

HWMR - THE GENUINE CHURCH LIFE, Week 03

The Issue of Life—

the Church Life as a House of Feasting for God's Building

Scripture Reading: John 12:1-11

John 12: 1 - 11 Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to **Bethany**, where **Lazarus** was, whom Jesus had **raised from the dead**. Therefore they made Him a supper there; and **Martha served**, but Lazarus was one of the ones reclining at table with Him. Then **Mary** took a pound of ointment, of very valuable pure nard, and **anointed** the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. But **Judas Iscariot**, one of His disciples, who was about to **betray** Him, said, Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? But he said this not because it mattered to him concerning the poor, but because he was a thief, and holding the purse, carried off what was put into it. Then Jesus said, Leave her alone; she has reserved it for the day of My burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me. Then a great crowd of the Jews found out that He was there, and they came, not because of Jesus only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. And the chief priests took counsel to kill Lazarus also, Because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed into Jesus.

Matthew 26:6-12 Now when Jesus was in **Bethany**, in the house of **Simon the leper**, A **woman** came to Him, having an alabaster flask of ointment of great value, and she **poured** it on His head as He reclined at table. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, Why this **waste**? For this could have been sold for much and given to the poor. But Jesus, knowing it, said to them, Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a **noble deed** to Me. For the poor you have with you always, but you do not always have Me. For in pouring out this ointment on My body, she has done it for My burial. Truly I say to you, Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her.

“If you bring out the precious from the worthless, / You will be as My mouth”—Jer. 15:19

I. Life meets the need of every man's case to build the house of God—John 2:18-22:

- A. The need of the moral is **life's regenerating**—3:3, 6, 14-16, 29-30, 34.
- B. The need of the immoral is **life's satisfying**—4:4-7, 10, 13-18, 24, 28-29, 34.
- C. The need of the dying is **life's healing**—vv. 46-47, 50-53.
- D. The need of the impotent is **life's enlivening**—5:2-3, 5-9, 17, 19, 25-26, 30, 39-40.
- E. The need of the hungry is **life's feeding**—6:5-13, 32-33, 35, 48-51, 57, 63.
- F. The need of the thirsty is **life's quenching**—7:37-39.
- G. The need of those under the bondage of sin is **life's setting free**:
 1. Who is without sin—8:1-9?
 2. Who can condemn and forgive sin—vv. 10-11?
 3. Who can set people free from sin—vv. 12, 24, 28-30, 32, 36?
 4. Who is the source of sin, and who is the multiplication of sin—vv. 37-44?
 5. Who is Jesus—vv. 45-46, 57-58?
- H. The need of the blind in religion is life's sight and **life's shepherding**—9:1, 6-7, 24-25, 35-41; 10:9-16, 27-30.
- I. The need of the dead is **life's resurrecting**—11:1-6, 8-16, 21-28, 32-33, 38-44.

II. The issue of life is the church life as a house of feasting—12:1-11:

- A. The **house of feasting** is **produced** by the resurrection life; the church is the produce of the resurrection life—11:43-44; Col. 2:13; Eph. 1:19-23.
- B. The house of feasting is outside of religion; it was in **Bethany** in the house of **Simon the leper**—John 12:1; Mark 14:3; cf. John 11:53, 57; 12:10-11:
 1. If the Lord has mercy on us and if His Spirit opens our eyes, we shall see that what God is doing in the universe is not merely to make people worship Him or serve Him; in this age **God's desire** and intention are **to come into man** in the Son, **by** His Spirit, and **through** His Word to be man's life so that man might live because of Him.
 2. This is absolutely different from religion and from the religious concept; religion with its doctrines, forms, rituals, and regulations does not have the presence of Christ and is the enemy of life.
- C. In Bethany there was a home where the Lord could stay, rest, feast, and be satisfied; after the Jewish religion had rejected Him, He always left Jerusalem to stay in Bethany—vv. 1-2; Matt. 21:17-18.
- D. The church is composed of **cleansed sinners** as represented by Simon the leper; he must have been healed by the Lord—Mark 14:3; Matt. 26:6:

- 1. Being grateful to the Lord and loving Him, he spread a feast in his house for the Lord and His disciples in order to **enjoy His presence**; a saved sinner would always do this.
- 2. The Lord has **raised us** from the dead and **cleansed us** from our sins; now **where we are becomes the meeting place of the church**.
- E. **Outwardly**, the church may be poor and afflicted; inwardly, however, everything in the church is precious, sweet, and dear because we are rich with the enjoyment of the Lord's presence; **we are with the Lord**, and **the Lord is with us**—cf. 1:23; Ezek. 48:35b.
- F. **Inwardly**, the church life is a **life of feasting in and with the presence of the Lord**— John 12:2; Psa. 16:11; Acts 3:20a:
 - 1. In the church life the first thing that we need is the Lord's presence; without the Lord's presence the church life is empty—Psa. 27:4.
 - 2. It is in the church that we and the Lord have rest, enjoyment, and satisfaction; here there is always a feast prepared for the Lord and His people.
 - 3. The church is a place where the Lord can enjoy Himself with His people and where His people can enjoy being with Him; it is a place where the **Lord and His people come together to feast with one another and enjoy one another**.
- G. In principle, a living church has more sisters than brothers—John 12:2-3.
- H. In the church life there are **different functions**: the functions of serving, testifying, and loving:
 - 1. The **servicing** function is represented by Martha (v. 2); we all must change our concept of Martha and not look down on her:
 - a. We must have some Marthas who are diligent, capable, active, living, and practical in the Lord.
 - b. In the church service the first function needed is to serve by taking care of certain practical affairs.
 - 2. The **testifying** function is represented by Lazarus—vv. 2, 9-11:
 - a. Lazarus was a living testimony and a witness to the power of the Lord's resurrection life.
 - b. This testimony gives people the feeling of resurrection power, the manifestation of resurrection life, and the enjoyment of the Lord as life.
 - 3. The **loving** function is represented by Mary (vv. 2-3); she represents the dear ones who love the Lord to the uttermost and who pour out what they hold most precious upon the Lord:
 - a. Her estimate of the Lord was that He was more valuable and lovable than anything else.
 - b. Anointing the Lord with our best love is the main expression, aspect, and characteristic of the church life.
 - c. "The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment" (v. 3b); the church here is likened to a house that is filled with the preciousness, the sweetness, and the pleasantness of the aroma of the ointment poured upon the Lord Jesus— cf. 2 Kings 4:9; 2 Cor. 2:15; Lev. 1:13.
 - d. Judas and the other disciples considered Mary's love offering to the Lord a **waste**—Matt. 26:8-13; John 12:4-6:
 - (1) **Throughout the past centuries thousands of precious lives, heart treasures, high positions, and golden futures have been "wasted" upon the Lord Jesus.**
 - (2) **To those who love Him in such a way, He is altogether lovely and worthy of their offering.**
 - (3) **What they have poured upon Him is not a waste but a fragrant testimony of His sweetness.**
 - e. The believers in Christ should have a **change in their concept of value**; Christ Himself is the preciousness to His believers— 1 Pet. 2:7; Phil. 3:8-9; Matt. 23:16-26; 1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 16:15; 9:54-56; 1 Pet. 3:4:
 - (1) The **proper concept of value** for the believers can be seen in their **estimation** and **assessment** of the following aspects of Christ and His full salvation:

Proper Concept of Value	Est. & Assm't.
a. Valuation of the Lord Jesus - Psa. 118:22; 1 Pet. 2:7	
b. Valuation of the word of the cross - 1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18	
c. Valuation of God's kingdom and righteousness in comparison to a man's daily necessities - Matt. 6:32-33; 2 Pet. 1:1, 11; 2:5; 3:13	
d. Valuation of the Lord Jesus in <i>comparison</i> to their relatives - Matt. 10:37-38; Luke 18:26-30; 1 Pet. 1:1, 17; 2:11a	
e. Valuation of a man's soul in <i>comparison</i> to the whole world - Matt. 16:26; 4:8-11; Rev. 18:13; 1 Pet. 4:19	
f. Valuation of their body in <i>comparison</i> to the seriousness and consequence of sin - Matt. 18:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:10-13	
g. Valuation of hierarchical position in <i>comparison</i> to being slaves of the Lord and to one another - Matt. 20:25-27; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 1:1	
h. Valuation of Christ as the treasure of justice in <i>comparison</i> to earthly treasure - Job 22:23-28; Matt. 12:18-21; Isa. 42:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:18-20	
i. Valuation of the enjoyment of sin in <i>comparison</i> to the unseen reward - Heb. 11:24-27; 1 Pet. 1:8-12; 2 Pet. 1:8-11; 2:20-22	
j. Valuation of the knowledge of Christ in <i>comparison</i> to all things - Phil. 3:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:2-3, 8; 2:20; 3:18	

- (2) We need to ask the Lord to grant us the light to have a thorough change in our concept of value so that we will continually **choose** Christ and all that He is as our **super-excelling portion**—Mark 9:7-8; 2 Cor. 2:10; 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:8.
- (3) *“If you bring out the precious from the worthless, / You will be as My mouth”*—Jer. 15:19; cf. v. 16:
- (a) We must treasure the Lord’s words more than our apportioned food, tasting the Lord in His word as the reality of the good land flowing with nourishing milk and fresh honey for us to dispense to God’s people for their full salvation—Job 23:12; 1 Pet. 2:2-5; Psa. 119:103; Exo. 3:8; Deut. 8:8; S. S. 4:11a.
- (b) We must **treasure the Lord’s words** more than all earthly riches so that **we can speak** oracles of God to dispense the unsearchable riches of Christ as the varied grace of God—Psa. 119:72, 9-16; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:10-11.
4. We all must be a **triangular member** of the church—a **“Martha-Lazarus-Mary”**; this is the proper name for all of us to have:
- a. In the church life there must be the **diligent service** for the Lord, the **living testimony** of the resurrection life of the Lord, and the **absolute love** poured out upon the Lord.
- b. In the real church life the **service** to the Lord is **rendered**, the **testimony** of the Lord is **seen**, and the **love** toward the Lord is **poured out**; this is the real expression of the Body of the Lord, which is **a vessel to contain the Lord and to express Him**.

The words of Jeremiah 15:19 which tell us that if we bring out the **precious from the worthless**, we will **be as God's mouth**. If we cannot tell the proper value of things, God will reject us and cast us aside. He requires that we bring out the precious from the worthless so that **we can be His mouth**. We have to see the importance of such a change in concept of value. May the Lord grant us the light to **have a thorough change in our concept** of value so that we will know to choose the most excellent portion.

(Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 3) Vol. 60: Miscellaneous Records of the Kuling Training (2), Chapter 23, Section 4)

God went on to tell Jeremiah that if he brought out, that is, **uttered**, the precious things from the worthless, he would be as His mouth. Jehovah's word concerning uttering precious things may indicate that He regarded Jeremiah's speaking in the previous verses as **worthless**. God might have been saying, "Jeremiah, **what you have just said is not precious**—it is **worthless**. **You cannot be My mouth if you speak worthless things**. **You need to bring out the precious things from the worthless**. If you do this, you will be My mouthpiece, My prophet, to speak for Me and to speak forth My word." God continued by telling Jeremiah that if he would be as His mouth, the people of Israel would turn to him. However, he was not to turn to them. (Life Study of Jeremiah, chapter 15, section 3 of 4)