

Christ Our City of Refuge

by Hoseah Wu

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the cities of refuge in the Old Testament and how they foreshadow the Lord Jesus as our refuge, stronghold, and high priest.

Duration: 1:04:28

Scripture: Exodus 21:12-13, Numbers 35:1-2, Deuteronomy 4:7, Joshua 1:9, Matthew 6:33, Mark 10:45, John 1:12

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, Richard from Elizabeth introduces his brother Levine to say a few words. Levine expresses his love for bagels and locks and praises the inspiring words written by a brother. He encourages the audience to come and experience the love of God and emphasizes that God will not withhold anything from His children. The sermon also discusses the importance of local assemblies being a refuge for God's people in a time of confusion and captivity. The speaker highlights the need for unity and encourages the audience to worship and serve God wholeheartedly.

Transcript

Can I complain a little bit? I can? Well, actually this weekend we thought we'd just come down here and just enjoy the Fellowship of the Saints. Hoping that we can just sit back there and listen to one of the brothers sharing and just enjoy it. And lo and behold, I received a call from Michael Woods.

He said, the brethren decided you should share. Well, here I am. The reason why we came down this weekend is because we have brethren that recently came to our fellowship.

And we thought we'd like to bring them down here to meet you, brothers and sisters. And later on, I hope they each will say a few words. And it's amazing how the Lord brought them to us.

So you'll hear from them. Now you sang that song that we learned from Minnesota. So should we just try that one so you won't forget it? Yeah, let's try that one.

Let's try that one. You did so well. Calmly Beloved.

Do you like this chorus? Yes, I think the brotherhood really inspired. And it's really interesting. Okay.

Get first note. Alright. Calmly Beloved.

Okay. Let's do it again. Get a strong word.

Calm. That's a strong word. Alright.

Go. Calmly Beloved of the Lord. And consider.

Good. That the Father has poured out on you. With joyful hearts in one accord.

Come and look upon the love. Of the one who gave his all for you. Our God we hail now his own son.

The treasure of his heart. Poured out for you. Since he already did his son.

Why now will he withhold. From you his all. My friends consider then the price.

That so willingly he paid to redeem. Consider how then you will live. Just how to spend it.

Our God we hail now his own son. The treasure poured out for you. With all the treasures of his throne.

Our Father give and step his son. Our God we hail now his own son. The treasure of his heart.

Poured out for you. Since he already did his son. Why now will he withhold.

From you his all. Father we just want to thank you. For this privilege to be together.

We thank you our togetherness is in your beloved son Lord Jesus. In him we are one. We thank you for this privilege.

To come together. And to testify our Lord. His love to his people.

Lord we thank you. For blessing us. We want to tell you our hearts are full.

Because of you. We worship you. And Lord now we look to you.

That you will speak. Some words to us. To our hearts.

That we may be encouraged. To go on. To love you.

To follow you. And to serve you. With our whole heart.

We commit our time to you. Bless our time together. We give praise, give thanks and appreciation to Lord Jesus.

Amen. First I bring greetings to the brothers and sisters in South Jersey as well as Central Jersey. And we want to thank you Richmond brothers and sisters for your support, your prayer.

This past many years. And if the Lord willing we will have another retreat in October. And we look forward to see many of you up there in New Jersey.

This morning the Lord really confirmed to my heart what I should share. Because the last prayer of that sister. And she kept saying that's refuge.

And the Lord seems to relay that in my heart for this morning. So shall we just turn to a few portions of scriptures together. Let's first turn to the book of Exodus 21.

The book of Exodus 21 verse 12 and 13. And then I'll appoint for you a place where you may flee. And let's turn to the book of Numbers 35.

Numbers 35. We'll read verse 1. It's a long chapter so we'll just select a few verses to read together. Verse 1 and verse 2. Numbers 35 verse 1 verse 2. And the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan.

A cross from Jericho saying command the children of Israel that they give to Levites. They give the Levite cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession. And you shall also give the Levites common land around the cities.

And let's go down to verse 6. Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites you shall appoint six cities of refuge. To which a manslayer may flee. And to these you shall add 42 cities.

So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be 48. These you shall give with their common land. And the cities which you will give shall be from the possession of the children of Israel.

From the large tribe you shall give many. From the smaller you shall give few. Each shall give some of the city to the Levites in proportion to the inheritance that they inherit.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying speak to the children of Israel and say to them. When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan. Then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you.

That the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee. Then shall be the cities of refuge for you from the avenger. That the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment.

And of the cities which you give you shall have six cities of refuge. And let's turn to the book of Deuteronomy 19 verse 1. Then the Lord your God has cut off the nations whose land the Lord your God is giving you. And you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses.

You shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess. You shall prepare roads for yourself. And divide into three parts the territory of your land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit.

That any manslayer may flee. And let's turn to verse 8. Now if the Lord your God enlarges your territory as he swore to your fathers. And gives you the land which he promised to give to your father.

And if you keep all these commandments and do them. Which I command you today to love the Lord your God and to walk always in his ways. Then you shall add three more cities for yourself beside these three.

And last let's turn to the book of Joshua. Chapter 20. It's a short chapter so we'll read the entire chapter.

Joshua 20. The Lord also spoke to Joshua saying. Speak to the children of Israel saying.

Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge of which I spoke to you through Moses. That a slayer who kills any person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there. And they shall be your refuge from the avenger blood.

And when he flees to one of those cities. And stands at the entrance of the gate of the city. And declare his case in the hearing of the elders of that city.

They shall take him into the city as one of them. And give him a place where he may dwell among them. Then if the avenger of blood pursues him.

They shall not deliver the slayer into his hand. Because he struck his neighbor unintentionally. But did not hit him beforehand.

And he shall dwell in the city until he stands before the congregation for judgment. And until the death of one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city.

And his own house. And to the city from which he fled. So they appointed Kadesh in Galilee.

And the mountains of Nathalie. Shechem and the mountains of Ephraim. And Kerjah Abba which is Hebron.

And the mountains of Judah. And on the other side of Jordan by Jericho Iswood. They assigned Biza and the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben.

And Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad. And Golan in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh. This were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel.

And for strangers who sojourned among them. That whoever killed any person accidentally might flee there. And not die by the hand of the avenger of blood.

Until he stood before the congregation. The city of refuge. In the first five books of Moses.

You notice mentioned in just four books. Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Excuse me.

On the Old Testament part of the Bible. The city of refuge mentioned in these four books. Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua.

So some Bible commentary. Then this four places mentioned correspond to the four gospels. Because in the gospel of John.

Matthew portrayed the Lord Jesus as king. And Mark as servant. And then Luke as the perfect man.

And John as the son of God. And so some say that in Matthew we see the power exhibited there. And then in Mark we see the service of love.

And then in Luke we see God's sympathy to a man. And then in Luke we see God's wisdom. Now, of course we know that Matthew wrote his gospel mainly for the Jewish people.

And then Mark wrote his gospel mainly for the Romans. And then Luke wrote his gospel mostly for the Greeks. And John wrote his gospel for the believers.

Whether Jew or Gentiles or the church. We all need the Lord Jesus as our refuge. We all need Christ.

And so this morning I'll just share a little bit of this refuge. And then draw on the meaning of the six cities. What does it mean to us spiritually.

Now, from the city refuge we notice some facts that we can consider. First is that these cities were God's appointed cities. They were set aside by God.

Just like the gospel. The gospel of salvation is not a man's invention. It's not a human device.

Salvation is of the Lord. It is an expression of God's mercy. It's a manifestation of the riches of his grace to mankind.

So there were not just one city. There were six cities. And those six cities are strategically located throughout the land.

So the manslayer may flee. So we see that these cities are not God's emergency measure. Because these cities were appointed before any crime was committed.

So we see one thing in these cities. That God is ever beforehand in supplying what we lack, what we need. And so in one of his books, he says, God laid his plan before the foundation of the world.

But God realizes his plan, or his plan commences from the foundation of the world. And therefore in Revelation 13, we have this phrase, The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world before any crime or sin was committed. God's provision was already there.

So we see that the cities were God's appointed cities. And then next we notice is that these cities were provided for the purpose of providing a shelter, a refuge from the avenger of blood. You know, Jew and Gentiles, we all stand guilty before God.

In a sense, we all have participated in the Lord's death because of our sin. But thank God in his infinite wisdom, through the deathly sun, he turned things around. So through his death, through the Lord Jesus, when he gives himself on the cross, he became a ransom for all.

His death became a ransom for all. And in his sacrifice, a way to that refuge city is now open. So we can come to him.

So this is the second feature we notice about this city. So there is only one way, one door, by which we can come to this city's refuge, and that's through the Lord Jesus. Now in Acts 4, 12, we have this word here, Nor is there salvation any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved.

So there's only one way through Jesus, through him by faith. Now the avenger of blood is determined to carry out his revenge. He's bound, duly bound to execute judgment upon the manslayer.

But the cities of refuge are so provided throughout the territory of Israel, so any person can run for his life and enter into one of the cities and find safety there. So that's the third thing we notice, second thing we notice. And then the third thing we notice is that these cities are placed on a higher elevation, on the mountain, on the hill.

So, in other words, they're visible. You can spot them very quickly. And for the one who flees, that city can be kept in sight.

So give him the shortest direction how to get to that place. Now, of course, the Lord Jesus left it up on the cross Calvary. But in Acts 5, we have this verse here.

He said, So we thank the Lord for his exalted position as Prince and Savior, and to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness to sin. So we can see that he's left it up for all to see, and we can come to him.

Now, the other thing we notice is that there are roads prepared to these cities.

Then we are told that roads to the cities are well kept. Every year they will send work crew to make sure the roads to these cities, refuge cities, are in good condition. They repair them.

If there's any obstacles, they'll remove them. So the fourth thing we notice is that the roads are ready. Always ready and with condition for the fugitive to flee to the city refuge.

And they are well marked out where to turn, where to go. It's all clearly marked out. So that's another feature we notice.

And then, the other thing we notice is the location of these cities. They are strategically located throughout the territory. We are told that between the cities, refuge of cities, the maximum distance is about 75 miles.

So any man-slayer can run to any of the cities within half a day. From any distance in Israel, the furthest point to run to under city estimate is about 35 to 40 miles. That's all.

So it's easy access. You know, in Isaiah 45, we have this verse. He says, Look.

Look is the shortest and the easiest way. And look of faith is the sure way to safety. So it's the access.

And then, the other thing we notice is that this city provides protection, only provides protection for the homicide, those who kill somebody unintentionally. But the one who deliberately murders someone, he is excluded. He is excluded.

So here, we learn the lesson that in Christ, there's no salvation for those who sin willfully, presumptuously, who defy God's love and mercy. That's the other thing we notice. And then, the next thing we notice is that for the safety and well-being of that fugitive, all we have to do is to remain in the city.

Remain in the city. Once he gets away from the city, his life is in danger. And so, brothers and sisters, in John 15, we are told we need to abide.

We need to remain. And this is the thought behind it. Now, the other feature we notice is that this city is not provided just for the Israelites, but also for the stranger in the land.

So, this city is for all. There's no difference between Jew and Gentile because we all have sinned and come short of glory. So, this city is for all, not just Israelites, but also for the strangers and sojourners in the land.

So, this same Lord over all, he is rich unto all who call upon him. So, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. So, it's for all.

So, these are some of the features we notice through this verse of scripture we read. And lastly, the safety of this fugitive is for him to remain. But if he wants to go back to his hometown or his home territory, to go back to his old lifestyle, he has to stay in the city until the death of the high priest.

But brothers and sisters, thank the Lord, our high priest, he lives forever. So, in a sense, we are eternally secure. Christ, he was not only the man that was slain, but he himself is a city of refuge to us.

And more than that, he also is the high priest and his priesthood is eternal. Therefore, our security in the Lord Jesus is eternal. Now, this is just some of the features we see about the city of refuge.

Now, let's just consider a few minutes on the meaning of the names of these cities. In Joshua 21, you notice the first city is Kedesh in the land of Galilee. So, they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in the mountains of Nathalie.

Now, the meaning of this Kedesh, this word is very meaningful. It means sanctuary. You know, when the Lord brought us to himself, we come to something far greater, far more beautiful.

It's vaster than we ever thought before. I'm sure the last few weeks, I mean, we've been watching news on television. We saw a lot of refugees driving cars from one country to the other.

I mean, to me, they don't look like refugees at all. You know, they feast and they drink. I mean, they don't look like refugees to me.

But when I was down in China, in the Philippines during World War II, I witnessed we are refugees. They almost had nothing. They were hungry.

They were dirty. All they had was a shirt on their back. Those are refugees.

But once we enter into the city of refugees, we are just like one of those in the city. We are not considered strangers anymore. And so, the Kedesh means sanctuary, holy place.

And God says, when we come into the Lord, we come into a life that we never knew before. A life within the veil that we can be in his presence and enjoy his presence. That's Kedesh.

And that's what we're brought into by the grace of the Lord. Then the second city is Shikkim. Shikkim and the Mountain of Ephraim.

Now, Shikkim in the original means shoulder, a place of strength. You know, we're all familiar with John 10, the Good Shepherd. But he left 99 and went and sought this one out.

And when he found it, what did he do? He took it and put it on his what? Shoulder. And that's not all. He took that one all the way what? Home.

All the way home. Now, brothers and sisters, that's what our Lord is to us. He not only picks us up from the world and cleanses us, but he places it in his shoulder.

And he's responsible to take us home. So, Paul can say the good work which he has begun in us, he will surely finish it. The church is always one.

And a church will be a glorious church. Not because we can do anything about it, but because of his doing. He has the power to carry us to the very end of his purpose.

And then the next thing we notice in another city is called Kerja Aba in Hezbollah. Now, this is very meaningful. It's fellowship communion.

Commune with the Lord and commune with the believers. We can have fellowship with one another. And if you notice in the New Testament, the place where God will commune with his people is above the mercy seat.

Where we have two cherubim. And the mercy seat is the covering for the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark of the Covenant, there are several things that are there.

Now, in Hebrews 9, I believe, it mentions three things. The manna, the law, and the rod of Aaron, the budding. Now, Paul says these three things all are there to remind us of our failure.

Our rebellion, our murmuring. Paul says we are forever a rebellious people. We are forever failure.

We fail the Lord miserably. And we are always complaining. But thank the Lord we can come and commune with him because the mercy seat covers everything that we really are in ourselves.

And it's above the mercy seat we can commune. And that's why whenever we come to the Lord Jesus, we know he's our mercy seat. It's because in him we are able to commune with our Heavenly Father.

And what a privilege. So when we come together, we do not look at ourselves. We do not look at one another.

We look at the mercy seat. We look to Christ. And there we have absolute liberty and freedom to commune with the Father.

So this is the meaning of Hebrew. Then the other city on the other side of Jordan is Biza. It means fortress or fortified city.

The Lord is not only our refuge, but the Lord is also our stronghold. He's our fortress. Maybe we should turn just to a couple of verses.

Let's turn to Psalm. Just a couple of places. Psalm 9, verse 9. Psalm 9, verse 9. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

As we follow the Lord, as we in fellowship with the Lord, the world, the flesh, the self, they'll cause us a lot of trouble. But thank the Lord he's our refuge. He's our stronghold.

In times of trouble we can come to him. And let's turn to another place, Psalm 91. And that was in a prayer this morning.

Psalm 91, verse 2. Psalm 91, verse 2. I will say to the Lord, he is my refuge, my fortress, my God, in him I will trust. And the scripture says those who put their trust in him, they should not be put to shame. So he's our fortress.

Then the fifth city is Ramoth in Gilead. It means height or exaltation. If the Lord Jesus is not in his exalted position, and he is, and we are found in him, what is our position? Often times we devalue our position.

And if we do that, we do not bring him glory. Our Lord Jesus today is a glorified Lord, ascended Lord, exalted Lord. If he is exalted and if we are in him, no wonder Paul said we are seated with him where? In the heavenlies.

That's where we belong. If the world, sin and flesh cannot touch him, so they cannot touch us if we are in him. So Paul says, you see, when we come to Lord Jesus, we have come into something far greater than we ever realized.

And then the next city, last city, Golan, it means joy or joyful or rejoicing. You see, we see the progression in our spiritual experience. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

If we can look at Romans 5, just that one verse, I think it's very meaningful. The joy of the Lord's people and the joy of the Lord's people coming together, it's just so beautiful. This last Friday we had a meeting.

We brought a Christian and most of us there were believers. And there was one person there who was not a believer. And I was just sitting there and look at their faces and all those believers were glowing and just soaking in the Lord.

Just soaking in the Lord. And this unbeliever, I just don't know how to describe her expression. It's so different.

It's when you see the contrast. You know, as our brother shared, he said, the only contrast is when Sinion holds onto the baby Jesus. You know, when the Lord's baby just went to the temple and Sinion holds the baby Jesus.

And then you see the contrast of the old Adam and the last Adam. The one old wrinkle, hair grey, dying. Yet here there's a new life.

You see the contrast. So last night when I look, I see such a contrast. I mean Friday evening, I look at such a contrast.

Those who are rejoicing in the Lord, abiding in the Lord. Now they are sitting in the heaviness with the Lord and those who don't know anything. What a contrast.

What is rejoicing? Romans 5.11. Now, you see, Romans is a book about faith, justification. And then here, Paul has this beautiful verse here. 5.11, he says, Not only that we also, I just need to skip the first few words, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received our reconciliation.

We also rejoice. We rejoice. We rejoice through our Lord Jesus.

He's our joy. Without Him there's no true joy. So we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus, through whom we now receive our reconciliation.

We are one with Him. We are at peace with Him. What a joy.

The Lord is our portion. He's our joy. And then Psalm 144.

That beautiful verse. Psalm 144. The last verse.

Happy are the people who are in such state. Happy are the people who are in such state. Who are in Christ.

Happy are the people who are in Christ. Happy are the people whose God is the Lord. Now this happiness is not because circumstances make us happy.

This happiness is in any situation as long as we are in the Lord and we are in Him. He's in us. We have happiness.

And how we rely on things we have to make us happy. Even sometimes in the fellowship. How come sometimes we rely on good ministry to make us happy? Good words to make us happy.

Those are not reliable. The Lord Himself is our happiness. And that's what we are brought into.

So we are brought into something wonderful. Something wonderful. But how does some of this lesson that we can practically apply nowadays in this last days.

The six cities that were appointed by the Lord. They were appointed because the condition of the Israel people were not normal. I mean when there is a temptation of killing or hurting someone.

But intentionally, unintentionally something is not normal. It's not normal. So the six cities were assigned to anticipate abnormality in the national life of Israel.

Anticipation. And because of flesh, self, it will happen. But yet somehow the Lord provides remedy before they happen.

Now in this last days, brothers and sisters, we know the whole Christendom is like in captivity. It's Babylon. It's confusion.

And God's people are looking for refuge. So every fellowship, every local assembly should be a refuge for the Lord. We need it.

And the Lord's people need it. I'm so thankful. In the last 20, 30 years the Lord has raised many places of refuge in this country.

Not just for the people of the world, but for the Lord's people. And thank God for those who found the refuge. So shall we turn to 2 Timothy, just read a few verses.

All of us, we know that 2 Timothy was Paul's last epistle. And so some of the words he wrote in this epistle, they are very heavy in a sense. But necessary.

Necessary. Let's read verse 19, 2 Timothy chapter 2. 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 19. Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands.

Heaven is sealed. The Lord knows those who are His. And let everyone who will name the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.

Depart. Yes we are. But in the great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also wood and clay.

Some for honor, some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master. Prepare for every good work.

And pause it. Flee also you who lust, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. You know in the Old Testament, the first mention of the word fugitive is in the story of Cain and Abel.

Cain ignored the word of the Lord. The Lord warned him. But he did not heed to the word of the Lord.

He murdered his brother. And he said, from now on I will be a what? Fugitive. He said, anybody who sees me will what? Will kill me.

Sin make us fugitive. When our relationship with the Lord is not right, we are fugitive. When our relationship is not right with our brethren, we are fugitive.

We run. Now isn't that true? When you have a controversy with the Lord, you don't want to be with your brothers and sisters. You avoid them.

You become a fugitive. You run. The second time the angel of the Lord told this family, he said, now run for your life and run to the mountain and don't look back.

Escape for your life. Run for your life. That was a lot in his family.

Wally, a righteous man became Wally, attached to the world. And God's mercy sees an angel and says, now run for your life. And you know the story.

But in this life, there are a lot of traps and snares out there. And the tragic thing is that us, those people, when we are trapped, we don't even know we are trapped. Because we are deceived.

We need God's mercy. And Paul says, depart from iniquity. Flee from your foolishness.

And it's true that we face temptations every day. The trap is always out there. But the trap set up by the world is easier to recognize.

But the trap that is set up by the religious world, we are numb to it. And Paul answers, in a sense, the trap set up by religion is more deadly than the world set up. Because it kills our spirit.

And so God's pause remedy for the people of his days, as well as for our days, flee. Depart. And seek to those who have a pure heart to seek the Lord.

Now a pure heart is simply an honest heart. It doesn't mean we are perfect. But we are honest.

If we sin, we say, Lord, I sin. That was David. He always inquired about the Lord.

He always confessed and repented. Honest heart. So Paul answers, when we get out of this way, it doesn't mean we are perfect people.

But before the Lord, we want an honest heart before Him. If we are wrong, we say, Lord, we are wrong. Then we make the right adjustment.

We flee. And what do they do? Four things. They pursue.

They go after. You know, the avenger of blood, pursue the one, the manslayer. Probably he would be waiting outside the city of refuge.

Once he thinks he is solidly careless, when now, he got it. Pursued. Relentlessly.

Pursued. For instance, our problem is that we are not pursuing. We drifted along, coasting.

Because to us, it is not an issue of life. But to the Lord, it is an issue of life. Because it involves His testimony.

Because we are here to be His representatives. And so Paul asked them to do four things. Verse 22, he said, flee also you who lust, but pursue, go after.

Go after. Go after what? Righteousness, faith, love, peace. With those who call on the Lord with a pure heart.

Righteous. Righteous comes from the word right. What is right? What is correct? Now, C.A. Cote, he put it this way.

He said, righteousness, righteous is the measure, is measure. Righteous. Righteousness is measured by what is due to the Lord.

Is measured by what is due to the Lord. Now, Paul said, what is due to the Lord? Righteousness is measured by what is due to the Lord. What is due to the Lord? Some or all.

It's very such. He is the head. He must be the first place in all things.

Do we honor Him as such? When we do, that's right. That's righteous. So it's very practical.

We can carry it into our school, into our work, into our relationship. Put the Lord first. So righteousness is measured by what is due to Him.

And He wants to be that first place. And we want to give Him that first place. And of course, faith is measured by our obedience.

Faith is believing. And the Lord is looking for such people. When they meet together, they want Him to be the first.

They want to obey His word. That's why we're meeting here. The Lord is the center.

His word governs our action. And then love is sacrifice, measured by sacrifice. If there's no sacrifice, there's no love.

And then lastly, peace. He's the king of peace. You know, Ephesians 2, He made peace.

He's our peacemaker, but He's also our peace. Peace is not the absence of war. Peace brings us into harmony with one another.

And that's why in the Old Testament, we have a peace offering. The NIV translates it as what? As fellowship offering. It's fellowship.

So Ephesians 2 must be a reality. All the barriers, all the things that separate us are now gone. Through the cross, it's all gone.

And He's our peace. We have the same access through Christ into one God, into worship. You know, in South Jersey, in our fellowship in South Jersey, somehow the Lord never wanted us to be pure ethically.

You know, ethically pure. All Chinese, all Caucasians. Since the beginning of our fellowship, it's always a mixed group.

It's all Americans and Chinese. And later on, the Lord brought a family of Indians. You know, from India, not the American Indians, the real Indians.

Okay? And then the Lord later brought in more Chinese. And then the last few years, the Lord even brought in Brazilians, you know, the encompassing family. So the Lord never wanted us to be pure ethnically.

To us, language is not a problem. Because I was told by Christian's wife that when Mario's mother and Christian's mother, they met for the first time, they are both elderly sisters-in-law. And Sister Chen, Christian's mother, could not speak one word of Portuguese.

Could not. Not one word. And Mario's mother could not speak one word of Chinese.

And I was told that when they first met, they were just talking to each other, you know. She talks Portuguese and she talks Chinese, and they were there for 10, 20 minutes. And they all do this.

They all understand each other. You see, language is not a problem. It's the spirit.

It's the heart. And they said, it was just so beautiful, seeing those two old ladies, you know, could not understand each other, and such sweet fellows. Well, I feel it's heavenly, not earthly.

That's all. It's spiritual. So we never did think that language was a problem.

And until recently, the Lord brought something more even miraculous. Because even though Americans or Chinese, we are all Gentiles. Right? But in Hebrews 2, I mean, Ephesians 2 says, the Gentiles in what? In Jews.

So in God's heart, there are only three groups of people. The Jews, and Gentiles, and in the church. In the world, Gentiles always feel Gentiles.

Jews feel Jews. But in Christ, somehow, what? The Jews are gone. The Gentiles are gone.

They are one in what? In Christ. So when Brother Levine came to us, he said, I found my refuge. That's how the Lord made me to say it.

He said, I found my refuge. I've been searching for a place, a home. Somehow, I sense there's something here.

I can be at rest. Now, family is Jewish. And when I fellowship with Brother Levine, sometimes I sense there's, it's just Christ.

Forgive me to say this. Sometimes when I was with Lance, I sense a little more Jewishness in Lance than in him. You know what I mean? Because he lives in Israel.

He always brings back some of these cultural languages, words to us. But Brother Levine is so free, so transparent. So we ask him, the Lord is breaking down all these barriers and bring us into his sanctuary.

Just to be with him in his presence, enjoying him and going together. So maybe I'm taking my time. So I just want to ask my brother Levine just say a few words.

And our brother Richard from Elizabeth. And just tell them, they've been searching the Lord for years. They caught a vision of what the Lord is after.

But the Lord is now bringing into some of the reality of that vision the Lord gave them. So Alan, say a few words. A big mic for a small man.

There's one thing I will not give up. I will not give up bagels and lox. You could put me on the rack.

You could torture me, but I won't give it up. My capacity for eating has expanded since I've been with South Jersey Christian Fellowship. Everything from bagels and lox to seaweed.

My friend Richie is laughing because he's Cuban. And we enjoy that food too. But all kidding aside, it's a pleasure to be here.

I've heard about you for many years. And all the rumors are true. It's really a blessing to be here with the brothers and sisters.

And I've been through, probably my greatest testimony came after I became a believer. And that's when the search begins. And I've gone through a lot of transitions, as we all have.

And gone through many, many, many, many, many different kinds of Christian movements. Gone through many transitional periods concerning the work of God. In quote, the church, New Testament church, etc.

And the Lord spared me. Not totally, because there was some still broken hearts along the way, especially in my own life. But I've been looking for the city of the Lord.

And I'm starting to get a greater glimpse of that city. And it's caused me to even put up and tolerate my other brothers and sisters. Because I know that this city is not pure yet, here on earth.

So what I'm trying to say is that I really appreciate what the Lord is doing. I originally came to the Jersey area to be with a bunch of Italian folks. The Lord has a sense of humor.

And I ended up with Chinese folks. But it's all the same folks. And what I came for, what the Lord brought me for, I don't quite understand yet.

But he goes beyond our understanding. And I appreciate that very much. And the brothers and sisters here.

Rich and I, he can share a little bit. We went to South Jersey Christian Fellowship. Long names, it's hard for me.

But we went there, and Mike Woods was sharing. We felt really the Lord there in a wonderful way. And one of the things that the Lord really has been dealing with me is to be pliable, to be flexible.

And to also, the one thing in my life that the Lord has always worked in my life and the need for God's people to restore passion for the Lord. Real passion for the Lord. And I've been sensing that.

I remember years ago, I was sharing a little bit last night. In Miami, Florida, I went from the Bronx to Miami. It was a crazy story, but I ended up there.

And there was a tremendous revival among the youth. And I was involved with that. And I remember, we touched something of the Lord.

We really touched. Not only his garment, but I believe we touched his heart. And everybody knew it.

And it was a wonderful season there. But then along came, in quote, all the wonderful systems that we've sort of looked up to and put on plateaus in Christian circles. And when I came in, it squeezed the very simplicity of life out of that group.

And when I went to the fellowship in South Jersey, even though they were older, many of them were older, and the Lord, I sensed that simplicity. I'm trying to be serious. I sensed the real presence of the Lord there.

And I'm used to it. I'm a drummer by nature. Seriously, I was a drummer.

I was a jazz drummer before I was saved. And I'm like moving all the time inside. And the Lord's had to deal with that in my life.

Just to wait on Him, calm down, and relax. And I appreciate that. And it's beyond the cultural thing.

It's beyond the laid-back Chinese culture and all that stuff. And the Lord sent me there to get them going. And the Lord sent them to me to calm down.

To balance. So, we shall see what the Lord shall do. And also the Latin, with Mario there, there's a lot of Latin in there too.

So that's the beauty. I was reading a book by Lance Lambert. I think it was God's Eternal Purpose, when he shared those messages.

And I remember, he was sharing this in the book about an Englishman or some, it was a church in England, and somebody came in and was excited. He might have been from Latin America. A brother in the Lord.

And he was really enjoying the Lord. And the Englishman went over and goes, Please, we're in England now. We're just in a wonderful state.

And Lance said, No, that's not true. It's a wonderful expression. If you go to a flower garden, if you had one fragrance, I'd get bored.

But when all the fragrances are put together, and it's a wonderful bouquet of the Lord. So I sense the Lord's going to do some wonderful things in these days. And I have a great anticipation there, here, and everywhere.

So I appreciate my wife, Amy. That's my wife, Amy. And she's the one who also inspires me in a very tremendous way.

And I appreciate that. You will see more, Brother Alan. I'd like to greet you in the name of the Lord.

I'm not accustomed to speaking in front of crowds. In spite of nationalities, there are two types of people. The pursued and those who pursue.

For a good many years, I was a pursuer of the wrong kind. The Lord got a hold of me many years ago, but I fell from Him. And I became a law enforcement officer.

And that became my God for a good number of years. Ironically, talking about the manslayer, I was a homicide detective. And that became my God.

I was a pursuer with a vengeance. Thank God that He was a better pursuer. The only other thing is pursue righteousness.

Pursue Him now. That's what I've seen in my life. Thank you.

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