

Monday 10th August – George Powell

Morning everybody and welcome to this Monday devotional – I hope you're all well. Weather forecast still warm, dry and sunny!

I really want to share some thoughts today for us as a church, as believers, about what Church is. What is church, what is our interpretation of it and where before we have had great times of fellowship, which we cannot currently do except outside, what does it look like currently. What does the new wineskin look like, something that God is speaking about constantly to us, and what He wants to do in the new season. Sometimes that can leave us a little bit up in the air. For some of us, we're excited that there's a new thing coming, and it's great that there are possibilities, but for some of us it's a little bit of nervousness, because we're not sure what that looks like. We can get a little bit disheartened by the state of affairs, like the fact that we can't meet together and have great big worship meetings like we used to do. It's been great having worship at Lox Lane as some of you have been involved with and it's been great to be there and the presence of God has been there. But I've been challenged by what God is saying to me, what is this season about for me, what are we looking at as believers in this season.

I've been listening to a few things and many of you will have been listening to other podcasts as well from other people and some of the things that keep coming through is about us getting back to the roots of what church is all about. I want to give us a little bit of an overview. I want to encourage us that actually it is Jesus Who is building His Church, it is not about some clever programme that we the leadership have got that comes in and makes church suddenly happen. No this is about Jesus building His Church. Jesus is the one who is going to build the foundation on which all believers will sit and the church will come. So I want to encourage us this morning.

One of the things I've been looking at is in Matthew 16 and I'm going to a bit of a passage and then we'll talk about it. This is Peter's confession of Christ, it says, 'When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.'

I was reading that and mulling over it and we all think about Peter being the rock on which the church is built, but I would like to take a bit of a pointer saying the reason why Jesus was able to say that Peter was the rock on which to build the church, is actually that he had a revelation of Who Jesus was for himself. Other people were saying in their relationship looking at Jesus when He said 'who do they say that I am', they thought He was John the Baptist or another prophet. But here was Peter who's actually seeing Who Jesus truly was. In that moment of him understanding Who Jesus truly was, that is the (sudden) foundation, Jesus is looking at Peter and saying you now understand what's going on here, understanding Who I Am, you now understand the truth about what you're looking at and what season you're in. And on that revelation of knowing who I am, Jesus, then I am able to say, on that the church will be built, on this rock, that rock of revelation, that rock of truth. That hasn't been revealed by man, that has been revealed by God, by the Father in heaven.

And for me, at the moment, the biggest thing that's happening is we are a little bit disconnected, we're having to find Jesus for ourselves. I was talking with Simon a bit earlier and we were saying how it is about my relationship with Jesus, my relationship with God, my relationship with the Holy Spirit, how am I in that. And it's as I understand the truth, as I understand the truth of who I am in Christ, as I understand the truth of what Jesus has made me to be, it's on that foundation, on that rock, that is where God is able to build the church. I want to encourage you this morning and say, listen it is a time which is weird yes, but in the midst of it get back to that foundation, that truth of who you are in Christ, the truth that Jesus loves you for who you are.

And it goes on to say later on in Matthew chapter 18, and we know these verses well, ¹⁹ "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Church, that's where it is. Church I know we love the big meetings, I know we love the fellowship and being able to sing and worship, and I do too, it's one of the biggest passions of my life, I love it when we come together and we feel that corporate worship, but that corporate worship has to come from somewhere. That corporate worship comes from that place of you and I understanding who we are in Christ, understanding the truth of who we are. And Jesus is saying, 'I'm building My Church, I am building My Church'. And so in this time where it might feel a little bit up in the air, and we might feel a little bit disheartened with the state of play, maybe we just need to get back to that truth of knowing my relationship with Christ is good. The truth of knowing Jesus is alive in me. And as I do that, when I meet with someone else the Holy Spirit comes and there is this celebration in heaven over where two or three are gathered in My Name. So God draws us together, to have fellowship, to have life, to share about what's going on with situations in my life and to pray about them. I ask for things in heaven and they will be done because two or three have gathered in My Name and I am there in the midst, God is there, that's the basis of church.

If you go back to Acts, it says they had time together, they had things in common, they were in each other's homes, they were sharing their meals together, it was a closeness. And I know in this time we are longing to have the corporate, and it will happen I'm sure, there will be a way that God opens up that thing. But in the meantime it's kind of like let's get the fires going in the midst of our meeting together. We've encouraged people to be praying together in each other's homes or gardens, whatever it might be, in twos and threes. I want to encourage that even more. Maybe there are opportunities you can have with friends to meet with them and just share God, share the truth, share heaven and that's where the power, I really believe, of where the church is going to come from.

As that happens I believe God's Spirit is going to move more across this nation and it's going to give us the clear blueprint of where we go, how we do church. How is it that God is going to save this nation, how is the plan of my neighbours getting saved, and those in Tesco's or Lidl or Aldi or whatever, Waitrose even! Where is it that they're going to get impacted by us, how are we, as Jesus' body, His ambassadors on earth, how are we going to show the way to Him the Father in heaven.

Again I want to encourage us this morning, that sometimes if my faith is built on just being in a church meeting on Sunday morning, then I'm in trouble. I know that's an easy thing to say, of course George, we are all supposed to be having our personal relationship with God. Perhaps this is the season where God is coming to you and saying 'come on, it's time for you to step in to that a little bit more, I want to have a true relationship with you, I want you to understand who you are, I want you to understand that you're sons and daughters of the King of the Most High. That is who you are and your inheritance is heaven and what I want you to do is become a people who are showing that to the world around you. By this they will know that you're My disciples by your love for one another'.

That is the key isn't it, so my relationship with Christ, my relationship is spending time with Him. So spend time with Him, find a place where, if it's in worship, put on a CD and spend time in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and in that, that is where your spirit will come alive and you will understand. Many of you will realise how much power is inside you. I really hope even this morning and I want to spur you on and say God has deposited His Holy Spirit in you, you have world changing ability inside you. You might not believe it right now and the devil is busy trying to tell you that you are not good, but I'm telling you right now that that deposit of heaven will bring about that transformation in this world today.

Hebrews 10 says this, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.' We do believe in this season we are coming to the end times and that could be next year, it could be a 1000 years, but my heart needs to be ready, I as part of the church need to wake up, I as a person of faith need to wake to this season. And God is asking and challenging me to draw closer to Him, to draw closer in my intimacy with Him, to be set apart for Him. And also, as in this passage, to encourage one another, to spur one another on, I want to be the one championing you and I hope you want to be the one championing me moving in to the things that God has got for each of us. What better way than going and having a cup of coffee with someone and saying what's going on in your life, how is God moving. And even when there are tough things that we're facing, that moment when we're together and fellowshiping and sharing and praying together, there'll be an unlocking of heaven in our situation. It's going to be great because you are going to testify how God has moved in your life, even today there are going to be moments where because you've shared it and because you've spoken together that heaven has come in that moment and there are going to be testimonies of truth. And that truth will help to open it up and encourage others.

I know in this time it's very easy to get disheartened and there've been times when I've felt oh what is going on. With all that's changing at the moment, with all the pressures that are going on, I know that those things are there and that means even more that I need to get back to my identity in Christ, I need to get back to who I am in Him, I need to get back to my heavenly inheritance. God has got a plan for me. Do you remember that lovely scripture in Ecclesiastes that we all go back to, ³¹¹He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men'. How amazing is that, eternity has been set in my heart, that is why I'm longing to be with the Father, that is why I'm longing and seeking His face. He will make all this beautiful in His time.

So we need to be at peace, we need to be relaxed in knowing that right now Jesus is on the throne, God has conquered sin and death and that my inheritance is in heaven. And through that I am able to become an ambassador of Christ in the world that I'm living in today. So church, yes we're not meeting together on a Sunday like we're used to doing, charismatic churches and other churches right across this nation are finding that, but how much more important is it that my personal relationship with Jesus is better and I can understand who I am in Him.

We talk about the Father heart ministry, we talk about understanding sonship, and that's all part of this journey, that's all part of what we're talking about here, understanding fully who I am in Christ. I want to encourage you this morning that God has deposited heaven in you, eternity is set in your heart. He will make things beautiful in His time. I keep getting this song going round in my head and it is 'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness, I dare not trust the

sweetest frame but wholly trust in Jesus' name. Christ alone; cornerstone, weak made strong in the Saviour's love, Through the storm, he is Lord, Lord of all.' And that is where I have to be, that is where I need to set my position; that is where I need to know. When Peter answered when Jesus asked 'who do they say I am', he understood that Jesus was the Son of God and in that moment Jesus could say to him, on that revelation, on you Peter, I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not prevail. So I want to encourage you this morning, get back to Christ, get back to knowing your relationship, get back in touch with Him and get back to praying. Pray together, find people and friends that you have relationship with, in your gardens or wherever it might be and pray and seek His face, to encourage one another in this season and Jesus will build His Church. And this season will be, although a bit weird, will be exciting as fires start in homes and then suddenly we'll see revival break out over this nation.

So I want to encourage you this morning, I hope you have a great day and bless you.