

Spiritual Awakening And Showing Gods Mercy

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the need for the church to move beyond self-focused Christianity and reach out to the hurting and needy in society. It calls for a revival marked by compassion, kindness, and practical help for those in need. The speaker shares personal stories of how reaching out to the poor and feeding the hungry led to spiritual growth and impact in communities. The message urges believers to be the hands and feet of Jesus, bringing light, healing, and restoration to a dark and broken world.

Scripture: Isaiah 58:6, Luke 4:18, Matthew 25:35, James 1:27, Galatians 6:2, 1 John 3:17, Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 2:10, Micah 6:8

Topics: "Compassion in Action", "Community Outreach"

Description

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Transcript

God bless you, Dan, and thank you for inviting me here to be part of this call to prayer this evening. And for all that and everyone who's online with us this evening listening, God bless you. We all know and you've all heard and are aware that this is a crisis moment in the history of not only the United States, but I believe this entire world as we know it.

I feel in my heart that we're living in a generation where we're now seeing the entire world rising up in its final assault against the Lordship of Jesus Christ. These are days that many of us studied for many years, but we didn't ever really think that we might be the ones living in them. But here we are today as wars and famine and pestilences are starting to increase all around, there's a lawlessness that's beginning to abound, and we sense that we're heading to a place like they did in the book of Acts chapter 27 with the apostle Paul being on board as the ship started to fall apart around them.

They began to sound the depths of the sea and they sensed that they were drawing close to an unfamiliar place. They threw four anchors out of the stern and hoped for the day. And that's essentially where we are today.

Now as the church of Jesus Christ, we are called to make a significant difference in our society, in our culture, in our neighborhoods. Matter of fact, even in our own homes. But we find ourselves in a place where we are of relatively little consequence in our present generation.

And if we have an honest heart, if you have an honest heart, if I have an honest heart, sometimes we simply just have to stop in our journey and ask the question, where are we? How did we get here? And God, in your mercy, where do we need to go? And we have to have an honest search because if our search is not honest, we will take the truth that God presents and we will incorporate them into our present practice. And we will end up justifying ourselves even if our present religious practice is falling very, very short of the calling of God in Christ Jesus. So it's in that context tonight, I want to look into the word of God.

And I want to say tonight, I'm not here to reprove anybody. If anyone needs reproof, it's me standing in this pulpit tonight. I'm asking God to examine my heart.

I have been all day looking into the word of God, studying the passage of scripture that I'm about to share again with you tonight. And I'm just saying, God, show me what I must do. Lead me, guide me, guard me, help me.

If my heart is insufficient, if I've not embraced the truth that I'm reading, if there's somehow a deficiency in my relationship with you and the way that you've chosen to honor your name through me, then show it to me. I've prayed the prayer even this day that David, King David, once prayed. And when he said, search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, see if there'd be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way of life everlasting.

And this is what I've been praying, saying, God, it's so easy for any of us to start justifying what we do. But if what we're doing is not producing results, if what we're doing, if there's no real end product at the end of it, may God give us the grace. May God just give us the grace to stop for a moment and say, Lord, would you speak to us? Would you give us your word? There's so many voices now claiming to speak for you, but only the voice of God now matters.

Our voices really are of no consequence. My words leave my mouth and just stop at the walls of the building I happen to be in or the room I'm in, but God's words are eternal. They can create a universe.

Our words don't really matter that much. What is he speaking? This is what the cry of my heart. Isaiah, let me just share with you.

Isaiah 55, he says, my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are my ways your ways. My way says the Lord is the heavens are higher than the earth. So are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

And he goes on to the next verse and says, when I send my word, it brings rain to the earth. It causes growth. It gives seed to the sower.

He starts talking about all the things that begin to happen when his word is the word that has the preeminence, when he is leading us, when we're not trying to lead him or trying to craft or create our own religiousness, which God's own people of Isaiah's generation had done and which we are all in a sense inclined to do. This is the reality. It's part of the human condition.

We have this tendency in a sense to take the things, the relationship that God's given us with his son, Jesus Christ. And we, we, we crafted into something that doesn't look like the original. Now, what do you mean by that? You'd say, well, the original church, 120 people came out of an upper room.

They had no media. They had no presentation, no concordance. They had, they had none of the things that we have today.

They probably didn't know as much as obviously the scripture that as we do today, yet through them, God touched the whole known world, even eventually the Roman empire, even though it was, it was not a completely clean thing, but the Roman empire bent its knee to almighty God at a certain point. And we today can have 120 churches in one small town and can't even affect our communities. So what has changed? The power of God has not changed.

The presence of God has not changed. It's something that we're doing in conjunction with him that has brought our present church age into a powerlessness. And there's no other way to describe it.

Our voices are just intermingled now with voices everywhere on the airwaves and political arena and such like, and we've lost our influence. So what must we do now? Where do we have to go? How did we get here? And how do we get to where we need to be? Let's pray together. I'm going to be sharing from Isaiah chapter 58 tonight.

And before I do, I'm going to pray with everyone who's online this evening. Almighty God, I ask you tonight for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I ask you Lord God to illuminate your word to our minds, to our hearts, to our conscience.

I'm asking God that we can stand in the light of your word tonight, that you would give an empowerment and enablement. Lord, that you would take us so much farther than we can go in ourselves. I have no desire for my words to be spoken tonight, only yours.

I'm asking you to override the frailty of this human vessel. And almighty God, cleanse me, set me apart for your purpose tonight. Speak through me, speak to me.

Lord, I don't want to escape the words that you've given me to speak this evening. I want it to examine my own heart first and foremost. Give me the grace, my God, and give your servants who are listening online tonight, the grace of Jesus, to stand in your presence and in your counsel.

We thank tonight, Lord of David, even though he had embarked on a course that was far out of your will. When Nathan the prophet came to him, he was quick to turn back to you. He was quick to acknowledge his condition.

And you called him a man after your own heart. Even after all he did, you still called him a man after your own heart. And so, Father, in Jesus' name, in Jesus' name, forgive us, Lord, for all that we have done in your name that has fallen so far short of what we as your people should be.

We haven't brought your name to reputation when that's what it should be in this society. Your name should have preeminence. You should be feared and revered and loved and esteemed and cherished on every street, in every home, in every church.

But something happened to us as your people in this time that we're now living in, and our voices were rendered ineffective. So speak tonight, O God. Speak.

Speak through me. And I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, Isaiah chapter 58 is spoken to the most religious people on the face of the earth of that generation. That's not even debatable. These people had a history.

They had a purpose. The power of God had walked with them. They knew what it was like historically to be in a place of slavery.

They knew what happened when they they cried out to God. God came in ways that are least expected. He sent an 80-year-old man with nothing more than a one-line sermon and a stick in his hand to bring them out from under the captivity of one of the most powerful armies on the face of the earth at that time.

They knew the history. They knew the story. They knew what happened to their forefathers in the wilderness for 40 years.

They knew what happened under Joshua when they came in to the promised land. They understood that their divine purpose on the earth was for God to so bless them and so use them that it would bring the name of God to reputation in the earth. It would cause the stranger, as in Solomon's day, for example, would cause the stranger to hear and to travel as the queen of Sheba once did, to come into the presence of God to have his or her questions answered.

There was something of God that he wanted to display through his people, and it's no different in our generation. As a matter of fact, it should be even more in our generation. They had this shekinah glory of God in one temple in one place in Jerusalem, but we today have the spirit of the living God, which they can only dream about what we have.

We have the spirit of the living God resident within these earthen vessels. Not a concept of God, not lines in the Bible about God, but the actual third person of the Godhead dwelling inside of our physical bodies. In that context, the spirit of God should be bringing the name of Jesus Christ to reputation in our generation.

And if that's not happening, why is it not happening? What have we done with the presence of God in our lives? We quite readily look back at the nation of Israel and say, look what they did. Look how casual they became. Look how perfunctory their religious performance was.

It all became tradition and wrote and arguing the scriptures and all the things that they would do and all their sacrifices only to find that their religion was so lacking in the presence and power of God that enemy armies were able to come in, ultimately invade, take them into captivity, destroy their temple that they never believed that could ever happen and bring them into a place they never ever believed that they would be. Now the prophet Isaiah was given of God a mandate in chapter 58 and God said to Isaiah, I want you, there's something that's grieving my heart and I want you to cry aloud. I want you to spare no one.

I want you to lift up your voice like a trumpet and tell my people their transgression and the house of Jacob, their sin. So God was saying this, I am personally impassioned about this. So I don't want you, Isaiah, to just speak this in a way that people would say, well, this is just another lecture, another sermon.

I wanted him, your heart has to be engaged with mine. I am concerned about this. There's a passion in the heart of God about this grievous sin of his people who are supposed to be appraised to his name on the earth.

They were supposed to be that place, that demonstration of God's favor being upon a people that would cause the stranger to come to the house of God, that would cause the casual to consider their ways and come back into right relationship with God. But yet God's own people had done something with this relationship that the Lord himself says, I want you to cry out against it. I want you to cry so loud that everybody can hear you because perhaps they were hard of hearing in that time.

I don't know, maybe they couldn't hear the word of God anymore. I want you to tell them where they have failed and I want you to just clearly declare their sin. So what was this grievous sin of the people of God? What was it that was so impassioning the heart of God that he wanted Isaiah to stand and be a demonstration of that passion to the people? So let's look at their spiritual condition first and foremost.

Yet they seek me daily. So I see a people, they're getting up in the morning, they're unrolling whatever scrolls they had, whatever scriptures they had. They're seeking God.

They have a devotional time, perhaps maybe 15, 20, 25 minutes, a half hour in the presence of God. They're reading his words. They're offering up prayers as they knew to do in that time.

And so these are people who are sincere in great measure and they're seeking of God. They delight to know my ways. They're studying God's words.

They're taking very seriously the admonition of speaking the truth or being a good employee or not treating people unrighteously, maybe in their own family, their own house. There's certain precepts in the word of God. They're studying them and they're doing their best that they know how to walk in the ways of God as it's been revealed to them as a nation that did righteousness.

Chapter 58 verse 2 in the third line. And so they have this exterior appearance of being in a completely right relationship with God. They're seeking him daily.

They delight to know his ways and they have this appearance upon them that they are walking and people would look at them walking by and say, there's some, there's part of the family of God. There's that person is a believer in the Jehovah God of that time. The fourth line in verse 2 says, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God.

So they're doing the best they can do to walk in the things that they know, the daily things, to be a perhaps a good husband, a good father, a good wife, a good brother, a good neighbor. They're doing the best they know to do these things. They ask of me the ordinances of justice as we are today.

Excuse me. We find ourselves praying today, God almighty, this scourge of abortion that's in our nation, the millions of babies that have been aborted. The Supreme court of the nation making this pronouncement even against the will of the people that homosexual marriage is now something that is somehow accepted in society and even suggesting and some people suggesting that it's even accepted with God and God's own people of that time are saying, Lord, bring justice where there's injustice, change things where laws are not righteous, where we're straying in certain paths.

God help us. And they take delight in approaching to God. These people had a genuine delight perhaps in going to the temple at the time of prayer or sacrifice.

They had sincere religious observances. And so by this standard, when we look at verse two chapter of Isaiah chapter 58 and verse two, we would probably give people an award today for being an exemplary Christians, exemplary followers of God. Yet God says to Isaiah, I want you to cry out about their sin and about their transgression.

So the, the issue is like, what is the shortcoming of these people? Why is God so concerned about this? But they also had a question in their hearts in verse three, they say, why have you, we fasted and you've not seen, and why have we afflicted our souls and you take no notice? In other words, we are, we are sincere as we know how to be. We are fasting. We are denying ourselves in some measure, at least anyway, maybe that's in their case, denying physical food for a few days here and there.

We are lamenting the condition of the nation. We are doing our best to repent before you, but it seems like it's not moving your hand. And why is our profession, why is our sincerity making so little, if any difference in our day? And I guess my question tonight to so many is do, do you and I have the courage to ask this question of ourselves? We are fasting.

We are praying. We are asking God to change laws that we believe are abominable. We're asking for righteous government.

We are praying. We are sincere. We are seeking.

We are opening our Bibles. We are trying to be the best that we know how to be. But why is it that it's not moving the hand of God? We know the history of the Christian church where somebody has begun to pray and great sweepings of God's spirit have swept communities and towns and churches and nations.

So why is it that with all this religious performance that we're doing before you, somehow you remain silent? Our nation continues to slide into this abyss of darkness, our homes and our marriages and our children being indoctrinated in our schools and ungodliness. Why is this being allowed to prosper when we have been seeking you as best as we know how to seek you? And it's a legitimate question. Now God begins to answer this question in the middle part of chapter 58 in verse three.

He said, in fact, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure and exploit all of your neighbors. So here it is. The Lord says, you are fasting and you're asking for all of these things, but the center core of your being, you're still focused on yourself and you're still looking at people even around you as things that can be used to your own advantage.

You're not really given for the sake of others. We teach at our Bible school in Pennsylvania that true Christianity finds its deepest expression in living for the benefit of others. It's strange though.

We serve a Christ who went to a cross. We serve a Christ who gave his all so that we might be forgiven. We might have hope.

He came to us in our poverty. He came to us in our captivity. He came to us when we couldn't come to him.

He endured our frailties and he endured our failings and our foolishness and still went to a cross and said, father, forgive them. They don't know what they do. He rose from the dead on the third day, took our captivity captive, went back to heaven and left us here as ambassadors and representatives of the one who went to a cross so that we might have an eternity in heaven with God.

We might be forgiven and delivered from the wrath of God, saved from the penalty and power of sin. And so how does a church that focuses on itself represent this Christ? This is the legitimate question that God's been speaking to my heart. And I'm asking anybody who wants to listen tonight, how is a self-focused church? How do we represent that Christ? If we are seeking our own pleasure, if that's the kind of the fuel source of our day, we will do a little charitable works here and there, but the essence, the fuel source of our whole religious profession is focused on ourselves and who online tonight can deny that that's not the curse of the American church, the Western church in our generation.

Self-focus has taken away our testimony. It's taken away our passion for the true work of God. It's taken away our ability to represent him in our society.

Our influence is gone because we have a value system that is not much different than the people around us. And we've heaped to ourselves as the scripture warns in the last days, we've heaped to ourselves teachers having itching ears that all they talk about is ourselves, how we can use God to aggrandize ourselves, to get a better personality, to have a nicer home. All of these things are great, but that's the entire focus in much of the church world in America.

I had a pastor come to see me, two pastors. They pastor one of the largest churches in America. I'm not going to tell you which one it is.

And they had this question. They said, we've seen your worldwide permitting in New York City and we're perplexed as to how do you fill a sanctuary on Tuesday night? How did it get to the point? What's your program to get people to come out Tuesday night and be excited about a prayer meeting, about praying for other people? We called a prayer meeting and nobody comes. And if a few do come, nobody prays.

A church in the tens of thousands of people. I said to them that particular day, I said, I mean you no harm, but what is it that you're teaching the people? And what are you speaking to them that they have no burden for the lost? That it's all just about themselves. When it comes time to pray for a nation, for a city, for those that have no helper, they all stay home because everybody has their house, they have their mortgage, they got their car, they got their kids in college.

And so what more do they need? So why should they go to a prayer meeting? So the essence of the concern that I had for them that particular day we were together is what exactly are you teaching the people and why have they no burden? Verse four, he says, indeed you fast for strife and debate and to strike with the fist of wickedness. That's another problem in the church. So people fast so that our voices can be heard above other voices.

And we can just argue minuscule points of doctrine that really, in most cases anyway, they have not much to do with the eternal destiny of man, very little to do the actual work of God. But we wind up like the Pharisees and the Sadducees, just arguing with one another about points of doctrine and striking each other with the fist of wickedness, condemning one another, calling each other heretics and such like, condemning each other's view of the scriptures. And then God goes on to say, you will not fast as you do this day to make your voice to be heard on high.

A lot of religious practice is just so that our flag would be a little higher than somebody else's flag out there. But our denomination, our church will be known as the game in town and everyone else let them just all fall where they may. Is this the fast that I've chosen? Verse five, a day for a man to afflict his soul.

Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Here's what God is saying through the prophet Isaiah. I didn't call you just to put on a religious display. I'm not interested in all your sincere acts of worship as you see it.

There's something that you're missing in this entire profession, in this entire seeking of me, there's something you're missing. I once spoke on this, Isaiah chapter 58, and the title of the message was, When Seeking of God Becomes Sin. Isn't that amazing? When God says, I want you to cry out against this great sin.

And yet for the next several verses, it's all just about people who are spending almost their whole day just seeking God. But yet something is so desperately wrong. It's so desperately short in their seeking.

In verse six, he said, Is this not the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and you bring to your house the poor who are cast out? And when you see the naked, that you cover him, and don't hide yourself from your own flesh. Is this not the fast? You see, this was the great sin of God's people of that time.

I'm just superimposing it now from the word of God on the practice of God's people of our generation. Have we done the same thing? In our seeking of God, have we forgotten about people? Has it become all about ourselves? Has it become about how big our churches can get or how much influence we can get in the political realm? Have we forgotten that the gospel is about people? Have we forgotten that the mission of God for you and I is to take whatever God has put in our hands, whether it's his word, whether it's the compassion of his spirit in our heart, whether it's some resources perhaps he's made available to us, and head out with those resources as Christ did when he came to us, as the early church did when they came out of the upper room, and move into this mountain of hurting humanity? We're living in a generation today where people are starving for truth. They're starving for direction.

They're starving for somebody that knows where we're going and how to get there. Just like in the apostle Paul's day, when the ship began to fall apart, thank God there was a man there praying. Thank God there was a man in the belly of that ship who was not living for his own benefit, that he was living for the sake of Christ, ultimately living for the sake of others.

Thank God there was a man who was praying, who was available, who was not bitter. Thank God there was a man, the captain of that boat, perhaps it was the captain, could call upon and say, where is that man that said that God told him we should not undertake this journey? I want to hear from him again. Thank God when Paul came to the deck of that ship, he was not seeking to preserve himself.

His burden, his passion was, yes, first and foremost, that God would take him to the furtherance and the fullness of his journey, but it was also for the other people on that ship, or the 276 that were traveling with the apostle Paul. Thank God that Paul could take the bread on the deck of that ship and he could break it. And just as Christ had done at the last supper, he could look and he could say, take this is my body, which is broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. We've even taken that, we've made just a ceremony out of it, as wonderful as the ceremony is, as wonderful as the remembrance of the fact that Jesus Christ gave himself for us. That's a wonderful thing.

Thank God for that. But is it possible that when he looked at his disciples and said, do this, he said, this is my body, which is broken for you. Then he said, do this in remembrance of me.

Is it possible, I'm just asking you the question tonight, that there's a deeper meaning behind it, a secondary meaning, that you too are called to be broken for the sake of others. You too are called to be given an outstretched hand for others in their need when they have nobody to help them, nobody to feed them, nobody to unlock their prison door, nobody to assuage their blindness or their woundings that are in their hearts, nobody to help them. Is it possible? Is this not the fast that I've chosen? Loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke.

I love the fact that in the gospel of Luke chapter four and verse 18, Jesus got up into the synagogue as he introduced the ministry that his father had given him in the earth. And here's the words that he said, the spirit of God, the Lord is upon me for this reason. In other words, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

Isn't it amazing? The very first thing out of his mouth is that I've come to proclaim these good news to those that don't have any resource. They have no way to get back to God. They have no strength, no power.

Not only did he preach to them, might I remind you, he also fed them. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, and to set free or at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Then he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. Can we say that in this generation? Do we have the spiritual authority? Because remember, he said, as my father has sent me, now I send you.

This is the mandate of the church. So as my father sent me, now I'm sending you to preach to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom to the captives, a sight to the blind. I mean, it's telling people who can't see a way forward that there is a way forward, to set free those who are oppressed and to tell them, this is the day when you can be free, you can be saved, you can have hope for the future, to be in effect, the extended hand of God in our generation.

Can we say the spirit of the Lord is upon me for this reason? Can we honestly make that declaration or are we in the same place of seeking and reading and looking like we're walking in righteousness, but yet we're hiding from the needs of people all around us. This is a serious thought, a serious consideration, because there is something that is lacking in the testimony of Christ's church in our generation. Can you just imagine for a moment, if every church in every community just headed out and started doing this, there'd be a spiritual awakening immediately.

I've lived long enough to see it. When we were in Canada many, many years ago, we were in a staunchly religious area that was not born again. And we were fighting to establish a beachhead in a 40 by 40 square mile area that hadn't had a Christian testimony as far as we knew for almost a hundred years.

And I remember in prayer, we started saying, God, how do we reach these people? They're so resistant to truth. How do we, how do we reach the community? The Lord answered our prayer and he told us to start feeding the poor, to start visiting those who had no resources. So we started gathering as much food as we could.

This little church in a town of 65 people, we started gathering as much as we could gather and we didn't make the poor come to us. We went to the poor. Sunday morning after church, there'd be boxes of groceries and names of people who had called in and families would take, some would take two, some would take three, some would even take more.

And we'd say, on your way home today, stop at these houses and give them this box of food for their families. If they invite you in, go in. If they don't invite you in, just say, God bless you.

Whatever the situation, we put no conditions on giving food to the hungry. We began to do this and people started to come to Christ. People started to come to church.

Eventually we had to get another building because the congregation got so big. There was people who spoke another language other than English started coming. We had to get a new pastor.

We got a new building. We established a Christian school. A food bank in the area in a major city found out about us and started supplying us with all the food that we needed.

As a matter of fact, they made us their Eastern Distribution Center. By the time we left to come to New York City in 1994, we were feeding full-time 237 families in our community. And the reputation of Christ in an area that hadn't had a testimony of God for 100 years started spreading to town councils.

They started giving us food at Christmas time to give to people. The reputation of Christ began to grow. We started having to see people outside the church when the sun was out on Sunday morning because the church building was full so they could hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God did a modern day miracle. It is absolutely incredible to behold it. The presence of God was there.

See, this is the promise of God when we start doing God's work God's way. It's truly amazing. We just had it out and started feeding people who were hungry.

And I remember a membership Sunday we had in the church one Sunday with all these people lined up and they were some of the happiest people you'd ever seen. They were former alcoholics and drug addicts and people who were depressed and suicidal and homeless and broken families. They were all lined up.

They were all becoming members of the church of Jesus Christ at that particular denomination. And I just thank God with all my heart for the simplicity of just doing it God's way. And I remember in Isaiah chapter 58, I would read this back in those days.

That's many, many years ago and say, God, this is what you told your church they should be. We should be loosing the bonds of wickedness. We should be undoing heavy burdens.

We should be telling the oppressed they can go free. We should be praying for their freedom. We should be breaking every yoke, sharing our bread with the hungry and bringing to our house the poor who are cast out.

I remember going through the town where our church was back then knocking on every door one day and inviting everybody to come to church on Sunday. This one particular lady said, there's a hermit that lives just down the road. And it was true.

It was a man who just lived in a shack, no running water, probably hadn't had a bath in 10 years. She said, the day I see somebody do something for that man, I'll come to your church. I got the men of the church together.

We went to his house. We took truckloads of garbage out of that house to the dump. We painted the whole house, put water in, put even put a washing machine into his house.

The associate pastor of the church I was pastoring took the man home every week for a meal, gave him a bath and his wife washed his clothes. And he started to attend our church. And I went back to that lady's house to collect her promise.

You see, there's an amazing thing happens when we start to reach out to those who have no helper, the report of it started to go everywhere because we had decided to be the church of Jesus Christ. And when you see the naked, that you cover him and hide not yourself from your own flesh. Now here's the promise.

When our religion doesn't take us into hiding any longer, when we come out of our place of seeking God, we come out with our hands full and a heart full. We come out with faith, believing for others that they can be set free. And we start moving into this mountain of, of flailing fallen humanity, which is really what this generation is all about now.

And we start going to them, not just with words, but with whatever God has put in our hands to give them. Then he says, your light shall break forth like the morning. Your healing will break, spring forth speedily and your righteousness will go before you.

And the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. This is an amazing, amazing promise. You'll have light.

There'll be healing flowing through you. The fact that I'm your God will become evident to people who get to know you and I will protect you from all that opposes you and comes against you. And verse nine is the promise that I've held to all of my Christian life, especially as a pastor.

Then you will call and the Lord will answer. You will cry and he will say, here I am. If you take away the yoke from your midst, the putting forth of the finger and speaking wickedness, I like another translation just says empty talk.

If you put away, if you seek to have others around you, no matter who they are, it could even be your enemies set free from that, which the sin in this world has put upon them. If you stop pointing the finger and looking to blame others for the problems that are around us, it's so easy to do that, isn't it? You see a poor man in the street. Who's to blame for this? It's the government's fault.

It's so-and-so's fault. It's their fault. It's my fault.

It's somebody else's fault. He said, if you'll stop pointing the finger and speaking empty talk, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light will dawn in the darkness and your darkness shall be as the noon day. Even in this darkened time, God says, I'll give you light.

Suddenly that oil in the lamp in Matthew chapter 25 that the wise had will suddenly be there. In the middle of this darkness, I'll give you a light. I'll give you the ability to see.

I'll give you a meaning and a purpose on the earth. Even your darkness shall be as the noon day. The worst times imaginable can be all around you, but you will still have light.

You'll still have life. You'll still have purpose. You'll still know where you're going.

The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought and strengthen your bones. You will be like a watered garden and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. And those from among you, in other words, those that God uses you to raise up, those that find Christ through you, those that know the tenderness and compassion of God through your life shall build the old waste places.

You will raise up the foundations of many generations and you will be called the repairer of the breach and the restorer of streets to dwell in. You will be the one that as Nehemiah, I heard somebody mentioned Nehemiah tonight. You'll be the one as Nehemiah who builds up that wall again and closes up the breach where the enemy was able to get in and weaken the testimony of God's people.

And you will be the one that God uses to restore places where men, women, and children can dwell again. Bottom line of the whole of everything that God's given me to say is just this, let's be tender and compassionate with people in this generation. Let's let our profession of faith go beyond just the perfunctory seeking of God.

Let's go out and seek, let's get involved in the mission of God and seek those that are lost. Let's help those that have no helper. Let's be used of God to open prison doors.

God will give us the grace and the strength that we need to do these things that we're called to do. And we will be called the restorer of streets to dwell in. And so Father in Jesus' name tonight, amen.

Almighty God, I ask you Lord for a spiritual awakening in this hour. Let it begin in my heart. Let it begin in the hearts of your people.

Wake us up Lord to the reality that you are willing to be God to us, in us, and through us. If we are willing to let you extend your hand, freedom, and resource to the mountain of human need that is all around us. Help us Lord in America to escape the trap of self-focused Christianity.

Help us Lord God. Help us God. Oh Jesus, if we have a sandwich, could you show us somebody that needs a half of it? Could you give us the grace to be kind and generous? Could you help us Lord Jesus to go beyond our comfort zone, to go beyond the boundaries of our own practice? Help us Lord Jesus to walk as you walked in this earth.

Father give us the grace and the compassion we need to do the work that you've called us to do. Don't let us fall into the trap and the sin of self-seeking. Help us not to use our relationship with you just to try to gain a higher voice than someone else.

Help us Lord Jesus Christ to go beyond just an exterior display of our devotion to you, to actual devotion to the cause that you've given us to be part of in the earth. Jesus you said, as the Father has sent me, now I send you. So God I'm asking in my own heart and my own life that you would show me the needs around me that I can be used to meet.

You would help me my God, not to walk by the lonely, the bruised, the hurting, the oppressed. You give me the giftings of the spirit that I need, whether it's in a corner store, whether it's in just a casual encounter on the street, whatever it is. God would you give me the words to speak.

Would you give me the faith to believe that the powers of hell that are in people's minds and on their lives can be broken by my prayers. Would you give me tenderness and compassion and courage and love that casts out all fear of man. Give me the ability God to reach those that can only be reached by an act of kindness.

Would you help me Lord God, would you help your people, would you break us out, oh God, of this position of weakness that we've been in as a church age for so long. Oh Lord, we can carry on doing the same thing and just let the nation go into darkness or we can let you speak and trust you again for a spiritual awakening. Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, help the church's Lord in this nation in Jesus name.

I just want to tell you a story before I close this evening. Several years ago in New York City, after a Sunday morning service, the security people came to me and they said, pastor, we have so many people in the church this Sunday and the last Sunday and it wasn't even a holiday season and it wasn't special, that if the fire department show up, they'll shut us down. There are people standing in corridors, they're in every room that's full, they're in hallways, they're everywhere to hear the word of God and we're going to have to do something because either that, either we're going to have to actually close the doors of the church at 10 o'clock in the morning when the service starts because we just can't handle the influx of people.

So the following Tuesday, I went to my office and I just began to pray, but my prayer was specific because in those days, most everybody was starting satellite churches and there's a lot of facilities available in New York City. Just a block over, there was about six small theaters that are available on Sunday. There was a large industrial building that had a high-tech theater that was available, sat 500 people and so I started to pray and I said, God, would you show me where do you want me to plant satellite churches in the city? We could tie probably 1,500 or more people to these churches and start new works in the city.

The answer he gave me was not what I expected God to say and I remembered as if it was yesterday. I was in my office and the Lord said these words to me. He said, Carter, there are satellite churches all over the city that will never have the name of Times Square Church on the door, but they are churches that are important to me and they should be important to you.

They're small churches, they're storefront churches, they're churches that minister in some of the hardest hit areas of the city where there's huge food deprivation. They don't have any resources to feed the people. They can hardly pay their own bills, let alone any kind of a salary to their pastor.

The Lord said to me, I want you to ask your board to underwrite 100 churches in the inner city to feed their people to the tune of \$1,000 a month per church in food supplies. It was a hefty commitment on our part. It was the biggest missions commitment in the history of the church.

Our initial commitment was \$1.2 million for the first year. So I took it to the board. Every man cried on the board that day, said pastor, this is the heart of God.

Let's reach out. The churches are going to be called the First Baptist Church of 181st Street and the Presbyterian Church over here. They're not going to be called Times Square Church.

They're going to be different denominations, but they're all people who are trusting in Christ for their salvation. I want you to help them so that they can reach their communities. They're to do it in the name of their church.

People in the community are not even to know that Times Square Church is behind this or doing this. And so we did. And from that prayer meeting came an organization that's now called Feed New York, where up to 100 churches roughly are feeding the people in the inner city.

And many of these churches, I mean, it's amazing what God has done. I saw pictures a couple of years ago where one of the churches had people lined up an entire block and they had a sandwich board sign out on the sidewalk and it basically just said free food and prayer. And the pastor told me an amazing thing.

He said, most of the people lined up all the way down the block weren't wanting food. They were just wanting prayer. Isn't that amazing? It really just brought the church out of the doors.

They had some food to offer people who were hungry and churches did different things. Some gave lunches to kids on the way to school who had no food in their schools. Mothers were coming, single moms would be coming by the church on the way home to get vegetables and such like because they couldn't get it in their community for their families.

All of the churches that I became aware of started to grow. Some had to get another building and move to another location because people started coming because they started feeding the hungry in their communities. They started doing what the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 58.

The interesting thing is when I was praying about the satellite churches, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, if you will do this, I will be able to answer your prayer. I remember those words, which I thought was interesting because my prayer was, where do you want us to plant satellite churches? But as it turns out, that's not the prayer that God was talking about. It was another prayer that I was going to be praying one day.

And so from this beginning of this organization called Feed New York of a hundred churches, we began a prayer meeting together and that prayer meeting began to expand. And now that prayer meeting is in 211 countries around the world every Tuesday night. It all started from this association of Feed New York churches.

Very recently, a very, very large food bank found out about what we're doing in New York City and have planted another division in Pennsylvania of their food bank. And they're offering us now all the food we need to do whatever we need to do in New York City. Our goal is to have 300 churches completely underwritten so that they can begin to feed the poor in their communities.

And as a result, people are coming to Christ. Pastors are being encouraged. A fellowship began in New York City that's been incredibly sweet of pastors of various denominations throughout the city.

And it's exactly as God said it would be in the Isaiah chapter 58. Your light will break forth like the morning. Your health will spring forth speedily.

Your righteousness will go before you. The glory of the Lord will come behind you. You will call and the Lord will answer.

You will cry and he will say, here I am. So here's my prayer now. This is the prayer that God was talking about.

Lord Jesus Christ, revive your church. Give us an end time spiritual awakening in America. Give us a moment of mercy in this country where you will gather in more people than we can count.

You will do it sovereignly. You'll do it supernaturally. You'll do it by your own grace and for your own glory.

It won't be a strategy doing this. It won't be a program. It will be you Lord, be God.

This is my prayer. God do what only you can do. And he said, if you'll take away, so easy to point the finger at other people in other churches and not help them.

So easy to speak evil of one another forgetting that we're all part of the body of Christ and the earth. I've found such incredible fellowship with people that I never thought I'd have anything in common with. We met at the cross.

We agreed that we have distinctives and our distinctives don't have to change. They'll stay the way they are. Just our particular practices in our churches.

But we met at the cross and agreed that together we would feed the hungry. We would try to relieve the oppressed. We would encourage one another.

We would do whatever we could to reach those who have no helper in our communities. Out of that initial effort is a permitting now with thousands of people attending online in 211 countries throughout the world. Look at what God can do.

Just as back in those early days back in Canada, when suddenly there's this supply of food coming in and people are getting saved. I've lived long enough. David Wilkerson once told me, he said, Carter, if you want to know where the power of God is, reach the poor.

Go to the poor. And the Lord stands at the right hand of the poor and you'll see God do things that only he can do. He will say, here I am when you cry out to me.

You see, that was the promise. The religious practice of the people of the day, there was no guarantee that anything they prayed was going to be answered. But for those who are willing to stop hiding from the needs of humanity around them and start to reach out and be the extended hand of God, God's saying, I'm going to be a source of supply.

I'm going to be this living water, not just your speech, but your compassion. I'm going to give you resource that you don't have. I'm going to take you into places you can't go.

I'm going to make you into what you could never hope to be in your own strength. I'm going to give you what you could never hope to possess by any amount of human effort or even profess devotion. I'm going to do something for you you can't do for yourself.

And ultimately, I'm going to use your life to close the breach in the wall that the enemy has used to get in and weaken you. And you will be called the restorer of streets, the healer of the breach, and the restorer of streets to dwell in. May God help us.

May God help us as a church to come together again, all of the parts of the body of Christ. No more evil speech, no more pointing of the finger, no more smiting with the fist of wickedness, no more trying to get our flag a little higher on the pole than somebody else, but all of us together as the body of Christ. I'm talking about those who have received Christ as Savior by faith.

They believe that the cross was God's remedy for our sin and God's offer of eternal life. All of the church must come together, stop arguing over things that really don't matter in the long run, and start moving together into this mountain of human need that's all around us. And watch what God will do.

I think it's a fallacy to pray for revival and not have any part or not have to do anything in it. Look at history. Every one that God's ever used in any capacity that we study has always started to reach out to human need.

Neil Moody started taking carts and bringing poor kids to church. They called him Crazy Moody when he used to do it, but Crazy Moody was used of God to bring revival to the known church world of his time. You look at all of those that have gone before.

They've always had a focus on the orphan, the widow, the addicted, the afflicted, the poor, and God used them and did things through them that only he can do. So here we are one more time. Our nation is dying.

Churches are weak, and we're saying, God, where are you? And the Lord looks back at us and says, where are you? You know what I called you to do. I promised to be God to you. I promised to go before you.

I promised to go behind you. I promised to be a river of life. I promised to be an end of supply.

I promised to be light in darkness. I promised to be a spring of water. I promised to use you to rebuild old waste places.

I told you you would plug the hole in the wall, and I said that you would be the restorer of straits to dwell in. That's what I promised you. So the question is not, where am I? The question is now, where are you? My church, where are you? I feel one more time like the prophet Isaiah in the beginning of his ministry when he stood in the presence of God and says, I'm undone.

I'm finished. I thought I had this wonderful ministry, but I'm done. I've seen you.

I'm learning about you. I'm observing your holiness. I'm seeing how other I am than you are, and I'm finished.

I'm done. It was at that point the mercy of God touched his lips. The revelation of God came into his heart, and he was sent down to be a voice for God even in the midst of a time that was so hard that only a tenth would believe, but yet he went.

And so I think we need to stop asking God, where are you? And we need to start asking the question, where are we? And I need to start asking it to my own heart. Oh, yes, I do. I do some things, but there's more I can do.

And there's a, I'm asking the Lord to stretch the borders of my tent because I can't stretch it myself, but at least I'm asking him to do it. I'm asking him for more compassion. I'm asking him for eyes that can see.

I'm asking him to have a life where I can live outside of the concerns of my own day. I'm asking him for a heart that has his love that casts out the fear of rejection, the fear of being laughed at, the fear of, the fear, just the fear that wants to grip all of us. If we're going to know a spiritual awakening, we have to deal with these things.

Otherwise, we're just going to carry on, on the same parade, going down the same street to the same end. But by God's grace, by God's grace, let's get together and let's do something. By God's grace.

Yes, we should still daily seek him. We should still delight to know his ways, still do righteousness, still not forsake the ordinances of our God. We should still ask for justice, still take delight in approaching unto God, but move into the mountain of human need with the kindness and tenderness of God in our hearts and in our hands and in our voices.

People are the most hungry for truth that I've ever seen in my lifetime. This campus church that I'm in right now is called North Jersey. It's Times Square Church, North Jersey.

And they have had food drives here for people, especially in this COVID time when people can't feed their families, folks, they can't pay their rent. And they've had lineups, they've had drive-through pickup groceries, and they didn't know how much it was going to be received. And they had lineups of cars coming down the street, coming through to get free groceries for their families.

So many people can't feed their children, can't feed their families. And hardly a soul that came through didn't roll down their window and have somebody in the church pray for them and weep. The same people in this campus church went out and did Christmas caroling this holiday season.

They told me a story of one couple that came out on their porch, man and his wife, the lights were off in the house. They came out and they said, would you pray for us? They're not believers in Christ. They said, would you pray for us? We've both lost our jobs.

We don't know what we're going to do. The pastor told me they were very, very moved by the prayers and maybe we'll take a look at something more we can do for them in the future. We've got to get out of the walls and we've got to start moving into this mountain.

And if we do, when the doors open again, you watch how full our houses are going to be. And so Lord tonight, one more time, I just ask you, would you help us to be your church? Would you take us out of the cycle of self-seeking? Would you give us the grace to be the people that were called to be? God, this is not an empty prayer from my heart. You know that I'm willing.

I feel like I say, here am I send me, but I don't know where the send is. You're going to have to show me, but as you've done in the past, Lord, and you've reached people through simple acts of kindness, you've reached people, Lord God, by allowing us to care for one another as the body of Christ. I thank you God for all the moms and all the kids and all the dads in the inner city of New York city that have found Christ as savior because we chose to feed them.

Thank you, Lord God. Thank you that we were able to pray it and bring them to a saving faith in Christ. Help us, Lord God, help us, my God, send a spiritual awakening, but let it come through the hearts and the

hands of your people.

Lord, we thank you. We praise you.

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