

Communion

Satisfied in the Lord

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We know well this statement from the Scriptures: 'This is the day that the Lord has made.' (Psalm 118:24). It's widely included in church liturgies, hymns and songs. But let me ask you, do you really *believe* that the Lord has made this day? I don't mean 'made' in the sense that God, the Creator of the universe, made the sun rise today. I mean, do you believe that in relation to you He made every detail of every circumstance of your day, today?

The Lord fashioned all your days

God saw your substance before you even existed, and in relation to that substance, He sovereignly and lovingly fashioned all your days, each and every one of them, before any of them came to be.

"Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them." (Psalm 139:16)

In speaking of our foreknown and wonderfully preordained substance, the Scripture speaks of God's faith towards us. The fact that the Lord knows and has measured out all our days means much more than a mere determination of their number and their fit within the scheme of days God has set in time. He certainly *has* determined their number and fit, but He has also carefully crafted every single day and, indeed, every moment of each of our lives.

If God has crafted *your* days, are you satisfied with His crafting? Are you content in the way things are turning out under His crafting? Or do you think His crafting is not entirely suitable for you? Are you trying in prayer to persuade God that *your* crafting would be better because His is going a bit wonky? It's not wonky - it's perfect for you, and that's the point the Lord wants to minister to you today. He wants you to be satisfied in Him.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote:

"But the Lord was pleased to bruise Him, putting Him to grief;" (Isaiah 53:10a)

Of course, the Scripture is speaking of the Father's pleasure in relation to the Son, but it is also speaking of His pleasure in relation to *all* His sons, including you and me. The Father has a very specific participation for each of us in the bruising of His Son Jesus Christ, for as we participate with Christ in His bruising, He priests His life to us. If we are participating with Him, we can be satisfied with the day we have today. *This* is the ministry and word of the Lord to you and me today.

Prospering in the Son's hand

"...If [the Son] would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand." (Isaiah 53:10b)

We've taught at length on Christ as the sin offering. Today, the point the Lord is making for us is that in His offering, Christ's soul, the very life that is in His blood, was poured out an offering for sin. But exactly *what* good pleasure of the Lord prospers in the Son's hand through the pouring out of His life, His seeing of His offspring (or seed) and the prolonging His days? Isn't the Father's pleasure His sons, including you? And just what is happening to the Father's sons who are in Christ's hand? They are being prospered by the Lord!

'Prospering' the Father's sons doesn't mean all things being made nice them. It means their growing, thriving, and becoming in substance the sons the Lord foresaw. The means by which the Lord prospers us is through His fashioning of the days and circumstances of our lives. *This* day, today, is the day that the Lord has made for you. Will you receive it?

"As a result of the labour of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied;" (Isaiah 53:11a)

Christ will see the labour of His soul and be satisfied. If you were to study the use of this word 'satisfied' in the Scriptures, you would find it prolific and *not* used to describe a fulfilled appetite (like eating a great meal would satisfy a hungry person). When the Scriptures talk about 'satisfaction', and about the Son being 'satisfied', the meaning is the fullness of comfort that comes on completion of a given work in given circumstances. The Son's satisfaction, His completed work, carried the 'Yes' and 'Amen' of God the Father, God the Holy Spirit *and* God the Son. The Lord was fully satisfied.

The love of God surrounded and consoled the Son throughout the labour of His soul as He was being poured out for us. There was a joy set before Him as He walked all the way from the Garden of Gethsemane to Golgotha, the place of the skull, and not a single thing any man did or could do to Him was able to rob Him of His joy (Hebrews 12:2). *That* is satisfied!

Christ is satisfied

"By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:11b)

By His knowledge, Jesus now priests His life and His satisfaction towards us. His work is complete. It is finished. The person each one of us is named to be is forever settled in the Heavens because Jesus brought each one or us, by name, back with Him from the death of sin. *Your* name is settled, and no fight, argument, re-negotiation, power or principality can *unsettle* it.

The question the Lord is asking you and me today is whether we will receive the settled name that Christ is priesting to us? If we will, then with Him we too will be satisfied.

If you have any agitation in your soul today, any trouble of mind or anxious thoughts about the word or way of God, then you are not satisfied. And if you're not satisfied, you're not at rest. The Lord is ministering to you today. The first song we sang this morning was, 'Lord, we receive Your word today. Your love is breaking in'. The consolation and ministry of the Spirit of God is towards you in your circumstances so that your soul can come to rest.

We need God's satisfaction and rest ministered to us! We can't come to rest by talking ourselves into it any more than we can deal with our own fear by talking ourselves out of it. We can try, but it doesn't work.

When the Scripture tells us that by His knowledge the Righteous Servant bears our iniquities, justifying (or making righteous) many (Isaiah 53:11b), we hear echoes of the call we've been hearing for some while now to turn and look into the face of Christ. For whose iniquity is Jesus bearing? Not just 'ours', but mine. Yours. The damage my iniquity has caused Him, the marks of what He is bearing for me, and for you, are marked on His body and in His face, and as we look on Him, we begin to see what we've personally done to Him.

When we see what we've done, right there is the possibility of life; the choice between life and death. The disciples Peter and Judas were faced with this same choice when they saw what they had done to Jesus. Peter chose life. Judas chose death. Which will you choose?

Poor in spirit is a blessed place

To proceed with the Lord towards the goal that He has fashioned for us, we need to be poor in spirit. Not pathetic in spirit, but poor in spirit, recognising our need to obey God *and* our utter incapacity to do so, yet not giving way to fear and drawing back. Poor in spirit, we trust in the Lord in us, in His obedience in us, to fulfil His commands. True poverty in spirit is a blessed place in which there is faith to fulfil our obedience - not by any capacity of our own but by faith in Christ's obedience in us.

The temptation and difficulty we all face when we see what the Lord is calling us to is to focus on our own inability, and when we focus on ourselves we become agitated, anxious or disturbed and we draw back. So, God helps us! He knows we need strengthening in our inner man (Ephesians 3:16).

We do not cope well at all with the fact that we've personally bruised Christ, or with the knowledge that we're going to end up in hell

unless He saves us. We do not like accepting that we are utterly unable to save ourselves! But it is inescapable that we are constrained to deep need and utter incapacity, and that the *only* answer for each and every one of us lies outside ourselves.

The only answer is Christ, who, having borne our iniquities and justified us by His knowledge, priests His life to us and strengthens us:

"Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death" (Isaiah 53:12)

'Take My yoke'

Jesus said,

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

In this invitation, Jesus meant, 'Be joined to Me, taking the yoke that was laid down to Me and that I'm now laying down to you.' Today, the Lord is calling us to walk by the Spirit instead of zealously trying to do His will ourselves. How hard we try to be 'good' Christians! But that's our mistake, isn't it? After all, what *is* a 'good' Christian? There's no such thing! It's only an ideal that has no substance. It doesn't mean anything, so there's no point in trying to attain to it!

Each of us can only be ourselves - who we *really* are in the Lord. This is the only endeavour God will grace. That means you don't have to be agitated about how far you perceive yourself to be from the 'good' Christian standard to which you think God is calling you (which is not even real). If you are settled today in being the one God has named you to be, and if you receive the fullness of the Lord's provision for you today, God will be satisfied in you today.

There's nothing else we *can* do today, and there's nothing else He *asks* us to do today. He doesn't condemn us because we haven't been behaving like Jesus up 'til now, nor does He expect us to behave like Jesus from now on.

How then, today, can we be the one He has named us to be? Well, not by any of the ways we might think or try. We don't even *know* who we really are! But our Heavenly Father does, and He fashions the package of our life for us so that the substance of who He has foreseen and named us to be comes into being. He sends His word, and simply says, 'Today, receive My word and find rest for your soul'.

You can receive His word today by presenting yourself to Him. He is pouring His word out to you today, and today you can receive Him and not harden your heart.

There is a danger though! What we *don't* want to do is to receive His word and believe that having received it we already know what He means and what we have to do about it. That will lead us right into agitation, not rest! Our rest is in knowing that today, the Lord is fashioning our day. It is He, not you or I, who divides between soul and spirit by His word (Hebrews 4:12).

His word divides between soul and spirit

When the word of God divides between soul and spirit it is not so that they become dismembered from one another but so that we can speak to our soul, as the Psalmist encourages us to do:

"My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken."
(Psalm 62:5-6)

Waiting quietly before the Lord and allowing Him to speak to us, we can then speak from our waiting on Him and in agreement with Him. Our 'Yes' is 'Yes' to what God is saying, and our 'No' is or 'No' to what He is excluding, which will be whatever problems, anxieties and issues are demanding His intervention but are in competition with His purpose.

Jesus said:

"All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."
(Matthew 5:37)

That statement is an absolute. As we receive the Lord's word, our 'Yes' and 'No' will be according to His word. Anything else, our commentary, our interpretations, our rationalisations, justifications and excuses are beyond simply 'Yes' and 'No' and are from the evil one. Let the word of God go deep into your heart! Let Him take hold of you by the heart.

On the day of Pentecost, the people who gathered and heard Peter's sermon did not respond by saying, 'We're so glad you preached that sermon, because we've always *thought* that was the case and now we're sure, so we can get on with everything we want to do for God.' No, they were cut to the heart, and their response was, 'Men and brethren, what must we do?' (Acts 2:37)

The pathway of recovery for those who were cut to the heart was the pathway Peter had only just come to know himself: repentance and baptism. Peter knew this pathway because he had come to know how absolutely poor in spirit he was and how damnable his religious self-confidence. He knew precisely the problem of the religious believers to whom he was appealing, who were cut off from the covenant of God because they were not joined to Christ.

Repentance from the heart

The Prophet Joel describes the way God views repentance:

““Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity.”” (Joel 2:12-13)

He calls us to turn to Him with all our heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning in godly sorrow that leaves no regret (2 Corinthians 7:10) but leads us on to fully receiving the Lord and His word today. As we come to the Lord today, you and I are repenting of whatever beliefs we've held that have been off-beam, or not aligned with the particular son whom God foresaw and named us to be. Where we've believed something that isn't true, or our 'Yes' or 'No' has been wrong, we're turning in godly sorrow to the Lord in relation to the matters He is showing us.

Our repentance before Him is not to be mere outward show without an inward rending of our hearts but must be from the heart. If we truly turn and return to Him, He is gracious, merciful and abounding in love and He will prosper us.

“Then the Lord was jealous for his land and took pity on his people [when they repented from the heart]. The Lord replied to them: “I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully;” (Joel 2:18-19a)

As we turn to the Lord and find true repentance, the Lord is zealous and compassionate towards His land. Our portion in His land is our participation in Christ. As we turn from the self-centred demands and

distractions of our own minds and hearts, from our own understanding and from our self-righteous activities, the Lord provides for us at His table. The grain, new wine and oil of His provision are His body and the wine of the New Covenant, given to us for our participation in Him. He arms us to see that He was bruised for *our* iniquities, and to participate with Him. The oil He provides at His table is His anointing over us so that our ears can hear Him, our eyes can see, and our hearts can be moved. We can be illuminated to understand. As we receive from Him at His table, and respond with a simple 'Yes, Lord', *then* we will be satisfied!

Is anything more than God's provision for us needed? If Jesus is ministering to us today from His communion table, what more could we need? He prospers us; He satisfies us; and He removes the reproach and agitation we so often carry.

“...never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations”. (Joel 2:19b)

He removes the reproach of our sin (Romans 8:1), sending it away so that we can look Him in the face and receive His strengthening and His grace to obey Him, even though we don't know how. He doesn't ask us to run the whole race of our life today. He just asks us to take the next step with Him.

The Lord restores and preserves

Have you ever known the Lord coming against you, as the Prophet Joel described, allowing devouring and loss?

“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten - the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm - My great army that I sent among you” (Joel 2:25).

The *Lord* sent that to you to turn you to Him, and then He comes to restore. The Apostle

John walked many years with the Lord. He'd had three and a half years of intense training as a disciple; he'd seen the crucifixion; he'd walked with the Apostles. He'd probably seen just about everything. As a very old man, John was praying in the Spirit on the Lord's day, yet when the Lord spoke to him the voice came from *behind* him (Revelation 1:9-10). Despite all John's training and work, he had been looking in the wrong direction and had never seen what the Lord was now showing him. It may have been tempting for John to feel as though Joel's locusts had stolen from him all those prior years of not seeing. But He didn't respond to the Lord's voice that way. He was strengthened by the Lord's hand on him (Revelation 1:17-18) and went on to write five books of the Bible that teach us how to read the Scriptures¹. That's wonderful, isn't it?!

Had John responded pathetically, thinking he'd lost the years when he hadn't seen or understood what the Lord was now showing him, or thinking 'his' ministry had fallen short, or feeling inferior as the only Apostle who hadn't been counted worthy of martyrdom, he would not have been able to participate in the new harvest season for which the Lord had preserved him.

Abraham experienced a similar turning after many years. Not until he was a very old man did God promise him an heir, the Seed who was Christ (Genesis 15; Galatians 3:16).

So, if you're older and feel like locusts have taken all your years, don't lose heart! You just might be part of the next harvest. When the dealings of God lead us towards repentance, His assurance is that in repentance we will eat in plenty and be satisfied by Him regardless of all we think has been lost. If you are tempted

to look back regretfully, wishing you'd known then what you know now, remember that it is the Lord who lovingly fashions your days, and today, He has is showing you His knowledge. Are you satisfied with that?

The alternative of *not* knowing what God is calling us to repent from is a lot worse than being humbled in repentance. Judas chose this alternative. He preferred to condemn himself rather than repent. That can be what we choose if we can't admit we've been wrong. That's the innate response of our flesh. All Judas had to do was look into the face of Christ, accept that he had transgressed, and go back to his brethren confessing what he'd done. But his pride was too strong. He dug in, not satisfied with the Lord's way or provision; not satisfied with the cross; not receiving the consolation of the love of God.

If we *will* repent, we will be satisfied and praise the name of the Lord our God who has dealt wondrously with us. Can you receive that? The Lord Has dealt *wondrously* with you!

"You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you..." (Joel 2: 26).

God is ministering

As you're hearing the word of God to you today, can you turn your heart to Him? Although you may feel you are completely incapable of doing so, the Holy Spirit will be pouring the love and capacity of God into your heart. Our iniquities were laid upon Jesus, and as we are joined to Him, we can be poured out to death with Him and raised to life in Him (2 Corinthians 4:2). If we will join Him, and as we join Him, He priests His life to us and we receive a

¹ The *Gospel of John*, the three letters of *John 1, 2 and 3*, and the book of *Revelation*

participation in Him. This is the Lord's wondrous dealing with us, and His ministry towards our spirit today.

God is prophesying to your soul, speaking to you about your substance as His son or daughter. He has fashioned your days and you can be satisfied fully in Him. Give Him thanks for His word and for the grace that is coming to you as His word takes hold of you by the heart, dividing between soul and spirit, carefully cutting you so that you turn you from your own ways to Him.

Don't kick against Him! Turn and return to Christ, for He is ministering to your spirit and speaking to your heart. If you will turn, you will know His satisfaction deep in your soul. Whatever the pressure of present difficulties, as you turn to Him from the heart, He will strengthen your inner man so that you come to rest in the face of what you cannot resolve, knowing it is the Lord who is fashioning your days and giving you the pathway to walk and the grace of His life to walk in it.

Thank the Lord!
