

*Father, this morning, we come to You. We just surrender ourselves into Thy hands. Let there be only one voice in this house – the voice of Jesus. Whether we hear it in English or in Telugu, let there be only one voice in our spirit – the voice of Jesus. Today, open our ears to hear the voice of God, not just the voice of man; the voice of God. Speak to us, O Lord. We know Your Coming is near and we have to hear what the Spirit has to say. Over and over, in Your Word, You say, “All those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit has to say.” O, help us to hear, Father. Let there be an unction over us today, to hear, to believe and to obey. Help us, O God. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.*

If you were there last month, we know we've been looking over the past few months on how we prepare ourselves and how we prepare the Church for the Coming of Jesus Christ. That's the most important thing after we come to Christ. We don't know when He will come. Today, next week, next year, ten years from now but we've been called to live in the light of His Coming every day. And if you weren't there last month, if I remember, we also looked at the Parable of the Ten Virgins, which is found in *Matthew 25:7*. We will read that today, once again and then, get into the core of the message.

**Matthew 25:1-7**

**<sup>1</sup> “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. <sup>3</sup> Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. <sup>6</sup> “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’**

Connected with His Second Coming, He uses this Parable and He gives us a number – ten. Ten is the number of God's judgment. Were there only five virgins? No, all ten were virgins. Did only five watch? No, all ten watched. Did only five fall asleep? No, all ten fell asleep. When the bridegroom came, did only five wake up? No, all ten woke up. Did only five have lamps? No, all ten had lamps. Why am I saying this? Because this isn't talking about the world and the people in the Church; it is talking about what will happen within the Church. This is not talking about the people in the world but this is talking about the people in the Church, regular people in the Church who have heard the Word all the days of their lives. So, all ten had lamps; all ten woke up; all ten trimmed their lights. Then, there was an issue. The light of five went out. Only five kept burning. At the hour of His Coming, only five had their lights burning. Why did their lights go out? Because they had no oil. Wisdom and foolishness is divided into two categories by saying, “The wise will always have the anointing and the flow of the Holy Spirit.” That's why God doesn't say, “Listen to what the Father says.” “Listen to the Word, which is written.” No, He says, “Listen to what the Spirit says.” Revelation, from the Father through the Son, comes through the Holy Spirit. In everything, they (the virgins) were the same, except for the fact that their light went out because there was no oil.

In *Luke 12:35-40*, do you know what Jesus says?

**Luke 12:35-40**

**<sup>35</sup> “Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; (Be watchful; be ready and let your light or lamp always be burning. Let it be burning) <sup>36</sup> and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. <sup>38</sup> And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. <sup>39</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>40</sup> Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”**

He says, “Be watchful. You don't know when your master will come.” There is a little twist in this Parable.

**<sup>37</sup> Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.**

They had girded themselves and were watchful with their lights shining. And when He came, immediately, they were ready. Now, what does He do? He girds Himself and He serves them.

**<sup>38</sup> And (it doesn't matter) if he should come in the (first watch,) second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants (who were found watching. And verse 39 says,). <sup>39</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>40</sup> Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."**

And verse 40 is important. God keeps on telling us, "I will come when you are not expecting." Honestly, do any one of us think He is coming today? No. That's the problem. He will come when we think He is not going to come. But if we really think He might come today, today would be a different day; we would be prepared. So, over and over, Scripture warns every generation – be girded; be prepared; be ready; be watchful and let your lamps be burning. Paul will exhort all of us through the *letter of Titus* in *Titus 2:13*,

**Titus 2:13**

**<sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,**

What are we looking forward to? *The blessed hope*. What is our blessed hope? What are we looking forward to? Are we really looking forward to the *glorious appearance of Jesus Christ*? Lying in prison, waiting for his death, Paul will tell Timothy.

**2 Timothy 4:7-8**

**<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me (Not me only but for everybody) only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

All those who are looking forward to His Coming. Only those who love His appearing. Because if we love and are looking forward to His appearing, it will immediately have something working in us. If you know, today, somebody is visiting your home; somebody important is visiting your home, immediately, everything in your home changes. Some of our young bachelors, if they know I am coming to their room, suddenly, the room is very clean. But if you lift their bed sheet, everything has been put there and covered.

But on the other hand, if you are a very disciplined person, when everything is in order, it doesn't come when the instruction takes place. Many Christians are prepared only on Sunday to meet the Lord. If He comes on Monday, they are in trouble. If He comes on Wednesday, they are finished. That is why we have Midweek Service on Wednesday to prepare them if He comes in the middle of the week. But if we love His appearing, we will be prepared. How do we prepare? We saw the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Only one difference – one set had oil; another set did not have oil. They had oil for a season and then, oil ran out. And after that, they were not careful to get refilled. We all know, in the Bible, oil represents the Holy Spirit, the anointing. I don't mean the gifts of the Holy Spirit but the ongoing increasing presence of the Holy Spirit – it is increasing. It is a relationship with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. That's what the anointing actually does. On the last minute, when Jesus suddenly comes, you cannot build a relationship. You go with Him based on the relationship that is already built because Jesus is coming for His Bride. And the work of the Church, the work of the Pastors is to prepare the Bride for Christ Jesus. So, the Bride is prepared and the oil is flowing. If the oil is not flowing, that's the purpose the Holy Spirit is given. Purpose – to build a relationship with God through the Son. The very life of the believer begins with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus rose again on Resurrection Sunday. Evening, He will meet His disciples. In *John 20:22*, the first thing He does it this;

**John 20:22**

**<sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.**

What's the first thing Jesus did after resurrection?

... *He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit...*

That is the beginning of a believer's life. Now, they are born-again by the Spirit. Forty days later, they will be filled with the Holy Spirit. That is something else. Born of the Spirit; filled with the Spirit and as they grow, Scripture says in *Romans 8:15-16*; it says,

**Romans 8:15-16**

<sup>15</sup> *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."*<sup>16</sup> *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*

And also,

**Romans 8:14**

<sup>14</sup> *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

So, first, He says, "Receive the Spirit." Then, He says, "Be filled with the Spirit." Then, He says, "Be continuously led by the Spirit." Then, we have the assurance, "Abba, Father."

In *John 15:4-6*, this is what Jesus says.

**John 15:4-6**

<sup>4</sup> *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.* <sup>5</sup> *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.* <sup>6</sup> *If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*

God is not saying, "Visit Me." He says, "Abide in Me." What happens when we abide in Him? The Holy Spirit flows. What happens when the Holy Spirit flows? God says, "You will bear much fruit." It is not talking about ministry; it is talking about the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is continuously flowing, your love grows; your patience grows; your longsuffering grows; your gentleness grows; your self-control grows. If we are doing ministry for thirty years, and if we are even more short-tempered today than before, the oil is not flowing. A gift is working; the oil is not flowing. The greatest danger for us, Pastors, is that we look at the gift and we think, "The fruit is being manifest." The larger our Church, the larger our ministry, the greater the chance of getting fooled because that is just a gift; that is not the fruit. He is not talking about the gift at all. He says, "If you are abiding with Me, the Holy Spirit is continuously flowing in you and you are growing in the Spirit, you will bear much fruit." That is what is important. That is what prepares us for His Coming.

Second – there is an increasing revelation as the Holy Spirit keeps filling us because the Holy Spirit is called in *Ephesians 1:17*, *the Spirit of wisdom and revelation*.

**Ephesians 1:17**

<sup>17</sup> *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you (what?) the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,*

This will happen only if we abide in Him. When we abide in Him, revelation or knowledge of Him of Jesus Christ increases in our lives. In *1 John 2:24-27*, Scripture will explain this clearly. John will explain it even more clearly.

**1 John 2:24-27**

<sup>24</sup> *Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.* <sup>25</sup> *And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.* <sup>26</sup> *These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.* <sup>27</sup> *But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.*

So, there is this abiding in Christ. How do we know we are abiding in God? We are continuously being filled with the Holy Spirit. How do we know? How do we know a tree is planted and it is receiving nourishment from the earth? Just watch its branches. It turns green, the buds come, the flower comes, the fruit comes, the fruit ripens – that’s exactly what God is saying. “If you are rooted in Me, the Holy Spirit will flow.” It will manifest as fruit. It will manifest as revelation. Your revelation, *the anointing will teach you all things*. The very anointing will teach you. That is our responsibility. One responsibility – *abide in Him*. Stay in Him. If a branch is detached, Scripture says, “At the hour of His Coming, it is just picked and thrown away in the fire.” So, be very careful about Scripture because we have this theology floating around – ‘once I am saved, forever, I am saved’. God says, “Stay in Me. Keep on bearing fruit. When I come, if you are not in Me, you are only good for burning.”

You see, when Jesus comes, there will be many reactions. One set of people will be terrified. In *Revelation 6:15-16*,

**Revelation 6:15-16**

***<sup>15</sup> And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!***

Nobody want to even look at His face. They are so terrified. The funniest thing is that it is called the ‘wrath of the Lamb’. Have you ever been scared of a lamb? But that Day, the mightiest of men will be afraid when they see His face. So, when Jesus comes, one set of people will be terrified. Another set of people will mourn; they will grieve in *Zechariah 12:10*. Another set of people will mourn when they see Him.

**Zechariah 12:10**

***<sup>10</sup> “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced...”***

This is what is left of Israel. They, when they see Jesus, they will mourn and say, “Aiyó, You were the One we pierced.” Then, at His appearance, there will be one set of people who will be very ashamed. *Daniel 12:2*. So, there will be people who are terrified, people who mourn and people who are ashamed.

**Daniel 12:2**

***<sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.***

So, people who are terrified, people who will grieve and people who will be ashamed. But then, there is another group to whom God says, “They will be bold and confident at My coming.” In *1 John 2:28*, that is what we are called to. What is the condition?

**1 John 2:28**

***<sup>28</sup> And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.***

Meaning – continue in Him; grow in Him so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His Coming. Then, our hope is real. Then, it is a blessed hope. Otherwise, it is a false hope. In *Titus 2:13*, it is called the ‘blessed hope’.

The five virgins are called ‘wise’. Why were they wise? Because the Holy Spirit is called the ‘Spirit of revelation and wisdom.’ Real wisdom is to be prepared for His Coming. In *Daniel 12:2-3*, there are those who are wise. Many will wake up to shame; many to condemn and *verse 3*,

**Daniel 12:2-3**

***<sup>2</sup> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to***

***shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup> Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.***

This is not the wisdom of the world; this is the wisdom of His Spirit. This happens only when we consciously choose to abide in Him. The five virgins continued in Christ. So, when He came, their lamps were ready and the light did not go out. So, yes, we know this; we've heard this but the question is: how do we reach there? I want to have that blessed hope; not just a hope that is doctrine but a hope that is real. A real hope. That is the hope of Paul while living, "I have finished. I know what is waiting for me." Absolutely sure. We are not sure. So, you know what we say? "Oh, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I put all my faith in Him. I believe, when He comes, He will take me." Paul didn't say that. He said, "I know. I've believed Him for my salvation but I worked for my crown. For my crown, I'm looking at me; I'm not looking at Him." What does he say? "*I fought the good fight; I kept the faith. I finished the race.* Now, He will give me the crown. It was all in His strength but I did it. Therefore, I am sure." The question is: are we sure? So, how do we be sure? How is our hope sure? God gives, through Paul, clues through Scripture in *1 Thessalonians 1:3*,

**1 Thessalonians 1:3**

***<sup>3</sup> remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,***

Look at the three things mentioned – what does Scripture say? *Work of faith*. First is – *work of faith*. Second – *labor of love*. Pastors, mark *1 Thessalonians 1:3*. That is the first letter Paul wrote in the Bible. Not *Romans*. First epistle written in the New Covenant is *1 Thessalonians* and it is connected with the Second Coming of Jesus. And if you have to be sure at His appearing, one thing He mentions is the *work of faith* and *labor of love*. Then, your hope is real. Hope is connected with tomorrow. The other two are connected with today. If I have to have the hope for tomorrow, I need to work for something today. If I work today and I know if I work today and I know if I get five hundred rupees, I have hope for tomorrow. Right? Our hope for tomorrow is connected with something today and the Bible talks about two things there – *work of faith* and the *labor of love*. Scripture is very clear. This has to be balanced. Faith and love have to be balanced. Faith and love. If we need to be ready at Jesus' Coming, we need both. Some people have faith, great faith and you will see them doing great things. But when you meet them close-by, you know they have no love at all. Some people have great love but they have no faith. So, they don't do anything. They just sit in their chair and say, "I love so much. I wish I can do something." But Scripture is very clear. You can do many things through faith; you can also love but if you need to have real hope, it is a work of faith and a labor of love. In *1 Corinthians 13:13*, we know from Scripture, Paul says,

**1 Corinthians 13:13**

***<sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.***

Love is the greatest. *Galatians 5:6* will say this;

**Galatians 5:6**

***<sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, (the only thing that matters is) ...faith working through love.***

Faith that works through love. Faith alone is not enough. You see, Scripture is very consistent. Now, turn to *Hebrews 6*. *Hebrews* is written to believers to see that they don't fall away. In *verses 10-12*, this is what God says,

**Hebrews 6:10-12**

***<sup>10</sup> God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.***

So, there is love and there is work. But look at *verse 11 and 12*,

***<sup>11</sup> We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. <sup>12</sup> We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.***

“If you want your hope to be real,” God says, “continue your work of faith and your labor of love till the end of your life.” Did you see that? It is not enough we did it for a season; it has to be till our end or till Jesus comes. Continue till the end. Faith and love have to go together. Otherwise, it can be very dangerous. Dangerous for us who know the Word because the more we know the Word, it is our faith that is growing, right? The more you get filled with the Holy Spirit, it is your love that grows. In *Revelation 2:2-4*, this is talking about a Church having a list of their work of faith. God says,

**Revelation 2:2-5**

***<sup>2</sup>“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; <sup>3</sup>and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. <sup>4</sup>Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.***

They had all the works of faith. One thing was missing – they had love in the beginning but now, they have fallen from that. And in *verse 5*, do you know what He says?

***<sup>5</sup>Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove (what? Your light will go away) your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.***

At the hour, when He came, all were virgins; all watched; all slept; all woke up; all trimmed; only five had light. Why didn’t the other five have light? Because He removed their light. Because they did not abide in Him. That’s why our hope must be real. Therefore, to have that blessed hope, both faith and love have to be there.

So, let’s look at one more example. This time, from Jesus, in *Matthew 7:21-23*.

**Matthew 7:21-23**

***<sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ <sup>23</sup>And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’***

Look at what they say to Him in *Matthew 7:21-22*,

***...have we not prophesied in Your name... (Can we prophesy without faith? No, it’s a work of faith.)... cast out demons in Your name...(Can you cast out demons without faith? “We did...”) ...done many wonders in Your name...***

Can you do that without faith? But what does He call them? He calls them ‘workers of lawlessness’. Why? He did not say, “Your work is the work of lawlessness”; He says, “You are workers of lawlessness! Your work is wonderful but you are workers of lawlessness.” Where is the clue? The clue is this – He said, “I don’t know you. You are a branch that has been broken away. I do not know you. You did not abide in Me.” When branches are dry, it doesn’t matter if it is a mango tree, a neem tree, an orange tree or whatever tree, when they are dry, they have only one use – good to be burnt. But when they are green, it is different. What did He say? He says, “I never knew You.” Where was the problem? They did not abide and the Holy Spirit wasn’t flowing. So, there were just working on a gift and the works of faith were being manifested. And therefore, we need faith; we need love; we need the Word of God. From where faith comes, we need the Spirit of God so that our work of faith will be a labor of love. Amen?

You see, a believer’s life should be like a machine. For the machine to work properly, it needs power. And after some time, when your scooter starts saying, “Craaa”, the mechanic will say, “Oil dalo saab (You need to put the oil).” If you have the power and oil, your vehicle moves smoothly. We need that. We need more and more power to do the things He wants us to do but we also need to be oiled so that our lives are smooth, so that we just don’t do the works of faith.

So, what do we do? We need a solution, right? We don’t want questions; we want answers, right? You see, this is where we forget – Jesus did not save us so that we could do some of His works; He saved us so that we could have a relationship with Him. God has millions of angels to do His work. He did not save us to do work, though we have to do work; He saved us for

a relationship. And a relationship with two people is always connected with communication. It's always connected with communication. The person to whom you talk most and are able to deal issues, usually is the person you are closest to. We have one communication up and we have communication this way (sideways). That's why He died on the Cross so that He could restore both. Our communication with God is called 'worship'. Aaradhana (worship) is not singing; aaradhana (worship) is not 'hallelujah'; aaradhana (worship) means that is the way we communicate with God. You can sing and do all these things without communicating to God at all. You just had a good exercise and sat down. You enjoyed the song. Communication with God – a genuine one – is called 'worship'. Communication with man, within the Kingdom, is called 'fellowship'. We don't say that in the world; only in the Kingdom, we have a term called 'fellowship'. The question is this: how strong is your worship? How strong is your fellowship? Your hope is determined by that. The strength of your hope at His Coming is determined by the strength of your worship and the strength of your fellowship. We are not studying the Word for knowledge. Jesus said, "I have not come to give you knowledge." He said, "*I have come to give you life.*" Peter said, "*Where can we go? You alone have the words of life.*" Life and that life Jesus brings, is measured in our worship and in our fellowship. Life. That is why, in English, the front room, where the family all spend a lot of time together is called a 'Living Room'. Because, in the old days, that is where the family gathered to spend time together. Now, they spend time before the TV. Now, the living room has become the dead room. Because the TV has taken over worship and fellowship. God offers a real hope, a real genuine hope. It is found only in one place. In *Hebrews 6:18-19*, God says,

**Hebrews 6:18-19**

***<sup>18</sup>that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup>This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,***

I want you to look at it carefully, Pastors. Mark this. This is the most important verse in the *Book of Hebrews* for hope. God says, "Those who have this hope ***have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.***" The hope is before us and we have to go and get hold of that hope. But it is found only in one place – in *verse 19*, it says it,

***...enters the Presence behind the veil,***

First, we have to flee. We have to flee from the world and enter into the outer courts, enter into the Holy Place. There is no blessed hope in the outer courts. There is some kind of a hope in the Holy Place. That comes from the knowledge of the Word. But still, you are not sure. But God says, "You have to go beyond the veil to the very presence where you meet Me." You, actually in worship, you meet God. And that gives you that hope. Now, that hope is not in knowledge; the hope is not in ritual; it's not in religion; it is because you have laid hold of a Person. That is the hope Moses had. Where did Moses' boldness come from? Because he had entered into the Presence there. This is the New Covenant. This is where worship should take us. What is the purpose of worship? To enter there and meet God. Whether we are alone in our home or whether we are in a group at Church, our worship, our communication with God should take us behind the veil or our worship has failed. That is where we abide. God says, "When you abide there, you have a hope that is real." Then, the rest of the things will flow. So, how do we learn this? See, *Hebrews 11* is the chapter where it talks about pleasing God. In *verse 6*, it says,

**Hebrews 11:6**

***<sup>6</sup>But without faith it is impossible to please Him...***

We all know this, right? Very simple thing – if you want to please God, you need to have faith. What is strange about *Hebrews 11*, it gives a list of a small set of people who pleased God. And the first one to be mentioned in *verse 4* is a man called Abel. And if you read *verse 4*, Scripture says,

**Hebrews 11:4**

***<sup>4</sup>By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.***

Now, his saakshyam (witness) is not from man. All our witness is from men. "Manchi (good) Pastor." And we feel very good. He got his witness from God. God testified of him and what is God's witness? Abel is righteous. Righteous means – this man

has a right standing with God. But what did he do to be declared righteous? Scripture says, “He brought an offering.” Two boys brought two offerings. The only thing mentioned about them is their offerings. We read their account in *Genesis 4:3-5*, you will see, both brought offerings.

**Genesis 4:3-5**

**<sup>3</sup>And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. <sup>4</sup>Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,** (Abel and Cain represents two groups of people in the Church; not in the world but in the Church. Those who bring offerings to God; not the world. People in the Church. What separates this group? God separates this group. In *Hebrews 11:4*, Scripture says,

**Hebrews 11:4**

**<sup>4</sup>...Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice**

What did he offer? A sacrifice. Please understand this – in the core of every strong relationship, there is sacrifice. Where there is no sacrifice, there is no relationship with God or man. The strength of a relationship is determined by a sacrifice. In every relationship, there is sacrifice. But the greater the sacrifice, the stronger the relationship. Both Cain and Abel brought a sacrifice.

**Hebrews 11:4**

**<sup>4</sup>By faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice**

Where there is no sacrifice, there is no relationship. So many people have no relationship with God because there is no sacrifice in their lives. What does Scripture say? We all know *John 3:16* – “For God so loved the world...” What happened after that? God also realized – if He wants to have a relationship with a fallen man, there has to be a sacrifice from His side. His relationship with us is based on the sacrifice of His Son on the Cross. Our relationship with Him will be based on how much we are willing to sacrifice. Where there is no sacrifice, there is no relationship. *Romans 12:1* – do you know what Scripture says first?

**Romans 12:1**

**<sup>1</sup>I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

The first thing, God says, “If you did not offer your body as a sacrifice, you won’t be here today.” But the truth, only God knows – whether you came for a sacrifice or whether you came for the offering. Only God knows. If you came for God, then you have offered your body as a sacrifice today. You could have done many things. I believe many of you don’t need that 150 rupees but you actually made a sacrifice. You offered your body. You got up, you got ready, you travelled a long distance and you reached on time. You offered your body. Now, *verse 2* says, “When you are sitting there, don’t go to sleep. Listen. Offer your mind.” He says, “I see the sacrifice of your body. Now, you offer your mind. Let Me speak to you.” You need to realize, our relationship with God (worship) is connected with sacrifice. This is true about human relationship also. When young people come to get married before us, what do we make them say? “For better or for worse; in sickness or health; in riches or poverty; forsaking all others; I separate myself to you.” What is the core of the covenant? Sacrifice. “When poverty comes, I will not leave you. When situation is really bad in the house, I will not leave you. When sickness comes, I will not leave you. And it doesn’t matter how many other people whom I love are around you, I will leave them and I will cleave to you.” If this doesn’t happen, it is just a marriage without a relationship. In every relationship, there needs to be a sacrifice and the strength of a relationship is based on how much each one is willing to sacrifice. So, from the Cross, God is speaking, “This is how much I long to have a relationship with you. I am sacrificing My Son.” Every relationship, remember, is based on sacrifice. Right from the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, relationship is based on sacrifice. This was before the fall. *Genesis 2:16-17*. Just look at that.

**Genesis 2:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”**



You know what God is saying? “You can eat this; you cannot eat this. You have to sacrifice this so that we can have a relationship. If you don’t sacrifice this, you will lose this.” Simple. Only one sacrifice. Before the fall, only one sacrifice. After the fall, many sacrifices. Before and after the fall, relationship was based on sacrifice. The relationship of Adam and Eve with God is based on this one tree; not the other trees. You can eat apple; you can eat orange; you can eat everything. But if you eat this, this will determine your relationship. Your TV has 200 channels and when you are going, you tell your child, “Don’t watch channel 7.” That will determine whether you have a relationship with the child or not. Therefore, God says, “Do this. Don’t do this.” That will determine whether we have a relationship with Him or not.

After all, the first step towards restoration is also based on sacrifice. In *Genesis 3:21*, it is not man; it is God.

**Genesis 3:21**

***<sup>21</sup> Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.***

So, there had to be a sacrifice for relationship to be restored. We don’t know. In the Garden, two animals were killed. It’s very painful for God. This is the first death in His creation. Maybe two lambs that He created, which Adam named. God loved this lamb; Adam loved this lamb. And now, they realized – if they needed to have a relationship, they need to make a sacrifice. On that sacrifice, a relationship is restored. Adam and Eve are outside and they have two sons – Cain and Abel. We don’t know the story because it is not written. For many years, our children will grow in our shadow. They will come to Church with us; they will sing along; they will go back. What is in their heart, we really don’t know. One day, they have to make their stand for God. So, Scripture says, “When the time came...” not Adam; for Cain and Abel to step out from the shadow of Adam; the offering time, we don’t know. For many years, every year, did Adam offer a sacrifice or did he tell them about what happened in the Garden? The only thing we know is that a time has come and both brought their sacrifice; both brought offerings. There was a sacrifice in both. Cain has worked hard, watched over his fruits for a long time. Now, they have grown and he plucked them all. Hard work. There is sacrifice and he brought it before God. With Abel, it is different. He has reared these lambs. Now, he has to pick one. I don’t know whether he had a knife. Knives all came much later through the generations of Cain. Maybe it is a stone. He must have held the lamb and hit it on the stone and now, he is bringing the meat. There is offering in both. There is sacrifice in both. But Scripture says in *Hebrews 11:4*,

**Hebrews 11:4**

***<sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain...***

*Faith comes from hearing.* So, maybe, he heard his father telling him what happened in the Garden. Are you getting the picture? Often, people approach God for a relationship with no sacrifice. Approaching God for something and approaching God for a relationship – they are two different things. They are not the same. Whenever people came to Jesus, He asked them a question, “What do you want?” “Oh, I am blind.” He said, “Take your sight.” “I am sick.” He spoke healing. “I am a leper.” “Be cleansed.” “Oh, my daughter or my son is sick.” “He is healed.” When they came to Jesus for something, He gave it freely but whenever they sought for a relationship, He demanded sacrifice. Our problem is – we confuse one with two. We may receive a hundred things from God without a relationship. Another man may have received nothing from God and have a vibrant relationship. When people sought a relationship, listen to Jesus in *Luke 14:25-27*,

**Luke 14:25-27**

***<sup>25</sup> Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,***

He saw the crowds. Miracles are happening. They are receiving so many things from Him and they were following Him. It’s a very dangerous thing to follow Jesus. From the first day, John the Baptist pointed and said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of this world”, and a few of John’s disciples started following Jesus. You will find it in *John 1*. He hasn’t begun His ministry. Think about it; Jesus is walking on the road. Many people are walking on the road but two people are following Him because John showed it to them. If you follow Jesus, He will ask you, “What do you seek?” They were shocked. They did not know what to say. They said, “Er, we want to see where You stay.” That’s how we would also respond. We respond with some random answer. And Jesus was not like my young men. He said, “Come and see.” He says, “Nothing under My table. You can come and see.” The crowds were following Him. How happy we would be if crowds came to our Churches! Because we are like Judas – crowds are equal to offerings. Jesus was different.

***26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."***

He says, "If you want anything from Me, you can take it. If you want a relationship with Me, it may cost you everything." What is He saying? He is saying, "A genuine relationship is based on sacrifice." An abiding relationship with God may cost you, maybe, every other relationship. When you got married, it cost you a lot of other relationships. Isn't it true? When you get married to Jesus, it will demand even more. That's why Scripture says, "God so loved the world, He gave." In Acts 20:35, this is what Paul will say,

**Acts 20:35**

***35 ...He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"***

Now, be honest – do you really believe this? You will believe this only if you are interested in a relationship; otherwise, it is better to receive than to give. When we are not interested in a relationship, this has no meaning. But if you are interested in a relationship, we realize – at the core lies sacrifice. Are you getting the picture? So, the first thing mentioned in the Bible about faith is, "Abel offered a better and a more excellent sacrifice."

The second thing – for a sacrifice to be excellent in God's eyes... Because remember, sacrifice was there in both offerings. Cain also sacrificed and brought; Abel also sacrificed and brought; but only one was submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Do you know that you can sacrifice without submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Only Abel was submitting. That is why Scripture says, "By faith." Whatever we do, does it come by faith? Outside the Garden, there is sacrifice and offering by two people but submission only in one. This is true about us Pastors too. We do so many things, sacrificially, for God. Then, we wonder, "Is God really pleased?" Or, "Why isn't He pleased?" Because there is no submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It can happen to anybody. It happened to Cain. He gave God his best but that's not what God wanted. Sacrifice alone is not enough. Imagine if one of you call me to your house and you invite me. So, I finally come to eat in your house. You make chicken biryani, mutton biryani, egg biryani and everything is wonderful but you are watching me; I am not eating. Why? Because I don't like biryani. Did you sacrifice for me? But did you ask me what I like? That's the problem. We sacrifice so much for God but we forget to ask God, "Do You like my sacrifice?" Cain sacrificed for God. God did not ask for any one of those things. He wanted only one thing – for a relationship. That, Abel offered and he offered it by faith. *Without faith, it is impossible to please God.* And when faith begins in the *Book of Hebrews* with this man, it is first talking about worship. Worship will define our life. Worship has to be done God's way. Cain also worshipped God; Abel also worshipped God. There was sacrifice in both worship but God was pleased only with one.

This mistake can happen to even the best of God's men. You will see this later in Israel's history. The best man, man after God's own heart, uncle David; a very important day in David's life, you will see in *2 Samuel 6:1-8*,

**2 Samuel 6:1-8**

***1 Again David gathered all the choice men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. 3 So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. 4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. 5 Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. 6 And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. 7 Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God. 8 And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.***

A wonderful day that ended in tragedy. What is he doing? Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. But a tragedy happened. You know what *verse 8* says? "David became angry." With great sacrifice, he is bringing the Ark; he is not accepted by God and hence, he is angry. Cain offered an offering with great sacrifice; God did not receive it. Cain became angry; David became angry.

One is bringing an offering; the other is finally bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, its final resting place and both get angry. Only one little difference – *verse 9*. David was afraid of the LORD; Cain was not afraid of the LORD. That's the only difference. That difference, one will go to hell; the other will go to Heaven. That is what we need to check our hearts for. We can make mistakes. We can get upset also. But be afraid of the Lord. Don't get up being a wanderer like Cain. Therefore, David will seek and go back again. He, again, seeks two kinds of people. In *Genesis 4:6-7*, God already told the solution.

**Genesis 4:6-7**

***<sup>6</sup>So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup>If you do well, will you not be accepted?...***

That's the only thing. *God is not a respecter of persons*. He doesn't love Abel more than Cain. God loves all of us the same way but we can please Him only by faith. If we do right, we also will be accepted. The only thing Cain had to do was go to Abel and say, "Abel, give me also a lamb. I will also offer God." And the story would have ended differently. But we don't do that. A lot of people don't do that. They get angry and they walk away. But some are like David. Initially, they get angry and then, they are a little afraid. "You better be careful. This is God, okay?" Then, they realize that, "God is fair. He is righteous. There must be something wrong in the way I did it. There's nothing wrong. The Ark should come to Jerusalem. An offering should be offered to God. But if God is not pleased when you do something right, maybe there is something wrong in the way I did it." So, David will repent and see God's face. In *1 Chronicles 15:12-14*, he gets the answer.

**1 Chronicles 15:11-13**

***<sup>11</sup>And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites: for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. <sup>12</sup>He said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. <sup>13</sup>For because you did not do it the first time, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order."***

"We did not consult Him." You did not consult me before you cooked for me. Therefore, I did not eat. Is the offering to God? So, you should ask God, "What offering pleases You?" Is the Ark God's? How should it be brought? It is written very clearly in Scripture – only a Levite should carry the Ark. Don't touch it. There are hooks on the side. Put the rod in it, carry it on the shoulder. Instead, what did you do? New cart with cows or bulls. The Ark is kept in the cart. They did not use an old cart; a new cart. Kotha bandi (new cart). God is not mad because you put an old cart; no, you used a new cart. You may bring a new thing to your Church. God is not interested. He wants to know whether you are doing it His way or not. It may be a very expensive thing. Great sacrifice. God is not interested. Question: did you consult Him about the order? Because worship is about God, right? What did David do? Thirty thousand soldiers, new cart, two priests and all the people with instruments; we don't have those instruments even today. Huge crowd. Question: David, where did you get this idea from? He will say, "Pastor James, I checked when the Ark was lost. It was many years ago, when Eli was the high priest." Do you know what happened?

**1 Samuel 4:10-11**

***<sup>10</sup>So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel (how many? Aiyo,) thirty thousand foot soldiers. <sup>11</sup>Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.***

So, what did David think? The day the Ark was captured, thirty thousand soldiers died; the day the Ark will be brought, thirty thousand soldiers will march. Good idea! And two priests, Hophni and Phinehas died. So, two priests shall go – Uzzah and Ahio. Where did he get his idea from? From what happened in the past in the world. The Philistines took the Ark into their camp. And you know what happens? Trouble in every house, in every temple because they took God. That is why, my dear brothers, when you preach to non-Christians, tell them, "Only Jesus. No other god." You know what happens? Many of them won't say that and the poor fellow hears about Jesus also. "Jesus heals!" Jesus is not Lord; Jesus is Healer. And you know what happens? He goes to the market, buys a picture of Jesus, hangs that also against the wall with all the other pictures like the Philistines took the Ark to the town. From that day, instead of healing, trouble starts in his house. Whether it is a picture or anything, if you took the name of our God and put Him along with others, He will start judging immediately. So, the Philistines said, "Let their God go back. Please! We don't want their God." *1 Samuel 6:7-8*. How did they send the

Ark back?

**1 Samuel 6:7-8**

***<sup>7</sup> Now therefore, make a new cart, take two milk cows which have never been yoked, and hitch the cows to the cart; and take their calves home, away from them. <sup>8</sup> Then take the ark of the LORD and set it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you are returning to Him as a trespass offering in a chest by its side. Then send it away, and let it go.***

How did the Philistines send it back? They used a new cart. They put the Ark of the Lord in the kotha bandi (new cart). What did David do? Thirty thousand men, kotha bandi (new cart) and he put the Ark over there. God said, "I am not pleased. Are you a Philistine or are you an Israelite?" What is happening in the name of worship in the Churches? Is it of Israel or is it of Philistine? God's thing has to be done, consulting God in God's order. So, in what we offer to God, sacrifice alone is not enough; you need submission to His Lordship. Are you seeing the picture? When all these things were happening and all the people were shouting and singing, the power of God should have come, right? The power did not come; instead, judgment came. Why? In *Luke 3:16-17*,

**Luke 3:16-17**

***<sup>16</sup> John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (We like the baptism of fire. Do you like it? Where is He standing?) <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor...***

Where is Jesus waiting? At the threshing floor, right? Now, read *2 Samuel 6:6*. The whole crowd is going – thirty thousand soldiers; the Ark; the bullocks; they are all going. Everybody is singing, dancing and jumping and everything. And then,

**2 Samuel 6:6**

***<sup>6</sup> And when they came to (where?) Nachon's threshing floor, (who was waiting? Jesus was waiting. He put His foot over there and the oxen stumbled.) Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled.***

What happens at the threshing floor? He judges you – "Are you doing in My way or your way?" And judgment came. Uzzah died. Who died? Uzzah died. Who is Uzzah? This Ark has been sitting in Uzzah's house for many years. When the Ark came back to Israel from the Philistines, nobody wanted it. Everybody was scared. We will say, "Hallelujah!" But if the real Jesus comes, we will also fall dead like John. So, it was kept in the house of Abinadab for many years. If I'm right, up to seventy years, it was sitting there. If the Ark of God is sitting in your house for thirty years, there are two things that have to happen. This is the Ark of God. It will not change. You have to change. If you don't change, this will destroy you one day. The problem is this – when Uzzah goes in the morning, the first day, he knelt down in front of the Ark of the Lord. After two months, he bent a little in front of the Ark of the Lord. After one year, he stood and waved at the Ark of the Lord. After two years, "In the evening, I will do it. Now, I have no time." That's the problem with us, Pastors. We get very familiar with God because He's been with us for a long time. So, the oxen stumbled and the Ark started sliding. What did Uzzah do? He touched it. It is written in Scripture, "No man will touch it. You will die." Why did he touch it? Because this had been sitting in his house for so many years, he became familiar with the things of God. I bet you, when Service is going on here on a Sunday, when a Hindu or a Muslim comes in, they will show respect. You know what the Christian does? When the Word of God is going on, "Ahh! Yes, Hello!" You know why? Because we have become familiar with the things of God. And you wonder why is judgment coming into our homes and our lives? Because our God says, "I wait at the threshing floor. I will be honored in My house and you are My house." So, what happens? Either we have a relationship with God without sacrifice or we give a sacrifice without Lordship. Both are unacceptable to God and we go through life without a deepening relationship with God.

Do you remember Ezekiel's vision? The river is flowing from the threshold of the temple. "Come" – is the call and they get into the water. His ankles were under water. "Come closer. Come more." It's a deeper and a deeper walk into the river of the Holy Spirit until Ezekiel realizes, "I cannot move at all. The river has taken control." If you want a deep abiding relationship with God, there has to be sacrifice; there has to be Lordship. Every relationship demands sacrifice. And the greatest relationship you and I can ever have now and with eternity is our relationship with God. And God says, "I demand everything for that relationship." Brothers, don't take the Word you hear lightly. Just because you have not been judged the first time, the tenth time or the fiftieth time, please don't ever think judgment will not come. It will come and we will see in

the second session as to why God delays. Don't ever take God lightly. "Anyone who approaches Me," God says, "I will show to him that I am holy." And that reverence for the holiness of God has to come back to His house.

So, as we go for lunch, let's pray.

**Closing Prayer:**

*Father, we just thank You once again. I thank You for giving this young man the tongue, Lord, to translate. Thank You, Father. We thank You for the food that has been brought. We believe it will be more than enough for everyone. I pray, everyone will be blessed as they partake of the physical food even as we have partaken of the spiritual food. We receive it with thanksgiving. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.*