

Manifesting Christ Through Union

by Ed Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of serving the Lord with gladness and understanding the centrality of Christ in heaven, based on the finished work of Christ.

Duration: 1:08:31

Scripture: Isaiah 54:17, 2 Timothy 2:21, Revelation 7:15

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Christian Service"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of serving the Lord with genuine delight rather than just going through the motions. He uses examples from nature, such as the relationship between the sun and the earth, to illustrate the principle of spiritual life. The preacher also highlights the necessity of relying on the Holy Spirit when studying God's Word and the importance of thirsting for God's presence. The sermon concludes by discussing the heavenly principle of Christian service, where believers serve the Lord and receive His blessings in return.

Transcript

Good morning, brothers and sisters. My spirit pants for thee, O living Word. There is a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable when we come to the study of God's Word.

We've just sung that indispensable principle, total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. It's His book. And thirst is the coin of God's kingdom.

Oh, everyone that thirsts, come and buy. Thirst will not be denied. If He creates a thirst in us, He'll satisfy that thirst.

He'll pour water on him that's thirsty. If we could come as dry ground, He would rain His water upon us. Open your mouth wide and I'll fill it, He said.

He delights to show Himself far more than anyone in this room desires to see Him. We've come to see the Lord. And only God can reveal God.

He delights to do it. Before we go to prayer, I want to remind you of our sister Ruth in the Bible. And how she became a gleaner in the fields of Boaz, you remember that? And how from early morning till night she would go out and secretly Boaz would have his servants drop in her path, hands full of purpose, supply.

But then one day, Ruth ceased being a gleaner in the field of Boaz. And she entered into a union with Boaz. And she had to glean no more.

Now she had the field. She was a co-heir with the whole field. She had everything because of her union with Boaz.

I think some of us perhaps have come as gleaners. And blessed be the Lord. He's faithful.

He gives, and He gives, and He gives again. But there is a union with the owner of the field that will put an end to your gleaning. Oh, may God take us there.

I don't know if you've come this week to, someone said to have their battery charged. What's a battery? I don't know where my battery is. To have your cup filled.

That's a gleaner. I pray that God would enable you this week to sink a well. Not just fill a cup.

Sink a well in the person of the Lord Jesus Himself. I'm going to ask you to bow with me, please, as we commit our time to Him. And then we'll pick up where we left off.

Our Father, we thank You so much that when You draw us, we run after You. We ask You even this morning to create a thirst in us. Work in us that attitude of childlikeness that is indispensable in receiving Your secrets and the hidden things.

Take us, we pray, beyond the sacred page. And enable us by Your grace to see the Lord. We want to behold our Lord Jesus.

We thank You, Lord, that this is not too much to ask because Thou art a great God and You desire this. So reveal Your Son to us, we pray. Teach us what it means to be serviceable to the Master.

We ask in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Well, as you know by now, both brothers have pointed it out, I had first choice.

In deference to the young upstart, the brothers gave me that privilege. And I chose this marvelous theme, service unto the Lord. 2 Timothy 2.21, a vessel of honor, sanctified, fit, useful, serviceable to the Master.

As I sought the face of the Lord concerning this wonderful theme, as I suggested on Monday evening, I found my heart crying out for some place in the Bible. When you come to a theme like serving the Lord, where do you go? I read the Gospel of Mark and I read Peter and I read 2 Timothy and I read the Isaiah servant passages and I looked every place somebody was called a servant. And my heart was crying out to the Lord for His guidance.

If there could be somewhere in God's revelation a master plan. If there could be a blueprint, a design, somewhere that God has laid out His heart, His heavenly intentions. And I asked the Lord if He would dawn on my heart the divine original, so that it wouldn't just be a message on serving the Lord, but that I might in some measure lay hold of His heart.

What does it mean to serve the Lord? And I believe in His mercy He did direct me to something that sheds great light on this whole matter of serving the Lord. Let me get that before your heart again and then we'll pick up. I want to do a little review and then pick up where we left off.

If you'll turn please to Revelation chapter 7. Revelation chapter 7, speaking of those who are before the throne of God in their eternal condition. Beginning at verse 15, For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.

They will hunger no more, nor thirst any more. Nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life.

And God will wipe all tears from their eyes. Verse 15, They serve Him day and night in His temple. There is a service up there, as our brother Kenny Pittman said when we first arrived.

A service after all the doing is done. What kind of a service is that? They serve Him day and night in His temple. Glorified, blood-washed saints.

And then if you'll look at Revelation chapter 22 please. Chapter 22, beginning at verse 3. There will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and His bondservants will serve Him.

They will see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There will no longer be any night. They will not have need of the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them.

And they will reign forever and forever. Glorious picture. His bondservants serve Him.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, there is a service in heaven. And as ages roll upon ages, His bondservants will serve Him. And as I studied, I thought, there's the master plan.

If God could begin to dawn on my heart what it means for bondservants who are beyond sin to serve Him forever. If I could see that service, maybe the prayer of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 6.10, Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

His will is being done up there. How is it being done up there? And so we are looking at that because I know, I don't have a doubt about this, when that day comes, we'll be serviceable to the Master. No question about that.

And so God has given us a picture of those who are serviceable to the Master, who serve Him day and night, who are called His bondservants. And my heart cries out, how do they do it? That Thy will might be done on earth as it's done in heaven. That's the plan.

That's the blueprint. That's the master plan. Now, we're not focusing, as you know, on the verbs, what they're doing, the action words.

God likes adverbs better than verbs. We're looking at how they're doing it. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And I suggested this little outline. We're following it in each of the messages. We leave the lower arena.

We leave the earth and we look up at the blueprint. And we ask this question, how does heaven begin? And there's a picture. And that picture contains a reality.

And so if we can see, how does heaven begin? And then the second question, how does it continue forever? And as I came before the Lord and I went before that blueprint and I looked at heaven and I

studied what God has given as a revelation. And I said, how does it begin? And He showed me this. And there contained the principle.

And how does it continue forever? And then I looked again. How does it begin? And He showed me this. How does it continue forever? And it's a principle on what heavenly service is.

And I looked a third time and there it was again. I almost didn't want to come to the conference. I almost wanted to look again and again and again.

I haven't seen it all. I've only touched, I've only begun to see the glory of this. The last time I was describing for you, how does heaven begin? Let me just get that principle before your heart again.

Heaven begins with a marvel of grace, a resurrection. I think I overstated the case last time. I said it never entered the heart, the thoughts of men, this bodily resurrection.

And one brother came up and shared about Job and how God had dawned on him that though worms would eat his body, yet in his flesh he would see God. So now and then God did dawn that great truth on some saints. But it was rare.

It was rare. Marvelous way heaven begins with a resurrection. And how does it continue forever? It begins with God doing it.

Man can't help. He can't do anything. He's in the grave.

God does it all. Grace. How does it continue forever? And the answer is the way it begins.

God does it forever. It's all grace, grace. God is a giver.

God is a servant. And I suggested as He had created the sun in the sky to be the great giver in our solar system, it just gives and gives. And He put the earth in a proper relationship with the sun so the earth could receive and receive.

And what can the earth give to the sun? Can it augment the glory of the sun? Can it add to Him? Can it increase His splendor? The earth has one thing it can give. And that is a testimony by receiving. And as the earth receives, the sun gets a testimony.

Otherwise we would think it's just a blazing ball of fire in the sky. We'd never know what the sun could do. But now we look at the earth.

Life everywhere. Color. Energy.

All the sun can do is because the earth learned to serve the sun by allowing the sun to serve the earth. And we read that there's no sun up there. And the reason there's no sun up there is we don't need the picture.

We have the reality. And He's the giver. And up there they've learned to receive.

And that's how it begins. And that's how it continues forever. Luke 12, 37.

When He comes again, He will gird on the apron, the slave's apron. And He will wait on them forever. What a marvelous passage that is.

And so that's the first principle, the heavenly principle of Christian service. We're going to serve the Lord. This is the resting place for the servants of the Lord.

If I'm serious about serving Him down here as they do it up there, then I must let God discover to my heart. I must allow the Lord to dawn on me the truth that I am a receiver. See, naturally I think I'm a giver.

And I'm always trying to give to the Lord. He's the giver. I'm the receiver.

Grace turns that around so that we understand, and now as I receive, I serve the Lord by allowing the Lord to serve me. That's the heavenly pattern. As the earth receives from the sun, as the body receives from the head, as the plant receives from the soil, and we ended with Colossians.

As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him. Rooted in Him. Grounded, built up in Him.

There's nothing else. He's your soil. You just take and take and take.

And how you serve the Lord? By allowing the Lord to serve you. Well, hold that in your hearts, please, and allow the Lord to guide you with me as we look a second time at the blueprint, at the master plan, at the great design. Is there any clue? Is there any revelation? Is there any light? We'll follow the same plan.

How does heaven begin? How will it continue forever? And I look again, and I see this. And I see this. How are you translators going to put that? I see this.

We need to see that together. What is it? How does it begin? How does it continue forever? Now, so that we may be helped, I'm going to ask you to turn to Psalm 100, please. I want to sort of get it.

I'm going to come back down in the lower arena, down on earth and lay hold of a little truth and then take it up to heaven and let God expand it. Psalm 100, beginning at verse 1, Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Here it is, mark it.

Serve the Lord with gladness. We're talking about serving the Lord. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that it's the Lord Himself is God. It is He who has made us.

Not we ourselves. We are His people. The sheep of His pasture.

Verse 2, serve the Lord with gladness. Alright, now let's go upstairs. Let's go back to the blueprint.

This is rhetorical. Don't answer. Is there any gladness in heaven? That's an answer.

Any gladness up there? Any joy up there? Serve the Lord with gladness. May I suggest that I don't want to add to the Scriptures, but I have an idea. In the balance of the truth, in the balance of Scripture, serve the Lord with gladness.

Serve the Lord with heaven's gladness. What makes heaven heaven? Why are they glad up there? Why are they rejoicing up there and singing up there? What's the joy of heaven? You say, the streets of gold. Someone said, is that literal? It's literal or better.

Literal or better. I don't have a problem with those who say it's figurative, because the reality is always greater than the figure. It's literal or better.

But that's not why they're rejoicing. Dana was sharing about a house. And the present foretaste of the house, and a house with many rooms.

Is that what the singing is all about? Or the pearly gates? You say, well, they're glad because of the absence of so many things. There's no sickness up there. There's no old age up there.

And there's no death up there. There's no night up there. And no weariness and no fatigue up there.

There's no sin up there. Is that why they're singing? I don't doubt that maybe a verse or two of their song might include some of those things. But that's not what makes heaven heaven.

The fact that there's no temple up there, or that there's a tree of life, or that there's a throne. What makes heaven heaven? What arrests and rivets our attention as we study God's revelation of heaven. I felt almost like a peeping Tom when I studied this.

I felt I was invading this holy place. And in my study as I went up and I began to study this, and as I looked into heaven, and as I put my ear to heaven's door, I saw nothing and I heard nothing except praises to the Lamb. It was all about Him.

It was centered in Him. Now, there are mysteries. And we talk about heaven and someone says, you know, what's it going to be like? Is it a place or is it just a condition? How are we going to appear? My grandfather died.

Will he be old? My baby died. Will it appear as a baby? The miscarriage. How will that appear in heaven? How will we communicate? Will we know all the previous things? What's our relationship to the angels? So many questions.

Will the Bible be there? Is it progressive? I tell you, as I studied this and I had all those questions in my mind, as many do, it was almost as if the Holy Spirit asked me, would you be more satisfied if I told you less about Jesus and more about those things? What makes heaven heaven? It's Him. If you don't want to hear about Him, you don't want to hear about your Bible. If you don't want to hear about Him, you don't want to hear about the Christian life.

If you don't want to hear about Him, you don't want to hear about heaven. 1 Thessalonians 4.17 To meet the Lord in the air. That's the point.

1 John 3.2 We know when He appears. That's the point. We'll be like Him.

We'll see Him as He is. Revelation 7.17 The Lamb is in the center on the throne. Revelation 21.3 He will dwell among them.

They shall be His people. Revelation 22.4 They will see His face. You familiar with the 17th verse of that wonderful poem by Anne Cousin? The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face.

I will not gaze at glory, but on the King of grace. Not at the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand. The Lamb is all the glory in Emmanuel's land.

It's Him. It's the glory of heaven. The delight, the joy that they have is Him.

Now, if we're going to serve the Lord with heaven's gladness, then we need to understand the centrality of Christ in that place called heaven. Now, there's no question when you read about Revelation, Dana's studying Revelation now, and I know he's already been caught up with the Lamb. The Lamb all through the book is the Lamb.

And we'll never stop praising the Lord for the Lamb and the finished work of Christ. But the gladness of heaven is even beyond praising Him for the joy that made this joy possible. It's based on the finished work of Christ.

But I think it transcends it. Let me ask the question again now. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Serve the Lord with heaven's gladness. How does heaven begin? If I were to ask you this question, where in the New Testament is the record of the Last Supper? I wonder where you'd take me. You'd say Matthew 26, of course.

That's where He broke the bread and poured out the cup. Called it the New Testament in His blood. Or Mark 14, or Luke 22, or John 13-17.

With you, I agree, that's a wonderful supper. But it's not the last one. Turn, if you would, to Revelation 19.

Revelation 19. How does heaven begin? Verse 7, Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him for the marriage of the Lamb has come. The bride has made herself ready.

It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean. The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And then He said to me, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

He said these are the true words of God. Now don't get lost in the details here. Don't get swallowed up in some system of theology.

Catch the wonder of this. How does heaven begin? Brothers and sisters in Christ, it begins with a marriage. It begins with a wedding.

It begins with a marriage feast. Don't read that la, la, la. That's the gladness up there.

The Lord and His bride have become one. And they lived happily ever after. That's heaven.

Revelation 21, please. Verse 1-2 I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

And I saw the holy city. A new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride, adorned for her husband. Verse 9 Come here, I'll show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

And He carried me away in the Spirit to a great high mountain. And He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. God doesn't begin to describe the eternal state until He tells us all about what it is.

It's the marriage of the Son of God. Jesus is getting married. And guess who the bride is? I'll tell you, this day of presentation, I know when we come to end time things, everybody goes in this direction and that direction, and some are all excited about the resurrection in phase 1, 2, 3, 4, or however many phases there are.

And someone else is, oh, the rapture, the rapture. I've never been too excited about something that takes a twinkling of an eye, and it's done. I haven't even really entered in, as many saints have, to the glories of the millennial kingdom.

But I'll tell you, there's a day coming that touches my heart so much. It's the presentation. It's the day when the bride is presented to the groom.

That's His day. You know, we sing, Oh, that will be glory for me. I can't sing that.

Not that way. And I know I stand out when we're singing it because I always sing, Oh, that will be glory for Him. Glory for Him.

Glory for Him. How He's longed for that day when the bride and the groom have been brought together. Everything's moving toward that day when He receives His bride without stain, spotless, without wrinkle, blameless, holy, pure, sanctified.

And as Brother Stephen shared yesterday, even he is not ashamed as he sees this glorious bride. Now, we can't get into the details now, but God describes that bride as this heavenly city, the Lamb's wife. And His description of His bride, He describes her as this magnificent, transparent, crystal gem all decked out in pearls and gold and gems and glory.

Look at chapter 21-11. Having the glory of God, her brilliance was like a very costly stone as a stone of crystal clears jasper. How does heaven begin? It begins with a wedding.

It begins with the bride and groom coming together. And what is the fruit of that union? How does it continue forever? Oh, the glory of this. Let me show you the bride.

They are united and she has become a gem that is filled with Him. And it's a transparent gem that shines to the ends of the new heaven and the new earth with the glory of the Lamb on the inside. She is the radiance of His glory.

That's marriage as God intended it to be. It's union with Him and the manifestation of Christ to the ends of the universe through the bride. That's the blueprint.

That's the master plan. The bride and the groom are one. And the outworking of that oneness is the bride is now the illuminator.

The Lamb is the lamp that is inside this marvelous gem. And He's just radiating His glory throughout the new heaven and the new earth. 1 John 3, 2, We know when He appears, can you finish it? We'll be like Him.

We'll see Him as He is. Alright, now let's get back to this. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Psalms 100. Serve the Lord with gladness. What's heaven's gladness? You say it's the Lamb.

Yes, it's more than that. It's the bride and the groom, the Lamb and His wife have become one. And how does it continue forever? One in such a union that Christ is manifest through His bride to all the ends of the universe.

I don't want to leave that, but let's come downstairs. We've got to come down here, because we're here. And we're talking about serving the Lord.

How do I serve the Lord? Heaven begins with a marriage, and it ends with the manifestation of Christ through the bride, through all the extent of the universe of God. Serve the Lord with gladness. Sometimes, many times, when we think of serving the Lord, the gladness isn't there.

See, you can fake the serving, but you can't fake the gladness. It doesn't say, I do Thy will. I delight to do Thy will.

There's no faking the delight. And sometimes, service here is so cold and so formal and so mechanical and so tedious and so dry. And instead of serving the Lord with delight, it becomes a burden and it becomes a drudgery and it becomes a heaviness and a frustration, unless we could serve like they do.

What is that secret? When we left off on Monday, I was using God's creation to illustrate spiritual life. We started with the sun and its relationship to the earth and we moved with the soil and its relationship to a plant. I could illustrate this point by staying there with botany.

In fact, our Lord Jesus did it when He talked about the vine and the branches and the union. There's no possibility of bringing forth fruit apart from the union of the branch into the vine. John 15, verse 4. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.

It cannot. It never can. It never has.

It never will. But let's leave botany. Let's move up to the crown of God's creation.

Because you see, this is the frustration of thousands and thousands of God's children. They think somehow that the life is in them and not in the soil. That it's in them and not in the branch.

And they try to serve the Lord with gladness. They can't. There's no production.

They're barren. The more they try, the more frustrating it is after Jesus told about the vine and the branches and He gave that wonderful secret. He made this comment, John 15, verse 11, that your joy might be full.

If you could learn that secret, the union of the branch with the vine, it brings fullness of joy. Because bearing fruit brings fullness of joy. And if you had fullness of joy, maybe you could serve the Lord with gladness.

Heaven's illustration is a man and a woman joined together as husband and wife. And out of that loving union, the man pouring into the woman, and the woman pouring into the man. And this great desire that God Himself expressed.

One day as the man loves the woman and the woman loves the man, as they communicate together, they say, wouldn't it be wonderful if we had another one just like us? As Brother Frompke was saying many times. And out of that loving union, there comes issue. What's the issue we ask? Fruit.

And a baby is born. If you've seen my wife this week, she's been on pins and needles all week. Ken, you really disturbed my wife when you said, turn off that phone.

She was sitting there. We're waiting for a call for our 15th grandchild. Anytime.

There's joy connected with that fruit. That event that brings life. She's already informed me, if you look around and I'm not there, I'll be in Delaware.

I want to be there. I want to see it. She calls it a miracle.

I want to watch the miracle, she says. I want to be there. God has connected that.

That's not just man's idea. Marriage and fruit, they're connected. Now you may have noticed as you study your Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, that there was sort of a stigma on the Jewish woman in her mind if she was barren.

If she couldn't produce. She couldn't have a baby. You read over and over again.

She grieved. She suffered. She groaned.

She agonized. She almost felt cut off from God as if God had displeasure with her in some way. The sadness was deeper than I want a baby.

I want to be a mother. I want to have a little baby. Rachel crying out, give me children or I die.

My brother Frumpke pointed out that it goes deeper. There's deep. It calls to deep.

And underneath that cry, I want a baby, was the grief that I can't produce. The barren womb goes deeper than that. Commentators tell us, and I'm inclined to believe they're right, that the agony in the heart of the barren Jewish woman was mysteriously connected to the Messianic hope.

God had promised that through the woman, through the seed of the woman, Messiah would come. And the Jewish woman, she may not even have known it as she cried out. On her level it might have been, I wish I could have a baby, but I'm sad because I can't produce.

Or she may have looked at her womb and said, how come I can't produce? How come my womb is barren? But it's deeper than that. It's not only I can't produce, but her deep heart was the Messianic hope, I can't produce Christ. I want to be in the line.

I want to produce Him. I want to be like the bride up there who is one with Him. And Christ just fills and radiates.

I want to carry. That's what fruit is. Fruit is life, and it contains the seeds of life.

It's life that contains life. That contains life. That's what fruit is.

That's why being a hypocrite is so bad. That's why if you have Christmas tree righteousness instead of apple tree righteousness, you're in trouble. Christmas tree righteousness is hanging a ball here and a star here and some tinsel over here, and you've got all these little lights and glitter.

But it's not real. And so you've got your fellowship over here and your Bible study over here. For years, that's all I knew.

Christmas tree righteousness. I could fool people. They looked at my tree and said, Oh, you have a wonderful tree.

But I never dropped seed. I never dropped life. Fruit is the womb of the seed.

It's life, barren and sad, fruitful and glad. That's the story of the whole Bible. Over and over and over again, we can see that.

There's a great sadness. Maybe you've experienced it. I certainly have.

When God discovers to your heart the barren womb. When you learn for the first time the branch cannot bear fruit of itself. You're going to serve the Lord.

And this is My Father glorified that you bear fruit. And if you can't bear fruit, you can't be glad. And if you can't be glad, you can't serve the Lord with gladness.

It's connected. Marriage. Fruit.

Gladness. Serve the Lord with gladness. There's relationship there.

I've heard Rachel weeping for her children and could not be comforted because they were not. I have shed many tears over my own barren womb. Wanting to produce.

At first I thought on the simple level, you know, I just want a baby. I don't mean baby, baby. I mean I looked at the fruit of the Spirit and then I looked in my life.

How come after all these years I should be further down the road? How come there's all this abiding corruption? Why do I still have this struggle? I look at the fruit of the Spirit. Spirit, joy, and peace, and patience, and long-suffering, and kindness, and self-control. And then I looked at my own life.

Then I thought, maybe there's no hope. Maybe it's not for me. Maybe some Christians are called to have fruit and I'm not.

I get so tired of surrendering and raising my hand and coming forward and signing cards and dedicating and rededicating and doing everything I know how to do. How come I can't bear fruit? How come I'm so barren? I never knew about the union of the branch and the vine. I never knew about the marriage of the Lamb and His Bride that produces fruit.

Barren and sad. And I looked at my life. No deliverance from sin as our brother Stephen was sharing so wonderfully.

Thank you, brother, for giving us that message to remind us again of God's great provision. But that recognition of the barren what? My heart is filled with lust and sin and I need deliverance. It's not there.

How am I going to serve the Lord at all? Let alone serve the Lord with gladness After seven years of that kind of barrenness, God in His great grace allowed me to crash. 1975. Oh, I praise the Lord for that.

That's another story. I understand better now what my sadness was. It wasn't, I wish I had patience.

I wish I had power. I wish I had long suffering. I wish I had deliverance.

It was bigger than that. It was more than, I wish I could produce fruit. My womb is barren.

I can't do it no matter how hard I try or how much I surrender. It's bigger than that. Down deep in my spirit was the messianic hope.

I can't produce Christ. I'm a Christian. I felt cut off of the line.

I wasn't in the messianic line. But I couldn't produce Him. The seed of the woman.

That great desire to be able to be in the line. That's why our Lord Jesus at the end called His mother woman to tie her into that seed of the woman. The promise.

He honored her by not calling her mother so that she could enter in. She was the honored one who became the mother of Messiah. Now as I try to bring this together, I know I've given you a lot.

We've been here and there. You don't need to look at these passages. I've chosen stories that you know.

But there's a recurring emphasis all through the Bible. I'm going to pick up three illustrations and then we'll wrap it up. Barren and sad.

Fruitful and glad. My first illustration is Sarah. You remember Sarah.

Beautiful woman. Extraordinary beauty. At age 90, she was attracting kings.

But Genesis 11.30 said Sarah was barren. She had no child. For 90 years she was barren.

She couldn't produce. A barren woman is a sad woman. A barren Christian is a sad Christian.

You know the story. Sarah's sadness drove her to every human effort somehow to shake off that barrenness and become productive after all. And how when we learn our womb is barren, we try everything to circumvent the barren womb.

And she did that. How many schemes do we have to go through? It's not just a story. Nothing can take the place in a believer's life if he's serious about serving the Lord.

Nothing can take the place of being fruitful. Peaceful coexistence with barrenness is an utter impossibility to a quickened spirit. It's not possible.

Sarah was desperately discontent. And one day, God came in with a message and gave her a promise that she's going to have supernatural fruit. And she laughed.

You can read about it. Chapter 18. Laughed in unbelief.

But what happened? God kept His promise. He visited her. And Isaac was born.

And she laughed again. This time it wasn't a laugh of unbelief. She named her son Laughter.

And she said in chapter 21-6, God has made laughter for me. And everyone who hears, they'll laugh with me. Barren and sad.

Fruitful and glad. You understand Psalm 92, Thou, Lord, has made me glad through Thy work. Second illustration.

Hannah, the mother of Samuel. Do you remember how her chapter opens? Chapter 1 of 1 Samuel. She has no children.

Chapter 1, verse 5. The Lord closed her womb. And how sad she is in bitterness and grief. Chapter 1 tells her story.

She's mourning and grieving and weeping. And she goes into the temple of the Lord. And Eli the priest, so heavy with flesh, could not see into her heart.

He thought she was drunk. And God opened her womb. And He gave her a song.

What a song! The song of Hannah. Some have likened it to Mary's Magnificat. Such a song! Barren and sad.

Fruitful and glad. Consider one other illustration. Elizabeth, the mother of John the baptizer.

Chapter 1 of Luke in verse 7. They had no child. Elizabeth was barren. And after God delivered her and gave her fruit, she said in verse 25, The Lord look with favor upon me.

He has taken away my disgrace. It's a disgrace not to bear fruit. Suppose Elizabeth had said, or Hannah, or Sarah, oh, let's just pretend everything's alright.

It doesn't matter if I don't bear fruit. Or let's say even worse, they came to the conclusion that I came to. It's not for me.

I'll never be able to bear fruit. Praise God for the way these stories end. God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Zacharias.

Luke 1.14 You will have joy and gladness. Many will rejoice at his birth. Barren and sad.

Fruitful and glad. It's all in the blueprint. These stories are redemptive stories.

They're not just in the Bible to give us facts. They tell us a spiritual story. Two more passages and I'll let you go.

Turn to Romans 7. I want you to see that I'm not making this up. That what was true in the reality in the heavens is true now on the level of earth. Romans 7 I want you to get the context, so let's start in verse 6. Now we've been released from the law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we might serve.

Now that's our theme. So that we might serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. So this passage is talking about serving.

Serving in the newness of the Spirit. How do we do that? Look at verse 4. Therefore, my brethren, you were also made to die to the law through the body of Christ that you might be joined to another to Him who was raised from the dead. That's marriage.

In order that we might bear fruit for God. I'm not making this up. That's how heaven begins.

With a marriage. And the fruit is the manifestation of Christ. That's heaven, how it continues.

And He says, do you want to serve in the newness of the Spirit? Then you've got to marry Him who was raised from the dead in order that you might bring forth fruit unto God. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The thing that makes heaven heaven is Christ.

The thing that makes heaven on earth is Christ. Union with Him and the fruit of being so filled with Him that it's life that He radiates to the ends of the earth. I can only serve the Lord with gladness when I have learned that principle.

Delight yourself in the Lord and He'll give you the desires of your heart. You want fruit? You're going to have to learn to delight in the Lord. It's so wonderful.

For years, I thought what I was called to do was ramrod the Gospel down everyone's throat. And especially my dear relatives, how patient they were with me. My dear in-laws, oh, I could tell you stories.

I didn't know about delighting in the Lord. You husbands, you're praying for your bride, your wife. The best thing you could ever do for your wife is delight yourself in the Lord and He'll give you the desires of your heart.

Husbands, wives, mothers, children, delight yourself in the Lord. That's the one problem you'll ever have in your Christian life, is to maintain your relationship, your union, your delighting in Him. In Acts, when Paul and Silas were in prison, they didn't say, now let's figure out how to win this whole war to Jesus.

They just delighted themselves in the Lord. And God came and shook the place and someone cried out, how do I get saved? Fruit! Because they were delighting in the Lord. Stephen didn't say when he was being stoned, now I'm a Christian, I'm supposed to forgive you guys for throwing those rocks at me.

He just saw Jesus delighting in the Lord. Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And God used that redemptively.

I'm going to turn you to one more passage. I promise this is the end. Isaiah 54.

Let me give you the background of this. Isaiah 54. There is a servant passage.

From chapter 41 in Isaiah to chapter 54. Dana made reference to this in one of his messages. Sometimes he's talking about Israel as his servant.

And other times he's talking about the remnant in Israel as his servant. And then he gets to Messiah as his servant. You've got to read those chapters.

It's all about service. You want to serve the Lord, read these servant chapters. They're marvelous.

But as he comes to the end, Isaiah 53 of the great servant. Then he comes to chapter 54. He's wrapping it all up.

I'm going to ask you to look at chapter 54. We'll start at the end so I can give you the context. Verse 17.

No weapon formed against you will prosper. Every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.

Their vindication is from Me. That expression, this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. What's the heritage? That's what I want.

That's our theme. Serving the Lord. What's the heritage? It's not just that verse that God will supernaturally protect us.

It's that whole chapter 54. You've got to read the whole chapter, because he's been talking since chapter 41. Servant, servant, servant, servant, servant.

And he comes now and he wraps it all up. And he ends and he says, this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. What is? Now let's go to the beginning.

Verse 1. Shout for joy, O barren one. You who have borne no child, break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed. For the sons of the desolate will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman, says the Lord.

This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. You who are barren, rejoice. Why? Verse 4. Fear not.

You will not be put to shame. Do not feel humiliated. You will not be disgraced.

You will forget the shame of your youth, the reproach of your widowhood you'll remember no more. For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel who is called the God of all the earth. That is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.

Have you come barren? Can't produce? Way down deep in your spirit is the Messianic cry, I want to produce Christ, but I can't. I'm barren. How does heaven begin? It begins with a union.

How does it continue? It continues with the manifestation of Christ. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. How do I bear fruit down here? It begins with a marriage.

Joined to Him who was raised from the dead. That you might bring forth fruit unto God. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.

Let's bow. Father, thank You so much for what You have shown us, this twilight of Your truth. Work it in our hearts, Lord.

We know we only dream of serving You if we have not learned to receive. We've only dreamed of serving You if we have not learned union with Christ and to delight ourselves in the Lord. Write these things in our hearts that we might be serviceable to the Master.

We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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