

Gathered Together unto Him

Seven reasons to do so

And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

(Matthew 13:2)

***The third in a series:
“Gathered Together”***

Sermon preached at

**The Strict Baptist Chapel
St David's Bridge Cranbrook**

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Seeking for the help of the Lord, I direct your prayerful attention to Matthew chapter 13 and reading for our text part of verse 2.

In verse 2 we read, “gathered together unto him.” The whole verse reads, *And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*

Speaking again this evening as I hope to throughout this month on Thursday evenings on the theme “gathered together.” We have this coming again and again in the scriptures and we've spoken of “**gathered together in my name**” and we've spoken of the “**gathered together as one man**” and I want, with the Lord's help, this evening speak of this word, “**gathered together unto him,**” that is, unto the Lord Jesus.

We have a promise in the blessing that Jacob blessed his sons with, and in the blessing of Judah, he says in Genesis 49 verse 10, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes. Shiloh is the name of Messiah. And unto him shall the gathering of the people be. So there's a prophecy right there of the coming of Messiah.

Remember the woman at the well of Samaria? She says, I know that Messiah's cometh. He shall tell us all things. And our Lord said to her, I that speak unto thee, am he. Our Lord is, the Shiloh. And we can see from the account that we've had here, great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship and sat while the whole multitude stood on the shore. It's one of the features of our Lord's ministry, the thousands that followed Him. And sometimes the scribes, they said that the whole world has gone out after Him. And it was very evident that there was a great drawing unto Him. Wherever He was, there the people were.

We know, of course, that in these Gospel days, our Lord is in heaven, He has suffered, bled, died, been raised up again and ascended up into heaven, that this word shall still be fulfilled but not in the literal way like it was on earth, although we may say literally gathered together in the churches or around the preaching of the word. We think of the times of great revivals, the times of Whitefield, the times when they gathered in the open fields because there was no room in the churches, and there was a great hunger and thirst after the word of the Lord. And in that is fulfilled what

is set forth by our Lord Himself in John chapter 12. He says in verse 32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." And the prophecy is, "they shall look upon him, or me, whom they have pierced." And so, it is with the coming of Messiah, the coming of the Lord, the idea of a gathering unto him. He is the central, and the people are gathered here below unto him. And at last, around the throne of God in heaven, He shall be the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and they shall be gathered unto him. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Now we know there were some that while their Lord was on earth, they joined such gatherings because of the numbers. Numbers draw numbers, and that still is the case, and there'll be people join the assemblies of the people of God, there's a lot, because they just want to be part of it. There must be something if there are numbers going after it.

Others like Zacchaeus, there's curiosity. In his case it was one of the Lord's divine appointments, that he wanted to see the Lord as he went by. And because of the multitude that was following him, he climbs up into a sycamore tree to be able to see him.

Then we have, of course, the scribes and the pharisees, when they were gathered together and gathered together unto him, that it was to tempt him and to trip him up and to try and lay snares for him. May the Lord preserve us and deliver us from a wrong motive in gathering unto the Lord. We can be sure that only in sovereign mercy there'll be a blessing, but many times there will be not. if we come with the wrong motive.

We are cautioned about saying there will never be a blessing because, of course, we have with Zacchaeus and we know in the time of Whitfield that there were those that came to hear him preach with stones in their hand, intending to throw them at the preacher. And as they heard the word preached, the stones gradually dropped from their hands.

Here below, the Lord has promised his presence. Though I'm with you always, even unto the end of the world, and that he is with his people, and where they are, there he is, even where two or three are gathered together in his name. And he that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth

me receiveth him that sent me. And so, wherever there is a gathering of his people in his name, there is, as our text says, they are gathered unto him.

I wanted this evening, to speak a word of encouragement to be coming unto the Lord, to be gathering unto him. The idea here with the gathering is not thinking, well, we just come alone. These blessings are for all the people of God. This is the expectation as we gather together in his name. It is a gathering unto him for these benefits and for these blessings and those things that we can so clearly see he imparted to those that gathered together while he was upon earth. They have their counterpart in the ministry of the Word now.

And so, I want to look at seven benefits, seven blessings, seven reasons why we should gather unto Him and the blessing that comes from Him.

The first one is directly in the context here, and that is to hear His Word.

This is why they gathered. They gathered to hear the Lord speak. And our Lord spoke to them, and He spoke to them in parables, an earthly story with a spiritual or heavenly meaning. There were those that did not understand. The Lord said, the reason why he spoke in parables, was so that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not hear, but to them that were given to know these mysteries, he would interpret this word to them.

What a reminder that though we gather like them here and hear the same word, yet it still is the sovereign work of God to open the understanding and cause that that word be heard and be understood.

The first parable that the Lord spoke here is a parable which is a key parable. The Lord says, if you know not this parable, how will you know all parables? And it is because this parable speaks of hearing, four types of hearers. And the first one is one that did not understand that word, and the word is taken immediately out of their hearts. It doesn't even enter in, doesn't have any effect at all. And then we have those where it does enter in, and there is joy at first when it enters in. but they don't have any root, that root is just in themselves. And so, when they have persecution or tribulations or troubles, then they're offended, then they go away. And then

others receive the word, and it's like among thorns, and those thorns, they spring up and choke the word. the things of this world, deceitfulness of riches, choking the word.

And you think, here is a gathering unto the Lord. And you might say that to three-quarters of his hearers, the word is not profitable. It is not that endures to eternal life. It is not saving to them. It doesn't last, they don't endure unto the end. But the Lord speaks the word for that quarter that shall be blessed, that shall hear it, that shall bring forth fruit. It should be always a strengthening encouragement to us to realise this. You could picture perhaps of a pastor with a flock and those that come and hear, if he had 20 hearers come through the door, and he was very pleased with these hearers. But upon the first speaking, then five of them disappear out the door, and they don't want to hear anymore. And then we have 10 of them, they receive the word. And yet, then there comes tribulation, there comes some illness, some troubles, and they're saying, if that's your God, I'm not having anything to do with that, and off five of them go. And then the other five, they get riches, they get something alluring them of this world, and their past pleasures, and the things that attracted them, attract them back. And all the pastor is left with is five hearers. But they are fruitful, and they bring forth fruit. You know, very often that would be very, very discouraging to any flock, any pastor, to have that kind of take-up, as it were, or blessing with the Word. Yet this is what the Lord says. But it is a gathering unto Him for this purpose. We should never be ashamed because there are some that don't receive it, or some that receive it and cast it away, or that there's so few that actually bring forth fruit. The Lord has warned his us of this. But like Peter, when many went away and the Lord said, will you also go away? And Peter said to him, to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. We believe and assure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And so, the gathering unto the Lord. They were gathered unto him and in the majority of cases this was a central theme. to hear his word. Be not silent unto me, lest thou be silent unto me. I become like them that go down into the pit. In the last days, it is said, there shall be a famine, not of bread or of water, but of hearing of the words of the Lord. So, our Lord is speaking of these days, and it is as gathered unto him that we hear His Word. So

may that thought be with us as we gather in His Name, as we gather unto Him, that it is to hear His Word, just like it was while He was upon earth. We hear the words of the Holy Bible, the words of the inspired Word of God. Preach the Word is our commission.

The second thing that they gathered for was for healing.

Many that had diverse diseases. Those that were blind, those that were lame, those that were paralyzed, they gathered unto Him, they were bought, the one that was born of four, brought unto Him, that they might be healed.

We come to ask the Lord's blessing on the means and for healing for our bodies, but how much more for our souls, that the malady of sin might be dealt with, that we might be healed of those festering sores of sin. There can be no greater malady. You know we might think of many things that we can fall ill with and there are some we can say if a person is ill with those it is a terminal illness. Well sin is always a terminal illness; it always will bring forth death if it is not dealt with and if the Lord does not heal us wash us and cleanse us. The Lord said of Peter, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. All are the people of God, not only have their sins pardoned and forgiven through our Lord and through his precious blood, but also are sanctified, made meet for the Master's use. They are cleansed in their walk and in their conduct. They need that washing of water by the Word to be renewed day by day. And where is it found? Not in the world, but as we gather together unto Him, unto the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we've sung the hymn that we have, The Physician, and gathering unto the Physician.

We think of those that deal with our maladies in a natural way, how much they specialize in heart or brain or bones or whatever it is, and what skill and wisdom they need. But with our Lord Jesus Christ, He understands every case. He gives wisdom to every natural physician, and He understands the disorders of the soul, and He alone is able to heal them. So may that be what we gather unto him for, "Heal us, Emmanuel, here we are waiting to feel thy touch." You think of the woman with the issue of blood, 12 years, she touched him, and was instantly healed. How many had very, very different cases and it is so spiritually. Many of the Lord's dear

people have those bitterness's and sores that they cannot tell to a nearest one, but they can come to the Lord for healing.

The third one I bring before you is that of cleansing.

Many that were brought to the Lord, many that came to the Lord, came and gathered unto Him, they were defiled, they were unclean, they had unclean spirits and they needed cleansing. Everyone that is quickened into life will feel how unclean they are. You know, you cannot but read the Old Testament and the ceremonial law and you wonder how anyone could come anywhere near the tabernacle, how could anyone perform any of those sacrifices, it was so easy to become unclean, so easy to be unfit to draw nigh. And we are pointed out that in ourselves, we are all as an unclean thing. All of us, we are not fit to stand before God, to come before God. We're like the publican to stand afar off, God be merciful to me a sinner. Or like the lepers that could not come nigh. They had to cry out all the time, unclean, unclean. They felt it. They had to be shunned. They had to be separated. They had to be put out of the camp. And yet it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. that cleansed lepers, made them whole instantly, set them free, loosed them from that uncleanness. Where we have an unclean spirit, where we have that which defiles us through and through, it is a gathering unto Him that He would deal with that for us. that He'd wash us, cleanse us and make us clean.

The fourth is this, to gather unto Him for life.

We have already quoted Peter saying, to whom can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Our Lord said, I am come, that they might have life, that they might have it more abundantly. And his reproof was, ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life. So, where we read, gathered together unto him, one of those reasons why we are together, one of those aims and desires, is that we might have life. There is no other source of eternal life than in the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone has power and ability to give it and impart that life to his people. In him is life, outside of him, away from him is death.

He speaks of himself in John 15 as the vine and the branch. The branch cannot abide by itself, accepted, abide in the vine, it will die, it will perish, it will wither. It needs to be united to that vine. And so, every branch in Christ, every one of the people of God, needs to be united with Him, gathered

together unto Him for this purpose, to receive life, to receive his words of life. He says in John 6, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. What a testimony to a poor soul that feels so hard, so lifeless, so dead, so unfit to come near the presence of the Lord and yet to realise that in Him the words that he speaks, they are spirit, and they are life.

I often think of Psalm 107. Of those that draw nigh unto death, they abhor all manner of meat. And you think, what hope is there for one that abhors the manner of meat in a natural sense. If you had someone that every sight or smell of food, they hated it and they shrunk from it, then of course they would die because they would never have food, they'd never have sustenance. And if it is in a spiritual way, if there's that that is pushing us away from the word and we cannot partake of it, we abhor that word, what hope is there? But we read in that Psalm, Psalm 107, even with that case, that he sent his word and healed them. Even by that which they had abhorred. I often have felt encouraged with that. When we feel so hard and cold and dead, we feel perhaps so little appetite for the word of God, we think, how can I be healed? How can I be cleansed? How can I have life when the very source of life I recoil from, I find it so hard to read, so hard to pray, so hard to come before the Lord? Yet the Lord uses that same word. All it takes is for the Lord to speak his word into the soul, send his Spirit the remembrancer, and that is the quickening word. We think of Lazarus that was dead and bound hand and foot with grave clothes and had been dead four days too. - You might feel like that. I've been like this so long. - And yet our Lord stood at that grave. "Lazarus, come forth." And he came forth. It didn't matter that he was dead when that word was spoken. It didn't matter that he was bound with grave clothes. That word was a quickening word. It broke through everything. Loose Him and let Him go. And that's what we need. We need the Lord to give us life. Fresh life. Renewed life. Eternal life. That life is in Himself. our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gather together unto him, desiring life, asking life of him. What a blessed assembly that would be if we could say we gather and we gather unto him and we desire life. We feel so lifeless, so hard, so cold. Lord, do grant me life in my soul. Or maybe one coming feels so defiled, so unclean. Lord, cleanse me, wash me. or so ill, Lord, heal me.

But then in the fifth place, to gather unto him for grace.

You know, those that gathered unto him, they marvelled at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. His dealings with men were gracious dealings. He was kind and long-suffering towards them. We finish our services, don't we, with the benediction, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is what we need. He giveth more grace and that grace is poured into his lips. Grace to help in time of need, saving grace, grace, grace. That is what is cried that might be upon the Lord. That is how He is known, the God of all grace. And it is in the Lord Jesus Christ that the Father bestows that grace upon sinners. May we gather together unto Him, seeking for grace to help in time of need. seeking for grace.

It's not deserved. We may feel the Lord has been kind to us, may have been gracious to us. Then we look upon our base requitals. We think of what we've done in return. We think of our hard heart. We think of those sins that have been so provocative. But then we have the Lord as the God of all grace, to give more grace.

What if it was said, well, that was exhausted? There's no more grace. You can't gather with the people of God unto him anymore because he's run out of grace. The Lord said of his disciples when they said, how many times shall my brother sin against me and turn again and repent and I forgive him till seven times? The Lord said, no, till seventy times seven, his grace will not run out. It is saving, it is the eternal grace of our Lord. May we gather unto him for grace.

Then sixthly, there is a gathering unto him for rest.

At the end of Matthew chapter 11, we have our Lord beautifully issuing this invitation. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." May you be of those that gather unto him, and the reason why we are gathering unto him is because we've heard that invitation.

We are weary. We are heavy laden. We do want rest. Where shall we find that rest? But in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has accomplished at Calvary the fulfilling of the law, the satisfaction of the justice of God, taken away the

wrath of God, He has done that which we could not do. The hymn speaks, “rest in the promise that God has spoke”. And really it is resting on the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ and resting by faith upon all that He has done. A true rest is one when we fully believe, faith is given to fully lean and put our whole trust upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Gathered together unto him for rest. Well, may we know what that is. The weary, heavy-laden soul coming unto the Lord. Lord, speak rest into my soul through the ministry, through the word tonight. Speak rest, that I might rest in what thou hast done.

The last one that I bring before you is a gathering together unto Him for worship.

Because our Lord has said, this people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise. It is a sacred thing. when we gather unto Him and we gather to bow and to worship Him, to give Him the honour and the glory that is due unto His name and get a little foretaste of what that is in heaven, to be gathered in heaven and to sing His praise. forever and ever.

We think of those gatherings like when the Song of Moses was first sung at the Red Sea. They'd been brought safely through, their enemies had been swallowed up in the sea, and they sung the Lord's praise. They sung the Song of Moses. And that is always the song of those who have conquered through the Lamb. They have been delivered by the Lord. And we read of those in the book of the Revelation. In heaven their employment is to sing the song of Moses, to sing unto him that has delivered them completely, fully, and brought them safely home to himself. I hope there are those times that we gather, and it may be in that way. We don't need, we don't come for healing, cleansing or life or even grace or rest, but we come to worship. Like dear Hannah, she had come up. desiring petitions of the Lord, that He'd heal her of her childless state and give her a child. And He granted her that. And then she came up and said, for this child I prayed, the Lord hath given me my petition that I asked of Him. And then we read of all her praise and all the joy in her God and what He had done for her and what He was to her. And those are blessed times.

We know, of course, there are times like the Syrophoenician woman who came and worshipped him saying, Lord, help me. May we not think that just because we come seeking to be healed or cleansed or to have life, that we

are not coming in an attitude of worship. We are. But those are blessed times when we're not seeking, as it were, anything, from the Lord, but seeking to return to give thanks and praise and glory.

In heaven, you know, we will not be gathering there for life. We have life. We won't be gathering to be healed. We're fully healed. Nor will we be gathering to be cleansed. We're fully cleansed. There's no need to gather for that purpose there. Or for grace, there's no need of grace there because everything is perfect and full and no want whatsoever and eternal rest that shall be always there. It's a mystery to us, the blessing and wonders of heaven. But worship, worship there shall be, and honour and glory and praise unto our God. And so may there be those times while we are here below, gathered unto Him, and He's gathering unto Him to praise His name. Because of who He is, because we love Him, because we desire to be with Him.

Gathered together unto Him. May the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, He who was given by the Father and given that he might come into this world, take on the nature of those whom he was to redeem, and in that nature, that he was to live a perfect life and perfect obedience, even unto death, the death of the cross, that he should, through his death and through his sufferings, bear his people's sin away, make atonement for them, endure the wrath of God for them, and then lay down his life and rise again and give assurance unto all men because of the empty tomb and there is a living Saviour ever living to make intercession for the people of God.

This is who we come to, God's only begotten Son, His eternal Son, His beloved Son. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Gathered unto him. May we truly know him, who he is, and desire to be in those gatherings that are about him and that are unto him. May the Lord add his blessing.

Amen.