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CH1609000000610183596

Hour of Power vom 04.08.2024

GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

BS: Wow! This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Good morning. So excited for you to be here on our first Sunday here as Shepherd's Grove and Irvine Presbyterian Church, worshipping together, doing mission together in this town. And just so thrilled that you came here. I heard there was a line around the building, which is a good problem to have. We say hello to everybody in the overflow, in the building next door. And don't forget there's an 8:30 service you can come to. Hey, we're just so, so glad you're here, so welcome.
HS: Yes, welcome. As Bobby said, welcome church family. We are so excited to be with you this morning. It feels good to be with you. Thank you for being here. We love you so much. The moment you walked through those doors, you become part of this church family, so thank you.

Turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you, or give a high five and say God loves you and so do I.

BS: We're so glad you're here and let's just prepare our hearts and ask that the Lord would do what He does.

And so Father, we come to you. In Jesus' name, Lord, we ask that you would touch our hearts. Lord, we know that you love us, that you care about our circumstances. We know that you care about our money, our jobs, our health and these things. But you care most about our soul. And so Lord, we pray that you would come in and move things around and change us into the image of Jesus Christ. Lord, we know that that's the best thing that can happen to us, and so we ask for it in Jesus' name, amen.

SCRIPTURE – Matthew 21:6-13 – Hannah Schuller

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Thank you.

In preparation for Bobby's message, the words of our Lord found in Matthew 21:6: The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," He said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers."

Everything God does in our lives, He does for our benefit. We, church family, are trusting in God's way. Amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, would you hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving, and let's say this creed together:

I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me.

I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me.

I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world.

Amen!

Trusting the Goodness of God

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Trusting the Goodness of God"

Today we're looking at the triumphal entry, and one mistake that I think is often made in this story is that it's separated from the cleansing of the temple. When you read this scripture, you actually see that the triumphal entry of Jesus the Messiah through the golden gate, and the cleansing of the temple, is the same story. And that this story is a reflection of the human story, which is that when we invite Christ to come into our life, the first thing He goes and does is cleanses the temple. It's a symbol that very often in life, we say Lord save us, heal me, fix my money problem, fix my marriage problem, fix my kids, and God says the first thing I'm going to fix is you.

And what we learn on a day like today is that God cares about both – but He first starts with the soul, with the heart. Jesus says the wisest thing that was ever said: "what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul." As Hannah said, everything the Lord does in our life is for our benefit. That's true. And so when He gets to working on your soul, you can trust that although it may be arduous or even painful, that it's a good thing, and it's a hundred percent linked to your circumstance.

Before we get into that, I want you to know that He does save and He is going to save you. And He does care about your money and your health and your relationships. He cares about those things, but He also cares about your heart. Jesus isn't just a healer and a Savior, and He is, and praise Him for that, but He's also our rabbi, our teacher, our guide, and He's calling you, friend, to be His student, to be His disciple, and to learn from Him.

Learning from Jesus is almost always difficult. It's never impossible, but it always stretches and pulls. And no longer how long you've been a disciple, He will continue to stretch and to pull on you. You may get sick of it but you trust that process because if you want Christ to save you, you also need to trust that He's going to change your heart.

It actually reminds me a lot of like lifeguards. We live here in Orange County, right? We have lots of beaches and when you go into lifeguard training, one of the first things they tell you is if you see someone drowning, you don't personally jump in and grab them. You throw that little what.. I don't know what it's called. A little red floaty thingy with the rope on it. I want to call it a lifesaver but it's not a circle so it doesn't seem right. Nor is it delicious. Your instinct is to jump in and save that person, but they'll pull you down. You might think that lifeguard is callous and cold; all they're doing is throwing me this lifesaver? But in fact it's the best thing. It's the best thing.

And that's what it's like following Jesus. Sometimes when He touches your life and moves in your heart, you think why is He doing this? Why is this happening to me? But you can trust Him, you can trust His process, and most importantly you can trust His teaching and His ways, even when it doesn't make sense. And the world is saying hate your enemy, gossip about them, get back at them, shut them out. Jesus says forgive them and love them.

When you get in an argument with your spouse and the world says you put your foot down and make sure you get your way, Jesus says forgive and work through it with them and love them, and be gentle in spirit, and check your ego.

Look – following Jesus is difficult, but it's the path that leads to life. And when we talk about Jesus as Christians, we talk about Him as our Lord and Savior, and we should because it's a package deal. He can't be your Savior without being your Lord. But very often we think Lord means God and it doesn't. I believe that so strongly I made a slide about it. "Lord" doesn't mean God. Now in the Old Testament, when you see the name of God, sometimes we put Lord in all caps as a way to be respectful of the name of God, but Lord doesn't mean God, it means master. It means king. It means boss. It means it's His way. And if you want Him to be your Savior, He's got to be your Lord. You want Him to save your life, you have to let Him lead your life. And trust me, letting Jesus lead your life is the best thing that could ever happen to you.

God wants to change your heart before He changes your circumstances. He does want to change your circumstances. He wants to work in your business and in your life and in your family, but He wants to start here first, and here. And that's a good thing to know, and that's what today is about. Today is about the guttural response that so many of us have when we ask Jesus to save us, but He doesn't do it the way we want Him to do it. He doesn't get what we're saying. He does something else entirely and it makes us angry.

And that's why I'm going to ask today this question. When you think about it in its context – you look at the story of Jesus. On Palm Sunday, Jesus enters into Jerusalem and people are thrilled out of their minds. It's a parade. Everybody's laughing and jumping up and down, and they're excited, and it's amazing, and five days later – five days the same group of people is shouting crucify Him.

Trusting the Goodness of God

Crucify Him and give us Barabbas. What happens? Why do they shout crucify Him and only five days later, after shouting Hosanna. I want to answer that question for you.

First of all, again as I said, the triumphal entry, that is Jesus coming into the city and everybody saying Hosanna, is the same story as Jesus cleansing the temple. Let's take a look at the temple real quick, if you have the picture. This is important. This is the temple in Jerusalem in the first century. This is the heart of Judaism. Every Jew loves Jerusalem and knows that Jerusalem is the holiest city on earth, and that the holiest part of the holiest city is this holy hill where the temple is. This is where every Jewish man, woman and child wants to visit at some point in their life. And if you look up on sort of the right bit there, there's like a castle. Do you see it? With the four towers on it? That's called Antonia Fortress. It is where the Roman garrison is, and it's also where Pontius Pilate is, who's the governor of the region, the leader of the city and all these people. And when you look at it closely, you see that that grand courtyard, the court of the Gentiles where anybody can come and visit, you see that over it it's.. almost literally towering over it is a Roman garrison looking down on them. And what is the subtext there? They are saying you guys do your thing, you worship your god, you make your sacrifices, you gather, whatever, but you get out of line, you're messing with us. That whole castle would have archers and legionnaires on it, almost all the time, ready to rain down hell and fire if there's ever a rebellion.

And so that's important. So you've got these two things – the temple, the heart of Judaism, and then right next to it, this ominous military presence that says do your thing but don't you dare try and get out of our occupation.

It's worth noting, too, that next to that in the temple there is this thing called a money changer. So you see where that red sort of roof is, that's sort of the main entrance to the temple, and it's there that when you go into the temple, you have to exchange your money.

There are lots of rules in place, one of which is that you're not allowed to bring any money that's not kosher. So in Judaism, in the Torah, you're not allowed to have any inscription of a person or an animal, and so very often Roman coins are going to have Caesars face, or different animals or gods on them, and you're not allowed to bring them into the temple. So when you go in, you have to exchange it for shekels. And of course anybody who's traveled, you know they always take a cut, right? So you lose a cut going in, and then guess what, you leave and you want to spend shekels in the Roman Empire, it's kind of hard so you've got to exchange it back, don't you. So you get a double cut to visit God's house.

Actually, incidentally when Jesus asks someone to throw Him a coin, and a Pharisee in the temple throws Jesus a coin, He holds it up and He says who's face is on this? And everybody says Caesar, and the Pharisee all of a sudden gets embarrassed. Why? He's walking into the temple with unkosher coins. He's breaking the rules and probably thriving off of those. Or he's corrupt. And that's why Jesus, the first thing He says is you hypocrite. You're a big old actor. You don't care.

Anyway, so this is what's going on. And incidentally too, one of the most common sacrifices is two doves; two doves outside of the city is four dollars. Two doves in.. or outside of the temple. Two doves inside of the temple is seventy five dollars. It's like when you're at Disneyland.. I remember I was at Disneyland with my daughter recently, I was like I'll have a slice of pizza and a Pepsi, please. Its twenty six dollars. Excuse me? I'm sorry.. is it pesos or dollars? That's like more than a pizza. It's crazy. So that's what they were doing is a very lucrative and corrupt thing going on, right? So this is important. So you've got corruption in the temple and you've got Antonia Fortress.

Now one other thing: a hundred and fifty years before this, was the Hasmonean Dynasty. There were three brothers – Shimon, Jonathan and Judah, or Judas, actually. It's actually why so many men were named Judas. It's after Judas the hammer. Judas Maccabeus, the great Jewish general who led the Maccabean Revolt against the Greek Seleucid Empire, who were occupying the temple and Jerusalem. So Judas Maccabeus raises up this army, and his brother Shimon marches into the city. And when he comes in, this great general, they lay down palm fronds in the street because that's the symbol of the Maccabean Dynasty and family. And he goes into the temple and he cleanses it, and that becomes Hanukah, the great celebration of the cleansing and renewal of the temple.

And so a hundred fifty years later, they're now occupied again by Gentiles, again, and here comes Jesus. And He's coming into the temple, He's just raised Lazarus from the dead. There's all these people whose minds have been blown, and its Passover. Everybody say Passover. This is a big deal because Jerusalem normally has about half a million people in it, but on Passover we have evidence to show, because men come from all over the world, Jewish men, to make a sacrifice for their family, that there's one lamb killed for every ten people.

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So the records from that year say that there are two hundred and fifty thousand lambs that were slaughtered in the temple. How many people is that? Two point five million people in the city, most of them young men.

Listen to me, guys – listen to me. Two and a half million young men, young Jewish men, who hate the Roman empire and here comes Jesus the great rabbi, everybody loves Him. He's coming in and what do they think is going to happen? Its tense. The guys in Antonio Fortress, they're all lined up, they've all got their armor on, they're ready for something. It's going to be the Alamo. If there's a rebellion, Antonia Fortress is going down. You've got two and a half million men who all hate the Roman empire, and here comes Jesus, this great leader, and they're pulling out their brass knuckles, and they're hiding in the crowd with their sticks, maybe a couple torches and knives and swords, and some of them are, you know, they've got their stuff, and they're ready, right? They're ready. Here comes Jesus. You know what He's going to do, right? He's been talking about this thing called the kingdom of God, and who's the king? Jesus! Right? So He's going to come in – the new Judas. He's going to come in - the new hammer. Bring down the Romans, and they are thrilled.

Now Jesus doesn't come in on.. real quick, when you come into a city as a king, in those days, you either come in on a horse, which means you're going to war, or you come in on a donkey, which means it's time for peace. This is so important. The symbol of the palm fronds going on the ground is an echo to the Hasmonean Dynasty; an echo to the general Judas Maccabeus. They are saying we're going to war, but Jesus is coming in on a donkey. Do you see the disconnect? It's a prophetic symbol saying you think we're here to go to war, I'm here to bring peace. And everybody's ready to go, and tensions are high, and there's a parade, and they're shouting hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna. What does hosanna mean? Hosanna does not mean hallelujah. It means save now.

Save now. Save us. Save us. Save us! Save us! Save us! Save us! From who? From Rome. Save us from Rome! Get these guys out of here! Save us! Save us! And here comes Jesus.

And imagine a parade, thousands of people. They're all freaking out. They're laying down their clothes, as they would for a king. They're laying down their palm branches, and Jesus is coming on a donkey, and He starts going.. like they're right next to each other, right? So He starts going kind of towards Antonia Fortress, but also towards the temple, and they think He's going to go to Pilate, who's at that fortress. And right where He's kind of like supposed to veer to the left, imagine like there's like a whole crowd, a parade, and it kind of goes to the left towards the fortress, and then all of a sudden as the crowd goes this way, Jesus on His donkey parts through the crowd. They're like wait – where's He going? Parts through the crowd, gets off His donkey, starts walking up the steps of the temple. They're like wait, what's going on here?

And He just gets violent and He starts knocking over tables, and He starts whipping.. I always like to think He whips them in the butt. Maybe I saw it in a cartoon or something. You just picture Him just – get out of here! It's the only time, I can think of, in the gospels where Jesus is violent, and not just a little violent. And so He just starts knocking over tables, and kicking people out. And He says 'it is written that my Father's house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it into a den of robbers.' So there's this like whoa, what just happened?

And then all of a sudden, after cleansing the temple, He just starts healing people. Healed. Be healed. Be healed. Be healed. Be healed. He just brings healing. And the temple just becomes a place of wonder and miracles as Jesus brings in His body the kingdom of God to these suffering people. Wow.

You want to know why five days later they shouted crucify Him? Because He didn't go to Antonia Fortress. He went up the temple steps. He didn't save them the way they wanted Him to save them. They didn't fit into the box that they wanted Him to be in. And I think that's the thing that we have to remember is that when we ask Jesus to be our Savior, we also have to ask Him to be our Lord. He must be both Lord and Savior if He's to do either one. It's a package deal. You can't take one and not the other. And so you say Lord, save me from my money problem. Save me from my health problem. Save me from my sin. Save me from my addiction. Save me from my past. Save me from all of my troubles I'm facing. Lord, when it rains it pours! Save me. And He says I'm going to save you, and I'm going to heal you, and I'm going to rescue you, and its going to be a whole new day, but you got to follow me, and you got to do it my way. Jesus starts with the heart. He starts with the heart. That's why when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus and he says 'rabbi, how can I be saved?' What does He say? 'Go pray this prayer and confess me as your Lord and Savior and you'll be saved.' No. He says, take all your possessions, sell them, give them to the poor, and follow me and you will receive eternal life.

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He doesn't say that to everybody, He says it to this guy because of his issues with idolatry. Because he trusts his money more than he does God. And incidentally, I'm the kind of person that thinks if that man had sold all of his belongings, and had given it to the poor, God would have given it back to him a hundred fold and more. And most importantly, that young man wouldn't have been the rich young man whose name has been forgotten. He would have been Jonathan. He would have been Shimon. He would have been Solomon, the disciple of Jesus who wrote the book of Solomon or whatever, but instead, he's a forgotten young man who chose not to trust his life to the smartest, greatest being in the universe who had only his benefit in mind.

You know God loves you and everything He does for you, He does for your benefit. Everything He asks you to do is for your benefit. He's on your side and only on your side all the time. He loves you. He will never stop loving you.

And so today, when we reflect on this story, we can't forget the temple part. Yes, we invite Jesus in, but then He comes in and knocks some things over. It reminds me of a famous quote from C.S. Lewis that says this: "imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He's doing. He's getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof, and so on. I mean you know that those jobs needed doing, and so you're not surprised. But presently He starts knocking down the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of, throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage but He is building a palace. You see He intends to come and live in it Himself."

That's what the Lord does. And that's why when we say Lord save us, we need to say Lord, start with my heart. Lord, if you're going to change my marriage, you got to change me. Lord, if you're going to change my job, you've got to change me first. Lord, if I'm going to find my calling, I need to find my calling in my inner life first. And so that should be our cry.

So I want to do this, and if you're watching on television, do this with us. I want you to take your hands, rest them gently on your lap, and look at your hands and make them into fists. Keep looking at your hands. Clench them hard like you're going to fight. Clench them like you're holding onto your life and if you open them, you're going to fall. Clench them like you want to punch somebody, like you're angry, like you're vindictive, like you're ready to go to war. And when you look at your hands, you look at all the stuff that makes you angry, hurt, frustrated. Whoever it is, you look at it. They're there in your hands. Your past, all the things about God that you're angry about, all the ways that He hasn't answered your prayers or forgotten you. All of your frustration, you look at it, it's there and clench harder.

And now we invite you, Holy Spirit, into our bodies. And now open very slowly, your hands. And feel how your hands don't want to open, with the knuckles and the joints, it feels stiff. And relax your hands and you look at it and you say Lord, take these things from us. Our past, our present and our future, Lord, we trust our lives to you, the life of the open hand. And when you look at your hands, you have hands that can receive, hands that can heal, hands that can embrace, and Lord, these are our lives. We give it to you.

And so let's just pray together. In Jesus' name, we pray, Holy Spirit, come into our body. Come into our soul, our mind, and we pray first that you would get violent with the things, the tables in our heart, to kick them over and knock them over. To cleanse this temple, Father. Even though it hurts, it stretches, it pulls, we release to you all of our pain and anguish and frustration, and doubt, and fear, we give it you, Lord. And then I pray Holy Spirit, just begin to heal as Jesus did in the temple. Healing wounds, healing broken hearts, healing all this frustration and doubt and anguish, and we give it to you, Lord, and we thank you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

Hey we did it! Way to go! Yes! Awesome!

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you His peace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.