

The Heart of God in the Wilderness

by Carter Conlon

God's judgment comes upon a nation that backslides from Him, and He will expose their lewdness in the sight of all their lovers.

Duration: 50:12

Scripture: Isaiah 40:5, Jeremiah 29:11, Lamentations 3:22-23, Ezekiel 36:26, Daniel 2:22, Hosea 2:14-15, Romans 1:18

Topics: "Wilderness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the depth of God's love for humanity. He highlights the lack of revelation and vision in society, which leads to moral decay and lawlessness. The preacher encourages believers to speak up and share the truth in their workplaces and with young people who are searching for answers. He also addresses the lies that society tells about the existence of God and the distortion of His image. The sermon references the book of Hosea and emphasizes the heart of God in the wilderness.

Transcript

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You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. If you'll turn in your Bibles, in the Old Testament, to the book of Hosea, chapter 2, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea.

Hosea, chapter 2. My message title is The Heart of God in the Wilderness. The Heart of God in the Wilderness. Now, Father, I stand back from this pulpit, and I thank you, God, that you would always make me more than I am.

I thank you, Lord, that you will anoint, God, you will supply everything that is needed. Lord, this is a difficult word to deliver. And, Father, I'm asking for the grace, I'm asking, Holy Spirit, that you would animate me.

My heart, even the expressions that I use, the manner I speak, would be your heart. Lord, I have no desire to be even involved in this message. I'm asking that it could come straight from your throne, straight to

your house, straight to your people.

Lord, I thank you that you will quicken my heart, mind, physical body, every aspect, Lord, that you desire to quicken in me. That I may disappear, that you may appear, and that your word may find its intended course. Examine our hearts today, O God.

Prove us, Lord, come close to us today. And we ask, O God, that you give us the grace to hear this. Give us all the grace to hear it.

Father, I thank you for this, in Jesus' mighty name. I have been shut away, and I feel something resounding so deeply in my heart, that I almost trembled to even deliver this message this morning. But I am going to, in obedience to God.

Isaiah chapter 2, verse 10. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of all her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me. I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of Balaam, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgot me, saith the Lord.

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and a valley of Acre for a door of hope. And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Now at the time of this writing, the northern kingdom of Israel was only a short time away from the judgment of God. Approximately 30 years, more or less. Hosea was one, obviously, of many that God rose up in those generations to warn the people that a certain indifference to the things of God was going to bring a very definite judgment.

Beloved, we would be wise to learn from history, but it seems that the one thing, as you've heard it said, that we learn from history is that we never learn from history. The pattern of God's justice upon people who once knew him is well established in the scriptures. You really don't have to even have a prophetic edge to see it.

It's there, it's established. God very clearly decrees that there are certain flashpoints in a sense, certain boundaries that cannot be crossed. And once they are crossed, the judgments that he decrees for those who once knew him, countries actually, as well as people that once knew him, begin.

They're only a short time away from an incredible judgment. They were not aware that it was coming. They were enjoying, at this time, a time of prosperity, and then they embraced a hope of peace, even though they were aware that enemies were all around the northern kingdom and encroaching on their borders.

Yet prosperity seems to have dulled the social conscience of the people. They'd gotten used to their wayward ways, and they embraced a peace that, of course, that they wanted on their own terms and without the very government of God in their midst. There were people who freely used the name of God.

They went in and out of the temple on the days that were set apart for that purpose, and yet they pursued pleasures and comforts which caused God to call them by the same name as a man would call a morally unfaithful wife, a wife of harlotry. Amazing that God could look down at his own people, a chosen nation that he had brought out and clearly established the fact that he was God. The history was there.

There was an evidence of God. There was a prosperity, there was a glory, a grace that caused the queen of Sheba at one time to come, and when she saw the majesty that God had given to Solomon, to the temple as it had been built in that generation, the scripture says there was no more breath left in her. There was an evidence of God.

There's an opening of the mind. There are ways of wisdom that come upon a people who have Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives. But now the Lord looks down at his own people, his own nation, established by his own laws, made a righteous people by an understanding, minimally at least at times, but an understanding of who he was, and now he looks down at them and through this prophet Hosea to the northern kingdom of Israel, he says, Hosea, you're going to have a wife that's going to be unfaithful to you, and I'm going to allow you to go through this so you can understand my heart for my people.

An incredible pain must have come into this man's heart as he stood before a northern kingdom and understood the depth of the pain that was in the heart of God for the unfaithfulness that had this relationship that he was in with his wife had caused to his own heart, and because of it he understood that this would be an unfaithful nation. Now in Romans chapter 1, put a marker in Hosea 2 please and go to Romans chapter 1 with me. Now the Bible tells us in Romans chapter 1 that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

Holding the truth, the essence of that means having the truth, not necessarily embracing it, but having an understanding that there is a God, he has created us, he does have the right to rule in this universe and such like truths, but taking these truths and holding them in unrighteousness. Romans chapter 1 verse 18 says, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest, or manifest means in the Greek text, it has been publicly made known.

There is nothing hidden about God, his character, he has made it known to the whole generation. And God has showed it to them, for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so they are without excuse. He said even the heavens declare the glory of God.

The very fact that the sun rises and sets, the whole universe hangs in a sense, with the power of God sustaining it is an evidence of the existence of God. So every day, every man stands before God without excuse. Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations.

That means they began to pursue foolishness, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like the corruptible man, into birds, into four-footed beasts and creeping things. In other words, they refashioned God.

They had the knowledge of God, but did not want to retain it in their culture, in their country, their society, so they began to refashion God in a palatable way, and to reform him, to remake him. That has always

been the struggle of the fallen nature of man. Remember that when the serpent came to tempt Adam and Eve in the garden, he said, if you will do this thing, you will become just like God.

And from that day onward, when sin entered into the human race, man has always wanted to be his own God. And if he finds the God of the universe too restrictive, he begins to fashion him, refashion him, and make him more palatable, sinner-friendly, for lack of a better word. Wherefore, God gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.

You see, there's a breakout, as it is. One of the scriptures says, without a vision, the people perish. Now, the literal translation of that scripture is, where there's no revelation of God, the people cast off all moral restraint.

There has to be a revelation. When you come here to this church on Sunday morning, the cry of the hearts of the pastors of this church is that there's a revelation of God. Not just the stories about God, or songs about God, but there is a revelation of Jesus Christ.

This pulpit is a mirror held up as it is, and that's always the cry of our heart that allows us to see Christ as he is, and subsequently to see where we have failed or fallen short of the glory of God. Wherefore, God gave them up to uncleanness, verse 24, through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, or that means the creation, more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

Amen. For this cause, verse 26, God gave them up unto vile affections. Even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one towards another. Men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meek. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

That's one of the most terrifying scriptures as far as I'm concerned in the New Testament. Beloved, if we sit in a place where there is a revelation of Jesus Christ, and we do not let that truth find a lodging place in our hearts, we attempt to refashion and reform God, God says you didn't want me as I chose to reveal myself here, I'll give you over to a reprobate mind. That means a corrupt mind, a crooked mind, according to the ways of God.

Being filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, back biters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, that means refusing reconciliation, unmerciful, who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Oh folks, we're living in an hour like this, where you turn on television at any time, and you will see this reprobation almost morning to night. And tragically, there are many of God's people, or at least those who are called by the name of God, not only do them, but have pleasure in them that do them.

The last stage, really, of reprobation is the vicarious enjoyment of other people's sins. It's the man or woman that says, well, I don't commit adultery, but I will sit at home and watch it on television and let it entertain me. And the scripture says that's the last stage of reprobation.

That's one of the final flashpoints of God's judgment on a nation. Now, back in Hosea chapter 2, again, verse 10, the judgment that God brings on a nation that backslides from Him, turns away from Him. In verse 10, He says, I will discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of My hand.

You see, the judgment begins with a shameful, stark exposure. That's what the word discover means in the Hebrew. There will be a shameful, stark exposure of the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of this people.

Oh, folks, I don't know if you're hearing what I'm hearing from the Holy Ghost, but we're living in a time where for the last two weeks on the news, all you hear about, on one hand, is the passion of Christ, and the other hand is gay marriage. Legislators violating the law, a lawlessness breaking out now in America, going willfully against the law. On one hand, we have this stark portrayal.

I have not seen it, but I hear of it, this stark portrayal of the horridness, the horribleness of the crucifixion, seemingly without any kind of an evangelical comment attached to it. I hear God speaking something to America today. I hear the Lord saying, you're going to go into judgment, and I'm going to show you why.

You see, once we've seen the crucifixion, there really is no excuse. God says, I'm showing you now the depth of My love. I'm showing you why I'm justified.

You can't hear it in half the churches or more in America today, so God has to go to the movie theater to preach the gospel to a vast litany of nations, to say, yes, you're going to experience some judgments, but I want to show you why I'm justified. I want to show you what I did for you. I want you to understand the depth of My love for people who call out to Me.

Where there is no revelation, where there is no vision, moral restraint is cast off, and a lawlessness begins to envelop that society. We would do well to study history. We'd do well to look at empires that have risen and fallen throughout history.

Not so many in the distant past. We'd do well to look at the lawlessness when the knowledge of God is cast off from the people. How shocking this must be to nations where the glory of God is now dawning.

Think about China now. There's an absolute sweeping of God coming into China. The house churches are now coming into the open.

Millions of people are coming to Christ. Members of government are now saying, we have looked, we've studied. University professors are now saying, we've studied, we've seen that it is Christianity that made America great.

That gave her knowledge that has far surpassed any nation in the history of the world that has allowed her to see and understand technology. And when others are still fighting wars on Camelback, she's putting men out in space on different planets. And the Chinese people are looking at this and they're saying, we see that what we've had is bankrupt.

And folks, it's not just the underground peasantry. This is now in government. This is now in the universities in Beijing and some of the top universities in China.

There's a realization that Christianity made America great. And how shocking it must be as China, with its 80 million plus believers and hundreds of thousands coming to Christ virtually daily now, looking on the

television perhaps and to see a nation now is spewing reprobation. To see the passion of Christ on one hand and lawlessness on the other and homosexuals lining up instead of the gospel telling these people they can be set free from their sin.

They're lining up by the hundreds while mayors and legislatures violate the law of the land. How shocking. How shocking.

People coming out of darkness themselves and looking and saying this is truth, this is right, this is righteousness, this is God. This is the way to being an economic powerhouse from the Asian viewpoint. This is from the government viewpoint.

They are actually seeing the principles of Christianity made America great. And now, how shocking it must be. Hosea says, I will discover her lewdness in the sight of all her lovers.

Everywhere she looked for satisfaction, everywhere that she thought would bring her security, I will now expose her lewdness. America has become like a madman that we meet out on the streets here frequently in Manhattan, just blubbing foolishness but unaware of what he has become. Hosea goes on to say, there will be a troubling that will come that is so intense that joyous times will cease to exist.

That means times of true and godly joy. He said, I will also cause, in verse 11, all her mirth to cease. Her feast days, her new moons, her sabbaths and all her solemn feasts.

Let me just read to you from Isaiah chapter 24, where Isaiah speaks about a coming day of judgment on the whole earth. Isaiah says it this way, the land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled. For the Lord has spoken this word.

This is Isaiah chapter 24, I'm in verse 4 now. The earth mourns and fades away. The world languisheth and fades away.

The haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants because they have transgressed the laws. They have changed the ordinance and broken the everlasting covenant.

God says there's a day coming on the whole earth where rebellion has gotten to the point where they've transgressed natural boundaries. Really, the word ordinance in the Hebrew means natural boundaries, ancient laws, which have been displayed in public places and which God requires must be strictly obeyed. But they've transgressed for the first time in history.

We're looking now in America at redefining marriage. And beloved, I want to ask you, where does it stop? Once this first redefinition, if it is allowed, and if we do have a reprieve under President Bush, it may only be for a short time. I encourage you to pray for that man and pray for every Christian in government in this country.

If we do have a reprieve, once the definition of marriage, it's a definition that has existed from time immemorial, as far back as we know. Whatever culture, there's been a definition of marriage between a man and a woman. Of course, in other societies, it has been at times multiple wives.

But that's no longer for today. Once the definition is changed, then I can foresee that we will have groups of people saying we all love each other. We want to get married together.

There is no end to this. Folks, we are really moving very quickly to flashpoints of God's judgment. As a matter of fact, I think we may be long past the point of return.

Therefore, he says in verse 6, the curse has devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men are left. The new wine mourns, the vine languishes, and all the merry hearted do sigh.

The mirth of the tabres ceases, the noise of them that rejoice ends, and the joy of the harp ceases. They shall not drink wine with a song, and strong drinks shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down, every house is shut up that no men may come in.

There's crying for wine in the streets, all joy is darkened, and the mirth of the land is gone. Troubling will come, troubling. I don't know what form it will take, but I know there'll be a troubling.

And all joy that is not based in God will be so superficial there'll be no enjoyment in it anymore. I think of Israel today, it's perhaps not the best example, but imagine yourself even today sitting in some outdoor cafe somewhere, and wanting perhaps to rejoice and enjoy the time, but there's such a sense of dread now over the whole society that it's so difficult to enjoy any type of an experience, whether it's a cultural experience or just a day out in a restaurant because of the troubling that is so evident now. Hosea, again chapter 2 verse 12, he says, I'll destroy her vines and her fig trees whereof she has said these are my rewards that my lovers have given me, and I'll make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

In other words, the economy will falter, the economy will fail. All of the places where she found sustenance, I will take them away, and I will cause a panic as it is, an economic panic to hit the country. Again, Hosea 2 verse 13, he says, And I will visit upon her the days of Balaam, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with their earrings and jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgot me, saith the Lord.

She worshipped the Balaam gods of prosperity and good times and moral unrestraint. Even in the house of the Lord, Balaam is worshipped now. You turn on Christian television, you're going to see Balaam worship, not the worship of Jesus Christ.

Oh yes, it's got Christ's name attached to it, but it is blatant Balaam worship now. Prosperity and health and wealth and good times and unrestrained immorality. And he says, for all of these things she will be visited.

She'll be drawn, in other words, into a battle that she cannot hope to win without the true presence of God. God says, I'm going to take away all comfort at every level. There'll be no more places of refuge.

There'll be no more joy. I'm going to take it all away. There's going to be a sense of dread and fear come upon the people of the entire land.

Now, these are principles of God. This was spoken by Hosea to the northern kingdom who didn't believe it because of their prosperity and attempts at peace. But just a few years later, here they are being assimilated and virtually carried away.

The northern kingdom, many of them never to be seen nor heard from again. And he says, I'm going to visit for these things. This is a pattern of God when a nation begins to thumb their nose, as it is, at the

ways of God.

But then he says a very curious thing. There may be a division in your Bible between verses 13 and 14, but really there isn't in the Old Testament. And in the midst of it all, he says in verse 14, Therefore I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably to her.

That's an incredible thing. He says, I'm going to draw many into a desert place and there I will speak to each one comfortably. And the word comfortably in the Hebrew text means with all of my heart.

I'm going to draw. You see, God is merciful. Even in the midst of judgment and justice, he is still merciful, an absolute merciful God.

And he says, I'm going to draw many into this wilderness place and I'm going to speak to them with all of my heart. Now, beloved, I want to ask you, how is God going to do that in our generation? How is he going to speak to this generation with all of his heart? Is he going to make another movie? Is there going to be, it would be awesome if there would be a chance that there would be another revival as it is in the houses of God. And perhaps there will be when it's finally evident that the gospel that's being preached is shallow and insufficient.

Perhaps there will be men and women of God who go back into the prayer closet and get away from the Internet and the boardrooms. And start seeking God again and bring a fresh revelation. That could be part of the way.

But I believe it goes much beyond that. And this is the reason why you and I are fasting. This is the reason why we will be in this house on Tuesday night, Wednesday night and Thursday night.

Crying out to God as the people of Israel did in the day of Esther. Oh God, I want my life to make a difference. You're going to send me where I wouldn't normally go.

You're going to give me courage to do what I wouldn't normally do. You're going to take me into places that I don't want to visit. And yes, there may be some rejection.

There's always the possibility of rejection. But Esther said, fast for me for three days and I'm going in and if I perish, I perish. If I lose my promotion, I lose my promotion.

Oh folks, promotion is such a non-issue now. It's like the second officer on the Titanic getting a promotion. It's such a non-issue today and the day we're living in now.

Acts chapter 8. I'm going to show you what I believe that Christ is going to do. Through you and I today. Now in Acts chapter 8, there was a man called Philip.

And Philip was a preacher of the gospel, a Christian. He went down into Samaria and he began to preach Christ. And the Bible says the people started to hear those things which he spoke.

And there were miracles that were flowing through his life. There were unclean spirits that were fleeing from people. And there were healings happening and there was great joy in Samaria.

Absolute great joy. Now Philip is a busy man. Just like many of us are busy.

We have day to day schedules that we have to keep. We have things that we want to do. We have areas in our life that God is perhaps blessing or prospering even in a Christian sense.

But all of a sudden in verse 26 in Acts 8, God calls this very busy man and a very successful man. He calls him to do something very strange. And it says, And the angel of the Lord spake to Philip and said, Arise and go towards the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

He sends him into a desert. Incredible. Into a place that he really wouldn't normally want to go.

This is a successful man. And his life is complete. And it even has a religious excuse in a sense.

I'm actively involved in the things of God. The things of God are prospering through my hand. But God says, I want you to go to a desert place.

A dry place. What could the reason possibly be that the Lord would send this man to this place? But you see, in this dry place, there was a man, the Bible says, from Ethiopia. A man of great authority.

And he was leaving Jerusalem and heading back into Africa. And he was sitting in his chariot and he was reading the words of the prophet Isaiah. He was a searching man.

He was in a dry place and he was searching for truth. He had gone to Jerusalem looking for truth and perhaps not been able to find it. And he's heading back in his chariot into his former place of living.

And he's passing through a dry place. And the Lord says, I'm going to bring many into this dry place. I'm going to bring many, many, many into this place of searching.

Things are going to begin to fall around. And the question is going to come into many people's hearts. Who am I? What am I doing? Where am I going? Where is God? What has he got to do with everything that's going on around me? Why am I feeling so destitute? If there is a God, God, would you show yourself to me? Would you speak to me? Would you help me? Many, many, he says through Isaiah, I'm going to bring them down into this wilderness place.

And there, I'm going to speak to them with all of my heart. In the next chapter, 8 verse 29, as Philip just simply obeys God. The spirit of the Lord says to Philip, he says, go near and join yourself unto this chariot.

And here is simply the command. And I believe this is what God is saying. Through the events that are happening today and what's going to happen tomorrow, many are going to be on a wilderness journey.

There's a season coming in many people's lives where they're going to be asking questions in their heart. They may seem to be prosperous. They may seem to be in authority even, but they are on a journey.

It can be your boss in the workplace. It can be a well-respected man in the community. It can be somebody who's just walking down the street and the Holy Spirit just shows you they're on a journey.

They're searching, they're questioning, they're asking and they're not going to find it on television. They're not going to find it in the foolishness that's being spewed through much media today. And into this place of a searching man comes Philip and the Holy Spirit says, go near, go near.

And as I'm preparing this message, I went out yesterday and I walked into a store and I saw a man come to the counter. Matter of fact, he reminded me a lot of David Davis. A well-presented man, a big booming

voice came up to the counter.

But as he came to the counter, he started wiping tears from his eyes. And I could see this man is broken hearted. I can see life has been hard for him.

I can see he's in a horrible wilderness journey and I'm in line behind him. And the question comes into my heart. You see, the Holy Spirit said, this is what I'm speaking about.

We have a choice. We can go about our daily business or we can go near. We can draw in and ask the Holy Spirit for the courage to say, I see that the day has been hard for you.

I'd like to share something with you if you have a moment. You see, that's the choice that God gives us to make, to go near. That's what the fast is all about.

It's God saying, I want to speak to a wilderness generation. I want to speak to young people. I want to speak to a society that is for a moment stopping to examine itself.

And I need a voice that can speak to them with all of my heart. I want to speak to them. But I've not chosen to send an angel and they're not going to hear it on the radio.

I have a church in every city. I have a body of believers in every country. I have people who are busy and occupied and know me and many of them know my heart.

And I simply want them to go near. I simply want them to move, not away from, but into the midst of the suffering. Into the midst of people's deserts all around them.

To get out of the busyness and the self-consumption that seems to want to swallow this church age. To say, God, help me now to be sensitive. God, help me to understand and to hear your voice and to not back away from human need any longer around me.

And Philip heads into the desert and the Holy Spirit tells him, go near. And verse 30 says, Philip ran to him. He ran to him and as he got closer to this man who was in a wilderness journey, he heard him reading from the prophet Isaiah.

He heard and it's like the type of man who's got some thoughts about God, but they're not quite correct. And he said, do you understand what you're reading? Do you understand those things that are coming out of your mouth? And he said, the Ethiopian man said, how can I? Except some man should guide me. How can I understand? Except somebody should help me.

Somebody should tell me. That's why Paul says in the New Testament, how can they hear without a preacher? How can they hear if nobody will go? There are multitudes of theories about God that are swirling around in people's minds and people's hearts. And we have a multitude of them, but we're so short of Philips in this generation.

Those will just press in and say, I'd like to tell you, I'd like to show you what God has shown me. And he desired, it says, that Philip would come up and sit with him. And the word desire is in the Greek paraceto.

It means it's one who's called to somebody's side to comfort them, to make an appeal to them and to encourage them. It's the root of the word paracletos, which is the word that Jesus used to define the Holy Spirit. When he, the comforter, has come, he will show you all things.

Jesus said he will glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and he shall show it unto you. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We have so much talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And somehow think in our generation that it's confined to things that we do inside of the church. But the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us, for example, is to draw close to us and comfort us. I believe in God, that God is comforting you today in spite of the severity of this word that you are receiving comfort from God.

Because you've been sitting in his presence and he has drawn near to you. But then, we who have received the Holy Spirit are called to be an extension of that ministry in our generation. We are called to draw near to those who are troubled and to comfort them with the comfort that we have received of God.

And that's what the New Testament says. We comfort others by the comfort that we ourselves have received from Almighty God. We've been comforted.

On the road to Emmaus, there were two men walking. And the scripture says, as it came to pass, as they communed together and reasoned, that Jesus himself drew near and went with them. He drew near to them.

That's the ministry of Christ. Christ had been crucified. As far as they could see, there was no resurrection.

There were rumors of a resurrection, but there was nothing that was really evident in their heart. They walked on the road and it says as they walked that Jesus just drew near. He just began to walk beside them.

Isn't that amazing? Isn't Christ the Lord of the universe? It shows us the pattern of the New Testament church. And he just began to walk with them. And he said, what kind of communication is it that you're having together as you walk and you appear to be so sad? And so they began to tell him their tale of woe.

Oh, the Lord Christ was crucified and we had so hoped that he would have been the one who delivered us. In other words, they're saying our hopes are dashed into the ground. We so had put our trust in something, but that which we wanted to trust, even our perception or conception of God has failed us.

And we're living in a generation when people's perceptions of God is about to fail them. There are all types of people sitting in churches that are going to be terrified in the coming days. They're going to be running.

They're not going to have an answer. You heard this before. The Holy Spirit one time warned us in this church that New York City was going into a time of calamity and difficulty and told us why it was going to happen.

And it did come. And many people who heard the word here were prepared on September 9th, 2001 or the 11th. Is it the 11th of September 2001? People were prepared because they had heard the word.

They'd received it and they were prepared to comfort those who were running in terror. Jesus himself draws near. It's amazing.

And he said, I will draw her into the wilderness. And he said, I will speak comfortably to her. And then he begins to open the scriptures and the Bible says from Moses right through all the prophets.

He began to tell them everything about himself. And it's amazing. They said when he was finished, did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us, by the way? And while he opened to us the scriptures?

You see, there's a comfort.

We're not called to stand next to people as the church and just go off on how wicked the judiciary is becoming or how wicked government is becoming. They already know that. Many people instinctively know things are wrong.

But we're to stand beside them and open to them the love of God, the mercy of God. He said, I will draw her into the wilderness and I will speak comfortably there to her. I will comfort her.

I will tell her that her warfare is accomplished. I will give a revelation of the very heart of God through his son, Jesus Christ. Their hearts began to burn as the scripture was open.

You see, hope was flowing in. He was talking about the reasons that God became a man and died on the cross on Calvary. And they said, didn't our hearts burn within us? And in that particular passage of scripture, verse 34, they drew a conclusion.

They said, the Lord is risen. Indeed, the Lord is risen. Our hearts burned within us and we have a witness that what we have heard is the truth.

I have a sense in my heart that even through this church body, as well as believers all over the world who will stand for truth in the coming days, we are going to be led of God to make a difference in our generation. I've determined in my heart that I don't want to back away from human need. I heard last Tuesday of a man in this church who saw a lady standing on a street corner just crying.

And he said to the lady, come to church tonight with me. And I believe that God will answer the despair of your heart. She came.

She gave her life to Christ on Tuesday night. Not backing away from the need. Not backing away because we're busy with religious things or we have our own lives or agendas to live before us.

I hear in the coming days this testimony in Manhattan, in Queens, in Brooklyn, in Staten Island and all the other boroughs and all the other states that border onto New York State. I hear this testimony, the Lord is risen. As God's people, you and I begin to move into these desert places.

Begin to draw close to those who are in need and begin to open to them the love of God through Jesus Christ. Oh folks, it's time to make a difference in our society. It's time to stand up for Christ and stand up for truth.

It's time to stop cowering under the gods of this generation. It's time that we begin to speak in the workplace. It's time that we begin to speak to young people who are searching for truth.

If you were here Friday night, you would have seen a full altar of weeping young people looking for truth, looking for answers in the midst of this dark and crooked world. They've been lied to many from the time they've been born. They've been told there is no God.

They've been told there are no absolutes. There is no up, there is no down. They've been told that good is evil and evil is good.

But they finally heard the truth and when they heard it, their hearts melted. And the testimony is there. He is alive.

The Lord has risen from the dead. There is a God. His name is Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hosea says, I will allure her.

The Lord says to Hosea, into the wilderness. Bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably. And I will give her vineyards from there.

And I will open the door, the valley of Acre for a door of hope. In other words, I will open the door to her. I will show her where true provision is.

And I will open the door to her. And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth. As in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

She shall sing, Hosea says. This bride, these people maybe who had a knowledge of God, but not according to truth or righteousness. There is going to be a new song come into her heart.

She is going to begin to glorify God. In the New Living Testament, Isaiah says it this way in chapter 24. The city is left in ruins with its gates battered down.

Throughout the earth the story is the same. Like the stray olives left on the tree or the few grapes left on the vine after the harvest. Only a remnant is left.

But all who are left will shout and sing for joy. Those in the west will praise the Lord's majesty. In eastern lands give glory to the Lord.

In the coastlands of the sea praise the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. Listen to them as they sing to the Lord from the ends of the earth. Hear them singing praises to the righteous one.

Isaiah said, yeah, it's going to be a difficult day. The world will be turned upside down. But in the east, in the west, in the coastlines, there are people who are going to rise up.

And there is going to be songs of Zion on their lips, on their mouths. When all around them seems to be crumbling, they're going to have a testimony. The Lord is alive.

He is risen. He sits at the right hand of all authority and power. He is my Savior.

He is my God. There is a truth. There is a right way.

There is a wrong way. There is a way to healing of the heart. There is a way to eternal life.

And His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is the call of every Christian. In our generation especially.

All through time, but especially today. It's the call of every Christian. It's to move with God's heart through the wilderness of fallen humanity all around us.

And to hear the voice of God saying to us, go near. You have to be set apart for God to even hear that voice. Go near.

If you will hear this today. If you will be among those who fast. And believe God that He is able to use your life.

Next year at this time, or even next month at this time. There will be somebody perhaps sitting next to you. Born again by the Spirit of God.

Praising God because you heard the voice of God saying go near. Go near. I guess really that's my altar call today.

It's for everyone in the house that says God. I want to hear that voice. I'm not coming to church to fast for no reason.

I want to hear you leading me. I want you to deliver me Lord Jesus from self consumption. From ministry busyness.

From the preoccupation with my own comfort and safety and gain. And I want to hear your voice saying to me. Go near.

Now beloved if you can hear it. Even today. There will be people wanting the kingdom of God.

Through you. Through people who are going to respond. There are going to be souls added to eternity.

Because you've heard the word of God. And you're going to begin to hear that inner voice. That just simply tells you to go near to this person.

Just begin to walk with them through their wilderness. And speak to them comfortably. About the kingdom of God.

There's no other reason that we're the church. We live to praise him and that is wonderful. But we bring the greatest amount of praise to his name.

When through us he is allowed to bear much fruit. To the glory of God the Father. There are people here today also that need to be comforted.

You can't offer comfort if you're in sin. You can't offer comfort if you are in prison. By the powers of darkness.

If you will believe God today he will set you free. And give you a message and give you a voice. And make you sensitive to those who are walking through wilderness times.

That we're living in today. If the Holy Spirit is drawing you today. In the education annex as we stand momentarily.

You can go and stand between the screens and we will pray for you. Those who need to be comforted. And those who want to be comforters.

And if this is deep and dear in your heart. God's going to hear you. He's going to speak to you and he's going to guide you.

As we all stand I'm asking you to make your way out of your seats in the balcony. Make your way to this altar. Main sanctuary just slip out from where you are.

And we're going to pray together. Hallelujah. Would you lead us in a chorus please? Warren.

Just make your way please down here. You want to be free? Those who need courage. Those who are afraid to take a stand for God.

Afraid of people. There are some here today that you're just you're so afraid of people. You'd say oh I'd give anything to be able to approach a stranger.

But I'm so afraid. The Bible says a perfect love will cast out fear. God will put his love into your heart.

And God will cast the fear out of approaching a stranger. And saying I see that you're going through a hard time. Can I be of some help to you? Can I talk to you about God? God will make you a comforter.

Please pray with me. Lord Jesus. I ask your forgiveness.

For everything in my life. That occupies. My mind.

My heart. My time. And keeps me.

From the work. That you have called me. To do.

And the witness. That you have called me. To be.

In this world. And where I live. Forgive me.

For embracing things. That offend you. And today.

I come. And I believe. That in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord you're going to set me free. I renounce. The hidden things.

Of this honesty. I will not. Hold the truth of Christ.

In unrighteousness. I ask you God. To give me a clean mind.

Give me a pure heart. And to make me. A channel.

Of your love. For my generation. Beginning in my home.

In my family. In my neighborhood. In my workplace.

And in my city. And in my world. Oh Jesus.

I see. Terrible times coming. I see.

Many. In a wilderness. Of indecision.

I also see. You'll give me to them. You'll give me.

The love. That I need. To cast away.

From my heart. The fear of man. And the fear of rejection.

And you will enable me. To go to them. And to comfort them.

With the word of Christ. And the knowledge of God. Lord Jesus.

This day. I commit myself. To this purpose.
And I ask oh God. That you could touch through me. You could flow through me.
That you would be glorified. Through my life. I yield oh God.
To this purpose. That you would use me. To make a difference.
For God. And for good. In my generation.
Oh God thank you. That you will use me. To stir up a new song.
In somebody's heart. And for the rest of my days. I'm believing.
That where I travel. Whether east. Or west.
Or north. Or south. There will be songs.
Of glory. And joy. Released in the hearts.
Of people. Who will come to know you. Through my life.
As Lord and Savior. Oh God. Let this be.
The chiefest joy. The chiefest delight. Of my heart.
Oh Jesus. I believe. You're answering my prayer.
This very moment. You're calling me. You're going to use me.
Even this day. You're going to use me. For your glory.
Jesus. We believe it God. We believe it Lord.
You're going to use this church. For your glory. Let your glory be here.
Let your glory be here. Let your glory be in this house. Oh God.
Thank you. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord.
Thank you God. Thank you God. Hallelujah.
Hallelujah. This is the conclusion of the message.

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