

# Miracle or Disaster?

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Hallelujah!

This morning we look to the Lord and we look to the Word. We cannot look to the Lord unless we look to the Word first.

Shall We Pray?

*Father, we just come to You Lord in the name of Jesus. We just thank You, we just praise You, we just worship You Lord. Thank You, thank You, thank You. Thank You, Lord. Thank You, You are the Author and the Finisher of our faith. What You have begun in us, You are faithful to finish it. All You ask of us is to believe and surrender to obey. We come to You this morning, we surrender our hearts, our minds, our entire being, Lord. Teach us Father, teach us continuously, teach us to stand in the midst of this evil day. How long will this evil day continue, we do not know, but Your people have to be standing and be found standing when it's all over, until the hour of Your coming, equip us with that Lord. That's the purpose within the ministry of the Church. So speak to us this morning, we surrender this time into Your hands. For in Jesus' name we pray, Amen, amen, amen.*

We have to keep hammering it in, like John the Baptist, the one line message until it becomes our life.

## **2 Corinthians 5: 7**

***<sup>7</sup>For we walk by faith, not by sight.***

Looks like a short little verse in the Bible but it is a verse that will set us free. It is like how you and I walk. What is that our eyes are on? Is it spiritual or the material; eternal or the temporal? You know we are all making big decisions and every decision is based on that. Is it the spiritual first or the material first? If the spiritual is first, we walk by faith. If the material is first, we walk by sight.

Material means what we see and perceive with our physical senses. It's a material-world. The eternal verses the temporal. A lot of things give us temporary results; very fast temporal gains, but in eternity it may make no difference, actually it may end up like you having an entrance exam with negative marking. As long as negative marking is not there you don't really care. In our days, before this generation came, we always thought there's nothing to lose. But when negative marking came in, fear came and it was like 'I'd better leave it alone.'

Please remember, these are not as we see. As long as the focus is on the temporal and the material, since that is the world we live in, people will not see any need for repentance or change. People living in the temporal or the material world get offended by the message that demands change because they don't see the necessity of change, because they always question themselves – 'What is it that needs to be changed? What profit is there for me?' They are not seeing the spiritual nor the eternal. And often the problem is we do not see the difference, we may pray, we may praise or we may preach, all passionately, but the core of it is temporal or material.

I have been to a couple of prosperity meetings, in my young days, you have to see the passion, you have to see the people in the pews jumping and dancing when the preacher talks about money, they literally bounce off their seats and the concluding worship is so passionate; you may pray, you may praise, you may preach all so passionately but if, at the core of it is the temporal world, this material world, it is still false.

So remember, we have been looking at the Kingdom. The whole thing is that we have to bring our focus back, before God can really speak to us and we repent. The focus is back to the Kingdom, King first; our heart for the King and mind is focused on the Kingdom. So, they are two different concepts - Heart to the King, mind to the Kingdom. We are now in 2020, almost 2000 years since Jesus died and rose again, I don't know how many years are left. And one of the signs very clearly mentioned is the falling away in the last days. We are in the last of the last days.

Ok, so now we go to,

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**2 Thessalonians 2:1**

**<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you**

So it's very clear, this is not talking about any particular event, other than the actual coming of Jesus Christ to take the Church.

**2 Thessalonians 2:2-3**

**<sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition**

It is not going to happen until the falling away takes place. Before the son of perdition; before the actual son of perdition is revealed, there has to be a falling away and people have to fall away. They will fall away and then the son of perdition will be revealed. If you look at how he is revealed; when the falling away takes place, how easy it would be for him to be revealed. Turn with me to *Revelation*,

**Revelation 3:14**

**<sup>14</sup> "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, these things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God"**

This is the last Church, the final Church, the seventh Church. Historically, there were seven churches in the time of John, but if you prophetically look at the ages, this is the last age of Philadelphia (one small little Church, God will strengthen) and Laodicea, this is a very large Church.

**Revelation 3:15**

**<sup>15</sup> I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot**

Let's see the first thing; the caution over there. First caution over there is that this church is neither hot nor cold; meaning, they are just luke-warm. They are not passionate about the Kingdom nor the King. This does not mean that they are not hot, but that they are passionate about other things. They are not passionate about the King and Kingdom of God, they are not and you will see.

He says: *I wish you were cold or hot*, and then

**Revelation 3:16**

**<sup>16</sup> So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth**

The first thing we need to look at is when God talks about it, it's not to look at our activities. Activities can fool, we as a church, have so much of activity, especially during this lockdown, but that's irrelevant, activity means nothing. You can be busy through the day and achieve nothing. That's how workers are. There are two ways, if you look at the workers: one is you hire somebody when you are building your own house, you call the laborers and you tell them, "I would pay you everyday" or you get that fellow and you give him a contract and tell him this is how much I will give you, you finish it. If you give him a contract, he will finish it very fast, but if you hire him every day (on a daily wage), he will just make a lot of noise because he wants to stretch it (the time of the project) as far as he can.

Honestly. I have built my house and I know how they work; we know how they work. What I'm telling you is that don't look at activity, God is not looking at activity, God is first looking at our heart - are you passionate about the King? Are you passionate about the Kingdom of God? There's a Person and this Person's mind; the way this Kingdom permeates. And it is to that we are invited and born again. Are you passionate about it? If you are not, you see the falling away takes place because the eyes are on the temporal and the material. You say, *'I am rich, I have become wealthy, I'm in need of nothing, you don't know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.* This is indignant. You don't know your actual spiritual condition, and you do not know what your eternal condition is also going to be.

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### **Revelation 3:18**

***<sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.***

I don't know what the Pastor of Laodicea felt when this letter came to him. John is sending a letter everywhere and a copy will be sent to the Pastor of Laodicea, the indictment.

### **Revelation 3:19-20**

***<sup>19</sup> As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.***

And you will see the fundamental issue with this Church is that they had stopped hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit had just become a doctrine, it's no longer a Person. The Pastor and the Church had stopped listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and the focus had changed from the Person, because when there is the Holy Spirit, his focus is Christ. And his focus on the Kingdom of God had gone but they had a lot of activity, and outwardly if you look they were doing pretty good and that gave them a sense of peace and security, but this is what the Bible is talking about. The Church doesn't realize it, the church has fallen away; it has fallen away completely, it's on the verge of being spat out into the tribulation which is to come.

So that's why we need to be very careful about these things because the norm in the Church, in the Kingdom of God is fire; not to be cold or lukewarm. The problem is we forget, anybody who is on fire for God, we put cold water on them and the older ones will begin with that. When a young one is on fire for God, we will say, "Don't show off! Sit still there!" But we don't realise that in the Kingdom of God the norm is fire. And that is the first indictment to the church in Ephesians - your passion has gone. Where is your passion? Your heart cannot be kept empty; if you are not passionate about Christ, you will be passionate about something else. The heart does not accept a vacuum, you will be passionate about something; that's the nature of the heart. So you will see what is actually happening and the problem is,

### **Judges 2:10**

***<sup>10</sup> When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers :***

Who was this generation? This generation was passionate about God.

***another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.***

The problem here is that every generation has to pass the fire on to the next generation; pass the passion of God onto the next generation. It passed down from Moses to Joshua, but did not pass from Joshua to the next generation; one generation, two generations later, the passion dies and every church becomes a denomination. None of the churches began that way; whether is it Methodist or Lutheran or any of the churches, they began and went through martyrdom and sacrifice and persecution, and the persecution kept the fire burning and then a generation arose, the fire was not passed on and then what happened is that they did not know the Lord. Then, what happens when you don't know the Lord?

### **Judges 2:11**

***<sup>11</sup> Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals;***

So they had different gods, because they are going and serving baals. So we may say that we are not going after different gods, but behind these gods, there are always ideologies, there is power, there are demons. You see you cannot remain neutral; if you are not passionate about the Kingdom of God, you will find a cause for which you will be passionate about. And that's what happened to the Christian world, full of causes, people are on the streets, fighting for causes without realizing that the reason is because you have missed the Kingdom of God and then verse 12 says,

### **Judges 2:12**

***<sup>12</sup> and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger.***

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You see there are stages - you did not pass on the knowledge of God, the passion of God then they started doing evil in the sight of God because they had no knowledge about the ways of God; what is right and what is wrong and they started serving other gods and then they started forsaking. So, ultimately what happens is that in this church there is neither knowledge nor fire for God; neither the passion for God nor the knowledge about the ways of God. See, true knowledge is always replaced by false knowledge. Again, your mind will not be empty. Mind of man was created in the image of God, so the mind of man will always search for knowledge; the heart was created to be passionate. So it will always be passionate about something else.

That is why you have innovation around the world and animals don't innovate at all, whatever idiots who believe in evolution don't understand that animals don't seek anything. The dog has been the same way from the time it was born till today, it doesn't build a home, it doesn't create anything, its passion hasn't been changed, its nature has not been changed, anything you talk about, it is still the same way.

It's simply because of the image of God; they don't have the image of God, we have the image of God. If you look at it in today's context - the heart is passionate about something, because God is passionate about His creation and the mind of God and the ways God functions, the way God thinks. So the man also has that mind, so he is also creative in nature. So if there is no true knowledge, it will be replaced by false knowledge. If it's not true fire for God it will be replaced by profane fire. Any passion for anything that is above and over God is called profane fire and that is what Aaron's sons offered; as a type they offered profane fire and they were consumed. And everybody who is within the Kingdom of God, who is passionate about anything else, other than Christ, will ultimately be consumed by God, they will be consumed because the fire is profane; its profane fire and God says, 'Be careful about these things.'

These are all warnings and in *Revelation 3* what we saw in Laodicea is the tragic sign of the last days' picture because the voice of the Holy Spirit is shut. He's knocking to get into the church while He should be right there behind the pulpit, speaking to the world and the Church; He is the voice, but instead, now He's trying to enter into the Church. So the Church has no voice to the world, have you noticed the Church has no voice to the world.

So how do we go back? We have to go back the way it happened every time a revival took place; we have to go back to God in repentance, surrendering our heart first and our mind. So we have to return back to true faith, we have to approach the Word of God, the spoken and the written, with all our heart. And ask God to show us and make us like Him. You see the entire purpose of God in creation is, "Let Us make man in Our image," and in His image He made us and we fell away. The entire purpose of salvation is to recreate man once again into God's image and it begins with salvation and that is,

### **2 Corinthians 5:17**

***<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.***

So let's look at the image of God

### **2 Corinthians 5:17**

***<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;***

*Jude 1:4* and *Romans 10:17*, we have to balance these two verses, because the verses are used as faith; faith as a system of precepts in which we believe and we live, that faith is actually called truth. And then there is faith which comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God. So both are there and we divided faith; there is the Word of God and then there is the hearing of the Holy Spirit and then it becomes complete when I hear and obey it results in our work. And faith is completed, and the life of God and power of God and Spirit of God flows into that situation.

### **2 Timothy 4:7**

***<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.***

Faith is a battle, a lifelong battle, if there are battles, there are enemies. So we learn about the enemies and we learn about the battle strategies and how to fight this battle and what are the weapons. Second thing, faith is a race; it's a journey, it's a race and if it's a race then we have to ask these questions - what are you running for? Paul makes it clear

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that there are two kinds of crowns, perishable and imperishable. What are you running for? Perishable or imperishable? Second thing he says is - How are you running?

### **2 Timothy 2:5**

***<sup>5</sup> Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.***

So he asks - how are you running? Are you running according to the rules? There are rules in the Kingdom of God. When you are running the race, it's not about finishing the race or finishing first, but what matters is – are you running according to the rules? What are you running for? A temporal or an eternal crown? Are you running according to the rules of the Kingdom? Then another question you have to ask is - how much are you willing to sacrifice to win this race? What price are you willing to pay? Any race in the world, people will check - is it worth it or not? Like 30 young people from Telangana have cleared the civil service and one of the toppers from Telangana is a girl and if you look at her, she is at the IPS academy at the one of the institutes, she cleared the exam for IPS last year and she is still not satisfied, and she cleared the IAS ranking, so she will leave her IPS and go to IAS and if you look at most of the people who have cracked these exams, the rankers who have cleared or who are from IIT Delhi, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Kanpur, you look at them, they cleared IIT and that itself is a headache, then they cleared IPS, still not satisfied. Now they will clear everything and what will they become finally? The peon of a politician, ultimately.

And here is God calling and saying, “Be My sons and daughters and rule with Me through eternity and I'm offering you something which is imperishable, but you have to run according to the rules, no bribing please, no corruption please; integrity, righteousness, all these things factor into race. Faith is a battle, faith is a race.” And then he says,

### **2 Timothy 4:7**

***<sup>7</sup> I kept the faith..***

Meaning, faith also has to have the truth, it is the truth that sets you free. Love does not set you free, it is the love of God that sets us free. Love does not set us free, it is the truth that sets you free. And if you look at any of these concepts, people who are satisfied with any of these spiritual states are fools; the only time when a person can be satisfied is when God says, “You have become like Christ.” That is what we are running for. Before we get into the other side of the message let me give you some examples:

Jesus said, “When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will lead you into all truth,” and that truth is very frightening unless there is surrender and love for the Person. So that's why these two things are important. If you don't love Christ with all your heart and all your mind, all your strength, you will always fear change. Let me say, when our babies were born and we love our babies, sacrifice meant nothing. When the baby had a little bubble in his stomach and started crying, it didn't matter how many hours you walked back and forth, back and forth in the night, all these things didn't matter and nobody expected salary at the end of the day nor a promotion. The simple thing was that you loved that little thing who could not give you anything back. That's why it is said, “The labour of love, the work of faith, patience of hope.” You cannot create these things, all you can do is go before God and say, “Spirit of God help me to love You, Jesus, with all my heart,” and that sacrifice becomes irrelevant.

If you look back in human relationships, you never think it is sacrifice to do things for the people you love, you don't think about it and yet these objects are temporal and when death comes you are separated and will not even know whether they will be with you on the other side or not because God alone knows whether they are saved or not and even when they come to the other side, relationship is different. So everything here is objective and has a timeline and yet we are willing to sacrifice because we see them in the material world and the material world catches us. So God uses all these examples and says, “I have to give you these examples so that you understand spiritual truths.”

So let us look at an example as to how difficult it is to handle truth. And sometimes we are such absolute fools when it comes to truth. Let's look at roles - father, mother, husband, wife, child, employee, employer, everything is included in these seven, I'm just using an example.

Children, don't get offended, if you get offended with the truth, God have mercy on you. It applies to everybody. Let's take our home, our orphanage, we have GSS for boys and GSS for girls, pick any girl from GSS, pick any boy from GSS, and think about the girl from GSS who came from a broken home, violent, abused, suicidal, and the child has been with us for 12-13 years and has grown now, let us say she's 20-22 yrs. And a boy from a similar thing. Imagine the girl gets married

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tomorrow and the boy gets married today, what do they know what a home is like? What do they know what a father is like? What do they know what a mother is like? A husband is like? Do they know what a wife is like? And this is true for everybody, because everybody comes from a dysfunctional home and even if you come from a functional home, and if you look at the Word of God and see the truth of who God is as the Father, who God is as the mother, who God is as a husband, as a wife, as a child, as an employee and as an employer. We realize that everything about us is dysfunctional. Everything is dysfunctional when you don't know the norm; the norm is God the Father. We are very satisfied when we don't know the truth; when we don't know the Father.

How many mugs (saying "the best dad in the world") do you get in this world? Isaac had two, I got so many. The only one who can hold a mug like that is God. Do we see, the problem that is there? People are so content – "Oh! I'm a great mother!" Are you? Did you look into the Word of God, to know who a mother is? Did you learn motherhood from the Bible? The revelation, which God and the Holy Spirit is able to show you. "Oh, I'm a great father!" Have you seen God, the Father, the revelation?

Christ is the Husband of the Church. Have we seen how Christ deals with the Church? Christ is the actual model of the wife to the husband; when He came as Christ and when He was accepted into the headship of His Father into all things, He showed a model in that too. We don't have to look at the female picture; we have to look at the submission-picture; wife, submit yourself in all things to the Lord, as Christ came and submitted Himself to the Father, in all things. He showed us the way. And when we look at all those things, and then we feel so cool and God says, 'You are a fool', because you do not realize that the question paper is given by God and the answer paper is Christ. And we are in the middle, we are caught in the middle and God gave us a Teacher called the Holy Spirit so that the answer tallies.

So this is a continuous process and in the last days, the problem is that the world is an absolute mess because the father is missing; the father, as God-type, is missing; the mother, as God-head, is missing; the child, is missing; the husband is missing; the wife is missing; the employer is missing; the employee is missing and it's an absolute mess, but everybody is happy. So we have father's day, mother's day, (I don't know if we have husband's day) we have women's day, children's day. And everybody is happy, congratulating each other, giving cards to each other, 'What a great husband you are!' 'What a great wife you are!' and God is scratching His head and thinking, 'What is this they are thinking about?'

See, because we are caught in the temporal, when someone says, "Oh! You are such a great father!" You feel good. Jesus never felt good until that day He came out of the water and God said, "I'm pleased with You." What was He pleased with? He said, "I'm pleased with You, I saw You as a Son in Joseph's and Mary's house; as a Brother to the younger siblings; I saw You in Your father's carpentry shop as an employee; I saw You and I'm pleased with You." And that is the only thing that should please us. And people don't realize it.

Homes are all dysfunctional; either alcoholic father or angry mother or a missing father, I mean a lot of children come today from single-parent homes; either the father left, or father died or whatever or automatically when the father is missing, the mother becomes very hard and she has to balance both, she becomes over tough and the children are waiting to run, and they run, and one day they get married and when they get married, they have no clue what a father is or a mother is and they have come through the education system which is all demonic, which is all psychological, human psychology, Freud and Young and all stuff. It's not like the ancient days. In the ancient days, they had so much of truth because the education in the western world was the Bible, a couple of 100 years later, when the reformation or the renaissance took place, the Bible was taken out and was considered old fashion. And other stuff was brought in.

Now our children are brought up with ideologies and everybody talks about rights, nobody talks about responsibilities, because, if a norm for a father is a responsibility, not rights - that's what a Bible teaches. The norm of the mother is responsibility and not rights. The norm of a father is responsibility and not rights, the norm of a wife is responsibility and not rights, the norm of a child is responsibility and not rights. If you look at it, when people come into the church, what they ask is, what are my rights? Why do people leave churches and keep floating about here and there? It is because they are coming with the attitude – 'What can this church do for me?' Instead of – 'What can I do for the church?' "I was not satisfied with the Church."

I thought you came to give and I thought it was more blessed to give than to receive. And if you see, those who understood and became givers it did not matter to which city they went, when they find the church, they are always givers, they are always happy and content.

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And we need to realize, we need to put this truth up and constantly battle the ideas that have gone into our mind. The ideas have come nicely packaged - women's rights, man's rights, children's rights. And when those rights are violated, it's all abuse. Jesus must have worked in His father's carpentry shop from the time He was a Child. In today's age Joseph would have been in prison for abusing Jesus in His youth; He didn't go to school, working, child labour, while the entire ancient world was built on child labour, they laboured with their parents in the field or in the workshop. That's how it was. But today, we have changed the norm, the problem is that we need to see that children are not abused, they are not kidnapped, they are not put into quarry, all that is right, but don't get the idea that when children work it is wrong.

The problem is that you will take this and the devil will put a new wrapping around it and suddenly you will realise that this idea has got in, that it is okay if the child is there, I need to hire a maid to do his room, child should not work, everything should be done for the child. The child will be a protected species. We take one thing and we never learn to balance these things, so the child grows up and always thinks that things need to be done for him/her. This has happened in modern times; the entitlement mentality. You can't speak to these 'protected species', they are always offended, because they have been brought up with ideas of rights alone and they think they are right. And that is the church in Laodicea and the Holy Spirit is out and He cannot talk to them.

Honestly if you look into the Kingdom of God now, in the church today, how many people can you talk to? 1970s research came and it talked about in the 1970's, almost 70% people used to go to the church and past couple of years it has come down to 17% who go regularly to the church and now after the pandemic it has come down to 5% who actually listen online. Don't you think the falling away is taking place? And I also see it spiritually that this online thing which God has forced, listening online is the biggest test for the actual believer because this is personal accountability, will you listen or not? nobody is going to monitor you, nobody is going to supervise you. What are you going to do? And people don't realise that the answer to everything in life; what is happening and what is going to happen, it will only become more and more difficult in the journey of faith and that's why Scripture says - *the last days would be perilous*, for whom? for the believer, not for the others.

All these things, in the evil days, are perilous only for those who are walking with God. It will not be evil and perilous for those who are not walking with God; for them evil is good. A lot of people in the church are not even bothered about what is happening in this country. They are not interested. The oldest democracy in the world - USA and the largest democracy in the world - India, from two different sides - same thing is happening - one thing in the US, the left wing forces are taking over and in India the right wing forces are taking over and at the core they are the same. The right wing in the USA and right wing in India are absolutely different. I'm not talking about right wing crazy, I'm talking about right wing conservatives in US actually believe in freedom, liberty, in everything but here they don't.

I'm just going to ask a simple question. Answer honestly, I have with me, 2 Indians and two non-Indians. Imagine, tomorrow in your mail you get a green card, in your mail (the average human dream) and a cheque of million dollars. (Usually you will get only a green card and no money or vice versa or third, you get neither). Think for a minute, you get a green card and you get a cheque, where will you go in the USA? If you could go anywhere, you have the freedom, wherever you want to go, where will you start? Pastor Vijay said, 'New York,' Sammy, 'New York,' Let me tell you, if you ask me, I will say, if I was given a choice, ministry wise, I will choose a place which nobody will choose; it's cold, windy, sparsely populated. It's called South Dakota. You know why? It is because you have absolute freedom in that state to practice your beliefs. You pay the least, 2%, of government tax, the government does not tax all your money away. You can, practically, have the absolute freedom to bear arms and the freedom of speech and I will choose that over any place in the U.S. Ultimately, you make your choices based on liberty and not on prosperity. New York is the most wicked city in the U.S. Where only evil has liberty, righteousness does not have liberty.

And this is the issue and most people in the U.S. won't go to South Dakota because it is very cold, I can manage the cold, I'll manage the wind too, I'll build a solid concrete structure with the million dollars which won't be blown away. But I will, any day, choose liberty over prosperity. These are the fundamental issues we face but this is what we struggle with; the temporal and the eternal that we choose. I remember my father reading me a story where there was a wolf and there was a fox which came out of the jungle. Since there is no food in the jungle, he comes to a farm house and sees a dog lying there and he is a fat dog. So the dog starts barking and becomes quiet a don't then they both start talking to each other. And the fox says, "It's very difficult in the jungle, there is no food at all. We are all starving and bones are showing." So the dog says, "Oh! Why don't you come and live with me? I'm all fed and given all meals, and it's an easy life." But the fox says, "What do I have to do?" The dog says, "Nothing, just bark a few times if you see danger, that's all is asked," and then the dog suddenly got up and when he got up, the fox saw the collar, leash and tied together and the fox said, "What

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is that?" So the dog says, "Oh! I'm chained, I can't go since I cannot be let loose," the fox said, "I will go back to my jungle and starve, no thank you, I prefer liberty over prosperity."

And people don't realize that liberty is the cry of the Kingdom – *Whom the Son sets free is free indeed*. So what kind of environment will I choose? I will choose an environment where there is absolute freedom to practice my faith. You know, of all states in the U.S. the only state that was not shut down, during this pandemic, was South Dakota. You know why it wasn't shut down? It is because the governor said, "I will not enforce the mask, I will request you, I will encourage you, to wear it, but I will not mandate it, because it's your freedom." Population is sparse but it has one of the least incidences of COVID 19. You have to look at all these things. The left wing in the U.S. will take all your liberties away and the right wing here also will take your liberties away, the genuine right wing that you see, the conservatives, will always give you the freedom to choose because it's a God-given freedom to choose; it cannot be taken away. When we make our decisions, we need to keep this in mind. That's why we struggle with understanding the Kingdom. Pastors struggle.

I don't struggle, I learnt that my job is to take people to Christ and get them to hear from the Holy Spirit and leave them alone and after that however they make their decisions and go away from the church, it doesn't bother me. My job is not to make a set of people follow me and keep them in the church till eternity comes. No! Our job is to only lead people to Christ. They have to learn to hear from the Holy Spirit and when they have learnt to hear from the Holy Spirit, there is absolutely no situation in life you will ever face which you won't be able to handle. A lot of people don't hear because they have been taught in the church to be dependent upon people, especially, the pastor, not on to Christ.

We have these two faiths - one is the precepts, the truth, the ideologies because in the new age we have to really hammer it in, because earlier we didn't have the ideologies. There were hardly any ideologies though they were false prophets and apostles. Whereas today, the children are not coming from a week in the farm or in the carpenter's workshop or the shop or the church, they are all coming from schools and colleges where it is all ideologies and taught to you as education. New educational policy has come. Imagine, in the coming five years, the agenda is very clear, by hook or by crook, we will take over every state government because education is state subject and, in every state, a particular party takes over and the education changes, history changes. If Jesus tarries to come, another 25 years of the same rule, a generation will arise who will not know Gandhi, who will not know Nehru, who will not know our freedom movement; what they sacrificed and fought for; the values and ideals. There will be a new generation which will be completely indoctrinated with a new philosophy of what India is. That's what has happened.

When you go to China, the Chinese student who grows up has no idea of the Chinese history. The Chinese history has been completely changed and taught by Mao as the father of China and this generation has no clue about their history. That's exactly what we read - *a generation who grew up who did not know their God* because history was changed and there are a whole lot of people growing up in the Church who do not know their God. They don't know their Lord, they have been sold to Jesus who is not Jesus; a gospel which is not the Gospel; a set of ideologies which are not the Truth. And everybody is happy – I'm okay, you're okay; you are a good father, a good mother, you are a good husband. Everybody is happy and if somebody is unhappy it's got nothing to do with the Truth, it was because the self was not met.

I was talking to Pastor Vijay about the older generation like our parents and grandparents and all who were Christians; they personally did not know Christ, but they were so much brought up in the Christian culture, ethos, they were more Christian than us – in their action, in their walk, the way they dealt in life, they were so much more Christian than us. A new generation has risen that says we have accepted but have no Christianity in their outworking at all. So there is an actual generational shift that is happening, where an older generation looks at these children and says, "You people sing, you people pray, you are so excited about your meeting but I don't see anything Christian about you." You look at the previous generation, everything about their values are so Christian and we say, 'But you don't sing, and pray and praise like us.' Who is true? We have to bridge these both and say, "You are true in your practice, we are true in Person," and when you get together, you have the actual picture, and you cannot walk away from this. This is the danger and struggle a generation faces and the Church like ours will always face the struggle, because you are competing with the hearts and minds of people to bring them to Christ; from the material to the spiritual; from the temporal to the eternal.

Our entire education system is like that. You know what, the entire purpose of the education system is to pass an exam, get a job and that's all. It's not about values, not about life, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter how many online systems and classes you have, you are all over there and you are learning, but you are learning nothing. And with that same mental attitude after 6 days a week of schooling, eight hours a day, when they come and sit for three hours in the church, how do you expect them to listen? As an exam? True, that's how they take it – pass an exam. You know what, the exam is that



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when I die, I don't want to go to hell, I want to go to Heaven, that's all. And we struggle and Jesus comes in the middle and says, *"I am the Life,"* and says, *"if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father."* 'Show us the Father,' "That is how the Father looks like, this is how He walks, talks, looks, how He works, this is how He is passionate – *to do the will of My Father is food for Me.* That's My passion, My Father says that I need to go to Jerusalem and die, you cannot discourage Me; I'm going to Jerusalem."

This passion, Jesus says, is what life is all about. And our struggle is with this. See as long as our heart is not right, even if you are operating in ministry, you are operating with gifts, and not with life. You know the difference. Example: there's a bonsai apple tree and its in your front room and it's bearing nice fruit, very nice and Christmas season is coming. Imagine you are one of those old-fashioned Christmas people and imagine you have 6 children, think about the Christmas tree, the decoration and the gifts what do you think the children will be excited about? Excited about the Christmas tree, Christmas is over, will keep it till New Year and after that what happens to the tree? It is folded and put away. What happens with the apple tree, it is still bearing fruit. You know this is fake and this is real.

Our minds have been bombarded with the fake and we do not even know how to distinguish between the real and the fake and Jesus comes in. We have changed the image of Jesus. Today, during Christmas time, nowhere in the world, you will see Jesus, you will see Santa Claus and people love Santa Claus because he gives gifts; he never threatens you, never preaches a message, *"Repent for the Kingdom of God is here"*, he never demands change from you. He looks like a nice, little old man with his white beard, forever giving gifts. Christmas has changed, and we have made that into the gospel. So let's go to,

## John 2

Gospel according to John is so different from the other gospels because, like I was preaching in the Nepali and Hindi service, the world is going through two major crisis, whole world is going through at the same time, one is called disease and other is called lack and nobody has the courage to speak the truth about the disease. I'm not talking about silencing conservative voices of the doctor, the actual truth about COVID 19. There is another truth behind COVID 19 and it upsets everyone if you tell the truth, you are vulnerable to COVID 19 because of your health; if you are a healthy person, you will not be vulnerable to COVID 19. Meaning, COVID 19 casualties have directly got to do with what you eat, if you have been eating on junk food, then you have all kinds of diseases in your body; meaning, if the mother has to buy food from outside that means the father is missing, so that's the truth about diseases.

When we were growing up or any country in the world, especially western and the more advanced knowledge kind of countries more, (in the sense I'm not talking about technology), if you look at earlier generations people rarely fell ill. There were no refrigerators, the butter in the west was kept in a bucket and put in a well and then put up in the morning, everybody drank from the well, we all grew up drinking water from the well, there were no systems, nobody fell ill. If I remember correctly, 7 years in my grandfather's house and before that 12 years with my parents in Bhutan which is 19 years, I remember falling ill just twice and one had nothing to do with the disease at all and falling ill was an event, everybody looked forward to it, going to the doctor was a big thing; next day you go to school and boast, "I visited the doctor," and the doctor will never give you tablet, it's impossible to get it. If you got a tablet from the doctor, visiting the medical store was another big thing, (feeling great) standing there and asking for a tablet and if you got a tablet, people used to be surprised, "Oh! He got a tablet." This is what sickness was.

You know why? It is because kitchen was a holy place. Nowadays it's not a holy place, it's a neglected place, make a lot of noise with the vessels and whatever comes out is served. I'm telling you these things because these things hurt, because when God says, "Give Me your body as a living sacrifice," it's the mother who is offering the body of the child; what kind of body you are offering? It's the health of the child. Is health your primary concern or not? That is the question you need to ask – what are you eating? The first miracle Jesus performs is at a wedding; meaning they are eating and drinking, and there was lack there. Also the other miracle done at the Cana of Galilee; two miracles in Cana, one in *John 2* and other in *John 4*. One is connected with lack and the other with disease. And God says, "Can I really speak to you?"

And you look at the world system, it wants to shut down the whole kitchen. They want the state to be completely dependent, you go to the US, Malaysia, Singapore. You go to all these places, you see people there hardly cook. In Singapore, everything is structured in this way - if you are working in this company, your company will be here, your resident there, and every place is made into a zone and they have all these eating joints. Everybody goes out within those zones to eat, they go home to sleep and they go to work. Everything made convenient for you, food courts, all are food

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courts. People don't realise that they are slaves to modern ideologies. The devil wants to bring all the people into cities, so that you are controlled.

Hats off to John McArthur, he started his Church, he had the entire congregation and he said, "We will worship Christ." The threat to all these pastors and churches if they dared to open is – "We will shut your power and water supply." You know in certain cities how the government controls you? They will take your power. Where do you get water? You have no water, no power and gas. You know why they push you into cities? of course there's ease; water is there. When I grew up we had to pull the water from the well with a Dior rope but no government came and touched my well. It was difficult, but you know you are free. There is ease in the city, but you don't know that you are a dog with a leash on your neck. Question is – how much will you give up for your liberty? You don't realise these things because one of the things Paul will tell Timothy is, "*Timothy, endure hardship as discipline.*"

What happens in all societies is that when you become government-dependent they will also start taking your liberties away and tell you what you can do, what you cannot do, what you can say, to the point of where; imagine the government of California said, "You cannot sing, if you sing in Church it will spread the virus," but they did not stop the people from shouting on the streets. We need to realise. These are the two fundamental issues people are going through – lack and disease. You will always be afraid of lack unless you hear the voice of God. What's the answer for lack? You hear the voice of God. There is no other way. God does not give you another solution, He says, "*My righteous shall live by faith. My righteous shall walk by faith and not by sight.*" It's as simple as that.

Our job is to lead people to that because the day and hour will come to us where every nation, like it happened in the past, where the churches were scattered, every individual had to walk with God alone. North Korea – how do you think they survive? because of a Church? Every believer has learnt to hear from God, otherwise you are not a believer. There are no Church gatherings, there are no meetings, no praising, no choir, no fasting, everything is individual, they have all learnt to hear from God and our job is to teach everyone, whether you are in a restrained situation or a free situation, everyone hears from God. Why? Christ is the Head of the body. And what are we? We are the parts of the Body.

Now let me give you an example: if Appu's little toe hurts because Raj, by mistake, stamped on her toe, how did you know? Where did the pain go? It went to the head. Every part of my body is connected to the head; it receives, it understands. Everything is from the head and when one part of my body is not connected to the head that means that part of the body is dead. That's why hearing is so important, you may hear, through other voices, the voice of God. When that signal is from my head, reaches the toe, it has to pass through so many nervous system, and it reaches there but it's still coming from the head. You may hear through a Pastor, you may hear through a TV program, you may hear through a book, you may read from your own Bible directly, you may hear God through different channels, but you are still hearing the voice of God and you know its the voice of God, that He is speaking to you. The fundamental lessons God teaches and those lessons can't be skirted, if you go to,

### **John 2:1**

***<sup>1</sup> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there***

and verse 2 is what changes everything

### **John 2:2**

***<sup>2</sup> Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.***

You have to understand the spiritual truth which is if Jesus was not invited to this wedding, it would have been just another wedding. It would not have been mentioned in history or in the Bible, it would make no difference. There was once upon a time a wedding, the wine ran out and they were full of shame, the guest said, "What is this and what is this you invite us to a wedding?"

And let's say, for example: Biryani ran out, wedding guests were given daal and white rice and they complained, till death. What changed the whole narrative, Jesus was invited. Jesus has not done any miracles. If you go by John's narratives, He's just got into His ministry, the third day.

### **John 2:3**

***<sup>3</sup> And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."***

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So the mother of Jesus came to Jesus and if you look at the narrative very, very, clearly, Jesus has done no miracle, no power struck, nothing over there. Then why did the mother come to Him? It is because she knew this was a Son whom she could trust, to find a solution to something. He had that history in the house as a Son. She had many children but she knew no one whom she could depend upon to find a solution. She was not asking for a miracle; she just brought a problem to Him.

The second key you learn is that – when you have a situation, whom do you take it to? Again the entire narrative changes, not because Jesus was at the wedding, but it was because the problem was taken to Jesus. The entire narrative changes not because Jesus is in your life, but because when you have trouble in your life you take the trouble to Jesus. Jesus can be in your life, Jesus can be in your home, Jesus can be in your Church, but the issue is when you have a problem, who do you go to first? And we have to teach our people to take it to Jesus first. Okay, when they are children, they will call us to pray, but 15 years later you are still calling your Pastor to pray? What does that mean? It means that you haven't learnt hear. You have become dependent and we don't create dependency in the Kingdom because it is dangerous when the hour of persecution comes, it is dangerous.

Let's leave what Jesus said to His mother. Wine is the symbol of the covenant; it's got to do with His end times; it was a symbol of His Covenant that He was making. There are three things which God does, He makes promises - there are incredibly great promises, He makes an oath; *so He swore an oath in His anger – "They will never enter into My rest,"* and He makes a Covenant. So these are three different things God does – He promises, He makes oaths and He makes a Covenant. There's an Old Covenant and a New Covenant. A Covenant cannot be broken, it can only be broken at the death of the person who breaks it. So if she's asking for something which has got to do with the Covenant; the Covenant, both the Old and New Covenant are unilateral covenants God made with man and man had no part in it. That is one of the most comforting things, if you understand about the Covenant. Meaning, I did not choose Him, He chose me, so He made a covenant with me that means He will save me; my salvation is not dependent upon my strength, it's dependent upon Him. It is regarding to that Covenant that He said to His mother, "My time has not yet come."

### John 2:5

Verse 5 is the key

<sup>5</sup> ***His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."***

One thing Mary told, if the Catholic Church believed, that would have set them free. One thing Mary said to the servants **"Whatever He says to you, do it"**

Three things over here, one is He will speak, whatever He says listen carefully to whatever He says, listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, listen carefully. Second, whatever He says, not only what you like. There are a lot of things which we like and God says that we will do it very enthusiastically. But there are a lot of things which God says which we don't like and *"Whatever He says to you"* this is the key, that one line,

*John 2: 5* – One advise Mary gave to the world, if only the world kept it, especially the Catholic Church if they only obeyed this - *"Whatever He says'* you don't have to come to me, I can't hear your prayers, I cannot answer your prayers, I am just another person like you. *'Whatever He says to you, do it',*" Third part is that you have to do it and leave the result to Him. You have to do whatever He says. Can we hear? Whatever lack you have in life, can you hear His voice? They ran out of wine. Just look at this as an illustration, this is the first sign He does. Everybody has a lack or lacks in their life, the question is, will you go to Jesus?

Will you do whatever He says? In this case what He said was easy. But in some cases what He will ask you do to won't be easy. But will you do it because sometimes we go to Christ to get, but He will say, "Return everything then you will get."

And we will say, "Okay, we will find another god," Whatever that one word is, if you don't surrender, it will give you nightmares. But whatever He says, you do. I wonder what He will say. The same God who told Abraham to *leave your country and I will bless you*, also asked him to take his only son, take a 3-day journey and offer him as a sacrifice. Whatever He says, are we willing? *"Whatever He says to you, do it!"*

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### John 2:6

***<sup>6</sup> Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece.***

There was something which did not catch anybody's eye or attention. That is not something anybody would use, and as a Pastor I have to be very, very careful because I wouldn't know whom He chooses; we do not know, we don't understand God's ways. If you look into that house, the house was full of vessels, because it was a wedding, the vessels in the kitchen cooking is going on, vessels in the dining room, all kinds of vessels, and of all vessels the most unworthy vessels are these sitting outside with water to wash people's feet and a set of servants, the lowest in the hierarchy to wash the feet of the people. Imagine what God used on that day.

First miracle, He used a set of things which we wouldn't even consider looking at and a set of people you wouldn't even say, 'Hi' to, who would be used now. I'm just using as an example and I'm not making that person into the water pot, so don't mistake me, it's just an example. We have been in this Church for 12 years, 13<sup>th</sup> year began, lockdown began, and in the middle of the lockdown, our ministry is seen, (earlier it was heard by tens and thousands) now, it is seen. We have more people today than we had ever in our Church's history. All around the world. But of all the people you are looking at. It's interesting right, of all the people who have come and gone there and all, there is this one person called, Appu kutty, nobody has seen, we haven't seen her yet, but do you know in this pandemic, she is, probably, the most used female voice by God; up to 12-13 times a week, four languages, and yet till today, nobody has seen her, yet her voice we are hearing everywhere.

You have seen Peter because Peter is here (in the front) and in 12 years, we spoke about this one's voice and that one's voice and that one's talent but I never heard anyone say anything about Appu kutty, right, but God saw. She was at the right place, at the right time. And therefore, she comes down and she does it quietly. Jesus was at the right place at the right time and there were six water pots sitting there outside. After that day, if pots could talk, imagine six water pots and one cup had so much to say. They would have said, "You all will be forgotten all of eternity, but for two thousand years, from so many pulpits, we will always be spoken about and all of eternity we will be talked about. The Son of God, when He came in the flesh, we were the first ones He used, He didn't even use His disciples."

Always learn to see through God's eyes; how He sees people, how He uses people. Never ever get the world's picture in. *There were six water pots of stone according to manner of purification and Jesus said, His mother said, "Listen carefully, do whatever He says, listen to the instructions very carefully,"* now He's going to speak, *"Fill the water pots with water"* and what does Scripture say? You see this is the difference, they don't ask any questions. That's why Jesus didn't ask His disciples to do anything, because they were with Him only three days. If He were to ask Peter and John, they would have asked hundred and one questions – 'Why water now? All of us already washed our feet. What do you want to do with it? How much should we fill? Is half enough?' it was very clear, what did He say? *"Fill the water pots with water,"* and they filled it up to the brim.

Do you know why a lot of people have heard but they don't experience God's presence or His power in their lives? It is because they haven't obeyed God's voice fully. They fill quarter, they fill half; but God says, *"Be filled with the Holy Spirit."* God didn't say – be half-filled with the Holy Spirit. And be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. That is the only way He has mandated to the Church. You want to walk free, in the midst of all this, in the midst of the pandemic, without any fear? Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Scripture talks about different signs and this is the first sign that Scripture has recorded? Do we take the first sign seriously? Do we start the day, 'Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit? I don't want to think my thoughts; I want to think Your thoughts. I want to live Your life. I don't want to live my life. I have already lived my life and I am totally dissatisfied; it's a miserable life. I want to live Your life. I have realized that there is rest in it.'

One of the fundamental things Jesus taught us during His life on earth, especially during His 3 ½ years of ministry, is how you can have rest in the midst of pressure. Unbelievable pressure He faced. He was an itinerant preacher without even having a bike, meaning He walked, He had no money, and He got 12 people gathered whom He has to take care and at the end of His ministry He asked them, "I sent you out, did you lack anything?" and they said, "Nothing." You know why they didn't lack? It is because He heard. You know why we lack? It is because we don't hear and if we hear, we don't fill the brim.

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Honestly think, let's look at an academic question- if you and I are filled with the Holy Spirit do you think we will struggle? We wouldn't struggle. That's the first thing He says, "Fill the water pots with water," and the Scripture says that they filled them up to the brim. Do we fill? Do we allow ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit? When God says something do we obey to the T? We are always taught to 'Dot every 'i' and cross every 't'.' One of the fun things is to always dot your 'i' and cross your 't's because if you don't the answer may look different, you don't know whether it a T or an L. Do you obey? And this didn't start yesterday or today, it started with Abraham. "Leave your country, leave your household." Did he leave? Yes, did he obey fully? No. He took his father along. Why? God says, "I did not include him, I love your father, you love your father, honour your father but obey Me, I did not include your father in this call because your father is an idol worshipper." I did not include your father, you did." Abraham could say, "I obeyed." Then why are you not hearing? How many years since you heard? Abraham: "Quite a long time," God: "Why haven't you heard?" Abraham: "I don't know." "I told you to leave father, you didn't. That's why you don't hear, that's why you got stuck at Haran, you haven't entered the Promised Land yet, because I cannot speak to you, you know why? Because in your heart there's a person bigger than Me. I cannot speak to you. You always listen to the one who is bigger and your father is bigger in your heart than Me."

God is not saying don't love your father, He is saying, "Love your father, honor your father but don't love them more than Me, you will not hear from Me, you always hear their voice." A man who has heard the voice of God should continually hear the voice of God. Before you listen to your father, listen to your mother, but after you have heard the voice of God, Jesus looks at His mother and says, "What has that got to do with Me, woman? You are coming between Me and My Father. Sorry step aside. I have heard my Father, it's over mummy, I love you, I care for you but it's over. My Father has spoken."

Abraham didn't. When we say that we are filled to the brim, let God say that we are filled to the brim. You know why? when you are filled to the brim, you will always hear the second command. If you haven't heard the second command that means you have not obeyed the first command yet. So Abraham does not hear the second command till his father dies. Then Scripture says – *the Lord appeared to him and said, "Go, I'll bless you,"* all these things he hears and now he enters Canaan, famine comes and he immediately goes to Egypt. Why did he go to Egypt? He went because he didn't hear the voice of God. Why didn't he hear the voice of God? It is because he didn't ask.

The question is – you need to ask. What did Mary tell the servants? *'His mother said to the servant.'* What does that mean? Imagine, I'm one of the servants and Mary comes to me and says, "Whatever He asks you to do, do it." So what do I have to do? I have to go to Him and ask Him, "Sir, what should I do?" If they hadn't gone, there would still be no miracle. He has the power, He has the voice, He can speak, but I need to go to Him and ask. So they went to Him and asked and He told them, 'This is what you need to do.' Abraham did not go to God and ask and God is teaching us simple fundamental lessons from that first miracle - did you go and ask? A lot of things we don't have to ask, that's about life; "Thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shall not," we don't have to ask those things, "Should I kill today, should I steal" – No, you don't have to ask. Those things we know. "Thou shall not make any grave an image," those things you need to ask – "Lord, that's a very dicey question. I know in the New Covenant, it's not the letter; it is the Spirit. Do I still have an idol?" and God will say, "Yes you have." "I have? who said?" "This person," "Oh! I didn't know that even persons are idols." He says, "Yeah! Your loyalty, your affections; your heart is connected with your affections."

Abraham is still there and he's not able to hear the voice of God to move forward. He's good, he's in the Promised Land, everything is going good but if you ask Abraham, "Abraham, do you know your purpose in the Promised Land?" he does not know, he might just say, "Oh! Maybe be a good cattle rancher." Do you know your purpose? "I know I have a promise, but I don't know my purpose." You know why he hasn't heard his purpose? Because it's a man called Lot whom he hasn't left yet. It was not part of the call.

There's a difference if you look at *Genesis 11*, Terah took Abraham along and in *Genesis 12*, Lot followed Abraham, but both were not part of the call. Lot can follow Abraham but Lot has to be allowed to move on, he's not part of your call. So the Bible says, "After Lot left, God said." He heard. You will see that continuously there's a process in Abraham's life where the blocks come in. And whenever there is a block in your life, when you are not hearing, you need to ask, "Lord, why am I not hearing? What is that I have left not obeyed? Have I disobeyed? Have I left something incomplete? You said, 'Fill,' if this is a physical cup I know when I have filled it. But because this is a spiritual cup, I don't know whether I'm full or not. I don't know, I may feel I'm full but I'm not."

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Laodicean Church thought they were full but when they were not; they were empty. They thought they were covered when they were naked. They thought they were rich, when they were poor. They thought they were prosperous when they were wretched. That's a terrible thing to happen to a Church or a person. You may think, you may feel, when you are not. My reality is not reality, my reality is what God says I am. I'm not a good father unless God says that I'm a good father. I'm not a good man, unless God says that I'm a good man. The question paper is set by the Father, the answer paper is Jesus. You know when you have board exams, and when you have evaluation camp going on. You haven't been an evaluator. I was an evaluator of a board exam, when you sit over there to correct the answer sheets, they give you the board answers, so you tally the student's answer sheets with that. Whether the student's answer is right or wrong, how many points do they get, how much can you give them etc.

The question is set by the Father, the Examiner has given the answer sheet; it is Jesus Christ and your life and my life are going to be evaluated with His. When someone on earth compliments you saying you are great, all that is irrelevant. On that day seven words, "*Well done! My good and faithful servant!*" That's the race we are running, the problem is this is a race with minefields set by the enemy, you cannot be complacent and say, "I'm sorry I don't want to partake in the race." God says, "Die!" because there's no way out, you have to, because you are in a spiritual battle, "I don't want to engage in spiritual battles," you are already lost, you are already a prisoner, this is all a part of it, your race, your battle, is a part of it, when you say you don't want to get in the battle you are rejecting the Holy Spirit; that is your CEO, you go to the army camps, they are all in the uniform, they all are the same, superior major comes and he's reading out the order from the CEO, "The Major has said!" that's all they care, they don't care from anything else, they don't care about anything else, proof,

### 2 Timothy 2:2

***<sup>2</sup>No one engaged in warfares, entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.***

We have to change our entire concept on loss and gains also. In life everything is put across in terms of loss and gain, as a balance sheet. But what is loss in the world will be a gain in the Kingdom but a gain in the world will be a loss in the Kingdom. Think about Elisha, an old man comes down, takes his mantle, puts it on Elisha and walks away. And because Elisha is a spiritual guy, he understands what it means; it is the call of God upon his life. Elijah has called him and now if he does not value spiritual things, that would be loss for him. That's Esau, "I'm not interested." Elisha is the one who valued it, and now when you are looking at Elisha after three and a half years of famine, rain has come, you know the dry ground when the rain falls, it's ready to plant your seed, you are going to have a harvest. You are going to make money, you are not just a small kid; you have 12 yoke of oxen, you are at the peak, this is your father's and you are going to make a killing profit this year and that's when the call comes.

The simple thing is you are a hard worker and you are going to make a profit. But now your profession has changed, everything you have learnt, you cannot take it there because your profession has changed. You know what, you have to give up that which is material, temporal, and you have to follow somebody, which is spiritual and eternal. Will you obey His voice? And people who have not obeyed His voice don't even understand these concepts. It is very difficult to teach them, there's always confusion, because I get all these letters about marriage and wanting to marry. Sometimes I just want to tell them, "Why do you want to get married? Why do you think you will make a good husband? Why do you think you will make a good wife? Why do you want to get married?" Lot of people in my life that I have met, I believe they should have never got married because they don't even understand what a marriage means. Marriage is a life of sacrifice and if you are not willing for that, don't get married. Stay single. For a woman to get married, it means she has given up her life, everything, for her home, the entire next generation is in her hands; the children will be made or unmade depending upon how she is, who you are and who God has called you to be. Do you understand?

### 2 Timothy 2:4

***<sup>4</sup>No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier.***

You are fighting for the souls, not the career. Do you realise as a mother you are fighting now for the souls of your children; that they may fulfill God's destiny? Who wants a career in the Kingdom? Whatever He calls you is your career. Only thing you do is to equip the person with what is needed for that career, called integrity, hard work. Life, as hard work, as a discipline. Let me ask you young people sitting here, how many of you hear His voice? Because this is an entire concept about the last days, about trials and tribulations and rapture. How do you know? People always ask, "Pastor, is it pre-

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tribulation, mid-tribulation or post-tribulation? I say, "I don't know." We don't know, why, because all these pictures are in the Bible.

Let me ask you this question, there are seven plagues in the New Covenant, in the Book of Revelation. There are ten in the Old Covenant in Egypt, if you look at the plagues, the plagues are similar, the first 3 plagues, everybody went through, right? And after that God made a separation and separation was only in the place called Goshen, where Israelites lived. What if in God's plan, we are hearing it completely different, the 7 tribulations; the plagues Of God are going to be rolled out and God has specified His Goshen around the world and His people will only be safe only in those places and the plagues will pass over them, but the first few, like this pandemic, God allows both (His people and the people in the world) to go through. Pictures are there and when the 10th plague is over there is an Exodus; they came out of Egypt and going to a land dedicated by God. What if after the 7 plagues are over, there is an Exodus, and God takes His people out, but they were protected because they heard and they knew exactly where they needed to be and God supernaturally kept them, and that's what *Revelation* also says about the woman who was taken into the wilderness and satan was after her but God protected her. How do you read all this? How do you read all this? The question is – can we live like that? We haven't heard. Let me ask you this question – how many of us, in this modern generation, can live without electricity? Probably in this entire Church, I'm the only one who has lived without electricity for an entire year of my life - no electricity, knowing because of that even till today, what I learnt in my childhood, I know how to make my own lamps and live. Can you live without electricity? Best life ever, you wake up with the sun and sleep with the sun and you realise that you have enough and more time, less trouble, no TV, no radio, nothing. Radio was there with batteries and think about it, simple eventualities.

Next is the EPM attack after the pandemic is gone, when all power systems are gone and there is no electricity. How will you live? You know how to live? because everything about modern man works on electricity. How simple were our lives? That's what Paul is telling Timothy. To focus, that's what Jesus is teaching us in the first miracle – do whatever He says.

Do you fill to the brim? Or do you feel? because feelings don't matter. What God has said matters. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord! Really? Who said that? Saul. "I have obeyed the voice, I have filled to the brim." The problem is that he is not speaking to any other person but to the prophet, who hears the voice of God. He says, "If you have obeyed then why do I hear the voice of the bleating of the sheep?" My question is, how did he distinguish between the Amalekite sheep and Jewish sheep? How did he know the difference, unless God told him? For me all sheep sound the same. How did he know the difference? God said, "He had not obeyed Me." The Bible says be filled to the brim. They filled them up to the brim. "Keep on filling until the Holy Spirit starts coming out of your nostrils," says the Lord God.

### **Ephesians 5:17-18**

<sup>17</sup> ***Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.***

<sup>18</sup> ***And do not be drunk with wine, is which is a sign of dissipation (this is a sign of the world); but be filled with the spirit.***

What will come out of your nostrils? Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. Now this is not going around singing, but there will be melody in your heart in the midst of persecution. Remember that Ethiopian sister who used to sing in that container? Hot like a pot -songs. Remember that man in China who opted to work in the place where the human excreta was dumped and nobody wanted to come there because of the pungent smell and when he comes out also nobody wants to come near him, he chose that place so that he could sing. Just think about it for a minute, pause for a minute and remember the time you are actually alone in your home, in your room, alone, is there always a song which is coming? Is there a melody? That's the first sign, making melody, we used to sing one of my first choruses when I got saved, 'Making melody,' I didn't even know these things were in the Bible 'Making melody in your heart. Making melody in your heart, making melody in your heart unto the King of kings.' Later when I read the Bible, Oh! all these things are in the Bible. You make melody. Do you see the fundamental things Jesus is talking about? Fill to the brim and what did they do? They filled it to the brim and the next command, simple command, yet very difficult.

### **John 2:7-8**

<sup>7</sup> ***Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water" and they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup> and he said "draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast"***

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And they took it. Now, waited a second. It's not so easy; inside, a feast is taking place, all this while from the time when the meeting was taking place, the wedding began, and the guests are coming, what were these people doing? You know what they were doing? They were taking water from these water pots and washing everybody's feet.

Suddenly they have been told to do something absolutely shocking – “Take some and take it inside.” That is why you have to hear very carefully, because what He tells you, will be absolutely shocking, it will scare you. Many, many, moons away, years and years ago when I stepped into ministry with little money in the bank, I stepped into ministry never knowing that you get offering or support, I was a rookie, I had no idea, I just obeyed and came out then I asked the Lord, “Lord, how do I move on? I trust that You will take care of me, I believe You will take care of me.” You know what the first thing you hear? You know, lightning goes through your heart, “Lord, what did You say? I was talking about receiving, God. I think You didn't hear carefully, You didn't hear what I was trying to say. I was talking about how I can get and You are asking me to give.” He said, “That's how you get, you can study the entire Scripture, that's how you get.” I became very spiritual and I said, “Lord, I believe Lord, I will get when I give but I don't know whom to give.” He said, “Don't worry. I will tell you.” I thought I will escape, but He said, “Don't worry, I will send them to you.”

You have to be very careful with this God. Don't put your foot in your mouth unless you really, really, believe what He says. You know, next week it started; the door been rings and you open the door, somebody is standing there and asking, “Pastor, I have not eaten for a week. I haven't paid my rent, I haven't paid my fees.” I said, “Okay! (And I gave him the money). This is God! What do you do? First feed them and because they were not from India, in those days, they were other brothers from Africa, they could eat! One loaf of bread and 6 eggs disappeared in a blink of an eye. They were not from Nigeria, they were from Kenya and they could eat! Boy! They could eat, okay! What was meant, for normal person like me, for four days, in one blink it was gone and they left and I said, “Come tomorrow.” And where am I? I am at the bank to withdraw money and I still remember, in my account I think I had 36,000 Rs, those days it was big money in my bank and God said, “Keep a record and by the end of the year I kept a record, I gave out every pi of that 36 thousand, and I looked at my account at the end of the year and One Lakh Twenty Thousand had come in without me asking from anybody. And that was the first lesson He taught me and after that I have never feared lack, there's only one way, the fear of lack is broken.

You know what God told them, “You fill.” He could have done it in many ways, we would have expected it like our Indian gods who wave their hands and suddenly wine is flowing, He didn't do anything of those things. He said, “You fill.” They had to go to the well, draw the water and fill and fill, so they are putting in. Second, no questions asked - what are You goofing to do? “Take a cup, draw some and take it to the master of the feast,” this is where it becomes difficult. You have to trust God's ways, He never does something the same way twice. We have to be very careful to hear. We struggle, because these two things are here, side by side, one is pestilence and other is famine, both are side by side and God's people need to come out successfully through these two, you and I need to learn to hear, there's no other way. Learn to hear and obey, it may look ridiculous, it may look threatening but these are servants of the lowest and they have to take that in, to whom? The master of the feast.

Now, we don't know what happened, when it happened; when did it turn into wine? Did it become wine when they had filled it? Did it become wine when they drew it out? Did it become wine when they took it on the way? Did it become wine or when it was handed over the feast? We don't know. We have no clue. Some people were healed instantaneously, some people were healed when they were going, some people were healed only when they went all the way and washed their eyes in the pool of Siloam. We don't know when it will happen, but listen carefully to what He says. Instructions were not the same, and they were all blind, “Let it be according to your faith,” another case, He spat on the mud, made clay and put on his eyes and said, “Go! Wash.” Lepers, while they were going. We don't know when it will happen, our job is to listen carefully and obey, without questioning. That's where our breakthrough lies; that's when our intelligence should be put away, He's not checking your intelligence, but your obedience.

And we have a lot of issues here. And Scripture says – ‘*And they took it,*’ just four words and that can change your life; ‘and they took it’; ‘and Peter did it.’ fFur words – ‘And Peter did it.’ Think about poor Hannah, crying and crying and breaking her heart and pouring her soul, “Lord give me a son, I promise he will be separated, a razor will not touch him.” Everything she said. The high priest said, “Are you drunk, woman?” and she said, “Lord, you do not know, it is out of the misery.” You know what he said after that? “Okay, the Lord has answered your prayer. Go in peace,” and she took it. Who is speaking? A disqualified priest. Through his mouth also God speaks and he doesn't even know that he has spoken the very prophecy of God. She receives it, her face changes. How do you know that you have received the Word of God? You face changes.



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There's melody in her heart. You read the Scripture carefully, she changed, she did not go back the way she came. Whose word did she receive? The voice of God through the word of Eli. She did not go back down; there's melody in her heart now. Jesus is teaching His disciples a fundamental lesson in the beginning. "This is how you will do it – listen to Me, obey Me and you will see it change. And they go there and see, it's wine, what does the master say?"

### **John 2:1-10**

***When the master of the feast had tasted the water which was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servant who drew the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.***

and what did he say? What is this?

***<sup>10</sup> and he said to him "every man at the beginning sets out the good wine and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior You have kept the good wine until now"***

What is God saying? The comfort. Lot of people come to the Lord through difficult situations later in life and are very discouraged because when you were young, you gave everything to the world and then you come to the Lord God and He says, "You know what, I can make your later end greater than all that you did before, if you believe. Would you just completely give your life to Me now?"

'Lord, I'm 70' - doesn't matter, 'Lord I'm 80, I cannot even speak' – "Doesn't matter, Moses. Now I will speak, now I will use you, are you willing?" Be very careful about hearing God and thinking that God heard you. These are two absolutely different things. "Oh we have been 10 years in this land, we have no child but God promised," so Sarah looked around, culture (we all are culture vultures.) In EFLU we used to call people that - "Culture Vultures" for them everything is according to culture. So Sarah looked around and everyone is having children through their maid servant, "So let us also take our maid servant see that God's promise is fulfilled." Did he check with God? Every time Abraham did not check with God he created trouble; with famine he did not check with God, about Ishmael he did not check with God. As soon as Ishmael was born, it started, trouble started in the house. But what does he name him? Ishmael. Ishmael means – "God Hears", Oh! God heard my prayer. The question is - did you hear God?

Lot of things when we see success, we think God answered our prayer. I don't want God to answer my prayers. I want to hear from God. I have enough of prayers answered. I don't want it anymore, I want to hear God. Isaac is the result that he heard God. But the problem is when he and his wife heard about Isaac, they both laughed; he laughed, she laughed about having a child in old age. And that's the problem, when we hear God, we laugh; we look at the impossibilities. The servants didn't laugh, they just obeyed, the disciples would have laughed, or doubt would have come in. Remember when Jesus said "Let us feed them," they said, "How can we? 6 months wages? With just 5 loaves?" - those are the disciples. He never asked the disciples to do anything the first time, He wanted them to learn the lesson – See! And what does Scripture say in verse 11,

***<sup>11</sup> This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.***

Nobody knew, He didn't make any Biblical theory out of it; this was just a practical lesson for the disciples, He said, "Learn" and they believed in Him. Nobody knew, it's not like today's preachers who call everybody and give this testimony about how great his power is. Jesus never did any of those things. That's why this was the first sign, not a miracle but a sign.

Miracle and a sign are different, you can experience a miracle but miss the sign. A lot of people have experienced the miracle of new birth and missed the sign. The new birth was the sign of something which will continue all the way till eternity. You are being renewed and renewed; it is a sign. But some said, "I am born-again I'm going to heaven," and then went back to the world. They experienced the miracle and missed the sign. And that is what God is talking about. We have all missed it for years and these are serious questions to ask. If I am a new creation then I cannot be a man like before, I need to be a man according to Your Word. I cannot be a husband like before, I need to be a husband according to Your Word. I cannot be a wife according to the old ways, I have to be the wife and a mother according to Your Word. I have to be a disciple according to the Word. I can't be satisfied with this old life, I can not be content because I will be disqualified that Day. It is not that I will lose my salvation, Paul said, "I will be disqualified." He did not say that he will be cast out of Heaven; he said, "I will be disqualified because I did not run my race according to the rules."

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You cannot serve like before, and you will see the fundamental key to everything is to hear and as soon as they heard and obeyed, lack was over. And you know what God did? The first miracle which God did to remove the lack was He used something which was so commonly and readily available that everybody overlooked it, it was there. We have no wine. But provision was already there all what was needed was God.

All you needed was to hear from God but because you did not hear from God, in the presence of your very provision you are drying and dying; it was right before your eyes. All you need to do is to hear and obey. Did you see Elijah? The lady picking sticks, bent down picking sticks, for what, she's getting ready to cook the last meal to feed her son and get ready to die, because everywhere else is famine you're not going to get anything from anyone, this is your last meal, you are getting ready to die and right there stands an old man and she does not realise – “That’s my miracle, I have to listen to him. If I obey his voice, my miracle begins now.” What he's going to ask is very difficult, but the question is will you obey? What if she doesn't obey, she and her son will die. God will show him another house, God's work cannot be stopped, If Mary said, “No, I don't want to bear the Son of God. I’m a virgin. I’m betrothed to Joseph. I have made my plans.” God would have said, “Fine. There is another woman there, go to her, she will say yes.”

And we often don't realise, we miss. I was telling somebody yesterday that our major issue is that we haven't learnt to sit still with God, we are too busy, I said in my entire Church GTC Hyderabad, except me and Pastor Vijay, nobody has yet learnt the discipline of consistently getting out and locking yourself with God, you're too busy and you haven't learnt the discipline of shutting every voice and sitting still and say, “I don't want to hear anybody, I just want to spend some time with God,” because if I don't hear God I'm not going to come through this, I'm going to be destroyed, along with others. I look at the time people waste, there's no time to waste church.

Yesterday, somebody wrote to me, “While the prayer was going, I think I left my body and I went to Heaven and came back.” Somebody who was saved a few months back. Now I'm not saying that you need to go that way. All those experiences are irrelevant. All I'm saying is that you need to hear the voice of God. We still haven't learnt to shut every voice.

The first lesson Israel got is being missed. Let's have our final Scripture,

### **Deuteronomy 8:1-4**

***<sup>1</sup>“Every commandment which I command you today, you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land of which that Lord swore to your forefathers” <sup>2</sup>“And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, so that you would keep his commandments or not” <sup>3</sup> “So he humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know. He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord”***

You know why He led them into the wilderness? Do you know why He put them in the desert, in the lockdown? So that they could learn to hear His voice, but they did not hear and when they heard, they rebelled. The only reason He led them from Egypt and first into the wilderness, and not straight to the Promised Land, is so that, “If you want to win your battles in the Promised Land and become an overcomer, one primary lesson of the wilderness is to shut every other voice and learn to hear My voice. That's the only way.”

That’s the only way the Church will survive. And our struggle is this, we hate the wilderness. You look into the Word of God and you find me one man who came out of the wilderness and was not used by God. Everyone, including His Son, had to go into the wilderness and see whether he was hearing. You know when the test was taking place in the wilderness for Jesus, the three temptations mentioned, it's not the temptations, the simple test is, “Have You learnt to hear My voice?” And He heard, answered correctly and He overcame. That's the only test. And that is the same test which Israel went through – have you heard? “yes” Will you obey? Jesus obey and He came back in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the only test.

We don't realise that's the most important test that we hear God's voice and obey it, man, woman or child and if you're child like Samuel, the only test is, “Will you hear My voice?” and the first test for Samuel is that he has to hear the voice of God. He heard the voice of God and he did not recognize but he heard, “Samuel, Samuel, Samuel.” The question is - will you obey when you hear the voice? Hearing the voice is one thing but turning away to the other side, saying, “That old man wont sleep and he won't let me sleep too.” He didn't say that, he just got up and ran, you know why he got up

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and ran? It is because his mother had taught him to obey that voice, "Samuel!" and he's there! She disciplined him to obey the voice of authority, mother isn't there, father isn't there and he realises that Eli is the next authority, Samuel runs. Eli says, "I didn't call you," twice, thrice, fourth time he gets the answer. Three times somebody says, "I didn't call you," would you go back to the same man? It's still absolutely clear, "I have heard a voice, calling me by name, I have to find out who called me."

Fundamental lessons, children I'm telling you, these are fundamental lessons. There is a huge difference between Heaven and Earth, when He speaks to you and you obey, your life is a series of miracles. And every time you and I did not hear or heard and disobeyed life was a series of disasters.

You can choose – Miracles or Disasters!

### ***Closing Prayer:***

*Father, we just come to You this morning, we just thank You, we just praise You, we just worship You O Lord. Around the world Your children are listening, some very young, new babes in Christ, some much older, it is irrelevant, we have a God who is our Father, who speaks and when He speaks, we are at rest, absolutely at rest because we know You are faithful, what You have spoken, You will do, all we have to do is to obey, teach us to hear and obey, teach us to hear and obey. Today we live in cities but we have to choose our wilderness where we crowd out the voices of men and women around us and the voices of all these ideologies that are being pumped day in and day out and just listen to the voice of God and meditate upon the Word of God and go out and do what we have been called to do, fully completely, fill it to the brim. Thank You Father, Thank You. Every time when a vessel is filled to the brim, what pours out is wine and a miracle because it is the work of God. Thank You Father, thank You, we praise You, we worship You, we glorify You, Lord. In Jesus' name, we pray Amen, Amen.*