

Do Not Despise the Day of Small Beginnings (Video)

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of dying to self and surrendering completely to God, focusing on the need for unity in the church and the power of the Holy Spirit. It challenges individuals to let go of personal preferences, opinions, and worldly approval, seeking only God's approval. The message encourages a deep spiritual transformation through death to self, leading to a life poured out for God and a church filled with the resurrection life of Christ.

Scripture: Zechariah 4:6, Matthew 5:11, 1 Corinthians 15:43, Revelation 3:1, John 17:22

Topics: "Dying to Self", "Unity in the Church"

Description

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Transcript

You know, there's a glory that the father gave to Jesus that he wants to give to you. Do you know what that is? Anybody want to guess or know? Yes, that's our memory verse for this last week. So, if you were memorizing your verse, you'd remember, you'd know that.

That's John 17, verse 22. The glory, Jesus is saying to the father, the glory that you have given me, I have given to them. And you think, what glory is that? That they may be one, just as you and I are one.

Do you think that's a glory? Do you really believe? Let's look at that verse, John 17, 22. By the way, I want to add an encouragement to us as a church family, and any of you visiting or listening online, to take our memory verses seriously, because they will really help you, not just memorize them, but meditate on them, it will really be a help to you, as they are to me. I can honestly say, I don't just memorize them, I find that God speaks regularly, regularly, almost every week, almost every week, through the memory verse to me.

John 17, verse 22, the glory which you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one. Do you know that the representation of the glory in heaven is manifest in your marriage, when you and your husband are one? In your home, when parents with children experience a unity? In a church, where brothers and sisters set aside their differences, even doctrinal disagreements, or different ways of administering things, and they say, I want the glory. I don't want just an experience of church, I don't want just friends, I want the glory.

Because friends will die, friendships will end, but the glory of God never will. My dear brother, dear sister, if you are hungering and thirsting for the glory of God, seek to be one with those whom God has called you to be one with. It begins in your home, with your wife, your husband, with your children, and in the local expression of the church, God has placed you in, which is why it's important to be a part of a local church, where you're planted, you're integrated.

Go back and meditate on this verse, and ask the Lord to make it a reality in your life. Last week, I was speaking about the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, from John 12 verse 24, and except it die, it remains alone, Jesus said. There's a guaranteed way to remain alone all your life, and be lonely, refuse to die.

Now, the loneliness that he describes there is quite a different loneliness than what we think of in the world as loneliness. You might actually get by in your life with a lot of friends, and a lot of attachments, a lot of people around you, popular, but you will die lonely from the standpoint of eternity, if you refuse to die. That word of God will remain, and the people around you, maybe that seem popular, or the celebrities, the world that seems to be popular and have all its clubs and its societies and all of those things, God will prove that they were really alone, amidst all their crowdedness, they were alone.

Because the only way to not be alone is to die, and if a grain of wheat does not die, it remains alone. It doesn't matter how many grains of wheat are around it. See, he's not talking about quantity.

If a grain of wheat, see I have a few grains of wheat at home, I brought a few last week. If I put a whole large number of grains of wheat into a bin, that's not death. And you can say, are they alone? They're around 10,000 other grains of wheat, but they're alone.

Because what Jesus was talking about in this non-loneliness, if you will, bearing fruit is what he calls it, can only happen if you put that grain of wheat into the ground, and so he invites you to do the same. But as I spoke about that, my dear brothers, dear sisters, if you can pull up my slides, what came to mind? What was the picture you left this room with last week when the Holy Spirit, I hope, presented before you the grain of wheat that must fall into the ground and die? Did you think of yourself as just this grain of wheat? When you think about your home, when you think about your marriage, when you think about us as a church, River of Life Christian Fellowship, how do you leave this place or how do you find yourself thinking about God's purpose in your life? Is it small? Is it empty? Is it few? Does it look like this? Okay, mine's not working, so you may, can you start the slideshow actually, Dorrington? That might help. That way I can control it from here.

Yeah? Let's see if mine works. Okay, you can just move on to the next slide and drive it for me. I put a picture up here.

Think about us. Whatever circumstance in your life that is foremost on your mind, what is it that occupies your mind during the week? Is it your job? Is it your family situation, your marriage maybe? Is it the church

life, maybe the church life you were used to having and feels a little different now? Is this what it feels like? Is this the vision that you were leaving with week in week out about us as a church or your home? Or is it what I want to show you in the next picture? I'll try it from here again. Is this what you see? Do you see fields of harvest? Is your eyes set on what God wants to do through your falling into the ground and dying? Not just the falling into the ground and dying.

Because if all you can envision is falling into the ground and dying and you leave this room thinking, ah, falling to the ground and dying, this is just kind of a morbid life. Oh no, it's not. But I found that the more I meditate on what it means for a grain of wheat to fall into the ground and die and actually fall into the ground and die, see there's a difference between hearing and thinking about falling into the ground and dying and the Lord actually seeing you die in your earthly circumstance.

Because what happens when you actually die is you get this vision. See I have really, really small in there, the picture of that, that same picture that I had of the hand holding those few grains of wheat. But that's obscured, that becomes small.

The reality of those few grains in the hands of the holder is diminished because of the expanse of the golden harvest. The Lord wants you to lift up your eyes this morning, dear brother, dear sister, for us as a church as well, to take our eyes off of the grains of wheat that you're holding into your hand. The Lord will give you plenty of circumstances in your life for those grains of wheat to die.

But you look up and fix your eye on the vision. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. You may wonder, how is this going to happen? In fact, you should wonder, how are you going to use us, Lord, as a church? How are you going to accomplish your purpose in our lives? I've been reading this chapter a few times this week and the Lord's brought it to light in a, to my mind, to my heart in a new light.

I always thought about this chapter in the context of physical death and physical resurrection. It is true, that's what he's talking about. But I believe that it's also true about the spiritual death and spiritual resurrection.

Let's look at that. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we'll go on to the next slide. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 35, but someone will say, how are the dead raised? Santosh, you're asking me to look at these little grains of wheat that I'm holding in my hand and I'm asking you, how is it possible? My situation is just too hopeless.

My marriage is just too far gone. My home life, my children, they're perhaps they're already grown and out of the home. How is this going to happen? The church life and my experience of, and my hurts over what I've gone through are just too much.

How can God ever do something? How are the dead raised to life? This is a very, very valid question for us in our situation as a church, for you, perhaps in your situation, in your marriage, in your home life, or if you're single in a situation you're dealing with. Every one of us, I believe, is facing circumstances, thoughts that we deal with week in, week out. How are you going to bring this dead thing to life? How are the dead raised to life? Let's continue reading.

And with what kind of body do they come? You fool. Oh, you love how the Holy Spirit just kind of throws that in there every now and then. You fool.

Like, I was just asking you a question. And it's like he has to, you know, slap me upside the head to say, wake up. Your eye is on the wrong thing.

Lift up your head, you fool. You're looking at the little grains of wheat and trying to imagine something supernatural happening by those grains of wheat in your hand. You fool.

That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And I had the Holy Spirit speak this very word to me even this week. You fool, Santosh.

You're looking at the physical reality of your circumstance with the grains of wheat in your hand and you're asking me questions. You're doubting. You're worried.

You're unbelieving about what I can do through it. You fool. Quit holding those grains of wheat in your hand.

Put it into the ground. That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies. So first of all, you fool, we must die.

That's no option. We must die. But then he goes on to say, what does the sowing look like? What will it look like when you say, okay, Lord, I take you seriously.

You said unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. What is that going to look like? What will it look like day by day, week by week, month by month, even year by year before you see the golden harvest? What will it look like? Let's look at this. We'll continue reading.

Verse 37, that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be. You're not going to sow a stock of wheat and get wheat. That's what he's saying.

That which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be. You're not actually going to sow the thing which is going to be, but a bare grain. And if you've done even a little bit of gardening, you know this is true, but I have to belabor it because it's so difficult for us to take that which we know is true in the physical realm because we see it all the time.

We drive by cornfields all the time, don't you? And you know, whether you actually consciously think about it or not, that that five or six foot tall corn or wheat or whatever it is started out as a grain of wheat that small. You know it. You learned it in science class when you were in fifth grade perhaps.

But now you take that into the spiritual and I find, I have found in my past, that I come to God saying, Lord, I don't want to be this grain of wheat. I want to be the long five foot, six foot tall blade of wheat or corn. I want to be that.

And I look at my earthly circumstances, small and hopeless, and think what good can you do with that? He says, you fool. You fool that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be sowed. Apply that now to us as a church.

Do we want God to do amazing things through us? Not, I'm not talking in terms of numbers. I'm not talking in terms of influence. And I think perhaps that led us astray at some point as a church where how people talked about River of Life Christian Fellowship and what people knew about River of Life Christian Fellowship and how what they experienced outwardly when they came into our midst was so different from what God's perception, God's opinion, God's approval of us may have been.

But he was, what he's saying here is that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be. So we are not going to look like what God intends for us to be. For a while, perhaps.

That grain of wheat is not going to look like that five foot tall blade of grass or wheat or corn for a long time. And if you hold on to this corn, this grain of wheat, refusing to go onto the ground and dying, saying, no, Lord, but I'd rather be that. And you look at blades of wheat, blades of corn thinking, I want to be that.

Make me that Lord. Make me that Lord. Make me that.

And he has two words for you, for me, you fool. Fall into the ground and die and then you will become that. It will take some time.

That grain of wheat, once it falls into the ground and is sown, it said it must die. When does the dying happen? After it goes under the ground. And when that dying happens, something comes to life.

So you do not sow the body, which is to be but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or something else. But God gives it a body. You see the difference between me trying to make myself a body, us trying to make ourselves a body in our marriages, us trying to make ourselves a body in our homes, us trying to make ourselves a body as a church.

That's me trying to do it. Me trying to fit the grains of wheat in a line so that it looks like wheat, so that it looks like a blade of wheat or corn. I'm lined up and I try to convince others and convince myself that this is a blade of grass, a blade of wheat.

And it's not because the death hasn't happened. And it will take some time. That wheat must go into the ground and die.

So the sowing looks bare. If your life feels bare, my dear brother, dear sister, in your marriage, in your home, in your church experience, if it feels empty, if it feels bare, have faith. If you're really that grain of wheat that's falling into the ground and dying, it will bear fruit.

Don't look at the bareness. Don't look at the emptiness. It must be sown in bareness for it to come forth in glory, in a body.

He says in verse 42, skip down. So also is the resurrection of the dead. See, I believe, my dear brothers and sisters, I'm convinced of this.

I'm speaking especially with regard to what and who we must be in the church, as a church, as a local expression of the body of Christ. But you can apply that to any area that the Lord is speaking to you. I want to apply it to us as a church.

If we continue as a church or are a church, when Jesus comes, that is lacking in the resurrection power of Jesus. We came together every Sunday. We sang songs.

We had Bible studies. We had good friendship. We were in each other's homes.

We hung out together. We did all these things, but we didn't have the resurrection life of Jesus in us. We will be the losers.

Everything will be burned up. But in fact, I've thought about this. I want to be careful how I say this.

If the Lord had come three months ago, and I speak this for those of you that were here three months ago in this local church, if the Lord had come three months ago, we would be eternally grieving, I think, over

the Lord showing us the reality of what we were. That there was not that glory that as the Father and He are one that we had in our midst. We didn't have it.

And I thank God in his mercy that he delayed his return so that he could open our eyes to pursue true unity, to pursue the true resurrection life of Jesus because he says so also is the resurrection from the dead. And I believe that for us to truly be a church that is pleasing to God and approved by him, we must die. River of Life Christian Fellowship must die.

And I think to some extent we have. Perhaps I don't know if it's all the way, but I think what we've gone through in the last few months is a death that must have happened and must continue to happen for us to experience the resurrection life. And my dear friends, dear family of God, dear brothers, dear sisters, don't trade any counterfeit for this.

The devil will do everything within you. He'll convince you of this or that, that there's some other option besides dying. Don't let him.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is so perishable or fragile. What is perishable? You know, when you say perishable goods, that means it's got a life expectancy.

It's, uh, it's, it's sure it's on its way to death. You better do something with it quick before you run out of time. That's what perishable means.

And God is giving you and I, my dear brothers and sisters, opportunities to perish, to give that perishable so that we gain the imperishable. So also is the resurrection from the dead. So also is River of Life Christian Fellowship.

If we are to be pleasing to God, it must be sown perishable so that it can be raised imperishable. Sown fragile. I like that word better because that's implied in that word perishable.

It's fragile, but it's raised up completely indestructible. This is the eternal, the resurrection life of Christ. Verse 43, it is sown in dishonor.

You know that if you want this life, if you want God, if we want God to bless and approve of River of Life Christian Fellowship, there must be a dishonor. There must be a dishonor over my life. Not that I dishonor God by my actions or by my words.

No, we must always seek to maintain a pure testimony before God and before men. But in doing so, there must be a dishonor. This is what the sowing looks like.

It's God's way. He is trying to prove that I'm not fixated on this grain of wheat. I'm fixated on the wheat that I will be on the golden fields of harvest.

And he says, listen, I'm going to prove that your faith is really on that. I'm going to test your faith by allowing this grain of wheat to go through dishonor. So Matthew 5 verse 11, blessed are you when, let's look at that.

The Lord spoke this verse really powerfully to me this week. Matthew 5 verse 11. Take this to heart, dear brothers, dear sisters, dear church family.

Take this to heart. Do you want the Word of God to become flesh in you? You know, it says the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, John 1, full of grace and truth. What did that mean? That whenever there was something written in the Word of God, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, even though the New Testament wasn't yet written because it's written about Jesus, Jesus knew what was going to be written.

But everything that we know is the Word of God, these 66 books, Jesus came to fulfill it. He says, behold, I have come. It is written in the role of the book about me.

It is written of me. So when you read the Bible, dear friends, you know what it must be? You must be reading this saying, it's written of me. So when it says in Matthew 5 verse 11, if you really want to follow Jesus, if you really want to experience his glory, you will come to Matthew 5 verse 11 and says, it's written about me.

Blessed are you, Santos. Blessed are you, put your name there. Do you want to be blessed? Bless me, Lord.

Bless me. He says, here's how I'm going to do it. I'm going to allow men to insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me, because you stand for the truth.

Blessed. Oh, wow. And when we stop seeing the insult and the persecution and the false speaking of evil as the thing that occupies my mind, why did they say that? Why did they do that? Why do they treat me like that? What did I do to them? All that I've done.

That's God sowing you in dishonor so that he can bless you. I have a simple question for you this morning, very simple question. Do you want Matthew 5 verse 11 to be written about you? Is it written about you? Is it written about me? I want it.

I don't want to get to the end of my life and says, well, Santos, for the Lord to say to me, you know, I was able to fulfill quite a bit in your life, but when it came to Matthew 5 verse 11, you kicked at the goads and you didn't let me. You allowed yourselves to be preoccupied by all those negative things and those negative thoughts. You, you didn't allow me to take you and put you into the ground and bury you a foot or two deep.

And so I could never bring the resurrection life out of you. It is sown in dishonor. It is sown through river of life, Christian fellowship.

It must be said about us. And again, like I said, apply this to any area of your life that you want resurrection life as dead as it is. Is it been dead for 10 years? That's fine.

God can bring it back to life and he will, if you will trust him. But the only way that'll happen, it must be said about river of life, Christian fellowship, as it must be said about every single one of us who form that church, that local expression of the body of Christ, that we were blessed. We were a blessed church because people insulted us and persecuted us and falsely said all kinds of evil against us because of Jesus.

And he goes on to say in verse 12, rejoice. Oh, it gets harder. It's one thing to say, okay, Lord, thank you for blessing me.

Now I got to rejoice. Are you willing my dear brother and your sister to trade what last week has been like with its morning? If it has been the case for you because of your circumstance, are you willing to trade your morning for dancing, for rejoicing? Now the circumstance hasn't changed. The people you're dealing with may be continuing to speak evil about you and falsely accusing you and persecuting you and doing all kinds of things to you.

It may be even in your own home through your spouse. But in the midst of that, are you willing to say, Lord, I'm trading my sorrows for your joy. You have turned my morning into dancing.

Last week was full of me being bogged down with the negativity that people cast at me, but no more. This week I choose to live in Matthew 5 verse 12. Rejoice and be glad because your reward in heaven is great.

Turn back to that picture, please. That golden harvest. This is your reward in heaven.

Rejoice and be glad because this is your reward in heaven. In every area of your life, in your marriage, in your home, in your church experience. This is the future of River of Life Christian Fellowship.

I believe it, dear brothers and sisters, but I'm not trying to pitch you something. I'm not trying to convince you to stay here or leave or anything like that. All that the Father has given to us will come and we will not cast out any whom the Father comes to us that we're sure of.

We're never going to try to convince people to stay or to leave because we rely on the Father. But this is the future of River of Life Christian Fellowship if we will die. And if we will take the death that God has allowed into our life to bring forth this reality.

I want this with all of my heart. I don't want to be stuck just holding those little grains saying, Lord, I buried it in the ground and did nothing with it. I didn't die.

Here I am. Now, again, I want you to know I'm not talking about quantity. I'm not talking about whether this church will grow in numbers or not.

I really, the Lord has increasingly set me free from that. I want life, though. I want abundant life.

I want the life of Christ growing in me in increasing measure and in you in increasing measure. And I would rather as many of us as are here full of the life of Christ than many, many more who are half of the life of Christ. What do you think is more valuable to God? The fullness.

That's more valuable to God. And I want that with all of my heart. I hope you do.

Back in Matthew five, verse 40, no, first Corinthians 15. It's sown in dishonor, but it's raised in glory. We heard at the very beginning, I started by saying that the glory is the unity.

Do you want that unity? Do you want to be raised in, you know, anytime you read glory now, not not always. I don't want to give you a rule of thumb, but try to put in the word unity because he said this is the glory which the father has given me, that they may be one as you and I are one. So we know that glory is unity, at least in that context.

I don't want to apply that to the entire glory of God because it's so much more. But there is an aspect of my partaking of the glory of God in my being one in those areas where God wants me to one beginning in my marriage and for us as a church. So if we want to be raised in unity, Lord, build true unity in our church.

I've been praying that for the last few months, my dear brothers and sisters, I don't want to settle for a deception for a counterfeit. I want unity. I want unity and I'm willing to do whatever true unity Lord, not a club friendship where we pat each other's back and scratch each other's back and do nice things for each other.

No, I don't want that. And if the Lord had to take us through this experience over the last few months to say, Are you willing to open your eyes to what true unity is? Unity that can never be separated, no matter what the disagreements. Then I want that.

Do you want to be raised in glory? You must be sown in dishonor. You must be willing to take a dishonor. It's the word of God.

It's a principle. And if you're trying to find a unity that doesn't come from dishonor, you may go. We may go and spend our entire lives building a counterfeit, which will one day fall down like a pack of cards.

And I pray it happens in our lifetime, not at the judgment seat of Christ, where all the pack of cards that have been built over the history of time will come crashing down. Read about it in first Corinthians three, wood, hay, and straw that gets burned up. But I want gold.

I want silver. I want precious stones with you, my dear brothers and sisters. I want that with all my heart, true unity.

He says in verse 44, 43, the latter part, it is raised in power, how? Sown in weakness. It is a principle. You can't have power by starting out with power, is what God is saying.

You can't have glory by starting out with glory. You can't have indestructible by starting out indestructible. You can't have fruit by starting out fruitful.

No, you must start out bare, empty looking. That's what bare means. You must start out fragile, almost destructible seeming.

You must start out in dishonor. You must start out in weakness. If you want the fruit and the imperishable and the glory and the power.

I'm going to dismiss our children for their son. Actually, your children, hang on here for a second. Let's look at this because I have a question for you.

Maybe this will serve as a little bit of a Sunday school lesson on this next picture. What do you see? Children, what do you see? What do you see, Zay? A mountain? Is it a big mountain? Yeah, it's a pretty big mountain. Anybody else? What else do you see? Yeah? Snow.

Okay, yeah, there's snow. The sky, yeah. Vienna, what do you see? You were saying something, yeah? Anybody else? God's majesty, yeah.

A peak, yeah. A summit, yes. Clouds, yeah, there's some clouds behind that.

This is actually a picture of Mount Everest, the highest peak altitude-wise from sea level. Yes, Zay? It's a little picture. His eyes are pretty good, I've got to say.

I tried to make it as small as possible. Yes, Ali, tell us. Ali, right? God's creation, that's absolutely right.

But, and you're all correct. Yes, Baba, tell me. You see some rocks, yeah, I do too.

A big rock. But there is a little picture there. If you look carefully, you can see it.

You may have missed it the first time. But it doesn't quite blend in. I tried to find a picture that blended in so that it wouldn't stand out as much.

But this is a picture, I want you to turn with me to Zechariah chapter 4. Zechariah chapter 4. God gave Zechariah a vision. And I want you to look at this vision briefly with me. Zechariah 4 verse 1. You know where Zechariah is? It's the second last book of the Old Testament.

It's talking about building the church. A prophetic vision of the building of the church. Zechariah comes and says, he's speaking about building the church.

With the priesthood through Joshua. The kingship through Zerubbabel. Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets.

You see that beautiful picture, all encapsulated in Jesus. Jesus is king and priest now. And that's what Zerubbabel and Joshua represent.

And then there's the prophets seeking to exalt Jesus. Seeking to exalt the king and the priest. And in the midst of this, Zechariah has I think 5 or 6 visions.

And this is I believe the 4th maybe or 5th vision that he has. I just want to look at this one. He said to me in verse 2. Zechariah 4 verse 2. The angel said to Zechariah, what do you see? Now, I want you to know that this was actually what was before Zechariah.

This was this vision. It would look kind of like this, I'm saying. We'll see that here in a moment.

But it's like the angel and the Lord showed Zechariah this picture and says, what do you see? Now he's not saying, well okay, how good are your eyes? He's saying, what do you choose to see? What do you choose to see, Zechariah? He's asking you and I that question. What do you choose to see in your circumstance? He says, Zechariah. He's the prophet.

He's got a prophetic vision. He's not seeing things the way human beings see. His eyes are open to see heaven because he's a prophet.

And my dear brothers and sisters, this is what it means to have the gift of prophecy. That our eyes are open to see things as God sees and speak as the utterances of God. That the motives and intentions of people's hearts are manifest through the words we say.

And prophecy is not just saying, well I think this is what that scripture means. And I look up that passage and that passage. No, prophecy is I see heaven.

And my vision has been changed. And the prophets of God, if you see in the Old Testament, all said after they were shown. They were sent.

God showed them something and then they spoke. And we live in a world, sadly, my dear brothers and sisters, bear with me if I take a little time. Where people want Bible studies where everybody says whatever they want.

Whatever comes to the top of their mind. Thinking that's prophecy. And it's the biggest counterfeit to prophecy.

And I pray that we, there's a greater carefulness in our midst when we speak in our gatherings. Not fear, I'm not trying to speak fear into your lives. But I say, Lord, I dare not speak anything that hasn't come from a vision of you.

A revelation of you. I shut my mouth and put it in the dust and say, Lord, I haven't seen you yet. How dare I speak in your church? Sisters, in your sister's meeting, let it come from a vision of God.

Brothers, in our brother's meeting, let it come from I've seen God. I've seen Him high and exalted. Now I can speak because my tongue has been cleansed like it was for Isaiah.

And so he says to Zachariah, what do you see? Look forward to that next picture. He says, I see and behold a lampstand. All of gold with its, by the way, this is the picture that is a small version of it in front of the mountain.

It's the same picture. I see and behold a lampstand, all of gold with its bowl on the top of it. There's a bowl on the top of it.

And it's seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it. Also two olive trees by it, flourishing, green, pouring olive oil. One on the right side of the bowl and the other on the left side.

Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me, saying, what are these, my Lord? We'll skip down to verse six. Then he said to me, this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, the king. Saying, not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

What are you, O great mountain? See, there's the mountain. Zachariah didn't even see the mountain. Go back to that previous picture if you could.

Now, as you look at this picture in your circumstance, in your life, as you picture River of Life Christian Fellowship, what will you choose to see? Will you see the mountain, the hurt, the missed friendships, the experiences we had or all these things? Is that what you're going to focus on? Go back, actually. One more. Yep.

A big mountain in front of you. The memory of it haunts you day by day. Or will you say, no, I see the church fed by the olive trees.

And it's not, the lamps aren't burning because they're manufacturing oil. Oil is being poured into them through the Holy Spirit, full of the Holy Spirit. If this is what it takes, dear church, let's do this.

Let's seek God's face for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I don't believe that we've done that near enough in the last 10 years as River of Life Christian Fellowship. Not near enough.

Because too many of us, myself included, and I start, I put myself at the start of the line, have gone through life thinking that just by reading God's word, I can somehow get some idea of who God is. That I can have a Bible study and go away with my head puffed up with knowledge and think that I got a revelation of God. And I never come to the place where God has baptized me with His Holy Spirit and filled me with His power.

And my cry, my dear brothers and sisters, is that we will get that reality. Oh, how it will change our lives. The only way we can experience unity is if I'm filled with the Holy Spirit and you are.

But if we're going through life without that happening, we're wasting our time. And we are, but we're not going to. I see the lampstand burning bright until Jesus comes.

That's River of Life Christian Fellowship. I see the fields ripe for harvest until Jesus comes. That's River of Life Christian Fellowship.

My dear brothers and sisters, let's fall into the ground and die because this is our hope. Jesus Christ. In the last century, or actually almost two centuries ago, there was a man named George Miller who lived one of the most effective lives for God on this earth, both in the work that God did in him inwardly, which we don't know much about because that God reveals in the final day.

But outwardly, that love of Christ was manifest. And he mentioned a quote which you probably are familiar with. So you can skip to slide number five or six maybe.

And I want you to look at this quote with me as our testimony as a church. This was taken from a quote by George Miller. Imagine if this can be said about us.

There was a day when RLCF died. Perhaps that day has happened. RLCF as a name died.

Not that we changed the name or anything like that, but RLCF died. Utterly died. Died to ourselves, to our opinions, to our preferences, to our tastes, to our will.

And for it to happen corporately within the body of Christ, it must happen individually with all of us. If it can be said, there came a day. Maybe it's a day that's already passed.

I don't know. It's up to us. There came a day when RLCF died.

Utterly died. Died to ourselves, died to our opinions, died to our preferences, tastes, and will. Died to the world.

To its approval or censure. Censure means they cut you down. Say, oh, you're not good enough.

What are you? You died to it. It absolutely didn't matter what people say about us. That's what death means.

Died to the approval or blame, even of our brethren and our friends. That's tough. That's pretty advanced spirituality.

But if you're really dead, it doesn't matter who it is that is approving or disapproving. Is it a close friend? Somebody a stranger? To a dead person, it absolutely doesn't matter. And since then, we only show ourselves approved to God.

Let's take this to heart. This was, you know, he gave this response. He gave this response to somebody who asked him a question.

What's the secret of your service? The age of 90, in his 90s. A few months before he died. Somebody asked him, what's the secret to your living a life that was just poured out for God? He says, this is it.

There was a day, he said, when George Miller died. It's up to us. Let it be said of us, there was a day when RLCF died.

To ourselves, to our opinions. No longer my opinion, my way, to my preferences. I like it like this, you guys do it like that.

My tastes, my will. Died to the world, their approval or censure. Died to our brothers and friends in Christ.

To their approval or blame. Truly dead. And since then, we only show ourselves approved to God.

You can fast forward one more slide. You know, it says about the church and Sardis, but I'm going to give you the corollary of that. This is what it means to have the approval of God.

He who has the seven spirits, read it in Revelation 3 verse 1. It's a slight twist on it. And the seventh star says this, I know your deeds. That you have a name that you are dead.

People saw you dying. See, he actually wrote that to a church about whom he said, you have a name that you're alive, but you're actually dead. You've lined up your, you know, you have a plastic wheat or plastic corn.

You have a name that you're alive. People think you're alive, but you're actually dead. Let it be so about us, you have a name that you're dead.

People think nothing of you, whatever. What is that? But you're alive. This is our vision.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/BP5E-9gK2p8.mp4>

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