Sermon transcript

Meeting start 1991-02-24 14:00
Broadcast date 2026-07-26 10:00
Location Zürich, Switzerland

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preached on 24. 2. 1991, 14:00, Zürich,

Topic: Luke 5:1–9: "LORD, at thy Word I will let down the net!"

broadcast on 26. 7. 2026

Luke chapter 5, verses 1 to 5.

[1] ***And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,***

[2] ***and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.***

[3] ***And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.***

[4] ***Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.***

[5] ***And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.***

We are gathered in the name of the Lord to hear his Word, and also to mention the events that are taking place. But the main point is always that God may have his way with us who have become believers, or who will still become believers, so that we may recognize his will and do it.

And so, if he helps us, and he will, that we may live a life pleasing to him, so that we may be certain that when the Lord comes, we will not have believed and run in vain, but as those who truly followed the Lord, did the will of God, and led a life pleasing to him.

I believe that this is possible, otherwise God could not have demanded it of us. And if he has demanded it of us, then he also grants the strength to ensure that it can be done.

Sometimes, however, believers reach a state where they become anxious and, well, how shall I put it, wish to do God's will to an excessive degree, and in doing so, they miss the mark. God's will can only be done where one finds peace in God, not where one becomes anxious and searches around for what one might do next, but

simply by following the Lord, trusting in God, and thus automatically doing his will. If every person were to ask themselves a few times a day, "Is it now God's will that I do this or that?", we make ourselves and the whole world nervous and never get round to doing God's will at all.

No, quite quietly and simply, whilst following the Lord, say to him, "Lord, I entrust this day to you, be with me, guide me through your Spirit to do what is right." And without much effort, God comes to have his right fulfilled in our lives. Praise be to his name!

Well, there are of course a great many things that could be mentioned, things that are indeed happening in our day. In particular, let us also remember those who are suffering innocently at this time, those who are in war-torn areas.

We have all seen that the final offensive has begun, and by human reckoning, it can only take a few days. With today's resources, it's not a matter of years before victory is achieved. A few days are enough for Kuwait, and a week for victory to be declared in Baghdad. Today it all happens very quickly.

What moved me, however, was the fact that Gorbachev stepped in at the last moment as the mediator, the man of peace. We all hold him in high regard, and we know, according to Bible prophecy, Russia will take the lead in the final battle to be waged against Israel. As much as it pains us, this is simply what the Bible says, and so it must come to pass, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled.

What is now foreseeable, and you don't need to be a prophet to see this, is the fact that the entire hatred of the Arab world will escalate against Israel to the point of no return, until that very hour strikes when the blow against Israel is then struck.

What really moves me and gives me pause for thought in this context is the following fact. We know, as we can gather from Revelation 9 and Revelation 16, from the prophet Ezekiel, and from various scriptures, that this final battle will indeed involve these masses.

And if we assume that it will take years, say six or seven years, to rearm and get everything up to scratch, so as to be able to launch the attack, and if this strike, which will then be launched, cannot take place until seven years after the rapture, how close could the rapture be? Do you understand what I mean?

So, if seven years after the rapture, this strike, that is the battle of Armageddon, is to take place, and it will, not before, for after the rapture there are three and a half years for the ministry of the two witnesses, followed by the breaking of the covenant between Rome and Israel, and then the three and a half years of the great persecution, during which many martyrs will give their lives, and only then, right at the very end, will the final battle take place, when Revelation 19 will also be fulfilled, when the Lord comes down from heaven on a white horse after the marriage supper and all the saints with him on horses. A horse always symbolizes battle, no matter where you read about it in the Bible. And so he will then lead the final battle. You

can read this very clearly in Revelation 19 from verse 11, and see how it all fits together.

Once again, I simply wish to emphasize this without causing us to be afraid, and I ask that we remain sober right up to the last day. Whoever wishes to get married, let them do so quickly. If you wish to do something, do it. Do all things as if we still had 100 years to live, but let us live as if it could happen any day. We simply must remain sober in every respect.

If then the first phase is now indeed drawing to a close, and then the second and final phase must follow, we know, perhaps by way of explanation, you know that there are around 50 million Muslims living in the Soviet Union alone. The entire Asian part is after all almost entirely Muslim, and that is why we can also understand why it has to be this way. And the Bible does say, ***"from the far north"*** [Eze 38:15]

Belarus or Leningrad would not be the far north as seen from Jerusalem. You really do have to look straight ahead and not glance to the left to understand geographically which nations will be marching in from there.

We can count ourselves lucky. You have 3 million Muslims in France. We have 1.7 million, and others have even fewer. But Russia does after all have exactly 50 million, and that makes a world of difference.

And when we consider the overwhelming power of the entire Muslim world, and tiny Israel, then God must intervene, and God will intervene. Our Lord will decide the final battle when he descends from heaven and reveals his power.

What also moved me deeply, and I ask you to forgive me for saying this, was when the news came out a few days ago that Hussein had written a book in which he copied Hitler's Mein Kampf, and it is entitled 'Our Struggle'. I don't watch television very often, because I don't have the time. But one evening, probably Thursday evening at 11:00 PM, I happened to watch the news, and then the man, the journalist, showed Saddam Hussein's book entitled 'Our Struggle' and clearly stated that he had taken a great deal from Hitler, and that it states the Jewish people must be utterly exterminated, and the state of Israel completely destroyed.

And so we can see which way the wind is blowing. And we believe that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not the god of Ishmael, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he will be victorious.

There are a great many other thoughts that could be mentioned here, but we are not here to be given a lesson in politics. But if we are now delving into Bible prophecy, then I think we would do well to observe these things and not simply gloss over them.

I believe that the longer this goes on, the more grateful we will become that God has granted us so much grace to recognize the prophetic Word. Perhaps this mention isn't entirely appropriate either, but I'm currently writing a new booklet. I'm writing

about the chapters of Revelation in order, and have now reached chapter 14. It won't be very long, perhaps a 100 pages, I'm not sure.

However, when I got to chapter 13, I did take out a few commentaries to see what others had said about the Antichrist. And the best known man in the field of radio evangelism, who by the way has his headquarters here, he writes: 'The Antichrist must be a Jew, he must come from Syria, and he must be a Roman citizen.' I shook my head, and if I had had dog ears, I would have gone back and listened again. But as I didn't, I closed the book, put it aside and said, 'Unbelievable!'

Then I read through other commentaries and realized where the wind was blowing from. When the Counter-Reformation began, and all the reformers had described the papacy as the Antichrist, Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, put forward the theory that the Antichrist must be a Jew because Christ was a Jew. For us, Christ was not a Jew. For us, Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh.

But that men who call themselves men of God, and who often seek to give the impression that they have lapped up God's wisdom by the spoon-full, should then sing from the same hymn sheet, I simply cannot comprehend.

But as I said, we don't want to come across as arrogant here either. None of us would have known for certain had God not sent his servant and prophet, Brother Branham. And so we keep coming back to the same point: God reveals his mystery to his servants, the prophets. And so we have been connected to the prophetic proclamation. And all these things did not grow in my garden either, but I have taken them from Brother Branham's sermons.

Now that we have reached this topic, let me clarify the following in a few sentences. Time and again, I'm asked whether we believe everything Brother Branham preached, and whether we also believe in the seven thunders he preached about, and so on.

I wish to make it clear before God and all people that we preach everything Brother Branham preached from the Word of God, adding nothing to it, and taking nothing away from it.

However, when brothers offer the most far-fetched interpretations about the thunders, and turn them into doctrines, and then label these doctrines as the seven thunders, and furthermore link them to Brother Branham, then we believe that this must not be allowed to happen. It is not right to put forward one's own teachings under the guise of the topic seven thunders, and then attribute to Brother Branham the most preposterous things that he never actually said.

And for all our reassurance, and I say this with a clear understanding of what I'm now stating, only according to Revelation 10, when the Lord comes down to set his foot upon the land and sea as the original owner, and I can tell you exactly from the Bible, I'm writing about it now, it will be exactly three and a half years before

the gates close. So immediately after the ministry of the two witnesses, when the Lord reveals himself to the 144,000, and then roars like a lion, the covenant will be broken and the final three and a half years will begin and run their course.

I can prove this 100% from Daniel chapter 12, verses 5 and 6, for there the prophet, or the angel who spoke to him, asked, ***"'How long will it be before the end of these marvelous things?'"*** [Dan 12:6]

And then the angel raised his hand to heaven and swore by the one who lives forever, just as in Revelation 10, he swore by him who lives forever, in Daniel 12 and in Revelation chapter 10, and in Daniel it then says, ***"a time, times, and half a time"*** [Dan 12:7]

If anyone today, whether they invoke God, Moses, Abraham, Paul, Branham, or anyone else, if anyone comes along today and says, 'The thunders from Revelation 10 have already sounded,' and so on, show them the door, and say, 'Only when you are right upstairs you may come back. There's no point in carrying on in this conversation.' Yes, that might be a bit harsh. But we are not here to listen to every charlatan who creates a certain atmosphere. I've heard it often enough myself: 'Christ has left the mercy seat, has been revealed in the seven thunders, he's descending, he has set foot on land and sea, now he's marrying his bride.' Just think of all that has been preached. Not with me! It must be in accordance with Scripture. And if it is not in accordance with Scripture, then it is not for me, because it is not from God. God is always and eternally bound by his Word. Finish.

Today, it is close to my heart to encourage us once more through the Word of God, to strengthen us in the faith, perhaps drawing on the Scripture we have already read together, but also on a few other scriptures that will simply be a blessing to us. That is what I believe.

In Luke 5, we read, I'm referring once again to verse 5, Luke chapter 5, starting from verse 5, and perhaps going on a little further:

[5] ***And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.***

[6] ***And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.***

[7] ***And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.***

[8] ***When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.***

[9] ***For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.***

Up to here this precious and holy Word. What do we learn from this? When the Lord steps into our boat, everything changes. We notice from the story of the storm, he commands the storm, he commands the waves, the storm is stilled, the waves subside.

Here a word of promise was given. And Peter then said, ***"At thy word, I will cast out the net."*** [Lk 5:5]

He had a command from the Lord. And this Word, which was given to him, he carried out in faith. And with this act of faith, as we might call it, he demonstrated that the Lord is able to perform miracles when things are done at his Word.

You know of course that a fisherman doesn't just fish during the day. Here we have our beloved brother, who has fished on Lake Zurich all his life. One day, I will go out with you. Of course, you do need to know what you are doing. And lo and behold, they fished all night long and the nets were empty, nevertheless, ***"At thy word, Lord, because you have said so, I will do it."*** [Lk 5:5]

It was in this obedience, carried out in faith, that God's blessing lay. And if the fish hadn't been there, God would have created them, so that they might be there and the nets would have been filled. That is the kind of God we have, he keeps his promises.

Now, as regards our salvation, and indeed redemption, grace, and everything that has been given to us by God, let me read a few scriptures on this. I shall begin with Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, and I would like us all to note the past tense used in these scriptures.

Not God will, but God has, God has done it. Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2.

[1] ***God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,***

[2] ***Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;***

[3] ***Who being the brightness of his glory...***

and so forth.

Hath. God will not merely, God has. God spoke through the prophets, and announced what he would do.

In the Son he has spoken, and has made what was announced a divine reality here in the flesh, on earth, in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

From Ephesians chapter 1, I would like to read from verse 3. Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3 to 5.

[3] ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:***

[4] ***According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:***

[5] ***Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.***

Anyone who wishes to read on is welcome to do so. Time and again, the same message is repeated here. God has already, he won't do it in the future. God has chosen, God has redeemed, God has pardoned, God has written our names in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world. God has predestined us, so that we may live according to the good pleasure of his will.

And as we have read here:

[3] ***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.***

Beloved, if this abundance of blessing has not yet been able to break through fully and has not yet become manifest, then it is not God's fault, then it is down to us. Somewhere, we, or circumstances, whatever they may be, are an obstacle. From God's side, everything has truly been done. God will not do it in the future. ***"God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."***

In order for this blessing to be revealed in us and through us, we must become vessels that allow themselves to be cleansed by the Lord, vessels that make themselves available to him, so that this abundance of blessing which he has bestowed and given in Christ may be revealed through the church. Brother Branham put it so beautifully.

He said:

Everything that God was was poured out into Christ, and the whole fullness that was in Christ was then poured out into the church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now, as we all know, it all comes down to our faith.

Peter could have stayed in the boat for a long time. If he had not acted according to the Lord's Word, no miracle would have taken place. The nets would not have been filled.

We, too, must take the plunge and say to the Lord, "At thy Word, we believe that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Let us continue reading from verse 9, perhaps just verse 9:

[9] ***Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.***

Always the word "has". He has made known to us the mystery of his will.

We can also read verse 22 in Ephesians 1. Verse 22:

[22] ***And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,***

[23] ***Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.***

Let us picture it like this. Christ is the head of the body. The body consists of many members, and he is the head.

Now, when this fullness, the total fullness of the body, is brought together and experiences union with the head, then the whole body is nourished from the head, it receives strength, it becomes usable, and it can carry out what the Lord wishes to do.

See, when we look at the head, the hands are not on the head, nor are the feet, but the head directs the whole body, so that the hands and feet can be used to do what the head wishes to do.

And if we as believers now wish to place ourselves at the Lord's disposal, let us do so completely, and simply say, "Lord, we know that the time is now very short. You have prepared a body for yourself, and this body is the church."

And according to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 12 and 13, we are baptized as members into the body of Jesus Christ. But the members are different.

I'll read verse 23 here once more, or rather, one must read verse 22 as well, for the context:

[22] ***And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,***

[23] ***which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.***

If the church is his body, then surely the feet must be there somewhere too. Then, in the very end, the full victory of Jesus Christ must be revealed through the church, and Satan and all the demons must have been placed at our feet, not just at his feet, but at the feet of his body, and his body is the church.

And when we gain this perspective, and understand the challenge, and say, 'Lord, though this is beyond our comprehension, but if you say so in your Word, then let it be done.' And then it will happen.

We need only recognize our task, our standing before God, then everything will go more smoothly.

Let us read from Ephesians chapter 2, verse 4. Ephesians chapter 2, from verse 4.

[4] ***But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,***

[5] ***Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...***

Let us pause here. For those who have become believers, who have been saved, it was accomplished when our Lord and Savior died on the cross of Calvary. And as he was dying, cried out, ***"It is finished!"*** [Jn 19:30]

He did all this, as it is written:

[5] ***He hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved,***

[6] ***And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places...***

Always the word "has", that is, past tense, not "he will do it", but "he has already done it".

In chapter 2, verse 18:

[18] ***For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.***

And it is always the same Holy Spirit through whom we have this access.

"***He has...***"

From Revelation chapter 1, I would like to read. Revelation chapter 1, just the first few verses. Revelation 1, verses 1 and 2, and then verses 5 and 6.

[1] ***The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:***

[2] ***Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.***

Always this certainty, and it is precisely this certainty that we need. No human being has taken anything upon themselves. God sent his angel, God had his servant John on the island of Patmos. God was able to reveal it to him, so that future servants might also know what is going on. And we have already read ourselves: ***"to shew unto his servants things which must come to pass."*** [Rev 1:1]

So it is not just about the singular, here it is about a singular when it comes to receiving the Word, and about the plural when it comes to passing it on.

Let me read verse 1 once more. Revelation 1:1: ***"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him,"*** to John, ***"to shew unto his servants,"*** [Rev 1:1] not merely to show John something, but to show his servants what must shortly come to pass.

And so if the Lord has servants on earth, they will be connected to the prophetic Word and message, and to the things that God has revealed to his servant John. One must be placed on this path by God. One cannot simply step onto it and say, 'Here

I am, Lord,' but God must do it. And so it is indeed written, also using the word 'has', ***"God has set in the church apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists."*** [Eph 4:11]]

If the ministries have not yet been revealed, then it is surely only down to us. It cannot be down to God. God has, and let no one doubt that God has, for God has. Amen. And here we must simply agree with God and then say, 'Lord, at thy Word, we believe it, and we also believe that you will also cause the ministries which you have appointed in your church to be revealed very soon to the glory of your name.'

Then, in the same chapter, Revelation 1, verses 5 and 6:

[5] ***And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,***

[6] ***And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father...***

And so forth.

So, time and again, this conviction: he has, he will not do in future, he has. And what he has already done, do you believe that he has done it? We are redeemed, we are children of God, we are a royal priesthood, we are kings. It just hasn't been revealed yet what we are. But this much has already been revealed: that we are redeemed, that we have become children of God, that he has brought us out, that he has opened our hearts, anointed our eyes, that we heard what the Spirit had to say to the churches through the prophetic Word, and through the direct message for this time. There is much we can already confirm as having happened, that is, having taken place. And as for the rest, we stand on the foundation of faith in the Word of God, and say to the Lord, "You have already done it." It will only be a very short time yet, and then it will be revealed. Oh yes, God has, God has sent his prophet just as he promised, God has spoken to us, God has opened our understanding for the Scriptures. One could really use the word 'has' in a whole sequence, each time anew, and say, 'You have done it, you have done it.'

And when we consider all that he has already done, it will be easier for us to believe that the things which are yet to come, he will also do them shortly.

With regard to the imminent return of the Lord, I would like to read two Scriptures, both from the Epistle of Peter. The first is from 2 Peter chapter 3.

The two passages from the Epistles of Peter, the first from 2 Peter chapter 3, the opening verses contain words of exhortation. Verse 2 reads:

[2] ***That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.***

Then there is mention of the end of days, when the scoffers will ask, ***"Where is the promise of his coming?"*** [2 Pet 3:4]

And then the Lord explains what is to come.

One day with the Lord is a thousand years for us. [2 Pet 3:8] The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. [2 Pet 3:9] Then verse 10: ***"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief,"*** and so forth.

Now to the verses I wanted to read, verses 14 and 15:

[14] ***Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.***

[15] ***And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.***

What an exhortation! "***Beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.***" We know what Paul wrote to the Ephesians, that the Lord will present to himself a church without spot or wrinkle [Eph 5:27], a church that has allowed itself to be prepared, a bride who bears the nature of the bridegroom, who has become one with him. And we believe that God is now at work in a mighty way, through the power of the blood of the Lamb, through the Word of God, which has indeed come alive, after it was revealed to us through the Holy Spirit, through the Spirit himself, who takes the Word and brings it to life for us, bringing us more and more, as time goes on, into harmony with his Word, so that in the end, the bride and the bridegroom may in one spirit form a divine unity, this body of the Lord, which is fully functional.

Not as the prophet Ezekiel saw in the Old Testament concerning Israel, where all the bones still lay scattered across the valley and he asked, ***"Can these come to life again?"*** [Eze 37:3]

And the answer was, "***Yes, they can come to life again.' Speak to the Spirit of the Lord.***" And then he spoke to the Spirit of the Lord and said, ***"Come from the four winds of the earth and breathe into these slain."*** [Eze 37:9]

And then he watched as suddenly, the limbs fell into place, as the bones were joined by tendons, as flesh came upon them, and as the flesh was covered with skin. All these stages are shown to us in the Old Testament, in the prophet Ezekiel.

Then suddenly, there stood a great army of those who had previously lain scattered, dead, as dry bones, but with whom God had a plan. They suddenly stood, brought to life, on their feet, fully functional. So it must be, and so it will be with all the members of the body of Jesus Christ.

May we look out across the valley today and say, 'Goodness me, that one laments and that one wails, no one can lift themselves up.' It is indeed like a battlefield.

There's groaning everywhere. Do not worry. The Almighty God, who has ordained that all things shall be set right and restored, and that the church shall stand firm at the beginning and the end in the power of the Lord, he will watch over his Word and he will finish his work. Here we are told: ***"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."*** [2 Pet 3:14]

Oh, if only this were granted to us in our hearts, in our minds, in our lives, that we might pursue holiness and peace with everyone, and as far as it depends on us, maintain this peace. And that indeed, the nature and life of our Lord might be revealed through our own nature and life. This is where we are called upon, beloved, "***seeing that you look for such things, be diligent.***" One may await things, knowing they will come, yet not strive to avoid all these very things, nor be intent of being found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.

May God today, at this very moment, at this very hour, place in our hearts the desire to stand before Him as we ought to be, and as we wish to be, at the hour of His return, that we may set everything right with God, and with people, with brother and sister, with husband and wife, with children, with everyone, whatever lies within our power.

May we bring everything that might be a hindrance to the Lord, and simply ask Him to be gracious to us, for we wish to be found before our Lord, when He comes, without spot or wrinkle, washed by the blood of the Lamb, cleansed by the washing of water by the Word, and sanctified in the truth.

This scripture is, after all, very well suited to our times.

We are now awaiting the last things that are to come upon the earth.

Yet whilst awaiting these things, we should be diligent that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Who among us longs for intimate fellowship with God, to read the Bible daily once more, to walk with the Lord, to live life with Him? I believe God wishes to grant this to us.

That is why we have come across this scripture, and have now read it, from 2 Peter chapter 1, the scripture so often quoted, 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 19.

[19] ***We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.***

Let us also take this to heart, and pay attention to the word of prophecy, but at the same time let us strive to be found at peace with God, to stand ready before the Lord, aware that he has forgiven all our known and unknown faults, sins, whatever they may be, that we ask him anew, "Lord, wash me in your precious and holy blood,

grant me fellowship with you, just as you would have it, this personal connection with you." And I believe he will grant it to us by his grace.

Just one more truly wonderful scripture, very familiar to us all, from Romans, time always passes so quickly, Romans chapter 8, let us rejoice in this, and take fresh courage, knowing that the Lord is yet to do great things.

Romans chapter 8, let us read this scripture today, with eyes anointed directly by God, and let us hear what the Lord wishes to say to us personally through it.

Romans chapter 8, verse 28:

[28] ***And* we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.**

Let us pause for just a moment on this verse, it is not the rest of the world that can say this, but those who love God, and why do they love him? Because they were loved by him first. And why is this so? Because we have been called according to his purpose, or predestination, as the translation sometimes varies.

Then all things work together for our good, no matter what it may be, even if we do not understand it ourselves, or others do not understand it at the moment.

Even if we shake our heads and say, "that can't be true, it simply isn't possible."

Be still, and you will find that God is right.

For all those who love him, all things work together for good. Not just the good things, it says all here, ***"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."*** [Rom 8:28]

Another Scripture says, ***"Give thanks to God in every circumstance, for everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*** [1 Th 5:18]

Then verse 29. Pay attention when it is read.

[29] ***For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.***

We have already mentioned this. Now that the singers have sung the hymn here, it is written in the Epistle of John, ***"We shall see him as he is."*** [1 Jn 3:2]

And that is why we do not believe it when a seven thunders doctrine proclaims that the Lord has come. We do not believe that. When he comes, we shall see him. And then we shall be transformed into his image.

Holy Scripture teaches this, ***"This same Jesus, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven."*** [Ac 1:11]

And I believe it is indeed the longing of us all to see him. And afterwards, we shall greet Abraham and many others. But first, we shall be welcomed by him, by our Lord and Savior, who has gone to prepare a place for us.

I do not wish to be drawn into any doctrine that claims to see something that cannot be seen at all, but rather to believe the Holy Scriptures, as it is written in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, that the Lord will return with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

I know that brothers from America were already preaching here in 1966 and 1967 that the Lord was already descending. They taught that the first phase, namely the wake-up call, the shout, was already taking place. They said that the shout is the message. So the Lord must have left the mercy seat.

I translated these things back then. I shook my head straightaway, and then had to conclude that they had misunderstood what brother Branham had said, and what Holy Scripture teaches.

In the sermon, 'The Rapture', brother Branham spoke about 1 Thessalonians 4, and then made a leap to Matthew 25. He mentioned Matthew 25, three times in a row and said: **Now is the time to trim the lamps, to purify them, and to fill the jars with oil.**

And that is exactly it. It is being fulfilled in our day that the cry is going forth, ***"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."*** [Mt 25:6]

Everything written in 1 Thessalonians 4 will come to pass when the Lord returns. And that shout is a wake-up call addressed to those who have died in Christ, for the dead in Christ shall rise first and we who are alive and remain, we will be awake by then, and don't need a call to wake us. We who are alive and remain will be transformed and caught up together with the Lord in the clouds, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. [1Th 4:16-17]

We were told only recently that the Lord is now amongst us here on Earth, and that the marriage is taking place here and now. None of this is true. One thing, however, is true: he has sent his revealed Word, and he is in his Word. He cannot be separated from his Word, and his Word is spirit and life. [Jn 6:63] He himself waits on the mercy seat until the very last person who is to become a believer, believes, until the last sinner has been forgiven, and the very last one has been called out and the number is complete. Only then will he rise up and return. I shall quickly read on in Romans 8, verses 29 to 30.

[29] ***For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.***

[30] ***Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also***

glorified.

Have you counted how many times the word 'has' appears here? He has done it; it is finished. [Jn 19:30] Those whom he has called with a holy calling, he has justified. Just now, I was reading in the sermon 'The Rapture' of Brother Branham, where he says:

Justified means before God as though we had never done it, as though we had never sinned.

Divine justification means that fallen man has been totally and completely removed from his fall and restored to the state before the fall, brought into fellowship with God as if nothing had ever happened.

Praise be to the name of the Lord! Divine justification is not a process in installments, where first you and then I… No, in Christ, he has called us. We have been crucified with him, died with him, buried with him, and raised with him to a new life. He has. He has done everything. Now it is entirely up to us. It is even written: ***"and he has glorified us."*** [Ro 8:30]

If you'll allow me, just three or four more 'has' from the Gospel of John, chapter 17, and then we'll come to a close. Gospel of John 17, verse 4.

[4] ***I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.***

He is standing on both feet. This is still before Golgotha, before the crucifixion, and he says: ***"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."*** [Jn 17:4]

With God, everything is already done. What he is yet to do, he has already done. With him, the plan is a completed, finished matter. Verse 6:

[6] ***I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.***

It goes on and on. Let us read verse 14 as well. John 17, verse 14.

[14] ***I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.***

This too fits the believer very well. Just as our Lord did not fit in anywhere on this Earth, there was no room for him in the inn, [Lk 2:7] nor in the temple, he did not fit into society anywhere, not into religious society, nor into any other. We, too, do not really fit in anywhere. We are tolerated until the moment when we are taken home. So, ***"I have given them thy word."*** [Jn 17:14]

Now I'll read verse 26. ***"I have declared unto them thy name…"***

Always, 'I have', not 'I will', 'I have'.

Verse 24.

[24] ***Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.***

"They belong to you. You have given them to me through redemption, here I bring them back to you." What wonderful words.

There is absolutely no room for doubt here. God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ. And whoever reads Isaiah 53 and many other chapters: He bore our sins. He took our infirmities upon himself. He has. He has helped us on the day of salvation. The Scripture in Isaiah goes on to say, ***"I have redeemed you and called you by name, you are mine."*** [Is 43:1]

Let us summarize what the Lord wanted to tell us today.

Firstly, it seemed to me as though the Lord wished to make it clear to us that matters have become serious, and that we are truly not merely living in the last days, but have arrived at the very end of all things.

And that we should put our lives in order with God and with one another, making ourselves available to him as his body, and truly asking him, "baptize me through thy Spirit into your body", so that the whole body of Jesus Christ may become a living organism, and that he, as the head, may be able to do all things through the body, through its members. Then it will no longer be Brother So-and-So, but the Lord, who by grace brings everything to pass in everyone.

And in this context, the Lord wishes to make it clear to us that from his side, everything has already been accomplished. It is finished. He has redeemed us. He has revealed himself to us. He has made his Word known to us. He has revealed his name. We can already affirm all these things with yes and amen. We are not outsiders, but people who have been placed right at the heart of the kingdom of God. Through the new birth, we have indeed been born into the kingdom of God, and thus have part in what God is doing right now.

May we be given fresh encouragement on our journey, so that we are not merely up-to-date doctrinally, nor merely be able to place the prophetic word correctly.

May God grant us grace in regard to these two points, so that the third is not neglected either, namely, that our lives may be pleasing to God, and that we may be at his disposal, both as individuals and as a body and living organism of Jesus Christ, baptized by the Spirit. May we be at his disposal in this way, so that he may take his church through the final stage, and that the following may be fulfilled: ***"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."*** [Zec 4:6]

We, as vessels, as members of his body, wish to place ourselves at his disposal. Do not forget: He who has called us, has also justified us. He who has justified us has also sanctified us. He has transformed us into the image of his Son. It has simply not yet been made manifest. In God's sight, we are already sons and daughters of

God. That is how he sees us, but as I've just said, it has not yet been made manifest. It will, however, be made manifest shortly.

Then we shall lay aside this earthly body and be clothed with a resurrection body, as we are transformed into the likeness of our Lord's body. Almost beyond our comprehension, and yet true. Just as there was a first Adam, so there is a second Adam. And just as all have borne the image of the first, so Paul writes to the Corinthians in chapter 15, so all will bear the image of the second Adam. [1 Cor 15:47–49]

The Lord has done all things well. Blessed and praised be his marvelous and glorious name. Let us rejoice and give him the glory for calling us, for leading us out, for predestinating us, for choosing us, for justifying us, and indeed, for transforming us into his image. Let us honor him through faith in Jesus' holy name. Amen.