

A Prayer Meeting Outside of Sodom

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting and obeying God's guidance, even in the midst of struggles and doubts, and the fulfillment of God's promise in our lives.

Duration: 44:03

Scripture: Genesis 12:3, Genesis 15:5, Genesis 18:1-2, Matthew 5:14, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Sodom"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Abraham and his encounter with the Lord. Abraham, who had been waiting for 25 years for the promise of God to be fulfilled, encounters the Son of God along with two angels. The preacher suggests that this was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. The Lord reaffirms His promise to Abraham, telling him that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky. The preacher also highlights the challenges that Abraham faced, including negotiating with God to spare the city of Sodom and dealing with a famine. The sermon emphasizes the need for believers to break away from the ways of the world and trust in God's provision.

Transcript

I want to talk to you this morning about a prayer meeting outside of Sodom. A prayer meeting outside of Sodom. Genesis chapter 18, please.

Praise God. Father, I want to thank you, Lord, with all my heart for your presence here in this church this morning. I want to thank you, Lord God, for your word, which is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

But it's even more than that. It is the place of promise, Lord, that you have said you were going to take us into this place as our inheritance in Christ. So, God, thank you for bringing us to this juncture in our day.

Thank you for bringing us to the place of knowing we need you. We need you every moment. We need you every day, every week, every month, Lord.

We need you. Oh, Holy Spirit of the living God, I'm asking you to enable this frail vessel to speak your word today. Take the thoughts of my mind far beyond the limitations of my own understanding.

And God, speak to every heart that you have gathered here at this time, at this season, for this purpose. So, God, I thank you with everything in my heart that you will be glorified today in Jesus' name. A prayer meeting outside of Sodom.

Genesis chapter 18, beginning at verse 1. Then the Lord appeared to him, that's Abraham, by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him. And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the ground.

And he said, my Lord, if I have now found favor in your sight, do not pass on by your servant. It's been a long, long journey that Abraham had taken to get to this place called Mamre. Matter of fact, if you go back to Genesis chapter 12 with me just for a moment in your Bible, it had been almost 25 years since the Lord first called him to leave his home and leave his homeland, leave his place of familiarity to travel to a place where God said, I'm going to make you a blessing so powerfully that all the families of the earth are going to be blessed through you.

Genesis 12, one says, now the Lord had said to Abraham, get out of your country from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. Now, everyone who's here today, who is a believer in Christ, you have already also experienced this same calling. When God called you, he called you to something bigger than what you had known.

He called you to something larger than where you had lived. He called you and I to leave behind that which we had become familiar with, to go to a place that can only be achieved in God with which we were not familiar and in which we can't obtain in our own strength. He said to him in verse two, I'll make you a great nation.

I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I'll curse him who curses you and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Now we know from the new Testament that Abraham in a sense was the father of faith.

He believed God. The Bible says it was accounted to him for righteousness. In other words, he was brought in to a right relationship with God because he believed his words that he spoke to him and God gave him a promise that through him was going to come a blessing that was going to bless the whole known world.

Now he could have no way of knowing how that's going to be fulfilled and neither can you know what God has destined for your life. Although the Bible says he's determined to take you to an end that he has always desired for you. Now we don't always understand the journey on the way there.

We, Abraham made mistakes on the way. The scripture tells us after getting this incredible promise, the first thing that happens in his life is a famine comes over the area where he was living and he has to head down into Egypt for a season. And it speaks to me, it's a picture of the new believer in Christ.

We've given this incredible promise that God says, I'm going to be a blessing to you. I'm going to make you bigger than you are. I'm going to do in you more than you can do for yourself.

And I'm going to bless people through you. And we're so excited right in the beginning. We start reading.

If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. The old things in his life pass away. Behold, all things are become new.

And we're so excited. We read these promises and we recognize the spirit of God now lives inside these earthen vessels. And he's going to transform us by his presence inside of us.

And the next thing you know, there's a famine and he's heads down into Egypt. And it speaks about every new believer is going to have to fight this, this drawing of the world to draw you back into its way of provision, its way of doing things. It's hard to make the break.

You know that I know that it's hard to make that complete break from everything that we had become familiar with things that once offered us comfort. And the world does offer sustenance and it does offer comfort. I'll be at the comfort it offers is so far short of that, which only God can give that it's not even worth the comparison.

Then there came a point after Abraham was in Egypt, he ran into a lot of trouble, but God delivered him. And some of you are like that here this morning. You've, you've run into a lot of trouble since you've been a Christian.

Come on, be honest with me now. It's not been an easy journey. You, you, you have been found in places you shouldn't be.

You don't know how you got there and you wish you hadn't gone there. And you're wondering if God's going to ever get you out. Is he going to be faithful to you? Abraham ended up, his wife was taken captive in a foreign King's court just because of the fear in his heart.

But the Lord released him. The Lord will stay faithful to you. Even when you struggle, even when you're in trial, even when you find yourself in difficulty.

When he said, I will never leave you or forsake you. He actually meant what he said. I'm not going to let you go.

I know you're going to struggle. I know that Egypt is going to, this world's going to pull back on you again and try to get you inside the comfort of its arms. Abraham chapter 13 left Egypt and he began to pray.

He had prayed once before, but he says in verse four that he began to call on the name of the Lord. It's like you and I that finally realized, Oh God, if I'm going to become anything, it's going to be you that does it. Lord lead me, Lord guide me.

We start to pray prayers like that. Lord take my life. I can't get to where I need to go in my own strength.

You're going to have to take me there. And in the Lord said to Abraham, after a lot had separated from him, lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are northward, southward, eastward, westward, all the land, which you see, I'll give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth.

So that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered arise, walk in the land through its length and its width. And I will give it to you. Phenomenal.

It's, it's a, it's a very real type of God saying, get in the book, my brother, my sister, and walk its length. Go from the north to the south, from the east to the west, through every page, through every chapter and everything that's in this book. I'm going to give it to you.

I died to give it to you. I rose from the dead to take your captivity captive and give you gifts that you can't get by yourself to make you a blessing everywhere you go and everywhere you travel. I'm going to make your life.

This incredible blessing that was promised through your father, Abraham. And then the scriptures, Abraham moved his tent and went and dwelt by the turban trees of memory. So that's where we started.

One day when he was in that place, the Lord told him, go outside chapter 15, verse five. He said, look towards the heaven and count the stars. If you're able to number them.

And he said to him, so shall your descendants be. Now, what he was looking at was you and I, the church of Jesus Christ. Remember Christ himself said, you are what you're the light of this world.

You are as the star set in the heavens for light, for the ability for people to navigate this world and find the place where God has destined them to go. You are the city set upon a Hill that cannot be hidden. Thank God for that.

He could have no way of knowing what he was looking at, but he was looking at the faithfulness of God in the next little season. The Lord makes a covenant with Abraham, but Abraham couldn't have understood that covenant and the covenant. If you take time to read it in Genesis, from where we started in chapter 18, if you go back to where we just left off, you'll see that God himself came down and made a covenant to fulfill this through Abraham.

All Abraham had to do was chase the birds away. That was his whole job. Keep the, keep away those vultures that would try to come down and devour this promise that I'm, I'm making to you.

And you and I have to do that too. We've got to chase the birds off of our heads that are the come down and try to say, Oh, you really trust in God. You really believe in God.

You really believe that God will do this for you. You really believe that God will make you a Our job is chase the birds away, chase, chase them all away and say, no, I choose to believe God. No matter what my eyes see, no matter what my ears hear, God is faithful.

He can't be anything other than what he is. And every promise he's ever made to me, he's going to fulfill. Now it brings us to where we open today, this place called memory.

It's almost 25 years after God initially made him this promise that he was going to increase him and he was going to be a blessing. And in that 25 years, nothing really had happened that Abraham could see. And Abraham actually even tried to give God a hand in fulfilling the promise.

Remember he took his wife's servant girl and had a son by her called Ishmael. It was, it was Abraham's attempt. I guess he got a little impatient with God said, you ever tried to give God a hand to make you what you're supposed to be? Try to, he's not moving fast enough for you and I. So we try to, we try to just push it along a little bit.

We, we try to push ourselves into ministries and push ourselves into places where we're not supposed to be yet. And we wind up with this son that should never have been, that's become just an albatross. It can be a ministry too.

That's just an albatross around your neck. And you say, God, how did I ever get to this place? And so now he's sitting in his tent door in memory, 25 years after the promise was originally made in the heat of the day. And so he's gotten to the place where he's just dealing with day-to-day stuff and it's hot and it's difficult.

And he's dealing with family issues, obviously with his son, Ishmael, his two wives are fighting. That's why I believe in the new Testament. Oh, you're only supposed to have one wife.

You understand that? Could you imagine Solomon with what, but he have a thousand altogether. Imagine the birthday card, just trying to keep up with all of that. And so in the heat of the day where he's just dealing with the day-to-day activities, day-to-day stuff like you and I are, the day is hot.

The day is difficult. It's a hot day in our society. Isn't it right now? It's a hot day.

The heat of anger seems to be everywhere. The heat of passion seems to be the cords at once, at least restricted. It seemed to be broken and it's everywhere.

And there's just this heat everywhere. And it's just so hard for so many of us to deal with it. And we come home and we have to live in the heat of the day.

And you know what that's like. It's hot on the job. You're not even allowed a biblical worldview anymore.

Your job is threatened and you're a hater if you happen to believe in traditional marriage, for example, or such like. And so in the midst of being there, 25 years after the promise was initially made to him, he's kind of made peace with where he is and he's just dealing with the heat of the day. And suddenly the son of God appears to him.

Now, everyone who studies this, you can do it yourself, go to any concordance. It is generally understood that this was Christ himself, a pre-incarnate appearing of Jesus Christ with two angels walking with him. And suddenly the Lord appears and he knows it's the Lord because of the way he addresses him.

And the Bible tells us the Lord speaks back to him again as only the Lord could. And he lifted up his eyes and three men were standing by him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the ground.

And he said, my Lord, if I've now found favor in your sight, do not pass me by. Praise be to God. I don't know how many are saying that even this day.

So God, you suddenly feel his presence again. It's been a long haul since he first promised to make you into a blessing. You feel in your heart that you've been everything but a blessing.

You're struggling like everyone else is in society. You're struggling to rise above the crowd and to be a testimony of the reality of God in your life. And suddenly just in the midst of the worship today, for example, you just feel him passing by you again.

And then something comes into your heart and said, oh my God, if I've found favor in your sight, don't pass me by. Have mercy on me. You feel you find yourself like the blind man on the side of the road.

The son of David have mercy on me. I'm part of your family, but I can't see my way forward. I don't feel like my life is a blessing.

You said it was supposed to be a blessing, but I don't feel my life is a blessing. And then suddenly the Lord starts to speak to Abraham. Now this is 25 years later.

God waits. His timetable is not our timetable. I remember one time I was a young pastor and a young Christian actually.

And God started speaking to me about living to see a spiritual awakening. I didn't even know what it was when he started to speak to me about it, that I would live to see a significant turning to God in a time of hardship. I couldn't understand it other than he had spoken it to me.

And I was just so excited about it and full of youth and full of strength and ready to go out and try to make it happen. And I, I was talking in the kitchen of our old farmhouse one day, and I remember pastor Teresa turned to me and pointed at me. And she said, God will never give the mantle of revival to a mantle.

He no longer wants it. Isn't it amazing until we've come to a place where we've exhausted our own ambitions. We've exhausted our own strength.

We're just dealing with the heat of the day. The promise seems to be many, many years ago. It's not been fulfilled.

And, and we've actually made peace in measure, at least that I may never live to see what God spoke to my heart may have just happened, even though I may never live to see it happen. I don't know what was at Abraham's heart at this point, but when he felt the Lord passing by, he said, if I've found favor, if after all these years, and he had nothing to point to, there was no litany of great faithfulness in his life. He'd made some terrible mistakes along the way.

He'd let his wife be taken captive in a foreign King's court. He had, he had married a person he shouldn't have. He had a child that God never ordained him to have.

And he had really made a mess of the promise in many regards, but he felt the Lord passing by again. And he says, Oh God, if I've found favor in your sight, please don't pass me by. And suddenly the Lord sits down and he tries to serve God and God, the son of God just patiently waits for him to get through all of his stuff he feels he needs to do.

And when he gets through it all, the Lord speaks and says, I will return to you according to the time of life. That's chapter 18 of Genesis verse 10. And behold, Sarah, your wife shall have a son.

Now, Abraham and Sarah verse 11 were old and well advanced in age and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself saying, after I've grown old, shall I have pleasure? My Lord being old also. And the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh saying, shall I surely bear a child since I'm old? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Now the word hard here is the same word in Isaiah chapter nine and verse six describing the Lord.

He says his name shall be called wonderful. That's the exact same words. In other words, you could translate this clearly.

Is anything too wonderful for the Lord at the appointed time? I would return to you according to the time of life and Sarah shall have a son. Phenomenal. Phenomenal.

God waits until we can't do something. And then he does it because if he did it, I'm telling you, if he did it before we got to the place of knowing that only God can do this, we will touch the glory as surely as we live, as surely as we sit or stand here and breathe, it would be, Oh, look what Jesus and I did. And then

Jesus would get real small and I'd get real big.

We'd be writing books, telling everybody else how we did this thing. Oh yes. No.

If God determined to do something through your life and through my life, he's going to wait until we know it can't be done apart from him. It's not going to happen. God, unless you do it, whatever, maybe an issue of character, maybe a promise that he made to you, whatever it is.

And you finally got to the place where you're just, you're just trying to get through the heat of the day. That's it. You've given up in a sense of trying to be a blessing in the world.

You've given up trying to help God make you a blessing in the world. And suddenly comes to you again, says, okay, now you're ready. Now you're ready for me to do through you, through you, not in spite of you, through you.

What I promised when, when Abraham was too old and Sarah was beyond childbearing, these folks are almost a hundred years old. And God says, I'm going to now give you a child. God forbid that done.

I've got the t-shirt no more grandkids. All I want are grandkids. I get off.

I was thinking of the scripture of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Anyhow, I'm just looking down at the scriptures. Why did you laugh? And so after this incredible promise to Abraham, it says the men arose, that's Christ and the two angels arose and Abraham arose with them.

And they began to walk towards Sodom. Sodom is a city that's about to be judged. Perversion, homosexual perversion had arisen in that city to the point where the report of it had reached heaven.

And Christ himself had come down with two messengers and said, we're going to go. We're sending the messengers into the city to see if it is as bad as the report is. They went into that city.

It's a city that's about to burn folks. You understand it's about to burn and it did burn. The judgment of God came down on it.

The flashpoint of God's judgment was when men and boys of that city knew that two angels had come into town and they were staying in Lot's house and they surrounded the house and began to beat on the door so that they could have sexual relations with the two strangers that had come in. Don't ever underestimate how depraved humanity can become without God. Once you take away the foundation stone of Christ and the word of God, there's no limit to the depth of depravity.

I've seen this. I was a police officer for 12 years, folks. I know what I'm talking about.

There is no depth to the depravity of humanity. When you take God out of the equation, it is only the power of the Holy Spirit that restrains evil in this world. You have to understand that.

The flashpoint of God's judgment is when they surrounded the house and they attempted to break in and make the messengers of God partakers of their sin. I challenge you with this one thought, we are not far from that today. There is a concerted effort now to push into the house of God and force the ministers of God to acquiesce to this immoral lifestyle and immoral lifestyles in our generation and to agree with definitions of things that God does not agree with.

We are very, very close to the moment that they were in, in this particular chapter of scripture. That Sodom had no idea that they were going to come under the judgment of God. They had no idea that the fire of God was going to come down and consume them.

They had no idea, the people in Sodom, that within a very, very short time, they were going to find themselves in an eternity without God. If they could speak to us today, they'd be crying out to you and to me to do something that perhaps Abraham could have done, but failed to do in his time. The Lord said, as they're heading towards Sodom, the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham what I'm doing? Since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.

For I've known him in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has spoken to him. Here's the point. God says, I'm not going to hide from Abraham what I'm about to do because he's determined to do right.

He's determined to believe me. He's determined to follow me. He's determined to instruct his house in the ways of God.

When you and I make that determination, one of the things that starts to happen is God starts to open our understanding of the times that we're now living in. We're not called, the apostle Peter says, we are not people who live in darkness that the day that we're living in should overtake us as a thief. We are people of the light.

As such, God can speak to our hearts, not just the sweet promises as wonderful as they are in the word of God, but he can speak to our hearts about those things that he's determined to do that are coming on this world for a reason that we've not maybe yet fully understood. So now the Lord said, verse 20, chapter 18, verse 20, the Lord said, because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they've done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to me. And if not, I will know.

Then the man turned away from there and went towards Sodom. Now, so now it's just Abraham and the pre-incarnate Jesus standing there. Sodom is probably at least the area that are visible from where they're standing.

Abraham's just been told judgment is coming. This church was founded in 1987. And when it was founded, God told pastor David Wilkerson, warn the city of New York of an impending judgment that is coming.

Warn. It's been 31 years now that this pulpit has warned of a difficult day and not being in the darkness. You remember in 9-11 in 2001, how the Lord started speaking to this congregation in about May or June, that a time of great calamity was coming to the city.

And we were to prepare and we were to pray. And by the grace of God, we heard, we listened to the voice of God. He told us of something to come.

And as a congregation, we were ready when the towers were hit, this church was ready because we had been in prayer. We had been interceding for the city for probably two months at that particular point. Now Abraham is standing face to face with God.

And it's a type of prayer. You and I have incredible power with God in prayer. He's not a perfect man.

You see there's great hope in these scriptures. It's not that he's lived a flawless life. He's made mistakes along the way.

He's doubted God. He's tried to help God. He's done.

He's gone down into Egypt. He's done a lot of things, but yet God is still with him. And he's standing face to face with Christ, the pre-incarnate Christ outside of a society, a city that's about to come under the judgment of God.

Now, Abraham came near chapter 18, verse 23, and said, would you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were 50 righteous within the city. Would you also destroy the place and not spare it for the 50 righteous that were in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked. Far be it from you shall not the judge of all the earth do right.

Here's a man. He's having a face-to-face honest encounter with Christ, the word of God, who was there in the beginning. All things were created by him.

And the son of God is not offended by his prayer. I love the reality of that. He's not offended when we're honest with him.

Even if we'd only see through a glass darkly, as the scripture says, in comparison to Christ, we have no sight at all. But yet Jesus is not offended by this man's prayer. He's not offended when we pray honestly, when we stand before him.

Shall you not do right, he says, O God, shall you not do right? The inference, of course, is that how is it possible for the God of all the earth not to do right? So the Lord said, if I find in Sodom 50 righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. Then Abraham answered and said, indeed, now I, who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. He knows who he's talking to.

Suppose there were five less than the 50 righteous. Would you destroy all the city for the lack of five? And so he said, if I find there 45, I'll not destroy it. And he spoke to him yet again and said, suppose there should be 40 found there.

And so he said, I will not do it for the sake of 40. Then he said, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak. Suppose 30 should be found there.

So he said, I will not do it for the sake of 30. And he said, indeed, now I've taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose 20 should be found there.

So he said, I will not destroy it for the sake of 20. Then he said, let not the Lord be angry and I'll speak. But once more, suppose 10 should be found there.

And he said, I will not destroy it for the sake of 10. So the Lord went his way. As soon as he had finished speaking with Abraham and Abraham returned to his place, that means he went back to the tent where he was in this place called memory.

Now this interaction, there's two things I want to talk about in this interaction. The first is why did he stop at 10? He knew his nephew Lot was there. Lot's wife.

And we know from, from the testimony of scripture, there were four righteous in the city because the angels took four out. They were iffy righteous, but they were righteous. You talk about an imputed righteousness.

I mean, but they were declared the Bible declares in the epistle of Peter, the Lord delivered righteous lot. So the scripture declares him to be righteous. So there's no debating that he had an imputed righteousness given him of God.

Abraham was six short of a victory. And there's no indication that the Lord said that's enough now stop. Don't ask for any more.

He could have gone down to five. He could have gone down to four. And you see, sometimes we stop in our prayers, just short of the victory, just short.

We, we, we feel that our assessment of the situation has been reasonable. And he got him down from, from total destruction to 50 to 10 and walked away saying, okay, wow, what a prayer meeting that was. And he was six souls short of a victory.

I want you to really think about that just for a moment. There's nothing in the scripture says he couldn't have said, perhaps there's five and let me speak. But once more, perhaps there's four.

And you see, if he had just kept going in his prayer, history would have recorded, perhaps something different, perhaps similar to when Jonah went to Nineveh and a city, extremely wicked city called Nineveh turned from the King down to the lowest in the land, put on sackcloth and ashes and turned and a whole generation was spared because one man went into the city. And this brings me to point two. We know that Jesus Christ is omniscient.

We teach that, which means he knows everything. He already knows how many righteous are in the city. So why is he playing this game with Abraham or is he playing a game with Abraham? Is he perhaps looking for something that Abraham was not fully aware of? Or maybe when we read it, we're not aware of, I mean, right, right away when Abraham said, will you destroy it for 50 righteous? He could have just said, there's not 50 righteous in the city.

There's not 40. There's not 30. There's not even 10.

Why did he allow Abraham to continue to pray? Was he really looking for something? And it is my opinion that he was looking for something because Abraham is a type of the church. Don't forget it was the church that was going to come through Abraham and be the blessing. We are the blessing that was promised by God through Abraham.

Through Abraham came the patriarchs of Israel. Through the patriarchs came the savior. Through the savior came the church.

Through the church came you and I. We are the blessing that was promised by God to Abraham. Here's what I feel in my heart that Jesus Christ was looking for. And Abraham fell short in his prayer.

It was this one prayer. God spare the city and I'll go. Send me.

Give me 30 days. Give me 60 days to open my mouth. You see a lot.

Couldn't win the city because he was too intermixed in it. Not his own family. Didn't even believe him.

He had no authority in his own home, but Abraham could have walked in and said, listen, folks, I have just had a face-to-face encounter with God. And God told me, God told me this city is going to burn. If you don't turn it, who's to say he couldn't have won six or 10 people to Christ in that city.

Well, not to Christ, of course, at that time, but back to the knowledge of God, who's to say he couldn't have done that. I really believe that in my heart, that that's what the Lord was after. That he would, you see what he did is he, he got it down to 10.

Then it says the Lord walked away and Abraham returned to his place. And a lot of our prayer meetings are like that. We come to prayer meetings and we pray and we get it down to what we think is a reasonable level.

According to our understanding, then, then we go home in a sense. And the Lord goes back to the work that he's doing. And we, we think the victory has been won, but we stopped not six short, one short of the victory.

One, me, me, that's what the Lord's always been looking for. It's the Isaiah moment when we see our own unworthiness at the altar of God. And we understand how far we fall short to the glory of God, but we're it's then we're touched by the mercy.

We hear member. Suddenly Isaiah is hearing the voice of God when he says, who will go for us and who shall we send as they are so familiar with his own weakness. And he knows he's been touched by mercy.

And because he's been touched by mercy, he knows that God is willing to be merciful. And he takes that mercy with him into that present society. And when he hears the voice of God saying who will go here, my says, send me.

I can, I can talk to them about mercy. I can talk to them about judgment, but I can talk to them about mercy and my message will be balanced. Their behavior deserves judgment, but God is willing to be merciful and has proven it on the cross.

Thanks be to God. Thanks be to Abraham. Having come to this place of personal bankruptcy, may I call it that now knows the mercy of God.

This same scenario repeats itself all the way through the Bible, the prodigal son coming home in the gospels. One of the gospels, he, he understands the mercy of God, but only through his own bankruptcy and his own failure. And when you and I have come to the point where we recognize that we stand by mercy, we stand by grace.

All of us, all of us, all of us. The Psalmist David said it the best, Lord, if you dealt with us according to we deserve what we deserve, who would stand among us? How would you like all your thoughts of this week put up on the screen right now? Thank God. Thank God.

Just like Mama Mae, Jesus forgets all of that, except for his own name and his own covering in our life. Thank God for that with all my heart. But when you get down to the place where, you know, you're not going to change apart from him and he begins to change you, then he starts speaking to you about the

city.

Then suddenly your prayer turns, God, you've been merciful to me. You've been so good to me, God, in all my failure and all my struggles and all my trials, in the things that only you and I know, you've been merciful to me. So God, would you give me a chance? Would you give me a chance to extend that mercy to this people in spite of their behaviors, in spite of what they do or don't do or live or don't live? Lest they come under judgment, Lord, would you send me? And it's a type of the Christian who just says, I'm going to start speaking by the grace of God.

I'm going to start speaking and I'm going to speak about mercy, kindness, the goodness of God, his willingness to forgive. There are standards of righteousness, but I'm not going to go with a pointed finger and a closed fist. I'm going to go with an open hand and represent the one whose hands have scars in them.

And I'm going to tell this generation, there's mercy for you. If you choose to want it, God is willing to be merciful. He is a judge.

And one day he will judge. And one day, one day cities in this world are going to burn. Scripture tells us that all the things will be on fire.

Peter says, the heavens will even melt with a fervent heat. But until that day comes, I'm not just going to go home. I want to go where the people are and start to speak to them.

And that is the cry of my heart. Praise God. And I, I trust and believe that it's the cry of the heart of this church.

It's, it's good to come to prayer. Thank God. So many of you do.

Thank God. You pray. Thank God.

You fill this house on Tuesday night. I bless God for it, but it's not enough just to come and pray and then go home. We have to go into the city.

And so that's my altar call this morning. Here am I. Send me. God, give me the courage to open my mouth when it looks like people are not going to listen.

You know, a lot of places we'd like to go as an evangelist, but I suggest Sodom and Gomorrah may not have been one of them, but who knows that some would have listened. Who knows that enough would have listened to spare the city for a season. Who knows that God wouldn't have raised up preachers among those who turn from their sin.

Who knows, I guess the truth is we never will because it didn't happen because nobody went, but by God's grace, that's not going to be our testimony in this generation. We will be the blessing to this world by turning them from their sin. We will be the blessing by leading them to Christ.

We will be the blessing by opening our hearts and being an open display of the love of God to people who maybe have never known it. And because they've never known it, they've looked in perverted places to find love, but we will be that testimony of the presence and the power of God. And so father, I thank you with all my heart this morning, Lord, you are coming again soon.

This world is unraveling quickly. Society is turning dark all around us. A hostility to truth and morality is growing by the day, but Lord, you have a church and you promised, you promised that your people would be a blessing to this world.

You said, as a matter of fact, you said all the families of the earth will be blessed in you. And so Lord, if we're living less in a lower place than our inheritance, give us the grace, my God, to start to believe you. Give us the grace to get up and go forward.

Give us the grace, oh Jesus Christ, son of God, to be the people that you've called us to be. We admit our fault. We admit our failure, Lord.

We recognize that we often don't speak when we should, and we don't go where you call us. But as you were merciful to Abraham, you will be merciful to us. And even though he went home, you still fulfilled the promise that you made to him.

And through his life, Christ came and the church was born. Help us, Lord Jesus Christ, to not go out of this world as dull stars. Help us to shine brightly, Lord, for the sake of those who live in darkness, that they may find their way home.

Give us hearts of compassion to care about those that are lost in their sin. Help us, my God, not to condemn those that you died for, but to tell them there's a forgiveness and liberty, a joy and a future and a heaven that can be theirs. Give us reasonings that can't be stood against.

Give us power, Lord, that this world knows nothing about. Raise us up, oh God, out of self-consumption and give us the grace, Lord, to live our lives for their sakes. Help us, Lord Jesus Christ, to gather the harvest in this generation.

I pray for my own poor heart, oh God. I pray for the strength and the grace, Lord, to do whatever you ask me to do and to say whatever you ask me to say and to go wherever you ask me to go. I pray it for every brother, every sister, Lord, that's in this sanctuary, those that are online, those in our campus churches, those that are part of our online congregation.

I pray, God, with all my heart that you would open our mouths and give us the courage to speak about your willingness to be merciful. Thank you, Lord. All I can say is not in strength, but in weakness, here am I, send me.

Father, I thank you for this and I praise you in Jesus' name. I want to give an altar call and I have a picture in my mind of when Isaiah began to hear the voice of God and when the Lord said, who will go for us? Who will go? I can see him moving towards the sound of that voice saying, me. I don't think it was an exuberant thing.

I think he just maybe raised his hand and said, here, I'll go. I'll go. In that particular environment he was in at that moment, he was the least holy thing there.

All that was there was the triune God was there and all these created cherubims and seraphims and angelic beings. He's the only one who has no right to be there, but he's the one that God sends. I love it.

I just love the mercy of God because the message is about mercy, folks. Judgment is coming, but it's about mercy. Mercy, mercy.

Oh, God have mercy. God have mercy. Everyone that God's ever used in a powerful way throughout history has known this truth, that we stand by mercy, we stand by grace.

We begin to call people from every walk of life out of darkness and into the life of Christ. If we will stand and if you want to join me at this altar with a simple altar call, here am I, send me. I just want you to pray this simple prayer with me.

Lord Jesus Christ, here am I. Send me. Give me your Holy Spirit that I may open my mouth and make your mercy known everywhere I go. Your promise to me is that I would be a blessing and people all over, everywhere I travel, would be blessed through my life.

So I turn to you, Lord Jesus, knowing you have to be the blessing in me. You have to be the words, the heart, the strength, everything has to be you. God, give me a harvest of souls in this generation, too numerous to count.

Through my life, Lord, push back the judgment of this day on our homes, on our families, in our communities and on our children. Push back the judgment and let mercy flow like a river again. I yield my body to this purpose and I trust you for the power to be a blessing everywhere I travel.

In Jesus' name, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, God.

Thank you, God. Thank you, Lord. Give him a shout of glory in this house.

God, thank you. God, thank you. God, thank you.

God, thank you. Praise God.

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