

A Call to the Church (Lazarus, Come Forth)

by Art Katz

Art Katz's sermon calls the church to embrace suffering as a pathway to glorifying God and understanding true life in Christ.

Duration: 44:46

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 9:24, John 11:33-35, John 11:38, 1 Corinthians 15:53

Topics: "Spirit of Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a gathering where many people were going to Afghanistan for missionary work after three months of court and discipleship. The speaker emphasizes the importance of waiting for the glory of God rather than relying on human efforts. They mention a moment when the congregation struggled to praise God and instead filled the silence with prophecies and exhortations. The speaker criticizes the preference for sentimental and dramatic displays over the pure and holy word of God. They also mention a powerful moment at a Pentecostal conference where a cry in tongues was interpreted as a message from God, but the congregation failed to seek understanding and translation for the edification of all.

Transcript

The portion of scripture that went through my spirit just before I was called was, corruption cannot put on incorruption. And I wonder if you've ever experienced the peculiar paradox that in the moment of God's greatest use of you, in the moment when his very glory is being revealed, there is even in that moment the subtlest emanation of our own soul, our own self-life, our own flesh. I don't know how a pastor could look out on so glorious a congregation as this and not be impressed with the number.

I don't know how a speaker can bring a powerful word from God and not be at the same moment impressed by its impact. Do you understand what I'm saying? There's a paradox, there's something that haunts us, that shadows us, that it can't be removed. But I want to say in the same breath that the holy end-time works of God shall not have this subtle corruption.

That wherever there's humanity, wherever there's the semblance of self, wherever there is the faintest iota of vanity, ego, pride, it has got to go. And I believe that every ministry and minister of God is going somewhere in the course of time to pass through a process of death. The most flourishing works, the most grandiose, the most effective, are somewhere in the course of time to be submitted to a process of death.

I hate to bring up the word. It sounds so morbid, but it's so desperately necessary. Even on this trip, I had the phone number, or I had rather the name of a black brother whom I've known through the years in my pocket in California.

We've known each other since the beginning. He heard me on radio one day, almost 12 years ago, in the first stages of giving my testimony, and something touched his soul in the hearing of my voice. And he called the station to get my name and tracked me down and found me and called me.

He wanted to come over and meet me. I said, come. And so the door knocked, and there I opened the door with this big black galoot standing on the doorstep.

Without a moment's hesitation, we fell into each other's arms, and it's been that kind of a loving embrace ever since. He's a man of extraordinary character and calling, saved out of the most desperate pit that you could ever imagine, and he has a manner of speaking and serving God that stuns audiences. He's spoken at universities, and he's a great encounter specialist of the Lord and a very special instrument.

Well, he had called me in the early days while I was in the Bay Area a week or so ago, and I had the note in my pocket, and I would take out my coins and things at night and look at the name and lay it down and not call. The next day, I would pick it up and look at it and not call. On the very last night of my days in the area, his name was on my heart, and I tried to call.

And I knew that he lived in Palo Alto, and I looked in the phone book, and I couldn't find any such number, and I called information, no such number. And just when I was going to despair of contacting this brother, I asked the pastor at whose church I was speaking, and that, by the way, was an impromptu last-minute service which was not in my schedule. And he happened to know someone who knew him, and so by such circumstance, I called him.

He said the phone rang six, seven, and eight times. You know what he was doing as it was ringing? He was adjusting the bell. And I was just about to quit, thinking he was not home, when he lifted the receiver, and he found out it was Ark on the other end.

Ark, he said. I've got to see you. I said, well, I'm speaking at such and such a place tonight.

Can you come to the meeting? No, but I'll be there at around 9.30. Please wait on me. Well, he came, and we went for ice cream. Now you know where I live.

And over the ice cream, I heard such a woeful tale of lament. I can't describe to you a man who is at the utter end of himself. Things are going wrong right and left.

It's an agony to minister. He has come to such a place so reduced that he wonders if he's even saved. It was pitiful to hear that chronicle of woes.

And I shared with him something that brought life to him that night, and I want to share it with you. It's in John, the 11th chapter, an episode that I have never understood until now. And maybe it is until now that we are to understand it.

There may be some of you who are languishing in a kind of spiritual death even now, inexplicable circumstances, suffering that you can't fathom, things going wrong. And it may be that there are others of you who are soon to experience what I believe is a necessity to put away corruption, and that is to be

entombed in a Lazarus tomb. John, the 11th chapter, Now a certain man named Lazarus was ill.

He was of Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived. This Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was now sick.

So the sister sent to him, saying, Lord, he whom you love so well is sick. When Jesus received the message, he said, This sickness is not to end in death, but on the contrary, it is to honor God and to promote his glory, that the Son of God may be glorified through it. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

They were his dear friends, and he held them in loving esteem. Therefore, even when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he still stayed two days longer in the same place where he was. You know how long you'll carry a certain perplexity in your spirit and not understand? I have to make certain confessions because I'm peculiar.

But for some reason, at the end of full gospel meetings, my spirit has not always soared when automatically there have been three lines of ministry, baptism in the Holy Spirit, salvation, and deliverance, automatically as a matter of course, as if we're required to perform this ministry at the conclusion of every meeting. I have not been able to understand the wincing in my spirit until now. When I see that there's a Jesus who loves a Lazarus who is deathly ill and still remains two days longer where he is, something begins to be communicated to my spirit.

I think a lot of us have been playing the game by the numbers, mechanically, and have thereby been missing the glory of God. There's something about our civilization, the whole knit and fabric of our culture, that is inimical to suffering of any kind. If that's a fancy word, it means opposed.

We are a fly-now, pay-later civilization. We are instant this and instant that. We are immediate gratification.

We are the ultimate lovers of pleasure, of which the Scripture says that at the end of the age there will be lovers of self more than lovers of God. Never have men more fastidiously spent time with hair dryers and blowers as they're now doing. Perfumed, powdered, pampered, never has flesh been more placated and appeased as in this civilization.

And even the children of God are not immune. We've never been so style-conscious, so pleasure-conscious. And there's something about the very word suffering that sends an immediate shudder in our souls.

But may I quote Basilia Schlink? She said, The greatest failure of the Church is to prepare God's people for suffering. In my humble opinion, the way of the cross is the way of suffering. And I know that the love of God bathes us this morning in congregations like this, and we're enjoying for a wonderful season the great pleasures of the renewal of faith and the entering into dimensions of praise and worship we've not heretofore known.

And I'm sure that Lazarus himself enjoyed many of these benefits before he became inexplicably ill. I wonder how obedient we would be to remain two days longer where we are if some dear friend whom we love is ill unto death. How many of us would be Johnny-on-the-spot to provide immediate ministry and thereby deflect, if not impede and cancel out, the great workings of God? May I say that our ministry is not first unto God.

It is never truly ministry unto men. And that the greatest failing of Christendom in modern times is shooting its ministry toward men rather than to God, where men please and crowd please, afraid to bring offense. Jesus said this illness is not to eventuate in death, but on the contrary, it is to honor God and to promote His glory.

And I'm willing to acknowledge that there are many defects in my own life and shortcomings, and others have been the victim of these shortcomings in that I have public places like this to speak. But one thing I think I can say with a clear heart and with a full conscience, whatever the defects or the exaggerations or the ill consequences of my zeal, everything that comes out of my life, so well as I understand myself, is to honor God and to promote His glory. May I say, children, that there ought not to be any other motive.

And we know what we're made of, and there are subtle interminglings of many varieties of motives of which we cannot help ourselves. We desire success, and we love to see things promoted and magnified. It's an inextricable, built-in thing.

It adheres in the flesh. What are you going to do? But if God is going to have for Himself a church without spot and without blemish, if He's going to have holy ministers, virgins undefiled with women, redeemed out of the earth in whose foreheads is the name of the Father proclaiming the everlasting gospel, we're going to need to submit ourselves again into the earth. I wonder how Lazarus felt languishing in sickness unto death.

Sickness itself is only another name for death. Don't you remember? That terrible pounding headache where you can't even think straight? The terrible fever? The tongue cleaving to the roof of your mouth? The utter weakness and terrible exhaustion? You're nigh unto death. Your whole life has been contracted and diminished.

You have barely a faint palpitation on sweaty sheets, and the Lord has not come. I want to tell you that Jesus didn't take Lazarus aside well in advance of this and say, Now look, buddy, we're friends, right? You love me, and I love you. So I'll tell you what's going to happen.

There's going to come at a certain moment a sickness in your life, but don't worry, cool it. It'll get bad, and I'll not seem to appear, but you can be assured that I am going to deliver you out of this. I don't think that he said any such word.

Jesus loved Lazarus, and he was his friend. And I believe with all my heart that Lazarus loved Jesus, and he was his friend. And may I say that the friends of Jesus can well be bidden to suffer and to die without explanation.

How many of you presently need explanation for everything? You're willing to obey God if he'll explain it. You're ready to be Johnny on the spot if he'll explain it. You're ready to serve God if he'll explain it.

You're willing to suffer humiliation if he'll explain it. But I'll tell you, if he explains it, there's no humiliation. It's humiliation because he doesn't explain it.

I can't help but notice the phenomenon of nature itself for which God has written his handiwork. It's very prolific. And we know that a fish will spawn many hundreds of eggs, thousands perhaps.

But of that number, not all comes to fruition. There's a great wastefulness in nature. God is willing to lavish wastefulness to bring forth some perfect expression of his life.

And of those eggs, only a few will come to the first stages of life. And of these fingerlings, fewer yet will survive and go on to the other stages of maturity. And maybe of the great number that began in thousands, we have only one or two that have left the periphery and the shallow scums to go out into the deep and there to come to full maturity and reproduce itself.

I wonder how many there will be in the last accounting when the faith of many shall grow cold. When the Lord shall come, shall there be faith in the earth? And if faith is not faith unto death, I don't know what it is. I wonder what the disciples of Jesus thought while Jesus delayed two days longer where he was.

Remember what they said later? Lord, we'd better not go there because the Jews were only recently intending to try to stone you and are you thinking to go back there again? I wonder how many of them had the stray thought that Jesus was delaying because he was afraid to face a possible stoning. And I can tell you with all my heart that every true act of obedience unto God will always result in a reproach, not only from the world, but also from God's people. If he really had guts, he'd go there and suffer the stoning, some friend.

But he was obedient to the Father and I want to tell you that while Lazarus died, he died. If you don't think it's painful to consider that someone whom you love is languishing unto death without explanation, it is. This kind of obedience does not come easy, both for him who suffers it and for him who obeys it.

Jesus said of Lazarus in the 11th verse, Our friend Lazarus is at rest and sleeping, but I am going there that I may awaken him out of his sleep. I wonder if Jesus would say that of us. Whatever you are suffering, and I don't know who's in the audience and what your condition, and whatever it may please the Lord to allow you to suffer, how many of us will in that condition be at rest, sleeping? How many of us will be pulling our hair and beating our chest? How many of us will be vexed? How many of us will look at our sisters Mary and Martha and see the disconsolate disappointment in their face and have our hearts sink? Where is the Lord? He's at rest.

What a statement for a believer in the midst of the ultimate perplexity of his life. Well, so then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus is dead and for your sake I'm glad that I was not there. It would help you to believe, to trust and to rely on me.

However, let us go to him. And so they came and came to Bethany. It's interesting what the name Bethany means, house of affliction.

And they came to that house and Mary and Martha were there. And when Martha heard that Jesus was coming in the 20th verse, she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house.

And Martha said to Jesus, Master, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. You know what's fascinating? That when Mary, who is the more spiritual of the two, so we think, later comes and greets the same Lord, she says exactly the same thing as her sister. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Isn't it fantastic how mindless we can be in speaking the word Lord and not let the deepest meanings of that word register? Because if he's Lord, what cotton-picking difference does it make whether he's there or not? No wonder that Jesus had to say of a Roman and a Gentile that there's not so great a faith in all Israel because the Romans said, You don't have to come under my roof. Just speak the word only. Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Jesus said, Your brother shall rise again. And Martha replied, I know that he will rise again at the resurrection of the last day. I think she was a leading charismatic of the community.

I know that. I heard it on Bob Mumford's tape. We know, but we don't know is our problem.

We know theologically, we know doctrinally, but we don't know in the gut. Jesus said to her, I am myself, the resurrection and the life, and whoever believes in, adheres to, and trusts and relies on me, although he may die, yet shall he live. And whoever continues to live and believes and has faith in and cleaves to and relies on me shall never actually die at all.

Do you believe this? I could almost imagine in my fervency that Jesus was speaking through this woman and through and into all generations of all ages, right to this moment into your own hearing. Do you believe this? In a world in which the resurrection is commemorated by the rolling of eggs on lawns. Do you believe this? Where the deepest glory of God has been somehow dissolved in pagan practice and Easter bunnies and chocolate goo-goo.

Do you believe this? You know that there's not another place in Scripture that describes the fact that Jesus wept. The shortest verse of all Scripture is in this chapter, two words, Jesus wept. And I want to understand what it is that makes my Lord grieve.

Was it the death of this young man whom he loved? Was it some sentimental exercise? Or was it something else? That when in the 33rd verse Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews who came with her also sobbing, he was deeply moved and spirit and troubled and chafed in his spirit and sighed and was disturbed. He said, where have you laid him? They said, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.

I wonder if he wept at the unbelief of men. He said, I know that he'll be raised on the last day. I wonder if he wept at those who quote the Scripture, absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, but who don't really want to be absent.

Listen, could you tell me what's so bad about dying? If to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord? If to pass out of this mortal coil is to be in complete and perfect union with him? What's so bad about dying? That we lament and go to the tomb and sob and gush and wrinkle our handkerchiefs and wear out the Kleenex box? When he saw those Jews sobbing and these sisters with him, he chafed in the spirit and groaned. Jesus wept. Beginning to reconsider the whole question of life and death, having recently had opportunity in Minnesota to be invited to a funeral parlor.

And there in the casket was a young woman in her early thirties, an exemplary saint of God, married to an unbelieving clod. He lived and she died of cancer and absolutely stupefied the entire charismatic community. And they invited me to come and to lean over the casket that perchance in the sounding of my voice or the touching of my finger, her eyelids would flutter and she would rise up in resurrection life.

They could not believe that God would cancel out and write finis to so glorious a life and testimony and allow the unbelieving clod to live. Unlike Jewish practice, which keeps the body concealed, Christian practice leaves it open for view. And I looked down on that still form.

It didn't need any mortician's cosmetic. There was a glory that adhered in that life, in its death as well as in its living, that was beyond contradiction. As a matter of fact, is it because I'm a peculiar Jew that as I sat on the front pew of that mortuary and watched the people lumber up in their Minnesota way, ordinary folk, Lutherans and stuff like that, and pay respects to the husband of the deceased, that I looked at them and

began to squint and wondered in my mind, who's really dead and who's really alive? I wondered, what is life anyhow? How many times have their clothes to be washed in 30, 40, 50, 60 years? How much weary groaning of washing machines and dryers? How many meals consumed? How many rolls of toilet paper? How many of all the things that pertain to physical coming and going and being and lumbering back and forth and feeding our faces and occupying space, the end of which is sound and fury signifying nothing? As I looked at these lumbering oafs over the casket, I thought to myself, she is more alive in her death than they are in their life.

I think we ought to review our definition. Life has not to do with the ingestion of calories or the occupying of space, but only that which promotes the honor and glory of God. And if I can best perform that in my silence as well as in my speaking, so let it be.

Somebody said that if the Holy Spirit departed the earth, 90% of all Christian endeavor would go on as usual, business as usual. How would you like to have your work so thrust upon God, upon His heartbeat, the palpitation of His life and His glory that emanated out of the grave, that the moment it ceases, you cease? Really, we ought to put it the other way. The moment you cease, He begins.

Hallelujah. I think there's a message here. Jesus wept.

And the Jews said, see how tenderly He loved Him? Why is it that people always love saccharine demonstrations and schmaltzy things, profuse tears and all kinds of dramatic stuff than the pure and holy thing of God that is life-giving? Why is it that only some months ago at the Great World Pentecostal Conference, in the midst of all that clobber and routine and religious posturing, where a cry of God came out of the balcony, a shriek and a cry in tongues that made your hair stand up, and a deathly silence come over the congregation. And the same woman who gave the tongue gave the interpretation in German. How I strained to lean to hear to catch only a phrase and heard enough to know it was God.

My people, my people, my people. Jesus wept. And I waited with my heart pounding to see what they would do at the platform in the audience of thousands.

And if they would ask if there was one in the audience who had heard the interpretation and could translate it for the edification of this body in English. But instead, guess what happens? It was brushed neatly away and the man at the pulpit led the whole congregation in singing, He is Lord, He is Lord. He is... And by the singing of the Lord, they silenced the Lord.

And then they brought on their whiz kid, pulpiteer, and he gave them a good old slam bang Pentecostal sermon in the grand old manner. And they loved it. They mopped out their eyes and they sniffled.

And when it was over, he had them on their feet and their hands were above their head. And boy, it was a bash. It was a piece of old time nostalgia.

The good old time religion, hallelujah. But somewhere the voice of his speaking had been pushed aside into obscurity because men preferred a sentimental bash, a sacrament here, to the now word of God. Jesus wept.

Jesus again, sighing repeatedly and deeply disquieted, approached the tomb. It was a cave, a hole in the rock. Hallelujah for the Amplified Bible.

A hole in the rock. Children, are you willing to be entombed there? I've just come back from Israel where we took 86 children and we went to visit the tomb of Lazarus. No one is quite sure exactly where the cave is.

There were a few right in that location. But we went into one which might most assuredly have been it. This much I know, it was decidedly uncomfortable.

We felt very congested, very suffocated in that compressed, dark enclosure. Couldn't wait to get out and take gulps of breath again. But would we be willing like he to be sealed in until the hour of the Lord's calling? You young people who itch to do for God, willing to be entombed in the rock, till you hear his voice only, calling, come forth.

I'll tell you that it's only that obedience that shall eventuate in the glory of God. Lots of hot shots going to Afghanistan after three months of course in discipleship. And there may be some peripheral efficacy for their work.

But as for me and my house, I am waiting for the glory of God. Jesus said, take away the stone. And Martha, the sister of the dead man, explained, but Lord, by this time he's decaying and throws off an offensive oath.

Praise the Lord for King James. By this time, he stinketh. He's been dead four days.

I want to tell you children that Jesus had only to be entombed for three, but one who loved him had to go a little length further. You say, how come, Art? Because Jewish tradition says that within three days before the body corrupts in the fourth, the soul might yet return to the body. But in the fourth day, the process of disintegration and corruption takes place and there's no prospect whatsoever for life to return.

There needed to be for Jews then and there needs to be for Jews now. Not only Jews who are Jews by birth, but Jews by practice. A demonstration of the resurrection glory of Jesus.

All that the Lord is needing is a Lazarus who will be the object of that demonstration both in suffering and in death until the fourth day. By this time he stinketh. Some of you might be curious to want to know what I'm doing in Minnesota.

Art, I understood that you were living just outside of New York City where there are two and a half million Jews. And isn't it right that you're called and ministered to your Jewish people? Yeah, that's right. Then what for God's sake are you doing up there in the north woods of Minnesota playing cowboys and Indians? I'm there for God's sake without explanation.

We're entombed and shoved in and compressed together until we shall hear his voice. What's your program for the Jews? I don't have one. I'm waiting for the coming forth of his glory.

Did I not tell you and promise you that if you would believe and rely on me you should see the glory of God? Listen children, I'm not speaking about some ephemeral thing, some fanciful spiritual concept. I'm speaking about something tangible and demonstrable that when men see it they fall on their faces and cry out to God in repentance. The Lord, he is God.

The Lord, he is God. That's what has happened every time. The glory of God has been made manifest before unbelieving Jews.

And so shall it be also at the end of the age. Did I not tell you and promise you that if you would believe and rely on me without explanation, in your discomfort and in your agitation, in your inexplicable circumstances that you can't fathom, though you think that God has absented himself from your life, though the heavens are as brass, that you think your prayers are not being heard, though he has not come in two days, if you rely and cleave to him that you should see the glory of God? So they took away the stone and Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank you that you have heard me. They may prefer to sing, He is Lord, he is Lord, but thank you that you have heard me.

Father, I thank you that you've heard me. Yes, I know you always hear and listen to me, but I have said this on account of and for the benefit of the people standing around so that they may believe that you did send me, that you have made me your messenger. When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And out walked the man who had been dead, his hands and feet wrapped in a burial cloth, linen strips, and with a burial napkin around his face. And Jesus said to them, Free him of the burial wrappings and let him go. Upon seeing what Jesus had done, many of the Jews who had come with Mary believed on him, they trusted in him, and relied on him.

May I say this? More Jews were saved that day in the coming forth of a man who spoke not a word, and preached not a sermon, and gave not a witness, but just was obedient in death as unto life. Many believed on Jesus in that day. How would you like to be bound up in your face and your hands and your feet? Boy, I'll tell you, the Lord gave us a testing only a few days ago in California, where on a Saturday night, the most prominent night of my activity at the Springs of Living Water, an audience almost this size, I came up on the platform and I had to tell them, I have no message.

Praise God for the maturity of that body that can receive the unusual dealings of God without disappointment. He didn't explain it. We had only to suffer it in obedience.

I said, I think that God wants no flesh on this platform, and may I say, in the authority of the name of the Lord, that's true ever and always. He wants no flesh on his platform. He wanted us to praise him that night and glory in him, and we could not do it.

Oh, we managed for about 15, 20 minutes, but you know, after a while, it gets a bit weary, the familiar choruses and strains and so on, and someone, of course, had to fill the silence, had to fill the vacuum, and they leaped in with a prophecy or an exhortation or a call to commitment, all good things, none of which was ordered of the Lord. We couldn't stand to be entombed in with the Lord for two hours, let alone for four days. By this time, he stinketh.

My reputation is getting increasingly unsavory. Why don't you go fishing where the fish are, cats? What are you doing up in the boondocks? By this time, he stinketh, and that's the eve of the coming forth of his glory. Upon seeing what Jesus had done, many of the Jews believed on him.

No act that Jesus did more precipitated his death than this. No wonder that the priest of that hour spoke prophetically that such a man must die for the nation, and it says in the 52nd verse of the Amplified, not only for the nation, but also for the purpose of uniting into one the body of the children of God who have been scattered far and wide. So from that day on, they took counsel and plotted together how they might put him to death.

If I am not presuming upon God, may I suggest for those of us who palpitate for the unity of the body of Christ, for those of us for whom this phrase is not a piece of gamesmanship, for those of us for whom this is not just some unctuous, glib speaking who think that it's going to be transacted under the banner of the dove by a bear slap and a hug, for those of us who know it's going to be exacting and demanding and strenuous to achieve this unity, for those of us who know that until this unity comes, there shall not be a body in the earth who shall bear the anointing of God's Christ to set the captives free, to whom God can give his spirit without measure. Everything weeps on the coming forth of this body, and I think that that priest spoke prophetically, and it's appropriate to ala ala, not only for the nation, but also for the purpose of uniting into one the body of the children of God who have been scattered far and wide. A man must die for this unity to be achieved.

Children, I'm speaking as a fool, and if you ask me how and what do you mean, cats, and can you spell it out, I can't. But I know that it's going to take something deeper than a full gospel bear hug and a back slap to achieve the unity of the body of Christ. And if I have achieved it with my wife, that snub-nosed Gentile from Denmark, that sandy-haired, light-complexed thing who is the antithesis of my Jewish passionate life, who loves crockery and bric-a-brac and porcelain, and it took more than a bear hug to achieve that unity.

It took dying. What then for the entire body? May I ask you a question in conclusion? Who are the friends of Jesus in this audience this morning? I looked up what Lazarus's name means. You'll never guess.

It means without help, helpless. Is there a friend of Jesus in the audience this morning who is willing to say to the Lord, let me be your Lazarus for this generation, helpless in the house of affliction to promote your honor and your glory? I've never seen a more beautiful body of ministers than were on this platform this morning. They're good-looking physically, and they're good-looking spiritually.

They're endowed men, superbly endowed men. They're capable and competent. But I wonder if there's one of them who is willing to be helpless where his strength now abounds.

You'll do a precious job for the Lord in your present strength and abilities, but there's only one thing that will promote his glory to the saving of many in that day, and that's submitting your greatest strengths and abilities into the dust of death so that that which is corruptible, the fatal and subtle taint of vanity, of pride, of self-seeking, of delighting in the applause, the admiration of men, of watching the congregation abound and grow, this will not be resurrected to newness of life. That stays in the grave. It's corrupted, and it stinks.

Only that comes forth which is incorruptible and of his life. Hallelujah. Oh, glory to God.

This isn't depressing, children. This is a glory. You're willing to be entombed in the hole in the rock.

There's a Minnesota for you somewhere. There's an inexplicable sickness for you somewhere up the road. There's a loss of a dear one.

There's an accident. There's a financial loss. There's something up ahead.

When it comes, will you not reproach the Lord and say, If you had been here, this wouldn't have happened? Will you be at rest, a friend who doesn't need an explanation to promote his honor and his glory? If you have a heart to serve God in this way, as the Lazarus who never spoke, there's never a word that's ever recorded from him, never ministered. He was just simply obedient unto death without explanation. You can tell the Lord, Do with me as you will, and you don't have to explain.

I want your glory in my generation. Bow your heads with me, will you? Precious God, if it was needful then that a man should die for the nation and to bring together as one those who were scattered abroad, how much more needful now. And I ask you to look, mighty God, upon your children who are sitting in this congregation, surely one of the most beautiful and impressive bodies of God's people that I have ever glimpsed, wonderful talents and abilities and dedication, real heart for God and want to do for him, want to sound his praises, but see that one here who is willing not to be heard and not to be seen except in coming forth from the hole in the rock.

I want to ask you in the name of Jesus that this is not for everyone. There's nothing about this that is compulsory or a matter of course. The Lord will not impede your life and allow you to go on to be a happy charismatic to the end, but he's looking for a few friends who love him, who do not require an explanation for suffering.

Is there a volunteer in the house who will raise their hand to God and say, Lord, see me? Do it now. Don't do it lightly. Hallelujah.

Precious God, in Yeshua's holy name, seal this peculiar kind of covenant. We've sought to serve you, Lord, and to work and to do our best. We've come back disappointed and we've seen only a modicum of results.

And Lord, save us from seeing as the world sees. Save us from measuring success numerically. Give us only a divine appetite for your glory and a divine discontent with anything less.

For you see, men and women this morning, willing to be numbered by you and reserved for entombment, for inexplicable dealings, that your glory be revealed, that many shall believe upon you in that day. Seal them in this commitment today, Lord, and bring it forth by your wisdom and grace in the manner that it shall please you. Thank you and praise you for this holy calling.

Thank you for a Jewish man who loved you enough.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/3/SID3168.mp3>

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