



## “Jesus Describes Days of Vengeance”

Luke 21: 20-24

July 19th, 2020

Will you please join me in Luke Chapter 21? This morning we continue in the prophetic teaching that comes to us from the Lord Jesus Christ called *The Olivet Discourse*. In Luke Chapter 21 and in Mark 13 and Matthew 24, it is also recorded.

In this portion of Scripture Jesus spoke of judgement that was to fall upon Jerusalem back in the First Century. He also spoke of judgment that is to fall upon the entire earth at the end of the age. In this portion of Scripture our King went back and forth between the two, so it is helpful to have a set of bifocal lenses on as we read this portion of Scripture, which will help us to see what was for them near and also off in the distance.

Three times throughout the pages of Scripture, it is declared from the heart of God: Vengeance is mine. I will repay, thus saith the Lord. In the portion of Scripture that is ahead of us this morning, we see the reality of that. The title of this morning’s message is *Jesus Describes Days of Vengeance*.

Just as a reminder of how this portion of Scripture opened up and how the scene unfolds before us, early in the chapter we find the disciples of Jesus ogling the opulence of the Jerusalem temple. You might say that it was getting all dolled up under the leadership of Herod the Great. Herod was treating the temple in a way that maybe an ungodly man would in desiring something of a so-called trophy wife, totally concerned with the externals with very concern about the internal. In Herod’s mind the temple was just a status symbol of civil religion in the domain that he had leadership over.

So Herod was putting forth much effort and investing much wealth in all the external beautification of the temple. The ones who had leadership over the temple itself, the Sadducees and the High Priest, they loved what Herod was doing. In the end, they had hearts similar to Herod’s, focused on the externals rather than the heart of things.

Jesus came to the temple and He saw all that was happening. While the external beauty of the temple was ever increasing, so was the internal corruption of the ministry there. Jesus saw the superficiality of it all, and He came in cleansing the temple earlier that week.

Jesus came in the temple turning over money tables. He came in driving out all those who were trying to sell the sacrifices at totally inflated prices. Jesus came in condemning what was happening there. It was at that point that within the hearts of the high priests and the Sadducees and the entire body of the Sanhedrin that they determined that Jesus would die, and He would die soon. They began plotting the worst form of death imaginable. With the Romans, they started plotting His crucifixion.

Meanwhile, we have the disciples of Jesus looking at the temple and gawking over the external adornment of it all. Jesus quickly informed them that the entire structure would be taken to the ground. They were looking at how marvelous it all was to human eyes, and Jesus said, Do you see these stones? I tell you that not one will be left on top of the other.

Jesus spoke to them of the judgment that was to come, stunned they asked, When will this be and what is the sign of that it is going to take place. From there, Jesus perched with His disciples on the Mount of Olives overlooking the temple where he went on to give *The Olivet Discourse*.

Jesus went back and forth with prophetic vision. He spoke of the judgment that was imminent upon Jerusalem in the coming decades. With that vision looking into the future, Jesus also looked at the judgment that would come upon the earth when He comes back in glory and in power.

As for the portion of Scripture that is before us this morning, Jesus took us to that moment in the First Century when Jerusalem would fall. To be exact, He took us to AD70. Jesus took us to the siege of the Roman army under General Titus.

He gave words of warning that they needed to hear in that day, and these are words that echo through the centuries that we need to take heed to as well, as they teach us about the nature of our God and the threat of judgment that comes as a result of sin.

Let's take a look at what is here. We will read from Luke Chapter 21 and Verses 20 through 24. Verse 20:

**<sup>20</sup>But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. <sup>21</sup>Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, <sup>22</sup>for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. <sup>23</sup>Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. <sup>24</sup>They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

We have a portion of Scripture that speaks forth the judgment of God to come upon Jerusalem. It is a portion of Scripture that should bring sobriety to our hearts.

As we dig into what is here, let's start by noticing a word that is used at the heart of this passage. I mean that both figuratively and literally. It is at the heart of the meaning of this passage and it is smack dab pretty much in the middle of what we just read.

We have five verses, the center verse, Verse 22, and almost in the middle of that sentence is the word *vengeance*. Jesus described what He just proclaimed as:

**<sup>22</sup>...days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.**

Days of revenge. The Greek that is used underlying the word *vengeance* is *ekdikesis*. The root of that term is *dikeo*. The nuance of that word is righteousness, justice.

So what we are talking about here is vengeance of righteous indignation that will be poured out. Righteous justice. Righteous judgment that will come from the hand of God. The boomerang of justice would return from God's hand upon the heads of the people of Jerusalem for the evil they have done.

Keep in mind that about forty-eight to seventy-two hours later that week, the leadership of the city would mock and scorn and insult and deride and slap and beat and humiliate and crucify the Son of God. They would do so with the support of the populace chanting out crucify Him, crucify Him in unison. Then once He was crucified, they would walk by wagging their heads at Him, the pure and unblemished Lamb of God.

After the crucifixion and resurrection and Pentecost, the church would be there, the people of God. And the leadership and the populace of that city would then carry out a fierce and violent persecution of the sacred, holy, and beloved people of God. The people of God would be excommunicated, ostracized, and cast out and in many cases, their blood would be shed. What Jesus was describing here is a time of retribution for all of these things which went on in an unrepentant way.

Even here we see that the righteousness of God is being poured out. Payday was coming. Rome would be God's instrument. These would be days of righteous retribution. Here in this text, Jesus described what was to come. Here in this text, we have teaching that comes from the Messianic heart of holiness, of justice, that has love, that has mercy, but is righteous.

Here we see Jesus describing the things that would happen there in the First Century when Rome came. There are multiple forms of communication that Jesus used. I want for us to see how He spoke by taking a close look, knowing these things came from the heart of the Son of God to all who will listen.

There are things for us to know about the nature of God; things for us to take to heart, even as we look forward to future judgment at the end of the age. There is warning for us to heed. There should be a yearning for ministry to rise up within us as we think about judgment that would fall upon the end of the age that is still ahead of us, and the judgment that took place at the cross to deliver sinners who deserve such judgment.

Let's see four words that Jesus had for us. In view of the coming judgment, let's notice first that Jesus gave:

### **1. A Word of Knowledge (21:20)**

Jesus said in Verse 20:

**<sup>20</sup>But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.**

Know it! Take it to heart. Be certain of it. It is coming. This is now the second time during that week that Jesus spoke in detail of the things that would come upon Jerusalem thirty-eight years later when the Roman armies invaded.

Here we have Jesus thirty-eight years beforehand giving this clear picture of what was to come. Understand, this awesome and unique moment of prophecy that took place here, because throughout the pages of Scripture, we see that there were prophets that God caused to rise up; people who saw into the future. These prophets foretold things to come.

However, with Jesus it was different. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. Jesus is the Beginning and the End. Jesus is God incarnate, who was here found in that which He created. He is the one who presides over all time and eternity. Here He was declaring what was to come.

Jesus is not only the one who knows and sees the future, Jesus is the one who wrote the future, and He is the one who will unleash it. He is the one who declared with certainty the things that would come upon Jerusalem.

If you read *The Jewish Wars* by Josephus which he wrote after that time, and you will see that Jesus was right on target. That does not surprise us a single bit! Jesus gave this word of knowledge, declaring the things that were to come.

Keep in mind that Jesus is not only the Lord of time, but Jesus is the Lord of eternity. Jesus declared things to come in AD70. Jesus declared and continues to declare through the power of His Word, carried by His Spirit, what is to come in eternity.

There is heaven and there is hell. Jesus has proclaimed it. There is a place of great mercy, and there is a place of justice. There is a place where people get what they don't deserve—the Kingdom of God; people cleansed by grace as they come to Christ with hearts made humble for sin; with hearts that are contrite, seeking forgiveness. There is a place of glory forevermore.

And there is a place of judgment, where people get what their sins deserve, exactly what their sins deserve. Jesus has proclaimed that there is one way, one path, that goes to that place of glory and grace. Jesus is the way.

Jesus said in John Chapter 14 and Verse 6:

**<sup>6</sup>I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

Jesus speaking of eternal things to come spoke of the way to have forgiveness and deliverance.

Here we have Jesus. He was less than seventy-two hours away from suffering the wrath of God Himself for human sin, paying the price as the Lamb of God. He was hours away from drinking that cup and yet, out of a heart of mercy, we know from Luke Chapter 19, that He was weeping and sobbing over that city for what was to befall them.

Jesus was just hours away from suffering the wrath of the cross. However, He was concerned for what would befall unrepentant sinners, telling them exactly what was to come. This is the heart of our Messiah.

We in Christ, I pray that this would be more and more in our hearts; that He would give us the same courage and boldness to speak of eternal realities to come, that people might turn from their sin and enter into the grace of our Lord.

Here we see Jesus giving this word of knowledge, and He gives words of knowledge to us that we might turn from sin and find salvation in Him. Then, once we enter into His forgiveness, He makes us messengers of that same Gospel. May the Lord help us, because these are serious things that we are talking about here today.

Jesus first gave us a word of knowledge. Continuing, we see that Jesus gave:

## **2. A Word of Instruction (21:21-22)**

This word of instruction is based on what He just said about what was to come upon Jerusalem there in the First Century. Verses 21 and 22:

**<sup>21</sup>Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, <sup>22</sup>for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.**

Understand that Jesus was instructing His hearers to do the exact opposite of what their instincts would tell them to do. What He was telling them to do here was counterintuitive. These ancient capital cities were built like fortresses. They were designed for security. They were constructed to withstand armies. They were supplied to outlast enemies.

So the natural response of threatened people was to enter into the city for refuge. Jesus was telling them not to do that. If you are out in the countryside of Judea, don't go into the city. Then Jesus said, If you are in the city, don't stay there. Get out! Flee. Go somewhere else. Run to the hills.

It is amazing because on that occasion, even by the very hand of God, the Romans would be so resourced and resolute that they would outlast the city. They would starve the city. They would emaciate it, and they would destroy it, and if they tried to escape the city after the siege happened, they would fall into the hands of the Roman army.

So Jesus was giving this warning and instruction to flee the city. The city would be no place of security. Jesus was speaking to all of those who had an ear to hear that God's judgment was real

and that it was coming, and those that would take it to heart would have the wisdom to get out while they could.

We need to be careful about what we take security in. Even those of us who in Christ, who look to Jesus and trust in Him, it is so easy for us to try to build our lives and hopes by taking security in earthly things that, in the end, are going fall and can fall at any time. Be careful what you place your trust in.

Your home can be reduced to rubble at the quaking of the earth or the dropping of a bomb and you might be in it when it happens. What are you taking refuge in? Your life savings can evaporate at the turn of the economy. The life of a loved one could be lost at the veering of a steering wheel. The health of your body can be taken at the intrusion of a microscopic cell.

What are you taking your refuge in? Where are you finding shelter? Life is short. Death is certain. God is our refuge. God is our strength. God is our help in times of trouble. God is the one who will deliver us from every earthly trial and calamity and deliver us safely into His Eternal Kingdom, as we are those taking refuge in Him.

Let us go to the Lord and view Him as the one who is our shelter. Let us go to the Lord and build our lives upon Him above anything else in this world, because He is the one who establishes eternity for us.

This is the word of instruction He gave to them: don't take shelter in the city. Listen to my words, Jesus said. Go out to another place. That was His word to those in the First Century. We continue, and we see that Jesus also gave:

### **3. A Word of Anguish (21:23)**

A word of anguish came next. Verse 23:

**<sup>23</sup>Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people.**

Jesus was speaking of anguished times, times of great distress. I was thinking about this siege of the Roman army and how they surrounded the city of Jerusalem and starved it, and thinking about where we are in this Covid-19 season.

We have been under quarantine measures that have been more or less intense at various times along the way. We have been under this for four months now. I remember back when all this first began, the very first weekend where it busted loose.

I remember Kristy and I went to Trader Joe's to try and stock up on supplies. The store was jamb packed. We could barely walk through the aisles without brushing shoulders with people. All the items we wanted to get, most of them were gone. We buy a lot frozen organic vegetables, and all the things that we get were all gone.

We looked at all the canned goods, and we could not even find a can of beans because they were all gone. I think there was a black market on toilet paper! Who knows what inflated price people were getting for a roll of toilet paper. It was crazy at the beginning. We have an industrious society and we recovered.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that the Roman siege of Jerusalem last for five months. The Romans surrounded the city and they placed it in a stranglehold. Nothing could go in or out. None of the nourishing resources from the surrounding farmlands and agriculture could be brought into the city.

Understand, they did not have the kind of canned goods we have. They did not have the kind of preservatives that we put into our food. They did not have the refrigeration that we have. These precious commodities, they could not get in and what was there was consumed quickly.

Furthermore, we learned from Josephus that all of this came down in April of AD70, right around the time of the Passover Feast, which was the greatest of all Jewish feasts. So it was close enough to the Passover that the city was unusually swelled with people, causing these resources to be drained all the more quickly.

Josephus wrote that people in the city were literally starving to death. They were dehydrating. There were people literally eating the dust of the ground to somehow satiate the hunger of their stomachs. Josephus even wrote that people became desperate to the point of becoming cannibalistic at times.

It was horrible. It was a time of great distress. It was a time of anguish. It was a terrible time to be the mother of young children. There in that agrarian society, they celebrated children. To be a young mom was to be walking in a time of great blessing, but here it was the exact opposite. They perhaps had it even harder than anybody.

Their own bodies were malnourished. How did they nourish the ones they were breast feeding? When it came time for them to escape, they had to carry their own weight. But what about the weight in their womb with the little ones?

Jesus described all these things, giving warning and giving people opportunity to repent and turn to God in faith. Reading this, I remember in Luke Chapter 19, when Jesus described these things on that day of the Triumphal Entry.

Everybody was celebrating. Jesus had such clear pictures of these things in His mind that He went off to the side of the road sobbing at the judgment that would befall them. You can be sure that this was in the heart of the Messiah when He spoke these things too.

We remember Ezekiel 18 and Verse 3, where God said:

**<sup>3</sup>Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?**

So it is with a heart of great gravity and holiness blended with mercy that the King described the judgment that was to come. These are awesome words but be sure that all of these things that we have described, they comprise the wrath of God—the judgment of God; the righteous retribution of God.

That is what Jesus said.

**<sup>23</sup>...For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people.**

It constituted the measured judgement of God. It was not simply some kind of national tragedy. It was sacred vengeance. When we read these things, we must understand that God does have the fortitude to carry out judgment. Not only was there this period of judgment that came upon Jerusalem but even more, there is an eternal hell.

The Scripture gives these things to us to sober us up and to help us to understand that while society is so flippant about sin against the holiness of the Living Creator of all things, God remains a God of justice and holiness. His eyes are too pure to look upon sin without judging it. We need to look at pictures such as this and our hearts need to say, Thank You, Thank You, Thank God for the cross of Jesus Christ.

We need to thank God that Jesus went and bore the sins of His people; that Jesus took the very real judgment that our rebellion against God is deserving of; that He took the judgment and when somebody looks to Him in faith, their sin is removed from them. They are cleansed and they are covered in His righteousness and they stand right before the Living God.

This is the work of His grace and we need to take this seriously for ourselves, and for the people that are around us. We need to be sobered and we need to ask the Lord to help us to be, not only a citizen of His Kingdom, but an ambassador of it. May the Lord grant us repentance where we are apathetic and may He reenergize us to these eternal realities.

Jesus gave this word of anguish. There is something else to consider. We finally see:

#### **4. A Word of Infamy (21:24)**

There is such gravity in these things. (Pastor shows overhead slides) First, *The Siege of Jerusalem* by David Roberts. It was painted in the mid 1800s. You can find websites that help you to zoom in super close and help you see the gravity of all that took place.

There is a word of infamy that comes in Verse 24. Jesus said speaking of the people of Jerusalem:

**<sup>24</sup>They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**



In the first portion of that long sentence in Verse 24, Jesus said that they would fall by the edge of the sword; they would be led captive among the nations.

Once again, Josephus stated that one million people of Israel were killed and another one-hundred-thousand were taken captive. Those who were taken captive were taken as part of the caravan of General Titus Flavius, who would become Caesar.

Many of them would be sold as slaves as they passed through the regions and the territories. The strongest and the most physically appealing of them taken in Titus' caravan would make it all the way back to Rome itself. They would be part of his victory procession as he entered into the city. Then they would be given to conquerors and people of nobility.

Pastor shows a slide of a structure called *The Arch of Titus*. This was built in AD81, about ten years after the completion of the siege of Jerusalem. Titus was made emperor and did not live much longer. So shortly after the death of his older brother Titus, Domitian built this structure to commemorate Titus. It was at Domitian's official deification and it was there as a monument to the victory of Titus over the Jewish rebellion in Judea.

If you look close up at the picture of *The Arch of Titus*, you will see a carving depicting a scene where you can see the Jewish captives. You can also see various temple instruments, most prominently including a menorah, which is likely to be the very golden lampstand that lit the interior of the temple.

This arch was constructed back in the First Century to commemorate the things that Jesus spoke of ahead of time in AD33, just before His crucifixion. Even with this structure being an example from antiquity that confirms the accuracy of the record given in Scripture, we still must also look at the breathtaking prophecy recorded in the second portion of this verse. It says:

**<sup>24</sup>...Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

King Jesus said, Jerusalem, the city of so-called peace, will actually be trampled under foot by the ethnos, by the Gentile nations, by the non-Jewish people—until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

On the one hand, what we find is that Jerusalem would undergo an ongoing time of Gentile domination. Gentiles would control Jerusalem and most specifically, Zion, the temple mount until the times of the Gentiles reached their appointed culmination.

To this day, I don't know how many of you grieve with me, when see pictures of sacred Zion, the temple mount, and see the Dome of the Rock cemented upon it—a place of false pagan worship. It saddens us to know that the sacred spot is polluted with the Islamic calls for false worship. This sacred place is being trampled underfoot. That is the language that Jesus used for it. This will be the case until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Now, as far as this prophecy of the times of the Gentiles, there is a negative aspect of it that Zion will be trampled underfoot. But there is also a positive aspect of it because looking through the pages of Scripture, it is also a time of Gentile salvation.

It is a time where the Gospel of God has this exceptional power among non-Jewish people—German men like me and whatever ethnicity you might be. The Gospel would go forth to the Gentiles.

Christians need to be serious students of Scripture, and Romans Chapters 9 through 11 give us this teaching about these times of the Gentiles. This especially culminates in Romans Chapter 11, where we read that we are living in the era of Jewish hardening until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

There is this great Gentile mission, bringing them into the Kingdom of God. It continues to the day when Jesus Christ comes back. When Jesus Christ comes back, in symphony with His return, there is going to be a massive work of salvation among the Jewish people.

This is how Romans Chapter 11 culminates—speaking to Gentiles like us.

**<sup>25</sup>Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup>And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion (the Jewish people), he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; <sup>27</sup>“and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”**

Wow! The amazing thing is that as the end of the age approaches, God is going to use this same Gentile mission to provoke jealousy within the hearts of the Jewish people. That is all going to culminate when King Jesus comes back.

You read the prophecies of Zechariah and see that Jesus returns and the Jewish people on the earth, they will look upon the one whom they have pierced. God will pour out upon them a spirit of grace and supplication. They will understand their sin.

They will understand that all along Jesus of Nazareth was their Messiah, the one they had scorned had ridiculed, and a fountain will be opened. Their hearts will be broken. They will turn to Jesus in faith. All Israel will be saved, according to this prophecy.

I understand that to mean an entire generation of Jewish people will see Jesus come back, and they will repent. There will be sackcloth and ashes. They will confess their sin and they will come to Christ en masse, and they will enter into the Kingdom.

From there, if my timetable and understanding of the things to come is accurate, Jesus is going to establish a one-thousand-year millennial reign centered on Mount Zion. Whatever is happening with the Dome of the Rock, it won't be happening there anymore. Jesus is going to take over. He is going to rule and reign over this earth from Zion.

The Jews, the Gentiles will mesh together as the people of God. The church of God, the people that worship the Messiah, will reign on this earth with Him in Edenic conditions for one-thousand-years. Then there will be allowed a final revolt of Satan. Jesus will destroy it. Then comes the New Heavens and the New Earth—the recreation of everything. We will reign with Him forever. It is an awesome thing for us to anticipate.

As we think about these things, I want for us to remember that these things were originally proclaimed to a persecuted church. Jesus taught this prophecy and He was preaching about the coming destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in AD70. There in the years that followed the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the Day of Pentecost, the church of God remained in Jerusalem. Some of them went out on mission, but the church remained there. The people of God stayed there.

There they remained being persecuted. They were being harmed and shedding their blood. Many of them were being killed. There they were being ostracized from society. They were suffering, yet there they remained as a gracious, humble witness to the truth of the Kingdom of God and the Messiah.

There they remained as those who were giving testimony to the cross of Christ, and its unique power for the cleansing of sin. There they remained giving testimony to the empty grave. There they remained calling people to faith in Jesus. There they remained as a gracious witness to their people to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Yet, there they were being persecuted for these things. They endured those persecutions even as they remained ambassadors of Jesus. People came to faith. The church grew. Here is something wonderful: the record of history bears witness to the fact that the church of God going into the AD60s, and as AD70 approached, they took heed to the Word of Jesus. The instruction He gave.

They remembered His word in this *Olivet Discourse*. Prior to the coming siege of Titus, there was another Roman general who advanced upon Jerusalem. That was in the late AD60s. The people of the God, the church, they remembered what Jesus said as Rome came threatening in an unusual way.

The church moved out. They moved out of Jerusalem and they went to a place called Pella in the trans-Jordan region. Pella was close to the Jordan River, up in the hill country toward the Sea of Galilee. There they went and there they were able to escape the judgment that fell upon Jerusalem when the Roman army came. They were delivered because they took heed to the words of Jesus Christ.

There they remained. There they bore testimony and the people listened to the word of Jesus, they were able to escape as well. Brothers and sisters, we are living in a day and age where being a follower of Jesus Christ who stands upon the Word—who is resting in the one saving Gospel that tells us Jesus and Jesus alone is the name by which anyone may be saved under heaven, those who are living according to the way of life that God has prescribed in Scriptures—there is a time of mounting cost that I think is related to that.

There may be times where you are not just harassed, but persecuted for being a follower of Jesus Christ. That may fall upon us too. According to Simon Peter, don't think it strange when those kind of times come upon you. That is what happens when you seek to live as light in a world of darkness.

Those times may come upon us as well, where the cost for being a Christian and a witness for Christ is high. What is the calling of God upon us during those times? Paul applied these things to the church in Rome. These words are so very relevant for us as we think about all of the things that we have been considering here today.

What is the application? What is the will of the Lord for us? It is in Romans Chapter 12. Let's start in Verse 14:

**<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.**

Be a person of grace. Don't fight fire with fire. Don't return insult for insult. Don't return slander for slander. Bless those who persecute you. Seek to treat them with kindness.

**<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another.**

Brothers and sisters, it is hard enough to live as Christians in the world, so we must be careful that the place of worship and fellowship is not a place of conflict and relational exhaustion. We must be a place where we are united together on the doctrine of the faith and where we are building each up in love.

Yes, calling each other out when we are sinning, but being gracious and understanding and slow to anger and patient with each other. We are to live in harmony with one another in a world that persecutes Christians. We need to be a part of a church where we can be replenished. I think that is what Paul had in heart here.

**<sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup>Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

As we look back to what happened in AD70, we can know that God is a god of justice, and vengeance will be inflicted where vengeance is due. God will do it. In the meantime, He calls us to be a community that calls people to repentance; a community of salt and light, seasoned with salt and full of grace, that we might live as His community here on earth and that by the work of His Gospel through His people, more and more people might be gathered in and brought to faith, and find the deliverance that only Jesus gives.

God calls us to be a community that calls people that they might be brought into a Kingdom that is a kingdom that is everlasting; that they might be brought into a Kingdom that is a kingdom of light and joy and singing and serving the Lord with wonderful initiatives throughout all eternity; a Kingdom where there will be happy dancing.

It is going to be a kingdom of everlasting joy, where sin will be banished. We will be cleansed. Our hearts will be lifted with joy for all eternity. This is what God has planned for us. Therefore, we live as light in a dark world with God as our strength.

With that I will close in a word of prayer.