13th January 2021 - Victory in Rest In Christ - Wednesday Prayer Meeting

From last week we are looking at the word that the Lord has been giving us for the year 2021. In fact last week when we reflected together we saw this truth that God gave us a word in 2019 - I will place you on a super highway. When He gave us the word, I will place you on a super highway, like I said last week, I for one assumed things will run easier, quicker, faster and we do less. So it's always like that. They say that if you can do less and get more you're running a profitable business. So here was this idea that God will do this in this way. That's the concept and it looked good as well, until March after we did the Strength in Weakness programme in Australia and everything was in place for the year 2020, when the lockdown came. When the lockdown came, we saw the tremendous pressure we had and we were stuck in our homes worldwide.

But then, as we looked back we began to realize, God's word had come true. He had placed us on the internet super highway so that our ministry would happen without a pause and it would happen in new and unique ways like we had not seen before. One meeting conducted from 3 or 4 places in the world simultaneously and that's an amazing thing that the Lord really did, bringing us speakers from all over the world we would normally not have access to, like Scott Hahn, the famous theologian on the Church and the Mass who spoke to us via CRL Australia. We saw this whole thing coming together in the most powerful way.

When you look back at the end of 2020 we realise God fulfilled His word, but in His own way. We need to put that under emphasis -- IN HIS OWN WAY. When we receive the word for 2021 we have to remember that when we declare it, we must hold on to the word but not to the meaning that we give to it. We generally give a meaning to God's promises. It has happened to youth. A boy is attracted to a girl and a girl is attracted to the boy, and in this attraction they pray and they say God has given me a promise that He will give me a great partner, but the assumption is the one you have chosen is the great partner. Then you hold onto that word and that partner becomes not your partner and your heart is broken, and then you ask, "Why did God give me that word?" I have met many people who looked back later in years and told me, "Actually God led me through that difficult experience to find me the right partner for my life and for my ministry." God fulfilled the promise but He did it in His own way.

Tonight we are looking at the word for 2021: Victory in Rest. Our base was that when we have this struggle to deal with the virus, with the closed environment, with all the situations, we struggle to deal with it, we struggle for faith, we struggle to hold on to God. In the middle of all these struggles, God is telling us victory is through rest. Tonight I'm going to take it a little further: Victory through rest in Christ. That's the New Testament revelation of how this victory in rest finds its completion in Jesus Christ.

Last week I told you about how the apple tree or mango tree is finding its fruit not by struggling but by resting in the soil it is planted. Therefore the soil we received and the soil in which we grow is the word of God, it is prayer, it is worship and I forgot to add because this morning in prayer I was deeply challenged about it - the breakthrough comes through fasting. If we don't have that self denial we will never break out of out worldview, we will never break out of our addictions. Later I'll talk about it. Thinking about fasting means waiting without food, but there are little things we never fast on, like the words we insist on using on other people, fasting on the thoughts that run wild.

Resting in God's word, prayer, worship, fasting and the sacraments that bring us rooted into His heart - the sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation that brings us back to God. That is the

base which we need to build, rather than finding out what is God saying, what does it mean, what is the meaning of this, we build our foundation.

Last week we looked at Exodus 14 and we found this amazing truth there. The people of the exodus, the Israelites, were jubilant in their victory. They were marching with great jubilation, happy that they were liberated, and they had seen the hand of God, they had seen the power of God, they had seen the miracle of God and they would have been cheering and booing at the same time. The only alternative that I have seen is big matches where one side wins and the other side loses. The winning side does this victory procession and in that procession, they not only celebrate their victory but they humiliate the losers. That's a major part of victory for them.

It is said that the Egyptians gave their jewellery to them. That was the sign of being defeated. They were strong in one moment but in the next moment, when they saw the army of the Pharaoh coming, all their strength disappeared. Why was that? We begin to realise their faith in God depended on external events. We need to really appreciate that. If you don't have an inner journey with God and you are depending on the events that happen around you to see the hand of God and if you count the blessings of God according to your own understanding and the good things that have happened to you, the moment something happens that you can't understand or the moment some different thing, some painful thing takes place, immediately we lose God in that situation. The first question people as is where is God? What is He doing? Because our relationship to God is what we call an external one. This is what the Hebrews had. They had an external relationship. They saw the plagues of Egypt, they saw the miracles brought by Moses but it was an external thing for them. Internally they were the same.

Now we have Moses in that same place, facing the same event but strong, unshaken and he says, "Remain, relax, be at rest. God will fight for you." So they are all placed in the same event, a majority fall apart and one person stands unshaken. We ask, why was Moses different? Why was he still? Why was he at rest when everyone fell apart? We have the answer from the scripture itself. Today's first scripture is taken from that place:

Deuteronomy 34:10

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face...

We have the key. The key to be grounded in God, unshaken in crisis, working through the fire. Isaiah said I will lead you through the water and you will not drown. We are thinking God will save us from the event. He does that but He also leads us through it untouched. Here is the key, Moses knew God face to face. Here is the beauty of it. The Bible is full of this in the first 5 books, how Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights in His presence. How Moses' intercession was responded to by God because they won the battle as long as Moses interceded. How Moses sat in the tent of meeting and when he sat in the tent of meeting and talked with God, God gave him the next guidance what they should do. You begin to realise this face to face relationship with God is really what matters.

It's beautifully said in Exodus 33, it looks as if it is written in the J tradition, where God is described like a human being. God is petulant and upset and He says, "You go, I won't come." It's like people fighting in a family. Then Moses says, "Unless you go with us we will not go." God said, "I will give you the promised land. I'll send the angels and give it to you. You go." But Moses said, "We won't go unless you come." God is really happy, but doesn't want to show it like a father who is happy with the response of the child. He

says, "Okay okay, I'll come." Then Moses says, "Show me your face. Let me have a deeper knowledge of who you are." Beautiful. That seems to be the dynamic between Moses and God. It's also said in the scripture that Moses sent 12 spies into the promised land.

I was reading this comparison that Jesus is the new Moses and somebody said Moses sent 12 spies into the promised land and Jesus sent 12 apostles to preach to the people. 11 spies collapsed when they saw the giants, but one stood. His name was Caleb. If you look at the history of Caleb, you will see that Caleb, Joshua and Moses sat together with God in the tent of meeting. That seems to be the secret.

So in this time of pandemic, a simple answer is coming to us. Who will weather the pandemic, who will overcome the challenges, who will walk through the darkness and grow stronger instead of falling apart? The answer is simple: Those who sit in the presence of God and grow in their rootedness in God. That's really deeply the challenge we have. Victory in rest. Victory in the heart of God. But see the result of such an action:

Deuteronomy 34:11

...who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt -- to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land.

Here is God's answer. One is we are untouched and unshaken in the crisis. The second part is heaven opens above. It's interesting that when the apostles asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, the first thing he said was Our Father in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Wherever Moses went, because of his relationship with God, because the door to heaven had opened above him, everywhere the power of heaven came down to earth, whether it is through the plagues, whether it is through the parting of the Red Sea, the power of heaven rushed to the earth, and God's intervention was seen through the life of Moses.

So we can look at the incidents of divine intervention that happened through Moses because that's what we can see, and we can imagine that that's really what's important. But I'm telling you tonight, we have to ask the question: Why did heaven open over Moses and not anybody else in that time? The answer is because he had learnt to be with God face to face. Why was it passed on to Joshua and not anybody else? Because Joshua had learnt to sit in the tent of meeting face to face with God. It is said that when Joshua battled, the Lord stopped the sun from setting so that the battle would be won. Can you imagine? Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Now we begin to realise, today's world is in need of such a divine intervention. All of us need it, the world needs it so we are praying for it but sometimes it may not be working out. I'm thinking it's because we are asking, we are praying, we are telling the Lord, but we may not be relaxing, resting and allowing that friendship to grow in our lives. Victory through rest. Resting in that relationship, assuring us of that victory.

So what are the victories of Moses?

1. He broke the slave mentality of the Egyptians - that's an amazing miracle on its own, because they had been slaves for generations. Therefore, being slaves for generations their mentality was of a slave and that's why they never went out of Egypt because Egypt had been put inside of them. We can see the same thing in our world today, where we are slaves to the mentality we are born into, into a caste mentality,

into a race mentality, into a colour mentality. We are slaves. Moses was able to liberate them and take them out.

- 2. Moses was the only man as far as I know, who liberated a people from another people without a war and without an army no war, no army, but able to win a battle. Can you imagine the result of having an intimacy with God and having heaven opened above him?
- 3. They crossed the sea on foot can you see the power of intimacy, the power of having heaven opened above? They crossed the sea on foot but it didn't end there.
- 4. They survived 40 years in the desert if you look at the 40 years, the people being formed in the sufferings, the struggles, the slave mentality leaving, the Egyptian mindset changing, God teaching them His ways in the desert. 40 years of leading them. They say they could have done it in a couple of days. So God doesn't have shortcuts sometimes because within the journey itself is an answer. Then God offers them the promised land.

Everything fulfilled, but I've always had this question. If anyone deserved to go to the promised land, if they had done a count of the people who deserve it, Moses becomes number one. But it's ironic. Moses is the man who couldn't go to the promised land. It looks difficult to grasp the meaning of it because he hit the rock twice instead of hitting it once. You hit the rock twice and lose the promised land? But I think there is a deeper meaning to that: The fullness of God is found not at the end of a journey, not when things have been completed. In any event, in any situation, if I have a relationship with God, intimacy, and I have given an inner response, in that moment I have entered the promised land. In the heart of the crisis I enter the promised land, I have an inner revelation, God liberates my inner being, I am stretched beyond my limitations and I find a new dimension in my life. I have entered the promised land, and when I look back it's in a crisis I did it, it was in pain that it happened, it was in that tragedy that it broke into my life. I entered the promised land.

If you look at Jesus it seems to confirm it. All Jesus had on this earth was death. If anyone deserved to defeat death it was Jesus. Yet it was through his death that the resurrection, the eternity, liberation from sin, the formation of the people of God, all this took place. So let's remember tonight, the fulfillment of God's action is in the now. You say yes now, you give an inner response now, you find an intimacy with Him now, you have entered the promised land. How do you know? Because the atmosphere of heaven will be there, that is peace, rest, interior joy, the oxygen of His presence. We have entered the promised land. What we are going to receive in fullness in heaven, we taste now in those moments.

We looked at the Old Testament flow and today we are going to the New Testament and the new Moses. When I made this message, I was not aware of it b ur last Saturday when I was looking at the Sunday readings, suddenly I realized it is the feast of the baptism of the Lord. So if anyone wants to know where you find the charism of what we are doing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the inner experience of what we are talking about, you can find it in the baptism of the Lord in the gospel of Mark. This year it is the gospel of Mark they have chosen to describe it.

In theology, Jesus and his ministry, if it is identified with anybody in the Old Testament, it is deeply identified with Moses. Theologians will tell us Jesus is the new Moses. It was prophetic to have that same experience come together this week in the baptism of the Lord.

You would see that Moses had to lead the people from the slavery of Egypt to the promised land, but no one of them were transformed within. So we had to have a new Moses. Where was he leading people? From the slavery to sin which is the deepest slavery of the human heart, to freedom from sin in the kingdom of God. The same journey by the new Moses. But it doesn't stop there. Moses had to cross an impossible sea, the Red Sea. Jesus himself had to cross the sea of death which no one had crossed and returned. He went through the sea and took people through the sea that death itself has been defeated and the promised land is eternal life with God the Father in heaven. You begin to realise, with God, all is not what it seems. That's the theme we can run with. With God, all is not what it seems. Here it is, the deeper meaning of the new Moses. He is carrying the same thing. Victory in rest. Now we find the New Testament truth:

Mark 1:9

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan.

So those who have studied scripture will know that Mark is considered the first gospel and his is a summarized version of the life of Jesus. If you go to Matthew, Matthew will tell you how John spoke to Jesus and said, "I am the one who should be baptised by you." Nothing of that sort in Mark. Mark comes to the point. He came to be baptized.

Mark 1:10

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

I want to break up this verse tonight and see the beautiful New Testament revelation of victory in rest

Coming up out of the water

When Mark uses these words, there is a direct reference to the Old Testament.

Exodus 2:10

When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son...

I would like to give you done background to this. In the book of Exodus it is explained that the Egyptians decided to kill the firstborn of the Hebrews, and Moses is born and he can't be protected. So what does the mother do? The mother puts him into this basket and puts him into the water. Last week, I told you how God asked Moses, "What have you got in your hand?" What did Moses have? He had this staff that did the miracles of Egypt. God said to let it go. The moment he let it go it became a living thing, a snake.

We learnt the spiritual principle: If you let go anything into God's hand, God will turn it into a blessing and give it back to you. If you keep it in your own hands, most probably you will kill it. That's the sin of Adam and Eve. The expression of sin given in the book of Genesis of Adam and Eve. What happened? God said, "Let me give you love, let me give you my power, let me give you my giftedness to care for the planet and make it multiply and bear fruit. What I give you you give away and let it bear fruit." When you give away what God has given, God increases what you already have. You receive from Him and give it away. Suddenly Adam and Eve lost their focus and instead of giving away they held, they kept and the moment they did that the flow of life was broken.

You can see the same principle with Moses. The moment he let go the staff into God's hand, it became more than a stick. It became the symbol of the liberation of the people from the slavery of Egypt into the promised land. Here, the same principle is at work. The mother held the child in her hand and I can imagine God asking: What have you got your hand? I can't protect my child, I can't keep my child. What do you do? Let go. The moment the mother let go the child, the child was being taken into the arms of God. In the book of Exodus it is said that Moses' sister ran by the water and the reed basket floated and came to the Pharaoh's daughter. The beautiful thing is, Moses' sister had astute intuition and she asked the Pharaoh's daughter, "Do you need someone to feed this child?" She said, "Yes, can you find someone?" She ran back to the mother and said she had a job for her. The Pharaoh's daughter gave the child back to the mother and said, feed him, look after him and when he is bigger, bring him back. What she gave up returned to her and it returned a much greater blessing.

When Jesus gave up his life on the cross in response to the Father, it is returned to him, returned as the resurrected Lord of glory. The moment you hold, the moment you grab, you kill. The problem is instinctively we do that. We need a lot of inner security, a lot of prayer, a lot of presence of God, a lot of fasting, a lot of learning how to yield to God to allow that truth to flow through our own lives. Having it intellectually doesn't help at all. It needs to become alive in our spirit.

Exodus 2:10 continued

...She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Who came out of the water? Moses. Who is now coming up out of the water? The new Moses.

Mark 1:10

...he saw heaven being torn open...

Isaiah 64:1

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!

I want to spend a few minutes on opening heaven and coming down. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. What is a closed heaven? In the time of Jesus it meant, for 400 years no prophet had arisen until John. That means people did not hear from God. God was silent. What do you mean when you say God is silent? It means people are stuck in their own worldview. You may not fully appreciate what I'm saying until I give you an example.

There was this man who was brought to me and I realized he was not mentally sound. He was stuck in his mind. The world he was stuck in in his mind was not a good place because he thought his boss was all out to kill him. So I asked him how he knew and he said, "At every bus stand, when I look out there is a man there who has been planted by my boss, and he's waiting to kill me." Now mathematically, even if his boss is the most powerful person in the world, he can't have a man in every bus stand from here to Moratuwa. So logically you know it's a mental problem. He is living inside a closed worldview. So I thought taking him to Chalakkudy will solve the problem. We can pray for him and there is a place he can be ministered to. So I said, "Shall we go to a retreat centre?" He said, "I would like to come but if I come with you even you will die. My boss will put a bomb in the plane and the plane will crash and everyone will die." If somebody tells you you're talking nonsense, he won't know what you mean because he is living under what we now call a closed heaven. He has been trapped inside his mind.

One day a person tells me on the phone, "There is this man, he was my tuition master and he wants to live with me but he doesn't want to marry me." So I said, "That's a terrible thing. So why don't you tell him that he must marry you?" Then she said, "But we are not talking. We have never spoken." So how do you know these ideas? "Because he sends those ideas to me. The man who is selling bread in the morning on the bicycle is shouting those thoughts. He is sending messages through that man to me." She is living in a mental world that is closed. Somebody else told me, "God is talking to me all the time. How? When I put the radio on He is talking."

We can understand that something is wrong with them, but most people on the planet are living in a closed, mental worldview. Why is that? Because we can't see God, we can't hear God, we don't have a link with God, there is no connection with God, and because of that, we are mentally walking in a closed world. That's the anxiety, the stress, the struggle, the suicidal, the emptiness, the depression, the sadness of the human heart.

For that to change, heaven must open. That's what you mean by a heaven opened. Heaven opened above Moses like fire. Heaven opened above Jesus like a dove. At Pentecost, the fire returned. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Because Moses had heaven opened above him, he could hit the staff and a miracle took place. He could extend his hands and a battle was won because heaven had opened above him and it was flowing through. Look at Jesus. He is doing the exact same thing in a deeper way. Because heaven was opened above him, he says, "Come forth," and Lazarus comes out. He says, "Be multiplied," and 5000 people are fed. Heaven's divine life is flowing through the earth.

The mistake we have made is we have turned this into theology and turned it into mental understandings and now we have a closed heaven. In this closed heaven we have religious knowledge. We know all the truths because we have religious knowledge, but these truths are not opening us to the reality of God. We are afraid, we are tensed, we are anxious, we are fearful, we are addicted, we are sinful. But if you ask any question we know the answers. That's why we need an open heaven. We need a spirit, a heart that is at rest with God. This happens almost effortlessly in our hearts if you know how to rest.

Mark 1:11

And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

God never said any of this to Moses. He told Moses, "I have heard my people's cry and I have come to save them. You must go to the Pharaoh." But here is a deeper, different revelation. Here heaven opens and reveals an intimacy that we have never seen before. Some theologians will say, here is the first reference to the Holy Trinity in the gospel of Mark, even in the gospels itself. You have the voice of the Father, you have it delivered by the Spirit and you have the Son receiving it into his heart.

Our call is not to do something for God. Of course we need to do something but that's not our call first. Our call is to discover this place of intimacy and rest that God has brought through Jesus Christ. That's our heaven. That's our refuge. That's our resource. That's our strength. It is only in rest that you find it. Here it is in the heart of Jesus. A voice from heaven says, "You are my Son." God the Father's love flowing into the heart of the Son. The Son's love returning to the Father nd the Holy Spirit moving. Heaven is open above Jesus.

When he died on that cross and he rose from the dead, Jesus kept heaven open for all of us until the end of time. Heaven will never be closed again. But after saying that I have to tell you, for many of us heaven

is closed. I realized this in my own life. The sun is so massive but yet you can block the sun. How do you do it? With your own little hand. You just put your hand up to the sky and hold it against the sun and you have blocked the sun from your life. Today though the heaven is opened not to be closed again, many people never enjoy that life.

How do you start? You start with the baptism. Baptism is to enter this intimate life of the Holy Trinity. Entering into the intimacy of the Holy Trinity, becoming a part of God, become another Christ? I was afraid to say it! It looked as if you are being presumptuous. But then I read that very text in the catechism of the Church. That's what baptism does to us. But the truth is, though baptism should be doing that to us, for many of us, even after baptism, it's a closed heaven until - I think it's many of our experiences - the day we were baptized in the Holy Spirit. That was the moment or the time that heaven opened for us. That's the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It's not just the speaking in tongues or the miracles or the signs or the gift of healing or whatever else the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they are valuable! But even more this revelation of God, victory in rest. You are a part of God's life itself. Then heaven is opened and you start walking in that experience.

It is beautifully given to us in John 16:32. In verse 32, what we saw in Exodus 14 with Moses and the people you will find between Jesus and his apostles:

John 16:32

But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

It is not the protection from the virus, it is not a comfortable environment, it is not having privileges others don't have. It is very simple: My Father is there with me. The life of the Trinity, the open heaven is there above me. Therefore you are shaken and you run home but I am not shaken. Victory in rest because of the Father. Then Jesus offers it to us in verse 33:

John 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace...

That's our theme today: Victory in rest in Christ. In me you may have peace.

John 16:33 continued

...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

When we are baptised, Jesus Christ comes to live inside us and we become a part of Jesus Christ. When we go to communion, what do you mean by communion? A common union. He becomes me and I become a part of Him. When Jesus Christ is living inside of me, He is not silent, He is not quiet. He is communing continuously with the Father. Because Jesus is inside of me, heaven is open. This communion, this interaction, this energy, this life is the flow of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, because He lives inside of me, because He moves in my life, every challenge is overcome, every fear is dealt with, every situation is turned to a blessing. I am at rest.

Moses told them in Exodus 14, "Be still. God will fight for you." God was going to fight from heaven. He was going to part the sea and fight for them but now God says, "Be still because I am going to fight for you from within. Heaven will be opened, I will be within you and a breakthrough will come."

What do we do? We rest in this truth and then we start fasting. Don't give in to your nature which is insisting on gratification, insisting on satisfaction at the human level. If you get stuck there you will never find this place. Don't give in. Go against it. Embrace the dissatisfaction of saying no to your flesh. That's when the dark ceiling over our life is being broken. Embrace the pain. Embrace the struggle of saying no to your nature because you know that the moment that lie is shattered, this life of the Holy Trinity will flow mightily through your life. Peace that passes understanding. Peace that moves beyond. Strength you don't know from where it comes. That presence that gives you rest. Victory in rest.

It is said of one saint who was a chancellor who was bring taken to death because he did not give up his beliefs for the king. He was the king's friend and the king appointed him chancellor. They asked him his last words and he said, "I wish that I had served God as much as I had served my king." He realised in the end victory at the human level, honour at the human level, glory at the human level not only fails to satisfy but is never permanent. It will pass away. Here is the breakthrough.

The life of the Holy Trinity has already been given to you, heaven has been opened, but for you to experience it we have to break out of the cardboard box in which we are stuck now. That box is of our own making. Heaven is open but we are in a box. How do you break out of it? Scripture, where you hold the truth; prayer, how you enter into the reality that God has revealed and then together with that, fasting. Denying the things our flesh is bringing to us, and suddenly the cardboard box is broken and heaven is open for each of us.

I would like to finish tonight with this beautiful example of Simon Peter, the loveable, mumbling, bumbling, stumbling servant of God who established the Church. Let's look at Matthew 16:16. Jesus asks, "Who do men say I am?" and then he asks Peter, "Who do you say that I am?"

Matthew 16:16

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

He hit a 6 and in American language he hit the homerun in the first shot.

Matthew 16:17

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

There are truths that we know for our whole life but suddenly those very truths we took for granted for a whole life becomes life-giving when the cardboard box is torn open and the Holy Spirit reveals the power of those truths. There is no new truth to be revealed. God is not going to come and suddenly say there is a fourth person in the Holy Trinity or a new Abraham that has come. The truth has been revealed but it has not been realised. When we fast, when we pray, when we worship, the truths that we have been holding on to are brought alive by the Holy Spirit. The life of the Trinity brings the energy of those truths, flowing through us. What's the result?

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

You will not be defeated by darkness, by the pandemic, by the attack, by the oppression, by the things that happen around you. You will not be broken because you have the energy and the life of His truth working inside of you. Victory in rest in Christ. Tonight as we come to worship the Lord let's open ourselves. Like Simon Peter, we may have heard the truths but it would not have had an effect of us. But this year in 2021 we want all these truths to become alive, real. When that happens, there is a breakthrough. O God what you have for us in 2021, let it be revealed into our lives in the most powerful way.