

Date/s - 22 July 2018

Topic - Longing for the return of Jesus

Speaker/s - Pastor Allen Hood

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like "Be Thou My Vision", "Living Hope", "How He Loves", or "Worth It All".

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Love the kingdom now and
2. Long for the kingdom to come when Jesus returns.

Word [45 min]

Please note that two different messages were preached on Sunday. This synopsis summarises the sermon preached in the first service.

Pastor Allen Hood spoke about the apostolic longing for the return of Jesus.

He shared that the Holy Spirit is equipping the church with gifts to prepare us for the Lord's coming (Ephesians 4:11-13). There is the restoration of this first love into our hearts (Revelation 2:4-5). We need to be awoken to this love, and to love and long for Jesus' return.

In Matthew 9:14, John the Baptist's disciples questioned Jesus' methodology with regards to fasting. In response, Jesus introduced Himself as the Bridegroom. This has Biblical references in Hosea 2:16, Isaiah 54:5 and Isaiah 62:5. Jesus has a deep affection for His people, just like the affections of the Bridegroom for his Bride. Jesus desires that we not only submit to Him (out of religious duty or habit), but to love Him wholeheartedly. God's people miss Jesus and are undone by the love of Jesus!

Pastor Allen shared about the example of Paul, who longed for Jesus. Paul's apostolic preaching came from experiencing God in a fresh and intimate way! Paul preached that the kingdom has come. Jesus is our blessed hope (Titus 2) and He is the hope of eternal life (Titus 1). His return will be glorious (Colossians 1) and is the hope of righteousness (Galatians 5)! Pastor Allen shared about how fasting is also an expression of the longing for God's presence (2 Chronicles 7:14). Do we, as a church and as individuals, long for Jesus like how a bride longs for her bridegroom?

God desires for Israel and the World to know the Messiah. There are two conditions for Jesus' return. The first is that the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world – see Matthew 24:14. The second is the rejoicing that comes with the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit yearns for Jesus to come! See 2 Timothy 4:8. God has the crown of righteousness to those who love Jesus' appearing.

Pastor Allen exhorted us to love the Kingdom now while longing for His kingdom to come. It is not one or the

other, but both. Revelations 22:17 speaks of this longing for Jesus' return, which is a measure of our spiritual condition. Pastor Allen spoke of the unity of God's church in longing for Jesus Christ's return, and the expression of this longing through mourning and fasting. This is not the longing of a servant but of a bride who loves from the heart. It is when the church will be in its identity as the bride of Christ!

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Hosea 2:16, Isaiah 54:5, Isaiah 62:5 and Matthew 9:15. Draw the parallels in these Bible verses and share your thoughts.** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: This is a recap question for members to be reminded of how God describes Himself as a husband to His people in Hosea 2:16, Isaiah 54:5 and Isaiah 62:5. God's plan for marriage is for a bridegroom to love his bride wholeheartedly. In Matthew 9:15, Jesus spoke on the responses when the bridegroom is taken away. God's people are to mourn and fast. Do we as His church similarly long for Jesus Christ's return? This can also be an opportunity for members to share and for leaders to bring back to topic to about the longing for God.

2. **Pastor Allen shared that we should be "loving the Kingdom now while longing for Kingdom to come." In practice, some Christians emphasize one on top of the other. Examine how we live our daily lives and reflect on what changes we should be making.** [15 min]

Leader's Notes: This is a reflect and relate question. It is often a struggle for us to find a balance between loving the Kingdom now and longing for Kingdom come. Pastor Allen used the illustration of both the heart and liver being vital organs of the body and said that it is not possible to live a full, spiritual life without experiencing the kingdom reality now and yearning for the kingdom to come when Jesus returns. Leaders can get members to share about their struggle with this false dichotomy, when are the times they may move from one to the other and share how they are reminded or remind themselves when they are at each end.

The in-dwelling Holy Spirit within us yearns for Jesus Christ to come. We are to live the kingdom reality now in our daily spiritual walk, having an intimate and living relationship with our Lord, giving our lives to Him. This is even when we contemplate God's glory and in confident trust for His return.

3. **2 Timothy 4:8 says that God has a crown of righteousness to us who love Jesus' appearing. Share with the cell about action steps you would like to take as a cell and as an individual as an expression of our longing for Jesus Christ's return.** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: This is a response question. Revelation 22:17 expresses a deep longing of the church, as bride, for Jesus' return. The longing for Jesus' return is a measure of our spiritual condition. Discuss in the group that this longing should not be out of religious duty or obligation, but from the heart and out of love (that is, of a bride for the bridegroom's return).

We can also examine whether we have inadvertently held idols in our hearts. Have we heeded wealth and material pursuits? Have we sought out man's empty praise, rather than God's favour? What occupies our time, resources and energies?

In our daily devotions, we are to fill our eyes with the vision of the Cross, fill our hearts with the love of Jesus and fill our mouths with praising God, surrendering our will and our lives to Jesus.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. "Loving the Kingdom now while longing for Kingdom to come". May this be the heart desire of every RiverLifer, daily taking steps to advance the kingdom of Papa God & spending time alone in His presence.

Announcements

1. SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

1 JUL-9 AUG | NIGHTLY | 8-10PM | IN CHURCHES NATIONWIDE

RiverLife will be co-anchoring the prayer meetings for the week of 29 Jul to 4 Aug with Pentecost Methodist Church and Bethesda Pasir Ris Mission Church.

For full schedule of Solemn Assemblies, please visit www.riverlife.org.sg/sites/files/riverlife/40day2018.pdf

2. Joining The Family

SAT, 18 AUG | 1.30PM – 4.30PM | FAITH CHAPEL

Sign up at the Information Counter or online at bit.ly/rlcjoiningthefamily by Sun, 12 Aug. For more information. Please contact Karen Koh at 65114139 or email her at karenkoh@riverlife.org.sg

3 Alpha Course

SUN, 2 SEP – 25 NOV | 2PM – 4PM | FAITH CHAPEL

Register online at <http://bit.ly/rlcalpha>

For enquiries, please contact Moses Sho at 65114146, email him at mosessho@riverlife.org.sg or visit our Guest Welcome Lounge on Sundays.

Church Vision Statement:

"A vibrant family where sons and daughters mature and reveal the Father's glory from generation to generation."