

Series 1 The High Gospel

Topic 3: The Church Life as the Real Communal Life

John 13 : 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

THE GOD-CREATED DESIRE TO HAVE A COMMUNAL LIFE

People are desiring to have some kind of communal life. This desire comes out of our natural makeup. In our natural makeup, in our natural life, there is a kind of desire to have a community where we may live together with others.

In Genesis 1:26 God first said, “Let Us make man,” and then He said, “Let them have dominion.” Man is singular, but them, the pronoun for man, is plural. Did God make one man or many men? People think it is easy to understand the Bible. Yes, on the one hand, the Bible is simple. But on the other hand, it is really hard for people to understand. Why did God use the singular noun man and then the plural pronoun them? Did He make one man or many men? The answer is: God made many men in one man. Or you can say that God made one man with many men. This simply means that in God’s intention, man is corporate. God did not create an Adam, then an Abraham, then a David, etc. God created a corporate man—one man with all men. In God’s intention, what He did was a corporate thing. So we all have to realize that the desire to have a communal life was something created in the human nature by God.

THE CHURCH LIFE AS THE REAL COMMUNAL LIFE

In Christ we all have the same life, and with this common life we have a common nature and a common desire. After we are saved, immediately within us there is a desire to contact some genuine Christians for fellowship. This is the desire for a community, a communal life. The church life is the real communal life.

CHRIST AS OUR COMMON ELEMENT, LIFE, AND PERSON FOR US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

We have to know that if we want to have a certain living, we need a certain life. God created

man with a life that desires to be in a community, but that life was damaged and poisoned. Thus, on the one hand, because we have the God-created nature, we have the desire to live with others; on the other hand, because our human life was damaged and spoiled by Satan, in our fallen nature we do not have the proper life for communal living.

But now we have Christ. Christ is wonderful. He is the common factor, the common element, for us to be one in the communal life with love for one another (Rom. 12:10). I do not know the names of all the brothers, but I still love them very much simply because they are brothers in the Lord. There is a common element among all the brothers, and that element is Christ. Christ is the element that causes us to love one another. Also, Christ within us is the life with the ability for us to love one another.

Hymn 1293 Preaching of the Gospel—The High Gospel

- 1 O I'm a man—
I'm the meaning of the universe;
Yes, I'm a man—
I'm the meaning of the universe.
God made me such, I am so much;
I'm the center and the meaning of the universe.
- 2 Christ lives in me—
He's the meaning of my human life;
Christ lives in me—
He's the meaning of my human life.
Yes, He's in me My all to be;
He's the meaning and reality of my human life.
- 3 The church is Christ—
His expression on the earth today;
The church is Christ—
His expression on the earth today.
This corporate man
Fulfills God's plan,
That this man may have dominion over all the earth.
- 4 The local church—
It's the new and real family life;
The local church—
It's the new and real family life.
We have the way To live today—
Eating, drinking Christ we're built up as the
local church.
- 5 What shall we do?
We should go and tell the world of this.
What shall we do?
We should go and tell the world of this.
Disciple all— This is our call.
Let us go and spread the news abroad to every land.

#8 The Development of the Kingdom of God

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I. The Gospel of Luke is a narrative of the ministry of the incarnated Jesus as a record of the incarnated Jesus on earth; Acts is a record of the succeeding ministry of the resurrected and ascended Christ in heaven carried out through His believers on earth:

A. In the Gospels the Lord's ministry on earth, carried out by Himself, was sowing Himself as the seed of the kingdom into His believers, with no church built up yet.

B. In Acts the Lord's ministry in heaven, carried out through His believers in His resurrection and ascension, spreads Him as the development of the kingdom of God for the building up of the church throughout the entire world to constitute His Body, His fullness, to express Him, even the fullness of God for God's expression.

II. The kingdom of God is the main subject of the apostles' preaching in Acts; this is indicated by the fact that the resurrected Christ, in His appearing to the apostles through a period of forty days, spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God: _____ **(Mon)**

A. In the Gospels the Lord Jesus Himself had announced the gospel of the kingdom:

① The kingdom of God is the Savior as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people, and developing into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in His divine life.

② The entrance into the kingdom of God is regeneration, and the development of the kingdom is the believers' growth in the divine life.

③ The kingdom of God is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live, and it will develop into the coming kingdom as a reward to be inherited by the overcoming saints in the millennium.

④ Eventually, the kingdom of God will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life, which all of God's redeemed will enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity.

⑤ The kingdom of God is what the Savior announced as the gospel, the good news, to those who were alienated from the life of God.

⑥ The Lord's word in Luke 17:20-21 indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual; it is the Savior in His first coming, in His second coming, in the rapture of His overcoming believers, and in His destroying of the Antichrist to recover the whole earth for His reign there.

⑦ The kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was in the midst of the Pharisees but who is now within the believers:

a. Wherever the Savior is, there the kingdom of God is; the kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples.

b. Christ is the seed of the kingdom of God to be sown into God's chosen people to develop into God's ruling realm.

c. Since His resurrection He has been within His believers; hence, the kingdom of God is within the church. _____ **(Tue)**

B. In Acts 1:3 the Lord Jesus as the One in resurrection must have helped the disciples to have such a proper realization concerning the kingdom of God:

① The disciples must have begun to see that the

kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life in the believers, that it is the propagation of Christ as life in His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life.

② The disciples certainly must have understood that they were now part of the propagation, the spreading, of Christ, and thereby were part of the kingdom of God. _____ **(Wed)**

III. The kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life into His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life:

A. To enter into this kingdom, people need to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel so that their sins may be forgiven and so that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom.

B. All the believers in Christ can share the kingdom in the church age for their enjoyment of God in His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

C. The kingdom of God will become the kingdom of Christ and of God for the overcoming believers to inherit and enjoy in the coming kingdom age so that they may reign with Christ for a thousand years.

D. As the eternal kingdom, the kingdom of God will be an eternal blessing of God's eternal life for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. _____ **(Thu)**

IV. The churches and the kingdom of God go together; the churches produced by the propagation of the resurrected Christ are the kingdom of God on earth today:

A. The resurrected Christ, who is propagating Himself in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God is His expansion:

① The churches are the expansion of Christ, who came to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God; this is revealed in the Gospels.

② In the Gospels Christ was the seed of the kingdom; in the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God.

B. We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God. _____ **(Fri)**

V. In Acts 14:22 Paul entreated the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, because the whole world opposes our entering in; to enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom.

VI. In Acts 19 we see that Satan is fighting against God's spreading of His kingdom on earth; the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God's kingdom.

VII. Paul's proclaiming the kingdom of God in 28:31 was the propagation of the resurrected, ascended, and all-inclusive Christ:

A. This is proved by the words teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, which things go together with the kingdom of God.

B. To teach concerning Christ is to spread the kingdom of God; therefore, the kingdom of God is actually the propagation of the resurrected Christ—a process that continues to be carried out through the believers today. _____ **(Sat)**

Crucial Point ①: Developing the kingdom of God, a realm reign by God by growing the inner seed of life.

OL1: The Lord's word in Luke 17:20-21 indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual.

Luke 17:20 And when He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation; **21** Nor will they say, Behold, here it is! or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

OL2: The kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was in the midst of the Pharisees but who is now within the believers.

The entrance into the kingdom is regeneration, and the development of the kingdom is the believers' growth in the divine life. The kingdom is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live, and it will develop into the coming kingdom as a reward to be inherited by the overcoming saints in the millennium. Eventually, it will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life, which all God's redeemed will enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. Such a kingdom, the kingdom of God, is what the Savior announced as the gospel, the good news, to those who were alienated from the life of God.

The Lord's answer (Luke 17:20-21) to the question raised by the Pharisees concerning the kingdom of God indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual. It is the Savior in His first coming, in His second coming, in the rapture of His overcoming believers, and in His destroying of the Antichrist to recover the whole earth for His reign there.

Luke 17:22 through 24 prove that the kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was among the Pharisees when He was asked by them regarding the kingdom. Wherever the Savior is, there is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples. He is the seed of the kingdom of God to be sown into God's chosen people to develop into God's ruling realm. Since His resurrection, He is within His believers. Hence, the kingdom of God is within the church today.

For Junior/Senior High School, University Student

A person should be a Christian. A Christian should be an overcomer in the normal church life. Once a person believes in the Lord, he is emancipated from the eternal judgment. It is no longer a problem for you with this point. The problem after believing in the Lord is whether you are to be trained in the darkness for a thousand years as a defeated Christian or you are to become a Christian who is an overcomer and reign as a joint king with the Lord for a thousand years. You are already a Christian by believing in the Lord, so you need to aim for becoming an overcomer.

In order to be an overcomer as a Christian, you need to live a church life under the reign of God, a life of the kingdom, and let the Lord Jesus who is your inner seed of life to grow. By growing and developing the inner seed of life, the kingdom of God's reigning will continue to evolve.

You should do the following every day, objectively.

i. **Every morning revival:** Be sanctified 10 to 20 minutes every morning, pray-read the Word, go to

school when praying is done. When in school, a variety of trials await you every day. In order to confront these challenges correctly and to deal with them correctly, you must pray-read God's Word and enjoy Christ. Lord Jesus says, " **Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation (Matthew 26:41).**" in order for you to stay awake and pray, revival is necessary every morning. Similar to taking your breakfast, take in the Word as well every morning. It is impossible to stay awake and pray without the supply of the Word. The best prayer is to apply the Word to yourself and pray with it.

ii. **Renew your consecration by consecrating your school life:** Renew your consecration when young, do not live a life for yourself but consider living a life for the Lord and the church, pray in the presence of the Lord, fellowship with your spiritual partner and the brothers and sisters who guide you. Then you will understand that the focus and goal of God's economy are Christ and the church. Rather than straining yourself to do something, it is necessary to fellowship with the Lord and brothers and sisters in prayers about school life and your future. The Lord will guide you little by little without fail. May you hold your future design in God's economy in your prayer!

iii. **The blessing soul will prosper, and he who waters will also be watered himself (Proverbs 11: 25):** While enjoying Christ and growing the inner seed of life, at the same time you need to bless the people around you with Christ. He who blesses is a man of riches. Christians who are growing the inner seed of life are people full of riches. Therefore you are able to bless others. Generally speaking, the more you bless others the less your share will become. But The blessings of God are inexhaustible and cannot be exhausted, so the more you bless others, the more you will be blessed yourself. I say again, you are a person who can bless others. In this regard, you need to be saved from your own narrow concept and individualism.

iv. **Prayer:** "O Lord Jesus, please allow me to have a new beginning every morning by pray-reading Your word and enjoying You. May God's dispensation increase in me through the church life that every day little by little I grow. May the blessings I received be flowing out to others. As a saved one, I shall move forward with the aim of becoming an overcomer. O Lord, Your blessings be with my school life."

Hymnal: 947 **Kingdom — Training and Prize (J751)**

- 1 God's Kingdom today is a real exercise,
But when Christ comes to reign it will be a great prize;
It is wisdom divine that we now may be trained
That His plan be fulfilled and His justice maintained.
- 2 God's children, we're born to be kings with His Son,
And we need to be trained that we may overcome
And to know how to rule in His kingdom as kings,
That His kingship thru us be expressed o'er all things.
- 3 Today we must learn to submit to His throne,
How to have a strict life and His government own;
His authority then we'll be able to share,
O'er the nations to rule with God's Son as the heir.

Crucial Point (2): Church life is a fighting for the kingdom of God

OL1: In Acts 14:22 Paul entreated the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, because the whole world opposes our entering in; to enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom.

Acts 14:22 Establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

OL2: In Acts 19 we see that Satan is fighting against God's spreading of His kingdom on earth; the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God's kingdom.

Acts 19:9 But when some were hardened and would not be persuaded, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

23 And about that time no small disturbance took place concerning the Way. **24** For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, afforded no little business to the craftsmen. **25** These he assembled together with the workmen of similar trades as well and said, Men, you know that from this business we have our prosperity. **26** And you observe and hear that not only at Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and perverted a considerable number, saying that the gods being made by hands are no gods at all. **27** And not only is there danger that our trade will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be counted as nothing and that the magnificence of her whom the whole of Asia and the inhabited earth worships will also be overthrown.

If your work is truly prevailing, eventually this prevailingness will touch the heart of the power of darkness. In Ephesus the heart of the power of darkness was the temple of the goddess Artemis. The more the Ephesians became believers in the Lord, the less influence this temple had. Apparently, the disturbance was caused by certain craftsmen. Actually, it was stirred up by the demons who were behind the scene.

Our ministry is to propagate the resurrected Christ as God's kingdom. But today every city is the kingdom of the devil. Hence, the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God's kingdom. The whole earth is the kingdom of darkness. If we are very kind and gentle in carrying out our work, seeking to please everyone, no opposition will be stirred up, no matter how long we stay in a certain place. If our ministry is truly prevailing, there is bound to be opposition.

We all need to realize that a battle is raging between God and Satan. Therefore, we need to be certain that whatever we do is absolutely on the side of the kingdom of God and that nothing is involved with the kingdom of darkness.

Acts 28:31 says that during the two years Paul was in his rented dwelling in Rome, he was "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered." The kingdom of God is one of the emphases of this book. Luke's writing both begins and ends with the kingdom of God.

For Young Working Saints/Graduate Students

If you wish to be earnestly for Christ and the church, oppositions and attacks by the enemy cannot be avoided. The church life is the kingdom life to overturn the kingdom of Satan, so the opposition is inevitable. However, you should not live a church life with halfway measures. Living with halfway measures means following the principle of Babylon, and in God's eyes, means falling into Satan's scheme and following Satan. Please read the Scriptures below.

Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels went to war with the dragon. And the dragon warred and his angels. **8** And they did not prevail, neither was their place found any longer in heaven. **9** And the great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole inhabited earth; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. **10** And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night. **11** And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death.

20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

According to the divine revelation, Satan is destined to suffer in the lake of fire in eternity. More church is built up, more Satan is pushed to his ultimate destiny. You should not fear because of opposition. Because the Lord and the church are with you, even today, Satan can make a little opposition but cannot prevail against the built-up church. As a matter of fact, Satan knows this well. Satan's scheme is to let you see yourself but not see Christ and the church.

Prayer: "O Lord Jesus. The normal church life is a life enjoying Christ and at the same time, a life of fighting against Satan. In the Lord, and in the Body, I fight against Satan for the kingdom of God. Please lead us from victory to victory. Amen!"

Hymnal: **Consecration for the Church** E1248, Js601, Cs603

- 1 Recall how David swore, "I'll not come into my house,
Nor go up to my bed, Give slumber to mine eyelids,
Until I find a place for Thee, A place, O Lord, for Thee."
Our mighty God desires a home Where all His own may come.
- 2 How blinded we have been, Shut in with what concerns us;
While God's house lieth waste -Lord, breakthrough, overturn us;
We'll go up to the mountain, Bring wood and build the house;
We'll never say, "Another day!" It's time! We'll come and build!
- 3 O Lord, against these days, Inspire some for Your building,
Just as in David's day -A remnant who are willing
To come and work in Your house, Oh, what a blessed charge!
Your heart's desire, is our desire -We come, O Lord, to build.
- 4 Within those whom You'd call Put such a restless caring
For building to give all -These times are for preparing;
The gates of hell cannot prevail Against the builded Church!
The hours are few, the builders too -Lord, build, O build in us!