

Message Three

**The Issue of Life—
the Church Life as a House of Feasting for God's Building**

Scripture Reading: John 12:1-11

- I. Life meets the need of every man's case to build the house of God—John 2:18-22:**
- A. The need of the moral is life's regenerating—3:3, 6, 14-16, 29-30, 34.
 - B. The need of the immoral is life's satisfying—4:4-7, 10, 13-18, 24, 28-29, 34.
 - C. The need of the dying is life's healing—vv. 46-47, 50-53.
 - D. The need of the impotent is life's enlivening—5:2-3, 5-9, 17, 19, 25-26, 30, 39-40.
 - E. The need of the hungry is life's feeding—6:5-13, 32-33, 35, 48-51, 57, 63.
 - F. The need of the thirsty is life's quenching—7:37-39.
 - G. The need of those under the bondage of sin is life's setting free:
 - 1. Who is without sin—8:1-9?
 - 2. Who can condemn and forgive sin—vv. 10-11?
 - 3. Who can set people free from sin—vv. 12, 24, 28-30, 32, 36?
 - 4. Who is the source of sin, and who is the multiplication of sin—vv. 37-44?
 - 5. Who is Jesus—vv. 45-46, 57-58?
 - H. The need of the blind in religion is life's sight and life's shepherding—9:1, 6-7, 24-25, 35-41; 10:9-16, 27-30.
 - I. The need of the dead is life's resurrecting—11:1-6, 8-16, 21-28, 32-33, 38-44.
- II. The issue of life is the church life as a house of feasting—12:1-11:**
- A. The house of feasting is produced by the resurrection life; the church is the produce of the resurrection life—11:43-44; Col. 2:13; Eph. 1:19-23.
 - B. The house of feasting is outside of religion; it was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper—John 12:1; Mark 14:3; cf. John 11:53, 57; 12:10-11:
 - 1. If the Lord has mercy on us and if His Spirit opens our eyes, we shall see that what God is doing in the universe is not merely to make people worship Him or serve Him; in this age God's desire and intention are to come into man in the Son, by His Spirit, and through His Word to be man's life so that man might live because of Him.
 - 2. This is absolutely different from religion and from the religious concept; religion with its doctrines, forms, rituals, and regulations does not have the presence of Christ and is the enemy of life.
 - C. In Bethany there was a home where the Lord could stay, rest, feast, and be satisfied; after the Jewish religion had rejected Him, He always left Jerusalem to stay in Bethany—vv. 1-2; Matt. 21:17-18.
 - D. The church is composed of cleansed sinners as represented by Simon the leper; he must have been healed by the Lord—Mark 14:3; Matt. 26:6:
 - 1. Being grateful to the Lord and loving Him, he spread a feast in his house for the Lord and His disciples in order to enjoy His presence; a saved sinner would always do this.
 - 2. The Lord has raised us from the dead and cleansed us from our sins; now where we are becomes the meeting place of the church.
 - E. Outwardly, the church may be poor and afflicted; inwardly, however, everything in the church is precious, sweet, and dear because we are rich with the enjoyment of the Lord's presence; we are with the Lord, and the Lord is with us—cf. 1:23; Ezek. 48:35b.

- F. Inwardly, the church life is a life of feasting in and with the presence of the Lord—John 12:2; Psa. 16:11; Acts 3:20a:
1. In the church life the first thing that we need is the Lord's presence; without the Lord's presence the church life is empty—Psa. 27:4.
 2. It is in the church that we and the Lord have rest, enjoyment, and satisfaction; here there is always a feast prepared for the Lord and His people.
 3. The church is a place where the Lord can enjoy Himself with His people and where His people can enjoy being with Him; it is a place where the Lord and His people come together to feast with one another and enjoy one another.
- G. In principle, a living church has more sisters than brothers—John 12:2-3.
- H. In the church life there are different functions: the functions of serving, testifying, and loving:
1. The serving function is represented by Martha (v. 2); we all must change our concept of Martha and not look down on her:
 - a. We must have some Marthas who are diligent, capable, active, living, and practical in the Lord.
 - b. In the church service the first function needed is to serve by taking care of certain practical affairs.
 2. The testifying function is represented by Lazarus—vv. 2, 9-11:
 - a. Lazarus was a living testimony and a witness to the power of the Lord's resurrection life.
 - b. This testimony gives people the feeling of resurrection power, the manifestation of resurrection life, and the enjoyment of the Lord as life.
 3. The loving function is represented by Mary (vv. 2-3); she represents the dear ones who love the Lord to the uttermost and who pour out what they hold most precious upon the Lord:
 - a. Her estimate of the Lord was that He was more valuable and lovable than anything else.
 - b. Anointing the Lord with our best love is the main expression, aspect, and characteristic of the church life.
 - c. "The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment" (v. 3b); the church here is likened to a house that is filled with the preciousness, the sweetness, and the pleasantness of the aroma of the ointment poured upon the Lord Jesus—cf. 2 Kings 4:9; 2 Cor. 2:15; Lev. 1:13.
 - d. Judas and the other disciples considered Mary's love offering to the Lord a waste—Matt. 26:8-13; John 12:4-6:
 - (1) Throughout the past centuries thousands of precious lives, heart treasures, high positions, and golden futures have been "wasted" upon the Lord Jesus.
 - (2) To those who love Him in such a way, He is altogether lovely and worthy of their offering.
 - (3) What they have poured upon Him is not a waste but a fragrant testimony of His sweetness.
 - e. The believers in Christ should have a change in their concept of value; Christ Himself is the preciousness to His believers—1 Pet. 2:7; Phil. 3:8-9; Matt. 23:16-26; 1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 16:15; 9:54-56; 1 Pet. 3:4:
 - (1) The proper concept of value for the believers can be seen in their estimation and assessment of the following aspects of Christ and His full salvation:

- (a) Their valuation of the Lord Jesus—Psa. 118:22; 1 Pet. 2:7.
 - (b) Their valuation of the word of the cross—1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18.
 - (c) Their valuation of God’s kingdom and righteousness in comparison to a man’s daily necessities—Matt. 6:32-33; 2 Pet. 1:1, 11; 2:5; 3:13.
 - (d) Their valuation of the Lord Jesus in comparison to their relatives—Matt. 10:37-38; Luke 18:26-30; 1 Pet. 1:1, 17; 2:11a.
 - (e) Their valuation of a man’s soul in comparison to the whole world—Matt. 16:26; 4:8-11; Rev. 18:13; 1 Pet. 4:19.
 - (f) Their valuation of their body in comparison to the seriousness and consequence of sin—Matt. 18:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:10-13.
 - (g) Their valuation of hierarchical position in comparison to being slaves of the Lord and to one another—Matt. 20:25-27; 1 Pet. 2:16; 2 Pet. 1:1.
 - (h) Their valuation of Christ as the treasure of justice in comparison to earthly treasure—Job 22:23-28; Matt. 12:18-21; Isa. 42:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:18-20.
 - (i) Their valuation of the enjoyment of sin in comparison to the unseen reward—Heb. 11:24-27; 1 Pet. 1:8-12; 2 Pet. 1:8-11; 2:20-22.
 - (j) Their valuation of the knowledge of Christ in comparison to all things—Phil. 3:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:2-3, 8; 2:20; 3:18.
- (2) We need to ask the Lord to grant us the light to have a thorough change in our concept of value so that we will continually choose Christ and all that He is as our super-excelling portion—Mark 9:7-8; 2 Cor. 2:10; 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:8.
- (3) “If you bring out the precious from the worthless, / You will be as My mouth”—Jer. 15:19; cf. v. 16:
- (a) We must treasure the Lord’s words more than our apportioned food, tasting the Lord in His word as the reality of the good land flowing with nourishing milk and fresh honey for us to dispense to God’s people for their full salvation—Job 23:12; 1 Pet. 2:2-5; Psa. 119:103; Exo. 3:8; Deut. 8:8; S. S. 4:11a.
 - (b) We must treasure the Lord’s words more than all earthly riches so that we can speak oracles of God to dispense the unsearchable riches of Christ as the varied grace of God—Psa. 119:72, 9-16; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:10-11.
4. We all must be a triangular member of the church—a “Martha-Lazarus-Mary”; this is the proper name for all of us to have:
- a. In the church life there must be the diligent service for the Lord, the living testimony of the resurrection life of the Lord, and the absolute love poured out upon the Lord.
 - b. In the real church life the service to the Lord is rendered, the testimony of the Lord is seen, and the love toward the Lord is poured out; this is the real expression of the Body of the Lord, which is a vessel to contain the Lord and to express Him.