

The house was filled

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I wonder if we could turn to three scriptures. The first is in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16.

Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16, and verse 13.

Matthew 16, verse 13, When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[00:01:07] We then turn to John chapter 12.

We'll just read the first eight verses. John chapter 12, verse 1.

Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, [00:02:07] Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, Not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone. Against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always. Then lastly, Acts chapter 1, and the first nine verses if we start to read at verse 1.

Acts chapter 1, verse 1.

[00:03:23] Acts chapter 1, verse 1. Acts chapter 1, verse 1.

[00:04:22] The thoughts I've had on my mind connected with these three scriptures have been raised partly by meetings I've been at since the beginning of this year, prompted me along the lines of these three passages. And last month in particular we heard here about the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I would like to continue a bit with those thoughts. But also think about the challenge that this presents each of us with as well in our own lives day by day. And the particular statements in each of these passages I'd like to draw your attention to are the following, where the Lord Jesus says

to his disciples in Matthew chapter 16, [00:05:05] But who say ye that I am?

And then in John chapter 12 we have the statement of the Lord Jesus. Me ye have not always, have not always.

And then finally in Acts chapter 1, the Lord Jesus commissioning his own just before his ascension, he says, Ye shall be witnesses unto me.

And in each of those statements, one of them a question, we see me, the Lord Jesus, in his greatness, and ye, those of us who love him, know him as our Lord and Saviour. In each of these cases as we see the greatness of the Lord Jesus brought before us, we see a challenge for ourselves. And that's what I would like to meditate on from each of these three scriptures. The first one, Matthew chapter 16.

[00:06:08] This of course of the three scriptures presents us most clearly the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus says to his disciples, ask them this question.

Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man am?

That's a tremendous question. The Lord Jesus calls himself the Son of Man.

We know that this happens frequently in the gospels. This wonderful title of the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man.

Yes, the Lord Jesus became man when he was born at Bethlehem. The true perfect man.

The one who walked through this world and was rejected, despised, disowned by the men and women with whom he came in contact with. [00:07:06] In the main at any rate. He was rejected, he was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. We hear as it were our faces from him. That's one side of the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man.

But when we think of his life, we don't only think of the reaction of those around him. We think of what God thought about his life. And we see that God was well pleased with the life of this glorious man here upon earth.

And one day God is going to vindicate him. And this is the other side of the thought behind this title, Son of Man. When in the future the Lord Jesus will reign over this world. He will no longer be the rejected one. No longer the disowned one. No longer the despised one. But he will be Lord of Lords and King of Kings. [00:08:02] And he's worthy. He has gone right down into the very depths.

Deeper than any other man has gone.

And so he is worthy to be exalted in the very heights publicly before this world.

And one day that's going to happen as we know. The wonderful prophecies in the Bible which tell us about the Lord Jesus being glorified. Yes, he is indeed the Son of Man.

Once rejected, scorned, disowned. But now one day to be glorified and to be exalted.

And to be the one who bears the glory in this world. And the glory of the Lord, we're told, will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Yes, the Lord Jesus is indeed the Son of Man.

But the Lord Jesus asks his disciples this question. Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?

The Lord Jesus wants to go beyond this wonderful title of Son of Man with his disciples. [00:09:07] He wants to hear a confession from them of who he is intrinsically.

Now, before that happens, they answer his question.

And, of course, we know it from other Gospels that this time Herod was concerned at the wonderful works of power that were being done by the disciples of the Lord Jesus. And he thought, yes, the Lord Jesus must be John the Baptist who had been beheaded. Come back from the dead.

And it was with his concerns, no doubt, that the disciples had heard things like, yes, the Lord Jesus is John the Baptist. John the Baptist.

And remember the words of the Lord Jesus about John the Baptist. That none born of women was greater than him.

Indeed, John the Baptist was a great man. [00:10:01] But he was only a man.

And then Elijah.

Some were saying that the Lord Jesus must be Elijah. Yes, they expected Elijah to come back before the Messiah.

And they thought the Lord Jesus, with his wonderful works of power, must be Elijah, the greatest of the prophets for Israel. The representative of the prophets, indeed. He is the one who is with the Lord Jesus on the Transfiguration Mount in the next chapter. Moses and Elijah talking with the Lord Jesus.

But, yes, the Lord Jesus is greater than John the Baptist. He's greater than even the greatest of the prophets. And then Jeremiah.

And that might speak to us, indeed, of the Lord Jesus himself, might it? Jeremiah is sometimes referred to as, we know, the weeping prophet. The one who pleaded with God's earthly people throughout his years.

[00:11:01] Even went down to Egypt with some of them when they forced him to go down with them. When he pointed out that that wasn't the place to go to. What a sad life the prophet Jeremiah had.

And in many ways he is, indeed, a type of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. The man of sorrows.

Yet, no, the Lord Jesus greater than Jeremiah.

It wasn't Jeremiah come back from the dead. Nor any of the other prophets that these people might have named. And then the Lord Jesus asks this question of his disciples. But who do you say that I

am?

I think the emphasis is on this word, ye. And this is where the challenge comes to us as we think of the greatness of the Lord Jesus. Who do we say the Lord Jesus is?

And it's wonderful, isn't it? It must have been wonderful to the Lord Jesus to hear these words from Peter. You know, the Lord Jesus knew the answer to these questions. [00:12:01] Of course he did. But he wanted to hear his disciples say them.

It pleased his heart, with no doubt, have we, to hear Peter say, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Yes, what a wonderful confession from Peter. It goes a bit beyond the confession in the 14th chapter of this gospel where they're in the boat. And they see the Lord Jesus calm the wind and the waves. They say, surely this is the Son of God. Yes, they saw his creatorial power and realized indeed he was the Son of God.

And despite his mistakes, we know that Peter had mistakes in his life.

Just a little while on from this incident, we see him trying to detract the Lord Jesus from his pathway to the cross.

[00:13:02] But how wonderful it is that we can still hear him say these glorious words. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And in these words, we see the apostle Peter looking beyond the rejection of the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man, to his glory as the Son of Man, because he uses this title, Christ, the anointed one, the Christ. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And that carries us on to the greatness of the glory of the Lord Jesus when he shall reign over this earth, because the title Christ has behind it, those wonderful thoughts of the one who is anointed, anointed, marked out by God to rule.

And the apostle Peter, as we know, not from his own understanding, but because the Father had revealed it to him, was able to call the Lord Jesus the Christ. But even more wonderful, he also says, the Son of the living God.

[00:14:05] And here, Peter gets to the very night of the question, because this is indeed who the Lord Jesus intrinsically is, the Son of the living God. And it's wonderful to start off in any meditation with this fact in our hearts and in our minds.

The Lord Jesus is the Son of the living God. You can't go beyond this. This is at the very heart of Christianity. And it's the very most precious revelation that the Father has for us.

And notice, it's the Father that reveals it, who reveals it to Peter. Not flesh and blood. We can't understand it, perhaps, but we can receive it by faith. Simple faith. The Lord Jesus, our Saviour, the one who came to save us on Calvary's cross, is none other than the Son of the living God.

[00:15:02] The reason why I said it went a little bit beyond what the disciples said in the boat on that rough sea, on the Lake of Galilee, a couple of chapters before, is because the Apostle Peter says, the living God. Yes, before they've been talking about people who have come back from the dead.

But here they were able to say, the Lord Jesus is the Son of the living God, one who is the source and giver of life.

And indeed, the Lord Jesus, too, is the source and giver of life. Haven't we been singing about that, certainly, in our first hymn? Oh, the greatness of the Lord Jesus, and what marks him out in his greatness, essentially, is the fact that he is the Son, the Son of God.

It's been said many times from this platform, hasn't it? Over recent months and years, we have emphasised this truth because we hold it dearly.

The Lord Jesus is the Son of the living God, [00:16:02] and if the Son of the living God is always being the Son of the living God, and always will be, of that there can be no doubt.

The Lord Jesus, the Son of the living God.

And if we're right on this point, then we may indeed go forward in serving the Lord Jesus and in living for him. And that's really my exercise for going on to the passages that follow on from this one that we've read already. But a little more about this passage before we actually leave it. The Lord Jesus, the Son of the living God.

It's very precious, isn't it, when we think of this, how precious it must have been to the Father to hear Peter say this to the Lord Jesus, confessing that the Lord Jesus was his Son. Indeed, God, delighted to save from heaven, this is my Son in whom I have found all my delight.

How precious that was to the Father to hear Peter reiterate that [00:17:04] in this confession of the Lord Jesus.

How wonderful, too, that it must have been for the Lord Jesus to hear it, for it confirmed from the lips of one of his own the greatness of the Lord Jesus.

Here was one who recognised him for who he really was and is. Yes, in a world which rejects the Lord Jesus.

Today we live in a world where the Lord Jesus is only referred to as a man, not given his glory as we were singing in our first hymn as God and man.

Yes, it was wonderful to hear Peter say, Thou art the Son of the living God.

How wonderful for the Gospel as well, the Gospel word, because it brings in all the sweetness of the Gospel, doesn't it, [00:18:02] that there was a Father who, in the words of the parable, having yet one son, his well-beloved sent him.

Yes, that shows the cost, the cost of God's plan of salvation to him.

That brings in all the sweetness of the Gospel. The Gospel loses all its sweetness if we deny the Lord Jesus his eternal sonship.

And then also how wonderful for us as individuals and together that we are drawn into this eternal

relationship where we can call God our Father.

We can say, Abba, Father.

We are sons by adoption.

The Lord Jesus is Son intrinsically. We are sons by adoption. How wonderful this is. We are brought into this wonderful, I'm going to say, [00:19:02] perhaps we can say family relationship, which has been from eternity and ever will be. Son with a Father, and we now sons before that Father's face.

Yes, the Lord Jesus could say, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God.

And yet, even more precious to us too, perhaps, is the thought as well that we are his Church, my Church.

The Lord Jesus, on hearing this confession from the Apostle Peter, says to him that he is going to build his Church on this rock.

The rock is the confession that Peter made of the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. And it's on that rock, that confession, that the Lord Jesus says that he will build his Church. How essential to us then that we are right about these words. [00:20:04] For we ourselves, as the Church of the Lord Jesus, are built upon this confession. How right then that we should also confess, along with Peter, these wonderful words, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Yes, and the Lord Jesus also says, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Yes, the rock that will ever endure, the rock that will never move, the rock that stands for eternity.

It's interesting to think of this, that it's the Church, I think we've said it before, the Church, that is the one distinct body of believers that goes into eternity as it was in time.

Yes, Hades shall not prevail against it.

[00:21:02] It's not subject to the power of death in any way, because the Lord Jesus has built it on this rock.

That's really what I wanted to say about this wonderful passage. No doubt the Apostle Peter said this of the Lord Jesus because he had been contemplating the life of the Lord Jesus. The life of the Lord Jesus was showing him these things and the Father from that revealed to him these wonderful words.

Yes, it was a time of rejection for the Lord Jesus. Earlier on in this Gospel, you see the Lord Jesus being rejected by his earthly people.

How wonderful then to hear the words of a disciple confessing the Lord Jesus in this way.

The Father loving to reveal this wonderful truth to a man like Peter and to you and me too.

[00:22:02] The Father delighting to bring glory to his Son, though he was indeed the dependent man,

servant here upon earth.

Yes, the Lord Jesus, the Anointed of God, the Son of the Living God. That's where we start when we think of the greatness of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus wants us to be true to that greatness, not in any way to waver, but to confess it and to be true to that confession. I'm sure it's the only starting point there is if we're going to experience, if I may use these words, success in our lives as individuals and as groups of believers. Yes, as a fellowship of believers here for him.

Let's turn on next to our other passage, John chapter 12.

[00:23:10] Incidentally, I think it's remarkable that in the other passage, that when the Lord Jesus says, flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father in heaven, indeed it was heavenly truth that had been revealed to Peter, that the Lord Jesus immediately says, but I say unto you, establishing in those words, the way the Lord Jesus says those words, establishing immediately his equality with the Father.

Flesh and blood have not revealed this unto you, but my Father which is in heaven, but I say unto you, and I say unto you, thou art Peter. Yes, it's wonderful to look at these little aspects of the scriptures which bring before us the greatness of our Lord Jesus. Now if we turn on to John chapter 12, we see the Lord Jesus six days before he should suffer for you and for me. [00:24:03] And now we are carried on from the consideration of the life of the Lord Jesus to a consideration of his death on the cross.

Not the actual account of it, of course, but in the action here of Mary, we see one who responds to the greatness of the Lord Jesus in the light of the fact that he is going to die for her.

Perhaps no other person had an appreciation of this apart from Mary, because in her actions she is the only one who shows a clear discernment of what the Lord Jesus was going to do.

And we're not speculating here because the Lord Jesus says it himself. In those words of verse 7 he says, Against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

And the Lord Jesus uses the words, kept this. It wasn't just a sudden thing that Mary had done. [00:25:03] It had been a meditation throughout the years that she had known the Lord Jesus, or the time that she had known the Lord Jesus. We don't know how long. But we know from an earlier passage in the Gospels that Mary had been sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

That's why she knew these things. She had been taken in the words of the Lord Jesus. They were precious to her and they had an effect on her life. And this is, again, a challenge to us, isn't it? When we think of the greatness of our Lord Jesus and the way in which he gave himself for us, how is this affecting our lives?

It means, depending on what book you look at, the house of dates.

I think that's probably the right meaning of the word, certainly the one that's supported from a concordance like Strong's, [00:26:01] the house of dates.

And another thought behind it is response in a day of affliction. And it might be looked at in this way,

that it speaks of refreshment for the Lord Jesus. We've just been thinking of the way in which he had been rejected in Matthew. But here, in the midst of his rejection, there's refreshment from the Lord Jesus. How is there refreshment from the Lord Jesus? Because there were three people in this household, at least, who were responding to him with love. They loved the Lord Jesus and they made a supper for him. They wanted to give something to him. When everybody else was rejecting him, scolding him, turning him out, they were receiving him in and giving something to the Lord Jesus. Oh, how much the Lord Jesus loves to receive something from you and from me. You know, the Lord Jesus is still being rejected today. So this is a challenge to us. How much are our homes? How much are our meetings? How much are our individual lives? [00:27:02] Like this home in Bethany, where there was a place for the Lord Jesus to come to. I must confess, when I think of it from that point of view, how little of my life is set aside for the Lord Jesus.

He has given everything for me. On the cross of Calvary, he died for me. He gave himself for me.

How little we give in response to him.

But there we are.

Certainly in this household, the Lord Jesus found refreshment. And it's lovely to see Lazarus, who once was dead, sitting at table with the Lord Jesus. Reminds us of how we were once dead in trespasses and sins, but now we've been seated in the heavenlies with Christ. There's Martha.

No longer encumbered.

No longer getting things out of proportion. No longer serving in a wrong spirit, but serving the Lord Jesus in a right spirit. Everything's perfectly in balance now with Martha. [00:28:03] She's serving the Lord Jesus. It's good to serve the Lord Jesus.

How much of our lives are being used in doing things for the Lord Jesus? It's good to be doing something, to have some special activity or service that we are undertaking for the Lord Jesus.

Whatever it may be.

It may be something that no one else knows about, but it doesn't matter if it's being done for the Lord Jesus. He values it.

He valued the service of Martha. And we have Mary too.

We often think of Mary, don't we, on the Lord's Day morning because this action of hers is so expressive of worship to the Lord Jesus.

And I think we can get something very practical out of what she does. She had a pound of precious ointment.

Splitenard. A pound of ointment. A small amount of ointment in some ways. Only a small amount of ointment. I don't know how big it would have been. [00:29:02] But when we think that at the time the Lord Jesus died on the cross and his body was taken down and wrapped in linen garments, Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds of ointment. But Mary, she just had a pound of ointment. And

yet it was very precious. It was very precious. It was worth, in Judas' estimation, 300 pennies. Nearly a year's wages for an ordinary working man at that time. When you equate that to what that might be today, you get an idea of how precious, how expensive this was.

And it was contained in an alabaster vessel.

Something also quite precious in itself.

And it was broken.

And because it was broken it could then be poured upon the Lord Jesus. And you know, I think it's nice to think of this in the context of worship because it illustrates to us how even if we've only got something very small to bring to the Lord Jesus, [00:30:04] whether we're a sister or a brother, he delights to receive it from us.

And we shouldn't be held back by our feelings that, oh, it's rather unworthy, it's rather small.

We should just break it and pour it on the Lord Jesus.

You see, it's just a matter of faith. The Lord Jesus loves to receive our worship, our affection, our praise for him. And often the word break is connected with faith. Remember those three mighty men who broke through to the well of water at Bethlehem in order to give some refreshment to David. They broke through the garrison of the Philistines. It often conveys a sense of just acting in faith, breaking. A bit of energy there, acting in faith. Not letting our own thoughts hold us back but just responding to the Lord Jesus. So often we're held back from doing that because we feel, [00:31:01] well, what we've got to offer is so unworthy. Perhaps some of us as brothers we feel that and as a result we don't get up and give the Lord Jesus praise and worship on the Lord's Day morning. But he wants us just to break our alabaster box of ointment and then the whole of the house will be filled with the odour of the ointment. That's exactly what happened. Oh, when we think of the greatness of the Lord Jesus, how he loves us to respond to him in praise and worship.

Not just in the meeting but in the home and in our own individual lives when we have time to respond to him. Not just, as it were, to read the scriptures and to pray for our needs but to respond to him.

How little time we give sometimes to reading the Bible and praying. Perhaps it's even a small amount of time as individuals that we actually spend time in the Lord's presence responding to him in praise and worship when he delights to receive it. How much refreshment the Lord Jesus got from Mary that day [00:32:06] as she broke that alabaster box of ointment over the Lord Jesus. It says in John that she broke it and anointed his feet.

In Matthew and Mark it's his head. Because, you see, in Matthew and Mark he's brought before us as the king and the servant.

And she has the right estimation of his true dignity and she anoints his head. But as was once brought before us at a Bible reading many years ago at Loestoft, I can still remember it, a brother told us when it comes to John's gospel and we have before us the Son of God, and we can only break the box of ointment over his feet. We must be at his feet in worship because of who he is in all his greatness, the Lord Jesus. She broke it over his feet. Of course, in reality, in the actual fact she did

both. She anointed his head and his feet.

[00:33:03] But here in John we have the oil ointment being applied to his feet.

And she wiped his feet with her hair. Yes, the hair of Mary, I think, would convey to us, I feel anyway, a life of subjection to the Lord Jesus.

It was her life. It expressed what her life was for the Lord Jesus. And she was able to wipe his feet with her hair.

And I think this is very precious because it conveys to us how our worship can really be enhanced if our practical life is what it should be, if we're really in the good, practically, of what our worship is. That was true of Mary.

And because of that, her worship was enhanced. She didn't only anoint his feet, but she wiped them with the hair of her head [00:34:02] and how that should appeal to us as believers too. We do feel, don't we, sometimes when we go to the meeting that we're not really right. We feel that our worship lacks because in practical ways in our lives we know there are things that might not be as they really should be. Well, how wonderful it is when we judge those things and settle them before the Lord, then our worship is that much more complete. It was complete worship from Mary here. She didn't only pour the oil over the feet of the Lord Jesus, but she wiped, she comforted his feet as it were. It's the same idea, I think, as in John 13, where he took a linen towel and dried the feet of his disciples after washing them. There was comfort, there was a complete action here on the part of Mary.

But what a reaction from Judas and the other disciples even. They despised what Mary had done.

Oh, how lacking in love on the part of disciples. [00:35:03] Yes, it wasn't only Judas. There are other accounts and you'll see that it was the other disciples who also murmured along with Judas how sad it is that sometimes our hearts can be so cold that when we see the appreciation of another saint we even despise it sometimes. Oh, we shouldn't be like that. But Judas, of course, had no love at all for the Lord Jesus. This particular passage makes it absolutely clear why he despised what Mary had done.

He was a thief and he cared only for the money that was placed in the bank because he used it for his own purposes. But Mary had to suffer the open derision of these people when she did this act.

And it shows that she was not ashamed to worship the Lord Jesus, to confess him. And that's a real example to us, isn't it, as well. That's what she did.

[00:36:02] And the Lord Jesus commends her and he says, let her alone, against the day of my burying has she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always. And here we have a very important principle. The Lord Jesus must always come first. He must always get the worship first. It was brought to our attention not long ago at Chelmsford that in Christianity as a whole today, in Christendom certainly, every other cause, many legitimate in themselves and worthy in themselves, every other cause like that is put before the Lord Jesus. Help to the third world, care for the needy. Wonderful things in themselves, but the Lord Jesus and worship to him, however valueless it may seem in the eyes of someone who has no love for the Lord Jesus, that is the thing that must come first. Worship must come first for the Lord Jesus.

And that's exactly what the Lord Jesus says here. [00:37:02] I've often thought these must be really embarrassing words for anybody who seeks to follow the scriptures and yet is intent on the social gospel when the Lord Jesus says, for the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always. And you know the Lord Jesus is saying clearly here that there wasn't much time left for people, for his own to give him this kind of worship. He would soon die on the cross and the opportunity of worshipping in this way would be gone.

And it's the same for us too. We now have an opportunity to worship the Lord Jesus in a world which rejects him. We have a privilege to announce his death until he comes, to remember him in the way of his appointing. There won't be that opportunity when he's come. There will be no breaking of bread, for instance, in heaven. There will be no opportunity to witness for the Lord Jesus in heaven. [00:38:04] No opportunity to do a work of service in a world that rejects him in heaven. The time for service, the time for being for the Lord, the time of worshipping the Lord will have gone forever when the Lord Jesus comes. Oh, how we should take our opportunities when we think of the greatness of our Lord Jesus to serve him now while we have the opportunity. He's worthy of it.

Wonder how much we are doing this.

Yes, we have an opportunity like Mary to anoint the Lord Jesus. He was the anointed one of God. We have an opportunity in this world which rejects him to anoint him ourselves in our lives too down here. And then lastly in Acts.

In Acts we see the disciples being prepared for the Lord Jesus for the time of his absence. He was going back to the glory. He had accomplished everything on the cross of Calvary and God had raised him by his glory from the grave.

[00:39:05] The Lord Jesus had appeared for 40 days to his own and it was in those 40 days that he says these words and it was in those 40 days that he says these words that we have read in this chapter.

And I think we can take these words for ourselves too and follow the example of the disciples. Yes, surely a passage like this once again brings before us the greatness of our Lord Jesus because in the first passage we've seen his life, his perfection, his pleasure for his father.

In the second passage we've seen his death anticipated by Mary. But here we see him in resurrection, the one who's come forth from the grave, come forth from death because there was no sin in him because he's God. The Lord Jesus could not sin because he's God.

[00:40:03] He's a perfect man, yes, but he couldn't sin because he's God. God cannot sin. God cannot deny himself, we're told elsewhere. Yes, the Lord Jesus coming forth in resurrection glory here in this passage.

And we see him now preparing his disciples for his absence and we can learn from their example too. And I wonder if we are learning from their example because we were singing in our hymns of ourselves, particularly as the church. And again, what's brought before us here is the thought of the church. Not actually at the moment these words were said because the Holy Spirit hadn't come at Pentecost, but the Lord Jesus in these words was looking beyond the day of Pentecost. And we see some of the marks of the church coming out even in the way the disciples were behaving before

Pentecost. [00:41:01] The Lord Jesus, he gives them a command to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes.

And that's obedience.

And perhaps the most important thing that can feature practically in our lives today as believers, both as individuals and as Christians together, is practical obedience to the Lord Jesus in everything. And these disciples, they were obedient. They didn't go off when the Lord Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem. They stayed together.

There was an earlier time when they had disobeyed what the Lord Jesus said, but now they had learnt their lesson. They stayed together in their upper room awaiting the promise of the Lord Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit. How much is obedience, practical obedience, in just simple aspects of our lives featuring in our lives for the Lord Jesus here?

Then there was fellowship. [00:42:01] They were together.

We know that they were together with one accord on the very day that the Holy Spirit came. How terrible it would have been if the Holy Spirit had come to that upper room and some have been elsewhere. Yes, there was fellowship here. They stayed together.

And we're told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is. And that's very practical as well. It doesn't just mean that we come to the meeting on Lord's Day morning and perhaps to the evening meeting too. It means that we're regular. We're regular at the meetings. We're regular at the Bible reading and at the prayer meeting. I must admit I was brought up to go to the meeting and only not to go if I had a very good reason not to go.

And I felt through the years that that's a very right way to regard the gathering together of the saints. We should have a very good reason [00:43:01] for missing meetings of the local gathering.

It's essential that we do gather together for Bible reading, for prayer, as well as for the breaking of bread and the preaching of the Word. This is made clear to us, isn't it, in Acts chapter 2 where we see that's what the early church was doing. They were together in fellowship and in the apostles' doctrine of fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. Yes, perhaps it's not surprising that our meetings are often very weak when we don't really attend our meetings regularly. But there was regular attendance in the early days of the church and right before even the day of Pentecost they were together in this upper room. How important that is.

And there was prayer.

It says they were continually in prayer. It's often our prayer meetings that suffer most from poor attendance. And yet we're the first to say that prayer is the powerhouse. [00:44:05] How often there are few stokers in a powerhouse. Yes, they were continually in prayer. Yes, so should we be as individuals and also together. The Scripture was an important element of their gathering together. Even before the day of Pentecost it tells us that Peter stood up and he quoted words of Scripture. They acted on what the Scripture said. Even though they didn't have the Holy Spirit and had to draw lots to decide who should take Judas' place yet their starting point was the Scripture, the Word of God. So it should be with us. We should base everything we do and say and all our actions and all

our words upon the Scriptures of truth. And they were waiting.

In their case they were waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit. But we're waiting, aren't we, today? Not for the Holy Spirit because he's come. He came at the day of Pentecost as the Lord Jesus promised he would. [00:45:01] He said, I baptise you.

It's been promised that you'll be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Yes, we're not waiting for the Holy Spirit to come. He's come. He came at Pentecost. And we've all been included in that baptism that occurred there. But we're waiting for the Lord Jesus to come for us in the air. That should be our attitude, to wait for the Lord Jesus. And once again, that's what the writer of the Hebrews emphasises. Forsake not the gathering of yourselves together especially as you see the day drawing near. That's what we should do. The Lord Jesus is raised out from among the dead. He's seated at God's right hand in heaven tonight. And we are his recompense in the day of his rejection just as Joseph had two children in Egypt, Manasseh and Ephraim. A recompense from God for the rejection he had received from his brethren. So we, in marvellous grace, are a recompense for the Lord Jesus.

[00:46:05] And we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, can give him a response in our lives day by day. May it be so, for we all are, I'm sure, conscious of our failure. But oh, if we would just let the Holy Spirit take control of our lives we might give glory to the Lord Jesus day by day.