

Awakening From the Sleep of Sorrow

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of awakening from the sleep of sorrow and finding security in Christ, rather than relying on the things of this world.

Duration: 48:52

Scripture: Luke 22:39

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "Godly Trust"

Description

This sermon is a prophetic message about awakening from the sleep of sorrow, preparing for difficult times ahead. It emphasizes the need to let go of worldly attachments, embrace the divine purpose, and find joy in God's presence despite challenges. The call is to be witnesses of Christ's sacrifice and to trust in God's control over all circumstances.

Transcript

This morning, the message I have for you is a prophetic message. That means it has some application to your life today, but it will also apply to tomorrow. I'm going to be speaking to you about awakening from the sleep of sorrow.

Now folks, there's a season coming, according to the words of Christ in Matthew chapter 24, when nation will rise against nation. There will be famines, there will be floods. There will be difficulty and distress come into the earth such as humankind has never seen.

And Jesus called the beginning of these things the beginning of sorrows. Now many sitting here today and many who are going to hear this message in the future and are joining with us as well this morning, you're going to go into this time of sorrow. There's no escaping it.

So getting up, you know, quite sometimes when you introduce such a title, there are a certain type of pursuit of Christ that you find even in God's own house, that if the message doesn't make me happy, if it's not initially telling me I'm wonderful and everything's going to be fine, then I'm out of here, I'm out of my seat and I'm out of the house of God. You do yourself a great disservice to have that kind of a pursuit of God. This message is going to give you strength.

If you can bear with it, if you can sit through it, you're going to understand at the end how where strength is found and how this time of sorrow is not your destiny. It's not what God has for you. There'll be many who

are ensnared there and they'll never get out of it.

Men's hearts are going to fail them for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth. And folks, he's not far away. We're in that season.

Everything that you know, many things around us today are going to so radically change in a very short period of time. You've got to be ready for the days that we're going into. You've got to be prepared to face these days.

And Jesus himself said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. You don't escape it by avoiding it. You escape it by facing the storm head on and facing it in the strength of Christ and facing it according to the truth of the word of God, facing it with the knowledge that God has clearly revealed in the scriptures.

And you will get through whether or not you're in a season of sorrow today or tomorrow, whatever your situation is, or you've just escaped one and you dread the thought of going back into that time again. There is an awakening from the sleep of sorrow. There is a church that's not going to be held captive there when the whole world is wringing its hands.

When men are casting their idols of silver and gold to the, to the bats and the moles of the earth, there is a church that is going to have a song of praise that people are going to look at this bride and be stunned because there's nothing on the outside that's causing the song. This song is coming from somewhere deep within something supernatural. And this is where we have to go as a church age.

This is where you have to go. This is where I have to go. I pray God give me the words this morning and the Lord give you the ears to hear and God by his Holy Spirit, give us all the desire to understand this message.

Father, I thank you Lord with all my heart today, God, I'm not standing here in my own strength. I'm standing here knowing as every person in the sanctuary that I need the same grace that I'm about to speak about. Oh God almighty, I pray for an anointing that transcends the frailty of this human body, the frailty of my human reasoning, transcends, oh God, everything that would stand in opposition to it today in the sanctuary and in our hearts.

Oh, would you give us Holy Spirit, the desire to hear what you're speaking to the church in this last hour of time. You said he has ears to hear God, give us ears to hear. Lord, I pray, give me ears to hear, give this body ears to hear, help this church, Lord.

God, be merciful to your people in this time that we're living in, in the earth. Father, I pray God almighty that you take this word and may it become a great strength to many in the days ahead. Lord, may it produce a song of praise in the hearts of those who desire to have an understanding.

I thank you for it with all my heart, in Jesus' mighty name. Luke chapter 22, please, in the New Testament. Luke chapter 22, again the message title is Awakening from the Sleep of Sorrow, beginning at verse 39.

Now we're talking about the time when Jesus had finished his last supper with his disciples. He's now heading out into the garden of Gethsemane. He's going to enter into a very intense spiritual battle where his flesh didn't want to go where his father was leading him.

He himself prayed, Father, if it would be possible, take this cup from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done. The disciples went with him, but you're going to see from this passage of scripture they couldn't stay awake and there was a reason for it. Verse 39, Luke 22, and he came out and went as he was wont to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples also followed him.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, pray that you enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from his prayer and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow. And he said unto them, why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

Sleeping for sorrow. I don't know how many times I have preached on this passage of scripture, I have studied it, I have heard messages on it, but I've never seen it in this context until the Lord just brought it to my attention. I've often preached that it was the intensity of the battle, and of course there's great truth there was the greatest battle perhaps this universe has ever known was transpiring.

But they weren't sleeping really just for the weight of the battle. The scripture says they were sleeping for sorrow, and when you look it up in the original text that's exactly what it means, sorrow. They were heavy.

There was a sense of deep and a foreboding sense of loss had come into their hearts. It's as if something they had cherished was slipping through their fingers, they were suffering the loss of something, and because of this sorrow that was in them, they couldn't bring themselves to pray. Mark chapter 14 verse 40 says that when Jesus returned he found them asleep again, and they didn't know what to answer him.

He was requesting of them, please would you stay up, would you pray with me? This is a difficult hour, this is the season where I'm about to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, would you please pray with me? You think after three years of walking with him, this one request, they would be more than glad to come, they would be more than glad to pray with him, but they couldn't bring their physical bodies, they could not bring their minds into focus, and they didn't know what to answer him, they were without excuse, we don't know why we can't pray. There was nothing, there was nothing they could say when he said why are you sleeping again, why can't you pray with me at least for one hour? In John chapter 16 at the time before the events of our opening text, now Jesus had clearly spoken to them of the reason why sorrow would come and be their temporary companion. He told them in verses 5 and 6 of John 16, he said in verse 5, now I go to my way to him that sent me, and in verse 6 he said because I've said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.

I'm going to my father, he said I'm going back to the one who sent me, and he said now because I've told you this, sorrow has come upon you. Now even the promise of future joy wasn't enough to release their hearts from the sorrow which had come to them. In verse 22 of John 16, he said now therefore you will have sorrow, but I will see you again and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man will take from you.

Now you would think that would be enough, he told them you're going to have sorrow, but I'm coming back and you're going to have a joy that no one's going to be able to take away from you. Now you ask a question, why couldn't they hear this? What was in them that was causing them not to be able to hear the fullness of what Christ was speaking to them? It's like they got stuck at the point of sorrow, and all they

could do because of the heaviness in their hearts was just hang their heads and really sleep in one of the most definitive moments in all of history. All they could do was sleep because of sorrow.

Now I personally believe that the depth of sorrow the disciples were experiencing in these moments where they couldn't pray had its origin in the sense of deep loss in the present. Now not only were they about to lose the Christ, their best friend, the image of God with whom they had become familiar, but quite possibly also they were losing in this loss of Christ the image of themselves in relation to this man Jesus who was in their estimation beginning also to fade from view. You see, here's the point, you and I walking with God, we come into the kingdom of God, we come into the temple of God, we hear the promises of God, we hear the word of God, we hear the word of God, and we all have an image in our hearts of how we think that Christ is going to manifest his life through us.

The businessman believes that he's going to be a greater businessman, the lawyer believes he's going to be more compassionate in the courtroom. Everyone believes that somehow God's going to come and he's going to manifest his glory through how I think my life is going to unfold. He's going to come with me, he's going to walk with me and he's going to make me better and he's going to fulfill this image that I still have in some measure of who I am, what my life is and where my life is going.

And so these disciples obviously had this in their hearts. Just picture with me for a moment, now it's conjecture on my part, but walk with me through this. What were these disciples thinking? Why couldn't they stay awake? Is it possible that John in his heart is saying, I can't believe he would leave me alone.

He knew how much I love him and how much I need him. And John was the one who leaned on his breast at the last supper. And I guess in John's heart, this is as good as it gets.

This is where I'm going to stay. I'm going to stay here. I'm going to always lean on him and he's always going to be here for me.

He's the friend and father I've always longed for. He'll never forsake me. And this is all I want in life.

This is how the life of Jesus is going to be manifested through me and in me. He's just always going to be there. He's always going to be so close, I can lean on his chest and I can hear his heart.

Think of James for a moment, who was one of those who sent their mother to Jesus, wanting to sit at one of the sides of Christ in his kingdom. And think of the confusion in the mind of James as he might've said, how am I supposed to reign with a vanishing king in an unseen kingdom? I thought I was going to reign. I thought, in his whole, in his mind for those three years, you know, Jesus was clearly revealing.

You look in the gospel of John, he was clearly telling them where he's going to go, what the future, but they weren't hearing it. Because it wasn't fitting into their own image of themselves. That's the point folks.

They still were holding to how I feel God's got to be God in me. And God's got to be God through me. And they're tenaciously as it is holding to this, at the same time trying to hear the truth of what Christ is speaking, but unable to lay hold of the fullness of it.

How am I supposed to reign with a vanishing king in a dissipating kingdom? And in the same chapters, our opening text, you see the apostle Peter denying him. Now, I've often said it myself, and there's a measure of truth in it, that he was afraid. But it wasn't just that.

It was much deeper than just fear. Peter showed that he wasn't completely cowardly. In the garden of Gethsemane, he took out his sword, and he cut off the servant of the high priest here.

I believe that Peter was willing to fight to the death at that moment. He wasn't by nature cowardly, as much as we would like to picture him that way. But picture Peter now.

Peter is following from a distance, and the confusion that must have been in his mind as he said, he promised me a kingdom. He gave me keys to authority. He told me I was built on a sure foundation, that I was standing in a place over which the plans of hell could never prevail.

But how do I reconcile what he's been speaking to me with the one who's standing before me, beaten, bruised, and captive? If he is at the mercy of wicked men, then how do I reconcile this kingdom that he's been speaking into my heart? This place where evil can't triumph, how do I reconcile it? You see folks, you and I must understand something. In the coming days, many people are going to experience intense sorrow as our image of God and our own image of how we think Christ should be glorified through us suddenly appears to be taken away. The Bible says everything that can be shaken is going to be shaken.

And that's not an exaggeration, everything, everything that can be shaken is about to be shaken. Now folks, if you don't fully embrace this right now, get the tape and keep it on your person somewhere, and play it again a year from now, two years from now. Now you'll understand why the Holy Spirit was warning us this day.

Many things that we thought were good and right, which promised security and fulfillment, which fulfilled our own view of how our life should be, will be suddenly gone. Things that we thought we were going to be in Christ, things that we thought God was obligated to be in us, our view. You see, it's in the human nature to want to be as God, that's our fallen nature.

And even though I'd like to think, and you would, that that's completely destroyed when we come to Christ, the power of it is, yes I agree, but that human nature is still there. That part of us that still wants to tell God how He should be doing this thing in us. This is how you should be guiding, this is what you should be doing, this is the ministry that I should have, this is how you should be flowing through my life.

And so we're walking with God, not necessarily in full agreement with Him. And God knows when we've laid hold of things that are hindering His work, that are hindering the true image of God from being manifested in us. And in His mercy, He will shake everything that can be shaken.

Genesis 13, Lot, one of the nephew of Abraham, part of the family of God, the scripture says he lifted up his eyes, and he beheld all the plain of Jordan, everywhere there seemed to be water, that means there was life, the touch of God was everywhere. And it looked, the scripture says, as the garden of the Lord, as a matter of fact he looked up and said, this is just like the garden of Eden. He looked into the ways of God, he looked into where the hand of God was being manifested in the physical at that time, and Lot proceeded forward to find his joy in something that is corruptible and falls short of what God has in store for His children.

I can't fathom how this man must have thought in his heart that God is leading me to find fulfillment in the things of this earth. And yet we live in a generation where that theological perspective has found great ground in the house of God. The Lot, Christianity, part of the family of God, I'm not denying that these are brothers and sisters in Christ, but sitting under perspective, not looking where they should be looking, and

having found a place in the earth and said this is what God has for me, this is where my life is going to be fulfilled, this is where I'm going to be satisfied.

Little did this man know the sorrow that was coming into his heart. The sorrow that was coming into his home, as everything around him was about to be shaken. The confusion of heart, I thought this was God, I thought we were being led by God into the promised land.

Now the promised land is burnt as it was to a crisp, going up into this little mountain with his confused children, because his eyes just simply had refused at some point to look high enough on this journey. Think about Abraham for a moment, seeing what he may have felt to be rightfully his being taken away, as he watched his lot go into this world as it is and take the best. And Abraham could have had a question in his heart.

After all, wasn't the blessing supposed to be mine? Wasn't this blessing supposed to include the land? Wasn't this blessing also including crops and herds and security and the things of this world? And he watched his lot go into the best of it now and he's more or less left standing there watching his greedy nephew take the best of all this world has to offer. Oh folks, how we can sorrow at the loss of an illusion. How we can sorrow at a vanishing hope.

How we can sorrow at an image of happiness. A childhood dream that we're just not willing to lay down. A self-view that does not conform ultimately to reality in Christ.

But it was after these things in Genesis 15 that the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision. The word of the Lord came to Abraham and he said, Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. Abraham, Abraham, Abraham.

Sons and daughters of Abraham. Church of Jesus Christ. Your future is not in the things of this world.

Your hope is not in the things of this world. Your happiness is not in the things you possess. It's not in the kingdoms of this world which can be taken away in a moment of time.

God was saying to Abraham, I have everything under control. And nothing of that which I promised you is bound to what you see with your natural eye. And understand with your natural mind.

The Lord says to you today, I'm bound to you. I'm bound to you. I'm bound to glorify my own name through you.

And I will shake everything that has to be shaken. I will take away everything that needs to be taken away. But the one thing that cannot be taken away is my life and my love for you.

My life and you can't be taken away. The Lord will shake it all until in his church there's nothing left but him. Until there's nothing left in this world to look at.

And to look to and to look for. Until kingdoms are shaking. Until everything in this world is beginning to spin out of control.

And God says now look up. Look up. Look higher than you've looked before.

In 1 Corinthians 13 11 Paul said when I was a child I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought like a child.

But when I became a man I put away childish things. There's certain seasons that we allow our children to have a wrong view of life. Our children can say outlandish foolish things.

And we just smile at it. Because they're children. But there's a time of learning.

There's a time of growth when there's an expected understanding to come into the heart. And that's the way it is for you and I as the bride of Jesus Christ. The Lord says you must not be children in this time you're living in.

You must put away childish perspectives. You must put away all thoughts and hope that your security is going to be found in anything of this world. And anything of this life because it's not there.

Your security is found in Christ and in Christ alone. 1 Thessalonians 4 13 Paul tells us that we're not to sorrow as those who have no hope. 2 Corinthians 4 18 again Paul tells us the things which we see are temporal or temporary.

But the things which are not seen are eternal. You and I choose to believe God that it's not what we see with the natural eye before us. But it's what we know in our hearts to be true upon which finds our attention our life and our joy.

It's what we know to be true. It's not what we see. If your joy is dependent on what you see it can be taken away in a moment of time.

The loss of a job. The loss of a loved one. The loss of a relationship.

The loss of some future ambition. The loss of some personal goal. These things can be taken away in a moment.

The ability, the purpose of them as I've seen in the roadway to achieving them can be gone in a moment of time. It can all dissipate. But my joy and your joy has to come from the things that I know in this book are true.

The ways of God that I have chosen to embrace. Not just the promises of God but the whole counsel of God. David said in Psalm 57, now in Psalm 57 David was fleeing from a madman.

Now think of it for a moment. Follow the life of David. He's having great victories in the wilderness.

Samuel the prophet has come in and singled him out from his own brethren and poured the anointing oil of God upon him. He's been given a sweet song that is very much part of his heart and part of his life. He's been carried by God.

He's been brought into places that the natural man can't go. He was made son-in-law as it is to the king. Given great victories.

Songs were sung about him. His name was on the people's lips. It seemed that everywhere he went there was great, great victory.

And David could have said, oh God this is how I see my life going. Oh this is awesome from the day that Samuel poured that oil on me. It's just been victory upon victory.

And David could have entered into the mix and said Lord now I know how this needs to be done. I know how your name needs to be glorified in the earth. And I know exactly what you need to do in my life and how you need to do it.

And that's the way we are. We are all that way. The best thing you can do for your own heart today is admit it and say you're right.

That's who I am. I have a sense of what my life should be. And I'm willing to hear everything from the word that confirms that to my heart.

But I'm not willing to hear that if God wants to speak to me that what I view my future to be may not be the will of God for me. Suddenly David finds himself in a cave with some disgruntled people on his left hand and on his right hand. Pursued by a madman.

But David says in that cave Oh God my heart is fixed. That was the cry of my heart. Oh God my heart is fixed.

David said I will awake early. I will sing songs of praise to you. He said God I will praise you among the nations.

I will sing songs to you in your holy temple. Lord I will choose to praise you until these calamities be over past. Actually that's verse 1 of Psalm 57.

God Almighty I'll give you praise until these calamities that are all around me are over past. Now you ask the question reasonably where does David get this power to escape the sorrow of his situation. It's a sorrowful time.

It looks like he's lost his position. He's lost his wife Michal has been taken away from him. He's lost so much.

All the armies are gone. The only thing he's got left is a sword of Goliath. It's basically a history of past victory.

He's in a cave. He's got perhaps an instrument of music that somebody may have brought with them. Everything is gone.

The only thing that isn't gone is the presence of God that's in him. The joy of the Lord that became that man's strength. Everything is gone.

The natural man would say this is ridiculous. God I thought you promised me that I was going to reign. I thought you promised me that I was going to prosper in my journey.

I thought God you promised me that this was going to be victory after victory. Line upon line. Defeating the devil stomping on his head and all the rest of it.

And here I am in a cave. I was the third from the top in my business. I was achieving in the realm of education.

I was moving forward in the medical field. My investments were doing just fine. My future was planned.

And in a moment of time it's all gone. But the Lord was able to speak to David's heart in that time and say maybe it's all gone. But I'm not gone.

I am the Alpha and Omega. I was here before you were born. And I'll be here after you're gone.

I will never leave you nor forsake you. Never, never, never, never, never. You will have a song no matter how dark the days get.

No matter how difficult it is. Even though the waves of the sea may roar. Men's hearts may be failing them.

The mountains may be moving. But you will have a song of praise in your heart. You who belong to God.

You'd ask me the question, how did David get this? Where did it come from? Where did he get the power to praise God in the midst of such an evil time? In Luke chapter 24, just two chapters away from where we started. Jesus walked up to two men who were on their journey after the cross. And he said to them, what are you talking about to each other? And why are you so sad? Why has sorrow come into your heart? You see folks, everybody had an idea of what the Redeemer should be.

Of what he should do. And even though he was plainly telling them what his journey was all about. There's almost nobody could hear it.

Must have been an awfully lonely journey for him. Then they talked to the Christ, to the Bible. Cleopatra says to him, are you a stranger here? Do you not know what's been going on? A mighty prophet was raised up in Israel.

Jesus of Nazareth, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. I sat at his house, I heard him speak. My heart was made so glad.

I thought that all the kingdoms that opposed him were going to perish in a moment of time. I was finally going to be free. All tyranny and oppression was going to cease.

But now, he said, the priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death. They've crucified him. We trusted past tense that it had been him which should have redeemed Israel.

And besides all this, it's been three days since these things were done. There are certain of our company who have been to his grave. They did not find his body and told us he was alive.

And even some of us went down and checked it out. But we didn't see him. And then Jesus opened his mouth and he said, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory. In verse 27, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in the scriptures all things concerning himself. He opened the word.

In other words, he opened to them the things in scripture. He showed them that the things they were experiencing, which had brought sorrow into their hearts, which left them heavy, sad, and visionless on their journey, were actually the working out of a divine purpose. God had never lost control of anything.

You've got to get that so deep in your heart now. Nothing is out of the control of God. No matter what happens.

No matter what you have to face in the days ahead. If it gets to the point where we can't meet even as a church anymore and assemble together. Folks, listen to me.

Nothing, nothing is out of the control of God. Everything is in the control of his hand. And then he made as if he would have passed by and kept on going.

They constrained him and said, no, we want to know this. We want to understand these things. In verse 29, they said, abide with us.

It's toward evening. And the day is far spent. And he went into tarry with them.

And it came to pass as he sat at meat and took bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they knew him and he vanished out of their sight. He showed them the reason that he had come into the earth in the first place.

That he was sent here to be broken. That all of the purpose of God in Christ was the redemption of a fallen world. Folks, that's what it was all about.

That's the message. That's the whole thing. How have we so perverted and deluded it in this generation to think it's anything else? It's about Christ coming into this earth, dying on a cross.

That men and women who are headed for hell may be reconciled to God through it. Faith in that sacrifice 2,000 years ago. That is the reason he came into the earth.

Their eyes were opened. And they said, did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way? And he opened to us the scriptures. Their hearts burned.

Now immediately after this in verse 45, Jesus came to them. And it says he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures. Now until we are willing to embrace the fact that even hardship is working out a divine purpose.

Until you and I get to the point where we're not theologically living to escape every difficult place in this life and in this world. When we finally get to the place of saying, God, all things work together for good. To those who love you and are called according to your purpose.

Not some things or a few things or many things. All things. Nothing that is coming into my life.

First of all, if it comes to me, you've allowed it to come to me. And if it comes to me, it's come for a reason. And if it's come to me for a reason, I'm coming through the valley of the shadow of death.

On the other side, goodness and mercy are going to follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Until we're willing to embrace both sides of the cross.

The blessing, the call, and the suffering. Until we're willing to put the whole of the scripture together. We'll never fully understand the scriptures.

But the moment you and I are willing to embrace the truth. I'm willing to embrace the work of God. The reason that God became a man in the earth.

Then the scriptures are opened. Verse 45. And after opening the scriptures, he led them to a place of power.

He said to them, thus it is written. And thus it behoove Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.

Beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold I send the promise of my father upon you.

But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high. God said this is the reason I came. This is what the message is all about.

This is the work of God. You are to be witnesses of the fact that I died for the sins of humanity. That is your focus.

That is your heart. That is your life. I didn't come to make you a more successful businessman.

I didn't come to make you happier on the journey. I did not come to fulfill some inner destiny of yourself that you think I'm obligated to fulfill. I came to die on a cross for the sins of humanity.

I came to offer eternal life and abundant life. Now that abundant life is Christ in us. The hope of glory.

It's a new mind. It's a new heart. It's a new spirit.

It's a new value system. I came to give you these things that are not given to the casual observer. They're not given to those whose hearts are inextricably attached to the things of this world, folks.

That's why so many people in the days ahead who have sat in the house of God are going to be gripped with sorrow. The value system is all wrong. The focus is wrong.

Where they're looking is wrong. And when it's taken away, they're going to say, God, you failed us. God, you've forsaken us.

Lord, I had such promise in my heart. I had such a journey. But God will say to you, it wasn't your promise.

It wasn't mine. The journey you were on was short of the glory of God. You're called to be a witness in this earth of the fact that I died for all people created in the image of God.

If God blesses you in your business, then thank Him for it. If He blesses you in your career, give Him glory. But keep in mind, that is not the purpose that Christ died for.

Those are some of the necessary trappings of the journey, but that's not the journey itself, to be a witness. I prayed this week. I said, God, I love my wife with all my heart.

I love my children. I love my grandchildren. But not one of them can come before you.

And whatever you call me to do, that's what I'm going to do. Where you call me to go, that's where I'm going to go. My plans have got to become secondary to His plans.

He directed them to a place of power. And then in verse 50, it said, He led them out as far as Bethany and lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

So now He's parted again, but this is different this time. This parting hasn't brought any sorrow with it. Because they now understand who they are on the earth.

Why we've been placed here by God. And verse 52 says, They worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

Now the Roman army was still there. Society, they were still in a captivated, natural, physical society. The Pharisees still, to the natural eye, seemed very much in control of the house.

As the natural man would look and say, well they appear to have triumphed over Christ. How perplexing it must have been to the Pharisees to see these people lifting their hands and praising God. Because they had embraced something that is not given to natural men.

It's something of God that's only given to those who desire to have a spiritual eye. And whose lives are abandoned to the purposes of God. In reality, it's where strength is.

It's where you and I can have an assurance that we will not be swallowed by the sorrow of this world. We're coming into a time in scripture called the beginning of sorrows. Sorrow will be all over the world.

People will be wringing their hands. Heart attacks will abound. The ambassadors of peace, Isaiah said, will weep bitterly.

They will believe that through amalgamating of governments and strategies and ideas, that somehow that peace can be brought to this perishing planet. But it will fail. Everything will fail.

All will fail. But in the midst of it all, Prophet Isaiah clearly says, there will be a people praising God. The scripture bears witness to it.

All through history. No matter what we have to face. Early Christians, many of them faced unspeakable hardship.

But the glory of God was in their souls because their value system was not attached to this world. Oh yes, they believed they were called to be good citizens, and they were. If they were true Christians, they would be a good citizen of this world.

But their value system was different. They were not an extra attached to the things of this world that are perishing. They had an inner value system that says, God, I trust you.

Oh God, I trust you. Oh God, I trust you. No matter what is taken away from me.

No matter where I have to go. Like the Apostle Paul. There were so many people on the shore that were trying to stop him from his journey.

Oh Paul, stay with us. Paul said, are you trying to break my heart? See, I've found a source of joy that you don't necessarily have yet. My joy is in abandonment to God.

Are you trying to bring me into your sorrow? Are you trying to break my heart? Are you trying to attach me to the ways of this world? That's what Paul was saying to them on that shore. And they were well-meaning people, but they fully hadn't embraced yet the ways of God. Paul knew, no, I'm going on this journey.

And that's where joy in life is really found. And even if it means prison at the end. Let God be glorified there.

That's where God was able to put a pen in that man's hand. And pen descriptions are much of what we read from today. And much of where our encouragement comes from is a man who had another worldly value system.

I plead with you, my brother, my sister in Christ. If ever there was a time to let go of the things of this world, it's now. It doesn't mean you abandon your house and take a tent and go live in the city and it makes you holy.

I'm not talking about that. But you let go of it as being the source of your fulfillment because it's not. And in your heart, you say, God, thank you for a lovely home.

Thank you, God, for a nice apartment. Thank you, God, for the subway fare that I have to get to work. And thank you for all of these things.

And thank you for my family. And thank you, God, for everything you've given me. But, oh, God, all this can be taken away in a moment of time.

And if my heart is attached to it more than I'm attached to you, then I will be swallowed of sorrow in the coming days. You and I have got to ask God to say, Lord, you've got to open to me the scriptures. And you've got to tell me and teach me and show me that all things that you're allowing into my life are working out a divine purpose.

The testimony you've established in me is not being triumphed over and never will be triumphed over. Praise God. I thank God for this with all my heart.

They were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Still oppressed by the Romans. Still having to pay taxes that were exorbitant and unrealistic.

Still going through the struggles and trials of at any moment having soldiers come in, arrest their sons and daughters, falsely imprison some of their family members. Still, still, still, still, still under this dominion. But yet, not under it anymore.

They'd found a source of life. They'd found a source of hope. They'd found a source of strength that has nothing to do with the things of this world.

They were living witnesses. The fact that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. And whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

That's the call of my life. That's how I want to finish my life this way. I beg you in Christ's name.

Finish the race well. Don't get so bound to the things of this life that you end up with your head down. Sorrowing over the loss of some insignificant thing, some illusion.

When you are called to stand and give glory to God in the darkened hour, give him everything you've got and do it now. If you don't know how to do it, ask him and he'll show you. Ask him to unlock the scriptures to you.

Give you understanding. That's where the joy comes from. Christian life is not to be something that we just use for comfort.

Comfort will come, but it will be a supernatural comfort, not a natural one. I want to give an altar call today to people who are living in sorrow. Sorrow has become a constant companion of your life.

I also want to call those who are living in the fear of loss of something. I'm going to ask you today in the Lord's stead to give up that fear. Give up the fear of losing something that you could never really hold to anyway.

And give your life in entirety to God. When you do, the Lord says he'll open to you the scriptures. He will unlock the scriptures.

You will have an understanding of God in your mind. And he will give you a song of praise that can never be taken away. Let's stand.

If the Holy Spirit is drawing you, please make your way to this altar. The Lord's going to touch your life today in a very special way. Every backslider, come home.

Get home quickly to God. Those who are not living for the Lord, get home to God. Get there quickly.

There's not a lot of time to play with this, folks. It's very difficult to get right with God in a time of panic. Get right with God now.

Do it now. Those who are not living for God, get right with God. We're going to worship for a little while.

And as we do, you respond now to the Holy Spirit. Lift your heart, lift your hands to God. Tell him, Lord, who I am.

Lord, what I have. Where I'm going, it's all in your hands, Lord. God, I give you my life.

I give you my life in the fullness of it. Open the scriptures to me. Help me to understand spiritual things.

Guide me in the way of your life. In Jesus' name. Now, ironically, the outworking of embracing this kind of a word this morning is joy.

In the natural, you say, well, I don't feel very joyful right now. But, you know, the root of sorrow and fear is the sense of loss. It's a fear of the loss of something.

That's the root of fear and sorrow. When you finally say, God, I put everything in your hands. I put my family, my future.

It's all in your hands. Now, I know it can't be lost. It's eternal now.

And, God, I'm not going to be shaken by anything I lose in this side of eternity. Because I have you. I have your promise.

See, that's what brought these people to a place where they could continually be in the temple, praising God. And it was incredible praise. I have no doubt about it.

There's a release in the heart when you've had this face-to-face dealing with God. I was just speaking with Pastor David here for a moment. The message you sat under today is the foundation that this church was built on.

And that's why there has been a constant and abiding joy in this house in the presence of God. We've seen thousands of people turn to Christ here. Because we've not been a pulpit or a people that have avoided the harder truths.

Now, it's difficult to preach this way in the kind of an hour we're living in now. But it's very necessary. You're being prepared to face the days that we're going to have to face.

Praise God. But the end result of this is joy. There will be an outbreak of joy in your heart.

There'll be an outbreak of joy in this house. I'm going to pray a prayer for you. After I pray, we're going to sing that song, Greg, if we can.

The Lord is high above the heavens. I, like those who have come to this altar and you've been battling with sorrow, would you just let that go now? The Lord says, let it go. I'm with you.

I'll always be with you. I'll lead you to a place of power. I'll make you a witness for the fact that I'm alive from the dead.

I'll make you a witness. You'll be able to sing when nobody else can. When everyone else is running for the hills, you'll be running to the house of God.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Father, I just thank you, Lord, that where you are, there's liberty.

There's this incredible generosity of God's life. Father, thank you, Lord, for leading us to that place that cannot be shaken. Lord, you said that only that which cannot be shaken will remain.

We know that to be you. It's your life. It's the presence of your life within us, God.

It's the great salvation you've given to us. The power of the Holy Spirit to stand as lights in the darkened world. Oh, God, I thank you, Lord, for a song of praise among these people and in this house in our time that cannot be taken away.

It cannot be shaken. It cannot be removed. It cannot be threatened away.

Nothing can take this song away. It's got nothing to do with this world. It has everything to do with the life of Christ being lived inside of us.

Father, thank you, Lord, for breaking off of us the cords of this life, the cords of this world, God, that these things do not become our controlling value system. Father, we thank you for this, God, with all our hearts. Now I'm asking you as a pastor of this church, Lord, for an outbreak of joy in this house, oh, God, joy that's unspeakable and full of glory.

Thank you, Father. In Jesus' mighty name, give him a shout of glory in this house. Hallelujah, Lamb of God.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus.

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