

Catford Lectures 2010-2011

Part 11

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[00:00:00] Good afternoon, can we start our meeting this afternoon with a hymn, hymn number 20.

Blessed Lord, our hallelujahs now to thee we raise. Never could we fully utter all thy worth and praise, praise the Lamb, yes, thou art worthy who did shed thy blood to redeem thy saints and make us kings and priests to God. Hymn number 20.

Blessed Lord, our hallelujahs now to thee we raise. Never could we fully utter all thy worth and praise, praise the Lamb, yes, thou art worthy who did shed thy blood to redeem [00:01:19] thy saints and make us kings and priests to God. Yes, we praise thee for thou loves us and we bless thee, Lord, for the peace and joy and gladness which thou dost afford.

Alleluia, thou, Lord Jesus, canst not cease to love. Thine we are and thine forever, one with thee above.

[00:02:24] Praise the Lord, yes, alleluia, who would hush the song. Join with saints from every nation, every tribe and tongue. Praise the Lamb for he is worthy, sweet eternal strain.

[00:03:03] Alleluia, alleluia, praise the Lord, amen.

Precious name of our Lord Jesus, amen. I'd like us to turn firstly to Colossians chapter three.

Chapter three.

Colossians chapter three and verse 16.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in [00:04:05] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. I desire this afternoon to say a little about the subject of singing. Singing is something which we as believers are very often occupied with. It forms very much part of our coming together and I wonder whether

perhaps we give any thought as to the importance of what we do when we sing as believers and the scriptures do have quite a bit to say about the matter of singing and psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and I desire with the Lord's help just to have a look at some scriptures and [00:05:02] see if together we can't learn something of what the Lord would have us understand as to the importance of and the privilege that we have as believers of being able to sing. So a number of verses. The first mention I think chronologically in the scriptures, I'm not talking about the first mention as we might open our Bibles and start in Genesis, but the first we might say of occurrence is in Job and if we might look up Job chapter 38. Job chapter 38, this is the Lord answering Job out of the whirlwind and he says in verse 4, this is the Lord to Job, where was thou when I laid the foundations of the [00:06:06] earth? Declare if thou hast understanding. So that establishes the time frame of our verse.

And then in verse 6, whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened or who laid the cornerstone thereof when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. This I suggest is the first reference to singing that we find in scripture in regard to the passage of time, if I can express it in that way. Now it seems that there was an angelic host. We have this expression, the sons of God. The sons of God, this expression in different contexts may mean [00:07:04] a different thing, but I think here we would agree that it refers to the or an angelic host. And it says that they shouted for joy, not exactly singing, but there was an expression of joy. But there was these morning stars. The morning stars sang together.

Now whether these morning stars refer to another company of angelic hosts or whether it's pictorial language speaking of the response of creation, I don't know. But this is the first introduction that we have to singing. And note that they sang together, and note that it's accompanied by the sons of God shouting for joy. So having introduced the [00:08:04] idea of angels, can we turn now to the Gospel of Luke? The beginning of Luke. Now I think it's true to say that we're very familiar, we're in Christmas carols with references to angels. We have hark the herald angels sing, and we have sing choirs of angels. And perhaps we're so familiar with these things that we've come to a certain assumption which may not be tested by scripture.

Because if we look to chapter 2 of Luke, the announcement to Mary, verse 12, Luke 2 verse 12, this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and [00:09:07] note this word saying, not singing exactly, but saying glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Now I say that because I want us to realize that as men and women, boys and girls, and especially as believers on the Lord Jesus, it is a special privilege that we have of being able to sing. So far we've not read really of angels singing. Now that may, you may not agree with it, you may, and it may be somewhat surprising to hear me say that. But I want us to count it as a special privilege [00:10:02] of men, men and women, boys and girls, that we have the capacity and the privilege of singing. And I trust as the Lord helps, as our time unfolds, that we'll see just how that is the case. Now if we go back to the beginning of our Bibles in Genesis, we'll see the beginning of some other aspect connected with singing by way really of contrast. And Genesis chapter 4, we have the account of the descendants of Cain. So already we understand that this is not the godly line. And there was a descendant of Cain, his brother's name was Jubal, and he was the father of all such as handled the harp and organ.

[00:11:16] And Zillah, she also bared Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every artifice in brass and iron, and the sister of Tubal-Cain was Nama. So we see that those who took up a line of rebellion against God were skilled, not only in the use of the harp and the organ, but in, we might say, the use of metalwork

and that sort of thing. So I bring this out just to show that what we have before us, there are two courses. We can either take up what we have for God or for our own pleasure and our own will.

[00:12:03] And I lay this out just as a word of warning that we have this twofold possibility before us. The first mention of the making of music is here in connection with the line of Cain. And we can assume that the use to which these things were put were not for God. And the end of the chapter, we read in verse 26, and to Seth, to him also there was born a son, and he called his name Enos, then began men to call upon the name of the Lord. So we have these two lines, these two races of men. One, we can assume, are occupied with themselves, and the other, the line of Seth, they began to call upon the name of the Lord. Well, moving on to the godly line, the next, in fact, the first mention of singing as such, [00:13:09] we find in Exodus in regard to Moses. And we can read about that in Exodus 15. And this is after the Lord has rescued the children of Israel. Chapter 15 of Exodus, we read, Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. So we have here a song being sung in response to something God has done, a wonderful work of salvation, a wonderful matter of triumph to which Moses attributes it all to [00:14:06] the hand of God. And as a natural response, a right and proper response, we see there's this singing to God, and we have this song of Moses. And then there are many other such references, and really just to pick one or two, 1 Samuel chapter 18. Now, this is David having triumphed over his meeting with Goliath, 1 Samuel 18 and verse 6. We read, It came to pass, as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the woman came out of all cities of Israel, the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing to meet King Saul with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered [00:15:06] one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. 2 Chronicles chapter 23. 2 Chronicles 23 and verse 18. And Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the Lord by the hand of the priests, the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the Lord, to offer the burnt offerings of the Lord, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was ordained by David. So, we have now a verse which shows that by this time, singing had been rightly linked with worship, with approach [00:16:15] to God. We have the burnt offering being offered in accordance with the law of Moses, and with rejoicing and singing, it seems, as ordained by David. So there was, by this time, a very strong link established between singing and with the offering of worship to God. And really, for the purposes of our little study this afternoon, we can leave it there. There are many other Old Testament scriptures that we could look at to see how singing is linked with praise, response to God. And we've seen how, quite understandably, it is a response following [00:17:06] something to sing about. Moses and the children of Israel were saved, were rescued from captivity, and as a result, in overwhelming thanksgiving and relief, Moses sang a song unto the Lord. And it's the normal response we see when we see a triumph like David triumphing over the Philistine, Goliath. But of course, both these incidents are typical, aren't they? They're a picture to us of the work of the Lord Jesus triumphing over sin, over Satan, over all those that come up against God. And I hope that we might see this very clearly, that this is the strongest reason we have for taking up a song, that we recognise in the person and the work of the Lord [00:18:04] Jesus that he has the victory, he has triumphed. And what then is the response of our hearts? Well, we respond with a song, but not just something that we express with our vocal cords, our lips, our tongues. It goes beyond that, as we shall see in due course. Singing, it seems clear, is a matter that goes hand in hand with rejoicing. But is that the only motive? Is that the only thing which causes us to sing? Well, the wonderful thing about the believer is that he or she is in a position to sing in other circumstances as well. And if we turn to Job again, [00:19:12] this time Job chapter 35. This is Job chapter 35 and verse 10.

But none saith, where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night? None say, where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night? And I wonder, do we know anything about this matter of a God who gives songs in the night? What does it mean, the God who gives songs in the night? Well, [00:20:02] the children of Israel, as we've seen, they were very keen in responding to some wonderful work of God when there was some matter of triumph to sing about. But in Psalm 137, a very well-known Psalm, Psalm 137, we read there, By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there, they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? So it seems as if, naturally speaking, in an earthly sense, [00:21:03] it's very, it's a completely different matter of singing when in circumstances of sorrow.

Certainly, it's, Israel found it almost impossible to sing glad songs. They couldn't sing about Zion, matters of glory and triumph when they were in a strange land. There wasn't the motivation, the motivation, they didn't have the cause for such singing. Is that how we feel sometimes? Is that us? As it were, hanging our harps on the willows, nothing to sing about, no joy, no gladness because of our circumstances. What about the God that giveth songs in the night? What does it mean? It's not, I think, a reference to those who have sleepless nights. It's not [00:22:04] what we think of doing when we can't sleep and we get up in the middle of the night. That's not really the thought. I think it's a, it's a moral thought. Perhaps we might turn to a very solemn verse in John's Gospel, John chapter 13. This is in regard to Judas. There with the Lord and his disciples, the institution of the Lord's Supper. Well, prior to that, we would say this is the last Passover and having celebrated the Passover with his disciples, the Lord is now going to take up something new. And he speaks to, to Judas. We might take it up, John 13 from verse 26.

[00:23:01] Jesus answered, he it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, that thou doest do quickly.

Now, no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, buy those things that we have need of against the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. He then, having received the sop, went immediately out and it was night.

It was night. Very, very solemn verse. Not just speaking of what was true of the time of day.

It's a moral description.

[00:24:05] Judas went out from the presence of the Lord to betray him. He went out into the night.

He went out morally into what characterizes this world. Night in scripture often speaks of often speaks of what is characteristic of this world. Very, very solemn thing to go out of the presence of God into the night. And Judas went into the night in circumstances which would not be a course of praise and joy in his own heart and there is nothing that God can receive from those who live in the night, morally speaking.

[00:25:04] There's nothing that God values in, we might say, the singing or the music that has its source in the night. The line of Cain produces nothing that God rejoices in. The line of Seth, however,

when men call upon the name of the Lord, well, if there's a proper response to God in the form of song, then there's something that he takes account of and takes delight in. Judas is an extreme example of someone that was in the night. He could know nothing of a God who gives songs in the night. He'd gone out from the presence of that God, of the person of the Lord Jesus. But there was another one, Paul, in Acts 16.

[00:26:13] Paul and Silas, in fact. Yes, verse 25, Acts 16, verse 25. And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God and the prisoners heard them. Now, this is an example of singing in the night. Now, I don't mean just because it's a song. It's a prayer. It's a song. It's a prayer. It's a song. It's a in the night. Now, I don't mean just because it tells us it was at midnight. Paul and Silas were in prison. Morally speaking, they were in a place which would initiate sorrow, [00:27:03] feeling sorry for oneself, despair. All these things naturally would be true of us, wouldn't they, if we were manacled one to another or to a soldier or to a wall in the dark in a prison for something that we hadn't done. Or at least, you know, we're imprisoned unjustly. This, naturally speaking, would produce in us maybe feelings of bitterness, of hatred. But the difference is in Paul and Silas, we have a much better example for the believer. These dear brothers, these men, they knew the Lord Jesus out of whose presence Judas had gone. These knew the Lord Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They had come to know a God who gives songs in the night, morally speaking, and so they were able to praise and these praises were heard. And we can [00:28:09] be sure these praises were a wonderful testimony to the consequences of the gospel. A wonderful thing, Paul and Silas singing praises at midnight. And that's what I believe is meant by this term, this expression, a God who gives songs in the night. Now, do we know anything of this? Do we know what it is when we're conscious of being in circumstances of the night, and it may be in the middle of the day, but outwardly the circumstances are such that we feel that it's the night. We're oppressed, we're going through difficulties, through sorrows. There's not a matter now for joyful praise as such. Nevertheless, the believer can at such times [00:29:09] can at such times have peace in his or her heart. There may indeed be aspects of joy. Maybe we've lost a loved one. Well, we can be full of joy because that loved one is with Christ, for instance, but that doesn't do away with the fact that there's sorrow. Maybe other circumstances, naturally speaking, would cause sadness. Nevertheless, if we know God, we know a God who gives songs in the night. So, are we beginning to see something of what I have in my heart? That this matter of singing is a wonderful privilege. The believer knows something that the unbeliever knows nothing of. Sure, we can praise God in times of joy and triumph. We're occupied with the victory that [00:30:08] he has won. But even when that's not the case, when we're going through difficult circumstances, these things are a reality, aren't they? That we can know what it is to know a God who gives songs in the night. Well, having looked at the practice of those in the Old Testament and Paul and Silas, perhaps we need to look at one or two other verses to see the wonderful breadth and extent of singing. We turn now to the last book of the Bible, Revelation and chapter 5.

Revelation chapter 5, read from verse 8. When he had taken the book, the four beasts, [00:31:15] four twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof. For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests or kingdom of priests, and we shall reign over the earth. These verses, I believe, bring us forward into a coming day.

Remember, Revelation is a book full of symbolic language, symbolic pictures, and these [00:32:10] four twenty-four elders, they represent a company. We believe the twenty-four is two sets of twelve,

representing both the Old Testament and the New Testament saints. We can say this is a little glimpse ahead to the day when every believer, you and me, will be with the Lord Jesus, he having come for us. And at that time, we're told we shall be forever with the Lord. Now, what we see here is there's a response. It's a new song, and there's a reference to the worthiness of the Lord Jesus. There's a reference to his being [00:33:07] entitled, worthy to open the seals. These are the seals of judgment, which are to be poured out upon those on earth. And there's an understanding that he, the Lord Jesus, has made us, unto our God, a kingdom of priests. So this is really, I suppose, the verse on which the writer of our opening hymn, Mr. Champney, penned the words of Hymn 20. He had this in view. What I desire that we might see of this is the necessity of singing a new song.

It's said to be a new song. And this is true also of a reference we find towards the end of the book in Revelation 14. [00:34:01] Revelation 14, verse 1, we read, And I looked, and lo, a lamb stood on Mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne, before the four beasts and the elders, and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand which were redeemed from the earth. So, again, a necessity here of singing a new song. And we're told who are the singers.

These are the hundred and forty-four thousand. And not only that, it says that no man could [00:35:08] learn that song but the hundred and forty-four. In other words, what they were singing of, they had experience of. It wasn't a third party matter. It wasn't borrowed truth.

These hundred and forty-four thousand were singing about something of which they knew, something that they'd gone through, something that they were fully identified with. And this, I believe, is the importance of what we have in these passages in Revelation when it talks about singing a new song. And while we're here in Revelation, chapter 15, verse 3, they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, [00:36:03] Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. As believers on the Lord Jesus, in order to sing aright, we have to know what we're singing about. We have to know the one to whom we're singing. And this is a vital matter. This is really what's on my heart, that we, when we're occupied with singing, that we realise the wonderful privilege that we have of being able to sing as believers on the Lord Jesus. The angels, as we've seen thus far, certainly they can shout for joy, they can say, they can announce the greatness of God, but they don't know the Lord as Saviour. That's a privilege unique to you and to me, [00:37:05] if the Lord Jesus is your Lord and Saviour. And you alone can then raise a song of response to your Lord and Saviour. It's not something that another can do unless he or she also knows the Lord in that way. And so we have a wonderful, unique privilege as believers of being able to take up a song to our Lord Jesus and to our God and our Father. So we come back now to our own present day, the dispensation in which we live. We're not living in Moses' day, we're not living in David's day, we're not living in the day of the Psalms, the Psalmists, and we're not yet in Revelation 5. What then have we before us? What privilege, [00:38:01] what opportunity do we have in this day of taking up a song? Well, it's not left to our imagination. The Scriptures tell us, and we can turn 1 Corinthians chapter 14, brings in a very important point. 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 15. What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the Spirit and I will sing with the understanding also. When the Lord Jesus was with that woman at the well, he told her a very wonderful thing. He said to her that the time now is that the Father seeks such true

worshippers who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

[00:39:07] And we have these two aspects, these two important aspects brought out here. The matter of singing in spirit and in truth. And so it's a matter not of what's natural.

If we relied on natural things, we couldn't sing songs in the night, morally speaking. But it's a wonderful spiritual privilege that we have. As believers, we are sealed with, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We have therefore a capacity to sing in the Spirit, to be prompted, to be motivated by the Spirit. And that's a very important, a very wonderful thing to know that is true of you and me, that we have, we are able to sing with and in the Spirit. But also it says here, [00:40:03] we should sing with the understanding. And that ties in with what I have said already in regard to the new song. It's something that we should know about. We should know the one of whom we're singing. We should know the one to whom we're singing. The things we sing, we should know and experience them. They should be already something that our minds understand in order to be a true and proper response. And that's a challenge, isn't it? It's a challenge I suggest to us as to how far we are singing with the understanding. Very easy to take up a book and just to read the words, but do we mean, can we sing truly what we're singing?

Is it a true and real expression of what we're singing? Is it true of us what we're singing? If it's not, then is that something that should concern us when we're addressing God [00:41:05] and telling him things about ourselves which may or may not be true? I just challenge my own heart, as well as your own. Ephesians chapter 5, and verse 19, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, we learn that in taking up a song, we're not only addressing God.

[00:42:09] In other words, addressing God is not the only matter connected with singing. Here, we're told that we're speaking to ourselves also, and that's very important then to see that when we are to sing with the understanding that we are singing what is true, because we're teaching ourselves, we're rehearsing matters when we sing. That's what this verse tells us, speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Now, that is something which takes place even at the same time that we may be directing our song to the Lord Jesus or to God the Father, and that's important to take note of because if we are constantly singing something [00:43:10] that's not true, and by that I mean it's not glaring error, not fundamental error, but it may not be substantiated by scripture. It may be that being so familiar with such a hymn that we place it on equal terms with the scripture, and that's obviously a danger if what we're singing is not according to God's word. And so we must be very thankful where brothers and sisters have composed hymns that we could sing together who were very familiar with the word. They were spiritual men and women, and they were able to set down words that we can follow in confidence that those words [00:44:01] can be substantiated by scripture. It takes us back to my opening remarks. We often sing about seeing choirs of angels and hark the herald angels sing. You see, we may be so familiar with these things that we think little of it. Well, it's important that when we take up something to sing that it should be in accord with the truth. And the way we know that is by taking account of the scripture we first read in Colossians 3, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. So that comes first, the word of God, we must be occupied with the word of God, and then in response we can be occupied with singing. But what is meant by these three descriptions? We have speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Many years ago I heard it [00:45:03] suggested that this leaves room for a wide variety of musical tastes. It was suggested, here you are, you see, if you like one sort of song and you like another, well, it's

permitted. And there's room for a wide variety of musical style and taste. I don't really think that's what the scripture means, and we don't need to go into that aspect in any case. But it's always important to see that the scripture sets out what God demands, what God finds important in the first case. It's not what's of interest to us. God sets his standard and it's up to us to respond and to supply what God asks of us. So are these three descriptions just different ways of expressing [00:46:07] the same thing, or is there a slight distinction? Some, of course, have said, some Christians, they insist only on singing inspired psalms. They'll only sing from the book of Psalms, set out in a metrical way, of course, and for many years, hundreds of years ago, that was what many Christians were limited to. Is that what is referred to here? Well, I suggest not. And one quick example will help establish this, Psalm 69. For instance, a very wonderful prophetic psalm. The opening verse is clearly a reference to the suffering of the Lord Jesus. But imagine that we were to take up Psalm 69 as a Christian hymn, [00:47:05] a hymn that we are to sing in our current dispensation in this day of grace. Do you think this would be an appropriate psalm to sing when we get, for instance, to verse 23?

Let their eyes be darkened that they see not, and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. And so on. The Christian day is not a day of vengeance. That lies in the hands of God. That's for a coming day. We live in a day of grace. And I suggest that that's just a little example of where to take up literally the words of a psalm, the inspired psalm, it would not be appropriate or suitable for the Christian dispensation. [00:48:07] Now, I think the scripture, what is meant by this word psalm here, is quite simply what we get in James. Exhortation in James chapter 5 verse 13. Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Psalms, or a psalm, is quite simply an expression of feeling. An expression of feeling. And in fact, if we think about that, that is confirmed really by the whole book of Psalms. It's often said that in the book of Psalms, what we find are the feelings of the Lord Jesus, set out prophetically. The feelings of the Lord Jesus. And so a psalm is an expression of feeling. [00:49:08] A real deep-seated feeling. Now, that fits in, doesn't it, surely, with many of the hymns that we sing. We use the word hymns generically. You take many of our hymns in our hymn book. They're an expression of feeling. An expression of what we've come to know. This new song, appropriate to our own circumstances, appropriate to our dispensation, when we know the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, when we can address God as Abba, Father. When we're occupied with the things of himself, we can say, yes, there's a real expression of feeling. And this scripture exhorts us to be occupied with such things. [00:50:02] Psalms and hymns. Well, a hymn, I suppose, strictly speaking, is addressed to God. And it's a hymn of praise or worship, addressed to the Lord Jesus or to God. And many of our hymns are, they're exactly that. They are hymns because they're addressed directly to God. They're not just an expression of feeling. Many of our hymns have all these different aspects. One verse, one line, maybe one characteristic, one another. But the scripture gives us this wide variety to be occupied with the things of God. And then we have this third category, spiritual songs. It's not, it doesn't leave the door wide open. It's a spiritual song, has to be occupied with things regarding godly things, something which the Holy Spirit can [00:51:05] occupy us with. And we have many such hymns, songs that we sing on a regular basis. Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. These three general characteristics would sum up what we can be occupied with. Well, you know, it's a wonderful thing to read as we did when we read of Judas going out into the night. A very, very solemn matter to read the counterpoint of that. And in Matthew 26, verse 30, we can read, and when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives. [00:52:03] The Lord Jesus had been with his own. They were with him there and they sung a hymn together and they went out. But the difference is, unlike Judas, they didn't go out and it was night. No, but they went out. They were with the Lord. And what did they do? What followed this going out with the Lord? Well, if you want to know a little about it, you can

read the middle chapters of John and see there what the Lord Jesus occupied his disciples with. The Father's house, the Holy Spirit, another comforter, all these wonderful things. And I suggest that what we see here is an example of what it is for the believer to be able to sing. The Lord Jesus has occupied us with the things of himself, [00:53:03] with his Father, with his Father's house. He brought his disciples into a great store of wonderful truth. And that's what we have in God's Word. And so when we're occupied with the Lord Jesus, as they were, we suddenly realise, we look up and we realise that we have before us so much wonderful truth. What can our response be other than to be occupied with the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? That, to me, seems to be what the scriptures with exhort us, encourage us to do. That we have a wonderful privilege as believers living in this current dispensation, something the angels know nothing of. They might know about it, [00:54:02] but like the 144,000, they don't know it for themselves. They can never know the Lord Jesus as their saviour. That is a privilege that's unique to you and me in this current dispensation. And so we have a wonderful privilege, dear brethren, of being able to address our Lord and Saviour, being able to address God as Abba Father, being able to take up and express the deep-seated feelings that we have of believers in this scene, knowing that the Lord Jesus has gone before, knowing where we're going. All these things surely would result in a wonderful feeling welling up in our hearts. But take note, the scripture says to sing with the spirit, and I believe it's much more important that we have firstly this deep appreciation of these truths, that they're [00:55:02] real feelings, that it's a spiritual response. Those two things are much more important than the quality of our singing. Well that's important, I'm not setting that aside, but we're not here to provide beautiful music. The descendants of Cain can do that, and they're very good at it, but that's not the most important object of our coming together and singing. Maybe we can't sing, maybe we're tone deaf, maybe our voices aren't as good as they were. Sometimes some of us lose our voices. Does that mean we can't sing with the spirit? Of course it doesn't. It's God hears the singing of our hearts, and this is the wonderful thing, making melody in your hearts. I trust that the Lord will encourage us to be occupied with himself, and as we're occupied [00:56:01] with him, that there's that appropriate response in our hearts. And we're going to sing in closing a hymn which touches on this. Hymn 206. 206. 207. 208. [00:57:13] 209. 200. 201. 202. [00:58:13] 203. 204. 205. 206.