

Our Past History

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon explores the significance of church history and the importance of a personal relationship with Christ through prayer and discipleship.

Duration: 1:06:47

Scripture: Matthew 16:24

Topics: "Church History", "Personal Sanctification"

Description

This sermon reflects on the history of a church group's journey, emphasizing the importance of learning from the past for encouragement and warning. It calls for a deep commitment to following the footsteps of the Lord, denying oneself, taking up the cross daily, and truly seeking to know and satisfy God's heart. The speaker urges the congregation to move beyond complacency, repent, and allow God to work out their full salvation.

Transcript

It is not because we wanted to close and make it exclusive, it is because we have a deep sense that there's a greatest need among the local saints. And the theme is about the church, so that the Lord will have his church that he is designing amongst his children, even in our midst. So our hope and our prayer is that we can really respond and know what it means personally.

So at the end of the ministry, we have given more time so that we can all enter into prayer to respond. So after each message, we will have time to respond and pray. We will not be satisfied where we are.

That truly, Lord, we will press on into the fullness of Christ. And not only that, that you will have, Lord, even your inheritance among the saints. So dear Lord, do answer all the prayers in your heart.

The prayers that you have for your children. So Lord, we just want to thank you for bringing us here. We do want to hear what you have to say.

By your Spirit, open us up. Show us Christ himself. In your name we pray.

Amen. Will you please turn to the Song of Songs, the Song of Solomon. Chapter 1, verses 7 and 8. Song of Songs, Chapter 1, verses 7 and 8. Song of Songs, Chapter 1, verses 7 and 8. Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's booth.

Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's booth. And please turn to 1 Corinthians. Chapter 10, verse 11.

Now all these things happen to them as types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Let's have a word of prayer. Dear Lord, we want to thank thee for gathering us together in thy presence.

In thy presence is fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore. We praise and thank thee for gathering us in this way. We thank thee for thou art always mindful of us.

Thou art to prepare us for thy imminent return. Thou want us to face thee with joy. We thank thee for thy long suffering with us.

We thank thee for thy love, and love us to the uttermost. Lord, we come this day to put ourselves in thy presence. We pray that thou will examine our hearts to see if there is any evil way within us.

Lead us to walk in the way everlasting. Lord, lead us to walk in the way everlasting. Lord, open our understanding grant us the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we may truly know thee.

Knowing thee is eternal life. In our midst ensure us Christ Jesus that it may be all of Christ and none of ourselves. We praise and thank thee that thy mercy, love, and grace are always there.

We shall avail ourselves of what thou hast provided for us. May glory and honor be unto thee forever and forever. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters We do thank the Lord for giving us this opportunity to be together. I always feel every time when we have such opportunity it is the mercy of God. God wants to prepare us for his imminent return.

He wants us to see him face to face with joy. And that's the reason why he always provides opportunities for us. That we may be well prepared to see him.

Are you longing to see him? I hope he will come now. This time we want to talk about the way of the church. The footsteps of the flock of our Lord Jesus.

You know when you open the Song of Songs you find a virgin there. Once she was rebellious but the Lord kissed her neck. So she was softened by the Lord.

And the Lord created within her heart a desire for him. He wants to have a closer walk with God. He longed to know the Lord more and more.

He felt the drawing of the Lord's love. She has tasted some of the sweetness of the Lord. And she longed to have a closer walk with him.

But unfortunately her brethren did not understand her. So they put her to lots of work. And while she was under such situation she felt she was not closer enough to the Lord.

So she cried out. Lord, where do you feed your flock at noon? Where do you make your flock rest? Why should I be as one veil beside the flocks of thy companions? I want to know where you are. I want to see your face.

The Lord answered her. If you do not know where I am just follow the footsteps of my flock. Brothers and sisters, do we have such a longing to Him? Are we satisfied just to be saved and go to heaven? Do you think our Lord's heart will be satisfied if we are in such condition? Do we have the heart to be saved and go to heaven? Do we have the heart of that virgin? The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 11 that he had exposed us as chaste virgins to Christ.

And he is afraid that we may be enticed and lose the simplicity which is in Christ. Brothers and sisters, where are we today? As we look at Christianity today, not to say those who use the name of Christ and yet with the spirit of antichrist. Thank God there are those who are faithful to the Lord.

People such as Wesley, such as Moody and all these who really love the Lord. But unfortunately we find people begin to follow these people. And you find in Christianity today all kinds of denominations.

Some follow Martin Luther and become the Lutheran Church. Other people follow John Wesley and they become the Methodist, Wesley Methodist Church. So there you find there are lots of flocks belonging to the companions of our Lord.

But this virgin, her heart was so pure towards the Lord. She doesn't want to be within the flux of the companions of our Lord. Because she felt she was as one veil.

She didn't have that direct closer walk with the Lord. She longed for the Lord himself. Nothing else would satisfy her heart.

The Lord knows who has such a heart for him. Even though now he is seated at the right hand of the Father. Yet we praise and thank the Lord.

Throughout the centuries he still left the first step of his flock on earth. If we read Church history unfortunately Church history now is the official Church history. But thank God in recent times we find more and more discovery.

We discover that even from the very beginning to now there are people who want nothing but the Lord himself. From the very beginning we discover that there are people who are willing to follow their Lord. There is first steps of our Lord's own flock.

And dear brothers and sisters it is our humble desire not only to find that first step but to walk. And it is for this reason that we feel the need of such a time together. So, brothers and sisters if you come to hear some good sermons you will be disappointed.

I have been preaching for more than 70 years but now I see that now I do not know how to preach. The only thing I know is to talk. I want to talk to you.

Heart to heart talk. I hope that you can understand my heart. I hope that you know why my heart really is longing for.

So, dear brothers and sisters this is what we would like to have this time. My brethren asked me to talk about our past. At first, I told them if you only want me to talk about our past I am not coming.

Because this is not my burden. My burden is today we are on the right footsteps. If the past can help us we will do it.

So, this morning I am going to talk about our past. I think I am the oldest one that has been here. I think I am being connected with the way we are walking.

So, I will try to share with you our past. If you feel there is something strange in our midst I will tell you why we are strange. This gathering in New York began long ago.

I do not know exactly when it started. Because that was before I came to this country. I think it is in the 19th century.

I think it was in the 40s somewhere, or even before. There was a pastor. He was a pastor of a great big church in Minnesota, Minneapolis.

I only know his name was Mr. Lind. And at that time he had radio ministry too. But somehow the Lord began to reveal himself to him.

And he began to feel that the way of the church that he understood was not God's way. So he resigned as a pastor. And at the time there were two elderly sisters.

I knew them. So they suggested to him, why not go to England to visit Mr. T. Austin Spock? So he went. He spent some time there.

So far as I know. When he returned, he said, I learned nothing new there. But what the Lord has shown me was approved.

So when he came back, he came to New York City. He lived in Fifth Avenue, Manhattan. And in order to support himself, he became a mechanic.

And there was a small meeting in his house. Then you know the Second World War broke out. There was a brother whose name was Dr. Thornton Stearns.

Not his son, but the father. And this Dr. Stearns, he was a graduate of John Hopkins. And then he went to China as a missionary.

He was connected with the Presbyterian Church. He was the head of the orthopedic department of Chilu University. And he and his wife loved the Lord very much.

And the Lord used him to bring a number of many medical students to the Lord. Then he began to see something about the church. So he resigned and came to Shanghai to join with us.

And when the China and Japanese War broke out, and after Pearl Harbor, you know all the so-called foreigners in Shanghai were put into confinement. And he was sick. So he was sent to the hospital.

So he and his family were the first people repatriated back to the States. And when he came back, of course, he lived in New Jersey, East Orange. And I suppose he was through Brother Sparks.

So he knew about Mr. Lin. So when he came back, he joined with Mr. Lin. And later on, Brother Lin was sick.

So he took Mr. Lin to his old home and nursed him until he passed away. And during that time, there were some other brothers and family joined up. So they began to meet in Fulton Street, Manhattan.

You know, Fulton Street was famous in Christian circle because during the Depression, there was a Fulton Street noontime prayer. Every noontime, those financiers, they would come together and pray. D.L. Moody spoke there.

It was a great movement. So they moved to Fulton Street. They used the place where the Fulton Street prayer meeting was because they don't use it at night nor on Sunday.

So when we heard about that in China, after the war was over, when some brothers and sisters and their family moved to the States, and we introduced them to that meeting at Fulton Street. I came in 1952. And when I came to New York, I joined myself with these brothers and sisters.

I know Mrs. Lin and the two elderly sisters that were at the very beginning. So we had a small meeting there. I would say about maybe 30, 40 some people.

And Brother Sparks used to visit us once a year. Then that house belonged to a, I don't know, financial organization. So they took back that house.

And Fulton Street prayer meeting had to be in Fulton Street. So they found another place on Fulton Street. But we moved out.

So we had been moving two, three times. And finally, we settled at China Institute. China Institute.

So we were meeting there. And in 1957, I got my permanent residency. So I was thinking of going back to the Far East.

So I decided to move to San Francisco. So the brothers, in responsibility, they asked Brother Sparks, who would you suggest to come and help us? And Brother Sparks suggested his son-in-law, Richard Aykroyd. And they consented.

But after Brother Sparks returned to England, they wrote a letter to Brother Sparks. They didn't want Richard. And I was leaving.

I was leaving. So finally, within, I don't know, not too long, the whole meeting was disbanded. They could not even pay the rent.

But one brother, who lived in Jamaica, Queens, Brother Gula, he and Brother Aykroyd started another one at his home there. And while I was in San Francisco, Brother Witness Lee came to this country. He was invited to pay a visit to Brother Sparks.

And he insisted that I must accompany him. He wanted me to interpret for him. So I felt, maybe I have to do that.

So I accompanied him all the way from San Francisco to New York and then to England. While I passed through New York, I felt within myself, I felt the need of coming back to New York. So when our visit to England was ended, I returned to New York and I worked together with Brother Aykroyd.

We worked together for a few years. And finally we moved from Brother Gula's home to American Legion Hall. So we had been meeting in American Legion Hall in Jamaica for quite a few years.

Even though the Lord began to add to us, but it was not the right place there. Because every Saturday night they have bingo. And there was a big sign before the building.

And when we invited people to come, they come and see the bingo sign. They said, that's not the place. And the bingo people really didn't want us to be there.

Because they want to prepare the place for Sunday night. So they wanted us to be out. But they couldn't do it because of public opinion.

So after we had been meeting there for some years, finally Brother Aykroyd said, it will be a Chinese meeting. Because the Chinese were added, but the Americans were not added. So he said, there's no hook.

So he left for Louisville. But strangely after he left, a group of Puerto Ricans joined us. So our numbers began to grow.

But because of the inconvenience, so finally we decided to move out. So we bought a land. And we began to build a building there.

That was in Jamaica, Queens. It is still there. And when we meet, we have two booths.

We use English as the main language. Because we feel since we are in this country, we should use the language of the country. But because of those Chinese and Puerto Ricans who do not know English that well, so we have two booths.

One booth to translate to Chinese, the other booth to translate to Spanish. And by the grace of God, the numbers continued to increase. And Brother Sparks used to visit us once a year.

And Brother Lee, who was in Los Angeles, will also visit us from time to time. We began to buy a guest house. It's a big guest house.

And as a matter of fact, I was thinking of buying another house to help the elderly. But it did not accomplish that. While we were there meeting together, we invited Brother Lee to come and visit us every year.

Because we had been working together for many years before. I knew him in 1933, when he first came and joined with Watchman Lee. As a little boy, I was in college then.

And he helped me a lot. And after, I joined with Brother Lee in 1935. So we worked together in China.

And afterwards, we worked together. I was in the Philippines, he was in Taiwan. And after I came to this country, and he came.

And as a matter of fact, it's New York that helped him to get a permanent residence. So we had been working for so many years. But unfortunately, there were some misunderstandings.

There were rumors around. But the main point was, we began to have different ideas about the church. So when he came to New York, he told me, you have to call yourself the church in New York.

I said no. We cannot do that. Because we are only about 200 people.

And there are so many God's people in New York. How can we claim that we are the church in New York? That will excommunicate all the believers in New York. We have to testify for the local church.

But we cannot claim ourselves as the local church. But he differed with me. And he said, if you don't claim yourself as the church in New York, there is no church in New York.

So he tried to take over. I knew what he was doing. But we still invited him to come.

So I remember the last time we invited him. I told the brothers who were with me, if we send a letter to invite him to come, we cannot limit him as to what he can talk and what he cannot. We want to respect him as a servant of the Lord.

Even though I knew what he would be speaking, but if we invite him, we will invite him open heart. So we sent a letter to him. And so far as I know, Brother Lee had a meeting with the brothers and sisters, I don't know, in Los Angeles.

And I was told that he showed a letter to them and he asked whether he could come or not. And somebody said, if they invite him, then you go. So he came.

And he not only came himself, he brought a number of people with him. I know he intended to take over that meeting. But thank God, at that time, the brothers are really in one with me.

So when he came with a group of people, they started the meeting themselves. We allowed them to do that. Until the time when we should meet.

Then we started to meet. No matter what he spoke, the brothers there were still in agreement with me. So that was the situation at that time.

By the way, I had a long talk with Brother Lee. I told him, I said there were rumors around. If I have something against you, tell me what they are.

If you have something against me, tell me too. We shouldn't have anything between us. Well, he told me two things.

I won't tell you the details. It was real misunderstanding. So I explained to him, and he finally said, all right, there is nothing between you and me.

But on the point of the church, we cannot agree. So that's the way that we departed. In 1972, I moved to Washington, D.C. And during that period, he tried to work upon the brothers in New York.

Through family relationship, so he finally took over New York. So that's the meeting in Jamaica. But when this happened, I was in Washington, D.C. A few brothers and sisters, they felt uneasy about it.

So they left. And they began to come together for prayer in here. I did owe them a lot.

Because I didn't visit them in the beginning. I want to avoid any conflict. Because to me, I feel a building, earthly things are nothing.

The importance is the presence of the Lord. So I tried to avoid any conflict with Brother Lee. I wouldn't try to go to anywhere where he was.

As a matter of fact, he took over several places when I began. But that's alright. Because there's plenty of places to serve.

But anyway, after some long while, I began to visit these few brothers and sisters in Queens. And by the grace of God, you find finally it is situated right here. So this is your past history.

It is not that this is something recently happening. It has a long, long history. Now brothers and sisters, why do we want to talk about past history? You remember the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

He talked about the past history of Israel. How God led them out of Egypt. How they passed through the Red Sea.

How they traveled in the wilderness. How they rebelled against God. Now, why did he mention all these things? Well, he tells us.

He said, these past things are as types. They are for our admonition. We who live in these last days.

Now, what is meant by admonition? Admonition means two things. On the one hand, admonition is encouragement. On the other hand, admonition is warning.

We are to be admonished, that is to be encouraged about what has happened in our past. And on the other hand, is for our warning. That we may not fall into the same trap.

So, dear brothers and sisters, you are given a brief past history. I hope that we do not look at past history as let be gone, be be gone. And let us learn from our past history.

To follow the Lord is not an easy matter. There are lots involved. Our Lord Jesus says, unless you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy to be my disciple.

Our Lord Jesus, for his love towards us, it cost him everything. It cost him his eternal glory and honour as the son of God. He emptied himself.

And what did he empty? Brothers and sisters, do you think we have much to empty? If we empty everything, it's almost nothing. And what need to empty are things that should be emptied, such as our sins, our flesh and so forth. We really haven't emptied anything that are good and right.

And yet our Lord Jesus, he emptied everything. He does not feel to be equal with God as something to be strived at. That belongs to him.

It is his right. But for the love of us, he is willing to empty himself. Not only that, but he took upon himself the form of a bond slave.

Brothers and sisters, when God created man, on the one hand, it was a wonderful creation. God never created anything like the way he created man, not even the angels, because he created us according to his own image after his own life. But when he created us in such a glorious fashion, what did he have in mind? He wants us to be his vessel and instrument.

He wants us to contain him in his fullness. He wants us to express him in his fullness. But unfortunately, we failed him.

And that's the reason why he called us to deny ourselves. That's the reason why he wants to take up our cross daily and to follow him. Brothers and sisters, have you heard that call? Are we really following the footsteps of the flock of our Lord Jesus? The Lord said, I'm the good shepherd and the good shepherd laid down his life for his flock and he will call them and they know his voice.

They will follow him and he will lead them out to the pastures. Brothers and sisters, this is what the Lord is doing. And are we really following him? When the Lord look upon us today, how will he feel? Will he feel happy? Or will he feel sorry? That we only think of ourselves.

What has happened? What will happen to me? Brothers and sisters, have you ever thought what will happen to him? He has waited for thousands of years and we are not ready. So, brothers and sisters, we hope this time when we gather together that we come with seriousness of heart. We dare not play church anymore.

The Lord said, I will build my church upon this rock and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. What the Lord has said, he will do it. But who will answer his call? So, dear brothers and sisters, we just lay these things before you and hopefully that you will seriously consider it.

This is not a small matter. Eternity hangs upon this. So may the Lord help us.

Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we do want to thank thee for all thy past mercy and grace. We have nothing to boast of. All we can do to boast is our weakness and we can boast of the mercy and grace and patience of thee.

Dear Lord, do arrest us from our complacency and give us seriousness into our heart that we may really want to seek thee and to know thy heart and to satisfy thy heart. Have mercy upon us. Deliver us from any self-satisfaction that we may really humble before thee and repent and allow thee to work out our full salvation.

O Lord, do not stop until thy heart is satisfied. We ask in thy precious name. Amen.

Pray and seek the Lord about the word that we have heard.

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