



## Feast or Famine

Luke 5:33-39

David Sunday

April 7, 2013

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Forever, Lord Christ, You will shine as the glorious Lamb of God. We will never cease praising You for the remembrance of the scars in Your hands and the death that You died, victorious over sin and death and hell itself. You are risen now, reigning forever. Lamb of God, You are worthy, worthy, worthy. Father, thank You that it was Your love that moved You to send Your Son for us and You love us with an everlasting love. We pray that You would peel away the curtains of unbelief and take away the dimness of our vision so we can see a little more clearly the One in Whom our souls will delight for all eternity—Christ, our Savior, King, Bridegroom and Heavenly Friend. Lord, we would see Jesus. Grant a full outpouring of Your Holy Spirit upon the preaching of Your Word and our hearing of it. *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer”* (Psalm 19:14). We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

We’re going to look at the Gospel of Luke. This glorious gospel is the longest book in the New Testament and it is our joy and delight as Christians to turn often to the four Gospels and behold our Savior and His life, teachings and work on our behalf. The text is Luke 5:33-39.

*<sup>33</sup> And they said to him, “The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.”<sup>34</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? <sup>35</sup> The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.”<sup>36</sup> He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. <sup>37</sup> And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. <sup>38</sup> But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. <sup>39</sup> And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’”*

Thanks be to God for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

My great grandmother, Nana Gert, was born in the little village of Ringwood, Illinois in McHenry county in 1895. She died 103 years later in Kenosha, Wisconsin in 1998. I knew her well. I often reflect on the changes she saw in her lifetime. I think in that century she saw more changes at a break-neck speed than just about any other person in any century in the history of the world. I wonder what it was like when

she was born to first travel by horse and buggy, then see an automobile, later work on those automobiles in the Rambler and Nash company in Kenosha and American Motors, then finally to fly in an airplane. In fact, I talked with my Nana Hazel—Nana Gert’s daughter—back in January and she explained when she first flew, she cried when she boarded the plane because she was so excited and in awe of this new travel opportunity.

I know some of us still cry when we get on airplanes but it’s because there is not enough leg room, not because we’re excited. There is nothing new and exciting about air travel any more. This goes for most innovations in our world. Everything that is new today will be old someday. Just ask your teenagers if they are satisfied with their cell phones and I bet they’ll tell you, “No, Dad. I need a new cell phone.” Even if they just got one a few months ago, they need a new one because there is something better that has displaced the old.

But in Jesus Christ, there is a newness that will never become outdated. That’s what this passage is speaking about: When Jesus came into our world an old age passed away forever. He ushered in a new creation that will never become old. We might look at the passage and at first glance think, “Okay, the pastor’s going to preach about fasting.” But that’s not the main point of this passage. The main point is that Jesus’ coming into our world and His presence in our lives brings a new power, hope and life that demands new ways of expression. When Jesus comes into our lives, He doesn’t merely offer to make us a little bit better than we are now. He smashes everything we once held dear and built our lives upon. He changes us completely. His presence makes all things new.

I think Paul is reflecting on the truth of this passage in 2 Corinthians 5:17. He says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*” That’s what this Luke passage is about. It’s not just a history lesson about the Pharisees and the obsolescence of the Jewish religion. It penetrates very directly into our own religious experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It’s very important that we pay close attention to what Jesus is teaching here in this passage. It presses a question upon us. Borrowing from the words of one commentator, the question is this: Where in our world and in the church and in our church are we living as if the new life of Christ and His gospel had never burst in upon us? Is there any place in our world or church where we live as if the new life of the kingdom of the gospel of Jesus Christ has never burst in upon us? That’s what we need to be thinking about as we examine this text.

The Puritans often structured their sermons with this format:

- Doctrine Stated
- Doctrine Explained
- Doctrine Illustrated
- Doctrine Applied

We're going to work our way through this teaching of Jesus based on these points.

## Doctrine Stated

The statement of doctrine this passage is teaching is this: The coming of Christ and His Kingdom brings about a new way of relating to God that cannot mix with the old ways—prior religious experience, other religions or your own ideas—the way we were before His presence permeated our world and came into our lives. When He comes, He brings a new creation and old ways don't fit anymore. There is an upheaval and transformation.

Jesus is not just an add-on or update; He's a whole new operating system. His gospel is a new operating system.

## Doctrine Explained

Now let's take more time to explain the doctrine from this text. In order to understand what is happening with the question to Jesus, we have to remember that Jesus called Levi the tax collector to follow Him and Levi—who becomes Matthew—follows Jesus. We're told in Luke 5:29: *"And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them."* Levi is excited about having met Jesus and wants his friends to meet Him. And Jesus is thrilled because heaven rejoices whenever the new life of the Kingdom breaks into someone's life. Jesus is enjoying a great feast with these tax collectors and sinners, celebrating this new life that has invaded Levi's (Matthew's) old way of living. When the Pharisees and scribes see this, they start grumbling. They have two main issues with Jesus and His disciples:

1. Who they are eating with. "How can you eat with tax collectors and associate with people like this? Jesus' answer is very profound: *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance"* (Luke 5:31-32).
2. The fact that Jesus and His disciples are eating at all. "What are you doing celebrating? Why are you feasting? If you were really religious and spiritual like we are you would be fasting right now. You would be fasting more often. What's wrong with you? The disciples of John fast and we fast often. Why don't you fast?" That was what the scribes and Pharisees were bringing to Jesus.

Under the Old Covenant, fasting was commanded to be observed once a year on the Day of Atonement. It was a sign of humiliation, mourning and recognizing sinfulness. There were other times in the Old Covenant—such as times of national calamity or personal distress—when God's people would fast as a sign of humiliation and preparation for God's Kingdom to invade their world. In the Gospels we see

examples of John's disciples fasting because they were yearning for the coming of God's Kingdom which they believed was at hand, so they fasted to prepare the way of the Lord in their lives. Scripture also tells of times when Jesus Himself fasted.

Though it was only commanded to be done once a year, the Pharisees fasted a lot more often than that. We know this to be the case from the prayer that Jesus gives us in Luke 18. He talks about a Pharisee and a tax collector coming before God in prayer. The Pharisee seems to be saying, "Look at me, God!" when he says this:

*"The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get'. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' [And Jesus said] I tell you, this man [the tax collector] went down to his house justified, rather than the other" (Luke 18:11-14).*

The tax collector was the one who was in a right relationship with God. But the Pharisees, who put great stock in the rigorous discipline of fasting, are taken aback when they see Jesus' disciples not fasting but feasting. It offends their religious sensibilities. I don't know if this was a Monday or Thursday when this feast was taking place in Matthew's house. I like to think it was. And Jesus was there celebrating.

I don't know how you react when religious people call into question your own commitment to piety. Maybe another Christian looks at you and says, "You eat that? You drink that? You went to that movie?" or, "You don't do this?" You know what? We need to listen because it could be God using another Christian in our lives to confront us about some behavior that is not in keeping with following Jesus.

But I wonder if—when you do get confronted by other Christians or when you sense that others are looking at you—you are ever tempted to kick it into overdrive for a little while to look better in the sight of others. It's not that you are really convicted by the Holy Spirit or concerned about following Jesus; you just want to look good for the religious people around you.

This controversy is going to swirl around Jesus all the way to the cross. He does follow God's law, but not in the way that the Pharisees do. Jesus is not concerned about that. He does not try harder to impress them. Instead, His response is very surprising. "*And Jesus said to them, 'Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?'"* (Luke 5:34). This is a revelation of the new situation that is breaking into the world. The Bridegroom of God's people has come to claim His bride. When you enter into a relationship with God, you become His bride. He is your Bridegroom. To become a Christian is to become married to the Lord Jesus Christ—betrothed to Him—and to look forward to a marriage

supper. It's to be united in a living, lasting, loving union with the Lord Jesus Christ. He says this is what is taking place right now. The Bridegroom is here!

The Jewish people would have immediately resonated with what Jesus was saying because it was their custom to not go on the honeymoon right away. Instead, they stuck around and had a week-long open house. The attendants of the bridegroom accompanied the bride and groom everywhere. [Personally, I don't like this custom, would you?] The bride and groom were like royalty, treated like a king and queen. The rabbis had actually ruled during that time, "All in attendance on the bridegroom are relieved of all religious observances which would lessen their joy." In other words, when it's wedding time, you don't need to fast. It's time to celebrate.

You can imagine how impolite and borderline offensive it would be if you were invited to a great wedding reception and they started to pass around the food and you kept saying, "Nope. Can't eat that. I'm on the South Beach diet." Or, "No. I'm fasting." People would get uncomfortable very quickly. A wedding is not a place to fast but to celebrate—to rejoice in the goodness of God's creation and His blessings on our lives.

Jesus is saying, "When My presence is here, it calls for a continuous feast. Being in My presence brings My disciples unquenchable joy." That is characteristic of the new life of the Kingdom. It's an unquenchable joy. And we know we have that joy especially when we rejoice in our tribulations because we have—in Jesus Christ—a joy that even suffering cannot rob from us. So we rejoice in hope of the glory of God in the midst of our sufferings. Paul says this is the keynote of the gospel of the Kingdom: "*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17). This is what God's Kingdom is about: "*...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*" Jesus is saying, "The Bridegroom is here. I am the Bridegroom." When He does that He is making a tremendous claim for Himself.

Let's look at a couple passages from the Old Testament where God portrays Himself as a bridegroom. Isaiah 62:5:

*For as a young man marries a young woman,  
so shall your sons marry you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
so shall your God rejoice over you.*

Then in Hosea 2:19-20—verses that are dear to me because I quoted them as I proposed to Kate on our engagement day:

*"And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD."*

Do you see what God is saying? “I’m going to enter into a covenant with My people that is akin to marriage. I’m going to be the Bridegroom; they are going to be the bride.” When Jesus comes into the world, He claims to be that Heavenly Bridegroom—that Divine Bridegroom Whom people have been waiting, longing, hoping for and dreaming of for thousands of years. Now He is here and John Piper says that the absence of fasting in the band of disciples was a witness to the presence of God in their midst. God is here. Jesus is claiming to be one with God, as when He calls Himself ‘The Bridegroom.’ Because He has come, you can’t fast.

In Luke 5:35, Jesus says a time for fasting will come: “*The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.*” That same word ‘taken away’ in the Septuagint of the Old Testament—the Greek translation of the Old Testament—is used in Isaiah 53:8:

*By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
and as for his generation, who considered  
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?*

‘Cut off’ is a reference to Christ’s death. His death is like ripping a Bridegroom from His wedding reception—kidnapping and brutally murdering Him. “And at that time they will fast” (Luke 5:35). Jesus is not taken away from us any longer. He is with us.

Before I go on from the explanation, let me say a word about the significance of Jesus calling Himself the Bridegroom of His people. In his expository thoughts on the gospels, J.C. Ryle meditates on how rich, instructive and comforting this should be for us. Here are a few things we should be thinking about and letting our hearts be warmed by when we hear Jesus talking about Himself as our Bridegroom:

- This means that Jesus deeply and tenderly loves all sinners who believe in Him. Though we are weak and unworthy in ourselves and fall short of Him in every way, Jesus feels toward us the kind of tender affection a noble and godly husband would have for his wife.
- It tells us what a close and intimate union exists between Jesus and believers. It’s far closer than a king with his subjects, master with his servants, teacher with his students, or a shepherd with his sheep. It’s all those things, but here Jesus brings us to the closest of all unions—that which God joins together and says, “*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate*” (Matthew 19:6). He says to us, “You will be to Me as My beloved wife and I will be to you everything a Husband ought to be.”

The name Bridegroom teaches us that every believer can enjoy entire participation in all that Jesus is and has. A husband gives his wife his name and joint ownership of all his property. He takes on responsibility for all her debts and liabilities. That’s exactly what Jesus does for those who trust in Him. He takes on Himself the debt of our sins. He tells us we are so closely connected to Him that whoever harms or hurts us harms and hurts Him. Whoever touches us touches the apple of His eye and He lavishes

blessings on us even in this life that transcend our comprehension and in the life to come blessings that stagger our imaginations.

That's what it means to have Christ as our Bridegroom—to be united with Him like this. Jesus is telling us that if this union has taken place—if He has come into our lives and united and betrothed us to Himself—it changes everything about our identity. All things become new and this new union and relationship demands new ways of expression. That's the explanation of the doctrine.

## Doctrine Illustrated

Now let's look at the illustration of the doctrine. It's as if Jesus pauses after He says this truth and thinks, "Okay. This is very important. I want to make sure everyone gets this, so I need to impress this on them. How can I illustrate this? What can I say that will help them understand how new this situation is?" He illustrates by using three different parables—three simple, sharp illustrations. In keeping with the wedding analogy, He turns to two things we find at weddings: nice clothes and fine wine.

**The first illustration is about patching an old garment** in Luke 5:36. Jesus says, "*No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.*" This was before they knew how to treat fabric so that it was non-shrinkable, but even in our day you can imagine how strange it would be for someone who has a brand new dress to cut it up and put patches on an old, torn up garment. In doing so, you would both make the old garment look ridiculous and ruin the new garment. Jesus says, "People don't do this."

Now why is He telling us this parable? He is telling us that is what people are tempted to do with Him and it won't work. It won't fit. People are tempted to treat the gospel of Jesus like a little sewing box full of patches. Here's a little gospel patch and we want to stitch the gospel onto the fabric of our old lives. The Pharisees wanted to take a gospel patch or two and stitch it onto the fabric of Judaism. Irreligious people maybe want to take a patch or two and stitch it onto the fabric of moralism—our own sense of morality and respectability. There are lots of ways we could do this but Jesus says, "No matter how you try, it won't work because when My gospel invades your life it must displace everything."

When you put on the Lord Jesus Christ, you've got to put off the old clothes of false religion and any attempt to get God's attention and favor by the things you do. It's me and Jesus plus nothing. Jesus says to us, "My gospel isn't a sewing kit for you. I didn't come into your life to patch it up. I came into your life to strip you of everything you've been relying on—to expose it for how worthless your threadbare rags really are—and then to clothe you in the beautiful robes of My righteousness. If you want to experience the newness of My Kingdom, don't try to take little bits and pieces of Me and patch it onto your life. Everything has to become new."

**The second illustration is about new wine** in Luke 5:37-38: *“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.”* Now in that day they would take the skins of animals such as goats and cure them and that would be used to hold wine. As the wine went through the process of fermentation, the dregs would fall to the bottom and the wine would expand. It was necessary for new wine to continually be put into fresh wineskins that were supple and could handle the expansion process. If you took the new wine and put it into an old, brittle wineskin; that wineskin would crack and you would lose the wineskin and the wine.

Why would Jesus be telling us that story in this context? It’s because a lot of people say, “Okay. I want to taste this new wine of Christ and His Kingdom. I want to drink it in but hold onto the old as well.” Jesus is saying that in order for us to take in the new wine of His gospel, we need to become a whole new container. Our old, sinful selves cannot hold the gospel. The gospel will burst all our former religious ideas. You can’t mix the gospel with other religions. It runs contrary to every other conceivable religious system. Jesus smashes us and makes everything new. He gives us new life, desires, vigor and power.

He doesn’t say, “Here, let me just fix you up a bit. Let me improve your life.” Jesus says, “No. If you’re going to let Me work on you, you have to let Me change you completely. You have to let Me give you a new nature. You’ve got to be born again. In order for the new wine of My gospel to invade your life, you’ve got to become a new container. Your old man cannot contain this. You must become new. Let me change you completely. The new wine of the Kingdom is worth it.”

I like how one pastor put it: “Christianity is not a wine tasting event.” You don’t get to say, “Oh, that’s kind of good. Let me try this and that.” Many people are ruining their lives by taking a little bit of Christianity, New Age, Buddhism, Islam—a bit of everything—to keep tasting and trying. Jesus says, “You will never experience the new life of the Kingdom that way.” In order for Christ to transform your life, everything has to change. He can do that. He can make you a new creation and He will if you trust Him. But some people won’t trust Him. Some people won’t even give it a try. That’s what the last statement is about in verse 39.

**The third illustration is about religious independence** in Luke 5:39. Here is a person who won’t even take a taste. He’s so set in his religious ways or perhaps so convinced of his own morality that he is independent of religion. He is not even willing to consider Jesus or explore Christianity because he is satisfied with what he’s got.

This is the way the Pharisees were. They had been tasting this old wine and thinking, “That’s good enough.” They were threatened by Jesus. Many religious people are threatened by the gospel



because it doesn't mesh with their concepts of religion. I know a lot of people get a little confused about verse 39 because we think, "Well, isn't old wine always better?" But I'm told by people who like wine that it depends on the vintage. There are certain new wines that are better. I don't know if anyone wants to add an amen to that but that's what I hear. Jesus is absolutely saying that His new wine is better but a lot of people won't give it a try because they are in bondage to their old ways. Therefore, they never get to experience the fresh, life-transforming wine of Christ's Kingdom. That's the illustration.

## Doctrine Applied

Now let's try to personalize this and think about how it affects our world and lives today. One thing people do with this passage (I didn't understand this until I studied it, and even now I'm sure there is more to be understood from it) is they use it when they want to try something new in the church. "We've got to get some new wineskins. These old wineskins have got to go. Time for a building remodel project; this old wineskin has to go and we need something new." That's a misuse of this passage. It should not be brought out to justify whatever change we want to make in the church.

But this passage should make us consider if there are any ways we are letting our traditions, rituals, habits and history blind us from enjoying and embracing the revolutionary new work God has done in Jesus Christ. As a church, we should always be asking questions like:

- Does this practice tend to obscure the gospel?
- Are we still full of fresh joy in the new wine of the Kingdom Jesus has brought us?
- Are we adding any requirements or expectations that tend to take our eyes off Jesus and put them onto ourselves?

I think we need to ask ourselves personally, "Am I more worried about doing church in order to impress others or am I falling more and more deeply in love with the Bridegroom of my salvation?" If Jesus is the Bridegroom that tells me there needs to be a vital, living, active love for our Savior. That needs to be at the heartbeat of it all. If I'm getting into the habit of just doing things religiously and have lost my love for Jesus, that's when I need to get back to the basics.

More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to Thee!  
Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee.  
This is my earnest plea: More love, O Christ, to Thee;  
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

(More Love to Thee, O Christ by Elizabeth Prentiss, 1856)

Lord, spare us from just going through the routines of religion if we have lost our first love for the Lord and His people. When we read this passage we should ask that question: Where in our world and church are we living as if the new life of Christ in His gospel had not broken in on us? As I look around

the world of Christendom, it seems to me there are broad swaths of Christianity that appear to be more concerned about traditions, ceremonies and rituals. Some of these don't even seem to appear in the Bible and look very superstitious; or if they are in the Bible they appear to be more connected with Old Testament rites than New Testament Christianity. As I look at Christendom it seems to me that a lot of what passes for Christianity tends to obscure the gospel and keep people at a distance from the Bridegroom.

We shouldn't just look at the world of Christendom and say, "We're immune to that." Instead we should be asking these questions:

- Are we always vigilant to make sure everything we do is designed to connect people to the Bridegroom?
- Is the gospel always simple, clear, accessible and penetrating?
- Are our worship structures simple enough for people to enter into and understand the truth of the gospel of God's Word?
- Are we developing ceremonies that are confusing and distracting people from a simple, pure devotion to Jesus Christ?

I should be asking myself personally, "Are my religious activities just an attempt to patch up my life and fill the gaps of my sinfulness so I can commend myself before God?" It sure sounds like that's what the Pharisee was doing in the temple. "God, look at me. You should pay attention to me because of what I do." Jesus says that will not fit with the new life of His Kingdom. Our religious activities need to be an expression of ardent love for our Bridegroom.

Has Jesus smashed your old wineskins of self-reliance and self-righteousness and brought you to where it thrills your soul to sing In Christ Alone because that is what you see? You are naked in yourself and trust in Him alone. He is your all in all.

When you put your offering in the plate are you ever thinking, "I hope so-and-so notices what I've just done. I hope God really favors me because of what I've just done"? Or are you thinking, "Oh Lord, You're so good. My heart is filled with thankfulness and I just want to worship You right now." When you come to the Lord's table, is it ever just a ritual for you or do you see it as Tim Keller sees it—"The hors d'oeuvres of our future bliss, whetting our appetites for the marriage supper of the Lamb"? Those are the kinds of things we need to be thinking about.

The last question I want to ask is should we be feasting or fasting? How would you answer that question? How would the early church answer that question? They both feasted and fasted. I don't believe we're in the time anymore where the Bridegroom's been taken away from us. He has returned—risen from the dead—and is reigning at the right hand of the Father. He has poured out the Holy Spirit on

our lives and Jesus Christ is with us today through His Spirit. I hope you believe that. His presence is in our midst.

But He has also gone away to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-7). So our hearts yearn for Him; we long for Him. Sometimes we lose contact and drift from Him. We start filling ourselves up with the loves of this world and we lose our love for our Heavenly Bridegroom. I think at times like that it is very appropriate and wise for us to fast. Not as the Pharisees did—out of a sense of obligation—or to commend ourselves before God but as a betrothed person who is engaged to the Bridegroom might say, “Oh Lord, I’m growing distant and pray that You would recalibrate the taste buds of my spiritual affections and make me long for You more.” Our lives are not to be marked by gloomy somberness but rather joyful eagerness. As the old hymn writer says:

And yet our joy is mixed with grief  
while faith contends with unbelief.

(From Jesus, Our Souls’ Delightful Choice by Philip Doddridge)

So sometimes we have to fast now so we can learn to feast more fully at our Bridegroom’s table.

Let’s pray for a moment and ask the Lord to cultivate in us our affections for Him. As we pray, I’m going to read a couple stanzas from an old hymn:

The Church has waited long  
Her absent Lord to see;  
And still in loneliness she waits,  
A friendless stranger she.

We long to hear Thy voice,  
To see Thee face to face,  
To share Thy crown and glory then,  
As now we share Thy grace.

Should not the loving bride  
The absent Bridegroom mourn?  
Should she not wear the weeds of grief  
Until her Lord return?

The whole creation groans  
and waits to hear that voice  
that shall restore her comeliness  
and make her ways rejoice.

Come, Lord, and wipe away  
The curse, the sin, the stain,  
And make this blighted world of ours  
Thine own fair world again.

(From The Church has Waited Long by Horatius Bonar, 1845)

Oh Heavenly Bridegroom of our souls, do within us whatever it takes to condition our taste buds—our spiritual affections—to yearn for You. Help us, Lord, when we lose sight of Your presence in

our lives to let go of anything we need to remove in order to draw more closely to You. Help us Lord, in whatever we do to remember Your Kingdom has come and You have done everything necessary to bring us righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit forever. We pray that joy would mark our lives and characterize our church—a joyful eagerness to see You face to face. Come Lord Jesus, we pray. Receive the glory for You are worthy. Amen.

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*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

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