

If you have your Bibles, grab them. Psalms, chapter 27. If you just started coming to The Village Church in the last couple of weeks, my name is Matt Chandler, and I'm the pastor here. It's good to be back. I've been gone for a while. We have a ton to do, so I'm just going to get going.

Late in high school, I had a teacher who turned me on to the Civil Rights Movement. I always was kind of a fan of history. He kind of turned me on to the Civil Rights Movement. That really grew in college. I was a Leadership minor, and really the things that got accomplished in that 15-year window and *continue* to be accomplished because of that 15- or 20-year window is remarkable.

As I began to study the Civil Rights Movement, there was a singular letter that Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in April of 1963. It's a very well-known letter (if you follow history and if you're familiar with this movement) called "Letter from Birmingham Jail." That letter haunted me, and I'll explain why it haunted me after I read you a portion of the letter. Just to set the framework for where this letter was written, Martin Luther King Jr. had come into Birmingham, and they had staged a series of sit-ins, marches, and sanctions against the economy of Birmingham for the oppression of African Americans in Birmingham and was imprisoned in that process.

The local white clergymen had accused King of lacking patience and that he should trust *them* to push this ball of civil rights forward. If you haven't read this, you need to Google it. You'll find it easily. At the beginning of the letter, he said he usually does not respond to critics because if he responded to all his critics, he would do nothing other than respond to his critics. He said but in this case since they were brothers, he was going to respond to him. So this is a part of that letter.

"Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait.' But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at a whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your 20 million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your 6-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness

toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a 5-year-old son who is asking, 'Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?'; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day and day out by nagging signs reading 'white' and 'colored'; when your first name becomes 'Nigger,' your middle name becomes 'boy' (however old you are) and your last name becomes 'John'; and your wife and mother are never given the respected title 'Mrs.'; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness,' then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.

There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools..." So this letter was written in 1963. Schools are still segregated. In 1954, the Supreme Court deemed it was illegal to segregate schools. So King's point is, "Yeah, we're breaking some laws while we press that certain laws take place." He sees that's paradoxical, so he is trying to explain it here.

"...at first glance, it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break *some* laws." One may well ask, 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.'"

Now let me tell you why this haunted me. First of all, this is not the distant past. Are you tracking with that? This is not 200 years ago. This is '63. A lot of people in these services were alive in '63, and not "alive" like a baby in Mama's arms alive. Here's what haunts me about the reality of the African American in 1963. I thought this. I knew I was coming out of this. I was ready to preach this message, and earlier this week, my 3-year-old daughter, Norah, pulled out this bench that sits at the end of our bed. She set it in the middle of our bedroom, and she climbed up on it.

Now there was some music going in the background while Lauren and I were getting dressed. She was still in her pjs. She pretended she was on the balance beam from the Olympics. She twisted around and twirled. I was giving her commentary. "Norah Chandler from the United States of America. Oh, look at this, ladies and gentlemen. Here comes the twist and the dismount. She stuck it!" Lauren and I applauded, and we scored her right. She got about a 6.2 or something like that. We scored it, and we all celebrated it.

All three of my children are a delight to me, so I just want to speak very frankly and honestly. You turn a dog loose on any of my children, I will physically murder you. Do you understand what I'm saying? I mean, you can laugh all you want, but I would punch you and choke you and try to rip out your... I would physically try to destroy you. You might be a big ol' boy. I'll take my chances. I'm wiry, but I know the soft spots. You might be all yoked up, MMA fighter. I'll punch you in the throat. I don't care how bad you are. You're going to go to the ground, and I'm going to take the boots to you.

Here's my thought. Here's what was haunting to me. *How did they do this week in, week out, month in, month out, century in, century out with nothing on the horizon?* The Supreme Court of the United States of America said in 1954, "This stops." Nearly a decade later, nothing had changed. How did they do it? How did, week in and week out, they walk under this oppression without going violent? The thing to keep in mind is if you watch the Civil Rights Movement under King, it doesn't go violent. Now things get goofy after King, but if you watch King and you watch King as he leads, it never goes violent.

So I've always wondered, *How did they do it?* Now I know the big answer: God. I know the big answer, but I want to know *how* they did it because there has to be some special dispensation of grace, because I'm telling you...what I said earlier is the honest truth. I know I'd go to jail. I know I'd make the news. I know I'm going to lose my job. There's not going to be like, "Well, he was just in murdering the guy. Let's let him preach." That's not going to happen. I know all it would cost me. I know my other children would not get to visit Daddy except through glass, and I would still murder you. How did they do it?

About four or five months ago, we had Dr. Rick Rigsby come speak to our staff. Dr. Rick Rigsby was a long-time professor at Texas A&M University. In the end, I cornered Dr. Rigsby, because I needed to know the answer to this question because it really has haunted me all these years. I've never been able to figure out how they endured. He said, "There were multiple pieces, but let me give you the main one."

What he pointed to as the main refuge, that thing that sustained the obedience of African Americans in the 60s during the Civil Rights Movement was how they approached God and how they worshiped with one another. I don't know if you've been a part of an African American church service. The way they do it is call and response. Do you understand what that means? That means in that service, there are no spectators but God, and everybody has come to play. There is interaction at every level of worship. It's not guys on stage and people in the crowd. It's *we're all here to get after the Lord*. It's going to go long, and it's going to go good.

Man, I don't know if you've been there, but in June, I was invited to speak at the E.K. Bailey Expository Preaching Conference. It was me and a thousand African American pastors. Only white dude in the room. I

started preaching and they started... It threw me off. I mean, everybody was shouting out. It threw me off because I'm used to you. Here's what you do. I'm like, "What's that word? What does that say?" You mumble. Right? I had a guy pacing in the back going, "That's right. Come on!"

Anglos don't do that. Anglos have had bred into them, have been trained, "You are here to perform for me. I am not a participant in this. I am a spectator," because we have not borne the crushing weight of desperate need. *So tell me about that, Pastor.* Not a "joining in with" but rather... So Rigsby said they would come in. That's where the four-hour service is. If you get white people talking about black church, and you're like, "I'm going to check out this church." They're like, "Pack a lunch, bro. Pack your lunch! I'm just sayin'! They're going to sing for like two hours. They're going to preach for an hour-and-forty-five minutes. They're going to sing for two hours. You better bring a sandwich or a cracker or something, man. You're going to die."

That's not how Anglos do it, is it? Most Anglos are like, *Hey, listen. You better be starting to wrap it up now, Pastor Chandler.* Right? So this call and response culture was they pressed *hard* into the presence of God. Here's what's spectacular, if you think about it. In that four-hour gathering, nothing got solved. So they're walking into that service past signs that read, "Colored," "Whites only," past restaurants they are not allowed to go into, out of impoverished neighborhoods with impoverished schools into a worship center. In that four hours...listen to me...*nothing* changed.

They walked right out, and those signs were still there, right back to their impoverished housing, right back to the broken system. Nothing changed, but in those four hours, they met with the living God, and upon meeting with the living God, he was enough to sustain them and to make all of that go away for just a bit. What happened as Rigsby began to unpack that this was the fuel for their obedience, some other Scriptures started to jump out to me. Let's go to Psalms 27. We're going to pick it up in verse 4. King David has nothing in common with an African American in the 60s. Nothing. Hence the title *King David*. I want you to watch what King David prays to God. Psalms 27. We're going to pick it up in verse 4.

"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." Now let's stop. We're going to read more of this, but I want to stop. I, at times, can feel stressed. Now I feel as though I have very busy, albeit good, life. I pastor this church. I'm president of the Acts 29 church planting network, 450 churches on six continents (and growing), writing books, teaching outside of here. I'm a very busy man. I can get stressed out. Anybody else can feel a bit overwhelmed and stressed out? Yeah, okay.

But you and I aren't kings. You and I might be businessmen and salesmen, and we might have busy lives, but no one is managing a kingdom. If it is, it's your tiny, little, sad kingdom. You feel like you have a

kingdom, you have a little ghetto kingdom, all right? You're not sovereign of your own state. You can't declare people get murdered. You can't declare people can be executed. You can't declare this is the tax rate, can you? If you can, please call me. You can't do those things.

King David can, and he has the Philistines that are a nation on the border of Israel that can't seem to learn to quit invading. You say, *How many times does he have to conquer the Philistines in one reign?* He beats them, and they run off. They come back. He beats them. They run off and come back. He beats them. They run off and come back. I mean, just destroying the Philistines over and over and over again. They just regroup and come back for more.

He has the Philistines. He has massive family issues. King David's family belonged on *The Jerry Springer Show*. His son rapes his daughter, leads a rebellion against him that disposes him from his throne for a good period of time. That's family drama. It beats whatever family drama you came in here with today. You may be like, *We don't get along well*. Okay. Unless your child has kicked you out of your own house, you're doing all right. You're doing all right.

So David has massively complex issues both as a statesman and as a husband and father, but did you hear his prayer? Do you see that those problems are on his radar, but he is not asking for the solution to any of those problems? He is saying, **"One thing have I asked...that will I seek after."** "What I need, I need to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

Now let's chat, because we have to understand the presence of God. When David says he wants to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, he is not saying, *I really like just to hang out in church. You know what I'll do? Let's escape. Let's forget crazy family. Let's forget the stresses of work. Let's just 24/7 church-service it*. That's not what he is saying. The Bible is clear the glory of God and the presence of God cannot be held by the temple. It can't. Even at the erection of the temple, the Bible is clear that the glory of God is way too big for the temple and that it overflows out of the temple.

So God is present in two different ways. God is present in his *omnipresence*. What that means is God is everywhere, always in his fullness. Do you understand all those components? He is everywhere, always in his fullness. So right now, God is here just like he is on Pluto, just like he is in the farthest reaches of the universe. There's not like a little piece of him here and a little piece of him there. He is always everywhere in his fullness. That's called omnipresence.

There's a second kind of presence the Bible often speaks of, and that's what theologians would call *special presence* or *manifest presence*. That's when God reveals his presence in such a way that his glory is made

visible. It is felt in our hearts. Upon his arrival, what is truly important is visible, and what is not important no longer seems important. Are you tracking with that? So God shows up. He shows up in a spectacular, visible way. He moves hearts. Our hearts are softened. Maybe tears come. Maybe we fall to our knees. We feel small. He seems big, and that brings about joy.

That's manifest presence. That's special presence. When David says, "What I'm after is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," he is not talking about omnipresence. He is talking about special presence. When he says, "That I may gaze upon your beauty," he is talking about seeing and savoring God in such a way that he becomes supreme in David's affections. He is talking about manifest presence, not omnipresence, because when we experience manifest presence, look at what David says happens.

This is verse 5. **"For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble."** Okay, I love that the Bible never pretends the day of trouble isn't coming. Did you notice he didn't say, "You don't need a shelter because he'll stop the storm"? No, he doesn't say that. A storm is coming. He is going to protect you in the storm. You shouldn't be surprised when storms come. The Bible never says they're not coming. In fact, the Bible almost goes over the top going, "They're coming! They're coming!" What God has promised us is not that he would save us *from* the storm but that he would protect us *in* the storm.

Then look at this next line. **"He will conceal me under the cover of his tent."** The *tent* in the Old Testament almost always is referring to the Tent of Meeting. That's how they would hear somebody talking about a tent, specifically in relationship to God. So the Tent of Meeting is where God would meet with Moses. When God was in the tent, it's not an omnipresence, because he is always in the tent. An omnipresence. But when God's presence would fall on the Tent of Meeting, Moses would go in there. Smoke would cover the tent, just as a way of going, "Hey, man. You're not ready for this. Don't come in or you'll get killed. Don't come into this tent right now. I'm talking with my boy Moses. Stay away."

His special presence would fall. The Tent of Meeting is the idea of a heavy, thick manifest presence of God. The promise is in the day of storm, we will not only be protected, but God will draw us into his tent, which is why the manifest presence of God is such a spectacular thing. As a church, one of the things we see a lot of is the dark night of the soul for people. There was a woman in our last service whose husband died just a couple of months ago. Last night, there was a woman and man who lost their 6-year-old son to neuroblastoma just a couple of years ago. I could go on and on and on and on. There is a tremendous amount of loss and grief among our people because we live in a fallen world.

One of the things I've been able to pick out over my nearly decade with you now is that in that room, God shows up in such a way that he grants peace that passes understanding. It's not that everything is okay. If you think back to that opening illustration of the Civil Rights, it's not that everything is okay. It's just that in

that moment, God is so near that all of that melts away and you get what you need. You have him. Then he says next, if you'll look at that next line, not only will he pull us into his tent, but he will lift us high upon a rock.

The psalmist, in particular David, loves to talk about his feet being set upon rock. Three years ago, I was still... I can't believe we're almost three years out. Lauren and I sat across the table with my neurosurgeon, and he said, "Best-case scenario here is probably two to three years. You have two to three years, so you need to start to figure out how to head on home to be with the Lord. Here's your timeline: probably two to three years on average. That's your bell curve."

That afternoon in his office, man, the bottom just dropped out from underneath both Lauren and me. Man, I couldn't, for all I tried to muster, even talk. We just cried a lot and hugged a lot. I was having to dial my phone and give it to Brian Miller, chairman of the elders here, who is now one of our lead pastors, and he was talking to my friends and telling other loved ones, "This is what they've just been told," because I simply didn't have it in me. We were already getting pinged a lot by people asking what we had heard, so we were rolling out information through him.

I just couldn't get my bearings. I mean, everything and nothing simultaneously was going through my head. *How do I prepare my kids for this? You don't die pretty of brain cancer. How do I prepare them for what they're about to see? How do I lead well and finish well with the church? Am I ever going to feel strong again ever? Am I ever going to have energy again? Am I about to get pounded the last two years of my life with poison and radiation? Is this how this ends for me?* All this and nothing is flying through my head simultaneously, and I couldn't get my footing. I felt like I was sinking in sand.

Then later that night, the tears ran out. I don't know if you've had that experience yet where there are no more tears to come out of you. You need a Gatorade or something. I mean, you're done. In the middle of that dark night of the soul, we began to remember some things. Some texts began to be stirred up in my heart. God began to pull me into the Tent of Meeting, began to shelter me from the storm, began to shelter Lauren from the storm. Then we began to remember, *He is not God; God is God. He's guessing; he knows. He's doing mathematics, and he created numbers. He's prophesying in part; he knows in full.*

Although God has chosen not to stop this, and he could have, that means he is at work in ways I don't understand, and I need to simply trust him. We began to grow in confidence. It's not in my doctors, although I love my doctors. Not in confidence in my ability to fight cancer. You don't fight cancer. Cancer will kick the crap out of you. You can talk all day. It will light you up. Anybody who has gone through it, you simply survive a day at a time. All that bravado, "Live strong!" Live strong while you're throwing up on your bathroom floor? I don't think so. You put that swoosh on you all you want. It will kick the trash out of you.

I didn't have confidence in me, in my will. I just thought there was a God who was able, and I was trusting him to be willing. A day at a time I believed he was going to give me all the strength I needed for that day. I believe he loves my kids more than I do. He loves my wife more than I love my wife. He can be trusted. "I'm yours. Wring me out how you want, but I believe you're able and you're willing to heal me completely. I'm going to walk in that until you reveal something else."

I began to get my feet back on the rock. That's what happens in manifest presence, special presence. God makes himself known in a real and tangible way. He brings about peace. He shelters, and then he gets your feet out of the muck and the mire, and he gets it up on the rock. It doesn't make the problems go away. It doesn't mean the difficulty goes away. It means he is enough, even in the difficulties. Then look where he goes next.

"And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me..." So my head will be lifted up. If you are defeated, the posture of defeat is head down, but what he is saying is, "Get your heads up." The psalmist does this line: "Get your eyes up. Lift up your heads. Get your heads up." Why? "Because he and his presence have vanquished, have conquered, your enemies." Now I need you to hear this. No matter who you are, you only have two enemies. There are only two. I know some of you are like, *Well, you don't know my life. You don't know Stacey.* I would say that, and I know there is some poor woman in here named Stacey. She is like, *Really?*

You have two enemies. Are you ready? Here they are. Here are your two enemies: Satan and demonic forces and you. That's it. Those are the only enemies you have. Even Stacey (sorry, if you're Stacey) fits into one of those two categories: your enemies are either demonic in nature or flesh-oriented. They are your iniquities, your bents, your sinfulness. I preach my guts out to you that no one has lied to you, betrayed you, and deceived you more than you have. No one. No one! You are your greatest enemy.

Now here's why we get our heads up: because when the manifest presence of God shows up, when that special presence shows up, both of those completely lose their power. If you'll remember King Saul was tormented by demons, and then David would play his harp. I know that doesn't sound manly, but keep in mind he killed Goliath and bears and lions, which is a lot manlier than however manly you are. So get off of him about his harp!

He is playing his harp, and when he played his harp, the manifest presence of God would come down, and the demons would flee from Saul, and Saul would feel comfort. When the manifest presence of God falls, the demonic realm and the powers of dark spiritual forces lose the loudness of their voice. When the

manifest presence of God shows up you feel small; God feels big. There's a great deal of joy in that smallness.

When God's spirit and God's presence really reveal themselves, you don't think you're awesome at all, but you know who *is*, and that's a delight! That's why he is going, "Get your head up! Get your head up! Desire this. Want this. Seek this. Get your head up! Your enemies will be triumphed." Then look at the net result. **"...and I will offer in his tent [in that presence] sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord."** So the only right, good response to the manifest presence of God is fervent, passionate worship of his name and his renown. We'll talk more about that momentarily.

Now I want to make this a bit pragmatic. I don't want it to be ethereal. I don't want you to be like, *Oh, okay. Manifest presence*, and not really know. I want to make it a bit pragmatic. I want us to talk about how we seek it and what it is, because what David just said is, "What I want, what I'm after, what I'm seeking, this one thing I need... I don't need the kingdom to be at peace. I don't need things at home to be made right. What I need is his presence. If I can get into that manifest presence, all of that will be okay. I'll be satisfied. I'll be empowered to keep walking with joy despite my circumstances. This is the thing I seek and I'm after."

What we find in David's life is when he can't get there he gets really frustrated. **"As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs for you, O God."** "I thirst for you. I'm hungry. When I can meet with God?" That's that angst of wanting to get into the manifest presence and not being able to get there. In fact, the Bible says us to *seek* this presence. Psalms 105, verse 4, says, **"Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!"** So you and I are to seek after the manifest presence of God.

Now I need to be really straight with you. You and I cannot control the manifest presence of God. You cannot make God show up in special ways. You can't make him! You don't have that key. It's not a combination lock. It's not if you go to the right twice past zero and come to seven and then back to the left to seven and then all the way back around to seven to form the perfect number 777, the Spirit of God will fall, manifest presence will be there, and energy and life and strength, vitality, and refreshment will return to life. No, not at all.

Although we cannot control the manifest presence of God, what we learn from Scripture is that there are things that attract the manifest presence of God, and there are things that repel the manifest presence of God. What I want to do now with my sermon... That was all intro. Don't panic. Don't panic. You're going to be okay. What I want to do now is I want to go very quickly into what the things are that attract this manifest presence and what the things are that repel this manifest presence. Okay?

What are the things God delights in and longs to come into, and what are the things that repel him? Think about it this way. Last night it rained. I don't know if you saw that. It was pretty crazy. I didn't even know what it was. It kind of scared me at first. The only way to get wet was to be outside, right? The only way to get wet was to be outside. We had a bunch of people in our services on Saturday night. Here's the thing. None of them got wet. We heard the thunder. Nobody got wet in this building, but do you know when we *did* get wet? When we went outside.

What I'm about to talk about doesn't guarantee rain, but it puts you in the place where rain can occur so when rain occurs, you get wet. So think what we're about to talk about is getting ourselves under the faucet. It doesn't turn the faucet on. It just puts us under it so if God, in his mercy, would turn it on, we'll get drenched. What attracts the manifest presence of God? Two big buckets.

1. *Personal holiness*. Let me give you a couple of texts. Psalms 41, verse 12. **"But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in your presence forever."** Let me give you one more. Psalms 51, verses 10 through 12. **"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."**

Now if you're thinking through the grid of omnipresence/special presence, how can God cast you from his presence if he is everywhere? This has to be talking about special presence, manifest presence. **"Create in me a clean heart, O God..."** "Because of my integrity, you have set me in your presence." We talk a lot here about treasuring Jesus, loving Jesus. Having Jesus is what we're most after, what we most desire, what we most love. How that translates into obedience is, *I want to be obedient to all God has asked me to be obedient to so I might experience the fullness of his presence and his power.*

It's like, the manifest presence of God is better than *this*. I'm not going to trade these two. It's an awful trade. Pornography, lust, adultery, cheating, stealing, these things are not better than the manifest presence of God. I want the manifest presence of God, so I want to line myself up with how God created me to operate for the fullness of my joy and to get myself underneath the faucet. This means we are people who confess and repent often.

Let me show you this at play. Acts 3:19 through 21. You have a pretty legit sermon here. Let me read to you this. It's going to be on the screen. **"Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out..."** That's great news. **"...that times of refreshing may come..."** Now I don't meet too many people who are like, *Yeah, I don't need to be refreshed. You know what I don't want right now? Refreshment. I don't want more vitality, more life. I just don't need it. I just don't need it!*

He says repent, and if you'll repent, if you'll turn, your sins will be blotted out, and times of refreshing might occur. Watch this. **"...that times of refreshing may come from..."** What? Are you serious? I did a 25-minute intro on call and response, and I got a silent room on that? So times of refreshing occur from the presence of what? The Lord. That's not omnipresence; that's special presence. How are we refreshed? By the manifest presence of God, not merely by instruction but by presence, which leads me to number two. This one is going to be uncomfortable. Now follow me here. I know this is going to wig some of you out. God's manifest presence is also attracted to...

2. *Fervent, passionate worship in song.* Look at me. God *loves* when we sing to him. He loves it! He says he inhabits the praises of his people! Can you believe it? He inhabits it. As we sing to him, as we make much of him, as we fervently sing and shout and clap and love God and sing what is true about God, he inhabits that praise. In fact, he commands us to do it. So Psalms 95:1-2. **"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!"**

Psalms 100, verse 2. **"Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with..."** What? Oh now we're having church. **"Come into his presence with singing!"** Now let me point out a couple of things to you, all right? First thing, I'm not just talking about singing. We don't sing to God via rotteness. *This is the part where we sing.* Most of us treat singing unto the Lord as an add-on to instruction. Now there is a strong place among the people of God for instruction, but I want you to hear this and understand it.

There will be a day where instruction ceases. Do you get that? When we're in glory, God is not going to ask me to exposit the Scriptures. We're not going to all be there and Jesus go, "Chandler, explain to them." "Okay, 1 Timothy. When the Holy Spirit told Paul to write to Timothy to the church at Ephesus, here's what he meant." There's not going to be any instruction, but there will be passionate, zealous worship through song. God loves it.

Before C. S. Lewis' conversion, he said he was reading the Psalms, and God sounded like a little old lady asking for compliments. He said after his conversion, he understood what he needed most was actually to give God compliments and that his soul was never more alive than when he was ascribing to God God's worth. I know some of us are old school and are like, *Well I just don't like the repetition.* Then you are going to *hate* heaven, right?

I mean, you're like, *I don't like to sing the same thing over and over and over again.* Then eternity is going to be awful for you, because right now and since the beginning of everything, there have been living creatures around the throne of God saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty" on replay! That's never switching to a new song. Now let me tell you why repetition is so profound: because it digs down in

your gut. Do you understand what I'm saying by that? It gets it past your shoulders. It's not just brain worship, "That's true. That's true. That's true."

Great, but I want my heart involved in that truth. I want my gut involved in that truth. I want to be moved by that truth. If you have to preach the gospel over and over and over again to get it, then why don't we believe we might need to sing some things over and over and over again to get it? Listen, I know all the emails I'll get this week outside of the murder ones. I already know that's coming. *I can't believe...* I've already coached my admin, "Just say you know what I was trying to say and ship it back." I'm not answering a bunch of murder emails this week.

When all is said and done, I know the arguments I am going to get. "That's emotional manipulation. You're trying to invoke the emotions." Okay, a couple of things. I'm not trying to manipulate anything, and I am absolutely trying to invoke the emotions. Absolutely I am! When did the Devil throw in the emotions in the creative narrative? I've read the Word of God. I know God created you, and I know God made you in his image and gave you emotions. That wasn't the Devil. The Devil didn't swoop in and go, "I'm going to give them happiness and gladness and joy." God wove that into you, and God wants those emotions to be stirred up by what *is* true and to terminate upon him.

Now if your emotions are being invoked by what is *not* true, then that's manipulation. I have a problem with that. To try to stir up your hearts in gladness toward Jesus Christ by maybe repetition, there's nothing sinful or wrong about that. That's not Wesleyan Revivalism. That's not what that is. The guilt seat would be Wesleyan revival where you would sit your lost friends in a certain seat, and I would know about it, and I'd talk to them during the service. That's emotional manipulation, not truth that stirs us up to sing unto the Lord.

Now here's the second thing we have to talk about when we talk about ascribing value and singing fervently to the Lord. Fervency is different for all of us. Can we agree? Some of us redline differently than others. My wife and I laugh about this. Some of the elders and I laugh about this. You never want me at 100 percent. I always need to be a little tired. Matt Chandler at 80 percent is tolerable. You can already see what's happening with just a couple of weeks off. I need to always be just a little bit tired because if I'm redlining, then bad things happen.

I'm like, "We're going to plant 9,000 churches this year. Let's go! All right, let's go! Let's go! Let's go! All right. Gather the troops. Here's what we're doing. We need the money. Guys, we need more. We're planting 9,000 churches. I want to change the worship service. I need each of them to be three-and-a-half hours long now. I don't know about parking. You fix it!" You want me at 80 percent. I am a better man at 80

percent than I am at 100 percent. So me at 80 percent singing unto the Lord is my hands are raised and my head is up. Me singing at the top of my lungs and me bouncing a little bit; that's me at 80 percent.

Some of you at 100 percent are never going to be that. The old argument that worshiping fervently and passionately in a congregation like this makes other people look around and go, *Oh, I guess the mature people raise their hands and shout and clap, and the immature people don't.* Well, that's foolishness. No, we all passionately and fervently sing and make music to the Lord because he has commanded us to, and he indwells that.

That's what's so heartbreaking when so many of you use the back half of our services as a reason to get out of here and get to lunch quickly. You take yourself out from under the faucet because you have elevated instruction past what it is. Now instruction is good and right, and there's a place for it in the gathering, but we have come here to worship the living God, to interact with the living God, to experience the living God, to get ourselves under that faucet and hope he turns it on. You do that with singing and worshipping after hearing the goodness and grace of God and what he has for us in Christ.

That attracts the manifest presence of God, and oh, that we might be able to get over ourselves. You know, David got caught up in the Lord so much one time that he took off his clothes. He was just wearing his ephod. He danced around among all the people of Israel, and his wife rebuked him and said he was looking like a fool. He rebuked her back. He said, "Woman..." I don't know how these guys got away with that back in that day. If I said, "Woman!" I would have to call one of our elders and go, "Hey, can I stay with you tonight. I don't want to explain." It would just be awful.

David said, "Woman, I'll be coming more undignified than this. You think me in this ephod dancing around is bad. I'll get worse than this! If I get the presence of God, I'm all in." I think so many of us just don't want to look foolish. I can tell you this. God is never going to go, "All right. You're just kind of making too big of a deal about me. I am not that great! Everybody calm down. That's a little loud. We're doing some things over here. We're trying to concentrate." It's an incense into the throne of heaven. He inhabits the praise of his people. He commands us to enter with singing and rejoicing.

This is what we're commanded to do. This is what we're asked to do by God. This attracts the manifest presence of God. Now again I have to keep going back to this. Does that mean that if we're walking in personal and corporate holiness and we enter into his courts with praise that the faucet will get turned on? No, but it puts us right under it. It puts us right under it. Now what repels the manifest presence of God? Two things, and we have to move quickly.

1. *Pride*. Psalms 138:6: **"For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar."** So let me explain this, because I know we're young and there's slang that's permeated the church. When God uses the word *haughty*, he is not talking about someone who is attractive. He is saying the *haughty*, the proud, the boastful. I know some of those 20-year-olds down at the Dallas Campus are like, *It's not my fault I'm gorgeous*. In the end, he is saying the proud, the boastful he knows from afar.

Now that's not omnipresence. That's special presence. "The proud, the boastful, I know from afar." Here's what's sad. The haughty don't care. They don't think they need it. They don't think they need the manifest presence of God. They don't think their sin is that big of a deal. They live under the illusion of control. Isn't it interesting that when everything is going well in our world, we're proud of ourselves? Come on. We can be straight. We're friends, right?

Things at home are good, and the checkbook looks decent, and the kids are kind of behaving. We're getting along with our roommates. We're not fighting with anybody at work. We're kind of proud of us. We're kind of getting into the swing of things. Things are in a good rhythm right now. This is the kind of stuff we say! Then when things fall apart, we're like, "God, what in the world are you doing?" This is haughtiness. This is pride. This is the illusion of control. This is, *I have this*. It repels the manifest presence of God. Then one more, and I have to land the plane.

2. *Complacency or indifference*. Proverbs 1:32 through 33: **"...the complacency of fools destroys them; but whoever listens to me will dwell secure..."** If you have your Bibles, go over to Matthew, chapter 25. I'm going to pick it up in verse 1. **"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like 10 virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.**

But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

So you have this great parable of those who go, "I'm going to wait no matter how long it takes. I'm bringing extra oil. Who knows when he is going to show up? We're going to be ready for when he shows up." Then you have some who are like, "Well, let's just see what happens." They're not really prepared. They have a

time limit on their range of waitfulness. "I'll wait for a bit, but he had better hurry up and get here." One is going, "I'll wait no matter how long it takes." One is going, "I'll wait for a bit. I'm definitely not burning midnight oil." One is going, "I'll bring extra oil in case I have to keep the lamp on even later than that."

When we are indifferent or complacent about the things of God, it repels the manifest presence of God. Surely this isn't a stretch for your imagination! How do indifference and complacency work out in your other relationships? Men, let me be straight with you. Be indifferent and complacent about your wife, you'll find a man somewhere else start to *not* be indifferent toward your wife. Be complacent about your children, and you'll wake up and your days of influence will be gone. Surely you can understand even on a human level that indifference and complacency never ends well.

That's why the Proverbs say a fool is destroyed in his complacency. If we were to come expectant, if we were to come in belief, if we were to fervently pursue like these men in the Bible do, where David goes, "I'm seeking, I'm after, I'm thirsty, I need..." If we're like Moses who cries out, "Show me your glory..." If we're like the apostle Paul who says he wants to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and on and on and on I could go... For like these men who say, "What I need is God, and I'll surrender everything and sacrifice everything and consider everything as rubbish next to the surpassing greatness of knowing him," I'll spend my life in that pursuit.

So here's how I think we need to grow individually and as a congregation. I think when we come and we gather on the weekends, we need to be better prepared. I'll tell you what I mean by that. I think we should be more avid in our prayers during the week, and I'll tell you why. This leads to really the second thing. Not only *preparation* but *anticipation*. Can I tell you what God does when we gather? Here are just a couple of things I personally know.

God *saves* people. Do you know how crazy that is? People come into our doors. They're not believers in the gospel, haven't experienced the life change Christ brings, and God meets them and rescues them *here*. God heals people here, like literally bends the laws of science and miraculously heals people here. God reconciles marriages here. He exposes sin here. He stirs up affections, and he changes lives. He does it when we come together and make much of him. Why is there so little anticipation about getting here? David mourned when he got to a place where he could no longer enter into the temple.

Why isn't there an ongoing anticipation for what God might do among us as we gather? You would think we'd be in a rush to get here, try to find a good seat just to see what he might do, to get ourselves under the faucet in the hopes that he might turn it on. One of my favorite things about our story here is God has saved people who statically aren't savable: 60-year-olds, aggressive atheists. Not just atheists but *aggressive* ones.

Reconciled marriages. People who have been divorced for seven years who God brought back together. Called wayward people home. He has saved the lives of those who were on their last breath, who were contemplating ways out. God is at work among us. Oh that our anticipation might build for him to show up in mightier and mightier ways. So my hope is just that we'd get better at positioning ourselves under the faucet, but only he can turn it on. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, I pray you would do now what only you can do. I pray that where our hearts are hard, where some of these words just bounced off of us, that you would give us hearts of flesh, where there is ice, that you would melt it, that you would, as the psalmist prayed in Psalms 51, restore to us the joy of your salvation, God, that you would free us up from our own dignity that we might enjoy you fully.

I pray we might sing louder than usual, that we might believe more that you are who you say you are, and that you say what you do. That you would give us the grace to embrace and believe all you have promised to us in Christ. We thank you for the gospel, for forgiveness, and for your manifest presence and ask you would fall in that way among us. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you guys.

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