

TEXT – Proverbs 30:1-9

"The words of Agur the son of Jakeh even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal, Surely I am more brutish then any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

We see there the beginning of preaching. If we search the Jewish history we will find there is no record of this prophet or this man called, Agur. We will find by interpretation Agur means, one who has never been taught the wisdom of man. We see already the prefiguration of the ministry of God being established in this world. Those who have not been taught the wisdom of man, or the meaning of the Scriptures through the wisdom of man. But those who trust God and trust His word, and ask themselves the questions as this man did - Who is it that has this power to ascend and descend? Who is it that has this power to take the winds in His fists and move them where He likes? Who is it that has in His power the power and the right to convert those winds into a garment of rain? Who is this man? Who is this one? More importantly - Who is His Son?

We have witnessed that. We all know the answer to that. It is the Almighty God who can take the winds of a cyclone into His fists and He can bring them where He likes and He can convert them into a garment of blessing. Who is He? More importantly - Who is His Son?

This Agur was not speaking only to two people. Those two people's names who are mentioned there follows the Jewish tradition that each person's name had a meaning, and it was signifying unto us that he was speaking unto the various groups of people who lived their lives according to those names. One of those names means: "I have been very weak without God." We are always weak without God. The despondent, those who have abandoned God in their life and are now weak, and do not know where to turn, those who are lost in the world, those who no longer trust in the Almighty God and His power. This message must go out to them. This message that there is a God who has this power and He has given us His Son who will bring perpetual life unto all of those who believe and follow Him.

The second name that was mentioned there means: "God is with me and it turns me to be equal to God." There are those in the world who believe that God is with them and it has turned their minds to vanity and they think they no longer need to turn to God. They no longer recognise that they are sinners. They believe that they can sin no more, and because God is with them He will continue to bless them, and it will not matter whether the others in the world are blest. We can see there that the message, this teaching or this preaching has to go to all mankind, those who are lost, and those who also believe they do not need this reconciliation to God. Where we all fit in this is an individual matter of our hearts.

Agur asked the Lord that there are two things that he required in his life before he died, and we heard those two things, and we heard the great danger that comes if we are given too many blessings and we say that they are our blessings, that we do not need God anymore, we do not need to offer unto Him our thanksgiving. If we are given too little, then it is easy for us to become a thief. If we do not become a thief, then it is easy for us to condemn God and say that –"If there is a God why is He not blessing us?" Agur asked that he be given sufficient that he be contented.

In our spiritual life we should also have that desire that we are given sufficient of the spiritual blessings through this teaching, that we are given as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians this Word of God that unto those who are saved it is the power of God. If we follow his teaching, we will find that he did not say that there was nothing else that is needed. He finished his teaching in that first chapter to the Corinthians by saying that it was just the first stepping stone to receive the righteousness of Christ, to receive the sanctification of Christ, to receive the forgiveness of Christ, to receive the resurrection of Christ, and to receive the redemption of Christ. We must not stop at the first blessing. We must avail ourselves of all of those blessings that God has given to the Church through the ministry and through the Sacraments, and we must hold fast to them.

We must place this gift of Christ within the Church as the greatest gift that mankind has ever received, and we must at all times give thanks for that and give thanks for the wonderful Grace that Christ has given unto us in the preparation of a perpetual blessing to be in the Kingdom of God with Him and then go on to eternal life. These are the blessings that we must never lose from within our midst. They are the foolishness of the preaching in the eyes of the world. But as Agur saw we must remain true to the Word of God. We must never add anything to it or take anything away, we must stand true and firm through this gospel of salvation, this gospel of the Kingdom of God, this important message from Christ that "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me."

Apostle Cliff Flor
North Queensland.

TEXT – Ezekiel 34:1-16

“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.”

God tells us that He is the good and dependable shepherd and that no other being, including us, has in no way His degree of goodness and dependability. But those who put themselves in humility as a sheep under His care, will share in His love, mercy and in His promises.

It is the prophet Ezekiel, who by authority of God and in His name speaks with authority to the shepherds of Israel, and then to the people of Israel. A word that concerns us today and has full validity.

God tells the pastors (today the leaders of our time) to what extent they do not fulfil their duties; He gives them a bad report card. It is as if the chairman of the supervisory board assesses the executives of a company. Now this can not only be transferred to executives of today's companies, but also to all possible institutions and associations, but above all to senior executives of the churches. Now we see how God's Word has validity today.

How do we manage? The centre is God's Honour and its essence as a measure of our actions. Everybody with a mission in the Church of Jesus Christ must therefore always think back to God's words and guidance to see how far God's admonitions are applicable. Devotion is the key to carrying out tasks in God's vineyard, correct - let and reverse (do penance) ..it helps under God's direction. His word and His direction to seek and then also live it.

God gives us His measure. Just as He is shepherd, so all the staff should judge. But we should not think that it is an impossible task that we should not even start. With such thinking we would exclude the possible help of God.

God knows very well that as humans we are imperfect and therefore our possibilities are limited. But if we let Him live in us, let Him make us a good shepherd of the flock, God can bless. It is worthwhile, therefore, to work happily and trustfully on God's cause under His guidance.

Now through the prophet, God will also become the people of our time. He presents us His mirror in which we see what we do. Often, we do not pay attention to the good that God gives us and even crush it or contaminate it. We should always be aware that some sheep can even be a wolf in a sheepskin coat. God makes it clear that He rejects this behaviour.

To be rejected by God!! Can we guess what that means? So, it is up to us as children of God to stand still and ask ourselves: How do I think? How do I talk? What am I doing? Can God always look at it with pleasure? It is necessary for us to be aware of this every day.

This awareness can help that He can reshape us. We deliberately hold out to Him, deliver ourselves, consider our words and actions, and thus actively prepare the ground that He can change. But everyone has their eyes fixed on them and not on the others – with the help of sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ of course can be involved (for example through prayer support).

We must remember, we cannot help a person change thinking, talking and doing unless they ask. How many times do we think we have to help, without being asked? We then wonder why our help does not have the impact as we imagine. How can God help us if we do not ask for it? He leads us according to His wise plan and thus on the right path for us. But we also have to want it and ask for it. But not with specifications, as so often. We have our ideas of what our lives should look like and ask God to do so. That God wants to divert our lives differently is crushed. When I enforce my opinion and will, God's word becomes contaminated - Thy will be done!

Only in peace and quiet, disconnected from everything that moves us out of the world, we can be connected to the Holy Spirit in God. This is how we experience His Word and His Will. Because He is the Good Shepherd.

Ezekiel 34: 31 *“And ye my flock, the flock, of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.”*

If we humbly place ourselves under God's care, then we have part in His love, His grace and His promises.

As we embrace the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ and life, we will see the green pasture of God and experience how God is the Good Shepherd. So, all the children of God are His sheep and hear His voice. From Netherlands Church.

TEXT – Luke 17:20-21

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said “The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for behold the Kingdom of God is within you.”

We see the Pharisees who were in the period of God's dealings where all walked by sight. They had to see to believe. They wanted Him to show where this would happen and then they could take the honour and glory by telling others. They had become high minded and believed it was reserved for them. He then prophesied that it would only come to those that walked by faith in their life. Those who always believed and prepared themselves for this coming from within. Matthew 5:8 *“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”* Matthew 6:21 *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

Their hearts would be reconciled to God, and they were not concerned where or when. Our Lord also taught it would be seen when He comes in glory. All those prepared will see and know.

Mark 9:1 *“And he said unto them, verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”*

We have to learn the lesson, not to become as the Pharisees, become high minded and believe in ourselves, that we will be the only ones to receive the promised Kingdom. This is not the way to have the Kingdom of God within us. 2 Corinthians 10-12 *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”* The Apostle Paul taught that we should measure ourselves against the life of Jesus Christ and if we do this sincerely we soon realise the great need of His Grace to keep our hearts pure.

Luke 24:32 *“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened up the Scriptures.”*

Romans 10:9 *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

1 Corinthians 2:9 *“But it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”*

Apostle Cliff Flor
North Queensland.

TEXT – 1 Corinthians 2:1-10

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

Objective: Community idea is based on the faith in the crucified Son of God. God's plan of salvation is no secret. The Holy Spirit God's action. The love of God, know!

1. Paul's appearance in Corinth

On his second missionary journey, Paul came from Athens to Corinth (Acts 18). He stayed there 18 months and told the Jews and Greeks the gospel of Jesus Christ. His letter to the church makes a summary on the situation there now, which seems to arise from a number of problems, maladministration and tensions.

Paul starts his letter with a look back at the beginning of its activities, as he once again, reminds them from the beginning. And so, Paul again reminds the church the basis of their faith: Jesus Christ.

The solution to our community issues and problems as they arise should also make it clear we have to put first what we stand for: God is our Lord, Jesus is the head of the church.

Only from this, the correct answers and solutions will be revealed.

2. The proclamation of the Gospel**2.1 I (Paul) came not with excellency of speech and higher wisdom**

- Church planting is done without the need for special effects and show acts
- Externalities are ultimately ineffective
- It all depends on the heart: when God's Spirit is the heart and takes place, there is the personal relationship with God and in the multitude of the faithful the church

2.2 The Crucified Jesus Christ alone

- The message of the gospel is simple and clear
- Beauty corrections are not necessary to be added
- The sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus is valid and cannot be by-passed

2.3 In weakness and fear and much trembling

- Paul: who has great knowledge in many matters and seems to be in control, acknowledges
- Paul knows his weaknesses
- God is establishing the Church (Acts 18:10), Paul is only His messenger

2.4 Sermon in demonstration of the Spirit and of power

- No human persuasion but only on God's Spirit and power
- A "designated" messenger of God only delivers God's action
- No Mindless chatter or philosophies but: from the Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit

2.5 So that faith in the power of God is founded

- Not on Paul, Apollos or otherwise not on a human is faith based, but solely on God; so that there should be the division or arguments based on men's appeal and wisdom
- This is true then as now
- One Spirit, one Lord, one God (1. I Cor. 12.4)

2.6-9 The wisdom of God**The hidden people**

God's action does not fit into the human imagination and the human value systems:

- Instead of merit - grace
- Love - instead of indifference
- Reconciliation - rather than confrontation
- Patience - instead of propaganda
- Truth - instead of a lie
- Justice - instead of selfishness

2.10 The godly revealed them through the Spirit of God

- God's action is no longer hidden.
- His Spirit reveals all of that is required

"The development plan for the new building area can be viewed at the Town Hall."

The plan of salvation for the salvation of the world can be viewed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And in contrast to many land-use plans in our cities and municipalities God's plan of salvation is permanent since there is no need for any amendments.

It is worth more than just to have a quick look, it should be studied.

There in we will find and know the love of God.

TEXT – Matthew 5:33-37

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven: for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem: for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou can'st not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay for what soever is more than these cometh of evil."

In this teaching of Christ, we see the foolishness of man in vowing to do things and swearing by those things that he mentioned, that we will give them up or have something done to us if we fail to keep those vows. All things are ultimately in the hands of our Creator, we are but clay, He is the potter and if we give our lives to Him, He has that final say.

Vows can be positive, that is, that we will do something or negative, that is to abstain from doing something. Nowhere in the Bible do we find that the Lord ever demanded, "Thou shalt vow this or that" but always put the onus back on the people. "If thou shouldst make a vow" or "When thou vowest etc", then let such vow be observed. We see the onus is on us. Even in the law period, having made the vow, every effort was then to be made to fulfil it, lest a slight would be put upon God, and a stain on the conscience of the worshipper. Ecclesiastes 5:5 *"Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."*

Vows even unto the law were entirely voluntary, and we see many cases recorded where vows and oaths were prevalent at the time Christ was on earth. That is why He gave us the text, so that in the Christian period that stood before the people, these same mistakes would not be made.

We today, as Christians, also have vows in the Church. Vows at Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Ordinations etc. All of these are voluntary and not forced upon anyone and in conformity to Christ's teaching, and the acknowledgement of our own short fallings, all vows are answered by a simple Yes, and then followed by "So help me God". These are the most important words of "any vow, for we acknowledge that it is only with the help of God, that we can expect to even attempt to fulfil them. If in our life we forget those words and forget to call on help from God through His Spirit and we try to go it alone, we will be doomed to failure but if we believe as written in Luke 1:37, "For with God nothing shall be impossible. "and remember firstly those things that we have committed with a Yea and think more sincerely about the prayer we offered at that time, "So help me God" we will obtain a better understanding of our text and be strengthened.

Apostle Cliff Flor
North Queensland.

TEXT – John 1:40-41

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

Here John reports about the beginning of Jesus Christ's work and about two people, who met with Jesus. They were the disciples of John the Baptist, were witnesses of his preachings, in which he spoke of the coming of God's kingdom and of the necessity of conversion and of repentance. They heard the testimony of the Baptist: "Look (behold) the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Maybe, they even saw Jesus being baptised and heard the voice from heaven: "You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." From all this experience, they were so impressed and became inquisitive, that they simply followed Jesus. He noticed them and asked: "What do you seek?" They asked: "Where do you live?" Jesus answered them: "Come and see!" They accept Jesus' invitation and spent the rest of the day with Him. It is not reported what Jesus told them, but this staying with Him and seeing, made the two perceive that Jesus is truly the Messiah, they were waiting so long for. Now how do they handle this recognition? They can't and won't keep it to themselves: "We have found the Messiah!" They have found what they sought after, and they want their brothers to share with them. They should also meet with this Saviour. They are not satisfied to just point them to Him, much more Andrew, when he finds his brother Simon, takes him by the hand and leads him to Jesus. This action leads, in the further development of the story, to a chain-reaction. Everyone gives the joyous message further: "Come and see!" It is like a fire which spreads rapidly and inflames everyone.

How is this with us in our life? Most of us are Apostolic Christians from childhood on, or for many years. Are also baptised with water and spirit, come under the Word of God, Sunday after Sunday. Again, and again, the gospel of Christ is brought nigh to us. Through His messengers He lets us know what is necessary to follow Him and to have a life with Him. In bread and wine, He is present. Christ says, that He has come to kindle a fire in us and wants nothing more dearly, than that the fire would already be burning. The Bible tells of the Emmaus disciples that, though they did not recognize Jesus at first, but when He spoke with them, their heart burnt. And when He sat with them in communion at the table, it dawned on them who He was. Also, with them, this experience and encounter with Jesus did not remain without consequences. They turned around and proclaimed to their brothers: "Jesus lives! We have seen Him!" John writes in his first epistle: *"What we have seen and heard, that we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."* (1 John 1:3)

What effect has our encounter with Jesus had on us? When also, above our life, the words stand: "We have found the Christ!" This must have forcible consequences. Then it must drive us, to carry forth this joyous message. To take people by their hand and bring them to Christ. There is no need for great theological speeches but sufficient is "Come and see, Here I am at Home!" Like Phillip, we won't get discouraged by a Nathaniel. Often, we complain about conditions in Christendom and particularly in our congregations: Many turn their back on the church, new growth and increase is needed. Often, we observe: "Who wants to still know something of Christ in this present time?" Let us ask ourselves, what picture does the church and the Christians portray in this world? And here we should not look at others but view ourselves. For many people: a Christian is bound all through his life and narrowed in by commandments and do's and don'ts, connected with self-chastisement and walking in sack-cloth and ashes; well, a very unhappy affair. Sorry to say, many Christians portray this. They go through life like grey mice and care-worn people. Really incomprehensible, because - When I am saved from death and am able to live through Christ, have come from imprisonment into freedom (liberty), from a slave to a child and called to become heir to the Kingdom of God, my heart must be rejoicing. Can this joy be traced in our lives? Do we live this glad tiding, that we have found the Saviour and Redeemer of our life?

Life challenges us to live in love, so that through it the love of Christ will shine. By this we will be recognized, not by our speech, but by our life and our deeds; by our fruits also. Let the wind of God's Spirit breathe into our lives, that He will kindle again, a faint glimmer to a great fire and we then fulfil our commission to be the light of this world.

Apostle Detlef Lieberth
Germany.

TEXT – 1 Timothy 6:6*'But godliness with contentment is great gain.'*

What a wonderful teaching that godliness with contentment is great gain. That great gain does not come from the natural blessings of this life. It comes from the spiritual blessings that Christ outpours unto the church. The end result, fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. If we have godliness with contentment then we look forward to this great blessing of the Kingdom of God, the great blessing that God will grant through Christ unto us where we can live a thousand years of peace. All will be equal. There will be no problem. There will be no food shortage. There will be no sickness. There will be no death. There will only be these blessings that God has promised for ever-more.

What a wonderful blessing that we can obtain, and the key to that is contentment. Our Lord showers upon the church many, many blessings. The blessings of the Holy Spirit lead us to be able to be reconciled with Christ. The blessings of Grace gives us contentment and peace within our lives. The blessings of forgiveness of our sins, the blessings of remission of those sins, but there are other blessings that came about that we tend to forget. The Scripture tells us when our Lord ascended to heaven He made His angels ministering spirits. The Apostle Paul wrote that do you not know that you have the blessing of an innumerable number of angels. These angels are there to help us, to guide us, to protect us throughout our life, and they are there at all times, an innumerable number to the church, and it is an added blessing we might say, because Christ wants each and every one of us to inherit the Kingdom of God.

If we wish these Angels to be with us, if we wish them to help us, and to work with us and for us, it is very simple. Our Lord said that if we testify of Him in this life, He will testify of us before my Father and the angels. That does not mean to say we have to go out in the street and shout the Lord's name. If we show contentment and the virtues of Christ in our lives it is a testimony. He taught, 'There is more rejoicing in heaven before His Father and the angels for one repenting sinner, than for ninety-nine righteous.' When we come in repentance, our names are given to the angels. It is important for us for the angels to know us because if we read the Scriptures we will see that when our Lord returns He will send His angels into the harvest to gather up the elect from the four winds of the earth. It is important that they know who we are. It is also important to remember according to Apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:12) that the angels also desire to learn of the mysteries and plan of God, so we must whenever possible attend church services to be seen by the angels who also gather to learn.

We can see that all of these blessings are all now given unto us and only available to us through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the head of the church, and we must respect them and never take any of the credit from Him if we are to be content.

Apostle Cliff Flor
North Queensland.

TEXT – Psalm 34:8

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

The table has at all times been the concept and picture for community of mankind with one another as well as with God. Poor or rich - it would always be given, whatever was available. At the table will be shared and therewith increased, and who is present there, takes part and is welcome. At the table is hospitality cultivated. God's care for man and beast we can already notice at the beginning of creation. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," we read in Genesis 2:16. The earth rose up grass and herbs and the trees yielded fruit, everyone after its kind. God provided unsurpassing riches and presented them to us. The choice is enormous. The Creator did His part and equipped it with Godly legality. Seed and harvest will never end.

God was always a loving and caring companion. In the wilderness, He was with His people. God let manna rain down on them to eat and gave them of the corn of heaven. Psalm 78:24. He intervened. Marvellous things happened. As crowning of the covenant at Sinai, the elders with Moses and Aaron had a meal. "... they also saw God and did eat and drink". Ex. 24:11. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord told the people that at God's tables should joy prevail. "Behold, my servants shall eat, drink and rejoice..."

Isaiah 65:13,14. In Psalms 23 we read: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies." God cares incessantly, and nothing can stop Him from doing this. Jesus Himself lived with people and sat with them at the table, though not to everyone's joy at that time. He had to listen to strong criticism. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them". Luke 15:2 Definite circles stay rather separate - one knows where one belongs to and where not. Community meals were important to Jesus and He set a sign there with to unity. Limitation was not His style. To make differences much less. All people should be helped. Therefore, closeness and direct interest in life is so essential. Jesus lived it before us and we want to look at a few examples in the bible: Matthew 9:10 "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples."

Luke 7:36 "And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat." Luke 9:16 "Then He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude."

Closeness to mankind is His manner. He takes part of their life, yes, He is part of them. Where He is present, past boundaries and barriers are lifted. He brings the commandment of love. The Law will be fulfilled. With Christ comes a brand new "Bread" which comes from heaven and gives life to the world. "I am the bread of life". John 6:33-35. A new meal is prepared. It is not a short-lived nourishment, which loses its good effect. It is Christ who sacrifices Himself for us. "Take, eat, this is my body, ... drink ye all of it, for this is my blood... Matthew 26:26-28. A wonderful and great table community has been given to us. Here is the believer invited into the closeness of Christ, which could not be closer. And when we call to remembrance that all time well known picture of the Last Supper, we identify something astonishing: There sit's the traitor, Judas, equally with Jesus as Peter, who could not withstand the pressure and denied Him. There is Thomas, who cannot believe in the resurrection. Everyone seated with Him at the table. Even up to John. No one will be under the cross. Nevertheless, no one will be refused. The bread from heaven is here for everyone.

And after the resurrection the table community is the sign of Christ's presence. Luke 24:30-31 "And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed it and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew Him." John 21:12-13 "Jesus saith unto them, Come and dineand takes bread and giveth them, and fish likewise."

The table in God's kingdom is set at all times. Rev. 3:20 *"If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me."* In God's kingdom to come, will be the complete community with His saved and glorified people. And always and ever will the table be set. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Rev. 21:6.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him....Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Rev. 19:7-9.

This is the aim of all who believe in Christ: *"Taste and see that the Lord is good! Psalm 34:9.*

Apostle Werner Weise
South Germany (Since retired).