

A Look into the Heart of God and Christ

Introduction

I really do not know how to follow what has transpired already this morning. I think the Lord really wanted to impress on all of us His great love and the power of one look. How it can change a life, how it can change our lives, how it changed my life. He looked upon us. Thank the Lord for that.

The Heart of God in Christ

This morning, I want to share on a look into the heart of God and of Christ. He has looked upon us, and may we look upon Him this morning.

Lord, we just come to You. Lord, honestly, I do not really know how to convey what You put in my heart. But Lord, we come and depend on the Holy Spirit to anoint not only the ability to speak but also to hear. Lord, we come under Your precious blood this morning. That blood that so avails before the throne and allows us access to Your very presence. Lord, we thank You this morning. Continue to pour out Your love and spirit upon us this morning as we look into Your Word. In Jesus' name.

The Privilege of Looking into God's Heart

When I was at the Christian Family Conference this year, David Peng was speaking. While he was speaking, he made mention of this thought of looking into the heart of God and looking into the heart of Christ. At the time, that really struck me and has been with me ever since.

You know, it is a bit astounding to think about being able to look into the heart of God. Think about that: God, the Almighty God, the Creator, to be able to look into the heart of God. We are mere humans, brothers and sisters, mere mortals. He is immortal, so far above us. He encompasses the whole universe, He fills it. Brothers and sisters, just to think of the privilege of being able to look into His heart.

And there is something yet more astounding to me as I thought about it: God wants us to look into His heart. He desires that we look into His heart. He wants to reveal what is in His heart to us. I think that is quite amazing. Brothers and sisters, He made evident this morning His great love for us.

We know that His heart really exploded with love and said, "I so love the world, I will give My only begotten Son." I cannot quite express how amazing it is to me, as I thought about it. God really wants us, is interested in us, and desires that we look into His heart, that we see what is on His heart.

Man After God's Heart

In 1 Samuel 13:14, speaking of David, of course, it says, "The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart." Brothers and sisters, He wants us to look into His

heart. He desires that we seek His heart. And He is especially thrilled when He finds one who is after His heart.

Not only does He want to reveal His heart to us, but He desires a response. Brothers and sisters, to me, that is very profound. To be able to look into the heart of God and the fact that God wants us to see. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." The heart is the key to everything; it is the key to your life.

Out of God's heart comes the very issues of life, the very issues of the things that He is concerned about, that are on His heart all the time. Brothers and sisters, the issues that are preeminent in God's heart should also be preeminent in the heart of those that are given the privilege to look into it, to see His heart.

Look into the Heart of God

So, what do we see when we look into God's heart? That was what was on David Peng's mind and thought when we came to that conference. What do we see when we look into God's heart?

The Holy Spirit and the Word of God

First of all, from the Old Testament, I will say this much: you can only look into God's heart by the Spirit, by the Holy Spirit. If you do not have Christ, if the Holy Spirit is not in your life, you cannot see into the heart of God. It is impossible. You must be born again to seek His heart.

And we also find that the Lord has revealed His heart in His Word. So, through the Spirit and the Word, we can actually look into the heart of God. I would encourage anyone who wants to know who God is to look into the Word; asking Him, by the Spirit, to open that Word to you, specifically the Gospels, and in particular the Gospel of John.

The Lord says, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." Brothers and sisters may the Lord open our own hearts this morning as we come before Him.

God's Creation for His Son

When God created the heavens and the earth and all the living things, He said it was good. In other words, it brought Him satisfaction. He was pleased.

In the Book of Revelation, 4:11, God is speaking of Christ, His Son. He says, "Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." The Father's pleasure, brothers and sisters, is in pleasing His Son. All of creation was created for His Son, including man, including you and me, we have been made after the image and likeness of God. No other creature carries the image and likeness of God.

But brothers and sisters, we know that to come into the fullness of God we need to receive Christ our Savior. God's desire is that His Son would be the center of everything that He did. And it was for His pleasure.

The Foreshadowing of Christ Looking for His Bride

And what else do we see in that first book in Genesis? Amazing. Right from the start, we see a marriage when Eve is brought to Adam. And you remember the story of how Eve was brought to Adam. He was put to sleep, God took something from his side, and He made Eve and He brought her to Adam. And Adam says, "Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

Brothers and sisters, we know this is a foreshadowing of Christ looking for His bride. His bride will come out from Christ. His bride will be a result of Calvary's cross where the spear pierced His side. Brothers and sisters, out came water and blood; blood for the redemption of man and the water for life to give His life for us. His bride would come out of Calvary's cross.

Even in Genesis, we see what was on God's heart for His Son, whom He wanted to so please; it was a bride, a bride for His Son. Remember in Revelation it says, "The bride has made herself ready." In the beginning, we see a bride. In the end, we see a bride. And we know we see the fullness of what that bride will be like. When you look into the New Jerusalem that John gave revelation of, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Christ is the Tree of Life – the Center of All Creation

What else was a prominent feature in Genesis? The Tree of Life. The Tree of Life was in the midst of the garden. It was in the midst of the universe, basically. And that should give us a hint that this Tree of Life becomes the center of everything in the creation.

And of course, we know the Tree of Life is Christ Himself, right? So right in the very beginning, we have an insight into what is in God's heart: looking for a bride for His wonderful Son. Christ was to be the source of life for this universe, the source of life for man. And brothers and sisters, we know that eternal life only comes to those who know Christ and have Christ. He is to be the center of every man's life.

But unfortunately, every man has not partaken of the Tree of Life, who is Christ. I would encourage anyone who might be here this morning that has not partaken of Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, to do so this morning. This is in God's heart. This is what we see when we look into God's heart.

Christ is God's Everything

Jesus Christ is everything to God. I can say it another way: Christ is God's everything. And He means for Christ to be our everything. Christ consumes God's heart. In His eyes, all things are centered in His Son.

After the fall of man, unfortunately, God's plan began to have a problem. Man fell into sin. And in fact, man became so evil that the word of God says, "every thought in his heart was evil." So much so that God could no longer bear it. And He says, "I am going to have

to judge the earth. I am going to flood the earth. I am going to take away everything, all living things.”

At that point, we might think the hope and desire of a bride for His Son will be lost in the judgment. But God spared Noah and his family. Remember that? He said, “They are righteous before Me.” And how were they spared? They were spared from God's judgment because they were in the ark. All that was in the ark escaped God's judgment.

Once again, a foretaste of God's heart that His Son be everything. Even the redemption and salvation of mankind would come through His Son, Jesus Christ. But even after the flood, that flawed nature of man began to once again do its work. And it brought much evil and darkness into this world.

Christ is the Lamb of God

In the end of time, in the fullness of time, it says that evil will reach its fullness. And once again, God will come and have a final judgment upon mankind. In Matthew 23:33, speaking of judgment, these are the words of Jesus Himself. He turned to the Pharisees and those around Him and said, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” That is judgment, the final judgment.

Brothers and sisters, God looked on His Son and said, “I am going to bring a final judgment on earth and on mankind. But You, I want You to be the ark, I want You to be My way of deliverance. You are going to be man's only hope of deliverance from My judgment. All that I find in the ark, all that I find in You, shall escape My judgment.” This is the heart of God.

Once again, we look at the nation of Israel. We know they went into bondage in Egypt for four hundred years. Then God used Moses to lead Israel out of their bondage. And we know it was by that last plague that finally broke Pharaoh, when the Lord said, “I am going to bring death upon all the firstborn in Egypt.” It would have applied even to the Jews. But the Lord told Moses, “Look, take a lamb, a spotless lamb. Take his blood and put it over the door. And when I see the blood, when the angel of death sees the blood, he will pass over you.”

Brothers and sisters, the word of God is clear. Once again, God looked upon His Son. He said, “You are My lamb. You have been the lamb slain from the foundation of the earth. You are My everything. But you are also to be My precious lamb, the perfect, sinless lamb.”

I do not know exactly what God might have said, but He probably said, “Son, You are going to be My precious lamb. I am going to send You to earth as the Son of Man. You will be the Man I have always been looking for, the perfect Man. And I am going to have to offer You up in sacrifice for the sins of man, for that corrupt nature that We see in man. Only You can pay the price of death for every man. You will have to take their place in death that they might be spared. Your precious blood, when I see Your precious blood on the heart of any man, I will pass over.”

Thank the Lord, Jesus Christ became God's lamb. Your shed blood, Lord, is the only thing that can pay the debt of my sin. And You are the only one, Lord, that can overcome this sin nature that I have within my flesh.

The Church as God's Dwelling Place

He must have said to His Son, "Look, the great suffering that You will have to go through, only I can understand. You are precious to Me. But My desire is to recover man, to recover everything back to Me that has been lost through man's fall."

Once the people of Israel were delivered and they went out into the desert, God decided that He wanted to dwell with them. Not just to lead them, not just to direct their lives, not just to provide for them, He wanted to dwell in their midst. Brothers and sisters, how would He be able to do that? Where was the place that He could dwell in the midst of His people and feel at home and be at home among His people?

God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle. And we know, brothers and sisters, that tabernacle was Christ. Christ in the wilderness was God's dwelling place. Look at the outer court: the bronze altar of sacrifice was there, and the laver for cleansing. Christ, our sacrifice, the blood of the lamb, is what cleanses us.

Look into the Holy Place. The lampstand was there; Christ, the light of the world. The table of showbread; Christ, the bread of life. The altar of incense, unbroken communion with God. Look into the Holy of Holies. The Ark of the Covenant, brothers and sisters, that box of acacia wood overlaid with gold; it speaks of the humanity, the perfect humanity of Christ. And the gold, God Himself; it speaks of Christ as the Son of God. It is all Christ.

And that is where God was pleased to dwell as they moved about through those forty years in the wilderness. Brothers and sisters, I do not know if you have ever thought about this, but when Christ was on earth, we know that really the Spirit of God was no longer in that earthly temple. So where was God dwelling? He was in His Son.

That is how God was able to dwell among His people. In those days, in the days of Christ on this earth, Christ was the temple of God. And we know this because when the disciples told Jesus, "Look at this great wonderful temple above us," the Lord looked at it and said, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it in three days." He was talking about Himself. His body was the temple of God. Christ is God's temple.

Brothers and sisters, today God dwells in Christ, but where does Christ dwell? "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst." Brothers and sisters, this is amazing.

Two or three, to gather together in His name, is the church. That is where Christ is pleased to dwell among His people. And of course, God is dwelling in Christ. Today, God's dwelling place is "the Christ," which is Christ the head, and Christ His body, the church.

Do you see the point I am making? I Corinthians 12:12 says, speaking of the church, "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body,

being many, are one body: so also is *the church*." Now I am wrong, right? I hope you caught that. He does not say, "So also is *the church*." That is what he is describing, the church. But he says, "also is the Christ." So, "the Christ" is Christ the head; the church is the body, many members. We are members of the body of Christ. Once again, brothers and sisters, we need to see that he says, "There also is the Christ" instead of "the church;" because we have all been baptized into one body, into the body of Christ by the Spirit.

You are all members of that precious body; the tabernacle of Christ Himself and God, which is out of Christ and is an extension of Christ Himself. Now, brothers and sisters, this is not just knowledge I am trying to show you, this is a profound reality. The church is the body of Christ and you are members. You are not members on a list with your name on it, like a church membership role. You are a living member, a joint, a living joint of supply in the house of God, His dwelling place. That is the importance in God's heart that you and I have.

When you look into God's heart, all you see is Christ. We experience the love, but that love comes out of Christ. What you see when you look into God's heart is Christ

Now we are there, brothers and sisters; but when God looks at us, He sees us in the body of Jesus Christ. I hope you get the difference. We are there, but what He sees is Christ when He looks upon us. Amazing.

The Place of Christ in God's Heart

From the New Testament, what do we see? The place that the Son of God has in His heart. We need to see the place of Christ. I am going to read parts of Hebrews 1:1-13.

Verse 1 and 2 say, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

His Son is the final word. His Son sums up all that the prophets have said and tried to reveal to us. His Son is the revelation of everything that God wants us to know and see.

And it says He has appointed Him heir of all things. Everything was created for His Son. He is to be heir of everything. Brothers and sisters, it goes on to say in verse three, "Who being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of the person of God ..." Read the Gospels. Christ was the express image of God. Do you want to see God? Do you want to know God? You have to look at Jesus Christ. You have to know Him, to have your eyes opened as you read these Gospels to see the person of Christ.

Then in verse five, He says, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" In verse six, "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Christ, what honor He gives to His Son. He commands all the angels to worship Him. "But unto the Son," verse eight, He says, "Thy throne," He is the One He has put on the throne. "Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Verse 13 says, "But to which of the angels said he at any time,

Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" This is the honor. This is the place that He has given to His Son. This is the place of His Son that we should recognize as well.

The Testimony of Christ Upon Himself

While on earth, in John 8:58, Jesus has the Pharisees and others gathered around Him, and He begins to testify of Himself. He gives His own testimony. And He says, "Before Abraham was, I am." Where else did you hear that word, "I am" in the Scripture? Well, I think most of us already know. God told Moses that when they ask what My name is, tell them, "I AM that I AM."

Christ is testifying of Himself, basically saying here, "I am the I AM, I am God." And of course, the Pharisees immediately recognized what He was saying, and they challenged Him saying, "you have no witness to your testimony." And He said, "Oh, no, I have a witness, the Father is My witness to the testimony that I am the I AM."

Brothers and sisters, God has made His Son Christ the I AM. We remember from the Scriptures, Christ Himself testified, "I am the bread of life." There is no way to have life apart from the Son. Eternal life is by the Son. All who believe on Him shall have eternal life.

He says, "I am the light of the world, I AM." The world has no light; it is in darkness, "But I am the light." He goes on to say, "I am the resurrection and the life. You may experience death, but I can raise you from the dead. I am the resurrection and the life." He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." We live in a world full of lies, brothers and sisters. But Christ says, "You want to know the truth? You need to know Me, I AM."

"I am the good shepherd." We have all experienced what it means to have Christ as your shepherd. "I am the great I AM. I am the door. I am the way in." You have to open that door. "I am the true vine, the true substance of your life. I am the pleasure of your life, I AM." Brothers and sisters, the Father has given to the Son the place of being the "I AM" for you, for me, for all creation; for every need, for every problem, for everything that is needed.

He is the "I AM." Do you see the place that the Son has in the Father's heart? The immense value the Son is to Him? How much He loves the Son? He has given His Son all the responsibility of carrying out His will for the redemption of man, for the restoration of all things, and the provision of life to live into eternity. He has bestowed all honor, power, and glory upon His Son. This is the place He has for His Son, immense love for His Son.

I cannot use a word big enough to express the love that God has for His Son. And brothers and sisters, all of us in Christ, that love flows down to us. Christ said, "As the Father loved Me, He loves you." Isn't that amazing? It is all because we find ourselves in Christ.

The Father's Testimony of the Son

Three times when Jesus was on earth, the Father's voice broke through the heavens, "This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased." The first one is in Matthew 3:16-17, when Jesus was baptized. And I will read it. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

At Jesus' baptism, He was committing Himself to the way of the cross. He was committing Himself before the principalities and men that look, "I am here to accomplish redemption on this earth, and I am committed to that." Brothers and sisters, God broke open the heavens. He looked on His Son, making that commitment before man and before the angels and principalities and powers, and said, "I am well pleased."

Matthew 17:5, the Mount of Transfiguration, you remember Peter, James, and John were there. The Lord had taken them up to the top of the mountain. And Elijah and Moses appeared. And they began to talk to Jesus about His way that He was going to go back to the throne. And as they were talking, Peter broke in and said, "Oh, wow, this is so wonderful." He said, "I want to make a tabernacle for Jesus and for Moses and for Elijah."

And immediately a cloud came over them. And they could not see Jesus and Moses and Elijah anymore. They were there. And God, frankly, was a little displeased with Peter. And then a voice broke from heaven, and it says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

And then the cloud lifted. And there was only Jesus and those three disciples. No one else can even be in the same place as the Son. As great as Moses and Elijah were, they had no place being compared with the Son. He is saying, "No one can take the place of My Son. I am well pleased. Hear ye Him."

The last time is in John 12:27-29. It was the day before Calvary. And the Lord said to His disciples, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The Father spoke, it was thunderous.

If you read the Scriptures, it says, "The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered:" They heard the voice of God, He was going to glorify His Son.

These three times the Father was so pleased with His Son that He just broke through the heavens. It is like a Father that can no longer contain Himself, saying, "This is My beloved Son. This is My heart, My beloved Son."

The Exaltation of Christ

In Ephesians 1:20-21, says, "Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might,

and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” God raised Him from the dead. He was so pleased with His Son, and He enthroned Him on the throne at His right hand. And, brothers and sisters, He did glorify His Son again.

His Son now has the double honor of being the Son of God and the Son of Man. His glory has increased through the work of Calvary and the resurrection. In Colossians 1:18, it says Christ, “who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” This is the Father's heart, preeminence, brothers and sisters, in your and my life, first place means just that. He is to have preeminence, not only in our life but in the Church itself. And then in verse nineteen, it says, “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;” All the fullness dwelt in Christ Jesus. Think about that. When He was on earth, in that earthly body, all the fullness of God dwelt in Him.

And the Lord says, “I am straitened until I be baptized with the baptism which I am called to.” In other words, brothers, and sisters, all of the Godhead was dwelling in Him bodily, and He was restrained by space and time. What a restraint! But thank God, through Calvary's cross, those restraints were thrown off. And now He is enthroned. All the fullness of God had dwelt in Him.

Fullness

But there is more that God says about that. Ephesians 1:22-23, speaking of the fullness that fills Christ, says, “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” That should show us something of the importance of the church, of you and me brothers and sisters, joined together as the body of Christ. That fullness that is now in Christ needs a body to be fully expressed, not only to the things on earth, but also in the heavens and to the principalities and powers. It takes the entire church to express all the fullness in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, Brother Sparks has a lot to say about fullness, much better than I can. But all I can say is this fullness has no end. This fullness is an infinity fullness. And brothers and sisters, we will go into eternity being an expression, bringing out all the fullness of Christ.

What else will be revealed and seen, I do not know. But I do know that is the tremendous responsibility that Christ has put upon His church. God has given His Son a body, an organic spiritual body, that is to be the expression of all the fullness of Christ. This is God's will for His Son.

In Ephesians 1:9-10, it says, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will,” speaking of God, “according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the fulness of times he might gather together,” to sum up, to head up, “all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”

What do you see when you look into the heart of God? You see Christ. Brother Sparks, spoke on the immensity of Christ; somehow God opened his eyes to see something of the immensity of Christ. It overwhelmed Brother Sparks, but his whole ministry was to reveal what God had shown him of the immensity of Christ.

If you read his daily devotional, it always has this at the beginning, "The best I can hope is that this has just opened a window, that as you look through it, you are seeing one thing: how superior is Jesus Christ to all else."

Brother Kaung, in his testimony, said that as a co-worker, and I am repeating this, as a co-worker with Brother Nee, he traveled all over China preaching the Gospel; getting people saved, baptizing them, gathering them together to break bread, teaching on head covering and the need to come out of division and stand on the ground of Christ alone.

He said, "I did this for many years, and then I began considering before the Lord, what more can I do, Lord?" I remember in his testimony he said, "I just began to think, there must be more." Think of that. This man had given his life to moving all through China, preaching the gospel, bringing together saints around the table. And yet he said, "What more can I do?" He was burdened by that.

During World War II, the Japanese invaded, and he was in Singapore at the time. And he testified to us that as he was leaving Singapore, bombs were being dropped on Singapore. The dock that he escaped on was on fire from the bombs, and the Lord spared him.

And he was led to South India, where he stayed for two and a half months. He testified that there, for the first time, he began to read some of Brother Sparks' books. And the Lord opened his eyes to see the immensity of Christ. The Lord opened his eyes to see the immensity of Christ. He said it revolutionized his heart in his ministry.

And we know, brothers and sisters, because he met with us for 50 years, no matter what he shared on, he always showed us Christ. It was always Christ.

The thought of how important it is to see, to have our eyes opened to see who Christ is, the immensity of who He is. Brothers and sisters, may the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, really open our eyes to look into the heart of God and to see Christ His Son.

Look Into the Heart of Christ

The Church

Well, what do we see when we look into Christ's heart? Matthew 16:17-18, Christ shares His heart with Simon. He was asking His disciples who people said He is. "Who are you?" And they said, "Well, Lord, some people think you are Elijah and the prophet."

And the Lord said, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And the Lord responded immediately to Peter. He said, "Peter, you are blessed. Simon Barjona, you are so blessed. For flesh and blood has not revealed

that to you, but My Father, which is in heaven. And I say to you, You are Peter. And upon this rock, I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

Peter had received one of the greatest revelations any man can see, and that is to see that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. His eyes were opened to see who Christ really was, that He came from God Himself. He had this revelation.

But the Lord said, “Basically Peter, there is more to this revelation that you need to see.” And what is it? He says, “I am building My church. I am the rock, and this revelation of who I am as the rock, and your testimony of the revelation that you have had, is the foundation on which I will build My church.”

You see, this revelation of Christ and the revelation of the church are not two separate revelations. You may see them separately. In fact, unless you see the revelation of Christ, you will never see the revelation of what the church is. But they are inclusive. The revelation of the church only comes out of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Significance of the Church

And then He goes on to say, “Peter, all hell is going to come against this revelation that you have had. All hell is going to come against the church that I am trying to build. But it will not prevail.” Brothers and sisters, this verse should give us the significance of what the church is in Christ's heart. He says, “All hell is going to come against it. The enemy so hates and attacks the church, but I will prevail.”

Brothers and sisters, I cannot remember whether it was Brother Stephen or Sparks who said, that if there were only two Christians left on this earth, Satan would do everything in his power to divide those two Christians. That is how much he hates Christ. And if he hates Christ, he is going to hate His church.

And once again, Ephesians 5:25-27. “Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.” Brothers and sisters, this tells us He died for you and me. Thank God His love was extended to you and me. But He died because He loved the church. What does that mean, brothers and sisters?

He said He loved the church and that He was going to give Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the word. That He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. That it should be holy and without blemish. He loves the church; He loves it right now. He is working on it right now to remove all the spots and wrinkles.

Brothers and sisters, when we look at ourselves, when we look at one another, we say, “What an impossible task.” But with God all things are possible. Look at the passion He has for His bride, brothers and sisters. That is what I want us to see. He has a passion for you and me.

But do you know what? When God looks down and He sees the church, you know what He sees? He sees Christ, He sees Christ's body. He does see you and me, but He sees us as a part of the body of Christ. Christ consumes all His thoughts and heart.

Ephesians 1:22-23 says the Father, "hath put all things under Christ's feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all." This bride, the church, will be His companion in full union with Him, expressing the fullness of His character and nature. The bride will be the Son's pleasure.

The Issue of Life

Brothers and sisters, when you look into God's heart, you see Christ. But when you look into Christ's heart, you see His church. The issue of life comes out of the heart of God in Christ. These are the issues that are so preeminent in their hearts. This is the reason for creation, the reason for mankind, the reason for you and me. The preeminent issue of life, of every man and every woman, it is Christ and His church.

Now, brothers and sisters, there are some, and maybe many in Christianity, who would agree with me wholeheartedly that Christ is the issue of life, what God is after. But what about the church? I think many see it as optional. After all, if you are really in the body, if you are living in the reality of the body, in church life, it is very difficult.

It is not just meeting together, but being built together, being of one heart and one mind. It seems almost impossibly difficult. And what makes it so difficult is we are still in the flesh. We still have the flesh. All those spots and wrinkles are being removed. But the way He does it is through the life of the church.

We know we should commit ourselves to Christ. That is an absolute, there is no doubt. We may not do it, but it is an absolute requirement that we commit ourselves fully to Christ. But what of our commitment to God's heart for His Son? What of our commitment to the church, to the future bride of His Son?

I am not just talking about the church universal, brothers and sisters. We see the church universal in the New Jerusalem, complete. It is wonderful when you read that picture. But what of the church local? Brothers and sisters, the church local is absolutely necessary because that is where the process of building the bride is worked out.

When the Lord revealed the church to Peter, He was speaking of the church universal. But there is only one church, not many churches, one church. The church universal. And we are a part of that because we are in Christ. But when building the one church, He builds it through local assemblies.

That is what we see in the Book of Acts. In the beginning we see the disciples working among the local assemblies. That is where the church grows. That is where there are problems, spots, and wrinkles. But through the work of the Holy Spirit, through love and prayer, the problems are overcome; and the problems become the means of the church being matured.

In the Book of Revelation, in the first three chapters, where do we see Christ? He is in the midst of the seven local assemblies in Asia. He is examining them. Are they measuring up? Are they measuring up to God's divine intention for His church to be the body of Christ, to be an expression of Christ? They are not perfect, and He is admonishing them to overcome.

The Practical Outworking of the Church

Without the practical outworking of the testimony of Christ in the local church, the universal church will never be matured into the bride of Christ. I will say that again. Without the practical outworking of the testimony of Christ in the local assembly, the local church, the universal church will never be matured into the bride of Christ.

So, what is the church? It is not a gathering of Christians just organized together. It is the organic body of Christ. And that is what is necessary to satisfy the Lord's heart. Two or three brothers and sisters gathered together unto Him, gathered in His name. In love willing to be built together, being a joint of supply; being adjusted together, willing to allow the cross to work in your lives together, to be matured into the body of Christ.

Many, and probably most Christians, think this matter of the local church is optional. They say, "I love the Lord. Christ is all I need." Do you know what? There are many Christians who really love the Lord, but they have not seen what is in Christ's heart.

But the real church life, they consider it as optional. He is all I need. In a sense, that is true. But brothers and sisters, to become what the Lord wants us to be, we are going to have to be living stones in the house of God.

For those who might think that church life is optional, I guarantee you Christ would say no. And I am going to repeat Ephesians 5:26-27. He would say, "I love the church. I gave Myself for it. I am sanctifying and cleansing it daily with the washing of the Word, the living Word that gives life. That she might be a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. My bride and My companion forever."

Look Into Our Heart

Now, lastly, we will take but a few minutes. What of your heart? What of my heart? We look into the heart of God. We look into the heart of Christ. But what about our heart? Is it in line with God's heart? With Christ's heart?

Matthew 6:21 says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." We need to deeply consider this. Where is your treasure? What is your treasure? God is the treasure of Christ, and Christ's treasure is the church. What is our treasure?

If Christ is really your treasure, how is it that the church, the local assembly, is not also your treasure as well? II Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." A heart perfect towards Him? It did not say a sinless heart, but a

heart perfect towards Him, a heart that wants what He wants. Acts 13:22, to whom, speaking of David, He gave testimony and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart." That is what He is looking for, that is what He found in David.

We know David's heart, that he was not perfect, but he was after God's heart. Read the Psalms. If you read the Psalms, you will see David's heart was after God's heart. God was everything to David. I Chronicles 28:9-10, God speaking to Solomon, said, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it."

The Love of Christ Constrains Us

And finally, II Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." That is what we were fellowshiping in this morning, the love of Christ. Brothers and sisters, it is the constraining love that will bring us to God's heart to see into His heart. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

Lord, we just come to You this morning. Once again I want to thank You that this morning I really felt like You were doing all that You could to show us how much You love us. Lord, we want to love You, we want to have a heart that is after Your heart. Lord, we want to see something, to be given revelation of the immensity of our Christ, of Jesus our Savior. Not only our Savior, but our Lord. But we see so little. Lord, we want You to be immense in our heart and our eyes. And Christ, we do not want to fail Your heart. We want to be willing to walk the way of the cross, Lord, to be an active part of what You are doing in building Your bride through the local assembly. Lord, only You, only Your constraining love can keep us on this path. We thank You Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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