

The Early Church in Asia Minor

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[0 : 00] Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that we have the freedom to explore together and to listen to your voice. We thank you for the extraordinary revelation by John.

And we ask for your guidance and your help in all things. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So the first century church in Asia Minor, subtitled What Jesus Expects from His Church. I have to acknowledge the assistance of many of the people in this room who met, I think the word is religiously, Tuesdays in the spring of this year, here in room 100, and together looked at the first three chapters of the book of Revelation.

So there's nothing original about what I have to say, but I think it's the responsibility of any activity that goes on in the church to try to report to the broader congregation some of the findings and some of the discussions that are going on in the church.

So I see this Tuesday lunchtime Bible study, which incidentally I need to advertise because it's slipped off the church brochure and is starting this Tuesday again, a new session on prophets and prophecy.

[1 : 48] And it will be meeting here at 12 o'clock every other Tuesday from this Tuesday onwards. But anyway, last spring we delved into this issue of the first century church in Asia Minor.

And of course, through half a dozen discussions, we generated a lot of notes, and there's no point in my giving you a complete summary.

I'll simply try to pick out some of the salient points. And fortunately, Bill has improved my visual aids to the point of giving us three points that I'm emphasizing.

Three major points. The nature of the revelation. The verdict on each of the seven churches as delivered by Jesus.

And what Jesus specifically expects. So, if you lose track of my somewhat circumambulatory discussion, just look at the visual aids, and I will remind you where we are on the points as we go.

[3 : 06] Now, with respect to background reading, if you're not into heavy reading, and most of the people in the back row are into heavy reading, but some of us in the front may be less so, John Stott's little book, What Christ Thinks of the Church.

Obviously, I've taken almost that title for the subtitle. But I've specifically stated in what Jesus expects from the church, as that seems to me to be a highly relevant issue at the present time. If you are into heavier reading, the new NIV application commentary for Revelation does, in fact, have some remarkably helpful discussion, not only about the first three chapters, but also puts it in context of the whole book, which I know is a mystery to many Christians.

So, those two sources, in addition to acknowledging the members of this group. In your first geography books, you will have seen from that of Asia Minor, and in particular, the first three chapters of Revelation deal with this small part of Asia Minor, in particular the Roman province of Asia, which focused then around the city of Ephesus, and constituted seven of the early churches, which were established primarily by Paul.

He, on the second journey, called in at Ephesus briefly, promised to go back. And then you'll remember that in his third missionary journey, he spent two and a half years in Ephesus, cultivating that church, and also developing some of the adjacent churches.

[5 : 18] And the context of the book is that John, in his banishment to the island of Patmos, which is located just off the coast of Asia, which is in Manu, is considering and reflecting on the revelation that he has from Jesus with respect to the state of these seven churches.

It constitutes something like a circuit. Seven churches about two to three days apart from Portspot. And the general sequence in which these are described in the first two chapters is essentially sequential in a clockwise direction, going from Ephesus and around the seven churches that are

described.

Now, it seems to me that in our time, we can think in terms of the spreading flame of the Christian church, in terms of the continent of Africa, that's where the action is.

It's a wonderful title of F.F. Bruce's book, *The History of the Old Church*, which he calls *The Spreading Flame*. And this image of the spreading flame for the first century could be seen as being directed centrally at this group of seven churches.

It was the first major jump from the context of Jerusalem and Antioch.

[7 : 07] And the flame was leaping across the Mediterranean Sea into the western part of Turkey. And here we see a whole group of fledgling churches experiencing all kinds of positive and negative things.

What's so interesting, and was something that we spent some time on as a group, was to think in terms of this as being the last occasion on which Jesus directly spoke to one of his disciples.

And even though we recall Paul's own words about talking about apparently having been born out of due time in the sense that he was spoken to by Jesus on the road to Damascus and was constantly thought of as being one of the last people to be addressed.

In this case, in the experience of John, we have a vision in which Jesus is directly addressing him in the church.

And so it seems to me that that sense of where this is in the history of the church, that we are still looking at the first of the great leaps forward.

[8 : 23] We can think in terms of our own situation today as being a backwater in the Christian world of today, and the flame has leapt across several other continents and several other oceans.

But the excitement and, of course, the attendant difficulties are somehow reflected in what Jesus has to say to these seven churches.

So let's get to my first point, which is the nature of the revelation. The book is called *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, but I think it's more helpful to think of it in three parts.

That it is a revelation through John. Secondly, that it is a revelation to the church. Thirdly, that it is a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Those three are really, it seems to me, descriptive of the nature of the revelation. First of all, the fact that it is a revelation through John.

[9 : 34] The revelation was made by God sending his angel to his servant, John. On the Lord's day, I was in the Spirit, says John, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

The context of John's life, to be so privileged as to have this revelation made through him, is described in very graphic terms.

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and in the, pardon me, and in the kingdom and in patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.

Let me say that again, hopefully without the cough. I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.

John had been banished on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. He had been bold in preaching God's word and faithful in his testimony to Jesus and he has had to suffer for it.

[10 : 55] This is the same John who wrote the gospel and three letters and it's the same disciple who had a special relationship of intimacy with Jesus.

So many things were revealed to John alone during Jesus' life on earth. And here we find that John is the very last person long after Paul's encounter with the risen Jesus to whom and through whom Jesus speaks directly.

There's some uncertainty about the details of John's activities in the area of Asia Minor but it is thought that he moved to the neighborhood of Ephesus.

There's even a tradition that suggests that he took Mary with him to the area of Ephesus. These are not confirmed historical details but at the very least he had enormous influence on that development of that early church.

And it is quite remarkable to me that we spend perhaps a disproportionate amount of time thinking about Paul when the case of John is at least as interesting and important.

[12 : 25] No, I don't think we need to talk about relative importance but we do hear a lot about Paul and we do hear I think relatively little about John. I think this is a very interesting reminder of the importance of John.

So the revelation is through John a very special privilege. It's a revelation to the church. John to the seven churches in the province of Asia.

This number seven indicates completeness and the seven churches although themselves historically accurate they represent the local churches of all ages and all lands.

They were all suffering persecution at the hands of the emperor Domitian. Several of them fell into doctrinal error through the presence of false prophets and they fell into sin by practicing sub-Christian ethical standards.

I wonder if the situation is any different today. The persecution is not necessarily from the emperor of whom we have remarkably few in the present time but leaders in high position in the state in the church and elsewhere are persecuting and of course I'm sure many of you have been watching the news releases from Turkey in which there is active persecution in this very same area at the present time with the rise of fundamentalist Islam.

[14:17] It's interesting to hear that we'll be hearing more about that issue next week. Certainly we fall into doctrinal error and certainly we have the problem of practicing sub-Christian ethical standards.

Unless they use the situation any different today. The situation was extraordinary in most of these churches in that you had not only huge idols dotted around in the marketplace and essentially back in Aelia feasts of love feasts and the like of sexual orgies that went on for a several period of time. The difficulties of resisting the pressures of participating in these orgies was that if you didn't participate you lost business and that therefore there was considerable pressure on the church to conform and whilst in our present situation we may not lose business by not conforming nevertheless under the most incredible pressure from the sexual laxity morality of our time.

So it seems to me that there's a lot to be learned here not just in thinking about the extraordinary situation of the early church but how directly relevant so much of this message is to us today.

Well then the third aspect of the revelation is that it is the revelation of Jesus Christ and that's the most important aspect of the revelation. I quote again from the first chapter he placed his right hand on me and said do not be afraid I am the first and the last I am the living one I was dead and behold I am alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and ages what an extraordinary experience for John to hear that statement and the very first few verses of the chapter speak about almighty God as alpha and omega and here we have then immediately thereafter the statement that Jesus is the first and the last so the equivalence of the father and the son with respect to this continuing presence is dramatically expressed in the little church where I grew up there were no decorations strictly forbidden no flowers no attractive architecture but on the front wall in large capital letters was this text

[17:22] I am the first and the last I am the living one I was dead and behold I am alive forever and ever and I hold the keys of death and paintings my sister and I spent a lot of time rearranging the letters trying to make different sentences out of the letters we did not necessarily absorb the message at the time but I am sure that the fact that this was something that we always had to look at whether we were excited about the service or not had an impression and so this is a very remarkable passage in terms of my own pilgrimage Jesus himself is the grand theme of this revelation he is the faithful witness this is just a thinly paraphrased statement from the first chapter he is the faithful witness he is the firstborn from the dead he is alive forevermore he is the ruler of kings on earth he loves us and he has freed us from our sins he has made us a kingdom and he will come again with the clouds so we are dealing with a very precious revelation and I simply repeat it is a revelation through John to the church of

Jesus Christ so we come down to point number two in case you don't know where we're at the verdict the verdict is what really Christ thinks of the church which is what John Stott emphasizes in this little book I can quickly record what the verdict was and then we'll think about it more carefully in a moment sound of angelic music is not appropriate this one first one Ephesus had lost its first love we'll ask what that means in the moment Smyrna however in spite of its being a persecuted church was given great good territory Pergamum the third of these churches was warned about its compromising doctrine

Thyatira number four was warned about ethical and moral compromise the fifth one Sardis had no discernible pulse as to say it might have been dead it's not quite dead because there is the encouragement for the people to wake up it must have been a little bit of pulse but it's in bad shape Philadelphia which is a lovely example was small and heavily persecuted but nevertheless Jesus

had placed in front of them an open door there's a lot of discussion in the literature that I consulted as to what open door was all about but again I don't necessarily always quote John Stutt but I found this very helpful interpretation that the door of opportunity for spreading the gospel was presented to this

Philadelphia church and in the context of its location at the edge of this Asian province looking out towards the new fields for Christian evangelism seems to me that that's probably a challenge and it would seem that this Philadelphia church was ready to take up that challenge despite its smallness and despite its heavy persecution and the final one everybody knows about Laodicea which was neither hot nor cold it was better and that was a sort of I suppose the worst of the cases if we make a sort of a league table out of these seven churches we really have two that stand out as being in relatively good shape

Smyrna and Philadelphia we have degrees of problems associated with Pergamum Thyatira and Ephesus and then Sardis and Laodicea sit at the bottom of the league table and are really in pretty poor shape the point about dwelling on the verdict for a moment is that in spite of the fact this was spreading flame in spite of the fact that there was growth and huge excitement in the early church only two out of the seven come out unscathed from Jesus' verdict on them so in a situation of growth and excitement but under extreme pressure of persecution you have five of the seven churches participating in and experiencing many of the same problems as we have today if we look at

[23 : 44] Smyrna which was one of the more encouraging situations Smyrna is as many of you know the site of the present city of Izmir which is by far the largest of any of these cities of the present time when the early church was being initiated here Ephesus was more important but Ephesus of course lost its eminence partly because of the silting in of the harbour partly because of the sea level change but partly also because of the rotten running of the show but Smyrna has flourished as a city as well as was doing remarkably good job under persecution in the first century one of the earliest bishops Polycarp who must have actually listened to

John in person and must have been a recipient of these letters is quoted in the following way these were the extensive notes which I thought you probably wouldn't wish to see anyway there's a important quotation here Polycarp who was an early member of the church in Smyrna tradition has it that he was consecrated to the priesthood by John and he became bishop from 115 to 156 AD and the proconsul

Staius Quadratus tried to make him deny his faith to save him from being burnt at the stake and the quotation from Polycarp is 86 years I have served him and he has done me no ill how then can I blaspheme my king who hath served me it was reported that the crowd was enraged this is the teacher of Asia this is the destroyer of our gods this is the father of those Christians to which Polycarp is recorded as saying oh lord I thank thee that thou hast thought me worthy to share the cup of thy Christ among the number of thy witnesses apostles so not only was the Smyrna church in comparatively good shape but it was producing quality

Christians of this caliber and so it seems to me it's a very remarkable outcome many other examples of course so the letter to Smyrna was probably written about 60 years before Polycarp's martyrdom but only about 20 years before he became bishop so this whole letter would have been part of his heritage church the situation in Philadelphia was also very remarkable in terms of the extent to which they were responding to the appeal to look out and not to look in at the weakness of the church several verses talk about the fact that we know that we're not strong

I know that you're not strong I know you don't have the numbers I know you don't have great evidence great social influence but I have opened the door is what Jesus says and this is an interesting comment in contrast with another reference to a door which is made in relation to the church of the church of the seer we find the example of a door that was locked and indeed for my one visual today this Almond Hunt painting which many of you will have known it's remarkably difficult to find one in Vancouver today here's the contrasting situation of the church where well they were neither hot nor cold and what it says in the passage is that

[29 : 02] Jesus stands at the door and knocks there's no way he can break in because the handle is on the other side of the door and so you curate the whole range of symbolism which we don't need to go into here but which emphasizes the contrast between the church of Philadelphia where Jesus had opened the door and the situation in Laodicea where essentially they've kept the door locked themselves well it's not lost because the appeal is made to open the door it's up to the

people in the church that live here to open the door though it's not possible in this case to see enough encouragement for Jesus to suggest that there's an open door because you have these people evangelizing and the whole world would fall asleep immediately so there's a personal application of the closed door as compared to the church application of the open door as a reflection of the way in which the verdict on these churches is evolved now

Pergamum was in the B category in this list of scriptures maybe want to put it in C category he's warned about its compromising of doctrine it's difficult to find out exactly what doctrines were being compromised the story of the Bala knights and the Nicolaitans I'm sure only Dr.

Packer would be able to explain to us but the fact is that they were under duress and in spite of the hard work they were doing some very interesting statements about being very hard working doing a great job of keeping membership up but doctrine was falling by the way so Thyatira was warned about ethical and moral compromise and we hear about the prostitution that is going on in the city and the way in which the church is compromised in that way and probably most seriously the case of Ephesus which had lost its first love what does that mean well

Ephesus was a really thriving concern especially during the period when Paul was there and encouraging them to grow but what is the first love all about I suppose it's a mix of excitement of enthusiasm of commitment and most importantly a sense of personal commitment to Jesus and so where Ephesus had made such a good start and where it is described as being in so many ways a first great church I have some lists here of the virtues toil and so on to toil with endurance and in orthodoxy without any sort of weakness at all but as far as love love is concerned it almost looks as if it is a loveless church so that puts the

Ephesus verdict certainly into the B category and perhaps even worse the examples of Sardis and Laodicea well we've talked about Laodicea a little bit but Sardis which had no this interval pulse seems to have been a first century church that was lukewarm and not in lukewarm but fast asleep and I could just the rebuke was I know your works you have the reputation of being alive but you're actually dead so we could say that this socially distinguished congregation was in fact a spiritual graveyard

[34 : 21] I think it was this Craig Keener commentator of this heavier volume who states that this was the first church in the history of Christendom to have been filled with what we now call nominal Christians the remedy that was proposed was awake strengthen what remains remember repent well evidently some of these Christians at St.

Sardis were very sleepy but apparently not dead so we in each of the each of these verdicts that Jesus pronounces on the church there is an opportunity for repentance none of them is a lost cause and however badly they're doing the opportunity is there for them to repent and that really is an encouragement for us as we think what category of church does St.

John's fit into here this is an A church a B church or a C church and there are a number of different dimensions which we need to think about there is both the church as a community and there is consideration the members of the church as individuals you and I are we hot or cold or warm are we half asleep many things that we don't do which I would suspect Jesus expects us to do and that's the third point of this presentation what Jesus expects from his church so let me just go to that third point those who are falling asleep point number three what

Jesus expects from his church in the case of Ephesus it's clearly to do the works you did at first to repent to examine whether or not you have a personal relationship with your Lord your faith and your endurance and your orthodoxy are fantastic you're right up there with the very best churches but you have lost your first love so Jesus expects from his church that personal devotion and each of us surely must examine ourselves because our own barometers our relationship with our Lord go up and down in time time so it's a healthy thing to think about the way in which

Ephesus with all its toil and endurance and orthodoxy nevertheless had lost its first birth and Jesus expects this from his church we are after all the bride of Christ he expects nothing less to Smyrna he says don't be afraid of suffering if you are faithful I will give you the crown of life this crown of life is I understand actually a wreath symbolic of victory the kind of thing that the Olympic athletes were given on successful completion of races don't be afraid of suffering what does that mean to us in the church today I suppose in the immediate context the context of the greatest suffering of this church affects the clergy their jobs their careers there's a definite suffering going on amongst our leaders there's a great deal of suffering going on in terms of illness and weakness difficulties of personal relationships

[39 : 20] Jesus says don't be afraid of suffering be faithful it's very simple it's very simple and I often think again Paul goes to great lengths in the epistles to describe what is involved in faithfulness I think we all know we all sense what faithfulness means certainly in our family relationships we model that faithfulness so two things Jesus expects the first love to be maintained and faithfulness to the pergamum church Jesus holds in front of them a sharp two-edged sword this is a symbol of the word of truth which proceeds from

Jesus lips the two-edged sword symbol would seem to be very appropriate to the way in which the word of God cuts through the dross cuts through the sham doctrinal truth is essential symbolized by the sword of the scriptures and in the case of pergamum the first example of the way in which doctrine has been compromised Tyatira we're told had the love which Ephesus lacked which is a curious thing because they were warned about ethical and moral compromise so their love of Jesus was apparently in place but at the same time the pressures of the moral decay around them were such that they were compromised so it's clear here that any one of these characteristics that Jesus expects from his church is not enough it's necessary that this whole suite of characteristics be attended to with care so if we get caught up with the doctrinal issue important as it is it doesn't suffice or if we get caught up with insisting on love it's not enough in itself there's a combination of expectations that Jesus has from his church Pergamum the statement is that they rivaled Ephesus in busy Christian service they shared with Smyrna the patient endurance in tribulation and in this case their later works exceeded the first so whereas Ephesus was told please get back to your early works and your early love in the case of Pergamum their later works exceeded the first but the big hole in their ornry was the lack of holiness and holiness is a slippery thing in terms of contemporary Christian standards it seems to me that we have to think very carefully about the standard of holiness the holy for I am holy says you're God what does that mean in practice how do we maintain standards of holiness in this church in our families in our personal walk with Jesus now the interesting thing in the case of Sardis there's absolutely no mention of persecution even though persecution was rife in all the other churches well perhaps it's not surprising because they were all asleep you have a reputation of being alive but you are dead what's the point of persecuting a dead church so that's an expectation that seems kind of minimal that we should try and wake up we should be alive to the leading of the Holy Spirit we should be developing of Christian witness in such a way that it's likely that we will be persecuted but I want to leave that for a moment because this whole question of persecution is one which I think is a tricky one in [44 : 56] Philadelphia the expectation is that the door stands for the church's opportunity to move out that evangelistic outreach is something that is affected in every church community and Philadelphia apparently has that potential in case of Laodicea there's a rather vulgar quote I want water that will refresh me but you remind me instead of the water you always complain about and make me want to puke is the comment about the fact that the church had neither been hot nor cold water there's an interesting background to that statement in that the water supply system in Laodicea was rather intriguing it was fed from volcanic geothermal source at some distance from the site of the church and the community and it was very hot at source and used as a spa and was purified and used to supply the local water drinking water so didn't quite have the same controls as we have on the

Vancouver watersheds but anyway by the time this hot water reached the community of Laodicea it was itself lukewarm and so the population was used to complaining about its water supply because lukewarm water whether it's from a spa or elsewhere there's not much use so Jesus picks up that experience of the local community and says you're absolutely no use at all hot water is great for going to the spa cold water is great for drinking but you folks just don't need and that's worth thinking about when we I guess I as an academic constantly face this challenge of seeing the balancing point between extreme viewpoints and indeed sometimes it's necessary to take a clear stand at one end of the spectrum or the other so much of academic life consists of balancing different components so then I think the most important individual lesson from this whole section of scripture seems to me to be encapsulated in this thinking because what it's saying is that there is someone standing at the door of each one of us and I'm sure each one of us in this room has committed his or her life to Christ but we do still have corners of our lives where doors with locks and handles on the inside still exist and it seems to me that in terms of what Jesus expects from his church this is a parable of the most profound of some of this and why wouldn't I have this hanging over our bed in the bedroom and it's a reminder really of the fact that

we constantly are needing to open that door and to try to fulfill some of the expectations that Jesus has of his church so that's a synopsis of my sense of the most important expectations that Jesus has if I could just summarize these first of all for love for Jesus we can't emphasize this enough we can't fudge this one if we have lost the love that we had when we first met Jesus we're in trouble secondly the willingness to suffer and I mentioned this is a tricky one because I'm not sure how much we are expected to suffer it's clearly the expectation of Jesus in relation to this early church that suffering is part of the expectation there there are many ways in which we suffer but are we suffering in the right ways in relation to what Jesus expects from this church then thirdly there's the truth of doctrine this has been a major struggle for us over the last little while this church and then there's this question of the holiness of life and I'd like to suggest that perhaps one way of expressing this is inward reality the holiness of life is somehow consistent with and almost equivalent to inward reality so as we consult our Bibles and our consciences then the criterion of holiness of life is something that rings true between what we're experiencing day by day and what Jesus expects from us fifthly uncompromising wholeheartedness in everything we do there are the jokes about hot and cold beside the point uncompromising wholeheartedness in what we do is surely something that again we should be able to deliver on Jesus certainly expects and finally in the list evangelistic outreach is critical and the spreading flame will spotter and disappear if we do not from a human point of view will disappear if we do not have evangelistic outreach church and the spreading flame in all its warmth and brilliance is still spreading at the present time and we have a long way to go even though it's a church with so much warmth and so much fellowship there's a great deal of need both in the church and outside the church for evangelistic outreach so those are the six points which seem to me to summarize what Jesus expects from his church so the this is a special revelation that we are given through the unique life of John to this very special group of churches in a particular stage in the history of the spreading flame and is the last of these direct statements from Jesus to an ordinary human being it's recorded

[53 : 25] I know we go on to greater things in the rest of the book in terms of future in terms of the history of the church to date that's the special revelation remember that Jesus has made this verdict upon those churches and that we have all those problems and we have all those possibilities in the church today and if you will just remember love for Jesus willingness to suffer truth of doctrine holiness of life as inward reality uncompromising wholeheartedness in everything we do and evangelistic outreach I think those represent the core of what Jesus expects from his church so when I ever hear that there's a conference coming up this is a mini conference we're having right here but when I ever hear

I usually say to a I'm not interested and the reason is that item one might be on the agenda right but at the end of the day or the weekend or the week conference it's inconclusive because the verdict hasn't been extracted from the revelation into the group personally and the expectation certainly isn't outlined as you have done there should be an item four perhaps result what we're going to do about it result through the expectation but conferences drive me nuts that they're inconclusive and here we have in the book of revelation something that's conclusive and something that we can begin to measure ourselves for a verdict and the expectation and promises of God and then a result but churches don't go there they don't go there that's my experience maybe someone else that's a very important point well I think we talk too much that thing for the professor to say but we do talk too much and we resolve too little and we make it too complicated and it seems to me that the wonderful thing about this passage is the simplicity of it and even with all the symbols which are I mean I haven't talked about symbols in this section which divert some people's attention but these are just simple basics that every person to get a grip on so why not practice practice these support so you have the two elements you have the individual that list goes to the individual and also goes corporately but corporately is more difficult to do to respect I once heard John Stott interviewed on the TV and he said when he was first converted he went home and he prayed this piece of scripture about when Jesus knocks on the door.

That didn't happen right away, but later on. And it's always stuck in my mind that that was pre, after his conversion.

That's all I did. That's all I did. How do you think St. John's stacks up against this nice upland?

[57 : 55] Well, I do think a member of the Executive Committee of the Church should... You have no other entity. I'm not going to answer the question that I have asked.

I'm asking for your opinion. Well, I'll give you my opinion if you give me yours first. Because I'm asking for an opinion there. We can't get this down to our data, can we?

Well, I'm a poor person to ask because I attend the 7.30 service, which is a rather small cross-section of the community.

I run this small Bible study group on Tuesdays at lunchtime. And I'm blessed enormously by this experience.

But it's not necessarily representative of the whole church. I find that the size of the church is a disadvantage. It's complicated to get to know people at anything like this or level that one would need to in order to fully express the expectations that Jesus has of us.

[59 : 10] So I guess my reaction has been to time and generate as much activity in smaller groups. And now, we're drawing all the time.

This group is great and that's very helpful. That's a very small fraction of the total. So, how we would evaluate that A, B, C or D for St John's?

I think it's probably helpful. We do have a marker, don't we? Well, we might be. We have a reputation of being united. Mm-hmm. Yep.

Yes, I think it's clear that we're not in the category of being root-born. It's clear that we're not in the category of being. It's sweet, most of the time.

But what we know about inward reality, and what we know about our personal devotion to Jesus is Lord, how many of the cupboards in our lives are still closed, and I think we have a way of measuring it.

[60 : 24] One of the advantages of the, as you just said, of the Catholic tradition is the opportunity of confession.

We don't necessarily want to have a clerical confession, but to share at a deep level is something that I think we ought to be working towards.

Is that someone towards? Is that someone towards? Yes, I think so. I think that Bill brought up the difference between how we stack up individually and corporately, and I think the corporate stuff is really difficult to get at, and I know that our church manager, what's Joanne called Gordon?

No. She's director of ministry. Thank you. Okay, yes. That she has done some research on this, and is looking at ways of implementing the results of that.

The results of that would be, you're going to hear more about this, and I think that we are not doing as well as we should, and these are places that we can expand our program into.

[61 : 52] How that will happen, I can't tell you. Nobody knows that yet. But I think a big church always has the problem of how to involve the entire church community in what's going on.

And we are not going to get to those things individually, unless we also provide something at the corporate level that will encourage all of us to be reading from the same page and working on the same goals.

And I don't know how that's going to happen, but I don't think it happens with people that are not personally involved in the things that you have mentioned, in loving Jesus, in developing holiness in our lives and so on.

We can't build on sand, and we have sand if we don't have people that are individually committed to those things that you mentioned.

Corporately, we would not be going anywhere without that. It makes me wonder how these Korean churches, 20,000 members, meet every Sunday.

[62 : 58] I would add that love of one should be the holiness of life. If that is in place, all these other things will fall in. I think that should be our emphasis in Jesus.

It has to be a reality, as you've mentioned. That's there, and naturally we will be evangelists. I had a very interesting viewpoint, sent by email from my nephew in England.

Now this is an observation with him. He's an outsider in this church, and I'm not even certain whether he's in the faith. But he did say that what he had noted in Vancouver was that we don't seem to be doing enough for people on the streets.

How is our evangelism going there? It's all very well going to Africa. But what about locally? That was his point that he made, and I thought, he's got me thinking, you know, in that aspect.

I think the great thing about St. John's is that the Scripture is central in the service.

[64 : 12] I was surprised when I was away in the spring. The church, evangelical churches that I know, there was no Scripture read at all. And it was, to me, a performance.

A lot of music. And I think it has a place, but I felt that without the Scripture being central, it's no longer preaching Jesus, you know.

Good point. Well, let me just then invite you all under the Tuesday lunchtime Bible studies.

Five o'clock. Alternate Tuesdays, which is time is Tuesday. Bring your lunch. Bring your lunch. As well as read, simultaneously.

And I hope to see you in this place. Thank you. Thank you.