

The Ministry of James, Peter, Paul, & John

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon explores the distinct ministries of James, Peter, Paul, and John in the New Testament, highlighting their unique contributions to the church.

Duration: 1:04:41

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-5, John 1:1, 2 Timothy 2:20-21, 1 John 1:1-4, Revelation 1:17-18

Topics: "Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the distinctive ministries found in the New Testament, specifically focusing on the ministry of John the Apostle. He emphasizes the need for the ministry of recovery in the church today, as the testimony of Jesus has weakened and become mixed. The speaker mentions the power of the Holy Spirit in preaching the gospel and opening the door to the kingdom of God. He also references the Mount of Transfiguration, where Peter witnessed the glory of Jesus and the presence of Moses and Elijah. Overall, the sermon highlights the importance of rediscovering the truth of God and the ministry of recovery in order to strengthen the church.

Transcript

First of all I would like to thank you brothers and sisters who have been praying for our last trip. We went to the far east for altogether seven weeks and we visited the saints in Hong Kong and in Taiwan and in the Philippines. I do not think it is possible for me to tell you of what had transpired but just to say that your prayers were abundantly answered.

The Lord was really gracious. The visit was timely and the Lord seemed to give the right words in different places as the Lord enables. So I do want to thank the Lord and thank you brothers and sisters for that.

Will you please turn to the gospel according to John. I'll just read one verse, the first verse. John chapter one verse one.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. First John chapter one, the first four verses. That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, that which we contemplated and our hands handled concerning the word of life.

And the life has been manifested and we have seen and bear witness and report to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has been manifested to us. That which we have seen and heard we report

to you that he also may have fellowship with us and our fellowship is indeed with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we to you that your joy may be full.

Revelation chapter one verses seventeen and eighteen. Revelation chapter one verses seventeen and eighteen. And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead and he laid his right hand upon me saying, I am the first and the last and the living one.

And I became dead and behold I am living to the ages of ages and have the keys of death and of Hades. Lately the Lord has impressed upon my heart especially concerning the ministry of John the Apostle. In order to understand John's ministry to the church I think it is necessary for us to first of all have a general survey of the distinctive ministries that we find in the New Testament.

So this morning probably it would just be like laying a ground for future consideration. In the New Testament we find that there are four distinctive ministries. Some people think there are three but probably there are four.

The ministry of James. Not the James who wrote the book of James. But the James the brother of John.

And then the ministry of Peter. And the ministry of Paul. And the ministry of John.

Now these four have very distinctive ministries in the New Testament. The ministry of James is the ministry of martyrdom. The ministry of Peter is the ministry of the kingdom of God.

And the ministry of Paul is the ministry of the house of God. And finally the ministry of John is the ministry of the family of God. Now of course we do not find much said in the New Testament concerning James the brother of John.

And yet his ministry is the foundation of all ministries. Because his is the ministry of martyrdom. We only know that he was a brother to John.

We do not even know who is older. Now we often think that James is older. But sometimes you find in the Bible it says John and James.

Instead of James and John. So we really don't know. But we know that as his brother John he has a very intense love for the Lord.

He is the first among the twelve apostles who is martyred. It is recorded in the book of Acts chapter 12. Herod took him and killed him.

Now to a martyr it is not so much as what he says. To a martyr it is the way that he dies. So we do not find much concerning that man.

What he says. What he does. But we do find that how he died.

For the Lord. Martyrdom. The spirit of martyrdom.

The spirit of love. Unselfish love. Intense love.

Or we may say sacrificial love. But as a matter of fact towards the Lord we cannot say there is any sacrifice. But we find that this kind of spirit is itself a ministry.

In a sense we all should live a martyr's life. Whether or not we die a martyr's death. That is up to the Lord.

But certainly if we want to have any ministry of any kind in the church. We must have the spirit of martyrdom within us. We find in the Bible that no one lives for himself.

Whether we live or we die. We live and die unto the Lord. Now that is the spirit of a martyr.

Now sometimes we have the desire. Now if the Lord will give us the honor of being a martyr for the Lord. Now we may not have this opportunity.

But it is not so much as to how we die as a martyr for the Lord. If we can live a martyr's life that is the same thing as we die a martyr's death. Now to be a martyr it simply means that his life is not his.

It simply means that he offers his life to the one whom he loves. He is willing to lay down everything. Even his life.

He will not reserve, keep back anything for the one whom he loves. For the Lord. And that is the reason why he can die as a martyr.

But this spirit should mark our life. In a sense this is the right thing because we do not belong to ourselves. We belong to him.

And of course we must live for him and not for ourselves. Someone put it this way, it is easy to die a martyr's death. But it is harder to live a martyr's life.

And I believe there is truth in it. Even though emotionally, sentimentally we may desire that if the Lord will give us the honor to die a martyr's death. But really as we examine ourselves before the Lord, do we live as a martyr? How often we say we love the Lord, we are willing to die for him.

And yet how selfish we are. How we are more concerned of ourselves than of the Lord and of his interest. How many really live completely for the Lord? Not just a certain percentage.

Probably by the grace of God we all live a certain percentage for the Lord. And yet can we say that we really live unto the Lord as a martyr? That means 100% for the Lord. Can we say that we do not hold back anything for the Lord? We live as we die.

It is the same. If today it requires us to lay down our life for the Lord, we'll do it. But even if the opportunity does not come, it doesn't mean that we do not need to lay down our life for the Lord today.

The principle, the spirit is the same. It does not have any time or place factors in it. So I do feel that as we are living close to the end of the last days, a spirit of martyrdom shall mock the spirit of God's people.

And unless we are mocked by such a spirit, that we live daily, dying to ourselves, daily living unto the Lord, daily laying down ourselves, our lives, for the Lord, everything for the Lord, there is no consideration of ourselves. No reservation. Unless we live daily in such a spirit, actually we cannot talk about any ministry that may come forth from us to the church.

So to me I feel that the first and the fundamental ministry that you'll find in the New Testament is exemplified by James. His death speaks so much to us. It is the blood of the martyrs that nourish the church.

And it is this kind of spirit that will really build up God's people. So I think first of all you do find in the New Testament the ministry of James. And then of course we have the ministry of Peter.

In Matthew 16 we find after Peter confessed the Lord, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Our Lord Jesus said to him, You are blessed. Because this is not something shown you by flesh and blood, but it is my Father who is in heaven, who has revealed it to you.

You are Peter. Astound. I will build my church upon this rock, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

And the Lord said, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens. So here you will find with Peter, after his confession of the Lord, he was given the keys of the kingdom of God. Now of course historically we know that he used these keys.

Keys are used to open or even to close the door. Therefore you will find on the day of Pentecost, how Peter used the key to the kingdom of God. Opening the kingdom of God to the world.

That people may come in, into the kingdom. And then later we find how he used the key in the house of Cornelius. Open the door of the kingdom of God to the Gentiles.

To draw in the Gentiles as well as the Jews into God's kingdom. Now of course these keys are not just given to Peter. Because in John chapter 20 we find after the resurrection of our Lord, how he breathed upon the disciples.

And said, receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whom ye shall forgive, his sins shall be forgiven. And whom ye shall keep, he shall be kept.

So in other words, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached. And when the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is like using the keys to open the door of the kingdom of God. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter was given a sight, a glimpse, of what the kingdom of God really is.

Because there on the Mount of Transfiguration you find he saw our Lord Jesus transfigured. In glory. And then Moses and Elijah appeared.

And they talked with him about his exit from the world. Peter woke up in time. And he wanted to keep that scene.

So he suggested that, let us make three tents. One for you Lord, one for Moses and one for Elijah. And before he finished his sentence, there was a cloud.

But it was a bright cloud coming over them. And Moses and Elijah were taken away. When they opened their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

And they heard the voice, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him. Now brothers and sisters, what is the essence of the kingdom of God? The essence of the kingdom of God is none other than this declaration.

From God the Father. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.

Now that is the kingdom. It is not Moses. It is not Elijah.

It is not Moses and Elijah with the Lord Jesus. The kingdom of God is simply this. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Hear Him. Dear brothers and sisters, if we learn to see no one but Jesus, if we learn to hear Him, we are in the reality of the kingdom of God. And then of course you will find Peter in writing his epistles.

His epistles are the epistles of the kingdom of God. That is what he deals with in his two epistles. And you will find that the kingdom of God is related on the one hand with sufferings, and on the other hand with glory.

If we want to enter into the kingdom, we must first suffer. If we suffer with Him, then we shall reign with Him. So this in essence is the conditions of the kingdom of God.

But anyway you find the ministry of Peter is the ministry of the kingdom of God. And being the ministry of the kingdom of God, he is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is to cast the net, as it were, to draw in people into God's kingdom.

So this is in brief the ministry of Peter. It is the ministry of preaching the gospel, of casting the nets, of bringing in people, unto obedience of the Son. And as we follow the Son, we have to learn to suffer before He will lead many sons into glory.

So this in brief is the ministry of Peter. Of course we need such a ministry. Then following the ministry of Peter, we have the ministry of Paul.

Paul was by trade a tent maker. And the Lord called him to build up the house of God. So his ministry is mainly a ministry of the house of God.

We know the kingdom of God is of a wider scope. And the house of God is more defined. And there you find Paul was called to this ministry of the house of God.

And to him was given such revelation. He was given wisdom and revelation concerning the ministry of God, the mystery of Christ, which is the church. God not only used Paul to raise up many assemblies in Asia, and later on in Europe.

But God used him to give us almost half of the books in the New Testament. Because he was a master builder. God used him to build his house.

To show us what the eternal purpose of God is. And with Paul we may say that the revelation of God has reached its height. All the counsel of God, the whole counsel of God was given to the church through the ministry of Paul.

Now in the first 12 chapters of the book of Acts we find the ministry of Peter. But from chapter 13 on to chapter 28, the last 16 chapters of the book of Acts is concerned with the ministry of Paul. And how God used him to establish churches all over the world.

But then finally we find the ministry of John the Apostle. And his ministry is concerned with the family of God. Now John is the first, is among the first of the disciples who follow the Lord.

You know two disciples of John the Baptist were with him when he pointed out to the Lord Jesus and said, Behold the Lamb of God. And these two disciples left John the Baptist. They followed the Lord.

The Lord turned and said, What do you want? And they said, Where do you live? And the Lord said, Come and see. And these two were the first disciples of our Lord Jesus. One of them was an angel and the other was unnamed in the gospel of John.

But we all know it is John. So John was the first of the disciples who followed the Lord. And he was the closest to the Lord.

We remember once he lay upon the breast of our Lord Jesus. He was so close to the Lord. And he was the last of the twelve apostles who died.

He had a love for the Lord that was most intense. His temperament was meditative. Even contemplative.

Now in the beginning we do not find that he was that type of person who would push himself forward. He seemed to be very contented to play the second fiddle. Now in the book of Acts you find that he was always with Peter.

Peter and John. But it was always Peter who took the initiative. It was always Peter who spoke.

It was always Peter who did things. And yet John was always with Peter. His was more of a supporting nature than of a leading nature.

He was quite happy to be that. When Paul visited Jerusalem for the first time. Paul saw Peter.

But he didn't see John. We do not know where John was when Paul first went to Jerusalem. But in chapter 15 of the book of Acts during the council there we find that John was there.

He was there. Because in the second chapter of Galatians Paul mentioned that these three men, the pillars of the church in Jerusalem James, Peter and John how they had the right hand of fellowship. So John was there in Jerusalem and he was one of the pillars in Jerusalem.

One of the main supports of the church there. Probably he became an elder in the church in Jerusalem as well as one of the apostles. You know among the apostles twelve apostles Peter was an elder and John was an elder.

But we do not know his whereabouts afterwards. Probably before Jerusalem was destroyed we know that in A.D. 70 Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman soldiers. And the temple was completely destroyed.

But the Christians in Jerusalem escaped that disaster. By revelation they left Jerusalem before Jerusalem was taken. And they crossed the river to the other side, to Perea.

And most likely John was with them. But anyway we do not know his whereabouts until both Peter and Paul died. After Paul and Peter died then we find John in Asia probably in Ephesus in the place that Paul labored much during his lifetime.

So here you will find after Peter passed out of the scene after Paul passed out of the scene then the ministry of John became more prominent. Because at that time it was not Jerusalem. Jerusalem was destroyed.

It was not even Antioch. It was Ephesus that became the center of the move of the Spirit of God. And of course because of that it also became a center of conflict.

So Ephesus became a very important locality during that time. And we find the apostle John was led to reside there. He lived in Ephesus.

And we know from history that during the Roman reign of Domitian he was exiled to the island of Patmos. And he was there he received the book of Revelation. But he was released under the reign of Nerva.

And we were told that he lived until the reign of Trajan. Now if that's the case then most likely the apostle John lived until about a hundred years old. Over ninety and probably around a hundred.

So he was the last of the twelve who died. Now we do not know how he died. Some say he died a natural death.

Other traditions said he died a martyr. But we are not sure about it. But we were told that when he was very old so old that he could hardly walk.

The people used to take him and bring him to the meeting in a chair. And after he came to the meeting of course they expected him to say something because he knew the Lord so well. And we were told by tradition that he would just say this and no more.

He said little children love one another. And that's all he said. And people asked him why is it that you have nothing more to say? He said well if you love one another that's all.

That's it. So so far as his history is concerned we find that he was the last one of the twelve that passed away. Now of course the Lord used him to write the gospel according to John.

The three epistles. 1st epistle of John 2nd and 3rd epistles and the book of Revelation. Of all the four gospels the gospel according to John is the last written.

Of all the epistles the epistles of John are the last written. And of all the revelations of God the book of Revelation is the last book of the New Testament. So in other words you find that his ministry is the last ministry.

The ministry of John James is the first. It lays the foundation. The ministry of Peter follows by opening up the door the kingdom of God.

And the ministry of Paul follows by building up the materials that have been drawn in into the house of God. Now we will think that with the ministry of Paul he has reached the height the fullness of the mystery of God. Now what else can you have? We will think of Paul's ministry as the last ministry.

But Paul's ministry is not the last. Because even before Paul left the scene you remember in Acts chapter 20 on his way to Jerusalem for the last time before he was taken. He called the elders of the church in Ephesus to come to meet him in Miletus.

And there he shared with them his last word. And in his last word he said I know that after my departure there will be grievous wolves entering into your midst. They will not spare the flock.

They will let people away. And even from among your midst there will rise of people who will draw people to themselves away from the Lord unto themselves. And how this prophecy was fulfilled.

Even before Paul died. Even before Peter died. We find a corruption and heresies.

False teachings, false prophets had already began to enter into Christianity. Now surely after they died when we come to say after A.D. 70 because that was a landmark when Jerusalem was destroyed. Now towards the latter towards the latter part of the first century after Peter and Paul died we find that there were corruptions there were heresies entering into the church and make holes as it were into the testimony of Jesus.

The church was in trouble. The testimony of Jesus was in trouble at that time. And it was during that period that you find the ministry of John became more evident.

So he came in after there was a falling a gradual falling away in faith. And God raised him up because his ministry is mainly the ministry of recovery. Now look at the gospel according to John.

Why? Why is this gospel written? We have already three gospels written that tell us of the life of our Lord Jesus. The gospel according to Matthew the gospel according to Mark and the gospel according to Luke. And they give us the history of our Lord Jesus on earth.

Even though there are variations and yet these three gospels are really more or less the same. So we call them hypnotic gospels. They are more or less the same.

They tell us of the history the story of our Lord Jesus. Now why should John in his old age write another gospel? Now not another of another kind but another of the same kind. Why? Now some people will tell us that John wrote this gospel in order to refute the false teachings concerning our Lord Jesus at that time.

We are told in history that in Ephesus there was a man called Serentis and he began to teach a false teaching about the person of our Lord Jesus. He began to say that the Spirit of God came upon Jesus when he at his baptism. But before he died on the cross, the Spirit left him.

So it was the man Jesus that was crucified. The Spirit of God had left him at the crucifixion. In other words, you find there was false teaching concerning the person of our Lord Jesus.

Heresy came in. And how John combated with that. So some people say now John wrote the full gospel in order to combat with the false teachings that were rampant during that time concerning the person especially the person and the work of our Lord Jesus.

Now there might be some truth in it but certainly John did not write that gospel just for that negative reason. The other three gospels they write about the Lord His life. But they give us the external history of the life of the Lord.

But John gives us the inward history as it were. The spiritual history of the life of our Lord Jesus. So in writing the gospel according to John he is actually filling in something that is lacking in the past.

In the past we find the three gospels that give us the outward history of our Lord Jesus. But there is something missing as to the inward history. The spiritual history of our Lord Jesus.

And John is used to fill in that gap. Now John is never interested in outward things. He is not interested even in putting things into you know right order or putting things into gathering things you know and put them together.

He is not interested in all these events and all these things. But he is more concerned with the contents. The inward reality of things.

So the gospel of John is different in nature from the other synoptic gospels. It gives us the spiritual history of our Lord Jesus. It deals much deeper in history than the other gospels.

Because His is a spiritual ministry. His is a deeper ministry as it were. His is a ministry of recovery.

He wants to recover us back to the very beginning. So that's the reason why you find in the gospel according to John, He begins within the beginning. His ministry is to bring us to the very beginning.

Very beginning. Now the same thing is true with the epistles. If you read the epistles of John you will find He begins with that which was from the beginning.

That which was from the beginning. And you find in the epistle He deals with the family of God. In the family of God you have the fathers, you have the young people, you have the children, little children.

He deals with the family of God. Now the kingdom of God has a wide range. The house of God is more defined but the family of God is the most intimate of all relationships.

And that is what John is interested in. The logos, the word in the gospel becomes the logos of life. The word of life in the epistles.

In other words, in the gospel you will find that in Him was life. But in the epistles you will find that this life is in us. And because this life is now in us, therefore it will manifest the same characters as the life that we find in the Lord Jesus.

It will be manifested in light. It will be manifested in righteousness. It will be manifested in love.

And that's what the epistles of John are concerned with. So again you will find it deals with the inward reality. Inward relationship.

The reality of life. Life in us. Manifested.

Now that is what John is concerned with. And then finally of course the book of Revelation. Now in the book of Revelation of course God revealed to John as to the coming events.

Leading up to the full realization of God's eternal purpose. But John is not a person interested in events. Even in future events.

Because you find in Revelation chapter 19 verse 10 it says, the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. In other words, prophecies show us the coming events. But the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

These events are given beforehand. Not that we may know what are going to happen. But to show us the testimony of Jesus.

So the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. Now what is the testimony of Jesus? To sum up in one word, one sentence it is what the Lord Jesus says of himself. I am the first and the last and the living one.

I became dead and behold I live forever and forever and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Now this is the testimony of Jesus. So John's ministry deals with the beginning as well as the end.

Because the beginning and the end is like a circle that comes together. So in dealing with the end he deals with the beginning. And in dealing with the beginning he deals with the end.

Now that is the ministry of John. So in sum you will find that the ministry of John is the last of all ministries. And it is a ministry of recovery.

In a sense brothers and sisters James has his ministry. Peter has his ministry. Paul has his ministry.

But after James and Peter and Paul pass away then the ministry of John becomes the most necessary ministry of all times. It is true in one sense. All these ministries continue on.

Of course we need the ministry of James. The spirit of martyrdom. It should still remain with us.

And we know that before the end there will yet be persecutions. Many will yet die for the Lord as we find in the fifth seal of the book of Revelation. Of course the ministry of Peter will go on.

The gospel will still be preached to the world. And people will still be gathered into the kingdom of God. No doubt the ministry of Paul will continue on.

Because churches, the house of God will still be raised up in many places. And God's people need to be built up. So in one sense these ministries never die.

They will continue on through the ages until the coming of the Lord. But in another sense, when we look back into history and take a kind of overall view, we may say that the blood of the martyrs has laid the foundation of the church. The gospel has been preached throughout the nations.

And the house of God is being built up everywhere throughout this world. In a sense we may say this has happened. But now, what do we find in our own days? In our own days we find that the house of God that is built with the materials that were gathered through the preaching of the gospel and through the foundation of the blood of the martyrs, we find that in our days how the church has become a great house.

And in that great house you have vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. How we find the church today as it were has many holes. The net has many holes.

And you know when God called John he was mending the net. How we find the testimony of Jesus is so weakened, so mixed, we are living in a day that we need the ministry of recovery. The testimony of Jesus needs to be recovered.

The truth of God needs to be rediscovered. We need to go back to the very beginning in order that we may reach the very end. So to me I feel that the ministry of John the Apostle has become a very urgent needed ministry in our times.

Now not that the ministry of James and the ministry of Peter and the ministry of Paul are not important. They are. But I think in our time probably we should learn to appreciate more the ministry of John the

Apostle.

Because we are living in the days of general falling away. So far as faith is concerned, there is much controversy. So far as life is concerned, there is much corruption.

So far as the testimony of Jesus is concerned, there is much weakening. And we are living close to the end of the end. And in order that we may reach the end, we need a ministry of recovery.

And a ministry of recovery is a ministry that will lead us back to the beginning. So dear brothers and sisters, I feel in a very special way that the Lord has really put upon my heart these days, especially concerning the ministry of John the Apostle. Now, this morning I am not able to go into what his ministry is.

But maybe I will use ten minutes just to mention one point for our consideration. Now, the ministry of John has certain special features. In other words, that is what the ministry of recovery is.

I think the first feature of the ministry of John is his ministry is the ministry of the beginning. The ministry of the beginning. You will find that in the gospel of John he writes in the beginning.

The gospel of Matthew begins with Abraham. Abraham and David. The gospel of Mark of course does not even deal with any genealogy.

The gospel of Luke begins with Adam in the genealogy. But here you will find in John he brings us way back to the beginning. And I think this is a special feature of John's ministry because in his epistles you will find the same thing.

That which was from the beginning. And then in the book of Revelation the Lord said, I am the first. I am the first.

Now you will find in the New Testament at one occasion the Pharisees came to the Lord and they said is it permitted at any time to divorce his wife? And the Lord said, what does Moses say? And they said, Moses said give her a letter of divorce and you can let her go. And the Lord gave his verdict to this matter. He said, Moses allowed you because of the hardness of your heart, but in the beginning God created a man and a woman.

And whom God has joined together, no man can set, separate. So you find that to correct a situation, the way to correct a situation is to return to the beginning. When God created he created a man and a woman.

That is God's original thought. And the two shall become one. But gradually you will find because of the hardness of heart.

So under the law God allows, as it were, people to be separated. To be divorced because of the hardness of heart if they continue on together life becomes so miserable. It becomes so impossible.

So God allows that. But that is the result of sin. That is the result of the hardness of heart.

That is not God's original thought. So in the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus in his redemption brings us back to the beginning. To the very purpose of God.

Now that's what redemption is. If redemption does not bring us to the very beginning, then it is no redemption. Redemption does not just forgive our sins.

But redemption brings us to the very beginning of God's purpose, of God's thought, of God's design. So the Lord said in the beginning it was not so. By his redemptive work he brings us back to the very beginning.

Now that is recovery. And then you'll find another case, say in Revelation chapter 2. The letter to the church in Ephesus. Now Ephesus was a church that was fully matured.

They had such love in them. They were able to receive the full counsel of God. And yet at the time of the writing of the book of Revelation, what was the condition of the church in Ephesus? They had left their first love.

They had other things going on as usual but they had left their first love. And what did the Lord say? Repent and do the first work. In other words, go back to the first.

Go back to the beginning. So dear brothers and sisters, the ministry of recovery is to go back to the beginning. For recovering it is not enough to just go back to the time, say, of John Wesley.

It is not enough to just go back to the time of Reformation, Martin Luther. It is not enough just to recover to the time of the church fathers during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. You know, people today, some people today try to recover to the church fathers.

Now that is not recovery. To recovery to the Brethren movement 200 years ago, that's not recovery. Even to the 16th century, Luther's time, that's not recovery.

Even to the 2nd and 3rd century, the church fathers time, that is not recovery. What is recovery? Recovery is to return to the beginning. That is recovery.

So that's the reason why you find Job always try to lead us back to the very beginning. Not in the middle of the road, in the midst of the road. Not some part, some landmark on the road, but to lead us back to the very beginning.

That is the ministry of recovery, to the beginning. Or to put it in other words, we have to seek our root. You do not deal with branches, even stems.

You have to go back to the very root. And that is the ministry of Job. The ministry of Job always leads us to the very root of all things.

Now what do you find in the beginning? He said in the beginning was the word. In other words, in the beginning you do not have many things. In the beginning you do not have anything.

There was no creation. There were no things. In the beginning there were no people.

No man. In the beginning there was no teaching. In the beginning there was no system.

In the beginning there was no form. In the beginning there was no method. In the beginning there was nothing.

In the beginning there was the word. That's it. That's all.

Now brothers and sisters, I believe this is important. What is our confusion today? What creates all the problems today? Too many things. Too many people.

Too many teachings. Too many forms. Too many systems.

Too many methods. We have too many. And because we have so many of these, we are confused and corrupted.

And how are we going to solve these problems? You cannot solve these problems by dealing with things. Or with people. Or with teaching.

You cannot. The more you try to deal with teaching, the more teaching you have. The only way to get out of all the complexities and all the confusion is to go back to the beginning.

And when you go back to the beginning, whom do you find there? The word. Nothing else. Brothers and sisters, when we begin to see no one but Jesus only, we are delivered.

And we have been brought back to the very beginning. So I think this morning probably I will just mention this much. And if God wills, you know, maybe later times there will be opportunities to go into more of the ministries of the ministry of John the Apostle.

May we have a word of prayer. Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank Thee that Thou has always provided for Thy people. We thank Thee for all the ministries that Thou has shown us in Thy word.

We thank Thee for the ministry of John in a special way as we live at the end of our days. Lord, we acknowledge that we need his ministry. We pray that we may know more of his ministry and be brought through his ministry into the very end as well as the very beginning.

Lord, we ask Thee to deliver us from trying to solve our problems somewhere along the way. That we do ask Thee, O Lord, that whenever we are faced with confusion and problems, that we will go back to the very beginning. And there we see no one but Thee alone.

Oh, how we praise and thank Thee. There is a simplicity in Thee. There is a reality that is only in Thee.

And we do desire that. So we just commit ourselves to Thee and ask Thee that during these days Thou will exercise our hearts and Thou will lead us back to the beginning that we may reach the end. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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