

Gleanings From Psalm 87

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the importance of understanding Zion and cultivating a genuine devotional life to fulfill God's purpose for the church.

Duration: 1:01:11

Scripture: Psalm 87:1-2, Matthew 25:40-41, Matthew 25:44-45, Hebrews 12:22

Topics: "Eternal Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of measuring success in ministry by the impact it has on the youth. He cautions against using superficial methods, such as incorporating rock beats in worship, and instead encourages a deeper engagement with God's word. The speaker highlights the joy and worship that comes from a genuine acknowledgement of God as God, as seen in the example of non-professional singers and dancers. The sermon also emphasizes the eternal reward for sacrifice and self-denial in this life, and the need to engage young people in a compelling way that recognizes the seriousness of the faith.

Transcript

Well, I have no message, and I am a message. You can't believe how we have prayed for this morning and these days in Buffalo and Canada where I'm going. I was anointed with oil yesterday by our own fellowship, they laid hands on me and sent me forth as an apostolic sending, and you're the first place where I'm opening my mouth after such a sending as that.

And my only thought is from my own devotional reading of this morning in the Psalms. Did you read the Psalms before you came to church? Do you have a devotional reading? Do you have a devotional time? What? You mean you get out of bed and spend a half hour in front of the mirror with your mascara and not five minutes with the Word of God to prepare your spirit before coming to service? No wonder we're so lackluster. No wonder the pastor has to strive to find some kind of, what do they call it, spiritual roulette to hit something that will revive you.

You should come already revived. You know, I regret that my earliest years were in the Assemblies of God. I was a Jewish convert, out of atheism and out of Marxism, and no one ever spoke to me about a devotional.

Do you mind if I take my jacket off? Only recently in the last few years have I learned the remarkable privilege of devotional life. How could I have gone on this long and have been so widely used and circulated without it? So my morning begins early, and I give the Lord plenty of time, and I'm reading Oswald Chambers, my utmost for his highest daily choice, dwelling on that, and two or three other devotional books, plus the psalm for that day, plus the chapter in the book of Proverbs for that day, and wheresoever the Lord will lead me in the things that are upon his heart, as well as a season of prayer, then I can face the day and what the Lord has. This ought to be standard operating procedure, and it's sacrificial if you're going to work and have to punch a clock, but the Lord will honor that and give you stamina for whatever you think you may have lost in an early rising.

If we're going to be saints, it's going to take this as a preliminary, you know, devotional life is a matter of course. Okay, well what was my psalm for today? Psalm 87, because I follow the calendar. Today's the 17th, and as I go through five months of psalms, the number 17 comes up for me today as 87, and it's not one of the more grand psalms, it's brief, but it'll give me a springboard to share a few things.

The title in the New American Standard, do you ever read the italic title before a psalm? The privileges of citizenship in Zion, whatever Zion is. His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwelling places of Jacob.

If he loves it, what ought our attitude to be? And if we can't even identify it, how shall we then love it? Well at least it ought to stir us to be concerned with, well what is the Zion that God so loves above all? If it's that important to him, and not just a category, but his devotion and his heart is there, how dare we be ignorant and indifferent to that? More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob, glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. A lot of mystical or mysterious references, Zion, holy mountain, city of God, but you'll find them in the New Testament. In Hebrews 12, you have not called to the mountain where God dwelled in rings of fire, but you've called to Zion, you've called to Mount Zion, and the city of God is described in Revelation, is it 21 or something like that, where it comes down from above as a bride adorned for the bridegroom? These are symbols, profound statements that God gives as choice and juicy hints, trying to draw us out to be engaged and to inquire, what does all this mean? That he has engaged the psalmist by the Spirit and inspired this, and John the Revelator and the author of Hebrews, I think, who was Paul, all touching the same thing.

There's a significance about Zion that we dare not ignore except at our own risk. Do you know that the church can become a commonplace? Do you know that the church can become a Sunday culture? Do you know it can become a place just for our convenience? It could even become a relief for aggravated consciences that want to be able to say, well, I went to church today, or I came to the altar, and then go back again to a kind of a humdrum, routine, mechanical, predictable lifestyle that is not affecting anything anywhere. All because of the ignorance of Zion and what it represents as dear to God.

That the church that is not occupied with what is dear to God is ipso facto not the church in any significant sense of that word. It's only an institution. It's only a religious culture.

We've got to know what God loves. The eternal purposes of God for the church. What does he have then? What are they? And we don't know about them? How shall we give ourselves to them? And if they are eternal, they must be mighty.

And if they're that significant, how much opposed will they be by the powers of darkness? It opens up all kinds of questions. What kind of a church? What does God mean by church? The aggregate of

individualities who are willing to come together for a few hours, but who are totally privatistic, individualistic, separated, occupied with their own narrow lives, and not in any way indicating the apostolic koinonia, quality of relationship that characterized the church at the first, the early church, where the glory of God was upon it and the power of God was expressed through it. How come we don't have it today? What's the difference? What are we lacking that they had? What was the character of their knit of life where no man thought that the thing which he had was his own? Have we been seduced by a worldly lifestyle that emphasizes privacy and thinks that we have it coming? And rather than going from house to house daily breaking bread, we would be offended if someone came in without first calling and found us with our hair up in curlers or our husbands with a beer can with his feet up on the coffee table watching the football game and doesn't want to be interrupted.

That the football game is more important than the fellowship of the saints. That's a drag because the saints are not that entertaining, not that enjoyable. What would happen if we would be closed in with ourselves alone and there would be a blackout and no TV and no distraction and we had to find out delight in the church? Wow.

What a drag. Unless the saints become saints. Unless they have histories with God.

Unless the Lord has quickened something in their devotional life, that very morning that they hear them share that revives something in you. You interact over the word of God, your fellowship. They were steadfast in the fellowship and in the apostles' doctrine and the breaking of bread.

And that was the matrix that God blessed. Great grace was upon them all. It's not a grace we have ever known in modern times.

It's great grace. It's reserved for a great reality. Which reality we don't know.

But we need to seek and obtain and it's all related to the word Zion. To God be glory in the church. Let's see who's going to fight me when the service is over to get this.

All classic messages, priests unto him. What is that, Catholic art? No. We're called to priestliness.

It's intrinsic to the faith. Jesus is the high priest and the apostle of our confession. He could not be that apostle without also being high priest.

There's a conjunction, a necessary relationship between priestliness and ministry and calling. Totally lost to our consciousness. And that's why we have become performers.

We know how to respond to the cues. We know how to be cute and winsome. My heart goes out to my young brother.

Are you a graduate of an assembly's bible school? No, nothing like that? Well, then there's hope for you. Lord, save him from going the way of all flesh and becoming an attractive religious personality that kids like. Let him be a man of God, priestly.

Because you know what distinguishes a priest? He has no concern for himself that anything should return to him by virtue of his service or ministry. It doesn't have to be acknowledged. It doesn't have to be rewarded.

He can even bear reproach, insult, and rejection and still be faithful in service. The thing that distinguishes priestly ministry from any other is that there's nothing in it for the priest himself but blood from fingertip to elbow. Selfless service.

Let's see who will come up for that one. Martyrdom. Come on, Tess, this is the assemblies of God.

Martyrdom? What are you saying? A little interesting thing of a view in the historic past of the church where some small number had to suffer an unhappy fate like that? No. This is the definitive call of God to saints of every generation and particularly the last. Martyrdom is alcohol.

Whether or not we pay it physically or not, it's not a matter of how you end your life, it's how you live your life. It's a certain mindset, a certain perspective. Well, so on.

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwelling places of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God. I shall mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know me.

Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia. All of these are ancient cities, kingdoms that had a degree of luster and notoriety and fame in times past. Why are they being cited? Because Zion eclipses them all.

Because they're all turned to dust. Because they're all a piece of antiquity that no longer has any significance. But Zion is eternal and abiding.

And yet God calls it a mountain, but you know what it is? It's a hill. It's a pimple. Have you ever been to Israel and seen the city of David on the hill of Zion? It's only a hill, guys.

It's not your Olympus. It's not some great towering peak that commands awe. It's humble.

It's insignificant. But that's where God has chosen to put his name. That's his dwelling place.

That's where the law shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem to all nations. Believeest thou this? Contemplatest thou this? You think that the world needs the law of God? The order of God? The wisdom of God on how to live in righteousness for the nations? That they'll no longer study war and turn their implements into pruning hooks? You think the world needs that? I wish you were with me in, where was it, Fort Worth, Texas, visiting with friends. And the brother was an engineer who works where they produce the F-16 fighter plane? I'll never recover.

It was like entering another world. The people there were not so much human as they were zombies. I never saw such a strange configuration of men whose humanity had fled from them.

I never saw such a slow method of production where men actually have learned to slow their every step and every action so that they can make it up through overtime. And there's something about working with implements of death that brings death. I'm telling this brother, get out of it.

And there was the F-16 going to Thailand and the F-16 going to Lower Slavovia. Any country, however small, has to have an F-16. What are they defending? It's a matter of prestige, pride, pomp, that they're up to date in their technological arsenal.

Billions, billions, billions of the world's wealth expended for that. At the end thereof is death. Hey, I'm the only guy that is not thrilled for our space exploration.

So what are we going to find, a rock on the moon? Hoping that there'll be moisture? You know why? Because the insidious and ultimate motive is to show that the God of the Bible is not really God. That there's creation elsewhere that the Bible does not explain. That's what they're really after.

And we're footing the bill for those jerks. That they can play their adult games at such expense when the world is steeped in poverty and starvation. What is it, 30,000 or 300,000 daily deaths of children, lives that are abbreviated and stunted, and we're out there in space looking for moisture in a rock? How come you haven't cried out? How come you've sat quiet and played Patsy without registering complaint? What kind of a church are you? Where's your moral and prophetic cry? Of course, your own kids were out there sleeping overnight for the first opening of Star Wars.

They didn't want to miss the premiere. So, the best part of Zion, it shall be said, this one and that one were born in her. The Most High himself will establish her.

The Lord shall count when he registers the peoples. This one was born there. Imagine what a distinction.

That you were not born in Babylon. You were born in Zion, spiritually. That the Lord registers that.

That's important and distinctive. Then those who sing as well as those who play shall say, All my springs of joy are in you. What are you going to do with a song like that? Sounds so mysterious.

So little opportunity to find a springboard to comment and to preach anything significant. Let me give you some thoughts that occurred to me this morning. The italics of the title on another revised standard version says, The Joy of Living in Zion.

You know that you can live in the Buffalo area? Or shall I say, you can have your residence there, but your true living is in Zion? Do you know you can do that? But are you doing that? Where is your effectual life being lived? Here in the earth, with its values, with its mentality, with its mindset, that is corruptive, that is opposed to the faith, and opposed to God, however honorific and however it's packaged, and sanctified and honored by the world, or is your true residence in Zion? Paul said, I have my citizenship in heaven. And he really did. That's why he was so freaky.

And so much peace of heaven that men could not abide it. Even Jewish men, even orthodox men, fasted and threw dirt on their heads, and vowed that we will not eat again till this man is killed, because he's not fit to live. There's something about him so offensive, we can't stand the sight of him.

Wherever he comes, he starts a riot. He's threatening our whole system. We had it all made until this convert came and ruined it all.

How come they're not saying that about us? How come we're so acceptable? Who's vowing not to eat so long as we live? You know what I'm saying by all that? There is a joy of living in Zion according to these italics. But as T. Austin Sparks says, there's also a controversy of Zion. Now who's T. Austin Sparks? Raise your hand in this room if you've ever heard that name.

Hey, well, I thought I... Who else? You've heard of T. Austin Sparks? He's one of those little-known commentators, English, who forsook a religious career. I think he was nigh unto a nervous breakdown, or suffered it. Somehow the contradictions in his spirit with what the religious world was expecting him to perform finally brought him to a place of breakdown.

And he was very successful until that time. And then when he, from the process of recovery, the world began to give him insight of an unusual kind. See if you can get anything that he's written.

And one of the things that he's written were a series of talks on Zion. I don't find anybody speaking about it, having any knowledge, any intuitive sense of it. And when I read this transcribed speaking of messages given at a Deeper Life conference in Great Britain when he was alive, I just sense the man agonizing.

He's choking, he's gasping, he's trying to find air, he's trying to say something that's in his spirit that has not yet reached the level of consciousness. He's birthing something. And well, it would require this kind of gasping and travail to bring forth something on so holy a subject that is so little understood or sought after.

But one thing he says in that booklet is the controversy of Zion. What he's saying is, once you become identified with Zion, once it becomes a serious consideration for you, the enemy who has up till now yawned in your face and been totally unimpressed with your taking of cities and whatever else you're going to do will now make a note of you and realize that you are a person or a congregation that needs to be feared. You've crossed the threshold.

You've come into a realm of consideration that is threatening to the kingdom of darkness that up till now has not been affected at all by anything that you've done, let alone what you think is taking cities or casting out demons or yelling or screaming or shrieking. Just take an interest in Zion. Just begin to direct yourself this way.

Just begin to contemplate why such a city, such a word is so significant to God that he loves it above all the places of Jacob. And you will be noted by the powers of darkness as one to be observed and watched because you're becoming dangerous. There's a controversy for Zion.

Yes, there's a delight in having your essential living there and dwelling there and your values there, but also the enemy will take note of it and will begin to turn up the juice or the heat. And the Lord will allow that because God takes that opposition as the very grit by which he brings us to sonship. Is that a strange expression? To be brought to sonship? We're children of God, but are we sons of God? Like Jesus, the Pattern Son.

Have we come to maturity in a priestly way where our one abiding passion is to serve the purposes of the Father, no matter the consequence to our souls? For him it was unto death. He's bringing many sons to glory, but he's not going to bring you against your will. He's not going to bring you in your indifference.

You're content to be a child, and you can be a believer 25, 30, 40 years and never have advanced from the childhood of your first salvation. Sonship is a process and a growth, and growth is painful. Are we willing for that? Are we moving toward that? I wrote here, and ourselves, that we love the gates of Zion, and this is an answer to parochialism as it is of nationalism.

What are you saying there, Katz? Nationalism is one of the most powerful factors in the world today. The Rwanda debacle, where a genocidal thing happened between black African tribes. 50,000 were hacked to death, many of them in churches.

What will you say about Serbia, and Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and Croatia? You know that they are all the same Slavic, ethnic, racial makeup, and yet they hate each other's guts? You know that they can slit open the bellies of pregnant women without batting an eyelash? You know they can rape 10, 11, and 12-year-old girls and consider it a military strategy in modern times, in our generation? Because of their

inherent and intense national identification, they can perform ethnic cleansing for those who are not Serbs, and they're only Croats or they're Albanians. Don't think we're free from this corruption. Only the power of Zion can save us from identification of any lesser earthly kind.

That's why I can go to Egypt as a Jew. And God can give me a text where Israel I have loved as a child, and I've called my son out of Egypt, and say, Lord, there's no way that these Egyptian Christians can understand. They're going to be offended.

They're going to look upon me as some white imperialist and Jewish Zionist speaking against Egypt. That's not a text for me, Lord. But you know what I spoke? What the Lord gave.

You know what happened? They went down like a deck of cards. The pastor who, unbeknownst to me, in the assemblies of God, had cried out that day, Lord, if you do not give me a word this day, if you don't show me some alternative to every gimmick and thing that I've been schooled in that does not work to bring either numerical or qualitative increase, I'm out of here. I'm finished with this.

I'll go to the garbage heaps, but I'm not going to continue in this. The Lord gave him a word that night. Israel I have loved as a child, but I've called my son out of Egypt.

Even if the son is himself Egyptian, he needs to come out of Egypt. You know what happened when Hitler came to power in Germany? And the German church watched the beginning from Kristallnacht, and I think it was 1938 when they destroyed most of the synagogues in one night. From that time on, there was the progressive, systematic process of bringing Jews out of their apartments and houses and putting them in ghettos and sending them in freight trains to the places of extermination.

What did the church say about that? Nothing. It went along with the national policy. They made as if they didn't see and they didn't know.

What happened to our Jewish neighbors? I don't know. I don't see them anymore. As if they could not smell the stink of the burning flesh.

They had not the courage. They had not the guts to stand against the national policy. They were more identified with Germany and its national aspirations than they were with the God of Zion, and they were unwilling for the identification that would threaten their security, and they went along.

They became the German National Church, and they had the German flag and the portrait of Hitler on the front of the church and were discouraged from reading into the Old Testament and from removing the Jewish believers from out of their congregation, or else they'd find themselves in concentration camps also. What if we were faced with such a choice as that? What if America should politically move in that direction? Would we go along? Where is our identification? Where is our loyalty? Will we stand for righteousness or will we be one of the boys? There was a national church and there was a confessing church, and many of the men in the confessing church found themselves in concentration camps. Martyrdom is the name of the game, saints, and unless we're willing for it, there's no way that we're going to be the church that will preserve its Jewish people and stand for the God of Israel and for Zion when those very things are threatened.

Oh, there's so much I could tell you. I said that there's a Holocaust coming that will eclipse the Nazi time because it will not be confined to Europe. It'll be global.

And unless there's a church that will extend itself for Jews in their time of Jacob's trouble, in the time of their fiercest opposition and threat to their life, not one will survive. That's why Paul says in Romans 11 that by your mercy, they may obtain mercy. And I'll bet you dollars to donuts, there's very little consciousness in the congregation about Jews at all, about Israel at all, let alone any sense that they are at the threshold of one of the darkest hours in their entire national history.

And it's a time of Jacob's trouble, spoken in Daniel, spoken in Jeremiah, spoken by Jesus, wherever Jacob is, which includes Buffalo, New York, and Toronto. You're going to be faced with searing decisions about what is your relationship with that people and your willingness to identify with them at the time of their greatest threat. Will the real church please stand up? And those who will not stand up will find that the alternative to radical identification with God and his people is apostasy.

And there's no middle ground. Now when Jesus comes as king, what is the first judgment that he performs? What did you do for the least of these, my brethren? Good Lord, when did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked, and in prison? As you have not done this to the least of these, my brethren, you have not done it unto me. Now be cast into the fire, prepared for the devil and for his angels.

What? Such an eternal judgment for the failure of one thing only? Yes, but that one thing is everything. Your ability to recognize the least of these, his brethren, and to extend mercy to them at risk to yourself is the statement of the truth of your entire personal and congregational life. You think you're going to be able to rise to the occasion when it shall come suddenly upon you if your every service has not been a preparation to that end before that time? Okay.

We need to have the power of our national identification broken and of our parochialism, of our narrow self-interest, our locality, our church, our congregational identification broken and of our parochialism, of our narrow self-interest, our locality, our church, our movement, our, our, our. And there's only one thing given by God powerful enough to counteract all of these secondary and lesser loyalties. It's Zion.

Zion is God. Zion is the purpose of God and the eternal purpose and the glory of God. And unless you're identified with that and are a citizen and have your dwelling there, you're going to be drawn off to parochial, national, and other interests that will compromise you and make you only an ineffective pew-sitter.

And that's why I never got saved in America. Where were you? I had to wait until I was 35. My God, and I've been seeking for truth from the time I was a high school dropout at the age of 16 and became a merchant seaman on the high seas as a Jewish kid from Brooklyn, not just looking for adventure, looking for meaning.

I had to be picked up off the side of the road as a 34-year-old hitchhiker by born-again believers who were willing to pick me up in my sodden, wet, messed condition standing in the drizzle and the rain watching the cars go by. By people who didn't want to be inconvenienced or take the risk of such a formidable-looking stranger. But a man stopped for me in a brand-new car.

And he didn't just give me the come on, hurry up, I'm doing you a favor. He got out of the car and greeted me. Took my filthy, wet rucksack and threw it in the backseat of his car and was even totally unconscious of what it did to his upholstery.

I thought, what manner of man is this? Mother warned me of men like this. There must be something in it for him. And he had me take a seat in the front and we drove off.

And I felt like I was the exalted guest. I was doing him a favor. And he turned and he said to me in German, Why are you traveling like this? It's past the tourist season.

Oh, I said as well as I could express it, I'm a modern man whose life is broken at its foundations. I've been a Marxist, I've been an existentialist. I've looked into philosophies, to ideologies.

I'm disillusioned, my gods have failed. There's no other god. I've had it, the world is moving toward a racial and atomic holocaust.

It's hopeless. I'm a high school teacher, I have nothing to say to my students. I can raise the questions, I can't answer them.

I'm married to a German woman who's schizophrenic from the Hitler time and I can't be civil to her. I thought I was a nice guy until she revealed how savage I am in the futility of her own psychological and emotional condition. I have no answer.

He said, let's stop for refreshments at my expense. And I'm pouring out over the coffee table this litany of anguish, sharing it with a Gentile stranger, thinking to myself, hey, you're sharing things of such a private and painful kind that you've never spoken to your mother or your deepest friends. Who's this Gentile that you've just met that is opening your heart like this, who didn't jump on me with John 3.16 to put another notch in his belt, but he was listening to me like I had never been heard.

His hearing of the anguish of my soul was an act of love, and not an opportunity to spring with a little formula, are you saved, brother? God has a plan for your life. Notice how formulaic we Americans are. We always want something reduced to step one, step two.

That's not going to work with Jews, I can tell you. You better have a much greater relationship with the Holy Spirit than a little fragile number of principles, step one, step two. You're not going to do this by the numbers.

You're not going to do your marriage by the numbers. You'll do nothing by the numbers, but by the Spirit of God, if you're yielded. And so I'm pouring out my heart to this man, and I finally came to him, I had nothing more to say.

Finished. I looked at this guy, nothing impressive. I had my arms folded over my chest, my typical arrogant Jewish contempt for Gentiles.

What are they going to tell me? I've been this, I've been that, I've been in philosophies, I've traveled, there's nothing new under the sun. And he said, in a quiet voice, he said, do you know what the world needs? I perked up, I said, hey, I've got to say this, this guy knows how to ask the questions. I'm dying for what the world needs, and we Jews have made this world in which I'm dying.

Who else has given the world Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, and Albert Einstein, and Steven Spielberg, but us Jews. We have made this world, and it stinks, and it's nigh unto death. He said, I want to know what the world needs, that's what I'm dying from.

What are you going to tell me? I said, Artie said, what the world needs is for men to wash one another's feet. Down he went, clunk. That may be old hat for you, but I was a Jew who had never read the New Testament.

I never heard about washing feet. I never read the Old Testament. I was a secular, atheistic Jew who looked upon the Bible as a crutch for the weak.

But when he spoke that one thing, I instantly had a vision of all of the arrogant hotshots of the world, the art cats of the world, who were going to save it, and steep it in a bloodbath, humbling themselves to wash the feet of the lowly and the despised. I thought of Israelis washing the feet of Palestinians, or high school teachers washing the feet of their administrators. We had a war on right within the school structure.

Wherever there's authority, wherever there's common law, children with their parents. There's a cry that went up out of my heart, Eureka! Hey, this will change the world overnight without a drop of blood being spilled. And I had never heard of a spirit, let alone a spirit of humility.

And before I could recover, this man went on in German to tell me about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And I wanted to complain and say, hey, that's not for us Jews. That's for you guys.

We've got ours, you've got yours. But I had no voice. And as those words were coming, I knew in my deepest heart, I'm hearing the words of truth in life.

How it could come in the name of Jesus, and which name we Jews have been historically persecuted for 2,000 years, I couldn't figure out, but I knew I was hearing truth. When I left that man that day, I didn't walk away. I staggered away.

I was like one drunk. I couldn't take it all in. But I was being prepared for that girl that my brother spoke of, who I met the next day, or only a few days later.

An American girl from Buffalo, New York, or some place like that. Some wasp, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant. She might even have been an Assemblies of God, or who knows.

She was certainly the symbol of everything we New York Jews despise. That's why the word wasp is a denigrating and insulting term. And what have I to do with this kid? I'm twice her age.

And she's in Europe on vacation, having completed high school. What's she going to tell me? I'm a university graduate. I'm an omnivorous reader.

I know this, I know that. And she was willing to spend time with me, walking the woods surrounding this European city in Switzerland. I'm probing this girl's motives.

Hey, how come you're being kind to me? How is it you're not afraid of me? I'm a formidable, threatening, and intimidating guy. You're not afraid? You're willing? Oh, she said, it's the love of God, Art. The love of God, the love of God.

I couldn't bear to hear the phrase. It was a cliché. It was a tired, worn-out phrase that doesn't say anything.

It was a religious cheapie. Although this kid mentions God one more time. She's had it.

I don't care how nice she is. My hobby is engaging Christians in debate and wiping them out. So what's this little kid to me? She mentioned God again.

I said, okay, stop. Appreciate you. You're nice.

But look, I'm sick of this God talk. Answer me one question that no Christian has ever successfully answered. She said, what's that, Art? I said, you're talking about God? How do you know that he is? Supposing you were in that place.

And there's a man who's dangling over the precipice of hell. And your answer is going to snap and cut that cord. And he'll plummet to his eternal doom.

Or it's going to rescue him. What are you going to say? God has a plan for your life? Are you going to quote John 3.16 and think that that will save you because it's in the Bible? I'll tell you, if the Spirit of God is not inciting you and moving you to speak John 3.16, John 3.16 is a dead letter and a cliché itself. Don't put your confidence in formulas and principles.

But the living God, there's a life in front of you. There's a world dying around you that needs his word. She looked up at me and I thought, here comes a long silence.

She'll quote something she heard in Sunday school. And I'll rev up my steam engine, I'll flatten her. Not a moment's hesitation.

She tilted up that little pug nose, freckled sandy head, Gentile face that was beaming. And she said, Art, she said, I know that God lives, he lives in me. Boom, down, I went again.

And as I'm trying to recover, what hit me, what did she say? It's not theological, it's not even intellectual. Sounds like a cliché. Anybody could say God lives in me and does say that.

What gave it its power? I realized it was true. And she had the face to prove it. Listen, guys, I can tell you as a Jewish believer, 35 years in the faith, who has traveled the world over, I have been a missionary to the Jews.

I've spoken in universities all over the world. I confront them. There's no more powerful revelation of their God, who is the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel, except that that light radiate out of a Gentile face to them.

How's your face this morning? Have you spent more time on the externalities of it in the mirror? Or is there a radiance that comes from having put your precious little nose in the book of Psalms and dwelled on it and contemplated it and taken it into your spirit? That radiance is not automatic. It's the statement of your proximity to Zion and your intimacy with the God of Zion who loves it above all the dwellings of Jacob. It has broken the power of your little petty affiliations and has released you for your citizenship and true identity in the house of God.

And on that basis you'll recognize who his brethren are. You'll recognize who his servants are. Like me.

You can either be offended or blessed. Take your pick. Is this going to be just a strange passing phenomenon that we can afford to throw away one Sunday? Or, same man, same speaking, seen differently through the eyes of a devotee of Zion will say, this wasn't just a Sunday morning.

This was not even a message. This was a visitation from the Most High. Take your pick.

How do you see? Well let me try and end this. Verse 5. And of Zion it shall be said, this one and that one were born in it. Notice how spare this is.

This one and that one. How many are there? Not that many. Virtually all of my activity in these days are through house groups.

Little bands of souls. The remnant people of God. It's so weird to have an invitation from the Assemblies of God.

And I'm going to Youth with a Mission in Buffalo. I haven't been to Youth with a Mission in years. There was a time when I circulated through all their bases.

I'm getting less and less popular in institutional places and more and more desired by the remnant people of God who meet in homes. Knockabouts. Nothing lustrous about them.

Nothing distinguished. But they're serious and earnest. God knows where to send his servants.

This one and that one. For the Most High himself will establish it. That's my confidence.

The Lord is going to do this. His Zion is going to be an eternal glory. It's the City of God that comes down from above, which is the bride adorned for the bridegroom.

What does that mean? That we're dressed in finery? Or that something of our character has been shaped in a way to be appropriate to that one whom God has given us as an eternal spouse? Someone even said recently that she will have the same scars in her hands and side that he has. Maybe not by an actual crucifixion, but by submitting oneself to the suffering that inevitably comes when we walk seriously in the faith. Come on, guys.

If we're not going to be honest, this is a wasted occasion. How many of us even have the consciousness of bridal relationship with Christ? And desire that? What does that mean? One of the tapes out there is bridal love. Are you going to fight to get to it before somebody else does? So think of the categories I'm putting before you.

Sonship. Bridal identity. Citizenship in Zion.

Dwelling in Zion. And this is not some fluky guy who is trying to find some esoteric, strange things to strike some novel note. These are the nuts and bolts, essential, quintessential elements of true faith.

But they've been lost to us. You know why? Because we've not contended for it. Content for the faith once and for all, given the saints, is more than the totality of its doctrines.

You think this is cheapy stuff? You've got to invest yourself in this. This has got to be high priority. Getting up in the morning.

You can't conceive of leaving the house without having sought the Lord first. He'll open these things to you. He'll reveal them.

They're mysteries. They're withheld. He doesn't allow the curious to dabble in this.

This is not a cheap, holy, ultimate thing for those who will seek Him. Who are not content for things as they are. Who don't want to be just another religious success or another get-by.

Don't want to be a congregation that enjoys a Sunday service and has a biblical message. Wants to count for the kingdom of God. Anticipates the coming of that king.

Knows that He'll not come except Israel first be restored. And knows that Israel will not be restored without first going through its last time of anguish and chastening, called the time of Jacob's trouble. Knows that it's going to come even to our backyard and out of our out-of-way places.

Knows that it's going to require from us a mercy and a willingness to extend ourselves sacrificially, taking the risk even of death. But not counting that too much. Not sorrowing as if, why me? Counting it privilege because it will obtain for us a crown.

Who thinks in those terms? A crown when? In the life to come. Eternal reward for sacrifice and suffering and self-denial in this life. Who thinks along those lines? No wonder our kids are freaking out and there's nothing to engage them.

And I want to tell you that the statement of the truth of what we are about is the statement of the degree to which those kids recognize the seriousness of it. If they're yawning, if they're bored, if they're poking each other in the ribs in the back of the congregation, waiting for the thing to be over, to get back where the real things are, in front of the TV set or their computer games or their sport or drugs or sex, we have failed apostolically to engage them. They're not persuaded that what we are about is compelling and requires their own participation.

And they're right. Measure your success by the way in which your own youth are affected. And don't try and give them the rock beat in your choruses that somehow that is going to be the answer.

They need something deeper than that and just the superficial equivalent to the world's culture that really they like. See what I mean? We've got to get into this. Time is short.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne. Well, you know how this ends in a very beautiful way. Singers and dancers alike say, all my springs are in you.

What do you make of that? Singers and dancers are not a professional cast. These are non-professional singers and dancers. They don't sing and dance because they're paid for it, nor because they have musical ability.

Maybe their voices are creaky and maybe their dancing is awkward, but they cannot contain themselves. There's a joy. There's a reality.

There's a worship. There's an acknowledgement of God as God that compels song and compels dance. And God loves it.

Not for its professional impressiveness, but for its truth. Because singing and dancing are ultimate expressions of body and soul, of voice and what we are, given to God out of the depths of our being, because He's God. Because we know Him and we love Him.

Because we appreciate Zion. Singers and dancers alike say, all my springs are in you. All my springs, not some of them.

Even my singing and my dancing is springs out of you. It's not something I perform out of some charismatic thing that I'm, what you call it, queued in to perform. I cannot contain myself.

The springs of it require this depth of expression. All my springs are in you. Do you know what it means, saints, to say, in Him I live and move and have my being? That for me to live is Christ.

That we are the children of the resurrection, sons and daughters of the resurrection. That we know the life of God and it's our very enablement. What do you think you're getting this morning? How dare a man come late last night into Buffalo, drive an hour and a half into the boondocks, get to bed after twelve and be up at five, and think that he's going to stand before the sons of God congregation and say anything of any significance except that the springs of his life are in you.

I'm called not just to declare but to demonstrate the normative mode of living that God intends for His church. And when you pull out the plug from your own natural sap and your own natural ability, your own winsomeness and cuteness and all the kinds of things that people will congratulate you for and you'll be as a dead man if there's no resurrection, then you'll learn that there are springs that you haven't even begun to scratch. This is the good news, not just salvation from sin and death, however great that is, but another life that is a spring for everything that you'll not be able to contain yourself from singing and dancing because all your springs are in Him.

And it says, the singers and dancers alike say, all my springs are in you. They're not saying it with words. They're saying it in their singing and in their dancing.

That is their saying. When Jews will see that, they'll be moved to jealousy. They're still waiting.

So, thank you Lord for Zion. Thank you for unfeigned and non-professional singing and dancing that cannot be suppressed. It rises up, we cannot contain it because all of our springs are in you.

It draws us up from our depths and we express it in the totality that we are before God, both with our voices and with our bodies. It's not charismatic. It's not learned.

It's not programmed. It's not induced. It's authentic worship.

And when the powers of the air over Buffalo and its environs see that, they'll have to reverse their position. Before they said, Jesus, we know him poorly, but who are you? But when this quality of praise comes up out of the springs of the life in God, because you are a dweller in Zion and love what he loves and are willing to sacrifice to be so identified, they'll take note of you. I gave a message in Germany just weeks ago, a final message in Nuremberg, the city that Hitler used for his greatest Nazi demonstrations.

Hundreds of thousands were heiled Hitler. Why did he choose that city? Because of its pagan past. And the Lord gave a message on a final night in Nuremberg on true German repentance toward the Jew.

And down they went. Not this cathartic sympathy for the Jew or guilty conscience, but a recognition that the sins of Germany are just like the sins of Israel. It's God rejection in the very name of God practiced on Sunday, as Jews have done it on Saturday.

And when they came down and groaned and cried out before God because their sin was writ large, after the cry came the song. And I heard spirit emanation that came up out of them that was priestly. And I said, now the powers of darkness over Nuremberg and over Germany have something to fear because they

cannot abide the authenticity of what is now issuing from the truth of your repentance.

Hey, we need that message here. So let me pray. I've gone past the time.

So Lord, precious God, there's no way except by the Holy Spirit that these children can follow this kind of rambling discourse, these references, the newness of them, the phrasing of them, the substance of them, the spirit of them is so incompatible with the kind of thing with which they have been made familiar. But I'm asking to the degree that it's you, that the springs are yourself, that you're reaching out and crying out for truth, for reality in your people that is beyond religion, beyond Sunday services, that they'll hear your voice, hear your cry, willing for the inconvenience of breaking their earthly connections, that they might indeed have their residency in Zion. Open up to them whole categories, Lord, the centrality of Israel and the Jew in the last days, the issue of the church as the glory of God, the relationship, the sacrifice, the issue of martyrdom, of what it is to which we're called, of what true worship is.

Give them a whole fresh way of appraising and seeing, willing to go back to square one, willing to call a moratorium on services, not wanting to go on until the Lord will give them a fresh day of new beginnings. Let them have ten days in the upper room, silence, repenting of forms that have become familiar, that the only question is can we do it better than the other church down the street. Lord, I pray for this people, that your visitation this morning will not be wasted, that they will recognize it as more than a novelty, or a man happening to be in the neighborhood who's available, that this is your very love pleading to bring them up to the higher ground, to the ultimate things of God, that they should love what you love, and be willing for the identification, even with those that hate you, willing to suffer for it, to those who despise Zion, and do not want to see God's law coming forth from it, the powers of the air who want to prevail through the nations, false usurping governmental powers.

Come my God, the assemblies of God need something desperate. It's resting on its leaves. It has lost the sense of its origins.

It has become acceptable. No one's throwing dust on their heads and saying, we'll fast, these people are not fit to live. They threaten us, they intimidate us, they exhibit something that makes us to reconsider all that we thought valuable.

Bless these children, Lord. Break into that movement here through this church, through this word, through the men and women that are in this congregation, through the young people, through saving a brother from becoming a religious flunky, a practitioner, a professional, and calling him to prophetic and apostolic reality. It'll cost him everything, but he'll be eternally indebted that he heard that call, and that he's willing to turn his back on good success.

There are young men and older in this congregation who have such potential and such call. Let them hear your voice this morning. Let them not be satisfied with pew sitting and a dollar in a collection plate and getting by.

Break the power, my God, of fear, of uncertainty, of insecurity. What would they do if they leave their job? How can they make themselves available to God at this age? How will you train them? Call them, my God. Bring forth a people for your name out of this very congregation that will affect this very community and beyond.

I bless them. I leave my peace behind in their house. Bless the tape of this, Lord.

Let them ponder it. And there's enough left behind in those books and tapes to turn this assembly inside out and upside down if they're willing for the inconvenience of that. Come, my God.

Give them opportunity. Extend mercy. Save them from going the way of all flesh.

I bless them. Give my brother a fresh recognition of his own faith, of his own call. Let him not be programmed.

Let him not try to reflect and imitate others who have succeeded in the assemblies and that he thinks that that's the way to go. Let him be your man, authentically your man, who doesn't have to rev it up. He can be broken.

His voice can be low keyed. He can speak naturally. He can confess to the congregation that he also is struggling and that we're in something together.

He's not your man of great faith and power that somehow is raising up a model of something that lacks reality and truth and whose poor wife, like the wives of so many ministers, have to suffer that contradiction because the women have a deeper integrity. Bless the women in this congregation. Bless their men.

Bless the young people. Bless this day that you have chosen to visit and to call. And we thank and give you the praise for a love that will not let us go, that will not allow us to get by and become second best or successful as the religious world has come to understand that.

Transact with this people today, Lord, in a way that will affect eternity. So even now, I ask in the name of Jesus, as the minister of this word, is there anyone, man, woman, child, of any age, the older and the younger, who are willing for the radical thing that God is proposing today, whatever the cost, even if it means your life. Do you dare stand for that? Do you dare come forward for that? Knowing that God, who has been earnest with you, is not going to take that lightly.

Your physical gesture, the bringing of your body, will make you a singer and a dancer for God. All your springs will be of Him. They must be of Him, because you'll not be able to do it in the natural.

So come on, saints, any of you, make this a transaction, a once and for all. Amen.

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