

WCCC 2017

His Wife Has Made Herself Ready (2)

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Matthew 24:32 – 33 Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

Matthew 25:5 – 6 Now while the bridegroom was delaying; they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

2 Peter 3:3 – 4 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of the creation.'

2 Peter 3:9 – 14 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.

Revelation 22:10 – 17 And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 'Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.' 'Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.' Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside

are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. 'I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.' The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

Our Father, we thank You once again on the last night of the conference that we can gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We hear the word of God wooing us. We sing the hymn asking You to come. We gather as those who will be Your bride and say 'Come, Lord Jesus'. We pray every one who hears these messages and whose heart is being touched will follow You wherever You go until they come to the marriage feast of the Lamb. We pray that You will help us tonight to understand more of our precious privilege as Your betrothed bride. We pray in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Last night we went with John as he was invited by the Spirit up to see the rejoicing in heaven because of the marriage of the Lamb. By the Spirit we were privileged to hear all of heaven resounding with great joy and glory to God because the marriage of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready. From heaven's perspective, it is already done. There is so much rejoicing. The wedding feast has begun.

Tonight, we read Revelation 22, where the Lord brought John back down to earth. Down here on earth the bride has not yet gathered for the wedding feast. But the bride was listening as the Lord said, 'Behold I am coming quickly'. The Spirit and the bride called to Him, 'Come, come'. This is our position as we live here on earth. It was a great desire of the apostle John to see the wedding feast in heaven. According to the word of God, he knew these things would come to pass. The Lord will give us such heavenly vision to encourage us as well. It will be done. In one sense, as always when we see great revelation of the finished work of the Lord, we start with faith and say, 'It is finished. We are the bride. The feast has come.' Then base on this faith in the finished work, we prepare ourselves as the bride for the wedding. Our dear brother Stephen said our Lord can come any time. The feast will soon begin. I hope it even comes tonight. I love a Chinese feast. All

of us will gather around one big round table. But we do not know when that moment will be.

In heaven, everything is finished. The angels are saying 'praise God, give glory to God'. But it is down here on earth where we seem to have problems. Everything is fine in heaven. But down here we struggle. It seems as if we are talking about two different worlds. We hear from the heavenlies, 'I am coming quickly'. Yet we know the reality here on earth as we read 2 Peter 3. There are many here on earth even so-called Christians say, 'Where is the coming of the Lord? Nothing has really changed. Everything is going on as usual'. Up in heaven, the coming is praised. Down on earth, His coming is doubted. Unfortunately, many Christians have taken the practical view. They say to themselves, 'I do not know when all of these things in heaven will take place. So I am going to live as in the days of Noah. I am going to eat. I am going to drink. I am going to college. I am going to get married. I am going to get fat. I am going to die.'

We seem to have these two realms – the heavenly and the earthly. We read that heavenly passage from Matthew. When you see Israel's fig tree ripens, then you know His appearing is at the doors. Now why is it that some Christians feel that He is right at the door and He is so near, yet others almost ignore this reality. I asked our brother Ed if we can sing this hymn 'Since Long Ago' because we see a brother who felt that the coming of the Lord is so near. Even as we sang this hymn tonight, to some it is just sentimental. But to others who know the Lord, it touches them deeply. You see you cannot really fake that you want the Lord to come back. You have to have a transaction with the Lord to where you know Him and see Him and are captured by Him. Those are the ones who feel the sentiment in this hymn.

We have been sharing all this weekend the wonderful heavenly truth of the Lamb and the bride. But why do we have such a hard time believing? Is it like as if you are getting engrossed in a book when you are reading it, and suddenly you close it and you come back to the real life? Do we open the Bible, live in make belief, and then close it and live our real life? I want to talk to those people who struggle on this very issue of the heavenly life and the earthly life. I want to try to answer the question of why today this is such a struggle for us.

I notice we have a number of young people here as well as some new Christians. We have been sharing on deep matters of the throne, eternal Lamb and all these things. But there is a reason that to many Christians these things seem so remote. The reason is this: the church of Laodicea has altogether lost its connection with heaven. Let me put it in another way, the church across the world in these last days has lost its heavenly connection. But still the Lord is trying to break into this world with the heavenly connection.

According to the Bible, we know that everyone in this world lives under the sun. We live tonight in PDT, Pacific Daylight Time. Our chronos, our watches are set to the rotation of this earth around the sun. This world we live in as Jesus said is an unbelieving and perverse generation. The world is full of unbelief. It infects the church as well. I just heard that some young brothers on the West Coast decided that the resurrection of Jesus is not really true. I know these young brothers when they were growing up. Now they have eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Such kind of doubt and unbelief cut them off from heaven. Still the Lord is merciful. He breaks in from heaven every time someone is born again. They are born into the kingdom of heaven. They just get a little taste of heavenly reality. So they live under the sun in this world, but they sense another time zone in their life KTZ, Kingdom Time zone. Now we walk on this earth as Christians, but we have a heavenly component in our heart as we sense eternity there.

We see how the church was created by Jesus' death and resurrection. As we look through the gospels, the Acts, and the epistles, we see the church was indeed on earth but was well connected to heaven. So Paul could write to the Philippians, and said you were citizens of heaven who eagerly waited for the coming of the Lord. The Thessalonians were going through persecutions on earth, but they were expecting intensely the coming of the Lord. There was a certain irony here. The church was connected to heaven even though it had nothing here on earth. Back then in the days of the New Testament, there were no church building. There were no professional leaders. They had no money. They had no status in this world. Yet they never were richer. They were rich in grace. They were rich in the power of heaven. They were rich in prayer being answered. They were rich in visions of their Lord. They were rich in love. That is the church when it is connected with heaven. It may be despised by those in the world, but it is rich in every way.

I am sure you heard the story of Thomas Aquinas and his visit to Vatican. Aquinas was a famous theologian in the Catholic Church. One time he went to visit Rome and the Vatican. He was such a famous thinker and a godly man that the pope had an audience with him. So he met Pope Pius who took him around the Vatican and showed him all the gold and artwork. Then the pope smiled and said, 'Well we cannot say like Peter, 'Silver and gold I have not.' Aquinas said, 'Neither can you say like Peter, 'Arise and take up your bed and walk.' The church by that time had become so worldly that it had no connection with heaven. They had worldly government, rituals, but they had no connection with heaven.

To be specific, we can never say there is no connection. Why? It is because in every generation, there was a remnant of those who kept the connection with heaven. They bore the testimony of Jesus. Paul, Peter, and John lived on earth but they lived in KTZ, Kingdom Time zone. They had seen something of heaven. They were under the restraint of heaven's commands. The Lord Jesus, Head of the church, ruled from heaven. The saints had seen the Lord and were humbled with repentance. That was the sign of heaven. They were found bearing the cross and denying themselves for the love of their Master. The church that is connected with heaven hears from heaven, speaks to heaven, prays to heaven and is led by heaven. As a last characteristic, though they may be blessed here on earth, they sensed, as the hymn that we just sang, the incompleteness in their life without the Lord Jesus.

When we came to the end of the first century to Laodicea, we read our Lord Jesus' speaking to the church. And we ask the question: do they have any connection with heaven? Laodicea represents not only the church in its low spiritual state. But also prophetically, it represents the last age of the church even as we live today. We all know that our Lord spoke to the seven churches in Asia Minor.

Revelation 3:14-22 To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witnesses, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and

naked. I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed, and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

What do we see? Now we see Christians. Jesus says He loves them. These are His own. They are Christians. He also said if they repent they can sit with Him on His throne. It is possible for them to be part of the bride. This is the only one of the seven churches that Jesus said nothing good at all. They are completely disconnected from their heavenly inheritance.

What are the symptoms? Jesus said, ‘You said I am rich and increased in goods’. Does that sound like the bride of the Lamb? It is true that the city of Laodicea is quite a wealthy city. We do not know if the Christians were financially wealthy. Many scholars think what they were saying was that ‘we are rich in doctrines, teachings, and all these Christians things’. It sounded a little proud. The only time we are truly humble is when we really see that we are in the presence of the Lord. It seems the church in Laodicea was standing up before the Lord saying, ‘We are rich. We accomplish a lot’.

Especially how about this ‘we have need of nothing’. We have heard all week on what the character of one who follows the Lamb should be like. We know the more we follow Him, and the more we serve Him, we find that the more we need to depend on Him for our very breath and our life. But imagine saying to the Lord, ‘No thank you. I have need of nothing’. What kind of condition is this? Now brothers and sisters this is the Lord talking to the church. He is exposing what is in their heart. Every Christian who has been to Sunday School knows we are all humble. Nobody in Laodicea would say, ‘I am rich and have need of nothing’ out loud, but they thought of it. ‘Oh I am nothing, I am nothing, but oh I am rich I do not need anything.’

But of course the worst of their deceptions is that they have no idea of what their Lord thought of them. I am your Lord and your Master. I am the Beginning and the End. I am the True Witness. That is how the Lord described Himself. I see you are miserable, poor, blind, wretched, and naked. Who do you trust - Jesus' opinion of you or your opinion of yourself? I think Laodicea was really wounded when they received this letter and opened the scroll and read about themselves. They had no idea of their poor spiritual state.

Jesus says, 'My beloved people. You are so distasteful to me that I will spit you out of My mouth. I reject you as part of My kingdom.' These are those to whom the Lord says, 'There are many who come to Me and say, 'Lord, did we not do great things? Did we not prophesy?' And the Lord said 'I never knew you'. The Lord loves His blood brought children but He is absolutely rejecting them in terms of the kingdom.

Furthermore, He said, 'I am standing outside of your assembly knocking on the door and you say you have need of nothing. I am not even in your equation. I am knocking on the door. Why am I knocking? I am looking for that individual who will reconnect with Me, will repent, will be zealous, and will come dine with Me'. Now we hope when Laodicea read this letter, they would be ashamed, and that they wept and repented. As the letter was read, they heard the Spirit speaking in their heart and they all got right with the Lord and all will sit with Him on the throne. Brothers and sisters, Laodicea speaks of the prevalent church experience in the last days – woefully disconnected from heaven. There is no voice from heaven. There is no enthroned Lord as Head over His church, directing His church. When they gather for prayers, they throw prayers in the air but nothing comes down from heaven. They can have their Bible studies. They are just theories, words, and concepts. This is the condition that the Lord finds in the last days.

I was saved in 1964. I went to my first Christian conference. It was in North Carolina. I heard this country preacher who was famous, spoke. He said something that made me think and it is still in my head today. Here was what he said, 'Christians today are so subnormal that if you see a Christian who is normal you think he is abnormal'. Now if you ask me who will be part of the bride when the wedding comes, the simple answer is that it is a normal Christian. That is all you

need to be. But normal according to God's standard. A Spirit filled man or woman. You have consecrated your life. You faithfully function in the body of Christ. You set your affection to the things above where Christ is seated. Your family is a blessing and witness to all the earth.

But the problem today is that many young people are experiencing church experiences that are disconnected from the heavenly resources. Now I have been to many churches of all kinds of denominations and descriptions. Thankfully I have been with some saints who are connected with heaven, but many other times there are no connections at all. What do you find? A church disconnected from heaven is a human institution. They are very busy doing things. They have programs going. It reminds me of something. I hope my brother can translate this right. When my children were growing up, they had pets. They had many pets because a lot of their pets died. They had hamsters. The hamsters stayed in a cage. You fed the hamster through the cage. But the hamster had something to do all the time. There was a wheel inside the cage. The hamster got onto the wheel and kept running and running. Then he would get off and take a drink. Then back on the wheel he went and run and run. That is what most churches are like. They just run on the hamster wheel. The wheel keeps spinning and spinning.

And all that the young people see is a church with a lot of spinning but with no heavenly progress and no upward way. No wonder they say, 'What is all this about Jesus coming back and the bride?' Well in these last days, in the midst of all of these difficulties, even in a worldly, self-satisfied lukewarm church, the Lord is faithful. He reacts from heaven in such a way as to reconnect us with our heavenly supply. So the Spirit comes to us as we are walking under the sun and breaks in from heaven and tells us to repent. By the Spirit of God and through His word, the Lord brings us to a place where our eyes are opened and we see our true spiritual condition. Are you not glad that happened to you? Were you on a hamster wheel when the Lord got your attention and told you to get off that hamster wheel? By His mercy, our Lord grants to us heavenly vision that knocks us off the hamster wheel. You remember Isaiah? He was a hamster for Judah. But when he saw the heavenly vision, he became a prophet for Jehovah. When John the Baptist came out into the wilderness, he told Israel, 'Repent and get off the hamster wheel of Judaism that you are on. You need the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'. Saul was

the best Pharisee hamster on the wheel until a divine revelation knocked him off that wheel and his self-righteousness. Then he was saved by God.

The matter comes closer to home when we realize the writer of Hebrews was writing to knock the Christians off their hamster wheels. They were partakers of the heavenly calling but they were living as though they were Jews. They did not know they could not have spiritual rest until they drew near to the Holy of holies where their high priest Jesus is waiting. The writer was telling the Hebrews to press on. They cannot go back. They must press on to Zion.

Now the other night we spoke of Rebecca who had no idea of her heavenly inheritance until she was called by the servant. You can imagine on her trip to marry Isaac, she had to have many adventures and problems.

We realize if we are to stay connected to heaven, we need to repent. Repent means to change your mind and to go in a new direction. You and your individual life can get so worldly that you forget your connection to heaven. When that happens, the love of Jesus grows cold. But the bride must have in her the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord. Repentance sometimes involves 'awakening' from our sleep. Paul said, 'Awake O sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'. The virgins fell asleep waiting for the bridegroom until they heard the sound and had to wake up for the wedding.

Which one of the seven churches that Jesus told them to wake up? It was the church in Sardis. Wake up, strengthen the things that remain. Christians fall asleep. The Lord wakes us and shakes us again. 'Wake up. Lay hold of the eternal life from which you have been called. Press on. Press on.'

Repentance involves us turning away from our self-life. In Psalms 45, we have the wonderful psalm of the Messiah coming for His bride. But it says in verse 10-11. *'Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear: Forget your people and your father's house; then the King will desire your beauty. Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him'*. So we will often hear these words 'repent', 'wake up', and 'reconnect'. There is only one reconnection to heaven and that is Jesus our ladder, our High Priest, our Intercessor.

Remember the gospel of John. Its purpose is to show Jesus in such a way that people will believe in Jesus and they will receive Jesus and eternal life. The gospel was also written because the church was losing its spiritual life and vitality. Because John was an apostle of recovery, when John remarked that Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life', this was not only about salvation. If we truly know reality in our life, the truth in our life and that Jesus is that way and that life, we know that we need to recover our connection with Jesus.

What does it mean to repent? As in Laodicea, there are three things that Jesus said are means of repentance. If the brothers and sisters would just do these three things, they will find themselves to be part of the bride.

They are in Revelation 3:18 *'I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the same of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.'* Do you want to reconnect with the heavenly reality?

Now Jesus is the only exchange they can use to become rich. They had to buy from Him. He is the exclusive vendor. We are not saying Jesus is the stock exchange. But Jesus is saying, 'Do you want to keep a connection with heaven? It is going to cost you something. Abide in Me. Let My word abide in you. Let Me prune you. I want you to be like gold. I want you to be like Me; bone of my bone. I am preparing you for the new Jerusalem where you will be transparent gold. But you need to buy from Me My life.' Brothers and sisters, it means you must spend some time – money. You find the most amazing thing. As you get to know the Lord, you get the desire for Him to come back much more.

Second, he said, 'Buy of Me white garments so that you may clothe yourself and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed'. This simply means we must go back again and again for washing in the precious blood of our Lord Jesus. When we see that innumerable multitude in heaven in Revelation 7, their robes have been washed white by the blood of the Lamb. Who is the bride but the one who has bright white linen?

Third, 'I advise you to buy from Me eye salve to anoint your eyes so you may see'. Brothers and sisters, in these last days, in this unbelieving generation, we can

overcome with a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Even in these last days, we can live under an open heaven before our Lord Jesus. Do you desire to see Him? Do you seek Him? You will find Him when you seek Him with all your heart. It will cost you something. But these three things are what keep us pressing forward.

I want to end tonight by going back to Revelation 22 and just to hear the three voices that are speaking there in the chapter. First, I hope you will be encouraged by hearing what our Lord Jesus said in verse 12. *'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.'* Can you hear that by the Spirit? What a precious promise He has made to us! Do you hear that voice?

But then there's the second voice in verse 17. The Spirit and the bride say 'Come'. Is that you? As we were singing this hymn 'Since Long Ago', is that you? Did you say, 'Come Lord Jesus'? I do not believe there is anyone who feels prepared as the bride. But can you honestly say you are preparing? Do you want Him to return so much that you will say with the Spirit, 'Come'?

Then there's a third voice speaking. Perhaps it is the Spirit and the bride still speaking but they are calling out to everyone. Are you thirsty? Come. Even at the last moment, the Lord's mercy is inviting you to come to the marriage feast. We see in this last chapter of Revelation that the time is very late. There is no more time to delay. If you are going to be righteous, be righteous. If you are going to be filthy, be filthy. There is no more time to fool around about this. But just like the master in the parable of the kingdom that our Lord spoke of, our Lord sent His servants to call the people to come in to the field at 9 in the morning, at noon, at 3 in the afternoon, and even at 6 in the evening. So when is the Lord coming? It can be very soon. So soon you do not have time to fool around. It is time to press on in Him, to live in union with Christ, to be His faithful servant, to pay whatever small cost there is. Even at the last moment, you can repent and come. Are you thirsty for reality? Come. The water of life is for you freely. Come. Have you ever heard a more merciful Lord than this? His desire for you is overwhelming. He wants all of us to

be there in His throne. Press on. Repent. Reconnect. Walk upon this earth under heaven. And we will rejoice together and the bride has made herself ready.

Let us pray:

Lord there is something in us even though we know we are so imperfect. There is something within us that cries, 'Come Lord Jesus. Come.' We sense the Holy Spirit as well who has been working upon us all these years that in some ways He Himself wants to be set free in this wonderful marriage. We believe You are laying preparations in the lives of everyone listening at this moment. Wake us up. Open our eyes. Give us love for You. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

West Coast Christian Conference