Before we have communion loved ones, I’d like to try to share something that is quite deep for all of us, and it will just need the light of the Holy Spirit for us to see it. And yet, it really explains most the things that happen in our present life.

So maybe you’d start by looking at 2 Corinthians, and it’s part of what Gentry read in the lesson. 2 Corinthians 4:10 is just a difficult half verse really. “Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus.”

And I know I read Thomas à Kempis [Thomas à Kempis, 1380 - 1471, German priest, monk and writer; author of "The Imitation of Christ", which is one of the best known Christian books on devotion] when I was 17, primarily because John Wesley read Thomas à Kempis, and of course, I was very respectful of John Wesley. And Thomas à Kempis used to talk about bearing in your body the marks of Jesus. And of course, I would think at times of the stigmata you remember, that some of the saints used to have reproduced in their hands, where it seemed the holes made by the nails in Jesus’ hands would be reproduced in their own hands. And it was in that connection that I used to think of this verse. But it has a very 'down to earth meaning' besides that one, that is a very practical meaning for you and me.

If I told you now, just this moment -- it's not true -- but if I told you that your bank where all your money was had just failed yesterday; just collapsed absolutely and utterly, and the government were not going to insure your funds of course, what would you think? Apart, I mean, from blaming your wife or your friend who told you to put your money in that bank, what would you think? And it’s just interesting; think what you would think. “It’s okay, I have stock and shares in my New York Stock Exchange; I’m okay. Well, my cash is there, but my home, my home is paid for. Okay, I’ve got the house.” Or, “Yeah, but I have savings, I have savings in that credit union, so okay, I’m alright.”

How many of us would think like that? I think it is the way most of us would think. You immediately think, “Alright what am I going to lose? If that bank has gone down the drain, what have I got of assets somewhere else?” And we immediately begin to run over in our minds where the other sources of our 'kind of financial stability' are. And of course, it’s because our stability and our security depends on those things. I mean, besides that you’ve got social security, and we don’t know how much that will produce; so when we think about our financial stability, and somebody tells us our local bank has gone down the drain, we immediately think, “Where else have we the things that we’re depending on for our security?”

And of course you don’t dare to think what would go through your mind if I said, “Do you know that all of those have gone down, too.” You know the kind of tremor that would go through your heart. You’d begin to think, “Well, I don’t know what I’m going to do.” Because, most of us here feel that our security and our stability, from a financial angle, depends on the money we have in the bank, probably the house we own, the bit of social security that we have; but most of all whatever other little investments we have; whatever stocks we own; or whatever property we own; or whatever business we have. And as we look forward to those retirement years, we think, that’s where we’ll go
to for our security, and that’s where we’ll have our financial stability.

Now if I press you and I say to you, “But are those things really stable?” You just look at the chaos that has taken place over the past decade in the States, and of course you’ll admit, “Well, I don’t like to think about it, but as I watch the gyrations of the stock market in these days, no, no; I mean, I know they’re not stable. I know even the experts like Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith, 1908 – 2006] Canadian and American economist] are utterly misinterpreting the way the market would go. Finally, you’re right; they’re not really stable. Even if I talk about what depends on insurance from the government, we’ve seen most of that collapse over the past 50 years. So no, it’s not stable, but it’s as stable as I can get. I don’t see how I can go beyond the bank, or beyond the stock exchange, or beyond this house. I agree with you, the house loses all its value if the bottom drops out of the real estate market, but it’s as stable as I can get myself.”

And if I say to you, “Well, upon what does the stability of those things depend?” You’ll say, “Well it depends on world economy continuing as it is. It depends on America continuing to be prosperous. It depends, I suppose, on whatever government we get in -- what they will do. It depends on all of us Americans having confidence in our own economy and in ourselves. It depends on all kinds of things.”

And if I ask you, “Well, what does that depend on?” You know you'd answer, “Well finally, on an invisible thing called ‘confidence’. When that ‘confidence’ goes all Wall Street can blow apart. Indeed it seems if somebody 'breathes the wrong way', Wall Street can turn upside down; so it all depends on some invisible ‘confidence’.”

And if I ask you what that depends on, finally I'll drive you back to the point where you'll see, “Well really it finally depends, I suppose on the Maker -- on the Creator sustaining the whole thing and determining to keep the thing going in its present state, and continuing to enable us all to have confidence that the economy is going to work, the way it is working at the moment. Finally I suppose if you press me, I’m dependent really on the Creator. And indeed, as far as security is concerned, I’m utterly dependent on him. It doesn’t matter how many stocks and shares I have if this old thing here [Pastor puts his hand on his heart] doesn’t keep beating, I’m lost anyway. If I catch some of these incurable diseases I’m gone anyway; so finally, yeah you’re right; I’m dependent on my Maker.”

But we’re a little bit like the New York kid who has never seen anything but the ‘concrete jungle’. He's never seen anything but these huge buildings and these concrete sidewalks, and his teacher asks the class, “Where does milk come from?” And he raises his hand and says, “A bottle.” Because, that's where he's seen milk coming from, and he doesn’t realize it comes way back from a cow. And we’re a little bit like that. If I ask you what you depend on for your security and your stability, you know fine well that most of us here this morning depend on all those intermediate causes that finally are unreliable, and that finally themselves depend on the Creator of the universe who sustains the whole thing.

But loved ones, do you see that we’re really living in unreality? Because, day-by-day we actually depend on the bank account; we depend on the stock and shares. We kind of build up our confidence, when we see one of our friends go bankrupt; you know how we build it up; you know, loved ones. So often we ‘don’t’ say, “Well, the Lord is my fortress and my strength, the Creator of the universe; he won’t let me down.” We don’t say that. If we hear of a friend who goes bankrupt, our little old minds -- we may not say it outwardly -- but our little old minds check over the investments we have,
to see if we made any the same as he has. And we work out, “Yeah, well that can go, and that can
go; but my Swiss bank account, that will never go,” as if Switzerland is somehow safe from all this
mess.

But we go over in our minds the things, the 'real' estate, as we call it, the 'real' estate; except
those of us that have been in real estate, know that's sometimes the most 'unreal' estate. But we
go over in our minds the things that we depend on for our financial security, and yet we know
finally that those 'aren't' the basis of our financial security. But if I press you, you have to
admit that that's where you and I live. That's where we live. I mean, we'll admit the theory that,
back of it all lies the Creator, but we'll have to admit that day-by-day, the beat of our heart, the
beat of our pulse, the perspiration on the old forehead, when we find some financial disaster taking
place, that is all dealt with by us in relationship to these 'unreal' bases of our financial
security; our bank account, our stock and shares, our house, our property.

If you died today, who would miss you most? If you died today, who would miss you most? And we're
all the same; you know the way we think, “Well, I think, Irene [Pastor's wife], she'd miss me.” And
you think now, Gene would miss you. And we all think of the loved ones that love us, and we think
they would miss us most. And if I asked you, “Who do you depend on most for your own self worth? I
mean, whose disapproval would hurt you most? Or, whose approval pleases you most? Or, whose
admiration gives you most a sense of value and importance?” Then you know, there are little names
dear hearts that occur to us. But what when they die? What when they die? Who then will miss
you?

It's kind of funny, isn't it, because you think well, have you a line-up there? “Well, okay my wife
dies, okay number two, number three, number four.” And it seems funny; it seems unreal, because you
feel, “Finally, I'm playing a game here, because, okay number one, I can believe they're really
important to my sense of self worth, but when you get down to number seven, I wonder how much self
worth I have left?” And so it's a funny kind of situation we get ourselves into. And yet it is
true, isn't it? Probably the 'real world' that you and I live in, is connected up with the people
that think well of us. And if anybody asks us, "Who would miss you most?" we reply, "Some human
being or other, our husband, or our wife, or our sons, or daughters, or our dear friends."

And yet finally they'll all die, won't they? I mean, finally they'll all die. Even if it's like
the ostrich, who sticks his head in the sand and says, “There are no dangers because I can't see
any,” even if it's 'you' die. Well when 'you' die they're all dead, as far as you're concerned.
The moment you die they're all dead; they're no longer able to affect you in any way; they're no
longer able to give you a sense of self worth. And actually, if I press you on it, you'll admit to
me, “Alright, Pastor, I agree, finally my value and my self worth is not determined by them. I
agree with you. Otherwise, it's just a temporary thing. Finally my self worth and my value is
determined by whoever put me here, and by what he thinks of me. And finally, that's the One that
gives me a sense of self worth or self value. And really, I know my answer to your question should
be, when you ask, ‘Who would miss you most?’ I should say, ‘God would miss me most.’” Except, that
that's not where we're living, see.

So do you see loved ones, in a strange way we're all living in a kind of unreality? And that's why
we get worried and anxious over the finances. That's why we get concerned, and resentful, and
jealous when we lose our sense of self worth, because we're actually all living in an unreal world,
where we're depending on the things that we have for our security, or on the people that think well
of us for our sense of value.
Why does God let your dad die? Why did God let your dad die? Well besides all kinds of other reasons that aren’t relevant today, one reason he let your dad die was so that you could begin to sense that the things in this present world are passing. And that even the loved one, or your mum: the loved one you thought was the dearest, and was the strongest, and the most permanent being in your life, even they can disappear. And God did that to begin to wean you off this ‘unreal world’, off this ‘artificial life support’ system. The Father does that with every one of us who are children, to begin to get through to us that this world itself is not sufficient to give us the things we need; the stability we need; or the sense of worth that we need. And he began at that moment to wean you off that.

That’s what Jesus did on Calvary. He turned from even his mum, even his friends, his disciples; he turned from what everybody thought of him, and he said, “Father into your hands I commit my spirit. I depend on you for my sense of worth and you only.” When he died, he turned from all the security that others could give him with their money, or with their clothes; he even just had a loin cloth on; his garment was taken from him; he owned nothing. And he turned from all of that, and he said, “Father, you’re the one I depend on. Into your hands I commit my spirit.” And he had you inside himself when he did that; and he did that for you too. He did that for you too. He turned you too, from those things, and those people, and he turned you too, to his Father, and he changed you, inside himself.

“Carrying about in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” is allowing that to become real in your life, day-by-day. That’s why our trials are dear to us. That’s why God allows a dear brother or a dear sister to die. That’s why God allows us to have trouble with the old heart, or with the lungs, or with the body. That’s why God allows disasters to occur to our money at times, or our jobs, because he’s gradually trying to get us to begin to “carry about in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus;” the dying that we experienced with Jesus to these things.

Loved ones, that’s what communion is about. And you see how upside down our world is; we encourage each other to think it’s a disaster when we lose a loved one. We do. We encourage each other to think it’s a disaster when we lose all our money. It’s not. It’s God trying to get us to come into reality, and see that it’s him upon whom we depend; it’s him only, and all the others are dear shadows. If you loved your dad, I loved my dad. So I’m not encouraging us to do anything but have great respect and great gratitude for our dads and our mums.

But do you see what they are? They’re reflections of God; that’s why they’re dear. They’re reflections of God’s love. The stability that they give to you and me really came from God; God just used them as instruments. Now it’s the same with your money and my money; God just uses it as a temporary instrument to express his faithfulness to you. That’s why at times he takes it away, and still you find yourself having a good meal. He’s trying to get it through your thick head that he can supply it to you without money, if need be. Because gradually, he’s getting us to carry about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, to begin to trust him and him only so that I can come to you some morning and can honestly say to you, “Your bank has failed,” and not a tremor goes through your breast. That’s it: not a tremor, not a worry, not an anxiety.

I can come to you some day and say, “You know all those people you work with, they all think you’re an absolute zero.” And not a worry can go through your heart; you’re just completely at peace, because your value and your self esteem doesn’t depend on them. You know your Father loves you, and has counted every hair on his head, and he thinks the world of you. That’s what God is after.
So it’s a kind of paradox: God has given us all this world to take it away from us gradually. And you know, if you need any proof of that, it all goes eventually. That’s why death is there. Sooner or later it all goes. Sooner or later you have to do without this world.

So I’d say especially to those of you who have had any hard things happen in your life, or are having hard things happen, where you’re beginning to lose friends; or somebody has died who is dearest to you; or money is going; or businesses are failing. Don’t look at it the way the world looks at it; look at it the way God looks at it. All he’s doing, is trying to wean you away from a fantasy world that you’re living in, because milk doesn’t come from a bottle; milk comes from a cow. And your stability doesn’t come from your bank account or your house; it comes from your dear Father who loves you. And your self esteem and your self worth comes from, not all of us and what we think of you, but from your dear Father, who has counted even the hairs of your head.

So loved ones, do you see how every trial and every disaster is lovingly used by God to bring us into reality? So when you come up to the Lord’s table today, listen to the Holy Spirit, and listen to him if he’s saying anything to you about some of the things that are beginning to be taken from you, and some of the things God is beginning to show you you can do without. And then join Jesus in his words, “Into thy hands, oh Lord, I commit my spirit. And God’s Spirit will bring you into real life. And it’s a life of peace, and a life of joy. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we have grown so used to this way of life that this gospel comes as a shock to us. And yet we know Lord, that it’s right, that we are dependent, not on these stocks and shares, or on this money, or on these houses, we’re dependent on you who alone can keep the stock market from going wild, who alone can sustain the world economy.

Father, we know that finally as our dads and mums have died, so all our dearest ones will die. And finally we’ll be left alone. And our self worth and our self esteem depends only on what you think of us, and on your love for us. So Father, we know these things, but we realize Lord, that we’re not living there day-by-day. So we thank you for what you’ve done for us in Jesus, where you have changed us. And we thank you Father, that that change that was wrought in Jesus can be wrought in us through your Holy Spirit, as we, step-by-step, take a new position in regard to our self worth and our self esteem. As we begin to identify ourselves with Jesus in regard to our security, we know that you, through the Holy Spirit, can give us the intimate trust in you that Jesus had.

Lord, we ask you that as we gather around your table today, you will do that in our own hearts.

We do not presume to come to this thy table most merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table, but thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore gracious Lord, so by faith, to receive thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, that the bread which we break may be unto us the communion of his body, and the cup of blessing which we bless, may be the communion of his blood, and that we may ever more dwell in him and he in us.

“The Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed took bread and broke it and said, ‘This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me.’ In like manner he took the cup after supper saying, ‘This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it for as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord’s death till he come.’”

Amen.