

The King Is Coming: Faith 2: Church Life and His Return

by Hoseah Wu

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in recognizing the Lord's Lordship and overcoming problems in our lives.

Duration: 1:12:55

Scripture: Genesis 18:14, Luke 18:8, John 1:38

Topics: "Church Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by acknowledging the shrinking world we live in due to mass media and instantaneous communication. He emphasizes the blessings of being able to connect with brothers and sisters from different parts of the world. The speaker then focuses on the story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18, specifically highlighting the promise of a son and Sarah's initial disbelief. He concludes by posing the question of what we seek when we come to conferences or meetings, urging listeners to examine their motives and seek the Lord Himself.

Transcript

I see our brothers and sisters in Brazil are all there now, in the receipts. Last summer, after the Richmond Conference, a few of us went to Brazil for about three weeks. We had a conference outside of Sao Paulo, and then later we went up to Belo to be with the brothers and sisters for about two weeks or so.

And we come to appreciate the saints in Brazil, their love of the Lord, and the way they worship, and particularly the way they sing to the Lord. It was so moving and so touching, and those days we spent in Brazil are memorable days. And so I have a request.

If they would sing us two songs, I have decided to follow these. Now that is an American song, but the way they sing it in Brazil, you won't even recognize it. It has that beautiful Latin touch to it.

So would you mind coming here and sing for us, brothers and sisters? I think you will enjoy that, and I think we can learn a great deal from you. And then I think the second song they will sing for us is about the Lord's coming. Our Brazilian brothers, they try to translate it for us, but how singable it is, they don't know.

So we have to give it a try. If you can sing in Portuguese, it's over there, and in English, it's over here. You have a choice now.

Portuguese and English over there. It's a very lively, lively chorus. We had a taste of the Brazilians.

Trivalha just had a short word of prayer. Lord, what a privilege just to be able to sit in your presence. We are so thankful.

You are so gracious to us, so patient with us. We want to commit our time to you. You know our needs, but we thank you.

Whatever our needs be, you are our supply. We look to you. We look to you to teach us with your own words, and we do pray that you give us a responsive heart.

Lord, together we may learn something from you this afternoon. In the precious name of Jesus, we ask you. Before we read God's word, I just want to say a few words from my heart.

This world that we live in, the 20th century that we are living in, is shrinking. It's getting smaller and smaller. I mean the mass media, the communication, the instantaneous communication that we have in this age is just phenomenal.

What happened in one part of the world, immediately the other part of the world knows about it, instantaneously. And I believe the Lord is using all this for our good. We are the most blessed people.

In my short life, the Lord has richly blessed me by getting to know brothers and sisters from different parts of the world. They enrich me immensely. The few years I live in this country, I thank the Lord.

The American brothers and sisters, they have enriched me a lot. The few trips I took to the Far East, how the Lord enriched those who were in the Far East. This past May, especially in the Hong Kong conference.

And then last year, a few of us, Ernie and his wife, Matt, Stella, myself, Ellen, and Christian went to Brazil to be with those brothers and sisters. We were really enriched. I just feel so small.

What I don't have, the Lord has it in others. What we are lacking here in the US, the Lord has it somewhere else. The Lord always has His fullness in His people.

And the trouble is that if we are not in fellowship with all His people, we miss it. So I'm very thankful for our brothers and sisters in Brazil, this time to be here in Richmond. I know they came here with the intention to receive, but I believe they have enriched all of us by their presence.

So shall we now turn to God's words? Let's turn to Luke 18 again. We touched on it yesterday. Just refresh our memory.

The last phrase of verse 8. Luke 18, the last phrase of verse 8. When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth? When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth? Let's turn to 1 Peter and read those few verses together again. Chapter 1 of 1 Peter. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved for you in heaven, who are kept by the power of God through faith.

For salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a while it need be you have grieved by various trials. But the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the

revelation of Jesus Christ.

Whom have you not seen, you love? Though now you do not see Him, yet believe in Him. You rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. And we'll just read one more portion.

Gospel of John 20. We'll read from 29 to the end. Chapter 20 of Gospel of John.

And Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, in that believing you may have life in his name. Someone put it this way. He said Gospel of John was written for the confirming of believers in the faith.

The Gospel of John was written for the confirming of the believers' faith. Therefore, the key word in the Gospel of John is this word, believe and faith. Of course, we know love and life are the key words in the Gospel of John.

But what is the having, what is the, why if life is preached, love is preached, if there is no response, what is good for? If life is preached, love is preached, and life is preached, if there is no hard to respond, it is just merely preaching. And so faith and belief are the key words in the Gospel of John. So this brother says Gospel of John was written for the confirming of believers' faith.

And John told us so. But what was written in this book so that we may believe is that in believing we may have life in his name. Now in believing simply when we become as true believers then we will have life.

It is not a mental ascent. But taking him in, believing into him, become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we possess that life. It is just, it is not a mental consent.

It is an act of faith. The son of man, when he comes, he will be looking for faith. Brothers and sisters, do you think when he comes he will be disappointed and not finding faith? Is it possible? I don't think so.

Don't we believe that a son of man has faith in himself that what he looks for he will find? It is not that we can give him faith. We have no faith to give him. Now brothers and sisters, but before the Lord looks for something he supplies, he provides.

We will see that later. As I shared yesterday, some brothers and sisters towards this last day, they have become very pessimistic when they look at the division among God's people and the spiritual poverty that exists among God's people. They become very, very pessimistic.

As though Satan has the power to prevent God from getting what he has set his heart out to get. You know, yesterday I shared the infant man at the pool. After 38 years in that condition, I mean, you get so used to it.

You just accept it. This is my lot. Accept it.

Brothers and sisters, you may, he may accept it, we may accept it, but do you think the Lord will accept it? And because the Lord will not accept it, therefore he enters into the picture and he went to that man to

change the whole situation. I said in South Jersey that we are creatures of habits. I remember when I was in school, college, my professor gave a factual illustration about a young girl who was brought up in a very sad environment.

Both parents were alcoholics, so they were always quarreling, fighting every night. So when this young girl was growing up, she determined in her heart and mind, she said, once I get away from home, I mean, when I grow up, I will never touch a drop of alcohol. I have seen what alcohol has done to my parents.

I will never touch one drop. And when I marry, if I marry to a man, I will make sure that man is not an alcoholic. Well, she grew up and she went away from home, went to college, lived in a dormitory, peaceful life.

Now, this is living. No fights, no quarreling, no drinking. I can concentrate on my education and study.

And long before, within a few days, she feels miserable. It was just too quiet. She missed all the commotions she gets so used to in her 18 or 17 years of life.

She used to all that, now she misses it. She had longed to go home and to get back to all that mess again. Now, brother and sister, we get used to mess.

And we are so accustomed to it, we say, well, this is my lot. I accept it. So this man, 38 years, is very possible.

I am sure he must be thinking it through. Many times he says, well, this is it. After all 30 years, what a frustrating existence.

And every time I come to the edge of that pool, someone just goes, just like that. What a frustrating existence. He says, well, forget it.

This is my lot. Take it. We all take it, but the Lord says, no.

We are peculiar people, we are mock up. We are people of destiny. And our destiny, our end is glory.

So, brothers and sisters, don't accept your present situation as your lot. Either individually, as a family, or as an assembly of God's people. Well, do we as believers, bought by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, redeem, mock up for him? Do we dare to deny him that which we are looking for? After he has paid such a great price for us.

Is our heart so hardened, so unresponsive, that we really don't care as a border commissary? Do we long for him? Majority may not be longing for him, but brothers and sisters, I'm sure at least there are a few. And the Lord is looking for those few, that will satisfy his true heart. And the Lord is looking to us, to be among those few, that will really respond to what is in his heart.

And thank God what he is looking for, he already has deposited in us, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the indwelling Holy Spirit. So we are called believers, individually, incorporate, we are the household of God. We begin in faith, we continue in faith, and we are to end in faith.

The end as God intended for his people, conforming to his son Lord Jesus. And as we shared yesterday, the end of this faith is a persistent, enduring faith. The faith that has been tried, test by fire.

The faith that lasts to the very end. The faith that holds on to Christ as our head. In spite of all the assaults, the horror of her, from Satan, the will of the flesh, to discourage, to discredit her.

And thank God, she will arrive at that glorious end. Because her loving Lord is the faithful one. And he is the one who nourishes her, cherishes her, sanctifies her, cleanses her with the washing of water by the word.

And that thought, cannot fail. Now this afternoon, we will look at another story, John 11. So we turn to the story of Bethany, it's a beautiful story.

We will not have time to read through the whole story. Chapter 11 of John. If you, I'm sure some of you have read Brother Spock's little booklet called Bethany.

It's a wonderful booklet. And according to Brother Spock's thinking, Bethany represents God's thought for his people in the local assembly. God's thought for his people in locality.

Because Bethany is where the Lord was received. Welcome, and he was served, he was loved, he was honoured. And where he was, he was at home.

But once the Lord entered into that picture, into Bethany, things happened. So one father said, if the Lord hadn't gone into Bethany, maybe things would be quiet and peaceful. But once he entered into the picture, something went wrong.

Problems came to the surface. You see, before the Lord enters into our situation, our problems are buried, hidden. But once he entered, they surfaced.

And we don't want that. But thank God for his coming, so that all of these problems, our flesh, all our weaknesses can be dealt with. So when the Lord came, the problem in Bethany magnified and came on the surface.

And you remember in Luke 10, when the Lord was in that house, an intention was there between the two sisters. And how Martha complained. And those words of complaint were strong words.

Martha dared to use those strong words. I'm sure most of us were not there to say those words to the Lord. They were strong words.

You can just look at it, Luke 10, strong words. She called him Lord and accused him for not caring. Now that is something.

She called him Lord and said, you are not caring. Isn't that right? Okay, verse 40. Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached him and said, Lord, do you not care? Do you not care that my sister has led me to serve you long? Therefore, tell her to help me.

Do something about it. And the first question that clicked in her mind is, why? Why does this have to happen to us? Doesn't he care? Doesn't God care? And this question is often asked by many assemblies. By the responsive brothers.

If you really care, Lord, how come you give us all these problems? All these difficult brothers and sisters in our fellowship? Well, brothers and sisters, the Lord does care. To say the Lord does not care is not honoring to him. He cares.

He cares too much. Therefore, he allows all these problems to come upon us. That should be our attitude for our spiritual education.

We have discipleship. We have our discipline. That's actually what the Lord is doing with us.

Faith needs to be tried and tested, and that is discipline. And the lesson the Lord wants Bethany to learn is this matter of his absolute Lordship. We call him Lord, but we are afraid to make him Lord of all.

That is our biggest problem. He is Lord in certain areas of our life, but he is not Lord in all areas of our life. Now, many years ago, I saw a banner that said, if he is not Lord of all, he is what? Not Lord at all.

Have you seen that? If he is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all. Well, brothers and sisters, the Lord is teaching the sisters that little household of faith in Bethany this very lesson. Is he Lord of all? And for that lesson, we are to learn continually all the grace of our life.

As individuals, as family, as a corporate fellowship. And that's why the Lord allowed things to come to Bethany. There was sorrow, there was disappointment, and even death.

In the hearts of the sisters, there was fear, full of fear, and there were doubts. But the Lord allowed these things to happen so that he can teach them that he is indeed Lord of all. Now, when all these difficulties came to Bethany, how did they get around it? How did they overcome these problems? Brothers and sisters, the overcoming, the secret to overcome all these problems is recognizing that he is Lord of all.

Brothers and sisters, whatever problems we face, if he is not Lord of all, then there is no overcoming. It's when he is recognized and confessed as Lord of all, then we experience his overcoming light in us. So, the secret of overcoming is to believe and have faith in his absolute Lordship, that he is Lord of all.

Now, let's look at John 11, a couple of places. Now, you notice John 11 there, the word Lord is mentioned eight times. The word Lord is mentioned eight times in the Gospel of John.

Once in verse 2. Now, the apostle John mentioned this in verse 2 because he is looking back. He was old when he wrote this episode and the things that occurred in John 11 already happened. So, he is looking back into history.

So, in verse 2, it was Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil, wiped his feet with hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. So, it just refers to the event that took place in the next chapter 12. But anyway, the Lord is mentioned here in verse 2. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord.

The disciples only called him Lord once. And that is in verse 12. Then the disciples said, Lord, if he sleeps, he will be well.

The disciples only called him once. And verse 2 is a statement that Mary was the one who anointed the Lord. And the other six times were uttered by the sisters.

Verse 21 by Martha. Then Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And then verse 27.

We will read 25 and 26 and 27. I am the resurrection and the life, and he who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this? Now here is the answer of Martha. She said to him, yes, Lord, I believe. You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.

That is a confession of her faith in the Lord. Then when he came down to verse 32. Mary called him Lord in her disappointment.

Then when Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And then 34. When Jesus said, where have you laid him? And they answered him, Lord, come and see.

And then one more time is in verse 39. Jesus said, take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to him, Lord, by this time there is finch, for he had been dead for four days.

So all together this Lord was mentioned eight times. One time by disciples and then the others by the sisters. Now eight always refer to resurrection.

And it is in this chapter the Lord says of himself, I am the resurrection, I am the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. So I think it is quite significant.

Well, let's look and see what happened to this family. How they react to their situation. There was sorrow.

And how was their reaction to this sad event. And in verse 3, we are told that the sisters sent word to the Lord Jesus and simply tell him, Lord, behold, whom you love is sick. They called him Lord and they simply informed him.

I think it is a statement of trust. You cannot call him Lord and not have some faith in him. Even though you are anxious for him to come immediately, but also you have a sense that as long as he knows, things will be alright.

So they leave it that way. The Lord, behold, whom you love is sick. Simply an information.

Now for our sister, most of us as parents, when our little ones get sick, we get very desperate. We want immediate attention. Even though just a little bruise here and there, we want immediate attention.

Quick solution. And yet in this case, even though there was sorrow, they recognized him as Lord, who is really in charge of that situation. And they simply informed him, Lord, behold, whom you love is sick.

And leave it in the Lord's hand. Then when Lazarus died, it was a great disappointment. Great disappointment.

He died and they buried him. And when Martha and Mary encountered the Lord, they uttered those words to the Lord, similar. Martha, same words, and Mary, uttered the same words.

They said, Lord, if you have been here, my brother would not have died. In the midst of sorrow, to recognize him as Lord in the midst of sorrow is not easy. Brothers and sisters, it's not easy.

In the midst of disappointment and still acknowledge him as Lord is not easy. When things go well, we have no doubt that he is Lord. But when things go wrong and they still acknowledge him as Lord, it is most difficult.

And so the faith of this time is severely tried and tested. Then the next thing that put him through this very trying time is in verse 34. The Lord said, where have you laid him? And they said, come.

They said, Lord, come and see. Lord, come and see. Brothers, they were not afraid to show their dead to the Lord and show him the site where they buried him.

Brothers and sisters, we cannot hide anything from the Lord. If he is Lord of all, he is Lord of all over everything, including our dead, including the site where he was buried. And then verse 39.

When the Lord said, take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to him, Lord, by this time they are extinct. And he has been dead for four days.

Fear, great fear. In case that stone is removed, we will see nothing but corruption. Corruption has already set in.

Full of fear. And yet in the midst of fear, they are still crying to him, Lord. In the midst of their doubt, fear, they still recognize him.

So brothers, we see here in Bethany, indeed the Lord was Lord of all in Bethany. And I think that is one of the reasons why Father Sparks says Bethany represents a local assembly in the thought of God. Where Jesus Christ is Lord of all over everything.

In their joy, in their sorrow, in their hope, in their disappointment, in when they have life or when they have death. Their sorrow, their doubt, he is Lord of all. And brothers, I believe this is what the Lord is teaching in the midst of our local assemblies.

That he wants to be Lord of all, Lord of all, over his people. In everything, in everything. Now brothers and sisters, when we have sorrow, do we refer our sorrow to him? When we have disappointment, do we refer our disappointment to him? If there is death, do we bring that situation to him, before him? Or we try to solve those problems ourselves.

And Martha's faith in 27, I believe plays a very, very important key in this household of faith. Because Martha said, yes Lord, I believe. Now she may not understand all that she believes, but she believes.

Now brothers, is that true with all of us? We say we believe, we don't know all, we do not know exactly all what we believe. We don't know exactly what we believe. Most of the time, but somehow we believe.

And the Lord looks for that. He looks for that. And Lord on that faith.

Because once we proclaim that he is Christ, the Son of God, who will come into the world. You are saying that in the Lord Jesus Christ, all God's provisions are all in him. Apart from him, there is nothing.

And when that route is taken, the Lord can do something with us. He is Lord of all. That should be our confession.

Now let's look at a few other things from the Lord's point of view. When he is recommended as Lord of all, we discover that the way he looks at things and the way we look at things are quite contrary. You recall the incident, the encounter between the Lord and Nicodemus.

You notice that the Lord was on one level, one plane, the spiritual plane. But Nicodemus was on the earthly plane. The two minds just don't meet.

The Lord says something and Nicodemus says, how can that be? How can it be? So for the natural mind, and even the spiritual, it's always, how can it be? It's always that way. So when he goes to John 6, when the Lord talks about his flesh is meat and blood is drink, they could not take it in. The natural mind cannot take it in.

How can it be? How can we eat his meat and drink his blood? How is it possible? And the scriptures say many of these disciples left him. So to the natural mind, and even the spiritual, it's always, how can it be? How is it possible? How can it be? So we are very natural, but the Lord is very heavenly. And particularly when he's recognized as Lord of all.

And when he's in charge of our situation. Now we can come to something that's a little bit more positive. Now to us, mostly, to us, sickness, the end of sickness is death.

Right? So when someone is dead, you bury the person. I mean, that's human solution. I remember when we had a prayer meeting at Brother Fong Chun's house.

Brother Fong Chun's house, he's a medical doctor. And in just two houses down is a funeral parlor where they live. Brother was telling us a story that one time there was a social gathering and people of all professions were together.

There were doctors and accountants and lawyers and social gathering and also a funeral director. And so they were just sharing what they do for a living and so forth. This man said, I'm a doctor.

They referred to this funeral parlor director. He said, now what do you do? Well, he said, we take over what the doctor fails to do. So you see, our solution is, if there's sickness, there's no cure, the end is what? Is death.

And once dead, what do we do? We put him out of sight, we bury him. Now we are all capable of doing that. Spiritually, we'll talk about that later on.

But with the Lord, who's in charge, if He's Lord of all, He says, this sickness is now what? Until death. Brothers and sisters, in every fellowship, we have spiritual sickness. Every fellowship.

There's not one fellowship free from any spiritual disease, sickness. But if your mind is caught on the natural, you say, I'm hopeless. Dead.

But if you recognize Him as Lord of all, by faith, maybe we dare to say, this sickness is not until death, but for what? The glory of God. There's a real battle there. We always look for quick solutions.

That's why there are brothers and sisters, there are those spiritual migrants. They move from fellowship to fellowship to avoid problems. Well, let's move further.

And the last Indian was dead. Right? He was physically dead. But dead to the Lord, dead to us is dead.

But dead to the Lord is simply what? Sleep. Sleep. So the Lord said, I'll go and what? I'll wake him up.

If he's all wrong, there's always, He's in control. He's the light giver. He's the light giver.

He's here to overcome death. He's here to give life. And the local church assembly is an expression of His resurrection life.

And He's always been an opportunity to display the power of His resurrection life in His people. So He said, this dead is asleep. And I'll go and wake him up.

And then later, you notice, the Lord went to the side of the tomb. And He cried with a loud voice. He said, Lazarus, come forth.

Now, you've heard this story. I mean, some people say that if the Lord did not say Lazarus, come forth, probably all the devil would come forth. But He physically called Lazarus.

Come forth. As though Lazarus had what? Ears to really hear Him. The Lord never speaks to blind.

To walls. When He speaks, He expects people to what? Someone to what? To hear Him. Therefore, in many parables, He said, He has an ear, then what? Many may not hear, but some will what? Will respond.

But in this case, He knew Lazarus can hear. Therefore, He said, Lazarus, come forth. As though He had ears to hear.

Now, brothers and sisters, in our local fellowship, we all have this problem. There is not a fellowship that is free from spiritual disease, spiritual sickness, spiritual weakness, spiritual death, and spiritual deafness. Now, how do we overcome? By simply acknowledging Him as Lord of what? Of all.

He is Lord of the dead. He is Lord of the living as He was the Lord of the dead. We often think He is the Lord of the living.

He is not the Lord of the dead. But He is just Lord of the dead as He is Lord of the living. Brothers and sisters, the Lord is faithful.

What He has set out to do, He will surely finish it. And that's why in the end of verse 36, the end of verse 26, the Lord asked Martha, He said, Do you believe this? Do you believe that I am the life giver? Do you believe this? Now, brothers and sisters, when the Lord asks questions, sometimes He is always very, very searching. Do you believe it? Do you really believe it? And Martha said, well, I believe.

Now, she may not understand the whole impact of what the Lord is asking, but at least in simplicity, she might respond. And that's all the Lord requires. Now, next few minutes, maybe I'll touch a little bit on this matter of spiritual responsibility, and then we'll conclude.

What the Lord can do, we can never do. And yet, there are certain things the Lord wants us to do. Not voluntarily, but at His command.

If we act without His command, brothers and sisters, we often bring death to our fellowship and assembly. If we do not ask and inquire Him and do things out of our own will, our own energy, all of a sudden, we bring death. Because if we do things without referring to Him, asking, inquiring Him, then we are not acknowledging Him as Lord.

We are Lord. We are running the show. We are running the Lord's assembly.

Okay. Look at verse 34. Just touch that a little bit.

The Lord said, where have you laid Him? That is a very pointy question. You know, at the beginning of the Gospel of John, when the two disciples left John and followed Lord Jesus, what did they do? Do you remember? So I was meditating this afternoon. I think it is very important we face that question every time we come to the conference.

Just what do we seek for when we come to the conference? To meet your friends? To listen to some good teaching? Or deeper teaching? Or other motives? Or do you want the Lord Himself? It is a very urgent question. So the first time those two disciples followed the Lord, now what was seeking? What were you looking for? And the Lord said, I think it would do us good every time we go to a meeting, to have a check before the Lord. What do I come for? Well, the Lord said, why did you lay Him? The Lord did not say, where was He laid? You see the question, you see.

Where was He laid and where do you lay Him? I think that is two different questions altogether. Where do you lay Him? It means you people in that crowd, you buried Him. To me, the Lord is teaching, is saying to us, we may not be responsible for our brother's spiritual death, but we are responsible for his spiritual burial.

He is dead, but we quickly put Him out of sight. We are responsible. We may not be responsible for His death, spiritually, but often times we are responsible for His burial.

That is what the Lord asks, why did you lay Him? It is a very searching question. You see brothers and sisters, our estimation of things is so different from the Lord's. You see, we thought that brother is spiritually dead, we buried him, the Lord said, now he sleeps.

Let him sleep for a while. In due time, I will come and wake him up. Now we are so impatient.

Without realizing, our fellowship is simply a school of faith, where our faith is severely tested. That enduring faith, brothers and sisters, often times we don't have. It lasts for a while.

We always find an easy way out. Move some way out, where things will be easier. Brothers and sisters, our fellowships are all alike, because we are all alike.

Flesh is flesh. Well, let's come to something more positive. The Lord said, take away the stone.

Command, take away the stone. Brothers and sisters, the Lord did what we cannot do, that is to resurrect Lazarus from the dead. But take away the stone is something that we can do.

And he wants us to do it. And at his command. We cannot do anything without his command.

Because he said, remove it, take away. Then they responded and took away the stone. Now, to me, this huge stone, to me, is really unbelief.

Our biggest obstacle in our Christian life, as individual, as family, or as a local, is this unbelief. Because without faith you cannot please God. Because without faith you cannot touch anything spiritual.

We all begin with faith. We have to live by faith, within faith. So the greatest obstacle in our Christian life together as an assembly is simply unbelief.

And because of our unbelief, God's work is hindered. And he does not do all the things that he desires to do. And that's why Paul, when he wrote to Timothy, he called Timothy the son of faith.

The son of faith. In the faith. And then later, in that same epistle, he exalted Timothy to fight the good fight of faith.

For us, we are all sons of faith. Because the Lord Jesus is the author of faith. And we are all sons of faith.

He has begotten us, and he has given us his faith. And now he is encouraging us to fight that good fight of faith. And Paul fought that fight to the very end of his life.

So brothers and sisters, fighting to believe and fighting against unbelief is a lifelong battle. And Satan is challenging that. Challenging that faith.

Every day. In our lives as individuals, particularly in our corporate. Because Satan always, his challenges always focus on that which pleases God the most.

And we shared yesterday, in Hebrews 11, what pleases God is what? Is faith. What this man, son of man comes, what you're looking for is faith. And Satan is always challenging that faith.

To wipe that faith, to take that faith away from us. And that's why Paul told Timothy to fight that good fight of faith. Hang on to it to the very end.

And brothers and sisters, it is this faith that will carry us to the very end. So that we can be all constituted together as the bride. And quickly move to the next thing.

Just let me just touch one more thing. As I said, this big stone, huge stone is unbelief. And the house of faith, it should be a house of prayer.

Now brothers and sisters, is that true? I believe that if God is going to recover that faith in the church, has to begin with prayer meeting. Has to begin with prayer meeting. The church ministry, the church prayer ministry.

And brothers and sisters, how brothers and sisters think on church prayer meeting night. Somehow when it's time to come to pray, all kinds of things happen. You know, if you read Brother Spock's book, In Touch with the Plum, he said, when it comes to prayer meeting night, all of a sudden you're sick.

Something happens in your family. Something happens. It just all happens when you have to go to prayer meeting.

Something happens, prevention happens. Brothers and sisters, we have to resist that. And come in faith and pray together.

So if the Lord has restored that faith in the church, brothers and sisters, we must give that expression of faith in the church. Restore that expression of faith through our prayer time together. So we need to pray.

It's in prayer together that we exercise our persistent faith, enduring faith before him. And then of course the Lord next, he said about Lazarus, he said, lose him and let him go. You know the great cloth that was bound on Lazarus, they were bound by other people.

A dead person cannot do much. Brothers and sisters, oftentimes through our action, through the way we conduct ourselves, oftentimes we put our brothers and sisters, without careless words and so forth, oftentimes we put our brothers and sisters into bondage. We bind them.

We restrict them. And so brothers and sisters, it's our response that through fellowship, we must learn to lose each other from our bondages. I'll just mention a few.

All of us, we have spiritual blind spots. We all do. We are all spiritually lopsided.

I find very, very few brothers that are really spiritually balanced. They are all spiritually balanced, but most of us, we are spiritually lopsided. All of us, we have some spiritual prejudices, and we all have spiritual fears, and we all have doubts, and we all need to be delivered from all these things.

And brothers and sisters, I believe the way out is recognizing He is Lord of all. He is Lord of all. He can take up all these situations for us if He is Lord.

And through our fellowship with Him as Lord of all, and with one another, we need to learn to have open fellowship, one with another, heart-to-heart fellowship, not nice Christian diplomacy, but heart-to-heart fellowship. We have much to learn from each other, and that's why the Lord put us together, to assist each other, to help each other, so that together we may overcome these obstacles, so that together we may recognize Him as Lord of all. Now, lastly, I want to share a few portions of scriptures with brothers and sisters and leave them with you.

As we move to the end of this last age, things will become more difficult for all of us. It will not be easy. Many of the local assemblies in North America, the racial constitution becomes more complex.

Now, years and years ago, most of the assemblies in North America, most of them would say all pure Caucasians, American natives. But now, people from other countries are coming to this country, believers. There are many things we need to adjust, culturally, many other things, habits, lifestyle.

But as long as the Lord's, we need to receive them, so that we can be built up together. As we receive them, you discover you will be enriched. And all these elements come you will have problems.

And the only way to overcome is recognizing Him as Lord of all. I've been to several assemblies that are strictly 100% Chinese. Good, brothers and sisters.

But some I feel there's a lacking there. Good, good, there's something lacking. Because what we Chinese have, or what the American brothers have, we don't have.

We need what you have from the Lord to enrich us, to balance us, to adjust us, to complete us. And the Lord is doing that work. That's how the Lord brings us all these.

And things will never be the same again. I was in Hong Kong this last time. I told the brothers and sisters that Hong Kong things will never be the same again.

There's 50 or so provinces from the U.S. never the same again. Now who ever think in Richmond 50 years ago that we'll have this kind of gathering. Provinces from all different nations here and before.

Unthinkable. Unthinkable. 50 years ago.

And the Lord is bringing us together. Why? Not to give us problems, but to what? To enrich us. Let's take the opportunity and embrace all those the Lord has given to us.

That we may enter into His fullness together. In spite of all the difficulties that we'll encounter. Okay, just a few verses.

Very comforting verses. Because I need them. And I hope you need them too.

First let's turn to Genesis 18. Okay, I will not read the whole chapter. You know the story.

You know the story. Okay, about the Lord came to Abraham and Sarah and promised that next year, this time they'll have a son. And then Sarah laughed in unbelief.

I don't know whether it's belief or unbelief. You figure it out. Okay, whether she's really rejoicing or she laughed in doubt.

I don't know. You figure it out. Okay, 14.

Now I believe this is what the Lord said to Abraham. The Lord said, Is anything too hard for the Lord? It's a question. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? God answers, Whatever we are facing, whatever we are facing, now or in the future, take this word, take this verse to heart.

Whatever you face, I know some brothers and sisters in some places you are facing very, very difficult situations. But hang on to this. The Lord said to him, He said, Is anything too hard for the Lord? That will get you through.

Now let's turn to the book of Jeremiah 32. It's also a very, very sad time. Very, very sad time.

The Babylonian troops were just coming in to invade and, you know, and it's a very, very sad time. Very sad. Before the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah's prayer.

Jeremiah's prayer. 17. 30 to 17.

Ah, Lord God, behold, you have made heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Now listen. There is nothing too hard for you.

An answer. Back to God. Amen.

Yes. There is nothing too hard. The Lord said, Is anything too hard for me? No.

There is nothing too hard for you. So, here's a prophet's prayer. And then finally, a word from the angel.

Let's go to Luke 1. Gospel of Luke 1. Gabriel. Angel Gabriel visiting Mary. Verse 37.

Verse 37. For with God nothing is what? Impossible. So I'll just read you, brother and sister, those three verses to take home and be before the Lord.

And finally, responsibility. As I'm meditating on this matter, responsibility. And the Lord's just really impressed on how this last few days.

Responsibility before the Lord simply will respond to his ability. That's all. That's grace.

We respond. He assumes the responsibility. Responsibility simply will respond to his what? Ability.

And that's why I shared last night, yesterday, that in the end of Revelation, it's grace and what? And amen. And all we respond and the ability is his. And it's grace.

And it's done. So may the Lord help us. Dear brothers and sisters, what he has set out to do, he will surely what? Complete it.

Until the day of Jesus Christ. And to God be the glory. To bow our heads.

Father, we do need your encouraging words because we are living in very difficult days. As individuals, as family, as your people, the local fellowship. And we do need your leading word to feed us, to encourage us, so that we may go on.

So that your end may be achieved. That we may be a prepared people for your beloved son, the Lord Jesus. Lord, we commit these few feeble words into your hands.

Lord, use what is of you. And we just give all the praise and all the glory to you. We ask in the praise of the Lord Jesus.

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