Message Two

Life—the Way to Fulfill God's Purpose

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14; John 1:4; 10:10b; 14:6a; 7:38; 12:24

I. God's original intention according to His economy was that man should eat of the tree of life—Gen. 2:9, 16; Rev. 2:7:

A. The tree of life typifies Christ who imparts life to man and who pleases and satisfies man—Gen. 2:9; John 14:6a; 10:10b; cf. 15:1; Exo. 15:25.

B. The symbolism in Genesis of the tree of life finds its explanation and fulfillment in the Gospel of John:

1. The Gospel of John reveals Christ as the fulfillment of the figure of the tree of life; Christ is the life, and He is a tree, a vine tree; hence, He is the tree of life—14:6; 15:5.
2. The fact that Christ said in John 6 that He is the bread of life indicates that He has come to us as the tree of life in the form of food—vv. 35, 57, 63.

C. Christ as the tree of life is the center of the universe and the focal point of the entire Bible:

1. According to the purpose of God, the earth is the center of the universe, the garden of Eden is the center of the earth, and the tree of life is the center of the garden of Eden; hence, the universe is centered on the tree of life—Zech. 12:1; Gen. 2:7-9.
2. The Old Testament begins with the tree of life (Gen. 2:9), and the New Testament ends with the tree of life (Rev. 22:2, 14); thus, the thought of God being man's life runs through the entire divine revelation.

D. God's desire for man to express Him in His image and rule in Him with His dominion can be realized only by God's life; life is the way to fulfill God's purpose—Gen. 2:7-12, 22:

1. Life conforms the believers to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God and brings us into glory—Rom. 8:2, 6, 29; Col. 3:4.
2. Resurrection life gives authority—Num. 17:8; Rev. 20:4.

E. Eating the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life—2:7.

F. What the church needs today is the ministry of life; life is the only means, the only way, for the church to be built up—Rom. 8:10, 6, 11; 1 John 5:16a.

II. The Lord's recovery today is in the time of the mending ministry of John, mending the rents in the church by the ministry of life for God's building in life—Matt. 4:21; John 1:4; 10:10b; 14:6a; 1:51; 2:19-22; 14:2-3, 23:

A. The Gospel of John reveals life's principle, life's purpose, and life meeting the need of every man's case, issuing in a house of feasting for God's building:

1. Life's principle is to change death into life; the meaning of all the cases recorded in this Gospel corresponds with the principle that the tree of life results in life and the tree of knowledge results in death—2:1-11.
2. Life's purpose is to build the house of God—vv. 12-22.
3. Life meets the need of every man's case:

a. The need of the moral is life's regenerating—2:23—3:36.
b. The need of the immoral is life's satisfying—4:1-42.
c. The need of the dying is life's healing—vv. 43-54.
d. The need of the impotent is life's enlivening—5:1-47.
e. The need of the hungry is life's feeding—6:1-71.
f. The need of the thirsty is life's quenching—7:1-52.
g. The need of those under the bondage of sin is life's setting free—7:53—8:59.
h. The need of the blind in religion is life's sight and life's shepherding—9:1—10:42.
i. The need of the dead is life's resurrecting—11:1-57.

4. Life's issue is the church life as a house of feasting for God's building as the house of the Father, the universal vine tree of the Son, and the new man of the Spirit—12:1-11; 14:2-3, 23; 15:1-8, 16; 16:13-15, 21.

B. The Gospel of John reveals that we can enjoy the Lord as our abundant life to be men of life—10:10b:
1. We can breathe in Christ as the breath of life—20:22.
2. We can drink Christ as the water of life—7:37-39; 4:10, 14.
3. We can eat Christ as the bread of life—6:35, 57, 63, 68.
4. We can walk in Christ as the light of life—8:12.
5. We can abide in Christ as the vine tree, the tree of life—15:5; 14:6a.

C. The Gospel of John reveals that we need to carry out the revelation of God's eternal economy, not in the way of work but in the way of life:
1. The Lord Jesus sowed Himself as a seed of life and fell into the ground as a grain of wheat so that the life within Him might be released to bring forth many grains; we need to serve Him and follow Him in this way—Matt. 13:3; John 12:23-26; 10:11; 1 John 3:16.
2. The work that the Lord needs to produce and increase the church is the overflow and outflow of the inner life, not the endeavor of outward activity—John 7:37-39; 4:10, 14:
a. The important thing regarding our work is not its quantity but its quality; gold, silver, and precious stones are always small in quantity but high in quality, whereas wood, grass, and stubble are always high in quantity but low in quality—1 Cor. 3:12-15:
(1) Gold symbolizes God's nature, silver symbolizes Christ's redemptive work, and precious stones symbolize the Spirit's transforming work.
(2) Wood signifies human nature, grass signifies man in the flesh, and stubble signifies lifelessness.
b. We will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ not according to the quantity but according to the quality of our work, "of what sort it is"—v. 13.
c. "Because Watchman Nee was not interested in the outward work, the life-issue of his ministry has flowed throughout the whole earth….In my whole life, he is the only person I have known who paid more attention to life than to work" (*Watchman Nee—A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age,* by Witness Lee, p. 87).

© Living Stream Ministry