

THE LORD'S CHURCH

The Lord's Church is with all in the whole world
who live in good according to their religious system.
(*New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Doctrines* 246)

A typical way to think of a church is as an organization within a religious sect or even a specific building in which a congregation worships. However, the Lord also teaches that He is present wherever the Word is read with reverence and the Lord is worshipped. With this idea, it is easy to see how a church can help us feel the Lord's presence (see *Divine Providence* 256:2). The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that the Lord's church includes all people who live a good life according to their religious beliefs. As we look at the parable of the great supper, we might contemplate the ways that a church invites people to come receive spiritual nourishment.

READ: "What Is the Church?" by the Rev. Patrick A. Rose

This sermon explores the concept of a church, noting that as little children many of us may have thought of the church as being primarily a building, a place in which we worshiped the Lord. Later, we may have thought of the church as the people who belong to it, a group who joined together in a common belief to worship of the Lord. But this idea is also limited, because it is the Lord alone who makes the church.

FAMILY DISCUSSION: In the Lord's Church

If we look at the big picture, the Lord's church is made up of all people who acknowledge one God and try to do what is good, based on their religious beliefs. How might this teaching affect one's attitude toward evangelization or missionary work?

PROJECT: The Lord's Church Is with Everyone (*ages 6-12*)

Make beautiful glass globes or Styrofoam balls to represent the earth and add this caption: "The Lord's church is with all who live in good."

PROJECT: A Global Perspective on the Church

Make a collage to illustrate the teaching that the church is with all who live in good according to their religious principles. Cut out pictures of people from around the world. Or make your own drawings of people from around the world and show them doing good things. For a background, you might want to use a flat map projection of the world, a 2 dimensional picture of our earth, or colored poster board. Add a quote such as: "The Lord's church is with all in the whole world who live in good" (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 246).

COLORING PAGE: The Lord Gives Us the Word by Lisa Buss

SING: Father in Heaven Who Gave Us the Word

COLORING PAGE: The Word of the Lord

PROJECT: Open Word Snowflake (*ages 10-16*)

INVITATION TO THE GREAT SUPPER

“A certain man gave a great supper and invited many,
and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited,
‘Come, for all things are now ready.’”
(Luke 14:16-17)

The spiritual meaning of this parable is about the Lord inviting all people to learn the truths that can help them do what is good and become part of His church. Three of the people invited to the great supper make excuses, and these symbolize spiritual attitudes which are disinterested in what the Lord offers us. The guests that are brought in from the street—the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind—symbolize people who know that they need the Lord to help them on their spiritual journey.

READ: “Receiving the Lord’s Invitation” by the Rev. Peter M. Buss, Jr.

This sermon explores the function of a church and ways that church members can emulate the Lord by reaching out to all people.

READ: “The Great Supper” a family talk by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

The Lord looks into each one of us...at those times He says to us, “Come, for all things are now ready” (Luke 14:17). He asks us to come to His supper, to learn from His truth. And when we come, then we find joy.

ACTIVITY: Dramatization of the Great Supper (ages 8-14)

A play script for the parable of the great supper along with suggestions for props that may be used.

ACTIVITY: Spiritual Feast (ages 8-12)

Bring in some of the foods that might have been served at the time of Jesus, such as olives, dates, figs, grapes, almonds, *etc.* Take turns reading a quotation from the Word (see enclosed quotation cards) and then selecting something to eat. Talk about our need for both natural and spiritual food.

ACTIVITY: Making Excuses (Ages 12-up)

What kinds of excuses did the guests give for not coming to the master’s supper? Explore the spiritual meaning of these excuses and look for parallels in the excuses we sometimes give for not accepting the Lord’s invitation to receive His good and truth.

COLORING PAGE: The Poor, the Maimed, the Lame, and the Blind

SING: See the Savior in the Temple

ARISE, TAKE UP YOUR BED AND WALK

By “carrying his bed and walking” is meant to meditate in doctrine.
(*Apocalypse Explained* 137:2)

In this miracle, friends help a paralyzed man to get to where the Lord can heal him. Rather than making excuses, he is highly motivated to seek help from the Lord. After He heals the man, the Lord tells him to take up his bed and walk. How can we do this in our lives?

READ: “The Lord Heals Paralysis” by the Rev. Ragnar Boyesen

We are paralyzed by the influx of evil spirits who invade our thinking and feeling processes. If we are not given help, we can be permanently damaged.... We are indeed in need of healing, all of us. Without the merciful presence of the Lord’s spiritual helpers we would expire.

READ: “Healing the Paralyzed Man” a family talk by the Rev. Donald Rose

The news that Jesus could forgive sins would mean the most to people who wanted to be good, but who had done wrong things in the past.... [T]he Lord was not born on earth just to see and talk to perfect people.

PROJECT: A Diorama of Healing the Paralyzed Man (*ages 3-6*)

Use playdough figures and a little stretcher to reenact the story from Mark 2.

PROJECT: Healing the Paralyzed Man (*ages 6-9*)

Color the pictures and then make a slit along the dotted lines so you can lower the paralyzed man through the roof (the slit) to get help from the Lord.

ACTIVITY: Sequencing the Story of the Paralyzed Man (*ages 8-12*)

Cut apart the story strips and manipulate them to tell the story in the correct order.

COLORING PAGE: Friends Help the Paralyzed Man Reach the Lord

SPIRITUAL TASK: Arise and Walk by the Rev. David Roth (*teens and up*)

The Lord is able to heal our spiritual diseases (things having to do with our salvation and eternal life) when we approach Him and live by His Word.

THE POOL OF BETHESDA

When Jesus...said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”
The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool
when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”
Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.”
(John 5: 6-8)

The waters in the pool of Bethesda were stirred by an angel so that a person could be healed. In this miracle, the Lord heals a man who was not able to get into the pool in time. This man was trying to get help, but he also offered an excuse at first. Yet the Lord healed the man and sent him on his way.

READ: “Rise, Take Up Your Bed and Walk” by the Rev. Grant Odhner

All the stories of the Lord’s healings are parables about the healing of the mind. Spiritual sickness and health, damnation and salvation, are all a matter of mind. It is our mind that experiences the Lord and His salvation. The Word’s parables are about the mind and its changes.

READ: “The Miracle at the Pool of Bethesda” by the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

When the Lord told the sick man, “Take up your bed and walk,” He meant that the man should walk on a path that would lead him toward heaven. And that is what the man did. And that is what we can do when we want to be healed by the Lord and to follow Him to heaven.

PROJECT: Pool of Bethesda Diorama (*ages 3-6*)

Make a shoebox diorama of the healing miracle at the Pool of Bethesda.

ACTIVITY: Dramatization of Healing the Man at the Pool of Bethesda (*ages 6-8*)

Use a large square of blue silk (or other fabric) to represent the pool of Bethesda. Let the children pretend to have different physical challenges and take turns going to be healed.

PROJECT: Stirring the Water (*ages 6-9*)

Color the angel and draw sick people around the pool of Bethesda. Then cut out the pieces and assemble so that you can move the angel to the pool to “stir” the water.

COLORING PAGE: The Lord Heals the Man at the Pool of Bethesda

ACTIVITY: The Lord’s Truth (*ages 9-12*)

Think about the role of truth in our lives by reflecting on ways that water helps us. Then find the truths that can help “cure” us of bad habits or attitudes.

COME UNTO ME

[I]t is a wonderful thing that where the Word is read with reverence
and the Lord is worshipped from the Word, the Lord is present together with heaven.
(*Divine Providence 256:2*).

The Lord reaches out to all people but we are free to receive or reject Him. By choosing to do what is good and let His truth be our guide, the Lord can draw us closer to Himself. How can the church support us in our efforts to look to the Lord and receive His invitation?

READ: For the World and for Each Individual

This article describes two of the most vital uses of the Lord’s church—the importance it has for the human race as a whole and also for each individual.

PROJECT: The Lord Is in His Holy Temple (*ages 4-8*)

A project to help little children picture the Lord being present in church when His Word is being read and we are worshiping Him.

SING: Come Unto Me, All You Who Labor and Are Burdened

PROJECT: Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together

Make a picture of the Lord by that altar of your church to illustrate the way the Lord draws us near to Him when we focus on the teachings of His Word.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Come Unto Me (*teens and up*)

Read quotes from the Word to explore our role in becoming worthy guests for the great supper.

SING: Father I Come to Thee