

# Jesus, His Desire for Fellowship

by Fred Tomlinson

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**Scripture:** Luke 22:7, Isaiah 55:9, Malachi 3:10, Ephesians 1:3, Zephaniah 3:17

**Topics:** "Divine Orchestration", "Surrender to God's Will"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Before I actually get started here this morning, I need to say a couple of things. I have something actually really important to say to you, and that is that, as most of you know, some of my friends have set me up with this YouTube channel. However, when it comes to operating it and navigating it, navigating my way around, I am a total novice.

I've never done Facebook or all these other things. I do emails and I text, but beyond that, I'm lost. I've never been someone who's wandered around on YouTube.

I have no reputation for listening to other preachers on the internet. So suddenly, this is on my lap. When we first got started, which was not very long ago, because we were all meeting together, and I had people like Pete, who is hosting this, and Steve, who is somewhere there as well, and others like Brenda, who were looking after the technical side of the recordings and so on.

Here I am on my own. I'm not complaining about it, but between looking to the Lord for his word, and then finding that I also have to look after these things, has been a real challenge to me. And after I had posted the message just a few days ago, which was entitled, Without Love I Am Nothing, I encourage you to

listen to it.

But I was puzzled because there were no comments at all, and that was uncommon, because there have been many, many comments on different messages, and so I was puzzled about that. And I was able to find them parked in a holding area somewhere, with a little bit of help over the phone. And I believe that I was taking the right action, but in fact, I deleted them all.

And I can't express to you how upset I am, because your responses mean so much to me. And can I just say this, if you commented following that message, it will show a scent on your computer or telephone, but I was unable to receive them, and I can't receive them now. But please know how doubly delighted I would be if I am able to receive them.

So maybe you could think of sending them again to me. That would be wonderful. I can't exaggerate how upset I was when I discovered they were all gone.

I got this momentary sight of the names, I can only remember I think one of them, and suddenly they were gone. And that was it, and I was gone too. Anyway, if you go on the YouTube channel, which is entitled Turn to the Scriptures with Fred Tomlinson, and you like it, can I encourage you to click on subscribe? And just as recent as this morning, I had an email from someone who said, what I really have to do, and someone else told me this a few days ago as well, is tell people if they subscribe to please ring the bell.

I didn't even know there was a bell. And that way you will be notified when other videos are posted. And I think in this remote kind of fellowship, I hope you know how much your feedback is valued, and your comments and subscription and support.

It's just so meaningful, and I want you to know how thankful I am. So let me just pray, and then we'll turn to the scriptures. Father, we thank you that above everything, everything Lord, about our own lives, and our own movements and our own needs, our own desires, there's you Lord.

And we praise you. We want with all of our hearts to exalt the name of Jesus. We want with all our being to preach the word of God, your message, the gospel.

And Father, we pray as you've gathered us together in this way today, that you will have your way and cause your Holy Spirit to move and minister and speak and accomplish your divine purpose in the lives of every listener. And I pray in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Amen. I'm going to read a number of verses. If you have your Bible and you'd like to follow me, I'll be in Luke's gospel, and in the 22nd chapter, Luke chapter 22.

And I'm reading from verse 7. And then came the first day of unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And Jesus sent Peter and John saying, go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat it. They said to him, where do you want us to prepare it? He said to them, when you have entered into the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water.

Follow him into the house that he enters. And you shall say to the owner of the house, the master says to you, where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large furnished upper room. Prepare it there.

And they left and found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. When the hour had come, he reclined at the table and the apostles with him. And he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Amen. I will break away from the reading at that point.

When I read in the eighth verse, in the ninth verse, forgive me, the two disciples, Peter and John, they respond to Jesus. He has just said, go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat it. They said to him, where? In verse nine.

And you know, I've said this before in the hearing of so many of you, but I expect you do the same thing as me. But when I'm reading sections of scripture like this, I have to pause and my imagination sort of kicks in, if you will. And I wonder, I've said many, many times, although you may think the Bible is a big book to get through and read, but I've said, what a shame the Bible isn't bigger.

That's been the thought of my mind, because there's so many questions we have. And this is one of those cases. I just have heard what Jesus has told these two disciples to do.

And just pulling out one of the words of their response, they say, where? Where? It's as though I imagine them thinking to themselves, Lord, really? How is this going to work? And the fact of the matter is, you see, this was Passover week in Jerusalem. And the city was teeming with a multitude of people. And the streets were just totally congested, people everywhere.

And Jesus is saying, you're going to see this man and follow him. I mean, that's the starter of what he said. And so just pausing there, we ask ourselves, I'm asking you, what was it about that man? Was there anything about him that we know? And I'll answer the question for you.

No, we don't know anything about this man. He was kind of, to all intents and purposes, a nondescript man. I'm sure he was a very precious man, somebody's child, or son, or husband, or father, whatever it was.

But just so far as this reading is concerned, we know nothing about this man. He was just a nondescript man in the midst of a teeming multitude of people. We do know this, that he would be carrying a water pot.

So in that sense, that would set him apart, because we're told that men didn't commonly carry the water pots in that particular way. And be that as it may, we won't try to discuss that any further. But my question is, who was he? Who was he? Well, having said that we've got no reference or any record of anything about him here, I can tell you something about him, and it's incredibly important.

And it's this, he was a man being used by God. You know, and that's not really uncommon today. But the fact is, the man himself, he didn't have a clue.

I'm sure, I'm confident, I'm 100% certain in my own mind, he didn't have a clue that he was being used by God when he walked down that street, finding his way through the milling crowd, carrying his water pot, no doubt full at this stage. He didn't have a clue, he didn't have the faintest idea. He had no idea that that particular walk down that particular street had any significance at all.

He was just doing his chores or whatever it was, however it would be described. He was just doing, if you like, his own thing. But, you know, the fact is that it's so easy to be careless about the way we're living our lives.

And, you know, he, I'm pausing here because I'm wondering whether to share any story, because I've got so many stories in my experience that would support the idea that I wanted to get across to you. You know, there are decisions that we make, we have made and we continue to make. And sometimes they even seem to be a bad decision.

I don't know whether you've had that experience. I certainly have. And you think, you know, I think I made a mistake in doing such and such.

And so it seemed to be a mistake at the time. But, you know, I could say this, I won't mention names because some people may know who I'm talking about and that may not be proper to tell their story. But I ask myself, why did that Christian brother move to this town for that short period of time? I can't tell you what the brother thought about it, I can't tell you that.

I'm a spectator. I'm looking on from the outside. I'm looking at outside, you know, and you wonder sometimes to yourself, why is he or she doing this or things like that? Well, frankly, at the time, I wondered what this particular brother had been thinking about.

I didn't go as far as to say he'd made a mistake, what moves I to say that, but he came into town, set things up in a particular way. And then he left and moved ever such a long way from here. But the fact is, I can look back now from this particular point in time.

And just for me, there may be other things that other people can say about this particular situation. But for me personally, that allowed me to get to know that particular brother sufficiently, that in the move that he made, he today has allowed me to be able to minister on his very, very large computer internet, what do you call it, platform. And it could, in fact, I think I'm pretty sure this is right.

There are some people in this group who are listening to me right now who are here, because of that particular move that that brother made. He came here, as far as I'm concerned, to make a connection, because God had a plan for that. And here, I've got people listening now, many, many, many people listening as the result of that particular brother, doing that.

So, so many things may seem to have no real purpose. But God, God knows what he's doing. And even strange things that we do, even, even things we perceive or decide were probably wrong, God in his genius is able to weave these issues, these situations together into the great garment of his will and his purpose.

And I think that is absolutely amazing. You know, you look back, I look back on that incident, I could talk about other incidents as well. I look back and you say, that was just amazing.

Just amazing that that should happen like that. And look how God is using it in these days, you know. But let me, let me back away for a moment and just take a different view to this.

Quite an entirely different view, actually. But although we may meet people in the course of our journey, who to all intents and purposes may, you know, humanly seem to be non-descript people. But, but if you look a little more closely, or if you're permitted to look a little more closely, you discover that they, they

actually have distinctive marks, distinctive features.

They're not carrying water pots. But if you're sensitive to the Lord, you detect things about that person or those persons. As you journey on, if you like, through the congested city of life, you discover that the grace of God, his overruling grace towards you, has placed you near to someone.

To someone who has that, that mystical something about them, that somehow uniquely identifies them as true ministers of God. I'm not just talking about people who are preachers, though it would include such people. But you recognize there's something distinctive, something of God that's distinctive.

And clearly, although you scarcely know them yet as individuals, you know that you are united in your heart with them. And that somehow God is using that placement or that convergence of pathways for his own purpose. And you sense deep in your spirit that God is indeed weaving something, he's producing something, which one day will come to fruition in an even greater way.

And I think the, if I'm permitted, I'm a great grandfather, so maybe you can sort of say a few things that you, the great grandfather, imagines are wisdom. I believe this is wisdom though. If you find yourself in that kind of situation, the very best advice that can be given to you is follow them.

Jesus said, when you see this man carrying the water pot, follow him. And I'm saying this out of my own experience. I could pause all over the place here with my own stories, but I'd be digressing from the theme that's on my heart.

But I can look back and say, it was so crucial that I seized that opportunity when that person's life somehow came so close to mine, and I engaged with them. I put myself in lockstep with them. And sooner or later, you begin to discover the remarkable significance and the hand of God in making that possible.

You know, Jesus gave some wonderful, wonderful advice, didn't he? Everything he said was wonderful, of course, but he said this on one occasion, and I'll put this into my own words. He said, should you find in a field somewhere a pearl of great price, he said, in effect, leave the field, run for all your worth, get all your money together, and buy that field. That was the way to possess it.

And you know, there are times in our lives when we have to act like that, and seize the opportunity as we sense, because perhaps it's not fulfilled, it's not come to fruit yet, and so far as its purpose is concerned, but you just know in your heart, God is in this. And the advice given is engage with every ounce of your being, and look to God to fulfill his purpose and to weave those next weavings, I don't know what you call them, of this garment of his will that he has in his heart and in his purpose. You can read a great verse on that if you want, and that would be in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 4, but that for another time.

The fact is that these disciples follow Jesus' instructions, they go into town, they see a man who's in the middle of the crowd, and he's carrying a water pot. Jesus told them follow him, so they follow him. I don't know how far they needed to walk, or how long the journey was, but sooner or later he entered into a building.

Again, I'm thinking to myself, what were Peter and John thinking? You know, first of all, when they see this unusual sight, the man, there he is, you know, they don't know him, but he's a man, he's carrying a water pot, let's follow him, they follow him. Sooner or later, he enters a building. I can't help but imagine that Peter and John just look at each other and say like, wow, what's going on? What now? What's next now? And they enter into the building.

It gets even more remarkable because they get inside and I don't know what the building looked like, I don't know how the setting was or anything, but lo and behold, there's the man of the house. Now what do you do? And so, they say, you know, the teacher says to you, where is the guest room, which I may eat the Passover with my disciples? I mean, this is remarkable, don't you think? And so, they just say the words they've been told to say. Does it make any reasonable sense? No, I don't think so, but they do it.

And the man, he responds. I think these two disciples are just increasingly stunned by the way things are unfolding here. And he says, follow me, I guess.

And they follow him, he takes them upstairs. And there's this large upper room. That's exactly what Jesus said they would find.

And in the room, I can't be totally certain it was like this. You'll understand what I mean. When they see in the room, there's 13 chairs and a table.

I don't know exactly. But I do know this, that it was a furnished room, whatever that meant at that time, and to them, and so on. Once again, I think Peter and John look at one another, and now they're shaking their heads.

You know, what's going on? This is amazing. It was utterly remarkable. Could it have been a coincidence? Well, I think you'll agree with me, the statistical probability of these factors just happening to come into play was astronomical.

There's no way. So, Peter and John do what they have to do, whatever exactly that was there, and they return. And I'm looking down in my Bible, and let me just read two verses again, 13.

And they left and found everything, just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. When the hour had come, he reclined at the table and the apostles with him. Now, don't you just wish to yourself that there was some other information in between verses 13 and 14? What happened? Well, I know one thing that happened.

They returned to Jesus, and they went back to him. And if I'm not mistaken, and I may be, Jesus was watching for them when they got back, and he said, how'd it go, boys? Or something like that. I'm not sure if you agree with me, but I think if it happened like that, I would say, did you catch a little smile on Jesus' face as he said it? You know, this is Jesus.

This is our Jesus. Amen. I'm remembering the words of Scripture from Isaiah chapter 55, you know, you remember it.

Where is it? Verse 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Imagine Peter and John's conversation. I don't, you know, I don't know anything much about Aramaic, but I think they probably used a word that sounds in English like staggering, just staggering.

Staggering. How often, how often have you looked back, and you recognise just the stunning convergence of factors that the sovereign God has been working all things to serve his will. My response to the Lord is, pity me, Lord, pity me.

You know, in so many cases I speak for myself, I likely speak for many of you as well. I've insisted that the process and all the particulars would work out the way I thought they would, but in so many cases they don't. You know, our human reasoning is never far away from us, especially us men.

That doesn't suggest that women don't do some jolly decent reasoning. I don't know where I'd be without my wife and others who've, women who've been so helpful to me right up to this moment. But this, you know, this is a big deal, because the fact of the matter is we rob ourselves of so much by our reasoning, by our, you know, it's, we just think too much, I think.

But we like to live safe, don't we? Especially as we get older, I think. We like everything to be neat and tidy. And then the Lord does something that overturns the table.

He's got quite a reputation for doing that, as a matter of fact, as you know well. He turns things around and overturns them. It wouldn't be wrong to say, well, even the very fact that I'm talking to you right now the way I am is a reminder that he's overturned some tables in all of our lives, that we should find ourselves in this situation today.

But who among us is going to deny that God is in it? He's got his purpose, that he's working out in it all. And you know, this is what he said years ago, and I frankly believe he's saying it again. It goes like this, prove me now, prove me now.

If I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. That's Malachi chapter 3 in verse 10. Check it out, Malachi 3 verse 10.

This was God, he said it then to those of old, he's saying it now by his Spirit, perhaps to you, no doubt to me. See me, prove me, prove me now. It may seem unreasonable, it may seem foolish to you at this point in time, but if you know that God is whispering something into your heart, he says prove me.

If I will not open to you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. You know, coming back to this passage, what was the purpose in Jesus' heart when he commissioned those two men to go and do what they would do? Well you know, just look with me down to that 14th verse again. When the hour was calm, he reclined at the table and the apostles with him.

He said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Now, this is a heart-stirring moment and his words stir our hearts. This is Jesus, he says, men, he's sitting in that upper room with them now, they're gathered there, and he said, I have eagerly desired.

You know the Greek word translated here and as it's used in other passages, it carries through the idea of a craving, of a longing. So Jesus is saying, brethren, as he looks around at those men, with the shadow of Calvary dark over him at this point in time, he's sitting there with these men, his friends, one of them will betray him. But he says, I want you to know this, men, I've had a craving desire.

I've been longing for this moment to be with you. Hours away from this catastrophic suffering, but his desire, his strong, eager desire is to be with these men. On the one hand, and we can look at it from different points of view, this is an incredibly and a tremendously human aspect of emotion, which it is, and he was very man, although at the same time, very God.

We want to see emphasized to our own minds today, the fact that this is God's heart toward you and to me, you know, behind the human aspect of it, which we're not for a moment underestimating or

challenging in any way at all. But this is, and that's staggering enough, that he would want to be with those men then. But when we elevate our thoughts and remind ourselves that he was very God incarnate, God manifested in the flesh, and then this statement becomes tremendously important to us.

This is tremendously important to you, whoever you are today, because he's describing perfectly his heart toward you and toward me. I don't know whether it's ever really crossed your mind the way it needs to, that God is wanting to engage with you in intimate fellowship. This is truly amazing.

You know, there's no doubt a multitude of factors that have converged together to bring you and me together in this way today, and I believe that's true. I believe it's a series of God's interventions in my own life along the journey of my life that has brought me to this moment where I'm sitting here alone in this room with a huge fly threatening me, and speaking to you. But God has arranged this.

This is of God that I am here, and he's brought you here in the same way. All kinds of different circumstances and factors that have done it, but he is responsible. Let's choose to believe this, shall we, that the sovereign God loves me and you individually, so passionately, so longing to speak to us and to accomplish something in each one of our lives, that he has negotiated all these myriads of circumstances to bring us together at this particular time, representing all of the earlier circumstances, some of which have not been pleasant, and have been horrifying for one or two of you as I'm looking around, but he's used them to bring us together at this moment to hear what he wants to say to us, and I believe primarily he wants to speak to your heart and reveal to you something greater of his love for you and his desire for fellowship with you.

He has an eternal purpose, and he is eagerly desiring to bring each and every one into this place. I'd love to pause and digress and read Ephesians 1 and, I don't know, verses 3 and 5 or somewhere around there, read them when you get chance, the eternal purpose of God being worked out. Let me ask you, do you grasp this? Do you grasp that he has chosen you? I hear from some of you, you know, I would hear, you know, I don't know that I can believe this because I feel so unworthy because of and then the things which have been shared with me, but listen to me, God has chosen you.

You're not required to contribute anything to this. You know, the fact that you feel yourself or sense yourself to be unworthy is irrelevant to the divine purpose. He's not looking for you to contribute anything.

He just wants to speak to you and because he's chosen you, everything has to do with who he is, not who you are or what you have done or failed to do. The hymn writer put it so well when he said, nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. You know, it's only here, this place, this point, this posture before him that we discover his astonishing compassion.

I've mentioned a couple of scripture references that we're not turning to. Here's another one, Zephaniah chapter 3 and verse 17, but essentially one of the features in that series of statements is this, that he speaks about him resting in his love. Another translation puts it this way and I think this is so thought-provoking, he will quiet you with his love.

What a wonderful thought, in like manner that a mother will run into the room of a frightened infant and she'd pick the infant up and embrace the infant and say, it's all right, the child's been having some kind of nightmare or something, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay and soon the sobs subside and mother wipes away the tears. That's our Jesus, that's his love for you. Do you know him? That same passage of scripture I've just referred to has this line in it too, he will rejoice over you with singing.

Hallelujah. You know, in that upper room on that occasion, Jesus, his heart's desire was being fulfilled in that moment, notwithstanding the heavy shadow of Calvary and the suffering soon to be his, but in that moment he was loving the moment, he was loving the man, he was where he wanted to be, where he eagerly had craved to be. Amen.

And soon we see him and he's on his knees in front of the men and he's got a bowl and a towel and he washes their feet. We'll talk about that some more next time. But you know today, as we're in his presence, he's not got a bowl and towel to wash your feet, my brother or sister, but he's here to freshly wash your heart.

This is Jesus. Will you bow before him today? Will you give up trying to be a Christian, trying to live the Christian life? Will you give it up? No one can do it, it's only him. He lives the Christian life, he wants to live it again through you.

Will you let him have his way with your life? My mother, sorry you never got to meet her, she was wonderful, but she had a favourite hymn and there's a favourite verse and we were in the context those years ago where people would choose him, she would always choose this particular hymn and she'd want to emphasise this verse. Here it goes, wonderful compassion. Reaching even me bows my humble spirit in captivity.

Let me close with words of another hymn writer, some of you will know exactly who I'm referring to. He said, I thank thee, uncreated sun, that thy bright beams on me have shined. I thank thee who has overthrown my foes and healed my wounded mind.

I thank thee whose enlivening voice bids my freed heart to rejoice. He also wrote, give to my eyes refreshing tears, give to my heart chaste hallowed fires, give to my soul with filial fears the love that all heaven's host inspires, that all my powers with all their might in thy soul glory may unite. Let me pray.

Father, we thank you together, Lord, that these are not idle fables, these are not thoughts and ideas to further fill our minds and our intellect with big ideas, and wild imaginations, but we thank you for the reality of the gospel of God. We thank you for the blessed Holy Spirit of God who in this very moment is speaking into the hearts of men and women. Lord, bring light and understanding concerning the true identity of who you are and your love for each individual, and I pray, Father, that there will be a response that you find in all of our hearts, a response that bows quickly and surrenders completely to such love.

We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

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