

Father, even as Your child sang now, Lord, come, Lord Jesus, sup with us; fellowship with us. You speak. You speak, Lord, for You alone have the words of life. You gave us the promise this year – to seek You, to dwell with You, to desire You above everything else. You asked us to abide in Thy Word. Today, Father, I pray even as You speak to us, our ears will be open to hear Your voice and You would teach us each day to rest in You, to abide in You, to put our trust in You. Speak to us, Lord. Help us to believe, help us to obey, help us to walk with You. Prepare us for the table, Your table. Prepare our hearts. We know we can never be perfect but we know we can be blameless. Help us to be blameless in Your presence, slow to speak, quick to hear, quick to obey. Help us, Father. Speak now, Lord. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Like I said, this is the seventh day of the year. In six days, God created everything and on the seventh day, He rested and the writer of *Hebrews* will tell us to labor; not to work, but to labor, to enter into His rest. Cease from our works so that He can begin His work in us and through us. So, it's good that we have an incredible year where the first Sunday is the seventh day and we are here in the beginning. He's still there in the beginning of this new year, the seventh day. I don't know how these six days have been. Resolutions all forgotten, half kept, struggling.

Many of the things which we do traditionally in Church are picked up from Israel's history. Israel had two beginnings, if you look. One – when they prepared to leave Egypt. In *Exodus 12:1*, God tells Israel they are in Egypt,

Exodus 12:1-2

¹ The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ² “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.

See, God's order is not our order. This month in the Egyptian calendar was not the first month. It was not the month in which they were living in the land. That was irrelevant. God says, “This is your beginning!” And if you know your *Exodus*, as you know your *Genesis 50* chapters starting with creation, ending with Joseph's funeral. *Exodus* beginning with Jochebed and Amram, though their names are not mentioned in *Exodus 1* and when you come to *Exodus 12*, it is talking about the Passover. He says, “We want to get out first and go somewhere.” God says, “Before I can take you somewhere, you need to have the covering of the blood.” First, you need to get out of the power of death before anything else can happen. So, for Israel, God says, “This is your beginning. The tenth day of this month, you will take that Passover lamb, you will kill it, you will take the blood, you will take the hyssop, you will put it on the lintels of your house and that marks your beginning.” They haven't left Egypt but that marks their beginning. So, for us too, though we celebrate birthdays, especially children's birthdays but older people try to remember that our beginning, actual real beginning is the day when we put our faith in the Blood of the Lamb of God alone, nothing else for our deliverance – that's our real beginning. Our history with God, our history in eternity begins on that day. The day you realized you are a sinner condemned to go to hell forever and there was this loving merciful Son, who had offered His own Son and His blood as atonement. You saw your sin and saw His righteousness and put your faith in that. You repented and you turn away – that is our beginning. In Him alone, that's our beginning. The rest all are prisoners, enslaved in Egypt. They have a new beginning for them. The rest are all in Egypt. The rest are all in the world but they are enslaved to the world system. So, we put our faith in the Blood of Jesus. That's why we have communion on the first Sunday of every month to remind us of our beginning. That's where we began. Without this, we don't have a beginning and many who do not partake of this is because they haven't begun. So, you should begin. A day should come when you should be able to say, “Yes, I want to start my journey with Jesus.”

The second beginning for Israel is forty years later. A generation began here. God led them out of Egypt with mighty hands, took them into the wilderness. Two years later, they stuttered at the edge of the Promised Land. Two years. He didn't even have to wait for three years to look for the fruit. Second year, they've collapsed. So, that generation died in the desert. They were saved but they did not possess what was promised to them. Many in Christendom are saved but we are promised the very life of Jesus Christ that reigns over sin, that reigns over flesh, that reigns over this world system, that reigns over the powers of darkness but most will not possess it because of unbelief not because of any lack of power on God's side. God will tell Israel, “Your fathers shortened My arm because of their unbelief.” If we don't believe and we don't obey, the power

Cross Over!

of God doesn't come into our lives and the life of Christ we are not able to partake. They were promised the land; we are promised a life. So, both are PL – Promised Land and Promised Life.

The second beginning is forty years later; another generation, young generation. God deliberately did it. He knew, He brought the parents out. Parents have come from the world. They refuse to change their worldly ways. So, God says, "What can I do with you? I can't do anything with you. I'll make you wander, wander forty years, let you all die in the desert but I will have a set of children who will forget Egypt, who will not think like the world, walk like the world, talk like the world, dress like the world, listen to music like the world, watch movies like the world. I will have a set of people," and He got a set of young people. They grew up and they were ready to possess. That's was the second beginning of Israel under a new leader and the leader is Joshua. The first leader is Moses and the second leader is Joshua. Moses can only bring you this far. There is a limit Moses can do because Moses represents the law. Law can bring you this far but only Jesus can take you further. So, Scripture say, Paul will say this way in *Galatians 3:24*,

Galatians 3:24

²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

What was the law? Tutor. It was a teacher to bring us to Jesus. So, Moses was the teacher to bring Israel to Jesus that is Joshua and only Joshua can take us into that life which God has promised. Only Jesus can take us across into that Promised Land. Only He can help us to cross over.

So, this morning, as we are in the beginning, on the seventh day of a new year, we will look at one those fundamental spiritual principles from the Word of God because we will fifty-one weeks left if you really, successful want to cross over from one year into another year, to move into more of what promises His children. So, we will turn to their second beginning. We will turn to *Joshua 3* and read the first seven verse.

Joshua 3:1-7

¹ Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove[a] and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over. ² So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; ³ and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. ⁴ Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before." ⁵ And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." ⁶ Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. ⁷ And the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

So, let's go to verse one. Let's look at especially young ones, all the young ones, lot of young ones. If you really want to do something with your life, learn fundamental scriptural principles. Joshua rose early in the morning. That is the first thing. Whatever you have decided to do, do it early. Don't delay. Procrastination; meaning – delaying is a scourge in the Kingdom and in the world. It's called the Mexican spirit which is never do anything today which you can do tomorrow. The only thing they will do today is cross, across the American border, nothing else. Joshua rose early in the morning and you will see Jesus' life He always rose early in the morning. Now, we are in one time zone but we work in different time zones. Some are on British timings, some are on American. So, whichever it is, whatever is early for you, according to you but begin early, don't delay. Now, I'm coming into spiritual things but principles are same. Don't delay doing the things that you need to do, especially spiritual things. You can delay other things. It may not harm you so much but if you delay spiritual things, because we don't sense it, but they actually cause you much more greater harm than other things. Keep your goals very, very clear but God's way not man's way. God's way not man's way. What is God's way? We have to learn now. That is what the mind of Christ is about. We have to learn to see things from God's perspective. How does God see? How does God want me to see? God says, "My ways are higher than your ways. My thoughts are higher than your thoughts," and yet, in the New Covenant, God says, *He has given us the mind of Christ Jesus* and He says, "By the hearing of the Word, let your mind be constantly renewed," so that we learn to see things God's way. In *1 Thessalonians 5:23*, Scripture says,

1 Thessalonians 5:23

²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is God's order. We have heard it before but we have to hear it again. When God sees, He doesn't see us body first. He sees us spirit first. He sees a soul and sees the body. When you and I look in the mirror, we see the body first. That's why everybody is looking beautiful, handsome, well-dressed because we saw body first, soul, and very rarely, we see our spirit. But God sees us spirit, soul and body. So. When you set your goals, Scripture says, physical exercise is good but spiritual exercise is better. That's why those who are body first will rise up early in the morning and they will go jogging. Those who are soul first will wake up early in the morning and read the newspaper. But Jesus will wake up early in the morning and go into the closet to pray because He's got His perspective very clear. Get perspective very clear – spirit first, soul second, body third and early. Meaning – stop just talking about it; start doing it. Because there are so many in the world physically fit, mentally smart and spiritually blind and with all their fitness and intellectual ability, if they die that way, they go straight to hell where neither their strength, not that ability will be used. So, remember – soul doesn't come first; neither does the body come first; it is the spirit that comes first and spiritual blindness is an incredibly tragic thing. Some people will say, "Look at me, I'm so fit." But they are not able to see the blindness of their soul. Some people are so incredibly well-read but they don't see their heart. See, unless spiritually our eyes are open, we can never really examine ourselves. When God asks us to constantly examine ourselves. How do we examine ourselves spiritually? Because the Scripture says, the only person who is not judged, Scripture says the only person who is not judged is, the spiritual man.

1 Corinthians 2:15

¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

The only set of people who will come through judgment without judgment are those who are spiritual. The reasonable ones will be judged because they could not judge themselves because one faculty was shut. The physically fit ones also will be judged because the other spiritual faculty was shut. The spiritual faculty has to be open. That's where God comes in. And the Spirit speaks to the spirit. Spirit doesn't talk to the soul; the Spirit speaks to the spirit and the soul digests it. The Spirit doesn't speak to the soul; the Spirit speaks to the spirit. When we are soulish, we are constantly judging others and we think our judgment is right, when our judgment could be absolutely wrong. Let me tell you; okay, Peter, since you are sitting in the front. He's a good kid. He's a very quiet, calm kid but for an example, let's say in 2017, he messed up big time, really big time. Name the sins – he did it all, but nobody saw him on 31st night him crying out to the Lord, broken in his closet. Nobody saw, God saw, God heard, God restored Him, God cleansed him. On first, ten people are judging Peter. "Do you know Peter? Peter Anna, do you know?" Everything they say is false because God has pressed the delete button. It's not there. God says, "What are you talking about? I don't see. It's not there." That's why God says, "Beware of judging." Because only God knows. Nobody else knows. Nobody knows. No one knows. Paul says, "When I judge myself, I ultimately leave it to God because I myself don't know about myself. Only God knows." So, be very careful in these things. That is why we need to ask God for more and more spiritual things.

If you were there yesterday, you would have heard about spiritual matters – how the Kingdom of God is incredibly real. Actually, to the spiritual man, the Kingdom of God is more real than the spiritual world. It's tangible. We don't see the things of the Kingdom of God as tangible. Tangible things are things which you can sense. You don't sense with your hands or your senses; you sense it with your spirit. Jesus says, "When you go to a house, what are you supposed to say? Peace be upon you." Now, everybody cannot say that. Only the ones who have experienced the peace of God as a tangible thing can say it. When they say it, if the other person knows the peace of God, has made peace with God, it will go to him. If it doesn't, it will return back to him. He knows it's time to get out of his house. Things of God are tangible. The Kingdom of God is real, as real as the kingdom of this world is. That's why Jesus told Nicodemus, "You are intellectually fantastic but spiritually blind. Unless you are born again, you will not see. You will not enter into the Kingdom of God." So, that's a beginning. What we are talking about there is a growth in it. Incredible growth in it where you can end up like Elijah and Elisha and Jesus and all the Old and the New Testament saints – Philip, Peter. You have to look at it and say, "That's real. I want to reach there." That's what Elisha asks. He followed. Followed. Followed. Followed Elijah. How many times? We don't know. Then, finally, when he crossed river Jordan, he asks, "What do you seek?" "A double portion of your anointing." He says, "I'm not the one that gives it. I cannot guarantee it. But I will tell you one thing. If you see how I'm being taken, everybody here knows that I'm going today, all the sons of the prophets know that I'm going today. But nobody is going to

Cross Over!

see how I'm going. If you see how I'm going, that means you're ready for that anointing. That's not an ordinary anointing." And Scripture says, "Chariots of fire came." Nobody saw. Only Elisha saw. He saw the chariots of fire come and take Elijah. And his eyes opened.

Yesterday, I was telling them – "Elijah went." Only one thing fell down. What fell? The mantle fell. You know when that mantle was put on him? Years and years ago. Maybe twelve or thirteen years ago when he was a young man ploughing his father's field, Elijah had come and put the mantle. He was called. He was chosen that day. Because he single-mindedly, without losing his focus, walked with this man. He said, "This is what I'm looking for. I want your spirit, and a double portion of it." Even in this world, people who really succeed are those who single-minded in their pursuit. God says, "Be single-minded in your pursuit of the things of God, because it is real." It is real. Be single-minded in your spiritual things. Put the spirit first.

Matthew 6:33

³³ ***But seek first the kingdom of God*** (Why the Kingdom of God and His righteousness? The Kingdom of God represents His power and authority and righteousness represents how He does things. First, I need power.) ***and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***

I don't seek (all these things) this first. I seek this (kingdom and righteousness) first. Because if I seek this (things), I will be desperate, I will be depressed, because no one can keep this. Because to keep this, I need this. Who can keep the righteousness of God? No man. But if you have the power of God, you have the righteousness of God. So, God says, "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.*" The Kingdom of God is not a matter of power. He says, "Seek." That's why He told His disciples after three and a half years, "Wait until you have received power and grow in that power." And you will grow in righteousness. The focus is very clear. He says, "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things*, whatever you need in life," God knows what we need in life. We need food. We need water. We need clothing. We need transportation. We need jobs. We need all these things. But God says, "Put your order right. You put your order right, this will never be a struggle. Never be a struggle. It will come because you got your perspective right." If this is not right, this will be a struggle or if it is not a struggle, you'll be tight fisted, because you'll still learn in fear or mammon will bind you.

Like I told yesterday, money is money, but God called it 'mammon'; meaning – it's a spirit attached to it. It binds you. The rich young ruler was bound by that spirit. So, when Jesus said, "Leave and follow Me," he refused. Mammon pulled him out. These are spirits. These are tangible things in the kingdom. Zacchaeus could break loose from the spirit of mammon, and Jesus said, "Salvation has come." But the rich young ruler who kept all the commandments of God was pulled away by the spirit of mammon and turned his back to the Saviour. These are real things. Go back and listen. You might get a little scared, but listen to the second half of yesterday's message. The Kingdom of God and kingdom of darkness is not like what we think; these are all there, here. So, focus. Focus. "Lord, let me get the spiritual things right because if I don't get my spiritual things right, I could really, really mess up on Judgment Day." We hear children asking for prayer, because tomorrow is exam. Judgment day. See, you need to realize mercy is received here. Not on that day. On that day, there's only judgment. There's no mercy that day. Mercy is received here. Let me put perspective. We're putting perspective. We're putting spiritual perspective, spiritual things first. Look at what God says in *Hebrews 12:15*, which I was sharing with the pastors yesterday.

Hebrews 12:15

¹⁵ ***looking carefully...***

Where are you looking? Looking at yourself. When you're looking in the mirror, you should not look in the mirror like a man looks in the mirror. You should look the way a woman looks in the mirror. When a man looks in the mirror, even when his belly is hanging till his knees, he pulls it up and says "Six packs." When the woman looks in the mirror, she sees, one little dot, it's a calamity. You should learn to examine yourself like a woman looks in the mirror.

¹⁵ ***looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God;***

How are you saved? What saves you? You are saved by grace. How do you fall short of the grace of God? What saves you? You're saved by grace. How do you fall short of grace?

...lest any root of bitterness springing up(not only has it come, you start passing that bitterness into the lives of others. Thereby, you) ***cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;***

Examine the spiritual – am I bitter? Am I unforgiving? Am I angry? Am I? 2017 is another story. 2018, seven days into it. How am I? Because one thing after Adam, after the fall, common is disappointments.

I told the pastors yesterday, in life, betrayal is part of life. You'll always feel betrayed. "That one betrayed me." "My wife betrayed me." "My children betrayed me." "My grandchildren betrayed me." "My manager betrayed me." "Everybody betrayed me." Welcome to the world! Jesus was betrayed by everybody. If the Master was betrayed, servants also will be. David was betrayed. Jesus was betrayed. But listen carefully – betrayal is what others do to you. Betrayal is what others do to you, or you do to others. Bitterness is what you do to yourself. Betrayal is what others do to you or what you do to others. But bitterness is what you do to yourself. You cannot guard against betrayal. You cannot guard against betrayal, but you can guard against bitterness. You can guard against unforgiveness. You can guard against the things of the spirit that matter to God. *2 Corinthians 7:1*, Scripture says,

2 Corinthians 7:1

¹Therefore, having these promises, beloved, (We have all these promises of God. Why don't they come to pass? Where is the block? Not in the body) ***let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*** (filthiness of the spirit!), ***perfecting*** (what?) ***holiness in the fear of God.***

Cleanse your spirit. God says, "Watch out! These are the real issues of life." God is there for His children. God wants to break through for all His children. But He says, "I'm not able to breakthrough for you because I have to start with your spirit, because I am a spirit. And I'm holy. And your spirit is filthy. Get rid of those things," He says. You can be fit, incredibly disciplined in your body, in your eating habits, waking habits, study habits, working habits, incredibly disciplined, very good for your company. You could be incredibly, intellectually incredibly smart. But nobody sees your spirit. Let me give you examples from the Bible. You are familiar. Most people are not, but you are.

2 Samuel 17:23

²³Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself...

He hung himself. But listen to this – he put his household in order. This is a discipline which he had inculcated over the years. In his body, in his mind, he has order. So even when he's taken over by the spirit of death, the spirit of suicide, and the spirit is absolutely messed up. The other two functions;

...Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb.

So, did the discipline in the body and the discipline in the soul ultimately matter? Didn't matter. We need discipline. We need to wake up early in the morning. We need to do our things all in proper order. You will save a lot of time. You will succeed in life. Everything, but if our spirit is not surrender, if our spirit has not been surrendered to God and the cleansing daily by the spirit by the word, this could be an end. He had order. We all need to have order. Much of the chaos is because people don't have order in their lives. That's why there is so much disorder in the society. If people had order in their physical lives, there would be so much order in the society. We need order. But along with order with the body and with the soul, you need to be very careful about your spirit.

Let's look at another man. The man Jesus Christ. Jesus was betrayed by everybody. Look here.

John 13:26-27

²⁶Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. ²⁷Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

Now listen; I've told it before. I've told it to the pastors also. This is no mantra or magic. This communion table is not magic. It's real. It's incredibly powerful one way or the other. If our heart and our spirit is not right, it doesn't matter who is breaking the bread, it can be Jesus himself who is breaks the bread, and the devil enters you. The first communion! Not the first Catholic communion, the first communion. Who broke the bread? Jesus. Dipped in the wine. Result? God said, "You didn't examine yourself. You had three and a half years, walking with Me, hearing My word, listening to My word, ministering in My power, you know what the Kingdom is. You didn't examine yourself. Since you're planning to betray Me, the original betrayer will come into you; what you do, do quickly." He went. He betrayed Jesus. Now, in *Matthew 26*, we will see after that what happens.

Matthew 26:47-50

⁴⁷ And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people.⁴⁸ Now His betrayer (Now what is he called? He's taken it and gone and betrayed.) had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him." (What happens?) ⁴⁹ Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?"...

Is there any bitterness in His heart? A little before, eleven were left. He told the eleven, "I call you no longer servants; I call you friends, because everything the Father taught Me, I revealed it to you. So, I call you My friends."

...Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.

Though he was not in that group, He included him in that group, because, "I have taught you everything I know." He's still a friend. No bitterness. Betrayal is something others do to you or you do to others. Bitterness is something you do to yourself. Scripture says, "Guard your heart." What I'm saying is, the Church is full of broken people – orphans, single mothers, single parents. Guard your hearts. We're not calling black white or white, black, but we're saying, "Guard your heart." We need to have order in our body the way we function. We need to have order in our mind and how our soul functions. But we need to have order in our spirit too. Spiritual discipline.

Then, let's look at the next portion. *John 20*, this is third day after the betrayal. He's risen.

John 20:6-7

⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there,⁷ and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.

Who is this talking about it? Jesus' dead body had been brought. They have put all those herbs, embalmed His body with strips of cloth and they put it in that tomb and He rose. When He rose, He bodily rose. And the strips of cloth are lying there. And there's a headpiece. Jesus is also a man of incredible order. So, even in His resurrection before He leaves, He folds the handkerchief, keeps it there and goes. Ahithophel had order. Jesus also had order. One went down. One went to His Father's presence. We need order. That's a discipline which we never forget. This comes, automatically, when you practice over and over and over. These things come automatically. You don't have to think about it. These things will always help you. Even when you're resurrected and you're in your new body, you'll still fold your handkerchief. But what matters is – do we have discipline in our spirit? Our order, our discipline, our intellectual capacity, none of these will make any difference if our spirit is contaminated. Therefore, examine yourself not before a mirror; it's before This (Bible). God says, "My Word is a mirror and the one who points out is the Spirit of God and if you are honest, He will show you." Understand this. To examine yourself, it takes great humility. And in the Kingdom of God, the greatest virtue is humility. God does not humiliate us or shame us. Scripture says that anyone who calls upon the Name of Jesus will not be put to shame. He does not humiliate us. But He tries to humble us. They are not the same. Why does God try to humble us? Because He is humble. Ahithophel is proud and intellectual; Jesus is humble and wise. Never forget *Isaiah 57:15*,

Isaiah 57:15

¹⁵ For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

What is contrite? Somebody who is broken over his sin. That is contrition. Godly sorrow leads to repentance and salvation. Somebody who is broken. Everybody is a sinner. Those who is broken over the sin that is called contrite. One who is contrite and who has a humble spirit. He says, "I live with them." That's why God wants us to make humble because He can live with us. Because on the 31st December, we received the promise about abiding in Him. God can only speak to the humble. So, this year, don't delay. "Lord, I want to hear from You. I want to hear every day from You." Not only does God speak to the humble, He hears from the humble just like that. Look at the difference. *2 Samuel 16:23*. Who is this? Ahithophel.

2 Samuel 16:23

²³ Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

Ahithophel is an incredibly wise man. You listen to him; his wisdom was like from heaven. It was like an oracle of God. But he is using that wisdom because of the filthiness of the spirit to go against David. David is not an intellectual. Solomon is an incredibly intellectual, learned man. David is a simple guy. His background is a shepherd. What he has is the wisdom of God. He is not intellectual at all. But he is a humble, contrite man. Then, someone told David saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." David immediately knew this is trouble. Why? This guy is smart. Really smart. He has got brains. He knows how to mess your life up. What does this humble man do? One simple prayer – "Lord, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness." He knew how network works that everything has to come through the satellite. So, he said, "Lord, when he is seeking, let the satellite give no signal." Simple man, very simple man! He said, "I pray turn the counsel of Ahithophel to foolishness." God answered his prayer and David is alive and Ahithophel is dead. One prayer! Did you see how God's Kingdom works? That's how it works. That's what God is talking about. See, reading without God touching your spirit is pointless. Only thing you cultivate is a discipline of reading. Reading is good. Reading is a good discipline. But here is a man with whom God dwelt. What is this man? God says, "He is contrite and he is humble."

Let me do a simple quiz for young people. Let me see how many of you know this. Vijay is not allowed to speak. Have you heard about somebody called Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, Ahinoam and when I come to sixth one, you will know – Abigail, Bathsheba? These are all David's wives! He had seven wives, many concubines, nineteen sons and one daughter. This is the guy who really messed up his life up. You want to talk about a mess in his life. This is the guy who really messed his life. But God saw his contrition, God saw his humility and wiped it all clean. If you look into the Bible the big names, Abraham – you take the Bible; count the name of Abraham – two hundred and thirty-four times, it is mentioned in the Bible 'The father of believers'. The great lawgiver, Moses, if you take the Bible, Moses is mentioned seven hundred and seventeen times. You take David; David is mentioned nine hundred and eighty-nine times, all the way till *Revelation*. And Jesus, till the end, will be called 'the Son of David' and His throne will be called Throne of David. Why? Because he had a contrite and a humble heart, he put his spirit first. That's what God is talking about. You really seriously desire God and not religion, put your focus first on spirit. Humble yourself. Are you getting the picture?

1 Peter 5:6

⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

When He lifts you, He lifts you up to Himself. Like I said, He doesn't humiliate you. God doesn't humiliate you; God covers you. People will humiliate you. When people talk, they only talk about the bad things of your past. When God talks to the humble and the contrite, He only took the stocks of the good things of you. What all things did David do? After David, you read God's history, He always says, "My servant, David. Nobody was like My servant David. Nobody's heart was like My servant, David." He talks only the good things of David, because he saw his heart and said, "Your past is wiped out. It doesn't exist." There is a difference between God's conversation about His children and our conversation about others. He never talks, He never gives any testimony about David, and all the testimonies he talks about David are excellent testimony. You go through the Bible, any king comes He will say, "Yeah, he is good but he is not like David." In our language, God is saying, "David was too good." But if you know his history and how God looks at people, He never looks at the quantum of our sin. Looks at the quantum of our contrition, the humility of our heart. God says,

⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

God lifted this man.

Like I said, in the Old Testament, there is hardly any man who is mentioned by God more than David. Because there is no other man who humbled himself more than David. Are you getting the picture? Now, we got seven wives of David and their names. Everybody knows. I didn't tell you all the names. The other one called Michal. Second daughter of King Saul. So, it was not seven; he had eight wives or more; he is still counting his wives. If you look at all his wives and if you pick one, who should be the most bitter among them? It has to be Bathsheba. Unlike all the others. All the other women were single women or widows. Bathsheba was a married woman and her husband was an excellent man and she loved him. The king forcibly took her; got her pregnant, got her husband killed and then, married her. When her husband died, the Scripture says that she mourned for thirty days. Anybody could have been mad and bitter. Because she had no power to disobey the command of the king. She could have appealed to his righteous nature but I don't know why she didn't do it, whatever. Bathsheba should have been the most bitter woman in that family but surprisingly, she is not. Betrayal is something others do to you; Bitterness is something that you do to yourself.

Proverbs 31:1

¹The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him:

Proverbs 31 is the final Proverb. It is an incredible Proverb. The first 8 verses, the mother will tell the son about the three fundamental principles about life, "You keep these," which he didn't keep, "if you keep, you will be successful" and after that, it tells what an ideal woman should be, which they believe he wrote. Who is King Lemuel? King Solomon. Who is his mother? Bathsheba. That is one mother who never talked to her son about the failings and the mistakes of his father. She never spoke ill about his father – one word. So, this young man grew up unlike the other sons always honouring his father. The day came for God to pick a king for throne of David, He picks Solomon. The day came when God had to pick a man to build a temple for him first; He picked Solomon. When Solomon dedicates the temple he says, "My God, my father, my God, my father." Why? Because one woman refused to be bitter. It's not what life does to you. It's what you do to yourself that matters. I am telling you too. Maybe, you were abandoned by your parents but God said, "I am the father to the orphans." Maybe, you are abandoned by your spouse but God says, "I am husband to the widows." You shouldn't have to be bitter; betrayal is what they did to you. Bitterness is what you do to yourself. You don't have to be bitter; you don't have to be unforgiving. Let it go, pass on, move on with God because there is only one way you can move on. You can move on with people in different ways but only one way to move on with God, your spirit have to be clear. With the world, if you are intellectual and you show off you are intellectual, you will have the company of intellectuals. If you are fit, then you will have the company of fit but with God, these things don't matter. The only thing that matters is do you have a contrite and a humble spirit. God says, "I am with you and I am with you all the way. It doesn't matter how history judges you, I judge you differently."

Think about David. 2017 December, he is all over the news, 'Jerusalem shall be called the city, Capital of David.' How many thousands of years later? It's still all over the news still how many years later. They call it Jerusalem DC. Washington DC to Jerusalem DC – David's capital. What a man! Does he have a good resume in man's eye? No. Does he have a good resume in God's eye? God says, "Yes, excellent. All are sinners but most are not contrite. That man is contrite that man is humble. Therefore, I speak to him." So, focus. Get rid of the filthiness of the spirit if you want to grow close to God this year. Get rid of pride, get rid of bitterness, get rid of jealousy, get rid of all these things that mess up, clog your spirit where you are not able to see the Kingdom of God. Make your priorities very clear early in 2018 make it very clear. Don't delay. Many have delayed in things that have really important. They delay. God says, "Don't delay. Do these things early."

Go back to,

Joshua 3:3

³and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it."

This is the new beginning. The Ark of the Covenant. These people are told something –

...“When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.

Now, we know forty years earlier, Moses had prayed a prayer. In *Exodus 33*, when he prayed this prayer, this was God’s answer to that prayer. God is very pleased with his prayer. God is not pleased with all prayers He is just answers because when our children asks, we just give them that doesn’t mean that we are pleased with their prayers. But with some prayers, we are very pleased. Father is incredibly pleased with his prayer. He says, “I want to know You. I want know Your ways.” God’s answer –

Exodus 33:14-17

¹⁴ And He said, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” ¹⁵ Then he said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in

He says, “Promised Land and all are fine but if You are not coming with us, I am not going. I will stick in the desert where You are.” Some of you young people need to say that to Lord, “Lord, I am waiting for a break-through in my life. I want a better job, I want to move.” But you need to say first, “God, if you are not going, I am not going. I will stick to the job I have. This is where You want me; this is where You will be with me, and this is where I will stay because for me Your presence is bigger than a job. It’s Your presence that I sought.”

¹⁶ For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth.” ¹⁷ So the LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”

Moses asks, “How will the people in the world will know that You are with us? What is the mark? We all look the same. Most of them are smarter than us. But how do they know that we are different?” Because Your presence is with us. Or rather, God’s presence has to be with us. We have to create conditions where by which it’s no longer about we abiding with Him because now, we are the house, it’s about Him. Abiding with us. He says, “*I know you by name.*” He says, “I listen to your prayer. *I know you by name.*” God knows you by name but that’s not what He means. He says, “*I know you by name, I know you. I know all those people who listen to your prayer. I know. I know all those people who have actually come to seeking Me.*” Some people have come because they like fellowship, some people have come because they like listening to Pastor James, some people have come because they want God. God says, “I know them by name.”

We heard it often. We have to hear these things again and again. He walks through Jericho; thousands and hundreds of people. Massive crowd and He sees one man – Zacchaeus. Why? He is only one who is seeking the presence of God there. The others have come to see the spectacle but he is desperate for one glimpse of Jesus. Jesus said, “I see you. Come down. Stop. I’m taking a break of journey. I’m coming to your house. I see you are so desperate to see Me. You can come down and see Me at close. I’ll come to your house. Give Me a meal. You are seeking My presence. I know you by name. Zacchaeus, come down.” So, God said, “One way people will know that you are My people – My presence will go with you, and because you are all so physical and not just spiritual, I will give you a symbol of My presence. The symbol that My presence is with you and on which My presence will be is – I will give what is called the ark of the covenant, the ark of the testimony.” That’s what Joshua is telling. “The ark moves. Watch it. Move along with it.” Meaning – wherever you go into this place, move along as the presence of God directs you. He gave them a visible symbol. What was that it was the ark of the covenant? Until the New Covenant is opened and we read from the writer of Hebrews, we don’t see the secret of what is there in the ark. We know bits and parts from the Old Testament, but the writer of *Hebrews* will say in *Hebrews 9:4*,

Hebrews 9:4

⁴ which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;

Order is reverse. Actually, if you look into it, the tablets of the covenant were put first. Then, Aaron’s rod that budded must have gone and manna have been third, but God doesn’t put order according to history; He puts according to spiritual reality. The golden pot of manna is Jesus Christ, the bread that came from heaven. The rod that budded is the power of Holy Spirit. The wooden dead stick was kept over there by morning when they came the rod had budded and blossomed,

Cross Over!

these were all dead sticks but when the Holy Spirit came upon us, we had life, but how did life come first? First, we received the Word. Upon the Word came the Spirit and then, He wrote His law in the tablets of our heart – that is God’s order – the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, but when the work of God happens in the life of a believer, it happens with the Son, Spirit and the Father. We see – this is what they were carrying the presence of the Triune God wherever they went and God said, “You are moving into a new year. Keep your eyes clear. Follow His presence. Seek the presence of God. Actively deal with those things that block the presence of God. Presence of God is something which is very real. When we know these things are real, peace and joy and love and all these things are tangible in the Kingdom of God. If it is not tangible to your spirit, when your back is broken and your legs are locked up in stock and you are thrown in the midnight hour into the prison, Paul and Silas no song will come. All you feel is pain on your body and anger in your soul, because your spirit is closed. When your spirit is open, what you feel is the peace, the joy and the love of God, automatic response of the soul and the body is to break forth into praise, because the Kingdom of God is real. It's not up here; it's real and God is calling a set of people saying, “If you desire Me, if you really desire Me, get rid of things that block Me. I want to come to you. I am standing at the door of your heart and knocking. You open it. I won’t break it down. I won’t push it open. You open it. You keep cleansing your life. You keep growing in the Word. You will see clearly, more clearly as each day passes by.” Do the things that block the presence of God. Get rid of it.

Second – *Hebrews 12:14*. Proactively seek the presence of God. You have to do two things; one – get rid of things that block God; two – seek after the things that bring God.

Hebrews 12:14

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness...

Peace with people. One of the best ways to pursue peace with people is; shall I give you little advice from, compared to you, an aged man? Talk less. You will have peace with everybody. That’s why Scripture says, “Quick to listen, slow to speak.” Talk less. Peace. Because peace is gained or lost through words. Pursue peace. Husbands here, pursue peace. Wives here, pursue peace. With all men. And pursue holiness,

...without which no one will see the Lord:

No one. God says, “Pursue peace with all men and holiness with God; the work of the Cross begins in your life.” You will see and experience God more and more as each day passes by. Pursue. One – put away the things that block; two – be proactive in your seeking God, of how you seek God. Be passionate about God and things that matter to Him in 2018. Things that matter to Him; not matter to us. Matter to Him in 2018. For God, the things that matter are the things of the Spirit. Not those things. Those things, He can answer them just like that. That’s why He is telling Martha, “Martha, Martha, didn’t you hear how many I fed with five loaves of bread. How many? Five thousand men, women and children and you are worrying about cooking when I’m sitting in your house? Martha, and you are upset with your sister because she is sitting at My feet? Don’t you see My Father is interested in spiritual things first?” I always used to say in the old days, when I used to take Bible studies in the homes in different countries, different states; when I used to go, I used to tell them, “When I coming there for the Bible study in the evening, don’t sit in the kitchen and do tang-tang-tang. I’m not coming to eat. You feed me, I’m okay but when I sit down to teach, please let the whole household be there. Even if you give a little rice and dal, I’m fine. If you don’t give me also, I’m fine. I haven’t come to eat; I have come to teach.” The problem is – when people call Pastors home, they are busy making a spread without realizing that the Pastor has already eaten and come. We have nothing to give except the Word of God. We are not coming to fill our appetites. Jesus is telling that to Martha, “Martha, Martha, relax.” All these things, God can add like this. It’s not a big thing for Him. The One who created everything by the power of His Word, can’t He create things? Of course, He can. It’s not a big thing for God but what is important to Him are the spiritual things because He is raising up a set of worshippers, in these last days, who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Worship is life. It is not singing in the beginning of a Service. It’s life. That’s what God is talking about. Be passionate. Be really passionate. Seek God.

Today, we sang that song – ‘The River of God’, on the river flowing. Did we sing that song? What is that river? Musi? Hyderabad had two rivers – one dried up and disappeared. Only one is left. What was the other river’s name? Do you know your Hyderabad’s history? I’m not a Hyderabad. I’m from Kerala. Do you know Hyderabad’s history? It had two rivers. One was Musi, the other was Yesi. One was named after Moses; the other was named after Jesus. Yesi and Musi – two rivers.

Cross Over!

One dried. Yesi is still there. Biblical characters living in that city, we don't know. Read Hyderabad's history. When I was an editor with Longman, I edited one of the history books of Hyderabad. That's how I know all the details. So, we are living but that river is not what the Bible is talking about. The Bible is talking about the river of the Holy Spirit. When you seek God, God seeks you and what is the result? Ezekiel talks about what happens. Last year's promise – rivers of living water will flow. So, is that a physical river or is it a spiritual river? It's a spiritual river. That means you know, in the *Book of Genesis*, Scripture says, "From Eden, a river flowed, it split into four and went in four directions." From heaven, the Spirit's river flows and flows through the bellies of men and women around the world. It's a river of life. It's spiritual. It is not physical. If it's physical, it's not possible. This is spiritual. There is a river that flows from the very Throne of Heaven, pours into the lives of people and pours out for them and it touches the lives of others. And what does Scripture say?

Ezekiel 47:9

⁹ And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live...

It will flow from many bellies. Wherever those people go, people will live. They will bring life because what is flowing from them is the very life of God. What happens?

...There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.

Wherever the river of God flows, there will be life and there will be healing in the lives of people. The problem is – sometimes, the river can go and it doesn't flow anymore. It becomes, what we say in English, a swamp or a marsh.

Ezekiel 47:11

¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt.

If you stop the river of God's Spirit flowing in your life, it will be given over to salt. It will not flow. He says, "I have given you My Spirit so that it shall flow from you continuously. Don't block My Spirit. Allow Him to flow." Otherwise, it will be given over to salt. It will corrode. It will go. Nobody will dwell there. Fishes will die over there. People around also will die. Is that your life – people around you are dying? You are a child of God but you go to your office, all around you are dying. They get angrier, more bitter, more miserable because you are bitter because you have blocked the life of God. No, that's not our destiny. Our destiny is to allow the life of God to flow. Bring the presence of God wherever you go. That was last year. This year, God says, "Seek Me even more." Last year's promise hasn't gone away. It will only increase if you attach this year's promise to last year. "I seek You with all my heart." He says, "My river will flow even more." That's what it means to open your lives every day and say, "Lord, I surrender. Use me, O Lord. I am here. I cannot open doors. You can open doors. I am willing to go anywhere and allow Your Spirit to flow. Send me somebody, Lord." Pray that way. Not, "Lord, give me favor with God and with man; by man, I mean that my manager should give me a promotion." No, "My manager should ask me – what is the reason for your hope? Everybody is getting a pink slip. Why are you happy?" "Because my God lives in me." That should be the question they should ask. Everybody was stunned by Joseph. Ultimately, they said, "That Hebrew dude, he has his God with him." Potiphar said, "His God is with him." Prison ward said, "His God is with him." Pharaoh's dream; nobody is able to crack. All the wise men in Egypt weren't able to crack. Suddenly, somebody's memory came back and he said, "There is a Hebrew boy. He can interpret dreams." Why? "His God is with him." Finally, when Pharaoh hears it, his mouth falls open. He says, "You are talking like God only! Who else can take care of this country? After me, you only number two!" Why? Was that the wisdom of the world? Was that the wisdom of the Egyptians? Was that intellectual? It was spiritual. It was absolutely spiritual because this young man, even in those horrible terrible conditions had aligned his spirit to the Spirit of God and God spoke through him. Jesus says, "One day, it will be like that. For all those who have aligned their spirit with My Spirit, I will say 'in this world, after Me, it is you. Rule on My behalf'." They shall reign with Christ a thousand years. It's a promise to everyone but God says, "Seek Me."

So, this year, "Lord, examine me. Show me." Listen to your conversations, young people and older people. Older people, oldest people – everybody. Brother Bhanu has joined me. Now, we have both white hair. I love it. I have company now, finally. God says, "Don't let your life go stale. It's not over." God has much to do through us if we are willing and available. In *Jeremiah 9:23-24*,

Jeremiah 9:23-24

²³ Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; ²⁴ But let him who glories glory in this..."

God says, "You can glory in one thing. Don't glory about anything else." Peter, don't glory about your sinning ability. It's not sinning; sinning ability. Any of the abilities you or I have, God says, "Don't glory about it." It's irrelevant. Any man boasts, any man glories – let him glory in this one thing –

...That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord.

The man who actually knows and understands God is always balanced because he actually knows God. He will balance kindness with judgment. God is kind. God is severe. Consider the severity and the kindness of God. He knows God. That's why he balances. The fellow who doesn't know God and only knows Scripture will say, "God is judging!" There is no mercy. The fellow who doesn't know God will say, "God is merciful. He understands," because he doesn't understand judgment. God says, "The one who knows Me will know how to balance Me because I am both merciful and I judge. I do both." So, if you want to judge preachers, judge them on how they balance the knowledge of God. It's not just grace that came with Jesus Christ; truth also came. It's not just truth that came with Jesus Christ; grace also came. Balance it. Beautifully, balance it. And how do you balance it more and more? The more you know and understand God, you are able to understand and balance that this is what God is. How do you know? Because I know Him. I didn't learn it in Bible college; I learnt it in my closet. That's why. Where did David learn all this? He learnt in this in his prayer. In his brokenness, he learnt who God is. Where did Solomon learn it? From his books. "I searched after knowledge. I searched in the birds, the animals, the reptiles, snakes, scorpions," finally, he became a snake at the end. Never will God mention Solomon after that. If He mentions, He will mention it sarcastically in the New Testament. He will say, "Look at the lilies of the valley. Did you see those simple flowers? Even Solomon, in all his grandeur, wasn't dressed like them. But David, My boy." That's why Scripture says, "Knowledge puffs up." We don't run after knowledge; we run after the knowledge of God. We want to know Him, the Person of God. That's our desire. That is salvation. What is eternal life? Knowing Him is eternal life.

Four little boys were boasting as only little boys can. Those fellows, after Sunday School, were sitting and talking. One fellow said, "My dad knows the Mayor!" Second fellow said, "My dad talks to the Governor." Another fellow boasted, "I think my dad knows the man in the White House. I hear him calling 'Mr. President'." The fourth fellow was the poor Pastor's son. He looked at them and said, "I don't know but I think my dad knows God because I hear him talking to Him every day." If you know somebody, you talk to Him. You don't just pray. You talk to Him. Have you noticed Jesus' prayers? There were prayers and there were conversations. "Dad, I know You always hear Me. Yes, I have checked My heart. There is one thing I looked – nothing blocks Our communication. I always do the things that please You. Therefore, You have never left Me." That's why I said, "Learn from the Master." Rivers of living water. Like I said, people will look at all your mistakes. That's what people will see. *Luke 15:30*. Record of mistakes.

Luke 15:30

³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

He knows his brother's testimony better than him. This fellow is the original brother's keeper in the flesh. "Are you your brother's keeper?" "Yes, I'm keeping the record of all his sins." Who is this? The elder brother. There are many elder brothers floating around in the Churches. They know everything about the younger brother. Look at the other side of the father's testimony.

Luke 15:20

²⁰ "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

Fathers know, one look at the children; they know whether they are faking repentance or are genuine. Parents know their children very well. "This fellow is coming. Fearful." "Will Daddy scold me? Will Daddy take me back?" He is coming with a prepared speech, "Daddy, please. Just as a servant." Daddy sees him and his heart broke. It's not the son who ran; the

father ran. He didn't even let him do anything. He put his arms around him. He fell on his neck and kissed him. He says, "It's all gone." All God is looking for is – "Will you repent and forsake your sin? You are Mine. Nothing else matters." You left the pig pen. You have come back. That's all.

Maybe, you young kids have forgotten this story. Let me tell you this story – there was a young girl, like all young girls. In the US little village town. She wanted the fast life. She had heard, seen; she wanted it. Once, she ran away from her house. She reached one of the big cities. In the big cities, what happens? The smart dudes come in, took her in the car, "Come! We have this Hollywood (blah blah) appointment." The end of the story – she became a prostitute. She has messed up her life. She doesn't know what to do. Her life is messed up. This was her life. But she still could remember her father and mother. So, she, finally, summed up her courage and said, "Dad and Mum, this is your daughter. This is what I have become. I want to come back home but I don't know whether you will forgive me and accept me. I will catch the train tonight. Before reaching the station, the train will pass our house and if you have forgiven me, there is an Oak tree. You know that Oak tree. Please tie a ribbon on it. If I see the ribbon, I know you have forgiven me. I will get off. If it is not there, I will continue and go back." She posted the letter. Not that night. A few days later, she got into the train, heart pounding. "What is going to happen?" The story says, "As the train crossed and reached near the Oak tree, the Oak tree was full of ribbons and her entire family was waiting at the station and said 'Child, just come back home'. We know what you did. It's over. Just come back home." That's our God. That's what God is talking about. Some of our children will come back only that way. I keep telling parents, "They may come back from the pig pen. When they come back from the pig pen, no conditions. Just come back. That's all." That's what grace and truth means. We stand on truth and walk in grace. What it will cost for this generation to come back to God, we don't know. So, we release them into God's hands. "God, You only know what are idols in their hearts. What are they pursuing?" All we can do is – stand there in grace and teach them the truth. Many of you teenagers in 2018 will finish your 12th and make your own decisions and go away. Whatever you have taught and learnt here is going to be tested when you have your freedom and when you go out of this city, out of the protection you had. Then, you start making your decisions. Then, it will show whether you will go to Church or not, whether you will choose, first thing – I need to find a house of God. I need to go find a place. That is when your real decisions are going to be made. It's not now. Now, you are all herded. "Come on Wednesday. Come on Sunday. Come!" A day will come when others won't choose for you. You will have to choose for yourself. And then, if you slip and fall, go down; I always tell Churches, Pastors and parents, let your heart be open like the Father's heart is. That's what salvation is all about. That's what He died for. That's why Jesus said, "I did not come to save the righteous; I came to save the sinners." The righteous had a major issue, "Why do the sinners flock after Him?" He says, "Because I came for them." So, there is conviction; there is contrition when you move towards God. There are both.

Understand God. Know God very clearly. Don't get into religion. God is a real Person. His Spirit is a real Person. His Son is a real Person. When you approach a person, when you approach me, you will know whether you will approach me or not. You know, because I'm a person. You know what Scripture says in *James 4*, about approaching to God? It says,

James 4:8

⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

How do you know He has drawn near to you? He's not a physical Person; He's a spiritual Person. How will you know? Because there is incredible conviction in your heart, saying, "Cleanse your hands." Immediately, the Spirit, like an X-ray, will show the work of your hands that are wrong. He will show your hearts, your motives of your heart; that your mind is double-minded. It will show everything like an X-ray film. Like the doctor looks at you and says, "You got TB." He never knew he had TB. When you approach God, He will show your hands; He will show your mind; He will show your heart. That is conviction. Conviction should lead to contrition because God loves a contrite and a humble heart. "You are that man." Broken, "I am that man." God says, "I love that fellow." He's not only broken, he's humble. Why is he humble? "Because I'm going to tell him something which ordinary men and women will never do. David, I have something to tell you." "Yes, Lord." "I want you to write a Psalm." "O, speak to my soul?" "No, nothing like that." "Encouraging?" "Nothing like that." "Then?" "About what you did. Will you write the Psalm?" "Yes, Lord. No problem." Thus, began *Psalm 51* – "Against You and You alone have I sinned. It's always before You. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." God says, "He is just not contrite; that kid is humble. He will listen to anything that I say." That's why He said, "That man was after My own heart." That's what God is talking about.

⁸ Draw near to God...

How will you know? It's kind of winter now, right, in Hyderabad? If you go outside, all the poor people over there, if you see, all are lit and are sitting near the fire. If you draw near the fire, will you know it? If you draw near to God, you will know.

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...

As soon as you draw near to God, your heart goes tap-tap-tap; everything is being revealed. The work of your hands, the attitude in your heart, the thoughts in your mind – everything is revealed. And then, God says, "This is the natural reaction if you really have sought Me. You will lament, you will mourn, you will weep in your closet." It's got nothing to do with what you did; it's got to do with against Whom you did it. When your little child has done something wrong, when he comes crying, "Mummy," is he worried about what he did or sad that his mummy's upset? That's why God said, "Be like a little child." He doesn't know the magnitude of what he has done; he only knows that, "Mummy said don't do it but now, I've done it. Mummy will get upset!" And if he sees that Mummy is not upset, he is not upset, though the difference means the same. Have you noticed, parents who have small children? So, David is saying, "I'm not looking what I did; I'm looking at Whom I did it against. Against You and You alone. I broke Your heart, Lord. Nobody has ever loved me as You loved me and I have loved nobody as I love You. How could I do this to You?" That is conviction. People in Jerusalem were all religious people who really loved Yahweh. They religiously following the law. Three times a year, they all come for the feast of Pentecost and they were all religious and nice people. Then, Peter stood up and spoke. They were cut to their heart. "This Jesus Christ you have crucified." "What have we done?! For thousands of years, we waited for the Messiah and when the Messiah came, we killed Him! What have we done! O, what have we done!" The repentance was not over their sin; their repentance was over what they had done to God. That's the point. That's what you need to understand. It is about a Person and if we are not moved by that Person, we are not going to be moved by anything.

So, this morning, even as you come to the Communion table, you are coming to a Person. It's a Person who shed His Blood. Don't think intellectually and make this Blood of Jesus into a thing. It is the Blood of Jesus. It's the Body of Jesus. This morning, seek Him. I ask the elders to come, the worship team to come. God is always looking into our hearts. Always. He will remind you of things which we have forgotten. When we approach God only, He will show, "Do you remember?" "No, Lord. I forgot." "Good. I haven't forgotten." It's interesting to go with God because He will remind you things which you have forgotten. You know something which He reminded me a few days back? Do you remember 1991, June 5th? I said, "1991? That's 27 years ago!" He said, "Yes." You know, in 1991, May, I was supposed to go to Delhi. If I had gone to Delhi, you would have never seen me again. I had booked my ticket to go on May 28th to Delhi. I had come back from working two years in Bhutan, pots of money. I've decided that I'm going to Delhi where my best friend is. He was working with the government and we are going to rent an apartment; we are going to work together in Delhi and make our life. That would have been a pig pen. God protected me. Suddenly, in the last week of May, this guy lands up because he's got a proposal. He's come in the Summer season. Railways, everybody understands – he comes and he says, "James, come. I have to see the girl." He said, "I have to go back but I have no ticket." I had booked two tickets. May 28th to Delhi and June 5th to Hyderabad. Two tickets. I said, "I will not cancel it. I will wait." So, I said, "Okay, 28th, I have a ticket. Why don't you go on my ticket?" He took my ticket and he went. I had one ticket left and I came to Hyderabad to do my EFLU entrance. Coming first time to Hyderabad. I came to Hyderabad by train, got off the station, found a hotel, checked into a hotel, went to EFLU, found where EFLU is, came back. You know the first thing I did which I had forgotten? God said, "Do you remember the first thing you did in Hyderabad? You walked down the Railway Station. On the corner, there was a Church – SPG. It was open. It was evening. Nobody was there. One door was open." All I did was walk in, get on my knees and said, "Lord, I don't know what You have brought me here for but here I am." He asked, "Do you remember?" I said, "No." He said, "I remember. That's why you are here." I had forgotten. God doesn't forget. That's what I'm telling young people – you are taught here. You learn here. When you go over, wherever you go, find a house of God; go into that house and tell God, "I am here. I don't know why I'm here. You know why I'm here. Here is my life." Because our lives don't belong to us anymore; it belongs to Him because Scripture says, "We are bought with a price." You surrender. It doesn't matter how many messes you make; there is a God who will take your mess and make it into a message. But surrender.

This morning, 7th day, first Sunday of 2018. Say, "Lord, I'm in Your house. I just surrender my life because You gave Your life for me. I have nothing to give You but my life and I give You my life."

Communion Prayer:

Father, we just thank You, Lord, for Your Son. Thank You, Lord, for Jesus. All we can say now and forever is – thank You, Jesus. I pray, Father, let us not boast of anything but about Christ and the Cross. All our achievements, all that we have, all that we have done is insignificant before what You have done for us. We just want to say, Lord, thank You, for coming, for dying in our place, for rising up, overcoming death, going ahead of us, for preparing a place for us so that we are a people of hope; not only in this life because You are with us but also in the life to come because You are there for us. Thank You, Father. As we partake of these emblems, I pray, it will bring healing. It will open the eyes of our spirit. It will bring strength to continue to walk, seek and walk with You, Lord. thank You, Father. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

As we come to the close, can we have Joshua? God said, "Follow the Ark." Follow His presence. That's what He told Moses, "My presence shall go before Thee." For us, He says, "You shall name Him Emmanuel because He is God with us." He will go with us; He will go before us. He will go with us but with a warning;

Joshua 3:4

⁴ Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure...

Keep a space. Don't get familiar with God. Churches who are very familiar with God actually do not know Him. Keep a distance. Scripture says, "Keep a distance." Follow Him but with reverence. Scripture says, "You are saved. You are being saved. Work out your salvation with fear and with trembling." Keep a distance. We are only in the 7th day of this year. Nobody knows what lies ahead. Does anybody know? Any prophets here? Even prophet will talk about one event. He cannot dictate the next 51 weeks. There is only One who knows and Scripture says,

...Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before."

None of us have gone this way before. Nobody. Not even the devil. Even he doesn't know. He thinks he knows but he doesn't know. There is only One who knows because Scripture says, "He sees the end from the beginning." So, God says, "Keep a distance." Be reverential but follow Him. Seek Him. Follow Him. And then, 2018 doesn't hold fear for us. It doesn't hold. Yes, Scripture says, "Everything that can be shaken," the writer of Hebrews says, "will be shaken." But the people of the Kingdom are not shaken. Why? Because we are being given a Kingdom that cannot be shaken.

You see, in my mobile, there is a compass. The problem is – the compass is very shaky but it doesn't matter how shaky it is, it always points north. And for you, young people, your life may be very shaky but point north always. Because God says in His Scripture; I'm not giving you a specific direction but Scripture says, "His throne is in the north." I don't know why the compass points north but Scripture says, "His compass is in the north." So, even the compass looks at the north. Half of India looks to the east; the rest to the west, waiting for a Green Card; but God's people look to the north. Life may be very shaky. Your life may be very shaky but life should have one direction. It doesn't matter. Shake all your way but shake and keep moving to the north, where He is and He is faithful and He will take care of us. Amen? He is true and He is faithful. Shall we stand? Shall we sing?

Closing Song: My God is Awesome

Closing Prayer:

Father, we just thank You. Awesome God. Awesome Savior. Wonderful Counsellor. Prince of Peace. We declare in Your house and in our lives, the government is on Your shoulders and we just surrender ourselves into Thy hands and we pray and we confess to the increase of Your government, there shall be no end, O Lord. Grow in us. Take complete control, O God. Go with us. Go before us. We just surrender ourselves into Thy hands, O Lord. We do not know what this month, the coming months of this year holds for us but we know Who holds the year for us. And our trust is in You. Our hope is in You, Lord. I speak healing into the Body of Christ. We confess what we sang – by Your stripes, we are healed, O Lord. We receive that healing. We receive that strength. We receive that salvation in increasing measure, God, so that we can go forth wherever we go, Lord. Let Your life flow, Lord. Unrestricted, let it flow, Lord; because wherever that river flows, there will be life, O God. Thank You, Father. Go before us, Lord. Make every crooked path straight. Let Your glory be there, Lord. May You be

Cross Over!

glorified, Lord. By faith, we lift up holy hands and we bless Your Holy Name. Thank You, Father. For Thine is the power, the Kingdom and the glory forever and ever, O Lord. Thank You, Father. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us, Amen.