

The Lord Hears the Afflicted Who Seek Him With all Their Heart

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the presence of the Lord in a church, highlighting how the devil trembles when Jesus is truly present. It delves into the significance of seeking God with pure motives in prayer, drawing from examples in the Bible to illustrate how God hears those who seek Him wholeheartedly.

Scripture: Mark 5:6, Matthew 16:18, Jeremiah 29:12, Psalms 34:6

Topics: "Recognizing God's Presence", "The Power of Prayer"

Description

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Transcript

I'd like to continue where our brothers were sharing. I think there are many churches that come at the presence of the Lord and say, Lord, we want you to be here in our midst. We certainly do.

I've wondered what is the mark of the presence of the Lord in a church. If Jesus is really here, there will be some sense in which the devil will be trembling and afraid. You look at this, at one example of that, there are many examples.

One of that is in Mark 5. If you turn there with me, please. Wherever Jesus went, the devil knew where Jesus was coming and he immediately panicked. He knew that Jesus had authority over Satan, over him.

And that's true in the case of this demon-possessed person, who it says, Mark 5 verse 6, seeing Jesus from a distance, he panicked and ran up and bowed down before him. It's not the man who's bowing down, it was him. But what prompted the man to bow down? The man, I don't think, had any idea who Jesus was.

But the demon inside the man knew who Jesus was. And from a distance, he saw Jesus coming. And this man, prompted by the demon inside him, possessed by the demon inside him, ran up to him and said, please don't torment me.

I implore you, verse 7, do not torment me. I imagine, as I pictured sitting here as we were gathering, as you were on your way here to come to this meeting, the devil's watching, is Jesus going to come to this meeting or not? There's churches in almost every corner of this town, all over the world, people meeting, in homes, in buildings, in cathedrals, in nice buildings, in rented buildings. And the devil's watching all of these church meetings and says, which one is Jesus actually going to go to? And that's the church we ought to be.

And the devil sees Jesus is coming to this church meeting. Now, we can't assume it. That he'll come here.

But when Jesus is in the meeting, the devil is afraid. And I long more and more that, as a church, every time we gather, there will be a real sense, a real sense, not just, oh, Lord, your presence, and all talking about it. That's just lip service.

There's a real sense that Jesus is here. That means we sit reverentially. We're not playing on our phones or distracted by other things.

There's a sense that Jesus is here. And the devil is in a panic because Jesus is here. Think about a church with just two or three people.

Most churches are trying to be big churches. I want to tell you, family, you know that. For those of you listening online, we're not looking to be a big church.

The Lord has saved me, at least, from that for a long time ago. We're not trying to grow our numbers. What I'm after, what we want, is a 100% church.

See, we heard today about the church that Jesus is building, church that has authority to take down the gates of hell. What is that church? Is it RLCF? No. RLCF is just a name that's going to perish, certainly by the time Jesus comes, if not before that.

It's just a name. There's no eternity to RLCF. But within RLCF, as an example, is a group of people, certain ones whom the Lord knows, who are part of that church, that spiritual church that Jesus is building.

And our objective, our goal as elders, as teachers, and I hope it's your goal as a member of this church, is that we have 100% people in RLCF, as many as are here. It could be three, it could be 30, it could be 300, I don't know. The Lord's in control of how many.

But our passion, our burning desire, is that everybody who considers themselves a part of RLCF is a part of that church that has authority over Satan. And I would rather have three people in a church where all three have authority over Satan, a part of that church that Jesus is building, than have a large group of people, where only a few here and there, really have authority over Satan. You know, I got this picture some years ago after the Lord had removed a number of people from this church, that all of a sudden it seemed like, you know, you can have 100 people on a tug-of-war rope.

Remember, we did tug-of-war a couple weeks ago. You got to have 100 people on the tug-of-war, and it doesn't seem to be going anywhere. It's just stuck, pulling against Satan.

And then God removed a bunch of people, and all of a sudden we found there was tremendous spiritual progress in our lives and as a church, and our authority over Satan, and our influence. You wondered what happened. I believe what happened was that God removed those, like we heard already, who were...

If you've got 100 people, you don't know who's pulling this way, who's pulling that way.

And he'd rather have a smaller group of people. God would rather have a smaller group of people who are committed to destroying the work of Satan, and that's the only reason they're here on this earth. Not to make friends, not to build a club, not to have a nice time and have friends for my children and things like that, but to destroy the works of Satan.

That's the kind of church we must be at all times. And if you look at that verse in Matthew chapter 16, where Jesus said that we will take down the church, his church will take down the gates of hell. Matthew 16, he says in verse 18, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

I will give you authority, verse 19. But what is it? When did Jesus say this? It was when Peter made that confession, verse 16, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And I've said this before, I think a few weeks ago.

I want to say it again. If Jesus was to come to you and ask you personally, who do you say that I am? Think about it for a moment. If Jesus was to come to you individually and say, who do you say that I am? Would you very easily answer? Yeah, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And then Jesus could say, no, that was what Peter said. You're just quoting Matthew 16, verse 15. Who do you say that I am? Peter was not quoting a verse.

He had gotten revelation from the Father within his heart that from within him, he said, I know you are the Christ. And I thank God for God's word. But what is the purpose of the Bible? What is the purpose of Peter saying in verse 15 that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God? So that I take that verse and say, Lord, this is what Peter said.

Now I want you, Father, to give me revelation so that I know who you are, Christ. And it's on the basis of that that God builds his, that Jesus builds his church. So here you and I are.

And the question that the Lord's asking me today, as I believe he's asking all of us is, have you received personal revelation from the Father? Have you personally heard the Father bear witness in your heart that Jesus Christ is who he is? Otherwise, you're just quoting somebody else's story. And may that be a challenge for us. I want to share one more thing, and that is we heard about God hearing our prayers.

If you turn with me to John chapter 11, you'll see throughout scripture, and I believe it's true that there are many people who God doesn't hear their prayer. I think there are many, many prayer meetings where people are praying, and God is not hearing that at all. You read that.

You read in Isaiah chapter 1, God says, I will not listen. Isaiah 59, he says, I will not listen. James 4, he says, you ask, but you don't receive because you ask with wrong motives.

God's not even listening. But yet there was somebody who whenever he prayed, every single prayer he prayed, the Father heard, and that was Jesus. And we ought to make it our ambition, our goal, if we're following Jesus as our forerunner, that it's true about us as well, that every single prayer I prayed, God heard.

Is this too much to ask? Is it too much to know that every single prayer I pray, God hears? Let's not take it for granted because there are some conditions. And Jesus said in John 11, verse 41, Father, I thank you

that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me.

Take that to heart this week. Could you imagine what a difference your week will be like if you knew with confidence, absolutely, God heard me when I just prayed that prayer? I think most Christians, after they pray, they're a little bit uncertain. I don't know.

I don't know if God's actually heard me or I don't know if he's actually gonna do that. I'm uncertain. It's a 50-50 chance.

Oh, let's be done with that. Let's follow Jesus' example, who every time he prayed, God heard him. And I was thinking, if you turn with me to Jeremiah 29, how can we be sure that God will always hear us? How can we be sure that God will always hear us? Now, almost everybody in Christendom knows Jeremiah 29, verse 11.

It's a very popular verse. I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for your calamity, to give you a future and a hope. It's a wonderful verse.

But you know what the next verse says, verse 12, if you really believe that God has wonderful plans for you, Jeremiah 29, verse 12 and 13 ought to be verses that you know too. In fact, I would say it's more important that you know those verses. I think we all understand God has wonderful plans for our life.

Do you know Jeremiah 29, 12 and 13? Because he says, then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. I will listen to you. Why? Because you seek me, search for me with all your heart.

The reason many prayers, think about prayers. Many people say, our father who art in heaven, oh father, they're calling him father. He doesn't hear it.

They're praying our father. Why? Because they're not seeking God with all their heart. They want something out of God.

They want him to do something for them. He's a Santa Claus that they turn on, turn off. I want this.

I want that. My wishlist. They're not seeking God with all their heart.

And I tell you, dear family, dear brothers and sisters, especially for us parents, don't you pray for your children? Don't you pray for their salvation? Or do you pray that God will protect them from the evil one? And can you say with confidence that God hears your prayer and he is going to protect your children? I want to pray that, that kind of confident prayer. And how can I know that? If I'm seeking God with all my heart, there's no ulterior motive that James says. There's no false motive there.

I want God with all my heart. And if that's true, God will hear me. So then you may say, well, Santosh, how do I know if I've got ulterior motives? I think I want God with all my heart.

And then I see this verse in Psalm 34. How does God deal with us when we don't have pure motives? When I don't know whether I'm actually seeking him with all my heart, what will God do? In his love for me, he afflicts me. So here's God.

You know, he says, if you don't, if you don't seek me with all your heart, I won't hear you. And God in his love doesn't just put his hand in my face and say, don't talk to me. You don't have pure motive.

Come back with a pure motive. And then he leaves me helpless, thinking, well, Lord, how do I get a pure motive? How can I make sure that I'm searching you with all my heart? I'm trying, but God is so loving that he doesn't just keep me at arm's length waiting for me to have pure motives and to search for him with all my heart. He sees that I'm incapable even of coming to him with all my heart.

And so he sends an affliction. Psalm 34, verse 6. Who did the Lord hear? This poor man. This afflicted man.

That's the literal word there. So I see God's tremendous love in saying, Santosh, I cannot hear you unless you seek me with all your heart. So I say, Lord, how do I do that? I don't even know where to begin.

I have this thing pulling at me and my flesh pulls me that way. And my motives are corrupted by this and by that. And he says, okay, I'm going to send an affliction in your life.

I'm going to send some difficult trial in your life that will constrict you, that will squeeze you so much so that you seek me with all of your heart. And then I can say like the psalmist, this afflicted man cried and the Lord heard him. Isn't God loving? He doesn't leave us on our own.

He knows that we're helpless because there were times when I said, Lord, I want to seek you with all my heart. I know you can't hear me otherwise. How do I search you with all my heart? He says, okay, if you really are serious and you're unable to even purify your motives in your heart, God sends affliction.

It's a wonderful poem I read many years ago about the prodigal son. It begins this way. Afflictions though they seem severe in mercy oft are sent.

They stopped my prodigal career. And I forget the rest of it. But those three lines are enough.

Afflictions though they seem severe in mercy oft are sent. They stopped my prodigal career and took me back to the father's house. Amen.

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