

Opening Up to The Lord's Life Flowing In

Opening ourselves up to the Lord's life flowing in

Luke 6: 38 "Give, and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

There is a saying that some people subscribe to because - obviously enough - it helps them to make sense of life that, and I quote, 'What goes round comes round'. From time to time I have heard people state this, as their conviction, and you may have done as well. 'What goes round come around'. In other words, if you give out goodness or kindness, or whatever, goodness and kindness will one day return to you. If on the other hand you give out badness or hurtfulness, badness and hurtfulness will one day return to you.

Another way of putting this might be that 'we reap what we sow'. In essence, **we will eventually attract back to ourselves what we give out.**

There seems little doubt that there is some truth in this.

Just as a simple and straightforward example, neighbourliness and goodwill usually attracts neighbourliness and goodwill in return.

Approach life with in sullen and complaining way and, usually, it will be what you attract back to yourself.

But not always, of course. It's not 100% guaranteed.

If we were to stop and think about it, it is almost certain that we could all come up with examples of where, and when, what goes out hasn't come round; where what has been given out hasn't been returned. A murderous dictator is driven into exile and ends his days in luxury and peace.

But still, something very important is touched on here. Indeed, **a truth is enshrined here.**

But what we need to do is to shift our focus from the outer world, as such; and our external life; to our inner world. For here is where the truth of the matter emerges, and it is what the Lord is bringing to our attention in these words from Luke's Gospel.

"Give, and will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

What is highlighted in these words is a fundamental truth about human life, that **what we say and do and set out hearts on and give out has repercussions or consequences for us, and those repercussions or consequences are within.**

Instead of saying, we attract **back to** ourselves what we give out, what we are being told here, and taught, is that we attract **into** ourselves what we give out.

Let's just note this now, that this has far reaching implications. It changes the way we see ourselves. It clarifies things. It frees us, even, from anxieties and guilt feelings we sometimes unnecessarily have, and it is amazingly encouraging when we are running low; don't feel we have much left to give; and are finding it extremely difficult to give what we've got.

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

So, what is the Lord saying to us here? What is He getting at?

For one thing, He is challenging the notion that we start our adult lives with a store of love, trust, care, tolerance, loyalty, faithfulness and wisdom which, over the years slowly runs down and can even run out. It's not the case and He wants us to know this.

Coupled with this, and following on from it, He is opening up here a fundamental truth about our existence, that we live our lives, every day and every moment, in the midst of influences - both positive and negative - reaching us and impacting on us from the spiritual world.

When we reflect on it we all know how it is. Feelings can well up in us, sometimes out of nowhere; feelings we didn't know we were capable of or possessed. In an emergency people will make super human sacrifices. In the face of a disaster a wave of sympathy and care wells up and sweeps over us. Then again and a different example, show a hardened, tattooed, bearded bikie his new born child and feelings will rise up reducing him to tears.

And it's the same with thoughts and insights. Thoughts also come to the surface from, apparently nowhere; thoughts that uplift us; ideas; insights; as well as thoughts that shame us and cause us to shudder.

"All life inflows", is a key teaching of The Heavenly Doctrines: the good of life - or, all that is wholesome and good and uplifting and thoughtful of others - from heaven, and the evil of life - or, what is dark and degrading and self-promoting and self-absorbed - from hell.

And this is going on continuously.

Random thoughts pop unto our minds - from where?

Random feelings are awakened, sometimes in one situation but not in another - from where?

But here is what is important.

Firstly, the Lord has the most detailed awareness of what is happening and monitors the situations that we are in freewill. These influences that reach us and impact on us from the spiritual world, either from heaven or from hell, reach us in roughly equal measure and strength.

Secondly, we are not responsible for what comes to us, as such. So it is not a matter of congratulating ourselves on good thoughts and feelings nor is it a matter of feeling guilt, or making ourselves guilty, because of dark thoughts and feelings. **We become responsible for what we choose of these contrasting thoughts and feelings to make our own.**

Thirdly, and we won't go too far down this track this morning, we become what we choose of these contrasting influences. As children and within the context of personality traits and inherited talents we start out as a clean slate. But we become the sort of person that over the years we choose to become or have chosen to become.

We noted the point earlier that we attract into ourselves what we give out.

We attract into ourselves, from the spiritual world what we give out.

And this is both wonderfully encouraging, but it is also quite sobering.

Let's listen to the words of the text once more:

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Now, let's pick up, again, the reading from The Heavenly Doctrines from earlier in the Service:

"With someone who does good with all his heart good is flowing in from heaven on every side into his heart and soul and inspiring him greatly to act as he does. At the same time love and affection for the neighbour to whom he does the good is increasing, and with this love and affection a heavenly delight, beyond description. The reason why all this happens is that the good of life from the Lord reigns everywhere in heaven, flowing in unceasingly in the same measure that it is given out to another. (Conversely) with someone evil who does evil to another with all his heart, evil on every side is flowing in from hell into his heart and spurring him on greatly to act as he does." (Arcana Coelestia 9049)

What, then, of the implications here?

Earlier, mention was made of time when we feel we are running low, if not drying up.

Give what you have got and you will discover the very thing you are being called to give out amazingly replenished.

The effort will attract replenishment. You will - and cannot but - attract into yourself what you are being called to give out however difficult it may seem; however big the task.

But be warned, that as we give out what is ugly and self-promoting so this - too - attracts reinforcement from the spiritual world; from hell. It can't but do so.

We all know that if we take a negative, complaining, attitude into a situation it attracts reinforcement. We only see further things to criticize, complain about and be negative about.

Setting the tone and theme of the Service, our opening words from Scripture this morning were taken from the prophecy of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, from Chapter 3, verse 1:

"Test me now in this" says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

The Lord here, both tests and challenges us.

Think of it, He is challenging us to put him to the test. 'Try it out'. 'See if it is not so'.

He knows that we can be resistant and reluctant when it comes to

Thinking the best of people

Making excuses for them

Looking on the bright side

Praising and encouraging

Genuinely applauding another person's efforts when it outshines ours.

But give it a go! See if it is not so. Take the risk.

And what you will find is that heaven, with all its influences, comes flooding in, in even greater strength and measure.

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Amen

Rev Ian A Arnold

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