

Then opened he their understanding

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 0 0] Well friends, let's look again at Luke chapter 23 Luke 23 and reading again at verse 44 Reading 44 and 45 It was about the sixth hour And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour And the sun was darkened And the veil of the temple was rent in their midst Want to look at that verse, 45 The sun was darkened And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst In today's church there is always a debate about what the emphasis should be in our preaching

There are a group of people who say, well there should be more emphasis on the love of God and these issues There are other people who say that the wrath of God and hell should be very much at the forefront of the preaching agenda of the church Others say, well we should delve far more into social and practical issues We should debate about various other of these things And of course there is a selection of things which are validly at the agenda or on the agenda of the church of God But I think that there is indeed one dominant issue which should always be in the very forefront of our preaching And indeed one issue which should always be at the very forefront of our discussion as believers And that is a very clear and very definite need for preaching on the cross And it's almost as if the Lord in his wisdom built in safeguards

To ensure that the church of God would return on a regular basis Back to this great theme of the cross of Calvary And when he instituted the Lord's Supper I'm sure that one of the reasons would be that the people of God Would not forget the very centrality of the Christian faith And the very core doctrine of the church of God Again there is a debate as to how often the church should celebrate the Lord's Supper Some say that the evidence suggests that the early church celebrated it at least once a week Some of the reformers argued that the Lord's Supper should never be disconnected from the word And that the two ought to go together That debate I think will continue on and on until the end of time But I think we've all agreed that Calvary should never ever be far from our gaze

There's one theologian, a man called P.T. Forsyth And he used a very interesting phrase He said that Calvary was the soul's magnetic north You know how a compass always veers towards the magnetic north There is always this bias, this tendency to go towards that place And I think that's so true of our experience That wherever we are, whatever state we are in That our soul always goes to Calvary It is grounded there in the very basis of our own spiritual lives Well this morning I want to focus on two elements of the environment of Calvary I want to look at the stopped sun and the torn curtain These words in verse 45 The darkened sun and the rent veil of the temple

As it was found round about the Calvary experience It's interesting that signs and wonders very often accompany great events in scripture We see that in the Exodus of course You see the pillar of fire And we see the cloud accompanying the people of God Moses hit the rock and the water burst forth Pentecost where there was the rushing mighty wind There was the cloven tongues above the people's heads There was the speaking in other languages That was the birth of the church That was the coming in a new way of the Holy Spirit And all these things were accompanied by great supernatural events Signs and wonders in the heavenly realms We see it in the giving of the law And here we see the sun was darkened I think even in the introduction we see almost a parallel We see here that the Son of God emptied himself

[5 : 22] The Son of God at one level was at the very lowest point He was emptied of his glory And yet it's almost as if even in that situation The Father is still revealing his majesty And so there's a simultaneous emptying of his glory Along with a highlighting of his majesty That such an event was taking place That the very sun itself was to be darkened It's almost as if heaven and earth It's almost as if heaven and earth are paying homage to the king of kings It's almost as if nature is getting together And worshipping and adoring Or at least rather responding to what is happening on the cross of Calvary I think in verse 45 that there are real parallels in the giving of the law In Mount Sinai, remember again, the mountain was darkened by a cloud

And so in the giving of the law there was there darkness There God gave man a law that he had to keep but he couldn't keep Here once again God covers a mountain with darkness Then on Sinai it was Moses alone receiving the law Now it's Jesus alone purchasing life Then on Sinai Moses shone with divine contact There Christ cried a divine abandonment And you see almost there how significant mountains are In biblical experience And how many great cataclysmic events happen In a mountain scenario and situation And again looking at the law Moses is hid in the cleft of a rock As the glory passes by Jesus is exposed on the top of a hill

As the wrath of God is poured out in him For Moses there was a cleft in the rock But for Jesus there is the exposure Not of the glory of God But of the wrath of God There we have the Son of God Taking upon himself the sin of his own people For him there was no hiding place As there was for Moses in God's grace And so this morning let's look at this incident And let's look broadly at the two scenarios Which we see First of all the darkened sun And then secondly the torn curtain Or the veil which was rent in that order Indeed the order is very important I may say by the way Some of the gospels invert the order Because remember the gospels are not giving a chronological account

The gospel writers recall things as they see them Not necessarily in order But I believe that the darkened sun came I believe that the death of Christ came first There had to be first of all expiation Jesus had to die before the curtain was torn in two But that's by the way First of all then the darkened sun What does it say?

There was a darkness over all the earth Until the ninth hour The first thing I want to look at here Are the facts of the situation Well there are again two views here Scripture says that there was a darkness Darkness over all the earth Some folk believe that that phrase All the earth is simply referring to Judea Others believe that it's referring to a darkness Which is all over the world They say that the event was so momentous That this meant that there was a universal darkness Over the whole of the world Others say well it's analogous to You know that phrase when the second world war broke out They said that the lights had gone out All over Europe And so the lights had gone out over Judea I suppose if you take the view that The sun was darkened And the whole world was plunged into darkness

[9 : 55] That points to the general impact Of the death of Jesus Whereas if you look at the focus on Judea being darkened I suppose that focuses on the events In that particular part of the world At that time The facts well We know that God stopped the sun We know that this was a supernatural Act of God This was the time of the Passover We know therefore There would have been a full moon We know also It would have been midday That was what the sixth hour was And we also know That there are two times When an eclipse is impossible You cannot have an eclipse At this time When it's full moon And when it's midday In the afternoon And so it wasn't just a coincidence It was a supernatural Act of God A friend recently loaned me a book Called the book of the universe And it's very helpful

On eclipses It said An eclipse can last From anything From a few seconds To seven and a half minutes But here The earth was plunged into darkness For several hours The writer in the book of the universe Said this Of eclipses They are of little scientific interest But they provide an attractive Easily observed example Of nature's clockwork In action And so eclipses are just like that They are like nature's clockwork Apparently we know When they will happen If you have a computer On to millions of years We know Because nature works like clockwork But here The clockwork stopped Here God intervenes Into the natural running of the world The clock is stopped The sun is stopped It is covered And the area Is plunged Into darkness

Super nature Is in harmony With super man Here we have God is doing something God is saying something Which is absolutely Remarkable So that then Are the facts Of the darkened sun Friends Secondly Let's notice The significance Of the darkened sun It says there And the sun Was darkened Why?

I believe Essentially I think that There were three reasons The first one was Because God Was judging His son Some say That this was a sign Of mourning That God was in mourning For the death Of his son An expression Of sorrow I don't think That's what the darkness Speaks of I think what is happening here Is that what is happening In Calvary's cross Is the most serious Solemn business Ever conducted In heaven Or on earth In scripture Darkness is a sign Of the judgment Of God Any Jewish schoolboy Knew that When the clouds Were darkened You read Ezekiel There The symbolism there All through Of the rolling sky And the thunder In the atmosphere And there was a darkening Because here God is dealing With sin And Jesus here

Is bearing In his own body The sin Of his own people On the cross And it was dark At noon Because Jesus Had gone outside The camp Because Jesus Was bearing Our reproach He was thrust Into the night Of the judgment Of God At one level His dealings With men Were over Or put to the side He had ministered For three years And now This was the hour The hour That we see All through the Bible And again He now deals With God And so I believe That the darkness There is firstly Because God Was judging His son What does judging Mean though?

[14 : 11] I believe That what happened Here was That God Was pouring Out his wrath On his own son Do we know About wrath? Well I think we do If you read In the book Of Revelation There's an image There It's called The seven bowls Of God's wrath And you read there The effect That the seven bowls Of God's wrath Had in the world It produced ugly And painful sores It turned the sea Into blood Every creature In the sea died The rivers Were turned into blood The people were scorched With a burning heat There was plunged Into darkness There was a plague Of earthquakes And fires And can you imagine The seven bowls Of God's wrath Causing the whole Water and the earth To turn into blood Here we have Jesus Christ As it were Drinking in The seven bowls Of God's wrath

And more It's a ghastly image During this period The seven bowls And more Are being poured Into the soul Of our saviour President Clinton Had a phrase Which he often used I feel your pain And you know We often speak About human sympathy But this is a pain That we cannot even Begin to enter into This is an experience That we cannot Even imagine There is a very Lovely liturgy In the Greek Orthodox Church And in the liturgy Of the Greek Orthodox Church There is this one Particular phrase It says this By thine own Unknown Suffering Good Lord

Deliver us An unknown Suffering We can look at The judgment In Jesus So awful That the universe Was blacked out We look at that And we say That he did that For us The judgment That was due To us Was poured Upon him He stood In our place He went Into the very Heart of the Darkness That we might Walk in light That we might Be children Of the light That we might Bask in the Glory of the Light All because He went Into the Eye of the Storm And said I will Take the Punishment Of my People Was darkness Because God Was judging His son But I think

Secondly It was also Darkness Because God Was creating His kingdom I'm interested In the parallels In this passage We read in the Very first verse In the bible Darkness Was upon the Face Of the deep And then we Have what we Call the fiat Of God That's the word Of God Comes and the Darkness Is dispelled And I think We see here Another parallel Because there Was darkness Again In the one God went Into the darkness And spoke And there was Light Light In another Case here There was Natural light And God Again went Into the Darkness And created Light Once again He is creating Isn't he Because the Darkness

Went It was a Limited darkness And he was Creating a Kingdom He was creating A new People He was creating A kingdom Made up of Rebels Men and Women Like us What are we Doing here Someone had Said to many Of us Five years Ago You will be In Kenneth Street Sitting at The Lord's Table If anyone Had said To you The day Will come When you Will be In this Place And you Will be Listening To preaching You would Have said You must Be mad That God Is building A kingdom Isn't he In a sense Just as The first World was Built He's building A second Kingdom And by the Light of the Knowledge of The glory Of God It's about To shine Exclusion For him Meant Inclusion For us

[19:17] And so the Darkness speaks Firstly of Judgment The darkness I think Speaking Speaks Secondly of Creation There was a Darkness Over all The earth Can you Imagine the Weird change In the World Remember the Eclipse Last year We didn't See it so Well up here But in the South of England How all These people Gathered in Devon and Cornwall And how Eerie it Must have Been How unnatural People were Talking It was in All the News Papers Folk were In aeroplanes Chasing the Eclipse Because it Was such a Talking point And I think That one only Lasted for a Couple of Minutes Shaking of The Shaking of

The earth There was a Darkness All around What was so awful That would cause this? When there is Darkness How awful was our Sin When it caused This What was so awful That only the Death of the Son of God Would appease it?

What was so awful Was my sin? What was so awful Was your sin? Sin was a real Problem And that's the Only way it Could be dealt With And we can Apply that Many of us Are light About our own Sin We say Well it's no Big hassle God will Forgive That's his Job And we We We run With our sin Ever so lightly But our sin Caused darkness Our sin Caused the death Of the Son of God Near us A few years ago A young boy Was killed Tragically With a shotgun He's playing With it And it went off You know what I was told I was told

I was told I was told that his Father Went into the house They lived beside In the Murray Firth And he got The shotgun And he swung it By the barrel And someone Who said this Said that they Had never seen Anything like it In their life And with almost A superhuman Power He threw The gun And it plunged Into the very Depths Because he Hated that It was an Instrument That killed His son It was an Instrument That had brought Havoc into His life In a split Second This gun Had destroyed The life Of his own Dear son How do we Feel then About sin Do we feel That we want Rid of it Do we feel That we hate it Is it something That we Metaphorically Would take And throw Into the darkest Ocean And yet We find here That our sin Is so awful Not that it's

Thrown into The very Deepest ocean But it is Taken by the Loveliest person The son of God And so the Practical Outworking of That is That we learn To hate Our sin Because this Is what it Did How can we Cherish sin How can we Caress it In our lives Because it Did such Damage It is the Enemy We must Loathe it Above all Else The wonder Is God Speaking to Us this Morning About our Own sin I don't Want to Enter into Some sort Of Manipulative Guilt trip That's not What it's About It's about Honestly Saying this Is my Sin I'm bringing It to the Saviour Because he Wants to Deal with It And so The darkness Would have Shown everyone

[23 : 48] All around How awful Sin was Now isn't It amazing That not Perhaps not So amazing Have you ever Wondered why Everybody Round the Cross of Calvary Was not Converted If you Saw the Graves And Stornily Open And the Dead Rise If the Sun was Darkened For Three Hours Would you Not say That God Was in The throne Would you Not fall Down Those of You Even who Are unconverted Would that Not convince You The bible Says No Because even If someone Come back From the Dead Many Would not Be persuaded Because there Was not Only darkness In the Elements There was Darkness In the Hearts The fact Of the Darkened Sun The significance Of the Darkened Sun The judgment Of God The creation

Of a kingdom And the Proclamation Of the Gospel The sun Was darkened But something Else happened And the Veil of The temple Was rent In the Midst Again two Things First of All the Sign You see a Sign in Earth Followed by A sign In heaven I think it's Matthew who Says that The curtain The veil Was torn From top To bottom Would seem To indicate A very Clear Heavenly Tear Now I Don't think I need to Go into This in Great depth With a Congregation Like this But in The temple You all know That there Was an Inner sanctuary And part Of it Was sealed Off with A very Heavy Curtain There are Tremendous Visual aids In the Old Testament The Old Testament Is highly Visual And so There we Have the Holy of

Holies Sealed off With a Very Heavy Curtain It was a Very Mysterious Place Hebrews 9 7 Says That the High Priest Went in Once a Year Never Without Blood And you Know If there's A place That we Are not Allowed To go It creates A sense Of mystery A sense Of mystique And how Much more Was this Place That very Few Men Had even Seen The High Priest Once a Year Never Without Blood Yes In a Sense It Symbolized The Presence Of God Leon Morris Says I think It Was Access By Proxy As the High Priest Entered Into The Holy Of Holies To Offer Sacrifice For His People It Was An Intimidating Place It Screamed Distance It Screamed Separation It Screamed Exclusivity It

Screamed Stay Away This Is The Holy Of Holies This Is An Awesome Place And So Many People Would Have Spoken About The Holy Of Holies I Don't Know Would Have Asked The High Priest What Is It Like In There What Is The Sense There I Don't Believe■li Theins that the high priest Caiaphas very often came and he performed a very solemn act he would burn incense before the the veil of the temple and some suggest that at the very time that the temple that the veil was rent that the high priest was in that environment there he saw it with his own eyes again do you see the irony there Caiaphas who said I tell you he said to Jesus I charge you on the road with the living God are you the Christ the son of the living God and Jesus replies yes then the high priest tore his clothes and said he has spoken blasphemy the high priest tore his clothes at the presence of perceived lies God tears the temple curtain in the presence of revealed truth we see there almost a visual aid of the difference between the truth of Caiaphas and the truth of God so there these are the facts but then briefly what about the significance what does it say the temple was rent in the midst I don't know about you but I have a real desire to go into forbidden places sometimes I love going to cathedrals perhaps maybe there's a closet Anglican in me but I go to these cathedrals and very often the pulpits are roped off and if I see something roped off there is this desire to cross over to see it to feel it you go to St Giles you you want to mount the pulpit and look around but it's all it's all it's all roped off there is a sense of there are forbidden places but in an awesome way the holy of holies was really forbidden and then all of a sudden God takes it tears and exposes it what did this do

I believe again I think it did three things firstly it brought assurance Hebrew says let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience this was a curtain which in a manner of speaking hid God it's a visual aid and before it had screamed when you approached it are you sure are you authorized are you the right person can you come near is this the right day do you have blood the curtain symbolized prohibition the curtain the curtain symbolized restriction there would have been fear to approach the holy of holies rightly so because God had said that and now there was a change there was freedom now we gather around the communion table there is no temple anymore at least a stone structured temple in the days of the curtain the message was you have no right to enter the message today is come right in the message then was stay away the message now is come near with freedom because Jesus allows you in it brought assurance the message to the Lord's the message to the Lord's the message to the Lord's that there is that there is that there is and the reasons for this are quite complex but many people perceive that in order to come to the Lord's table you must be absolutely fully assured. To use a military attitude, a military example, the Lord's table is for the

[32 : 14] SAS, it's for the elite, it's for those who have made it through all the degrees, it's for those of us who are sure and confident, who have no doubts whatsoever. First of all, does such a person exist? Secondly, the Lord's Supper brings and helps assurance, it strengthens, it's not for those who are already full, it's for those who want to be full, it's not for those who have arrived, it's for those who are on the pilgrimage. It brought assurance, but then secondly it brought access.

The key verse is Hebrews 10 19, it says we can enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus. The old order of Judaism has been done away with. There is a new in the living way, shadow lands is in the past, the lights have come on, Jesus has died. John Calvin has a lovely way of putting it, he says this, we need no longer stand at a distance in the porch any longer, we may freely advance into the very presence of God. Let me illustrate it. When I was growing up I had a boyhood hero. He was a year older than me, he was called Graham Bell and really I idolised Graham.

But there was a problem. In those days in the 60s, very few mothers where we lived worked, but Graham's mother worked. And Graham had a child minder. And I would go round to Graham's house and Graham had a house and that that house had a porch. It was a fairly big porch but nevertheless it was a porch. And I knew Graham for months and months and I never get in the porch. I knew his house was exciting. I could hear noises in the background.

One day I went to Graham's house and we were on the porch. And he said my mum's home today. The child minder's not here, my mum's with us. We still played on the porch. And I remember it as clear as anything, she was baking.

And I could get smells of something happening in the kitchen. There was a sense of warmth. His mother was singing. There was a noise of kitchen utensils. There was in a sense, I knew that in the depths of the house there was something going on.

[35 : 37] I could hear the faint noises. I could get the occasional smell. I could get a sense of action. How I wanted to go into that house. But we were still on the porch. And I'd never seen his mother before.

Then she came to the door. She smiled. I said, Graham, who's the wee boy? Graham said, that's David.

Their face looked up, bring him in. And they brought me in. I was going into Graham's house. And he brought me right through the house. Into the kitchen.

And boy, could she bake. There was everything there. The table was laden. It was a paradise. And she was a very warm woman. And she spoke to this little boy.

And she made it at home. For months I had been in the porch. But now I was admitted into the centre of the house. Friends, that's what we are like.

[36 : 49] Under the law, in a sense, in the Old Testament, we saw the shadows. We got the smells. We got the types. We got the signs. But we didn't see the reality. We knew that in the future, something was going to happen.

The people of God, perhaps in a shadowy way, knew that the day would come when all these bulls would stop being sacrificed. There would be a day come when the high priest would be made redundant.

There would be a coming day when all the ritual of the temple would be put in the background. Why? Because there would be a new and a living way.

And that's why we're here today. Because the veil of the temple has been rent. Because we are in a new and a living way. Shadowland is behind.

We bask in the glory of the light. The old Jewish ways. They had been a childminder for so long. But now the father beckons.

[37 : 50] He says, come on in. The rent veil. This marvellous signal brought assurance.

It brought access. Then thirdly and finally and very briefly, it brought mission. Some writers write, you know, these contemporary academics.

They like to see things in scripture all the time. And there is a school of contemporary academia. It says, Luke is anti-temple. Luke is against the temple and the structures of the temple.

Nothing of a sword. You read his second volume. Acts. Luke is pro-temple. Paul is pro-temple. Jesus is pro-temple. They used it. And the early church used the temple.

But there was a difference. Up until then, Jerusalem was the centre. The tribes were called to go to Jerusalem.

[38 : 54] From now on, the people of God would be called to go from Jerusalem. That was a change.

Well, friends, this morning, history says the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

All these things happened in order that we, this morning, can sit in the glorious light.

And I pray that God will switch on his light and that we'll see him and his son in all his beauty.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

[40 : 04] Let's pray.

And to his grace. Amen. Let's sing to God's praise in Psalm 91.

Psalm 91 at verse 5. The tune is for.

Psalm 91 verse 5. Thou shalt not need to be afraid.

For terrors of the night. Nor for the arrow that doth fly by day while it is light. Nor for the pestilence that doth not for the pestilence that doth waste at noonday openly.

[41 : 32] Psalm 91. Psalm 91 from verse 5 to verse 5 to verse 5. The tune is for. Thou shalt not need to be afraid.

The tune is for. The tune is for.

The tune is for. The tune is for. Nor for the heart of God, that my King were in His sight.

Nor for the best servants that watch in darkness, keep them here.

Nor for the structure of the grace that would be holy.

- [42 : 51] Nor for the best servants that watch in darkness, nor for the best servants that watch in darkness, nor for the best servants that watch in darkness.
- Day, the void of life, the good of world chains.
- Oh Oh Oh
- Well friends we will be coming shortly to the Lord's table and just one or two words traditionally known as the fencing of the Lord's table.
- So they will be brief words because I do feel that in a congregation such as this there will be few if any unaware of the significance of the Lord's table.
- [45 : 43] Those of you who work in the world of computers are familiar with the concept of FAQs. The FAQ is what are called frequently asked questions.
- Whenever you come across something new you first of all go to the FAQs the frequently asked questions. And in a sense the Lord's table the fencing of the Lord's table are a series of FAQs.
- Let's go through a variety of them one by one this afternoon. First of all is the Lord's table for everyone.
- The answer is no. The scriptures say that those who will benefit from the Lord's table must be able to discern the Lord's body.
- At a most basic level they must be Christians. A Christian is someone who has experienced what we call the new birth, the second birth.
- [46 : 59] They have been born again. People often look at evangelicalism and they disparagingly speak of those born again Christians.
- There is no other type. That is how we access the kingdom of God with all its privileges.
- Not simply by coming within the building but by coming under the blood. By in our own lives recognizing that Jesus Christ is my savior.
- That he has died where I should have died. That he has taken the wrath and curse of God which is due to me. And so we discern the Lord's body.
- We know why he died. That we are able to say he loved me and gave himself for me. It is only Christians who have to take the Lord's supper.
- [48 : 04] There is an argument. I don't think it's especially strong. But there is an argument which says that the Lord's body is the church. I think though there is a degree of helpfulness in there.
- In that if we are to come to the Lord's table we must have a strong view of the church as a body. That we are coming for communion with one another and fellowship with one another.
- The church is a very strong concept in scripture. And those who perhaps not in this context but in another context fail to discern the Lord's body.
- Fail to appreciate the seriousness which comes from keeping a unity of the people of God. So is the table for everyone?
- No. It is only for the Lord's people. And it is only for those who are able to discern the Lord's body. Who see the benefits and privileges of being part of the church of God.
- [49 : 13] Second FAQ is will harm come to those who eat and drink unworthily? Will harm come to those who eat and drink unworthily?
- The answer is yes. Harm may and probably will come. Why? We all know about the perhaps unfortunate translation of the AV which speaks of damnation.

The word is far better translated judgment. What the word there is saying basically to whom much has been given much shall be required.

The Lord's Supper is a tremendous privilege. And those of us who take it are privileged. And if we take it without having, if you pardon the colloquial language, a clue about what it's all about.

Then the element of judgment is heightened. Because we have been exposed to a privilege. But we don't really know what it's all about.

[50 : 17] A third FAQ is, is it for the very strong? I dealt with that very briefly earlier on. And I would like to say the opposite is the case.

Those who benefit are weak. And those who benefit most are those who feel their weakness.

I want to crush the mythology that says that the Lord's Supper is only for those who have attained a degree of full assurance.

Our standards say that many of the Lord's people wrestle long and hard with their status before God. We even saw that yesterday in our preparatory service where we looked at Simon and Simon Peter.

Where he cast down the nets. And I think we made the point that Simon Peter wasn't all that convinced that he should do it. He wasn't all that sure it was the right thing to do.

[51 : 23] He wasn't even sure if Jesus was right in that situation. But he did it. And there is a tremendous blessing to obedience.

You go to work each morning, many of you, you don't feel like it. But you do it. And you go and you're rewarded. You get a salary. And sometimes even you enjoy your work.

There is a serendipity of enjoyment. Things that we do simply out of duty. Duty is not necessarily a bad thing. Duty is a good thing.

And so we come with our lack of assurance. And the Lord's Supper strengthens us. Is the Lord's Table for every single Christian?

Well, I think the Lord would want us all to have a lifestyle which is in harmony with the Lord's Table. And there are perhaps times when our lifestyle is not what it should be.

[52 : 25] That we are living in open, fragrant sin. And we are unwilling to repent of that. How do you know who is a Christian?

How do you know who is a worldling? How do you know an apple tree is an apple tree? Because you get apples from it. How do you know a Christian is a Christian? Because they bear fruit.

An apple tree may be wrongly named. It may be named a raspberry tree. But if it bears apples, it's an apple tree. There are many people in this building, perhaps not even at the Lord's Table.

And you show the fruit of the Lord in your life. You love his day. You love his word. You love his people. You should be at the Lord's Table. But there are distinctive lifestyle choices which we should all make.

And we read about them in the Scriptures. I'm just going to read a few words from Galatians 5, which speaks of the characteristics of the unconverted.

[53 : 32] Galatians 5.

Very interesting list. Galatians 5. Galatians 5. Galatians 5. Galatians 5. Galatians 6. But if he be led of the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, they are clear, which are these.

Adultery. Fornication. Uncleaness. Lasciviousness. Idolatry. Witchcraft.

Hatred. Variance. Emulations. Wrath. strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders. Isn't that interesting how envying is put beside murder? We envy your neighbor's lifestyle, but here it's beside murder. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If these are lifestyle choices which you're happy in and you're reveling, then they are signs that you're not a genuine believer. But I think many of us, all of us are guilty of these things, but we do not like them.

They repel us, that's a different matter. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law.

[55 : 43] And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. There was once a farmer in the Appalachian mountains in the USA and he had two dogs. And they were always fighting. And the tourist said, which dog wins? And he said, the one I feed the most. And that is so true of a Christian's experience.

When there is a civil war working within us, the flesh and the Spirit, which one wins? The one we feed the most. And we pray that our spirit will be fed this morning to enable us to be fighting fit.

This, we believe, is the teaching of the Lord. We now sing to God's praise in Psalm 118.

Psalm 118. And we will begin singing at verse 15. The elements will be laid before us.

In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody. In joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

[57 : 24] The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. I shall not die but live. And shall the works of God discover.

The Lord hath me chastised sore but not to death given over. And have set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness. Then will I enter into them and I the Lord will bless.

Psalm 118. From verse 15. In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody. In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody.

O joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly.

The right hand of the mighty Lord. The right hand of the mighty Lord. The right hand of the mighty Lord.

[58 : 44] Exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord.

Amen. Amen.

This is the gate of God I live, the trust shall enter in.

The will I raise for the weepers, and how's my safety be?

Amen. Amen. Well, friends, the scriptures say, For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.

[61 : 10] For the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, Take it, this is my body, which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This cup is a New Testament in my blood, this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me.

For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. For whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. This is the word of God. We bow our heads as we pray.

I in the heavens high, but be o Lord, O Lord. As we pray, I sense your presence this day.

[62 : 29] We pray that these elements would be used for the upbuilding of the people of God. And as they are as it were set apart from our secular, our spiritual use.

We pray your very real blessing upon them, upon all those who will eat the supper, and take away all our sins. Amen.

Friends, I don't want to take a long time because I do believe that words should be short at this stage. I just want to read one verse of the Bible, Matthew 27 and 29.

There's no need to look it up. And when they had plated a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head. And they read in his right hand and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.

They plated a crown of thorns and put it upon his head. Have you ever dined with a monarch?

[63 : 55] I suppose that a few of you have perhaps met Her Majesty and indeed what an experience that is to be in the presence of our Queen.

If you have never before ate with a monarch, you are about to eat with a monarch today.

King of kings, the Lord of lords invites you to a meal he has prepared in this place just now.

Monarchs wear crowns. Monarchs wear crowns. Our monarch wore a crown. It was a bitter, sweet crown, wasn't it?

Sweet because it was a crown. Bitter because it was a crown of thorns. We read of thorns first of all in the Bible.

[64 : 59] In Genesis chapter 3, verse 18. The world was cursed. One of the signs of the curse was that thorns would be widespread over the earth.

The sign of the cursed ground. The soldiers at the cross that day did more than they knew. They took the thorns from the ground.

They would have put it in a circle, huge big thorns like nails. They would have pressed it into his head. The blood, we believe, would have ran down his face.

They did more than they knew. The symbol of the curse was laid in his head.

Thorns mingled with the blood. They did more than they knew. Because...