

APPROACHING THE LORD IN WORSHIP

The Rev. David R. Simons

Worship is an approach to the Lord. We do this when we come before His open Word not only with our bodies, but especially with our minds and hearts. When we approach the Lord in this way, He comes to us. For it is a spiritual law that the Lord can flow into our minds and hearts, only so far as we approach Him. The first thing of all worship, then, is to approach the Lord and look to Him so that He can fill our minds with His truth and our hearts with His love.

The Word is the Lord with us—revealing Himself, showing His love and wisdom, speaking directly to us. When we listen with open minds, then Lord flows into us, to enlighten and lead us toward heaven, for heaven is a state of receiving, a state in which angels receive the qualities of the Lord into themselves. They receive His truth and His good with delight. Reading the Word can be a delight to us as well, for through the Word the Lord's Divine love can flow into our minds and raise all our good thoughts and our true loves to Himself in heaven, like a great magnetic power. Then heaven itself can flow into us and the Lord Himself will be with us.

True listening is not easy; it is hard work. It is much easier to think of yesterday's game, or next week's party, to worship our own false gods, our own worldly ends. True listening takes concentrated effort, because our natural minds like to wander toward the things of this world. Unless we train ourselves to put the things of heaven first, we may be worshiping with our bodies but not with our minds, and this is not true worship.

In addition to the reading from the Word, worship services usually have preaching from the Word, so that its truths may be opened to our understanding. It is the duty of priests to teach the truth and by it to lead to the good of life, that is, they show how the truth applies to our lives and lead us to live the life of religion. Priests are specially trained for this use, and it is their love to see that people receive and follow the truth.

In the New Church we read from the Old and New Testaments and from the Heavenly Doctrine, also called the Writings, because these are three parts of the Word. The Old Testament tells us about the Lord who was to be born into the world. The New Testament shows us the Lord on earth. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us about the Lord in heaven and on earth. When we receive the truths of the Word into our minds, only then can the Lord be born in us. Only then can the Lord work His miracles in us, even as He did on earth. And only then can He show us into His angelic heaven and lead us to dwell there forever.