

The Triumph of the Lamb

by Michael L. Brown

Michael L. Brown's sermon emphasizes the triumph of the Lamb and the importance of understanding God's unconventional ways in advancing His kingdom.

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Topics: "Kingdom Living", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a grandfather and his granddaughter, emphasizing the importance of forgiveness in advancing God's kingdom. The speaker also discusses the need to address the activist homosexual agenda with compassion and resistance. The sermon then transitions to the speaker's experience in India, where they witnessed a large gathering of leaders and youth despite heavy rain and challenging weather conditions. The speaker concludes by highlighting the significance of Revelation 5 and the need for a perspective shift in light of recent events and challenges in the Christian community.

Transcript

We ask you for the eyes of our understanding to be opened. We pray for ears to hear, for a heart to respond. We pray as always, God, that you would change us so we could go out and change our world.

In Jesus' name, amen. For those that are listening to this online, it's November 12th, 2006, here at the FIRE community in Concord. If you are here in this meeting, let it be known.

Okay, great. I want you to turn with me to Revelation 5. And I have some things of real importance to share with you today. A lot's happened in the last couple of weeks here in the States.

There's been a tragic scandal with a national Christian leader whom we all hurt for together. There have been some major shifts in the elections. A lot's going on, and I believe there's some key things that we need to hear, a perspective we need to have.

God dropped a theme in my heart when we were in India a couple of weeks ago. The Lord was really doing some great things with good numbers of people there. The leaders' meetings in the daytime, there were 7,000 leaders.

Not an exaggerated figure. I mean, there was a tremendous crowd of leaders that come from all over the city and all over India. When there was a youth meeting from teenagers up into their 30s, we had a good

10,000 people for that.

By the second night of meetings, we were well over 40,000 people attending. And then rain started to come, heavy rains, heavy winds. The field, the cricket stadium there was getting very muddy.

Saturday, when it was time for the night message, it was amazing. The crowd was growing despite the weather. And just when it was time for the message, rain started to come.

Everything had to be cut short. And then I was going to be speaking. Steve Hill and I were sharing the meetings.

I was going to be speaking now the final Sunday morning. And most of the folks, the pastors, had gone back for their services. And because of the rains, the crowd was much smaller.

And because it was Sunday, it was really just the main leaders' congregation that was gathered there Sunday morning. So we were in the hundreds versus the thousands under this long tent with heavy rain around us. And just you had to go trekking through the mud to get anywhere.

And I thought, really, this is a bit more of a picture of the kingdom than the big crowds and the excitement of that. There's something that God wants to say to us in the midst of this. And if you want a title for the message, it's the triumph of the Lamb.

So I want you to go with me to Revelation chapter 5. Revelation 5, I want to lay out some principles and then talk directly about some of the things that have been happening. Revelation chapter 5, verse 1. Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or to look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, do not weep, see the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The root of David has triumphed.

He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. This is exciting. The triumphant one, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Yes, I mean, we like that. Root of David has triumphed. He can open the scrolls.

Verse 6, then I, wait, what's this? Then I saw a lamb. They've just announced the triumph of the Lion of the tribe of Judah who's going to open the scroll and reveal its contents. And John looks and he said, then I saw a lamb looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

The great triumph is announced, the triumph of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And when John looks, he sees a lamb looking as if it has been slain. Hear me, God's ways are not our ways.

And God does not always work in the ways that we think are best and the ways that we think will bring about the best results. In John, the 12th chapter, some Greek-speaking Jews come to Jesus. They want to see him.

And he says, beginning in verse 23, now is the time for the Son of Man to be glorified. I mean, think, you got there at just the right moment. He's going to be glorified.

Maybe he'll put on a display of miracles. Maybe he'll raise his hand and the heavens will light up around him. Maybe there'll be like the Mount of Transfiguration and more.

Maybe he'll call down fire from heaven. Maybe he'll cause an earthquake. Maybe miracles will just begin to happen.

Now the Son of Man, the Son of God will be glorified. And then he says, unless a grain of wheat falls in the ground and dies, it remains alone. If it dies, it bears much fruit.

The way that he's going to be glorified is by dying, by laying down his life. And that is the path and the key to resurrection. See, we think that power consists of numbers, consists of influence, consists in finances, consists in success.

And even though God can work through all those things, he defines power very differently. And often he manifests his power most greatly through our weakness. His ways are not our ways.

Luke 16, Jesus addressed those who esteem themselves so highly, some of the religious leaders that seem to be the key men in this society. And he said, you're the ones that justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Luke 16, 15.

That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God. God is often looking at things through completely different lenses than we are. I read an article recently about Heidi Baker ministering.

Many of you know the work of Roland and Heidi Baker in Africa, extraordinary work. The Kabbas just got to spend some time with the Bakers and hear even more firsthand of what God's doing through them. I mean, extraordinary miracles, blind beggars coming and eyes being open, deaf ears of children, orphans being open.

7,000 churches they planted and they worked with the poorest of the poor. And most of us would define poverty a certain level and then be shocked to see the poorest of the poor around the world. And Jesus once said to her, to Heidi Baker, come up to the lowest place.

In other words, ministering to the poor and the hurting and the outcasts and the nobodies in this world, that's coming up. That's coming up to the lowest place. God's got the whole thing turned upside down.

Now listen, God often blesses and brings increase in all these ways that I mentioned, in numbers and in influence and in finance and success. You read the book of Acts and it gives the account, the number 3,000, at Shavuot, Pentecost, coming to the Lord, being added to the body. And then it grows to 5,000.

By the time you get to the sixth chapter of Acts, it mentions that many priests are becoming obedient to the faith. When you get to the 21st chapter, it's speaking of myriads of thousands who are believers. Around the throne, according to Revelation 7, there'll be a multitude that nobody could number, but we make a fatal error.

We make a terrible mistake and it often is fatal. Often it's a matter of life and death. When we put our trust in those things, when we trust in our numbers, when we trust in our power, when we trust in our influence, when we trust in our finances, when we trust in some level of success, be it numbers in the government, be it numbers in a congregation, we make a fatal mistake when we put our trust in the arm of flesh on any level.

And often that is the key to our spiritual undoing. That's often the key to our failures and our shortcomings. It's a key to our powerlessness here in America to have such massive numbers and yet to be so ineffective in terms of really impacting the culture with the message and life of Jesus.

Take a look with me in 2 Samuel 24. There's a parallel to this in 1 Chronicles 21 that many people notice. 2 Samuel 24 one, it says, "The anger of the Lord burned against Israel "and he incited David against them." That's 2 Samuel 24 one.

1 Chronicles 21 one, it says that Satan incited David. The answer being very simple because God was angry with David that Satan was then used as a tool to incite David. 2 Samuel 24 one, "Again, the anger of the Lord burned against Israel "and he incited David against them saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah." What's so bad about that? How is this a provocation of wrath? How is this gonna bring judgment on the people? I mean, God took censuses of the people, counts of the people beginning and end of numbers and they're numbered there.

You have different counts given the exiles returning and Ezra and Nehemiah, counts are made. What's so bad about numbering the people? And why was it often considered dangerous and associated with special offerings to turn away wrath? So the king said to Joab and the army commanders with him, "Go throughout the tribes of Israel "from Dan to Beersheba and enroll the fighting men "so that I may know how many there are.' "But Joab replied to the king, "May the Lord your God multiply the troops "a hundred times over "and may the eyes of my Lord the king see it." But why does my Lord the king want to do such a thing? But he went and did it and then wrath broke out and it brought a terrible plague of judgment on the nation. Thank God for little children making noise.

You say, easy for you to say. Listen to what Matthew Henry said about it. He went through five different reasons of trying to explain what it was that was so bad that David did.

And then he comes across this, which I believe is the right explanation. He said, that which was the worst thing in numbering the people was that David did it in the pride of his heart, which was Hezekiah's sin in showing his treasures to the ambassadors. It was a proud conceit of his own greatness and having the command of so numerous of people as if their increase, which was to be ascribed purely to the blessing of God, had been owing to any conduct of his own.

It was a proud confidence in his own strength. By publishing among the nations the number of his people, he thought to appear the more formidable and doubted not that if he should have any war, he should overpower his enemies with the multitude of forces trusting in God only. See, the problem was, as it says in Psalm 33, no king is saved by the size of his army.

The problem is as blessings come, as numbers increase, you begin to think, now we can do something. Now we have power. Now we are somebody forgetting that we only triumph in terms of God's kingdom advancing, lives being changed and Jesus being exalted.

We only move forward by the grace and power of God. And yes, he can use numbers. And yes, he can use our united voice.

And yes, he can use our united serving and giving and all these different things. But the key to the power lies at the throne of God. And the moment that we put our trust in the wrong place, the moment that we think, we've got all these numbers at the voting polls, we've got these mega churches, we've got this, we've got that.

At that moment, we make a fatal error. And at that moment, we are thinking of things just the way the world thinks. Let me say again, God's ways are not our ways.

The lion of the tribe of Judah who triumphs is the lamb looking as if it had been slain. There's a Romanian pastor, Joseph Tsong, not living in Romania now, but when he was being interrogated by the police, he had been beaten and threatened many times. He was being interrogated and he thought they've come to the point of killing him.

And he said to them, he said, your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying. He said, my tapes, my messages are all over Romania.

He said, if you kill me, all those tapes will be sprinkled with blood and then everyone will say, we need to hear what this man had to say because he was willing to die for it. And at that point, they became afraid to kill him and thought the only choice is to exile him. God's ways are not our ways.

You may see a scene somewhere, maybe in Indonesia, Muslim riots and Christians being killed. You may get the reports through Voice of the Martyrs and other ministries, believers being beheaded, chopped up, burned alive, church buildings being torn down, terrible suffering, radical Islam lifting its voice. And you're watching the scene, you're watching people getting destroyed.

You're watching God's people suffering terribly. You're watching what looks like the triumph of Islam and God's looking at that and say, I've got them just where I want them. When the dust settles, listen to me, when the dust settles, some years later, you'll see that the kingdom of God has advanced.

You'll see that there's been great increase among the believers. Joseph Zahn said this, the sovereignty of God means Satan at the end always finds out that he just promoted God's cause. All God's enemies combine to destroy his work and they always discover at the end that they just promoted it.

I mean, think of the ways of God. He looks down at a rebellious earth. He looks down at wickedness and sin.

He looks at people that will not have him as God. Maybe the angels come around the throne and God says, I have the solution. I know just what I'm going to do to assert my rule as king over these people.

Angels are, yes, what is it? I'm gonna send my son to die for them. I'm gonna send my son as a lamb that they will crucify and that's how I'm going to win. Your supreme weapon is killing, my supreme weapon is dying.

It can be terrifying to see if you're in a country being persecuted. Maybe you see these signs that are becoming more common around the world. You see them maybe pictures from England of Muslim demonstrations and they have these signs, behead those who insult Islam, that appeal to the flesh, to

anger, to violence.

You have to take over. You have to be forceful. That's how you win.

You contrast that spirit, behead those who insult Islam. How dare you call us terrorists? We'll kill you if you call us terrorists. You wanna know the real revolutionary spirit? You wanna know the spirit that really brings about change? You wanna know how the kingdom's advanced? Not through anger and hatred and violence and power, earthly power, you know it's advanced.

We saw a great demonstration of it just recently among the Amish communities. I mean, you think of this, the slaughter, 10. You wanna get a picture of innocence.

You know, little Amish girls. 10 of them shot, five dead, either immediately or shortly thereafter. Beginning at the age of six.

Our oldest granddaughter's almost six. It was so easy for me to picture just the innocence of a little six-year-old and the terror of the moment. I just would read accounts and just sit in my room and cry.

And then the thing that was so overwhelming was the immediate report from every angle. Anyone that talked to anybody, the reports came the same way. We must offer forgiveness.

We're not angry because we know that Christ has forgiven us and we offer the same forgiveness. I mean, immediately they start raising charitable funds for the wife or the murderer. Now that she's a widow, wow, they attend the funeral.

One pastor was visiting one of the families and here's the mother just gently preparing the body of her six-year-old in her white dress, just preparing her for burial. And he said that finally something happened and he had to leave the room. He couldn't stay, he was just too overwhelmed.

It was when the grandfather came in with his granddaughter about to be buried in her little white dress. Gathers the rest of the children together to explain to them the importance of forgiveness. That's how God's kingdom advances.

You know, all the might, the power, the anger, you think we've got to respond in kind. That's where we lose. That's where we guarantee defeat.

That's when we have nothing whatsoever to do with the spirit of Jesus. I was preaching in India on this theme and suddenly it hit me, a question hit me. You know, God's really spoken to us to tackle the whole issue of the activist homosexual agenda.

Reach out and resist. Reach out to individual homosexual men and women with compassion. Resist the agenda with courage.

And there's a book I've been working on. Hopefully next year we'll have it out called *The Queer Thing Happened to America* about the activist agenda. And somehow I believe God wants to use the book to make an impact.

And the question hit me, what if God's purpose in me writing the book is that it would then draw attention to what I have to say and then get me in front of the media where I would be crucified, humiliated, mocked, and just turned into a sacrificial lamb so that people would see the true spirit of those that oppose. In other

words, show up as a lamb among wolves so that the real wolves can be exposed as they chew you up. See, in my thinking it would be, yeah, I'll have the right answer.

You know, maybe there'll be some setting where there'll be some debate or discussion and I'll have the perspective they've never thought of. Have you considered this? Aha! And I felt like God's saying, what if I wanna raise you up to be crucified, be mocked, humiliated, can't get a word out of your mouth, you just seem like an idiot, and that's the purpose of it. Scott said that's good, bless you, bless you.

Tremendous support we have from the leadership team here at FIRE. But amen, I agree, that's good. Let me just tell you a little story.

Some years ago, when Phil Donahue was back on the air, I was asked to be on a show with our friend Rabbi Shmueli Boteach and a well-known Baptist leader, key Christian spokesman, Albert Mohler. We were on together, and then they were doing another show, a live show, towards the end of the year, December 17th, that particular year, and could I come on again, and Shmueli and Albert Mohler, and this time they were gonna have another guest who was a liberal Christian, very much not believing in the authority of Scripture the way we would, and then another guest, I didn't know who it was, turned out to be Flip Benham, meeting for the first time. And this particular show, just the nature of it and the live audience and everything, I didn't get to say much.

We had a staff gathering at our house that night, end of the year holiday party, and I wasn't there for it, so they watched on television, and they were more frustrated than I was, because the only way to say something would have been to kind of just yell above everybody. So here and there, I got to say a few things and some key lines, but not much else. I remember thinking at a certain point, they just could have put a stick with a smiling face on it in the chair, would have been just as effective.

Now, thankfully, Dr. Mohler got to say some very clear things, and Flip got to confront Phil Donahue straight on about his own life. The message went forth in many ways, but I thought, boy, if they ask me on again, I'm going to say, only on the condition that you let me talk. So some months go by, and I'm flying out of Pensacola, two ladies getting on the plane, and they say, were you on Donahue? I said, yeah, some time ago.

They said, we just watched that. I said, well, there was a live show with an audience. They said, yeah, that was the one.

I said, oh, in what context? They said, well, we're part of a pro-life ministry, and we had a regional or a national gathering here in Pensacola, whatever it was, and the director was talking about, you know, when the world attacks us and so on, and we're going to be dealing with a lot of hostility, and they said, they showed that episode to use you as a model of how to respond graciously under fire. Isn't that interesting? Thankfully, others got to speak, and the message went out in different ways, but you never really know. I mean, we think if we could just have this setting, this position, that'll do it, and God may have a completely different purpose, completely different way of doing things.

I'll say it again, His ways are not our ways, and it's time for us here in the States in particular, where we have so many numbers, where we have so many people in high places, be it in the government, be it in the business world, be it in the media, be it in the sports world, you name it, just out there. It's so easy for us to trust in the wrong things. It is so easy for us to forget what the gospel is really about.

There is the constant challenge that we can easily deceive ourselves. Listen, we believe God wants to grow and increase fire, the congregation, the school, the world missions work. As we're leading the coalition of conscience here in the city, we believe God wants to increase that in numbers, in different ways.

And those of you that are seeking to follow the Lord, when His blessings on you, increase comes, whether spiritual increase, whether increase in maturity, whether financial increase, different things. One way or another, God shows favor, and there's some multiplication somewhere, somehow. And it just as God warned in Deuteronomy 8, when He financially blessed His people, that they could then put their trust in the wrong thing.

And they could then think, look at what we have done. And that's the curse right there. That was the curse that Nebuchadnezzar fell on.

Isn't this great Babylon that I've built? Look at what I have done. Look at us. Walk around, see the buildings, walk around, see the numbers, walk around, look at the bank account, walk around, look at the press release, walk around, look at this.

And it's all, they can all go up in smoke. All you need is God just to breathe against it, and it's over. Samuel Chadwick was a teacher of Leonard Ravenhill.

A few generations back, Chadwick said, the church always fails at the point of self-confidence. Hear that again. The church always fails at the point of self-confidence.

Years ago, someone was speaking to me about, God wanted to deal with pride in my life, and I examined my life based on pride the way others would think of it. Yeah, I don't care to be some big shot or big name, or being in front of crowds is meaningless, and this and that, and just, I thought to myself, I'm not proud. And all the while, the thing that this person rightly saw that God then nailed me with was self-confidence.

The subtle difference between God confidence and self-confidence. And it's harder for the church to fail at the point of self-confidence when it's persecuted and beaten down. When Larry Tomczak was here with us last time, he quoted another pastor.

This is not meant to be an exact statistic, but there's an overall truth of it, that the church under persecution, 90% stay strong. The church under prosperity, 10% stay strong. I don't think that the church in China, with its extraordinary growth from less than a million at the time of the rising of communism to at least 80 million under communism.

I don't think there's any way to have that growth, to maintain that growth, to see those things go forward in that way, except under extreme pressure. John Piper made the comment, nobody ever says, I learned some tremendous lessons from the Lord during a time of ease and plenty. No, it's during the times of adversity and challenge.

You might think that the church in China thanks God for America and the liberties we have. Some Christians there pray that God would send persecution our way so that we could draw closer to Jesus. When Paul talks about the thorn in his flesh, I believe in context in 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, it's best to understand that in terms of extreme and unusual persecutions.

Extreme opposition. Just think of it, wherever you go to preach, instead of all the cameras around you clicking your picture and people asking for autograph, they're carrying you to the jail. They're dragging you out after being stoned.

You're at somebody's home in a back room where you escaped after being whipped. God's ways are not our ways. When I heard the tragic report about Ted Haggard, just aside from tremendous grief for the reputation of Jesus and then pain for him as an individual, for his family and the lives that are touched, I just said on a certain level, it's a picture of the Evangelical Church of America.

It's a picture of the Evangelical Church of America that we can get to a certain point, access to the White House, influence in the polling grounds. An article came out in May of last year, even though New Life Church in Colorado, there was not the largest. It was called Soldiers of Christ Inside America's Most Powerful Mega Church.

Things can look so powerful and yet there's so much corruption in our own midst. There's so much hypocrisy in our own midst. There's so much that's not right in our own midst.

There's so much that we're trying to tell the world is wrong while we ourselves are living hypocritical lives. And again, anybody with any sense, when you hear the fall of someone else, you examine your own heart. Last thing you do is point fingers.

You examine your own heart, you examine your own life, and then you pray for mercy for all involved. I remember in 1987, with the shocking news of the fall of Jimmy Swigert, who was then ministering, speaking to millions every week on TV, massive ministry around the world. First the fall of Jim Baker and then Jimmy Swigert.

I remember hearing that report. And even though by God's grace, my life was free of sexual immorality, the pornography that plagued him, when I heard that, I felt, that's me, that's us, that's all of us. We need to humble ourselves.

We're not so big, we're not so great, we're not so powerful. We need to get on our faces. And Ted Haggard is the head of National Association of Evangelicals, come on, representing 30 million people.

We turn out in the voting booths. People have to listen to us. We can even control the elections.

Those were some of the quotes from evangelical leaders. And yet the corruption of our own lives, one of the major issues with voters, even though there was a big shift, Republican, Democrat on the one hand, many people were voting for the same values, they just voted for people that they felt held them better. One of the big things that they claimed they were voting against was corruption.

I mean, what do you do when some of the most righteous words that are spoken in the whole mess are spoken by a homosexual prostitute? This is what he said, what Mike Jones said. You can't put yourself in the position he was in and want respect and people to follow your words when you're actually doing the opposite behind their backs. I read that, I didn't think of our poor brother.

I thought of me, I thought of us, I thought of our people, I thought of the work we're doing, I thought of, well, how does God see us? And William Booth made the comment, founder of Salvation Army, when it was a firebrand for God, he said, the greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender. To the degree that our lives are surrendered to God in private, to the degree that there's consistency and purity

and wholeness, God will bless that. Doesn't matter if the whole world's watching on television, doesn't matter if you're ministering to a million people a week or 10,000 in your congregation, doesn't matter if you're putting out books and tapes that are going all over the place.

When God gets hold of somebody, God can do anything through it. I've often said, we may not know the top 100 church leaders in the world today, in terms of the people closest to God's heart, having the greatest influence. We might not know the names of any of them.

They may not have appeared in the front of our magazines and been hailed on our TV stations. Godly Scottish leader, Robert Murray McShane, said, I feel persuaded that if I could follow the Lord more fully myself, my ministry would be used to make a deeper impression than it has yet done. We've been saying there's a need for a fresh wave of revival.

It's a critical need for awakening to come. And that there really must be a Jesus revolution in our society. Things have gone too far.

So many folks have moved here recently from New Jersey. I mean, think of the court decision in New Jersey. Four to three vote from the Supreme Court of New Jersey, ordering the legislature there to have 180 days to either form to legalize same-sex marriages or same-sex civil unions.

And you say, but it was a close vote, four to three. Well, the three were overruled by the four. The three wanted right on the spot to legalize homosexual marriages.

And they were the ones appointed by a Republican governor. Some recent things in New York City, just within the last couple of weeks, New York Transit Authority has now passed a law that if you're a cross-dresser, you can go to the bathroom of that sex. If you're a man that cross-dresses as a woman and identifies yourself as a woman, you can go into the woman's bathroom.

Great news for the ladies, huh? You don't think there's a New York rapist or a peeping Tom or a sicko, aside from a cross-dresser with whatever problems they have, that's gonna use that? You think of the craziness of the whole thing. Who's making these decisions? The most recent one in New York just happened right after it, is that you can have your birth certificate changed. You can have the gender on your birth certificate changed simply if you self-identify as the opposite sex and have been going through some hormonal therapy.

Without a sex change operation, you can just self-identify as the opposite sex. Then who needs gay marriages? Self-identify as the opposite sex. I mean, change your birth certificate.

It's insanity. We need a revolution. We need a fresh wave of revival.

And what's one of the things that's holding us back the most from seeing it? Our self-confidence, our complacency, our trust in numbers, and hear me, our looking to the government to do what the church is supposed to do. Should we be involved in the voting process? Of course. It's our sacred responsibility in a democratic society.

Should we call on people to do what's right? Absolutely. Should we pray and fast for the right appointees in the courts to make righteous decisions? Absolutely. But always without ever putting our trust in the system or the people.

I mean, when do we figure out that that doesn't bring about change in itself? And what do we make of the fact that the greatest wave of revival that we had in America in decades took place during the Clinton administration? Maybe Christians were putting less trust in the government or the White House and more trust in God. Look, I was pained by some of the election results, especially South Dakota, and the failure to pass the strong abortion law there that the legislature had already passed. I was saddened by some of the other results, but as it was happening, and of course terribly pained by the Ted Haggard situation.

Again, for him, all those involved, and in particular for the name of Jesus. But as the whole thing was happening, this encouragement was rising in my heart, saying, this is the best thing that could happen to us. No, not somebody's fallen to sin.

No, not corruption, political leaders. But the fact that a lot of our little kingdom just got shaken. The fact that we're going to wake up a little bit more and start to get on our faces and say, God, unless you visit us, it's over.

That we'll stop just trying to live some nice life and just fit in and keep everybody happy, and instead start to live with some kingdom values. Oh, are we doing it, many here? Absolutely. God bless you for it.

I'm speaking to me, to us. I'm speaking to the body as a whole in America. Listen to this.

I found a remarkable quote from this article in May 2005 called Soldiers for Christ. I think it was Harper's Magazine. I'm not exactly sure.

I found it online. Listen to this. There was a member of New Life called Tom Parker, Commander Tom in the Royal Rangers, I think.

He had a vision, apparently, and it was with some Lord of the Rings imagery. And he saw Pastor Ted Haggard as one of the key players for Righteous. I'm not familiar with the whole Lord of the Rings imagery and all of the story behind it, but I'm just going to read this to you.

And apparently there was some demon who was in the story who was trying to kill one of these key guys and Lord of the Rings. So the reporter asked Tom, who had this vision. This is May of 2005.

There's a demon that nearly kills Gandalf in this whole deal that was symbolically Ted Haggard in the vision. So he said, so who's the demon? Who's the demon that's trying to kill him? The reporter said, I expected Commander Tom to reply with the usual enemies, the culture and the homosexuals and the humanists. But the demon, he said, is inside Pastor Ted and inside every Christian.

Before the church can condemn the world. This is a secular article. Before the church can condemn the world, it must cleanse itself, thought Tom.

He believed that American evangelicals were filthy with pride. Quote, pride's dangerous, he said. Ted Haggard's own confession that he had struggled with tendencies in his life, something so dark and repulsive, he spoke of all of his adult life, he would enjoy periods of victory and freedom.

But then he said as he started to struggle because of pride, he quit communicating to others. These were his own words, because of pride. And those that would just scornfully there point a finger, and you don't know the deception that can be in our hearts.

And you don't know when you get whatever your point in life is, how difficult it is to then come clean and say, I've totally blown it, and accept the humiliation of it. It's a terrible trap, but any of us could fall into it. In fact, we all remember 1 Corinthians 10-12, let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

So here's a word, almost a prophetic word, over a year in advance. Pride's dangerous, he said. He was thinking of the last presidential election, quote, like a football game, us against them.

Commander Tom was pleased with the results, speaking of the previous elections, the 2004 elections. He was pleased with the results, but dismayed by the political power surging through his congregation. Quote, that is not the same as going into God.

God does not see politics as a victory. What are we supposed to learn from all this? These are major things that have just happened in America. It's not a matter of, okay, we know what to do for the next election.

That's the last lesson. What are we supposed to learn as individuals? What are we supposed to learn as a body? What if, in fact, God wants to give us much greater influence? What if, in fact, he wants to use us to touch millions? What if, in fact, he wants to bless us with all kinds of prominence for his kingdom? Will we go the way of everyone else, or many others, I should say, or will he be able to entrust us with more? I remember an old man of God, tremendous prayer warrior with a broken heart for God. We had spent some wonderful days together, and afterwards he said, Mike, I'm praying that God would trust us with a little more of his travail.

What a sacred entrustment, a deeper burden, deeper brokenness of heart. What are some lessons for us? Stay low. Stay low.

It doesn't matter how high God raises you, what influence he gives you, who knows your name, stay low. Learn to esteem what Jesus esteems. I've just been meditating on that Heidi Baker word, the word from Jesus.

Come up to the lowest place to believe what he says. Stay low. Learn to esteem what Jesus esteems.

Cultivate kingdom values. One of the best books on biblical generosity that I've read emphasizes before God can entrust you with money, you have to be completely freed from the love of money. You know, Jesus says several times in Scripture, Luke 14, 14, and other places, that everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but whoever humbles himself will be exalted, meaning it's good to be exalted, right? It's a good thing to be exalted, and a bad thing to be put down.

So what's the point of what he's saying? Well, if you humble yourself, then you don't care about being exalted. Then it's not an issue to you, then it's not about you, and you don't really care if you're the highest, the lowest, the front, the back, it doesn't matter. So then he can raise you up, because you're freed from the ego of it.

If he wants to entrust you with all kinds of money, say, oh man, if I had that it'd be great, then you won't have it. You'll be covetous, greedy, you might have it, but it won't be for kingdom purposes. When you're divorced from the love of it, he can entrust you with all kinds of it, because hey, whatever, let the Lord be glorified.

Cultivate kingdom values. Learn to live by dying. Learn to live by dying, by laying your life down, by not trying to save your life, but willingly lose it for the God.

If I say this, I'm going to lose my reputation. If I'm honest and righteous here, I'm going to lose this position. If I do this, I may lose my life.

That's the path to freedom. Joseph Son said for so many years, he tried to live this careful, careful life. Yes, we use wisdom, of course.

Yes, we exercise compassion. We're not just random gospel attackers looking for our newest victim to pounce on with our message. Sometimes so much of our wisdom is just our calculated way to save our lives.

And he said for years, he lived like that and was ineffective. Then he found the power of when he lost his life. Then he found it.

He just started to go for it and obey. You cross over into another realm. Learn to live by dying.

Believe God for growth and blessing and influence, but never put your trust in those things. I'll say it again. Believe God for growth and blessing and influence, but never put your trust in those things.

We prayed for some of our business people here in our midst. I believe that quality is in our people. That it really is not going to matter to them if they have the biggest business in the region.

It's really not going to matter. They're going to be the same people, live by the same values, glorify Jesus the same way, and remember the source of their strength. I believe that.

We need to examine our own hearts and lives, and we need to remember the power of a holy life. We need to remember the power of a holy life. I mean, if God's looking down on the earth, think of it.

Does it ever say He's looking for who's the strongest, who's the smartest, who's got the most experience, who's got the most financial backing, who's got the most media connections? No. 2 Chronicles 16.9, in the midst of a word of rebuke to the king from the prophet. Remember the power of a devoted life.

That's what gets God's attention. That's what he'll back, whether man ever sees it or not. That's where the influence is going to be.

That was the power of the Lamb, a life completely consecrated. I'll close here. There's one time, one time in the Bible that the words, I sanctify myself, occur.

One time only. And it's in John the 17th chapter. The Greek word hagiozo, and that form found only there in the entire New Testament, or if you even check the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, found only there.

John 17. He's praying for his disciples. He's prayed for them in John 17.

17. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth.

Verse 18. If you sent me into the world, I've sent them into the world. Verse 19.

For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. For weeks before going to India, those words were going through my mind. For the sake of those people you're going to minister to, sanctify yourself.

Sanctify yourself. The same principle, but on a human level, not on the Jesus divine level. And I preached, my last message to the leaders there was the message, the call, sanctify yourself.

Give yourself completely over to God for your generation, for your people, for your city, for your congregation, for your nation. For them, I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. Parents, do it for your kids.

Leaders, do it for your flocks. A life laid down, given over to the Lord. A lamb, completely consecrated to the purposes of God.

By that consecration, saves the world. By that consecration, redeems billions of people. By that consecration, keeps us strong until we stand before God.

It's a time for us to humble ourselves. I say this to anyone here, if you have found yourself caught in sin, I'm not just talking about you thought a wrong thought, let your eyes wander for a moment, got angry, turned from it, that's not who you are. I'm talking about you find yourself caught in something.

You need to come clean for your good, for the good of those your lives touch. If you're part of this flock here, come to one of the leaders. The last thing you're going to get is an angry, condemning word.

No matter who you are, no matter what the thing is, by God's grace, we stand together and get freedom and get help. Sometimes there's mercy. Why wasn't something exposed earlier? Sometimes God gives us time to repent.

Sometimes God is just allowing his principles to work themselves out. But whatever it is, you know, listen, there's no way that we can preach against an activist homosexual agenda without having a broken heart for homosexual men and women and telling people right within our own body, you may be struggling with this and you're too ashamed to come forward, you can get help the same way Jesus died for all sins the same. His mercy is the same, His power to change is the same.

Let's humble ourselves. Let's lean on His grace. And instead of putting our trust in ourselves, let us fully and clearly transfer our trust to the living God.

And the moment you do that, I don't care what the situation is, hope rises. I'm not just crazy when I started feeling encouragement rising in my heart, the worse the news. And as much as I didn't want to see things go the way they went, the worse the news, the more encouragement rose in my heart.

Now God's going to rise up. If we can wake up, if we can take hold of this, if we can see the principle of the triumph of the Lamb, that's the lion of the tribe of Judah. We can see God do amazing, extraordinary things in the days to come.

Let's pray. Thank You, Lord. I want everybody to close your eyes through this place.

This is not an option.

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