup> Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.

### ***God's Covenant with Noah***

<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. <sup>22</sup> While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

### **Luke 21:29-33**

#### ***The Lesson of the Fig Tree***

<sup>29</sup> And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. <sup>31</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

### **Insight for Worship**

*Secrets of Heaven 4180.3-4* by Emanuel Swedenborg

[3] This is like the heat and light from the sun. Spiritual heat is love, and thus good; but spiritual light is faith, and thus truth. When heat is received from the sun, the trees and flowers vegetate and produce leaves, flowers, and fruits or seeds. This comes to pass in the time of spring and summer. When however heat is not received from the sun, but only light, nothing vegetates, but all vegetation grows dormant, as in the time of autumn and winter. So also it is with spiritual heat and light, which are from the Lord. If man is like spring or summer, he receives the good of love and charity, and produces fruits; but if he is like autumn and winter, he does not receive the good of love and charity, and accordingly does not produce fruits. Yet he may still receive light, that is, may know the things of faith or truth. Wintry light has a similar effect, for it presents colors and beauties and makes them conspicuous, like summer light, but with the difference that it does not penetrate toward the interiors, because there is no heat in it, and hence no quickening.

[4] When therefore good is not received, but only light, it is as when heat is not received in objects, but only an image of form and beauty from the light, and hence there is cold within; and where there is cold within, there is a dormancy of everything there, and as it were a shrinking and shuddering when light introduces itself there.

### **SERMON: “Summertime With God”**

How is your summertime going so far? Are you enjoying it? Have you had some prolonged time outside on a good, warm day to soak up the soothing warmth of the sun? What is your favorite summertime fruit? Mine is watermelon! Have you simply enjoyed *breathing in this rich, almost flavorful air inside of your lungs*? I have, many times. And while I sat there taking it all in, this question went through my mind: “Kit, have you been open to summertime within your soul lately?”

**Spiritual summertime.** Did you know there is such a thing? One of our core New Church teachings is that everything in nature exists as they are because something higher...something spiritual...in the spiritual world corresponds to it. There is a deep relation and symbolic connection between what is natural and what is spiritual. As the Rev. Dr. George Dole taught us in seminary on this, just remember this simple phrase: “As above, so below.” William Worcester describes this reality in his excellent little book, *The Language of Parable*, this way: “Every object of nature, every phenomenon, is as a smile on nature's face, or a tear, or a tone of nature's voice which embodies to us feelings and thoughts within. Every one is an effect which invites us to trace it back to its cause in the world of the human mind and originally in the Lord Himself.” (p. 6) The relation between natural objects surrounding us and the spiritual things within our

minds rests on the truth that they are the same things on two distinct planes of life. So, for example, the deep feelings of spiritual joy I experience sometimes are outwardly expressed by a sweet smile on my face and that precious glint in my eyes.

***Can you guess what natural summertime represents in the life and growth of your spirit?***

The story of Noah and the great flood is, in part, a marvelous parable of the first great spiritual calamity on earth. That story was handed down by the ancient Church peoples on Earth, not to convey an historical, physical flood encompassing the globe, but rather to record a calamitous *spiritual flood*, which caused immense suffering and changes in humanity long ago. The Golden Age of humanity had ended. Humanity's perpetual "**spiritual spring and summertime**" was over.

As strange as it sounds, for some mysterious reason the people of that Golden Age began to gradually turn away from loving God and others most of all, choosing instead to focus on loving themselves above all else. They turned away from trusting God in favor of only trusting their own knowledge above all else. In other words, once humanity got serious about tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, symbolically shown in the ancient mythical story about Adam and Eve, their internal ruin was inevitable! The great flood described in *Genesis* tells the story of how almost all people everywhere back then encountered a horrible and devastating spiritual flood of negative, falsified thinking brought on by evil desires and affections.

**In other words, said simply,  
the world was drowning!**

Not from natural waters filling up dry land,  
but rather from **basic, terrible manipulations of truth.**

- For example, when we say, *"I'm an island! Who needs God anyway?!"* we are falsifying what is good and true and we then join the ranks of the people of the lie.
- Or, in the language of the Most Ancient people, *"What's most important in life is the nicest cave in the neighborhood and possession of the best apple grove around. It doesn't matter what kind of lies or manipulations I have to conjure up to get them...my needs and wants are above and beyond everyone else's—only mine matter."*

- And lastly, as people still today are tempted to think, *“This love and spirituality business sure is too hard! Emotional and personal vulnerability, who needs it? It’s better to give up deep vulnerability and mercy and forgiveness—all of that takes too much energy. Hardness of heart...now that’s the way to go!”*

Isn’t it amazing how easy it is to twist spiritual and psychological truth into false mental and emotional manipulations...[RATIONALIZATIONS](#)...twisting things to suit my wants and needs in life...and “...to hell with what God wants. I’m tired of God’s Word telling me what I can and cannot do. I don’t need God anymore.”

But, **thank God**, there was a band of people, represented by Noah and his family, who were devoted to the Lord and the hope of better days ahead. New Church theology reveals that only that remnant, that devoted group of brave and faithful souls, survived the flood of human falsity and rationalizing and all kinds of lies and perversions. Our *Genesis* lesson this morning depicts the beginning of the second chapter in human spiritual evolution, so to speak.

The many pairs of living animals brought inside the Ark represent all of the good and negative feelings, desires and thoughts that the Lord was able to store up inside the minds of those survivors, which ultimately help us to regenerate. In *Genesis 7:6-10* we read: [“Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. <sup>7</sup> And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. <sup>8</sup> Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, <sup>9</sup> male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup> And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.”](#) These people represented by Noah’s family worshiped God with love and adoration. But the "curse" created by their ancestors was real and would remain because many real, ancient people had freely chosen evil over good, and did so consistently for many generations.

The Lord our God, though, decided never again to allow people to fall prey for certain to their evil ways, so the Lord performed spiritual surgery and **DISCONNECTED** humanity's head from their hearts. This gave us the ability to lead our wills with our thoughts when our intentions are bent on selfishness. This spiritual surgery done by God enables the Lord to gradually regenerate us into truly good and wise human angels bound for heaven, when we freely choose to follow the truth of caring way of life—and this promise of God carving out a perpetual pathway of growth, born from our mental capacity to lead our wills when we feel weak and whimpy inside was symbolized by the story of the first rainbow appearing skyward. Today rainbows still signify God’s promise that He always provides a way forward during stormy times.

A crucial legacy was left behind since those ancient days after the Noatic Church era began, one that continues to this day. Our theology refers to it as necessary ***ALTERNATIONS OF THE SPIRIT—our inner seesaw, if you will, which helps us grow.*** Thus, in order to gradually spiritually regenerate throughout life, which defines the nature of our salvation, we must go through spiritual states of being that are represented by the change of seasons, by night and day, by morning, noon and evening. The poetry of God's Word expresses this truth in this way: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Gen. 18:22) We are all destined to encounter these internal-spiritual ups and downs, and **to do so is to be on course toward heaven.**

#### ***TEMPTATION BATTLES or STRUGGLES***

(the spiritual storms we all encounter time and again throughout our lives)  
***help us to be regenerated by the Lord, when we cooperate with God.***

***Intense spiritual struggles help us gain GREATER CLARITY  
about possible mental manipulations or rationalizations  
we may be into, but as yet don't recognize.***

And so, going through spiritual wintertime has a nice side-benefit, because it gives us a clear sense of what life is like when the warmth of love falls away. Those dark, cold days of spiritual wintertime can help us understand how extremely important it is to choose a better way of life than wintering away from God's Love. Indeed, the change of seasons of springtime, summer, autumn and winter remind us that it is healthy to experience movement inwardly toward and away from God, because this helps us develop as "angels-in-training" through life. So, times of inner doubt, confusion and feeling times of less lovingkindness inside (our spiritual winters) are part of the ebb and flow of spiritual growth—indeed, it's okay to experience alternations of state.

I remember once, years ago, during my chaplaincy years of ministry one afternoon when I had the chance to get to know a young man who was the son of one of our patients in the ICU. We talked about many things, and then he opened up more and shared with me that he had long felt like the odd man out within his family of origin—and was known as the "black sheep" in his family. He basically explained that he was the only member of his family who was born inherently as what psychology calls a "highly sensitive" person—you know, the kind of person who is simply more affected by life's plethora of stimuli, the sort of person who cries easily and who can be seen by

some as caring “too much” for people in general. I learned about such psychologically sensitive people in college, and so I affirmed who he was and that it’s okay for him to just **be who he really is**, because God makes some people that way. And because I was able to affirm him, he realized that rather than being the odd man out or being some sort of human mutant, the truth was that he is just a part of the wide diversity of human beings, and the world needed him to **be who he is...period**. For that young man that day, life in general became much less of a spiritual wintertime and instead it blossomed into longer periods of inner springtime and summertime, full of healthy self-esteem because he was finally able to love himself as part of the pottery molded from God’s handiwork. And because he could now feel good about who and what he is as a person, he found it much easier to love and esteem others as they are too. His spiritual summertime blossomed and expanded, and he began enjoying life like never before.

God is drawing us into changes of seasons in the spirit. All around us in this glorious season of summer, nature is full of life! She is full of light and vital heat, and the trees, our gardens, farms full of ripening vegetation and fruits, and life in general is reaching for its abundance—and all of this natural fullness is speaking to us also. It’s reminding us through summertime sights, smells, tastes and living forms that all of the hardship, all of the trials and struggles we go through, **are all worth it! Life’s difficulties, heartaches and griefs are at least acceptable, aren’t they? Why? Because the plumpness and wonders of life, revealed to us symbolically in the grand blessings of summertime, are THE BEST!** The joys of summer are like the “royal flush” in God’s hand compared to the “three of a kind” held in the hand of Old Man Winter.

So I ask you, do you want to be more warm and inviting like a lovely summer's day? Is peace and relaxation in the Lord prominent in your thoughts? This time of year is designed to teach you, in part, to ask God through prayer to help you grow like nature in summer—and to really enjoy your days on earth—enjoying God’s fruits of the Spirit. So, let's make the most of these gorgeous days of summer. Let's continue to enjoy God's wonderful creation of nature, and soak up time with family and friends, and then return to worship with deep gratitude spilling over like a fountain fed by the waters of Heaven!

As Christ said it so beautifully: **“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”** (John 10:10) Amen.