

Ascending the Holy Hill

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the urgent need for believers to pursue holiness and integrity in their spiritual ascent to God, as illustrated in Psalm 24 and the teachings of Karl Barth.

Duration: 1:01:12

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, Psalm 24:1-4, Psalm 24:6-7, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker describes a personal experience of feeling disoriented and lost in a cloud of smoke. He relates this to the story of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, emphasizing the need for human frailty and cleverness to be dissolved before coming into God's presence. The speaker emphasizes the importance of immersing oneself in the entirety of the Bible, not just the New Testament, in order to avoid becoming brittle and stagnant in one's faith. He encourages listeners to spend time reflecting on and contemplating the word of God, and suggests transcribing and reflecting on sermons as a transformative practice. The speaker also addresses the condition of mankind and the church, pointing out the need to break free from self-imposed prisons of foolish, frivolous, cruel, and unclean living. He emphasizes that the antidote to this condition is the word of God, which sanctifies and cleanses. The speaker concludes by urging listeners to aspire to a higher level of faith and purity, and to fulfill the calling and privilege of becoming transcendent and heroic in their Christian walk.

Transcript

Well, tonight I'm taken by surprise that the only leading that I have from the Lord is to read something to you that's not even my own. Reading itself is usually deathly. It's the thing that one wants to avoid.

People fall asleep when they hear a red word. But I'm impressed to share with you some extracts from a sermon from one of the theological giants of the 20th century. And if I don't communicate something about him to you, you'll not get him from another source.

This is a once and for all. He's so important to figure. His sermons are so extraordinary, his works, that it behooves us to have some acquaintance with his name.

The name is Karl Barth, B-A-R-T-H. You pronounce it with a hard T in German. He's a German-Swiss theologian and has passed on to be with the Lord.

He lived through both world wars and probably one of the great theological figures of the 20th century. It has to do with neo-orthodoxy, with the return of the word of God at a time in Germany when liberalism was rampant. The search for the historical Christ, and did he really live, and are the accounts accurate, and all of that kind of liberal confusion that had come into the German church and finally took its terrible toll in the Nazi time when the church was so weakened, its faith so enervated, excuse the language, that the enemy had opportunity to sweep in and bring a demonic reality into the entire German state.

It doesn't hurt you to examine that history because it's a little preview of things yet to come of an anti-Christ time that was prefigured by the actual taking over of apparatus of a state, and not just any state, but the most advanced, the most civilized, the most cultured, and make of it an engine of destruction for civilization and the near annihilation of all European Jewry. So the church is the issue of society and a key in history, and we need to learn from its failure. And the failure has almost always to do with the neglect of the word of God by men who themselves do not take it seriously and don't take God seriously and have so depreciated the word that the audience that hears them does not expect to be hearing the word as God's word, nor does the man who speaks it think that it's God's word.

It's an opinion. It's an educated commentary. It's something of that kind.

So into that kind of generation, Calbot came as a simple Swiss pastor who took his obligations seriously and was confronted by the same congregation week after week who looked at him quizzically and wondered what he was about, and so he strained and sought God for what it means to be a minister of the word and to preach, and the whole phenomenon of preaching that needs to be resuscitated, restored, be brought to the exalted status that it must occupy or the church will fail. And it wouldn't hurt to hear something from a man with that emphasis, for we are exactly in that kind of danger now. So let me pray, and I'm taxing your patience, your ability.

If you had difficulty with my English, wait until you hear his, and I'll try to transmute his thought in a way. I'm like a mediary between this theological and spiritual giant and to the contemporary here and the church, that it should not be lost upon us, because though the man is dead, he still lives. It would be almost doing despite to God to be neglectful or ignorant about who he is, what he represents, and what contribution he has made, because if he's touching the issues of truth and the significance of the preached word, that is timeless.

The fact that I'll be quoting from a sermon that was given in the 1920s does not make it old-fashioned or antique. If it is the word of God, it's timeless and will have a power and a meaning for every generation and maybe especially all the more for the last. So Lord, this is experiment perilous, but what can I do? You've not given me any other kind of leading, and I know that it's, as a rule, suicidal to read, but nevertheless I'm asking that if this is your will, you'll quicken that reading and you'll quicken, my God, thoughts that you would have me to express in conjunction with what is being said and an ability to elaborate it and bring it in a meaningful way to this significant congregation.

Lord, we need your blessing desperately. I'm feeling out of it. My juices are not running.

I don't feel my adrenaline flowing and ready to go and tiptoes, and I would rather have stayed in bed, so to speak. But come, my God, and show resurrection, life, and power, all the more that cannot be attributed to a sluggish piece of aging humanity, but to the reality and power of God that raised Jesus from the dead and will raise us also. Come, let this be a Holy Ghost resurrection phenomenon and we'll give you all the praise, the glory, and the honor because we know that we know it's not in any way to be attributed to man.

You've seen to it that he's defunct and down and that nothing issues from him is out of his own verve, his own sap, his own ability. He has none. For all effect and purposes, he's dead.

So come, my God, and be the life of this speaking and make it so significant, Lord, that it will be a deposit of an historic kind that will affect the church that is the church of this city, this nation, my God, for all the days until the day of your appearing for which they will be grateful. For we thank and give you the praise for it in Jesus' name. God's people said amen.

You can turn to Psalm 24, which is his text. It's a gorgeous psalm that I had the liberty myself to comment upon it, but it's not for me that the Lord would have you to hear tonight, but a man who's dead and yet lives. But the psalm, like all psalms, is precious, a psalm of David, and this Davidic influence needs to come into our Christian lives.

This is the fullness of the Gentiles that is waiting to come in. It's more than something numerical. It's a dimension, a quality, a quotient, that is transcendent, that whatever the nationality, race, or ethnic origin of a people, God is wanting them to be infused with something so essentially Hebraic, which is to say the essential character of every God himself.

And one of the ways to obtain this fullness is to invest yourself in the psalms. So this is my daily practice. I commend it to you.

And it's not playing spiritual roulette and your reading obligation that you've read so many chapters, so many verses. God forbid you should reduce this to a mechanical requirement. It defeats the purpose.

It's no longer Davidic. It's Singaporean. It's Davidic when you luxuriate in the psalms, when you swim in them, when you take this rare wine to your lips and let it rest on your tongue before swallowing and catch the fragrance of the bouquet and the scent and the tingling sense of this remarkable language.

For these men, this David, this extraordinary man of whom the Father was not ashamed to speak of Jesus as the greater David, that what is Davidic is the genius of the faith that needs to be restored. It's not some Old Testament thing. It's timeless, and it needs to be brought in, not just to our consideration, an infusion into our being.

So, the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein. Believest thou this? Paul believed it, and when he spoke at Mars Hill, he virtually quoted it. He said, God, the maker of the heaven and the earth, does not dwell in temples made by hands.

The first thing he said to the Greek philosophers is to make a statement about God and creation, and that's the first thing that needs to be said, that remembered, and deeply taken to heart. The earth is the Lord's. It's not our playground.

It's not for our amusement, our entertainment, or let alone our exploitation. It's the Lord's, and he's a purposive Lord. He has purpose in his creation, and it behooves us to understand what is the purpose for the piece of earth upon which we reside.

What do you think? That this peninsula, this Malaysian thing, is some kind of geographical freak that just happened by circumstance and convulsions? Or is it ordained in its very configuration, and the way that you're located as a hub has got to be more than accident, but divine intention, but not for our commercial success, but for some divine purpose that needs to be sought and recognized. You have to seek the face

of God for the meaning of your location, your place, your purpose, and your time. And that's a Davidic understanding.

That's Hebraic, that kind of mentality. And you can enjoy it, even being Chinese. Just don't let that intrude upon it.

And that's a secondary factor. This is primary. And by the way, I don't have this because I'm Jewish.

It's not automatic. It doesn't come with your genes. It comes by your investment.

It comes by luxuriating yourself in this very peculiar literature that if this were to be taken from the book, from the Bible, it would so diminish all of the content of God. So to read the Psalms daily, the Psalm of the day, and to dwell upon its language and take it to heart and ask, put questions to the text. Why is God saying like that? Why does this begin like this? Because the end of the Psalm seems to be so unrelated to its beginning.

Why the frequency of certain words? Why the repetition? The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods. And then an abrupt shift and change, taking us by surprise.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Every time I read who, as I shared this morning in another context, I'm always getting the sense that whoever who is, he is so few and so rare that when God raises the question, it's almost haunting, it's almost like a mock, it's almost like a challenge. Who? Who? Is there one who shall ascend the holy hill of the Lord? Who shall stand in his holy place? This is more than play on words. This is something graphic that is being hinted at, that there is an actuality.

That's holy, a place that can be obtained and found and ascended. But who's qualified? And yet as we're going to find out, if we don't make that ascension, the consequence is tragic. Somebody needs to go up.

As Moses went up to the top of the mount and was there and received from the Lord the tablets of the law and set in motion a whole dispensation of which we are the inheritors and full of consequence for all generations because one man went up, took him 40 days, and he didn't just ascend up on an escalator. It was a fighting through brush and thorns and thickets and things that bite at your legs and are exhausting, all the more when you're in a fast and you're neither eating nor drinking. And the last six days before he came right up to the summit, he was in a bank of cloud.

An overwhelming kind of darkness came upon the dear man because the Lord called him out of it in the seventh day, the number of completion. But whatever it was, he could not come directly. This is presumption.

Even though you're invited, you go, how do I say it, tippy-toe. This is holy stuff. And he had to have his things, his humanity, dealt with in the cloud of smoke, which if you've never been in, I don't commend it to you.

I was in it once and I hope never again to be required to be in the thick smoke that comes from fire. You cannot know how totally disorienting it is. Our little building took fire at three o'clock in the morning where I was with my family, and on the tile countertop I had a whole box of my classic tapes.

And we ran out, and my wife said, can you go in again and get my pocketbook? It's right on the tile table top. No sweat. I bowed low and went under and came in through the door, and it's almost just an arm's reach from the door to the counter, and I never found it.

I was so totally disoriented. I could not, not only could I not find the counter, I could not find the door through which I had entered. I was totally, totally, humanly disoriented.

It's the strangest feeling that even the things that are familiar to you are lost in the smoke. How would you like to be in it for six days? Why six? Because that's the number of man. And you don't come up into God's presence and be there and receive the holy tablets of the law and bring your own human scent with you and your own cleverness and your own brittle humanity and even your good stuff needs to be dissolved in the cloud of smoke before you dare come into the presence of the Most High.

You see, dear saints, if we're only cleaving to the New Testament and are not immersed in these realities, how brittle will we become? How metallic? Our voices will be a clang. This is for us. We need to make that ascent.

We need to understand why the great Moses, a prince, could not come directly into the presence of God. So how dare we budge in? How dare we push open the doors and come up at will and do our thing? What presumption, what arrogance, how contrary to the very nature of God. No wonder that we're forbidden to even attempt the holy hill.

That's why, who shall ascend? Who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully. Well, we'll need a whole night just to examine these criteria given by the Holy Spirit that makes a person acceptable to attempt the ascent. But just reading it crudely, it already speaks for itself.

Clean hands does mean more than just washing. It means you've not given your hands to things that manipulate and masturbate and all those kinds of things for which we'll never be censured or criticized and in which we take a certain liberty. But the hands have to be clean.

And if the hands have to be clean, what shall we say about the heart? It's got to be pure. My God, who's free from taint, from egoism, from vanity, from making, excuse my language, envidious comparisons with others and exalting ourselves thereby? This is to be human, all too human. I mean, we take this in, we breathe this air.

To have a pure heart and to have lived in this world for any length of time and to maintain that purity of heart is no small thing. And yet God says, if you don't have it, forget even about making the ascent. And by the way, who likes to go up? Up is a taxation, a demand.

It's grueling. It defies spiritual gravity. Everything dictates that we remain below.

We stay on the level ground. We don't exert ourselves. We just go with the flow and we're one of the many.

To break out of that and to go up requires a certain determination that only a pure heart itself can entertain. Most of us are fixed and choose to remain below. It's as if God is giving an invitation, who? Who chooses to go up and is willing for the sacrifice and the attention to the character of his life and his integrity in order to be a candidate that I will consider and receive? You see, you would never have thoughts like

this if you hadn't read Psalm 24.

But there's reading and reading. So don't pull that stuff that you learned at school as if this is an assignment and you're going to be tested. This is dwelling.

This is imbuing. This is luxuriating. This is taking to heart.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob, O God of Jacob. Then again, there's another radical shift.

There's a break in this text and something now else is being introduced. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of glory.

Do you know what I, in my imagination, conceive? That somewhere the connection is at the top of this summit. This place where God is waiting for someone who dares to make the ascent. The King of glory himself waits at the gate.

And it's an ancient gate. And it's a gate of a kind that does not want to permit his entry. Because when the King of glory comes in, everything must change.

And he does not knock that gate down. Though he has all force and all power, he allows himself to be restricted, restrained by a gate that must be opened by someone who has come up, and with holy hands can pull the bolt and loose the closing and permit the entry of the King of glory into Singapore, China, Asia, America, the world. The King of glory has not come in, dear saints.

He's waiting for someone, maybe a corporate someone, a unified soul, a body that has a heart of this kind. This is more than just a single virtuoso and spiritual adventurer for whom God is waiting. He's waiting for a body, a corporate entity that has a desire of this kind, men and women of kindred spirit who are joined, related, unified, organically one who want to make this ascent.

That's the one for whom he's waiting. And when they come up, because they have the requisite condition and have seen to it painstakingly, even in their relationship with each other, is the issue of purity. We need one another because who does not have a blind spot, who does not have some intrinsic defect or some inherent failure that needs to be identified and recognized by someone who will speak to us about it in truth and love.

This is the genius of the church as church and the issue is the King of Glory coming in. What will that mean, my God, for Asia? So lift up your heads, O ye gates, you everlasting doors that have since time immemorial contained the Holy One of Israel, the King of Glory, because he's strong and mighty but he'll not use his strength to break through because that would be a contradiction in terms. He's waiting for something.

We're co-heirs. We're participants with him in the mystery. He has faith.

He believes for people rising up out of charismatic obscurity, out of predictable Christianity, out of the things that are mundane every day and who want to remain at that level and trust that the word that comes to them will find lodging and stir and ignite something that begins to touch their imagination and excite them to attain a condition of a kind that is not to be found in the general neighborhood. Clean hands, pure heart, soul not given to vanity that has kept itself from being compromised because it wants to make this ascent, because it's jealous that the King of Glory come in, because there's a world that's dying for the want of his presence and his entry and we're willing for whatever sacrifice that ascension will require and we know that we need to attain it with others of like mind and heart and that even this intention will single us out as being different because most will remain at the plateau and will be looked upon strangely even for having this kind of desire and what is required to attain this kind of character. We will be mocked even by Christians as being thought too radical and not content with things as they are.

We're divinely discontent and we want to go up and we're willing to defy gravity and obtain the character by which an ascent is welcomed by the Most High. You can be sure you'll stick out like the proverbial square peg in a round hole and who wants to be looked upon as different, right? We want to be just like one of the boys and acceptable and a Christian but good fun also. This will disfigure us to have this kind of intention that can't even be explained.

You can only groan. You can only surmise. You can't even communicate.

You can't even articulate this desire that has to do with a jealousy for the King of Glory coming in. So how does Barth speak to this subject who is so jealous about the Word of God and the preached Word that sees the Word as a sacrament and as a holy thing that has to be a living Word because he knows that there are people who need, who look for a redeeming Word. If it's merely informational, it's not enough.

It has to have certain character, certain attribute. And this Word, we must not rest in our quest for it. This redeeming Word must be a primary all-inclusive Word which must embrace the whole world.

It must be one Word alongside of which there is and can be no other Word. God's Word. Can you sense the heart of this man? The Word of God? Can you see the juices running in his mouth that it's more than something informational and more than just biblical correctness? It's infused with something.

It has a meaning, a significance. It's a life-giving thing because men have not called upon God, because they have not sought the face of God, because there's a kind of callousness and an indifference to God, not only among the unbelieving but even among the faith. They need to be called out of the things that are false.

They need to come to a fear in the knowledge of God, the awareness of the God of judgment, because he says we have forgotten God. So the Word is the thing that rescues us out of falling into a state of that kind. So it needs to be a special Word that allows God's judgments to be understood and recognized, and his grace to be cherished.

It kindles something. It brings a light. It's a hope, a new day.

The earth is the Lord's. But, he says, why does that statement enlighten us so faintly? Why do we read it in a matter-of-fact way and we don't topple out of our seats in the acknowledgement that the earth is the Lord's? Why doesn't that fact smite us and have such a penetration? Why do we ascend into the hill of wood and stand even amidst the need which surrounds us in the Holy Place? Why is it not true and real to

us? Why do we not live by that Word? Why doesn't the acknowledgement that the earth is the Lord's affect the practicalities of our life, give us a larger vista of understanding that finds its way down and into the everyday issues of our life? Just merely to nod in agreement with the statement and not to be affected by it, is to miss it. And he's raising the question that even if we read it and somebody speaks it, if it's not a really preached Word, it doesn't penetrate, it doesn't come through into our deepest consciousness as it ought.

It's there to give us a sense of God as Creator. But why is it not true and real to us? Why don't we live by it? Why do we live as though it's not true if it is true? Which is the worst thing that we can do to just give the truths of God a kind of begrudging acknowledgement but not receive it as a truth that requires something from us and is life-changing in its meaning is to disregard it as true. It's technically true, but it's no longer true effectually.

And that's where preaching comes in. It takes the Biblical Word and speaks it with such a quality from God that the truth becomes true in a way that makes a requirement of us and affects our categories and is factored into all our consideration. If that doesn't happen in the Word that's proclaimed, it's not the preached Word.

Preaching has lost its significance. It's no longer a sacrament. It's a skill.

It's a style. This is what this man is groaning about. So even our Christian words, our sermons, our pious observations are so helpless, faltering, lacking in light and spirit.

They sound pious, but the reality is absent. The saddest part of it is that we speak and hear the Word of God as a mere word of man. It no longer possesses its unique power and meaning.

The saddest thing of all is that the Word of God has become for us the Word of Man. And it no longer possesses its unique power and meaning. It takes faith to believe that the Word that we're hearing preached is not the Word of Man or a commentary or an opinion, but God's Word.

And the very same text preached by another loses that quality. It's the preacher and his own faith to believe that that Word and his attitude and the comment that he wants to make by it and with it is not his own, but the Lord's. That gives it and infuses a quality into that Word that makes it true in a vital way.

That changes us. It becomes life-giving through preaching. Preaching is a sacrament.

And are we expecting the Word to be that for us? And are we willing and so know that it's a holy thing and it requires the God himself to imbue the speaker and the Word to have that kind of value and force? And therefore we should have been praying today and not think that some personality is coming who has it all together. He brought his briefcase. He has his messages.

And he can do it. He's a pro. It's a holy thing.

It's a tentative thing. God has got to be in it and he needs to be called upon. He needs to be sought because we're not asking for an amusement.

We're not wanting to fill the hour. We're wanting to hear something of a transaction with God that changes us, that affects the world, that allows the King of Glory to come in. And for that, we have to pray because every factor in hell and darkness and the air that contests God protests and wants to keep that Word from

coming forth.

And if it does come forth, it wants to thwart it. It wants to distort it. It wants to bend that communication so that you don't receive it as a pure Word that has come from heaven.

But by the time it comes to you, it has taken on another kind of aspect and it loses its cogency and power. The Word of God as a preached Word is a sacrament, you dear saints. It's a holy thing.

It has not to do with men who have a gift of gab and can quote Scripture and make a message. These are words that need to be birthed through the travail of prayer. And such words, when they come, cannot be easily comprehended.

They make a demand upon us who hear because they're different from the usual thing that we can handle easily. This is another kind of content. It must be read and pondered and re-read and pondered again until the truth that is in such a preached Word becomes spirit and life to the reader and to the hearer.

It's not only a requirement made upon the man who's up here who's speaking, it's a requirement made upon those who are down there who are hearing. There's hearing in hearing. And a real Word of God that is a sacramental Word needs to be heard several times.

It needs to be heard in a small circle of saints who can shut the machine at the desire of anyone in that circle and say, what is he saying? Did you understand the point he's making? Where is that in Scripture? Or, what's the application for ourselves? We need to dig out. We need to take the meaning, find it, and search that content. What a privilege, because that very activity stretches and enlarges us.

But just to sit there passively like a bunch of dummies to hear something of a kind that's an entertainment and we enjoy it because it's biblical and have not been extended to reach out and wrestle with that Word and dig out its meaning and its application is to lose its value. That's why we don't grow. That's why we're fixed in the state that we're in.

The Word of God is holy saints. It's not an entertainment. Maybe we need to hear fewer words but more acute words of God's own speaking.

Maybe that's why I don't have a message tonight. The Lord has given you enough already in the two speaking since I've been here and I'm going to be here again Sunday? What do we need? More messages? Or to examine more profoundly the messages that have already come? What has already come from me just in these two speakings? Fresh, original, given from the throne, full of implication, full of promise, full of possible judgment? It's weighty. And has it bounced off? Has it found a place in our deepest consideration? Or is it something that assures our lightness? We're too light already and the thing that saves us from being light is the weighty Word of God when it is adequately considered.

We printed up copies of the message that I gave in Germany on the issue of the Gospel to the Jew because I knew that there's no way however astute that German audience is, that they could hear such a thing in one hearing. It's too convoluted. It's too... the content is so demanding, the thoughts, every sentence is compact that needs to be unpacked.

It requires something of the hearer and we provided it in written form that they might study the Word that came. Are you students or passive hearers? There's no greater provision made for our growth, for our enlargement, for our maturity, for our wisdom, for our discernment, than the Word of God properly

considered. And do we have the faith to believe that what we're hearing from the man that we know, maybe know too well and see him sweating or laboring, that that could be God's Word? What are we, romantic? Does it have to come out from the ceiling and say, Thus saith the Lord? If it comes from the familiar man with the familiar accent, can you believe that that could be God's Word through him? And you would do well to believe that than to dismiss that.

But does he himself believe it? Or is he just giving an opinion and filling the air and fulfilling a function because it's a service? Something is radically needed, saints. Groan with me, will you? Groan with Calbot, who wrestled with this because he wanted to avoid sermonizing. He wanted to avoid sermonizing his congregation and stupefying them in which they leave in the same condition in which they came, and nothing happened.

He knew that it's contextually God's Word, but something needs to happen to make it a divine reality that produces a work. And Paul, boasting in Thessalonians, says to these former pagans, I praise God that when you heard the Word of God from me, you received it for what it was, the Word of God and not the Word of man that produced a work in you. Have you ever dwelt on that? These former pagans turned from their idols to serve the living God and to wait for his Son who has saved them for his coming from heaven and will save them from the day of his wrath to come.

Boy, they got the full measure. They got a whole apostolic gospel. They were expecting.

They were waiting for his coming. They knew that they had to share in the kind of sufferings that they saw in Paul, that it was intrinsic to the faith, that there would be opposition but they still believed because when they heard a Word of God from him, they received it for what it in fact was, the Word of God and not of man which performs a work in them that believe that the same people who would have heard the same preaching and had not the faith or the heart to believe that it was God's Word because after all, it came out of a Jewish man and probably had an accent of some kind and we have seen him sweat and he had to go to the boys room and in other ways give evidence of his humanity. So how can that be the Word of God? And so they received it as being the Word of man and it performed no work.

How are you receiving this tonight? Or yesterday? Or Sunday? Will you dismiss it even in a complimentary way as being the Word of a man or will you have the faith to believe even though it's faltering choked, spluttering ragged that it's the Word of God because to believe that performs a work in them who hear and we need that work and if we don't have that work, how shall we have clean hands and a pure heart? How shall we ascend the Holy Hill because it's the very Word that fits us for that ascension if we hear it and receive it as God's Word. All you dear saints, if you will receive this tonight as God's Word, how will it affect every subsequent message that you hear out of your own pastor and other speakers from this pulpit? It will be transforming and if it's God's Word, how can we in one hearing receive the totality of it? We will need to ponder and to reflect and to contemplate which won't hurt you a bit that's why you need amusement and novelty as alternative to boredom and get sucked up into the vortex of the world and its cheap stuff because you're not spending the time in the Holy Word that has come. You don't delight in it you don't think to contemplate and find occasion to hear the message again or as the pastor told me he's taken messages of mine and he has transcribed them for himself.

I said, that has got to bless you. I'm not ashamed to ask people, who will volunteer to take this tape and transcribe it as a printout because I know that whoever will do that will receive a benefit that is immeasurable. Just dealing with that word, hearing it typing it, reflecting upon it is transforming.

This is the given thing of God to save us from mediocrity to save us from predictability, to save us from being stagnant, to raise, to elevate to bring forth a people in the earth of a notable kind that makes the heads of the unbelieving turn in the mere contemplation of them because they have a stature. They have a beauty. They're Hebraic.

There's something about them. Their eyes are already seeing the things that are eternal and invisible. They're lofty.

They have another set of values. They cannot be compromised by materialism and possessions and things of that kind. They can take it or leave it.

It doesn't affect them because they've seen and heard something of another kind and their knowledge of God as God is being kindled and deepened with awe and respect and majesty so that their worship is not just their vocalization. It's genuine. They've grown in the apprehension of God as God through the word that's preached.

So Bot states, a bolt is fixed in place. It requires certain hands, different hands from our own to open. Clean hands are required for it, says the word of our text.

It requires men with other hearts than our own to see God's light. He who has a pure heart, says the word of our psalm, can ascend into the hill of the Lord. It requires men in our place who have not lifted up their souls to falsehood, to vanity, to compromise, to cheap things, to break the bonds of this temptation.

He who has clean hands, this is the primary thing which is told us. Clean, guiltless hands open the bolt that closes the entrance to the redeeming and freeing thing which God has to say to us. To understand what is meant, we may imagine that all of us are without exception sitting in a prison which we have erected around ourselves and keep on building through our foolish, frivolous, cruel, and unclean living, thinking, and doing.

I'll repeat that. This man is mad. This man is preacher, prophet.

This man is seeing something. He squints his eyes and he sees a condition of mankind and even in the church that others do not see and do not see for themselves. This man sees and speaks and addresses and he says, what we have to imagine is our problem is where we have erected, we're in a prison of a kind that we ourselves have erected for ourselves and we continue to keep building it through our foolish, frivolous, cruel, and unclean living, thinking, and doing.

Can that be a statement that is true of a people who avoid conspicuous sin, who do not fornicate or get drunk or gamble or lie even and yet there's some aspects of their life that are not too far removed from the things that are foolish or frivolous or cruel or unclean in their thinking and doing? This is how he sees the condition. And what's the antidote for a condition like that? The Word of God. That sanctifies, that cleanses, that washes in the water of the Word.

And so I said to the speakers at our own conference in Minnesota, be aware that what we need to hear is more than a word that is informational. We need a word that washes. We need the washing of the water of the Word.

Because the Lord in my early morning devotional time showed me in Leviticus 19 that if you touch a dead body, you have to go outside the camp and be washed in water and wash your clothing and after seven

days of washings you're free to come back again because death is pervasive and the stink of it and you can't use your hands and touch things and be for God if the taint of death is upon you. You've got to wash. So where is the corollary to the Leviticus 19 requirement of the Hebrew people in ancient times? It's the Word of God now.

And so I'm saying to our speakers, you better pray. You better seek the Lord. You better give us more than a word that is correct.

We need to be washed because the taint of death is upon us. There's a day that we can't go. The world is filled with death and lies and subterfuge.

The whole system is predicated upon death, values that are deadly and the thing that purges and removes the taint of death from us is the Word, the washing of the water of the Word that is truly the Word of God and not the Word of man. When we need to know that our preaching has this requirement, who is sufficient for it? This is ultimate requirement and it needs to be prayed for by the congregation so that it's not the speaker's obligation alone that he can do it. He's a pro.

He's experienced. He's got it in his briefcase. I can lean back and enjoy my obscurity and let him do it.

Know you, dear saints, we're in something together and we need your prayer. We men who are the messengers and the bearers of the Word of God who have the same kind of intention is called but we know what God is wanting and what must come or the King of glory will be penned up and restrained unless someone can go up to that hill who has been made clean by the Word. But what Word? The Word that is preached, the Word of faith, the Word of revelation, the Word of the Spirit because there are people who have sought the Lord for the speaker and for his utterance because it's once and for all it will not be given again and we're privileged to be in the hearing of the presence of the Word of God preached.

Well, that's going to take time and you can't fiddle with your TV set and write up to the last minute on Saturday night and watch the Late Late Show and doze off and wake up and hope for some piece of spiritual roulette on Sunday morning that's going to stimulate you. You've got to shut that cotton picking thing off and pull out the plug and begin seeking the Lord and you'll be opposed and your ceiling will be like brass and your words don't feel like they're going through to begin to pray for tomorrow morning service. Will you be praying for Sunday morning service? Because what you'll get will be proportionate to what you are by faith expecting and by diligence seeking.

I tell you, dear saints, I've got such treasure. I'm a unique man. I'm chosen.

I'm called. I have a history with God. I've been given revelation and understanding of so uncommon a kind that I can't begin to tell you.

The Lord can draw forth out of me things so holy, so precious, so once and for all you'll not hear it again from any other man if you don't get it from me. But will you get it? Will be the measure of your investment because it's not automatic. If I know the way things are that will be busy, will be strained, will not have adequate rest bang, it's time to come and you're on and you're being invited and you're called and there you stand by the holy desk.

It's more than professionalism if it's going to be a word that cleanses, purges, washes, instructs, inspires, changes. You've got to pray for that and believe for that and desire that. You privileged people.

This is not an entertainment though it's in a theater. And when the word comes it's not going to be easily comprehended. The man is going to use funny language and words we've not heard before and we have to strain to follow him and it won't hurt you to be strained.

A dictionary is the most valuable tool after a bible. And you know what I found? That it's not only for the hard words but I go to the dictionary now for the common everyday words and I'm astonished at what I find there. The subtlety and aspects of truth that are in the most ordinary words you would never have thought so.

Use that dictionary. Grow by the use of language and know that the ability to speak words and hear words is privilege unspeakable and distinguishes your humanity. If you're dull to words both to hear them and to speak them if you have no reverence for the sanctity of language and make it cheap and glib with gossip and small talk your whole humanity will be defrauded.

This is the provision of God for us to become larger than life and more Hebraic than we are Singaporean. Don't be stuck in your culture and ethnic origin. Though we love your food, I mean first things first.

So the words that are real words need to be pondered, need to be reflected on. Somebody paid me a high compliment. He called me a contemplative prophet.

Praise God. I love to contemplate. I love to muse and to reflect on the word of God upon history, upon situations, upon complexities of life.

Musing is reflection that enhances our humanity, but not to muse is to become amused and to seek amusement, which is the negation of musing. That means you lose your contemplative reflective capacity as a human being and you become a dum-dum. An object of commercial manipulation, especially you young ones.

Don't you know you're a market? You're a profound market in the commercial world and therefore they're out for you that you should buy, that you should consume, that you should wear this, you should eat that, you should go there. That you should fill out your silhouette, lighten your complexion, and do all the kinds of things that will make you more attractive and you palpitate over that. Only the word of God can save us saints.

It needs to be respected, revered, holy. But it's not for those who already have, Colbert says, prepared their programs and want God to ratify it, who have already found God so-called and defined him and are bent on building their own kingdoms. If that's your mentality, forget it.

You're nullified. You're no longer a candidate for the word of God, either to speak it, to hear it, or to receive it. If your kingdom is already established and you know God and ratify and need and you got it all together.

Where's your uncertainty? Where's your sense of mystery? Where's the sense of God who's beyond our defining? In fact, if we have defined him, we've made him non-God. He's beyond our defining. He's not to be defined.

He's to be appropriated and what's the word? Received. How did Paul say it? Oh, that's apprehended. This is a glorious God who needs to be apprehended.

He's full of mystery, the triune Godhead. What, have you got reduced it to a formula? Father, Son, Holy Spirit, you got it all together? That's mystery. Why is God composite? What kind of relationship between his persons? How can it still be one God in three persons? Isn't that a contradiction of terms? Why does God establish himself in this configuration that where the one person defers to the other, the Son to the Father, the Holy Spirit to the Son, in a gracious self-deferring love and condescension to one to the other to show us a pattern of how we ourselves should relate on this earth.

If you reduce that to a formula, you've got a doctrine. My God, you're a candidate for apostasy, even with the technical truth that turns into a lie, if you've not struggled with it, wrestled with it, invested yourself in it, and know that you know, and love the mysteries of God, and know that it's never beyond, it's always beyond our reach. Something needs to be apprehended.

Do you have a sense for mystery? Do I have to bawl you out as I did those German students and tell you you have no sense of the tragedy of life? You have no sense of mystery. You're mechanical, you're predictable, you're one-dimensional. The very thing that would save you, you're not obtaining or utilizing, which is God and his Word and the remarkable mysteries of which Paul was a steward and handle with such delicacy and love.

The gospel itself was for Paul. My gospel, our gospel, he speaks of it fondly and affectionately, and for him it wasn't a formula on how to get saved, it was a statement of God's cosmic intention for the redemption of mankind. For us to reduce it to a formula is already travesty and doing despite to the faith.

You'll reduce it to a formula if you haven't wrestled with it. What is this gospel? What is this message? Why is it central to the church's understanding of itself as the church and its purpose? What are we promoting before men that just requires their little decision that has not brought them into any depth of awareness of God and his magnitude and glory that requires their real repentance? We've made it cheap and glib and easy? What then is the church composed of such so-called converts who were saved with a gospel of that kind that was other than Paul's? So, one statement, and I'll try and conclude. The earth is the Lord, and it's too great a truth for man to express, know, and perceive as he would other truths.

God is divine and not the subject of our perception and our measurement. We don't know him saints as we ought. We have diminished him and fitted him into our categories.

That means in the end we have trivialized God and made the faith a Sunday culture. We need to be enlarged. The awe of God, the fear, the sense of himself as he in fact is, to bow before that God requires being apprehended by the word that is God's word, that is spoken through people who have birthed it through prayer.

It makes a requirement of us, as I said to the ministers this morning, if the word that you speak makes no requirement of its hearers, it's not God's word. God doesn't speak for effect. He requires.

His word requires. To whom much is given, much is required. We need to be required of.

It's his mercy to make that requirement lest we be stagnant and stay at the plateau level and refuse to go up. So, Carlebach says, the holiest thing is lacking. Even though we talk much about it, that deep respect for God's majesty, that real reverent respect is wanting in that God's thoughts in every case are higher than our thoughts.

There is wanting that earnest prerequisite of the knowledge of God as God. But only his name, his kingdom, thy will, that is wanting. And when that is wanting, it's not merely that something is wanting, but everything is wanting.

When that is wanting, nothing will succeed. Everything is loose, empty, mere doctrine, even if it be tenfold pure. This guy is crying out that even our correct things are not correct enough.

If it be tenfold pure, if this critical thing is wanting, everything is wanting. And what is the thing? The real reverent respect, the deep respect for God's majesty, that sense of his awe, the earnest prerequisite of the knowledge of God, his name, his kingdom, his will, that is wanting. And when that is wanting, that total jealousy for God's glory and honor and name to be served in our generation that will require sacrifice to attain, when that is wanting, it's not merely that something is wanting, everything is wanting.

And everything for the want of that is loose, empty, even if it be tenfold pure. There's something wanting in the knowledge of God as God, even among those who believe. And if that condition is to be remedied, it'll come through one way only, the word of God preached from the holy desk that trembles us who come up to speak from it, who in the very moment of coming up and opening our mouths are made immediately aware of the frailty of our humanity, that we're sweating even as we speak.

And out of our mouths has got to come holy things that become an event for the hearer and bring change and purity of heart and hands and keep them from vanity that they might ascend to the top of that hill for which God is waiting, someone who's qualified to come up, that corporate someone who has broken out from the world and its details and its depths and its allurements and seductions and gone up in the purity of heart for which he waits and have a pure hand to throw open the bolt that opens the door and allows the king of glory to come in. What a calling. What a privilege.

God forbid that we should live entire Christian lifetimes and fall short of it and read Psalm 24 as if it's a little ditty rather than an invitation for ultimate heroism and transcendent humanity which is the glory of the faith. Lord, bless these children. Lord, have mercy on these children.

They're the products of their age and time and they're doing so impressively in the measure that they have and they think that that is the measure. There's more. There's something ultimate, my God.

Something holy we haven't begun to contemplate or to seek. We're satisfied with our success. We're enjoying it but we've not thought that there's something more than enjoyment.

There's an issue here of glory. There's an issue of a king who's the captain of the host who has to come into this Asia that is dying for the want of the knowledge of him that is living in its superstitions and its materialism and doesn't know that this is only a preparation for an eternal life to come and they'll learn it too late in the day in which they pass this life and it's too late to remedy their indifference and rejection of the one God who is God and is the God of Jacob and the God of Israel because he has not been made known to them. No one has preached.

The word has not come that they might call upon him of whom they've not believed. So Lord I'm praying blessing for these children.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/art-katz/ascending-the-holy-hill/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net