

## **“Tipping the Balance Point Toward the Good”**

LPNC Annual Meeting Sunday

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January 23, 2022

### **Scriptures**

Deuteronomy 30:11-20

John 15:16

### **Hymns/Songs**

"Give Me Oil" 351

"Praise to You, Giver of Life" 306

### **Deuteronomy 30:11-20**

#### ***The Choice of Life and Death***

<sup>11</sup> “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. <sup>12</sup> It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ <sup>13</sup> Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ <sup>14</sup> But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

<sup>15</sup> “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. <sup>16</sup> If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup> I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

### **John 15:16**

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

### **Insight for Worship**

*Secrets of Heaven 7996*

“In general the banquets within the Church in ancient times, both midday meals and suppers, were held in order that people might be brought into association with one another and joined together in love, and in order that they might inform one another about matters of love and faith, and so about the things of heaven. . . . People’s minds were thereby nourished, and also their bodies in a parallel and corresponding way. As a result they enjoyed good health and long life, they received intelligence and wisdom, and they were also brought into communication with Heaven, some into open communication with angels. But as in course of time all internal things disappear and give way to external ones, so it is with the ends to which banquets and feasts are held. At the present day these are held not to draw people together into any spiritual fellowship but to create worldly connections. That is to say, they are held for the sake of material gain, the quest for high office, and mere pleasures. They provide nourishment for the body, but none for the mind.”

### **SERMON: “Tipping the Balance Point Toward the Good”**

If I were to ask you this morning, why are you a Swedenborgian or New Church Christian? Or, if you are relatively new to this wonderful religious tradition, what if I were to ask you, why are you perhaps thinking about joining this aspiring group of Christian-Universal spiritual seekers? On this Annual Meeting Sunday, I am inspired to ask you, what are one or two things about the Lord’s New Christian Church on Earth that not only caught your innermost attention as a spiritual human being, but what is it about this church, it’s people and it’s beliefs that calls you back for more?

I’m going to share with you today about one of my top three reasons why I love this church and all of you as well, and, why it is my joy to be able to serve the Lord, our church and all of you as your minister. But before I do so let me say that it is my contention (and has been for years now) that is it profoundly important for every one of us to stay in touch with the Lord and within ourselves and one another about what our deepest and most ardent reasons are for loving this amazingly good and challenging spiritual growth tradition, which has been inspiring people like you and me for over 250 years to live by every day.

My message with you this morning is about “Tipping the Balance Point Toward the Good.” In addition to what the New Christianity teaches about the constantly loving and wise nature and ways about how God loves and cares for every person on Earth and in Heaven and Hell after death, another of my most favorite beliefs we hold dear is the belief that out of the Lord’s infinite Love and Wisdom, He is always....every second....every millisecond of our lives....keeping us in balance spiritually speaking. Our

theology talks about this as one of God's highest spiritual laws: the law of spiritual equilibrium. Said in down-to-earth terms, your inner, your ability in spiritual freedom to be able to choose every moment of your life between what is good and evil and what is true and false, is something deeply provided for and protected by the Lord. And God promises you to always keep your will and your mind balanced inside, relative to your unique ancestry and inherited tendencies. Indeed, like these beautiful stones on the cover of our bulletin today, your inner freedom is kept in balance by the Lord. Let's look at them now, shall we?



The middle or center of the horizontal stone being perfectly held in balance is like each of us: every human being born on Earth is given this gloriously wonderful and awesome spiritual gift from the Lord. In one of my favorite books written by Swedenborg, *Divine Providence*, there is a chapter heading titled, **“It Is a Law of Divine Providence That We Should Act in Freedom and in Accord with Reason.”** In this part of this book we read, “I mention this at the outset so that the reader may know that ‘acting from freedom and in accord with reason’ means thinking and intending freely, and then freely saying and doing what is in accord with reason.” (DP 71) He goes on to say that “...divine providence is constantly leading us to think and intend what is good and true, [yet] we have a freedom to consider what is evil and false as well....” (ibid. 72)

We then read these eight suppositions:

1. We have a capacity for disciplined thought and a certain latitude, or rationality and freedom, and these two abilities are in us as gifts from the Lord.
2. Whatever we do from our freedom, whether we have thought it through rationally or not, seems to be ours as long as it is in accord with our reason.

3. Whatever we have done from our freedom in accord with our thinking becomes a permanent part of us.
4. It is by means of these two abilities that the Lord reforms and regenerates us; without them we could not be reformed and regenerated.
5. We can be reformed and regenerated by means of these two abilities to the extent that we are brought to a realization that anything good and true that we think and do comes from the Lord and not from us.
6. The Lord's union with us and our responsive union with the Lord comes about by means of these two abilities.
7. Through the whole course of his divine providence, the Lord protects these two abilities untouched within us, as though they were sacred.
8. This is why it is integral to divine providence that we act from freedom, and in accord with reason. (ibid.)

So, we can ***count on our God to constantly preserve with pure perfection our inner freedom to think and intend and desire whatever we want.*** You are guaranteed this most precious and incredible gift from the Lord, with every breath you take. But God also gives this gift to you with accountability, and He asks you to decide, every morning you wake up and yes at the start of each New Year, which way are you going to tip the balance points of your will, your mind, the words you choose and the actions you will take? Are you going to tip those balanced rocks in the picture before you toward what is good and true? Or, will you freely choose to tip them the other way, toward what is evil, selfish, hard-hearted and stick-necked and false?

In *Deuteronomy 30:15-18* we read: "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. <sup>16</sup> If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess." We must remember that there is both a literal and an inner or deeper spiritual sense to God's Word. What it tells us here is that each day God preserves your spiritual freedom, perfectly. Even in your worst and most difficult days, the Lord preserves your freedom to choose. Each day God sets before us our great spiritual gift to choose life (the good, true and heavenly pathways), or we can choose spiritual death (the pathways of selfishness, materialism, choosing to find our happiness in physical things alone and wanting personal prosperity above the good of our neighbor

and our society. Spiritual death does not mean your existence will be snuffed out—it simply means turning away from the good and holy and loving pathways that allow the Lord to more fully help you, guide you and protect you from hellish impulses.

This year as with all of our years as members and friends of this church, we are free to read, meditate upon and use the goodness and truths of God's Word to tip the balance points of our lives towards Heaven now. We are free to volunteer in many ways to help our church to grow and thrive and become a beehive of spiritual inspiration. We are free to support justice and peace in our land, and we are free to try as best we can with prudence to create times of being together, opening up and really connecting with each other; sharing meals together (in safe ways), and enjoy growing together in God's grace. And, we can choose if we desire, to join this blessed church and thereby be able to vote at our meetings (annual or otherwise) and continue the great legacy of spiritual growth and outreach that our ancestors have given to us.

Our Lord and Savior wants you to be sure to hear and internalize these other powerful words of assurance today: [Jesus said,] "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." (John 15:16) Amen.