

That They Might have My Joy Complete

It is really joyful when the Lord invites us to His table. It is also joyful when we come into the midst of the brothers and sisters. I think we should have joy in our hearts. There is no question about it.

Let's pray:

Dear Lord Jesus, we want to thank You for this hour. We thank You for Your calling to us to come to Your table. Indeed, Lord, on one hand we remember Your suffering. On the other hand, we also come to know what joy You have in Your heart regarding the church. Lord, indeed, what You are after in these days is the church herself being made ready for Your return. So for this hour we do pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit in speaking and in the hearing. Lord, on this matter of joy, it is not only our joy, but the joy of the Lord. So we ask You for Your presence with us as we share in this hour. Grant us that knowing; help us to pierce into Your heart that we may know what is that joy, and what You are after, and what shall we do? Lord, be with us. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

This topic came along maybe two months ago when we gathered together for the work day, and we talked about the opening. So I asked the Lord what would that be? We all know that the past two or three years have been difficult for some of us or maybe to most of us. Through the pandemic and all the chaos in the world, we are in some ways affected one way or another. We may have loved ones that passed away, we might have a long-term illness which we are still going through. We may have been laid off from work, not even knowing where the next meal is coming from. These things kind of dragged us down, but that time when we came together, the Lord seemed to be speaking to me. He said, "The word is joy." Obviously, it does not fit into five minutes in the opening; so we could not do that. So I thank the Lord for this hour when we can share on this matter of His joy. We have to go with His joy first, and then He is going to call us into His joy, and that joy will be made full in our spirit. I think that is great. We will turn to some of the verses and look at this word. We will pick out small portions of it that we may not have paid attention to that way before.

Hebrew 12:2: "Fixing our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

We all know about Hebrews 12:2, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." Well, we might stop at that point and forget about the remainder of the words. But in the second half he said, "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." "The joy set before Him ..." We have to know that. What is that joy that was set before our Lord Himself and because of that joy He endured the cross? None of us can know the suffering on the cross because we have not experienced it. For the Lord Himself suffered so much, but He endured.

It also says He despised the shame. What attack, what mocking the people had for the Lord at that time when He was nailed on the cross! Yet the Lord despised the shame. And where is He

today? He sits at the right hand of the throne of God, and He has that joy. I think that is what I will try to share today—the joy set before Him.

John 16:24: “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.”

Isn't that a wonderful verse!? Especially when we have no joy?

John 16 is the chapter on the coming of the Holy Spirit. It has to do with the Holy Spirit, but let's not ignore these because it is something we can ask or actually something that the disciples would ask. By receiving it then the joy in the disciples' heart would be made full, would be made complete, there is a fulness of joy in their hearts and we have to discover what that is.

John 15:11: “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

Chapter 15 is the chapter on, “I am the true vine.” We are all familiar with this chapter, but have we paid attention to this verse 11? “My joy may be in you.” Now we can see that it is not our joy; it is His joy in us. Because of that, the joy in us may be full, and there would be a completeness, a perfectness in there.

John 17 is the High Priestly prayer. It spoke of the glory that the Lord has with His Father. Then He also spoke about the oneness of the saints, which the Lord had prayed that they may be one in the name of the Father.

V. 13: “But now I come to Thee.” The Lord is going back to the Father, and He said these things to the world that they may have My joy. It is a prayer to the Father. They are the disciples at that time. They may have My joy made full in themselves. Again, we are talking about the fulness of joy.

His Joy Made Full in Us

Today we want to share on this. We are all familiar with this Bible verse, but let's give a different emphasis on it. His joy, His heart is satisfied. Then He calls us to enter into that joy, and that joy in us will be made full. That is the thought in here.

We have to ask the question: What will bring joy to the Lord's heart? That is the key thing. We like to have joy, so we enjoy our own joy sometimes. Can I not have my joy? Can I not have my enjoyments? But I think the Lord want us to concentrate on Him, what will bring joy to His heart. In John's Gospel he also said, “Ask in My name and you will receive, and that joy will be made full in you.” What will we ask? That will be the question. Hopefully, we will have the answer by the time we finish.

Then the Lord said, “I spoke this thing to you.” What is the thing the Lord spoke to us? The things that the Lord spoke to His disciples will give us the answer. Hopefully, by the end of this hour the Lord will give us His words, and not only words that are audible, but He will have spoken to our hearts, giving us that answer because we are focused on this matter of His joy and His joy made full in us.

We are in difficult times, there is no question about it. It is difficult in the world, difficult in the circumstances of our lives. The disciples themselves as recorded in John were in a difficult time. When we look at this verse, I thought this was astonishing. When you look at John 13:30 on to chapter 17, the Lord was speaking to His disciples only. We can say that those are words that are recorded in the Gospel of John. The Lord had much to say to them, but He only had such a short time, and He is going to pour His heart out to the disciples. Now that is important, and it is also important to us in these days. At that time the Lord was departing from the world, and He wanted to give encouragement to His people.

Now we are at the point that the Lord is returning, and it is just as critical as the time of His departure. We know that the time of His return is at hand. The word that the Lord spoke to His disciples is to be also for us today; I believe so. It is not only for the disciples, it is also for us, so I do pray that we do have some understanding, some comprehension of His words as well as being obedient from the heart because it is vital. It is so important for the disciples to get through to the end. It is also so important for us today to get through to the end. So that is the thought.

We will talk about the differences between the Lord's departure from the world and His soon coming. This is a big transition. And we will share on that and then some time on this matter of joy. The word the Lord gave me is a little bit different than what we think about joy. I think it will be helpful to us to see what that is.

This matter of joy actually comes in Luke 15 where we have the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin and the parable of the lost son. We will talk a little about that and then we will go to Matthew 15 which is also a parable of the talents. It is very interesting of what the Lord is looking for from His servants. And then we come back to the Gospel of John. We can only have time to take a glance on the words, maybe an introduction, touching upon some points. If it is something that touches you, take it back to the Lord and ask Him to really show you what it means in those chapters especially chapters 10-17. Chapter 10 starts with, "I am the good Shepherd." Then lastly I want to share a little bit about joy. We think about the joy of the Lord, and the other side of joy is grief. Paul said, "Rejoice always." Does that mean the believers would not grieve? I think we have to ask that question. Actually, the Lord Himself grieved. The story of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha is a very short verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept." So the Lord did grieve, but yet I want to make the connection that grief leads into travail and travail leads into joy. That seems to be a principle, but again I do not think I have enough time to fellowship on that but I just wanted to touch that point. Then lastly John 13 is the last word to the disciples at the end. After Judas left the room, the first commandment the Lord gave to His disciples which is a new commandment, He said, "You love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Joy has a lot to do with loving one another.

The Transition of the Lord's Departure and Return

John 13:30 were the very last words. Judas left the room, "and it was night." Those were dark hours in the time of the disciples—night time, dark hours. But then the Lord encouraged them in John 13:31 to the end of chapter 17, and He spoke to them about the great transition. The Lord is leaving them and returning to heaven, but yet He is not leaving them as orphans. He said, "When I ascend to heaven, I will send you a Helper, the Holy Spirit." They are really

sorrowful, yet at the coming of the Counselor, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, their sorrow will be turned into joy. So even in the darkest hours there is hope. There is hope of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Now in the hour we are in, we know that the darkest hour is always before the day breaks. As we mentioned, the return of the Lord Jesus is at hand and it is the darkest hour that we are in. The world is in chaos. I think we all know that. There are earthquakes, tornados, fires on the West Coast, food shortages, even baby formulas. All those things are scarce around the world. Then there is much unrest because of wars, famines, and also a lot of evilness in the world, and people are suffering. Even last week there was violence against children in school, nineteen children and two adults and two teachers were shot. Are we not in the hour of more sorrow and greater shaking than the disciples experienced in their time? What do we do? How do we face it? We do thank the Lord that we have Hebrews chapter 12:2 it says, "Fixing our eyes on Him..who for the joy set before Him." The Lord Himself has a joy that is set in front of Him." In a very similar way there is a joy set before us. We have to look at that and not at the circumstances in which things seem to be so evil, so dark. Let's set our eyes on what is yet to come.

So from the disciples point of view they are looking at the cross that is yet to be accomplished. But for us we are actually looking backward to the cross and see that transition has happened; that is complete. The Holy Spirit is here. The Lord is exalted on high, and the Holy Spirit is here to abide in us forever, and we are living in the good of the finished work of the cross. We have got to remember He is able to keep us as Paul says, "He is able to keep what we have committed unto Him unto the day of His return" (see II Timothy 1:12). I think that should be an encouragement to us, but we have to keep our eyes on Him, set our eyes on the joy that is yet to come. That is the coming of the kingdom age when the Lord returns, and a thousand-years ' wedding feast takes place. At that time the wife will have made herself ready, and her heart is set on the Bridegroom's return to receive His bride. I think those are joyful times, and seeing that will bring us through the time we are in.

What is Joy?

So what is joy? I know that we all experience joy in our lives. We know what joy is. We sensed the joy in our hearts when we were born again; that is joy unspeakable. Many of us are grandparents and we enjoy the times singing little children's songs with the grandkids, and it comes with all the motions which I do not know how to do. But there is one song the kids sing, and I enjoy it. It goes like this: "I have got the joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Where? Down in my heart. Where? Down in my heart. I have got the joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Where?" And the last one is, "Down in my heart to stay."

It speaks of Christ in us. Christ is our joy, there is no question about it. Christ in us, Christ in our heart, and that is our joy. And we recognize it. He is in us; He dwells in us by the Holy Spirit, He abides in us. That is why it says, "Down in my heart to stay." He is never going to leave us. I think that should be our encouragement. So we do have some sense of joy. If you do a search on joy in the Bible, that word is used in many places. But there is a particular joy that I want to focus on; it is His joy. Actually what is interesting in Luke 15 is that joy in heaven. It is not ordinary joy;

it is joy in heaven. We know the story in Luke 15 is the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. I just want to read the phrase of what happened when they are found.

When the lost sheep was found, the shepherd carried the lost sheep on his shoulders rejoicing. The shepherd, rejoicing. We have to remember that. Our joy has to come first from His joy. Then there was the woman who lost the coin and then found it. What did she say? "Rejoice with me for I have found the coin which I lost." Rejoice with her. Lastly, is the parable of the lost son. When the son repented and returned home, his father was so happy to see his younger son home again, and he brought the fatted calf, killed it and celebrated with his neighbors. There was much happiness, much joy in his heart.

Even in the parables like these where we see the shepherd, we see the woman, and we see the father, there is much joy in their hearts. We want to have that perspective in us. Whatever you do, even though we say it is for our joy, and I understand that, but it is for His joy. When He has His joy, that joy is in us too.

What does Luke 15 say about heavenly joy? We should pay attention to it. Luke 15:7: "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents."

Referring to the parable of the lost son, the father said, "But we have to be merry and rejoice for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found." That is joy, not just in the people's hearts. That is heavenly joy. Even heaven will rejoice.

I do think we know some of this and we experience it. Don't we have joy in our hearts when we know of someone who repents, a sinner who repents and comes to the Lord to be saved? We rejoice in our hearts; it is heavenly joy. Or when a wayward Christian who drifts away from the Lord and now repents and returns to the Father, how we rejoice in our heart, and that joy is the heavenly joy, the joy in the Spirit.

The Talents

As far as Luke 15 is concerned, it seems to be talking about the joy in heaven, and somehow we have a share in it because we are in Him and He in us. However, He shares His joy, and we also sense the same thing. But there is also another aspect of joy.

In Matthew 25:14-30 I just want to mention it without reading it. It is a story that we are all familiar with; it is the story of the talents. The master was going away, and he gave talents to his slaves; one received ten, the other one five, and one got one. The one who received ten and the one who received five traded with them which brought them double. But the one who received the one said, "I have a tough master; I am going to bury it away." So when the master returned, the ones who received ten and five doubled, and the one who did not was the lazy one. He did not do anything with it.

We can concentrate on faithful servant or lazy servant, and that is okay, we can read it that way. But if you read into it what the master spoke to the faithful servants in verse 21 which says, "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put in you charge of many things." And the last phrase was, "Enter into the joy of your master." The master appreciates faithfulness, and faithfulness really brings joy into His heart. There is something in

the slave that corresponded to the nature of the master, and that is joy in the master's heart. The slave is not supposed to receive a reward. Slaves just work because they belong to the master, but the master gave them something extra. The master said, "Come on in. Enter into the joy of your master." Take that story and think about it. On one hand, we have the story that the master is joyful because his heart is satisfied. On the other hand, it is for the slave. The master is so gracious and said, "Come on in. You can share my joy."

Remember the words we read in John: "Share my joy and that joy will be made full in you." That is the joy. As far as joy is concerned, you have to reconcentrate, refocus on the joy of the Lord. It is not just something you can put your hands on, but we have to come and say, "What would bring joy to the Lord's heart? He is our Master." I think a good interpretation is when His heart is satisfied, that is joy. You find that in the parable in Luke 15, and also in Matthew 25. So it is not something abstract; it is something that is real. The Lord's heart must be satisfied, and then there is joy in our heart. And from that He invites the servant into sharing His joy. Then our joy will be made full. That is the secret, and that is what the Lord showed me. I hope that will be helpful for all of us.

The Joy Set Before Our Lord

We want to touch a little upon Hebrew 12:2 on this matter of the joy set before Him. Let me just read the verse again: "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

As I mentioned earlier the Lord suffered much. We can never understand how He suffered. Even before the cross we do not know the story of the God of Gethsemane. We only know the effects. The Bible says, "His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). That is suffering, but of course the Lord overcame triumphantly at the end. He said, "Not my will but Thy will be done." On the cross we really have to consider this matter of suffering. We read about it in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. There was much suffering to the body; there is no question about that. There is no comparison, I do not think we will ever know the suffering in the Spirit. Our Lord Himself is sinless, sinless perfect. Can you imagine that the sins of the whole world were placed on His shoulders, and the Bible says, "He became sin for us." What suffering that is! The Lord Himself knew no sin, but He became sin for us.

Then He was hung on the cross. In the Old Testament it says, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on the tree." Shame. The Lord was cursed. How much suffering that is! And we have these words the Lord cried out the last three hours to His Father. He could only say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The Lord went through all this suffering and shame for us.

Hebrews 12:2 says, "Jesus endured." Thank the Lord for that. Because He looked for that joy that was set before Him, and He endured.

The last words of our Lord, Himself on the cross were, "It is finished!" That was a triumphant cry! His mission in coming on earth was accomplished. It was a heavy price to pay, but what does the cross bring forth? It was not only suffering, and we may not know what that is as far as the

Lord is concerned. But why the cross? What does the cross bring? I think there are two verses in the Gospel of Luke that will answer this.

The Lord Came to Cast Fire upon the Earth

Luke 12:49-50: "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled. But I have a baptism to undergo and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!"

If you look at the contents, it seems to be out of context actually. The Lord was speaking about servants to be dressed and ready, to keep the lamps lit, and to wait for the return of the Master. But in the middle of that we have this verse 49-50. It seems that the Lord wants to speak to us something that is critical for His disciples, and it has to be understood.

Luke 12:49 says, "His purpose in coming to earth is to cast fire upon the earth." Can you imagine that? What does casting fire mean? Of course, we need take that in a spiritual meaning rather than just a physical meaning. Do you know what fire will do? I think this country is experiencing this as you watch the news. The West Coast wild fires just burn. It consumes whatever things it touches; it is unstoppable. That is fire. So what the Lord is talking about here is that His purpose in coming to earth is to cast fire.

The Lord had a Baptism to Undergo

In verse 50 He also said that He has a baptism to undergo. We take that baptism to mean the cross. So there is a cross, and He is going to go through it. He was going to bear the cross, but yet there is something after the cross, and that is the fire that was released after the cross. May the Lord speak to us in our spirit, grant us to understand what is before the cross and what comes after the cross. It is tremendous. And the Lord said, "How distressed I am until it is accomplished." So His heart is for that release like fire on earth. We all know that the cross was not the end of the story. Going back to John 16, is the chapter of the coming of the Holy Spirit. And we have to see the fire that is recorded in Acts chapter 2. The 120 were gathered in the upper room, and they were filled by the Holy Spirit; they were baptized into one body. After that, in a very short time, maybe ten or twenty years, the testimony of Jesus reached the end of the world at that time in the countries they knew of. That is fire, and that fire was released because our Lord Himself was willing to be crucified. Afterward came the resurrection we talked about today. That is the ascension, and that was the coming of the Holy Spirit which set them free. It was the liberty of Christ's life among His believers, and that fire of the Holy Spirit can never be stopped. That is amazing to us! If we lose sight of that, we might see things earthly. Indeed, that is what happened, and that is what the Lord is after.

After the Lord was crucified, John the disciple in John 19:35 wrote in no uncertain terms, "I saw it. And he who has seen has born witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe." That is the testimony of John the disciple. He was the only disciple by the cross, and he saw the Lord crucified. He saw that soldier come and pierce the side of our Lord Himself, and out came blood and water. Out of that the Holy Spirit fashions the church, out of His side. The church herself is bone of My bone and flesh of My flesh, and that is how close she is. There you get the complement. It is there that you get the church, the answer to the Lord's heart. Now that is His joy. That is the joy that is set in front of Him. Amazing! Amazing

story! May the Lord help us to understand what He means by that joy. And we will be forever captured, and our heart will be set to have the Holy Spirit work something into us that will answer His heart. The Lord is looking for His counterpart.

I would like to spend a little bit of time on the Gospel of John, just bits and pieces because it is so wonderful. May the Holy Spirit use it in some way to speak to us.

The Resurrection of Lazarus

In John 11 I am touched by the story of Lazarus. It is a small family in Bethany, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. The Bible says that Jesus loved them. In that setting Lazarus was sick, and then he died and was in the tomb for three days. Jesus had delayed His time of arrival at that village, but in the end Jesus raised up Lazarus. The Lord declared, "I am the Resurrection and I am the Life." So Lazarus was raised, and I am sure that Mary and Martha were filled with joy, no question about it. But there is a bigger picture. One of the sisters prayed that his death could be a picture of the church, like the home in Bethany. It is a bigger picture of seeing that the Lord is getting what He is after, the church in resurrection.

Then there is a bigger picture than the church herself. We take Lazarus as a foreshadowing of the nation of Israel. There comes a time when the Israelites, the Jews will be restored. God set His eyes on Abraham's descendants, and He never gave up. There would come a time that they would be restored, joy in heaven. There is also a bigger picture than that. I have to say that death is never God's idea, but it may be necessary. God delights in life.

In Revelation 22 what an impact there is in the New Jerusalem. There will be no more death in the ages to come, no more tears. Now that is joy, and that is joy in the Lord's heart. That comes first, and then there is joy in our hearts. The point I want to make is that even in the Gospels I do believe there are so many big pictures. So when you get to John, there is a kind of a division at John 10. If you look before John 10, the Lord was talking about individuals, but in John 10 He said, "I am the good shepherd." Actually there is a verse in John 10:16 where the Lord spoke of other sheep that He has, and they would also hear His voice, and they would become one flock with one shepherd. So from John 10 on he is talking about the church altogether.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

In John 16 the Holy Spirit turns sorrow into joy. We see what a difference there was before the coming of the Holy Spirit and after the coming of the Holy Spirit. Before the coming the disciples had sorrow; there is no question about it. The Lord Himself was so bound by His physical limitation. He could only be in one place at a time, and He was limited by time. And He had to finish the work and return to the Father. And everything in that relationship should be outward and objective. At that point it was impossible to know the depth of Christ. And we have to admit that before the coming of the Holy Spirit we knew only in pieces; we knew a little bit. God revealed to us, but it is very, very limited. And the disciples themselves often misunderstood the Lord. How impossible it was for the disciples to live the life of the Master. That was before the coming of the Holy Spirit, yet everything changed after the coming of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:22 it says, "Therefore you now have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice and no one can take your joy away from you."

John 16:24 it says, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy will be made full."

I think we should treasure the coming of the Holy Spirit. He is in us; He is in everyone who believes in Him. Christ in us is the hope of glory. Now He is in us. He is omnipresent; He is everywhere, and His time is no longer limited, and He abides forever. The Holy Spirit will take the finished work of Christ on the cross which becomes the basis and means of His work in us, and also the judgment of the world. The good news is that because of the Holy Spirit residing in us, we are actually equipped to become spiritual men and women. By His life in us and by the Holy Spirit we can live the Christ-life, and that is amazing! Do not ignore the Holy Spirit. He is a gift from above, and He is with us. He brings us into that spiritual reality, the joy in heaven that the Bible talks about. He is going to give us another dimension of knowing Christ. In the Old Testament they were so limited in their knowing of God, but now we can know Him. Now we can satisfy His heart because we know His heart. I think that is really amazing to us!

John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser." In this chapter as we read carefully, we find the Father in there and the Son in there, because the Son Himself is the true vine. The Word does say, "I am the vine and you are the branches, but the Lord is referred to as the true vine; He is the whole plant. Branches are not apart from Him. When you think about the church, when you think about what happens, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, He is the whole thing."

We also notice that the Father is in there. He is the Gardener and He is the Keeper. He works on the plant, He works on the branches so that they will bear much fruit. And there is the pruning. And the goal is so that there will be much glory to the Father. And we have had a brother share with us that glory is something that is never defined in the Bible. But I will take his definition that glory means God is satisfied. The Father is looking for fruit, and not only looking for fruit but He is looking for quality and quantity, and that fruit represents Christ's life in us. He wants growth, He wants that fullness of His life, and that is why there is the pruning. The cutting is so that there will be much fruit for the Father. We have to see the Father's heart, and what brings Him the glory, what brings Him the satisfaction of the heart is for the branch to bear much fruit. We might think about bearing fruit in some other terms, but I can say that it has much to do with Christ's life in us, that quality of His life in us. Only the Christ-life will satisfy the Father's heart.

Chapter 15:11 also has these words, "My joy may be in you that your joy may be made full." So what is the goal? The goal is that the Lord's heart and the Father's heart will be satisfied. When He is satisfied, He calls us into that joy, and our joy will be made full.

John 17 is the High Priest's prayer. In the first portion you find the word 'glory' in there. Of course, there is glory in the Father and the Son. There is no question about that. But then there is a phrase in verse 10 that says, "I have been glorified in them," in the disciples! Glorified in the disciples! "I find My disciples to satisfy My heart." I think that is amazing to us!

The Oneness of the Father and Son

After verse 10, from verse 11 on He spoke of the High Priest's prayer which mentions that the disciples may be one even as We are. Now this oneness is like the oneness of the Father and the Son. There is no other oneness in here. That they may be one in the name of the Father, just like the Son and the Father. I think that is important. There is a lot of oneness that people talk about, but this is true oneness. What the Lord prayed is true oneness in here. At the very beginning it spoke of His disciples who had Christ-life in them. It is really this oneness that is based on the life of Jesus among us. And we cannot have any other oneness. That is in verse 2 where God's people receive eternal life that is of the Lord Himself, and that is the basis for oneness.

I think we do experience some of the oneness even today among God's people. What a joy it is when we come and meet with brothers and sisters who have Christ in them; that is often joy in our heart. But we meet on Christ alone, and we need to close our eyes to anything else that distinguishes us as different, such as our skin color, where we come from, our background. That is all gone! Our oneness is on the basis of His life. And that oneness is like the oneness between the Son and the Father. And that oneness will bring joy into His heart.

I have just touched a little bit on John. I would ask you all to seek the Lord if it would be helpful for you to go deeper into the Bible verses on abiding in the Lord Himself, on this matter of oneness. The Lord is after oneness and we all know that. In Ephesians it mentions, "Diligently keep the unity in the Holy Spirit." That will bring joy to His heart.

Joy and Grief

Two more things I want to briefly touch. One is on this matter of travail. Paul's letter to the Philippians is "rejoice always." Does that mean we do not grieve? No, it does not mean that. Jesus did indeed grieve as we find in John 11. And in Nehemiah there is an example of how Nehemiah did grieve at the beginning when he heard the story from his brothers returning from Jerusalem, and there was nothing in Jerusalem that answered to God. The Bible says in Nehemiah chapter 1:4: "Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." We need to grieve. Grief is not something negative as long as we understand what it is. Joy to the Lord is when He gets something that answers to His heart. The Lord grieved. When He did not find anything that answered to His heart, the Lord grieved. The Lord looked at the world, He looked at Jerusalem and at that time He grieved for the people because even though Jesus was there they did not recognize Him as God; they did not even know God, and the Lord grieved. May it be that we not only share His joy, we also share His grief. You find out that grief actually leads to travail, and travail leads to joy. It is a very strange principle, but that is really true in the spiritual realm.

Love One Another

One more thing I want to share is that we cannot talk about joy by itself. Otherwise it loses its meaning. So I am happy that the Lord starts with this new commandment: "Love one another even as I have loved you, but you also love one another." It is a matter of love. I do not think this matter of love is a surprise to us. Galatians 5:22: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.” The word for fruit is singular; it is not seven things. The first one is love, so I would read it this way: The fruit of the Spirit is love. And then it manifests in six different ways, and the first one is joy. We would conclude that joy is originated from love. So when you are only after joy but no love, you are not getting joy at all. When you are after love, when you love one another as the Lord loves you, then there is joy. There is joy not only in our heart but there is joy in His heart. Again, I wanted to briefly mention that because it is how this whole section started in John 13:44.

Do Our Hearts Desire to Satisfy the Lord’s Heart

What we shared today is the joy set before the Lord. We know that the Lord Jesus Himself is very true to the word in Hebrews 12:2. And the joy we shared today is that the Lord gains the church, His bride corresponding to Himself. We do not want to feel, “Oh great, the Lord gets what He is after.” But we have to ask the question: how are we involved? What is our portion in this case? Are we willing to endure? It is in the same way. The Lord Himself endured the cross and despised the shame. Along the same line there is also a joy that is set before us, and that joy is the soon return of the Bridegroom. The Lord Jesus is going to receive His bride. With that in our spirit, what do we do? Are we willing to endure the suffering? We do have suffering in these days. Are we willing to despise the shame because we have seen something much better ahead for us. We will experience the joy that the Lord Himself, the Bridegroom is going to have when He receives His bride, the answer to Himself.

So that is heavenly joy in the Lord’s heart, but sometimes we are more focused on earthly joy which is only momentary. Is that what we are after? Or are we after something that the Lord is after? Do we set our goal, our purpose of life to satisfy Him, to bring Him joy? And that is important. We talked a little bit about grief and travail. Again you find the word travail in many places in the Bible. Even when you come to Revelation 12, the section about overcoming, overcomers, the male child, it says that the woman travailed. The travail of the woman will bring forth the manchild.

Are we willing to grieve as the Lord grieved? Are we willing to enter into travail so that the Lord gets what He is after, a company of people who represent the church and are prepared for His coming? We have talked about the Holy Spirit. Are we still wanting a Christ for the purpose of meeting all our wants or our needs on earth? Or will we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us to bring in the reality of Christ’s life into us so that He is our life, Christ in heaven is our life. In very practical terms Christ is the true vine; we abide in Him and He abide in us. Are we abiding in Him? He is our protection, He is our refuge, He is our strength, He is everything to us, but are we abiding in Him or do we tend to drift away? We are often prone to drift away, but if we do drift away may the Lord grant us that repentant heart and return to Him. But the best would be that we do not drift away. Abide in Him, then allow the pruning work of the Father so that He will get much fruit for His own glory. Oneness of the saints, we can’t ignore that. Chapter 17 is the Lord’s prayer. So let us enter more deeply into the oneness of saints, we cannot ignore it. As Ephesians says, “Diligently keep the unity in the spirit.”

Finally, I want to conclude on this matter of loving one another. Love one another as the Lord loves us. Joy is love expressed. The way the Lord started His discourse with His disciples in

John 13 is a good lesson for us. It starts with a new commandment, loving one another as He has loved us. May it be so that the Lord will work His life in us. If we ignore everything else but hear the word: “Love one another as He has loved us.” I believe that will satisfy the Lord’s heart.

Let’s pray:

Dear Lord Jesus, we want to give thanks to you today. We just sense there is something in Your heart that You are after—Your counterpart, the bone of Your bone, the flesh of Your flesh. The church is the answer to Your heart. So we do want to pray that You would open our eyes and grant us those far visions. Lord, bring us into the heavenlies as we sit with You, so we can see far, we can see, we can fathom what is in the depth of the heart of our Lord Yourself. Draw us to You, draw Your church to You, Lord that we may set our purpose on earth is to really satisfy Your heart, to be conformed and transformed into the likeness and the image of the Son. Lord, we want to commit ourselves unto You. Lord, we want to bring everyone who would hear this sharing unto You. Lord, may You take what is Yours and really speak deeply into our hearts. Lord, we are in the darkest hour. The time is short, and Your return is soon at hand. Lord, help us to set our mind on what is heavenly, set our mind on Your heart, that we may please You, that we may please You in all things. Lord, grant us that love for one another that You said in Your commandment, love one another as You have loved us. Lord, draw us to Yourself; help us to diligently keep that oneness in the Spirit. Lord, You are after oneness, the oneness that is between the Father and the Son, that oneness would be among Your people. Lord, we do thank You for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Thank You that He dwells in us, and He reveals Your heart within us, and He will do the work. Lord, we want to say we are open to the work of the Holy Spirit for that pruning work so there will be much fruit, there will be much of Christ in each one of us for the Father’s glory. Thank You, in Jesus name. Amen.