

The Asbury Outpouring

by David Thomas

This sermon reflects on a powerful spiritual awakening experienced over 16 days, emphasizing the importance of surrender, prayer, and trust in God's work. It highlights the need for deep repentance, humility, and a focus on encountering Jesus. The speaker encourages a return to the simplicity of worship, observance of God's work, and a deep commitment to prayer and trusted relationships. The sermon calls for a renewed dedication to intercession, a laying down of self-reliance, and a fresh outpouring of faith and hope.

Scripture: Psalm 126:1, Malachi 4:6, Isaiah 40:31, James 5:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 6:6, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "Commitment to Prayer"

Description

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Transcript

Wow, it's so good to be with you all. It's great to be back at Westgate. I love this church and love all of you.

Thank you for your desire to be in this room for this reason. And I come to bear witness and to encourage you, to stir your hope, and to encourage you to continue to press on in prayer. And I found myself living in Psalm 126.

And so I'd love for us just to read it out loud together. It's going to come up on the screens. You can just follow along, all right? Let's just let this be the Word of God for the people of God in this moment.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them.

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

I feel like I'm bringing you a bundle of sheaves. And y'all, this is the first time I've talked about Asbury in any way publicly. And all morning long, I've just been weeping.

And so I'm probably going to do that song. But I'm so thankful to have the chance to just bear witness. I'm reluctant to because I'm so fearful of in any way giving an impression that there was anything about us.

Please, I have to just really emphasize this, that it wasn't that we somehow got something right and God favored us. It's just that we saw and just tried to say yes, and God kept growing it. And this can happen where you are.

If it can happen in a little small town in the middle of nowhere, Kentucky, this can happen anywhere. We want to encourage you to trust and press in for the outpouring of the presence of God. Alec is right in that definition, the overwhelming presence of God.

Everything got pushed aside. And there was nothing. And it was the kindness of the Lord.

We just began to sense. We would say to each other, this is the kindness of the Lord. And we understood the kindness of the Lord leading to repentance.

It was just almost like the presence and pressure of the love of God was just squeezing out, pushing out sin from us. I can honestly say after this past month, and I just say everything from the bottom of my heart here. I don't want to exaggerate one word.

I don't want to sound in any way more than anything is. But I have never hated sin like I hate it now. It's just so, I just can't stay far enough away from it.

I don't want any relationship out of, in order. I don't want any thought. I don't want it.

I just don't, it's unbelievable. I understand how Wesley would talk about just this desire for sin being uprooted, just pulled out, being sort of perfected in holy love. You just have, and this was the experience of just living under and outpouring of the presence of God.

More than any time in my life, this was a time when the boundary between heaven and earth seemed to go. It was a sense of like, there is no delineation here in this room. So Asbury University has chapel every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 10 o'clock.

Wednesday, February the 8th, the chapel preacher was Zach Mierkrebs. He's like a spiritual son to me. I'm very close to him.

He preached that day. By his own admission, it was a kind of a mediocre sermon. He went too long and the students leave at 11 o'clock.

I mean, the place is full like this. And then all of a sudden it is empty. They go straight to class.

It's mandatory chapel. So he landed hard. It's like, okay, I'm out of time.

What I've been talking about, if it's anything that you're interested in, you'll just need to pray. And they left. Except for 15 or 16 students who lingered and they didn't wanna go.

And a few more went to class and asked permission if they could come back. And Asbury being Asbury, they said, well, sure, you can go back and pray. So maybe 30 students just lingered.

The worship resumed and Zach took a photo of the front and sent it to me at 1120. And he said, students have been left. I sent back a folded hands emoji.

So I'm praying for you, you know. And so I was at a lunch appointment and after lunch I checked my phone. He had sent a video and about 60 students now were there.

And I texted him and then I called and I didn't get an answer. I thought, hmm, he's probably involved with them. I remember standing in my office thinking, what do I do? And hearing this sort of inkling, you need to get down there.

And so I just jumped in my car and canceled stuff on the way. He just called, you know. And I got there, as soon as I saw Zach, he came over to me and just fell into my arms and started weeping.

He couldn't say a word. I thought, whoa, this is. And so we just sort of lingered in it.

The students were worshiping and just opening up and in no rush until about mid afternoon. There was a young woman sort of on the side who was praying at the altar. And y'all, this is a hundred year old building, an old fashioned wooden altar rail.

She was kneeling and she turned around and sat on the altar and faced the group of students. And she said, y'all, I know that I've probably offended a lot of you. If I have, I'm so sorry.

She's just confessing to the student body. I'm so sorry for being, I know I've been so mean lately, but both of my parents are alcoholics and they're getting a divorce. And I am so afraid I'm gonna grow up and just be just like that.

So that last week I went out to High Bridge, this tall sort of overpass bridge. She said, I was about to jump, but my mom called me at that time and it sort of pulled me away. She said, I've been so anxious all the time.

I'm so depressed. And she said, I feel like a ghost on this campus. I feel like no one knows me.

No one sees me. And then a student said, but we see you, Sarah, we see you. And they all started coming forward and started praying for her.

And I realized what I'd just heard was the voice of Jim Z. Anxious, depressed, suicidal, broken, family torn to pieces, lost. No one sees me. No one knows me.

I'm all over social media and no one has a clue. I was hearing the voice of a generation and they just began to pray over her. And she opened up and began to just feel freedom.

Confess your sins one to another so that you may be healed. And that just began to move. It kept on going till about 4.30. I saw Kevin Brown at the back of Hughes Auditorium.

He was, end of his work day, he was just sort of standing right there looking, you know. And I went back to him, I said, and I'll tell you all, after having been there for about three hours or so, it was just like going off in my head, like, oh my goodness. It's like, this is, so, and I went back to him, I said, Kevin, I feel like this is real.

And I don't think that we should stop it. Okay, yeah, I mean, seriously, Kevin, I think you should plan for this to go through the night. Through the night? I said, yes.

Really? And I said, yes. So he saw Sarah Baldwin across the room, the Dean of Student Life, and he kind of, he couldn't get her, so he texted her, got her attention, she came back. We went downstairs under Hughes with Zach, the young preacher, the four of us.

David, tell them what you were saying to me. I said, y'all, I think this is real. I feel like God is really moving here.

And I think we should just let it go. And I think it's probably gonna go through the night. And so Kevin said, any of y'all gonna stay? Zach said, I'm in.

And I said, yeah, I'd love to stay. And Sarah did. We stayed till about two, it just continued.

And then security was with the students, so they just, they stood there. And I got back there about 7 a.m., and it was about 100 students. Midday, 200.

They were just starting to come in. And Kevin put a simple email out to the whole student body, all faculty, worship continues in Hughes, feel free to go. Kind of giving permission for professors to cancel if they wish to, that sort of thing.

That went on Thursday. Friday, we had this, we had this, another chapel, Monday, Wednesday, Friday. So we had chapel again, and it was perfect.

We had this wonderful speaker, it was a missionary to India. She'd come to faith in the campus revival of the University of Georgia. She spoke, it was like it just gathered credibility, put more kindling on the fire.

It was like strengthening. By this point, students had texted their families and their friends. People were coming from around Lexington, starting to fill.

Saturday, so much more. Sunday, much, much more. People were starting to travel over that weekend.

That night was the first time that we went to another location, went across the street to Asbury Seminary, to their chapel. And that first night, it was alive. I went over there, actually, and preached.

And then on Monday, it went, we were in six buildings Monday. Hughes Auditorium, Estes Chapel, McKenna Chapel, the Seminary Cafeteria, the Seminary Gymnasium, then Great Commission Fellowship, Mount Freedom Baptist Church. And then, you'll see some pictures, the lawn, the front lawn, we put 500 seats with a big jumbotron.

All that was full. That kept on growing throughout the week. So about Thursday or Friday, every street in the little town of Wilmore was lined with cars.

The little grocery store was out of food. We had one Subway restaurant in Wilmore. Absolutely gone.

No food left. By the weekend, people were traveling again, and it was just, this is how we made notes. This is all we did.

We were sketching out, trying to respond. Okay, what's next? Who's gonna do what? It was so on the fly. We were, that weekend, probably 15, yeah, that's how sophisticated it was.

That is truly, that's the way it was. By that weekend, we think maybe 12 to 15,000 people a day were coming into Wilmore, to the point that finally, Wilmore closed the town. Do you have this sign that says revival over capacity? You see that one? Yes.

Isn't that amazing? Wouldn't you love that? That's like, I love that. Oh my goodness. So they closed the town.

You had to show a Wilmore address to enter the town. And then there was sort of this anticipation of trying to restore it just to the students only. So that Monday, this was the second Monday, I just said Hughes Auditorium for 25 and under only.

And we were making our way to that Thursday. That Thursday was the Collegiate Day of Prayer, which was an event that had been scheduled for a year and a half. And it was all, we just really believed that the Lord had just orchestrated that and just had put that there.

And so we came to that day and that night, they had planned all this program. They had Francis Chan and Rick Warren and all these people coming, and they were generous to say, no, we're just gonna let it be another night of the outpouring. It was all college students.

The gospel was preached that night by a college sophomore. It was so, so beautiful. And such a beautiful response.

All over the room, people came to faith. We think maybe 800 people or so came to faith. Some of the most thorough conversions I've ever seen in my life.

And we anticipated, they had anticipated that there would be maybe 40 or 50,000 people watch that simulcast. But with the attention that it got, four networks in America picked it up. A network picked it up, took it all over Europe, 59 Spanish-speaking countries.

On my flight here into the Detroit layover, I got a text that the response in the Middle East broke all metrics. It went into China through another network. We don't know how many tens of millions of people watched that last night of the outpouring.

All over, still hearing all about it. It's unbelievable. And the room was filled with students, all college students, 1,500 college students from all over America.

If we had paid to assemble that room and done a global simulcast, it would have cost tens of millions of dollars. The whole night was free. It was completely a miracle.

And it was as though we had sort of held up, we had just tried so hard to hold community under an outpouring. We just stayed under it. It's like, okay, God, we're just gonna stay under this and build community under this.

And it was like we together just tried to form a vessel under an outpouring. But Jesus himself had designated a night when he wanted to turn the vessel over and just like empty it out. It's like, you don't need to come to Wilmore.

You don't need to come and look at this. We're just gonna turn it over and send it out. It was like a big cannon blast of the presence of God just went all over.

And honestly, I have been utterly speechless over the, just the waves of stories that have come out of, I mean, everything from, we said that this outpouring is the anti-Las Vegas. We said this every Sunday. Every day.

They say in Vegas, what happens here stays here. At the outpouring, what happens here is meant for the ends of the earth. We said that every day.

I was, one night, one night I was driving back home. I would go home for three or four hours, shower and kind of catch a nap. And I couldn't wait to get back.

Honestly, it was so hard to leave. But I was pulled over to get some gas at a speedway. And I went in to get something to drink about 2.30 in the morning.

And a young man and the cashier were just sitting outside talking as I walked through. They said, you've been to the revival? I said, yes. And I went to get my water.

And they, by that point, they had moved behind the cash register. And they said, oh man, it was just amazing tonight. This young man, all tatted up, pierced and all over the place.

I just feel like God really touched me tonight. I said, oh, that's wonderful. He said, you want to pray? I said, yeah.

So we joined hands right there across the cashier. And I thought, you know, isn't that the picture? The outpouring being, just spilling over. That's what we're after, isn't it? That the outpouring will just spill over into the streets.

And that I really do believe is what, I just want to encourage you. I really believe that He is. He has not given up on us.

He is coming to rescue Gen Z. He really is. I'm so convinced of it. Utterly convinced of it.

We heard stories of churches in London. If you know, London is just a desert spiritually. Two Sundays in a row, this Church of England had 110 conversions in those two Sundays combined.

In London, this is like growing tulips out of sand. I mean, this is like unbelievable. We've had invitations to, Asbury's had invitations for their students to come and bear witness in Korea.

I mentioned about the Middle East. I was walking the very last day, then that Thursday, the 23rd, for the last, I was going to supper in the cafeteria. And I bumped into three people who had come from Taiwan.

And they'd been watching the videos, they sit and crying for five days. And they finally just decided, we're just gonna go. And they got there and they were there for three hours, just that last night.

We saw a group of 10 guys who had driven up from Mexico. 30 hours, they came to the altar for a couple of hours, got back in their car and drove all the way back, just to be there. I was there on the Monday after it had all closed.

Everything was done. I was there for a meeting on the campus. And I was walking by the steps of Hughes Auditorium and I bumped into two men from Norway.

It's the sweetest leaders of a Pentecostal church in Bergen, Norway. And they had been so moved on and on. One son of theirs got up and said, we just feel like we have to go.

The thing was over, but they just still wanted to go. If anybody can help us with our expense, all the money came in from this little church. And as they even made that announcement, people started coming forward.

The young started coming to pray. They said it was just unbelievable, just at the mention of it. And they were there for a week.

Hughes Auditorium was open at one hour a day, every for that week. They just needed to give the campus a rest, but they just wanted to be there to pray. And they had bumped into people from Panama and Argentina and all these countries.

I cannot, you know, we haven't even used the word revival because revival is usually something that you think of when you can look back on it and really know what it was, you know. But it may be. But we used, during the time we knew it wasn't outpouring.

And so we just stuck with that word, an outpouring of presence, the kindness of the Lord leading to repentance. I do want to say the atmosphere, and just like Alex said, was one, the first few days, that's about all we could do. We could hardly get off the floor.

It was such deep repentance, deep consecration, deep humility and self-examination. The meetings were so simple. A lot of times we would just say to everybody, if you have a favorite verse of the Bible, if you'd like to read it, people would come and just line up on each side.

And we had microphones back and forth reading scripture. We would sit for an hour under the word of God. All we did was just hear God's word.

Other times we would have extended periods of testimony, just one after another, side to side. It was almost like the love and power of God were just pouring in through a filter of scripture and testimony into our lives. That was just how it was.

The presence was just filtering into us. There was no celebrity. We said this every single day.

There is no celebrity in the room. The only celebrity in this room is Jesus. And we said, and he is so much more than a celebrity to us.

That word isn't even right, but it's the truth. And so kind of to try to live into that. Yeah, I told you those four that ended up in the basement together.

We added a few other, the chapel coordinator, a few other people. There were eight. They were kind of in this lifeboat.

And every three hours we would just go. The first four days, literally we met in a storage closet just to kind of get away from, no one interrupt us. We were just, it was all just paying attention.

What are you sensing? What are you observing? Right from the start, we made this commitment to be utterly unoffendable. We knew we had to be absolutely honest. We couldn't like take care of each other's feelings.

I totally disagree with that. I don't think that's right. We just sort of shot it straight.

We said, we'll just keep short accounts. We'll repair as we go. But it was just that.

And the other commitment we made right off the bat was like, we will never introduce ourselves. So there were six people that were coming up. There was never a single individual, never a director, never a person people could kind of attach to.

And whenever we would come, we would just start talking. We never introduced ourselves. It was this commitment to nameless, titleless all the way through.

And it meant, it was something, it really registered with Gen Z. There was one day I was coming to talk. I was gonna speak. I came in the back entrance and the volunteer usher said, excuse me, you can't come in this door.

You know, just like stop me. And I thought, wow, this is working. No one knows, has a clue who I am, which is exactly the way it was supposed to be.

There was no production. This is an old building. This is, you know, for digital natives, Gen Z, this was an analog event, okay? There were no projectors.

We had a grand piano, an acoustic guitar and one of those drum boxes. They were, that's all there was. No, and also all the words were just coming from people's hearts.

There was, I mean, it literally was just this overflow and you just learned the song that they were all these very familiar songs that we would sing all throughout the time. And honestly, it was very clunky at times. Very simple, raw, messy, real.

For Gen Z, it's like, yeah, like my life. Raw, messy, clunky, bumpy, you know? And it's like, okay, I get, you know, this is, I can kind of relate to this. Their experience.

So y'all still tracking with me? Just kind of just telling you the story. What we began to observe. And I just, I feel like I don't really even need to teach off of it.

I'm just trusting the spirit with this, that I'm just bearing witness and there may be something that the spirit will just bring some light to, or bring a little weight to. And you'll think, wow, wait a minute. I need to pray with that.

I need to hold onto that for a bit. But what we observed early on was that there was a, there was great movement and blessing on three things. On the altar, on the worship, and on the young.

And we just began to live into that. And I wanna talk about those things just for a second. We'll start with worship.

The worship was of a different order. And I came to see this. It was not talent.

I really believe, like I was saying, that this was the toppling of celebrity Christianity. It really honestly felt like Jesus turning over the tables in the temple. It's like, okay, okay.

I've seen your great events and your famous Christians and that's fine. And I've done all I could with that. But I want you to watch and see what I can do if I own the room.

You just let me have the room and watch what I do. Now, I wanna say something about this because celebrity Christians are not bad people. A lot of the times we admire them and they've risen because they are unusually faithful and they're really gifted and we love them.

It's not like that they're bad, but to some extent, we as the American church have sort of thrown a harness into celebrity and said, all right, we'll get a crowd if we get a certain name, in which has actually been trusting in the flesh. We've just tried to harness fame. We've not, you hear me there.

That's what we, oh, we have to own this. It's not just their fault. We have leaned into, plus there are some who have sought to build fame, who have built following and built publishing and their numbers and all of this stuff.

And I really think that there's a rebuke that we're wrestling with because we as Christians, we don't have celebrities. We have saints. We have great models of the faith who we look to, but those are known after they're dead and they are never out there trying to campaign to be a saint.

They're not trying to build that. So building it and granting it as a way of harnessing, we're under rebuke over that. That's what we were struggling, that's the toppling.

And this room was void of that. I mean, there was just none of that in the room. And so one of the ways in which these young leaders, there was a young woman, 24, who was the coordinator of all the worship.

She was so young and they just took it so seriously. So they developed what they call the consecration room. And so any person who stepped on to lead worship, there was all college students.

They had to go to the consecration room first and they asked, they just said, okay, we just wanna know your heart. How is it with your soul? How are you honestly? Be real. Do you have any relationships that are out of sync? Anything? Have you seen porn recently at all? Where are you? Be honest.

And they just began to open that up. And I mean, the consecration room, I would peek in there and go in there and these students were on their faces. I mean, they were weeping.

And sometimes they were scheduled and if they weren't ready, if they weren't done, they would miss and stay. They would not get up until they were done. And so though it, y'all, it was so clunky.

There was one worship set, honestly, I fell asleep. It was so dull. This was not talent.

It was like one chord and then another chord. But it was so pure. It was as pure as snow.

It was, and here's the rest of that story. The very last night I was leaving, I had my backpack on literally 1 a.m. Thursday, the 23rd, done, walking out. I ran into Katie, I mean, to Madeline, the worship coordinator.

She said, have you met Katie? And I said, no, well, come meet her because she's been leading the consecration room. And I went over to her and here was Katie's story. Katie works for a ministry called Chi Alpha, which is the student ministry of the assemblies of God.

And for 10 years was a missionary to South Korea, opening Chi Alpha chapters on South Korean university campuses. Over time, she became acquainted with the remnant of the church in North Korea, probably the most persecuted Christians on the planet. These believers basically left South Korea and went there knowing they would never return.

They were giving up family, dreams, money, hope, everything to go into a place where they would risk their lives if they were found out they could be imprisoned or killed or whatever. And they went there on calling with a model of ministry that was basically crucifixion of self and prayer. I've been crucified with the Christ, I no longer live, Christ lives in me.

They would go into spaces, Christ lives in me, Jesus, I trust you, make yourself known in this room. It was a speechless evangelism, reliance totally on revelation. They were just trusting that he would enter the consciousness of the people.

This was their model of ministry. This woman, Katie, had felt sort of a calling. Students were wanting to go there.

They were feeling a call. She was leading in the spiritual formation of these students who were feeling calling to that kind of ministry. She was on furlough, heard about the outpouring, felt compelled to come, came to Wilmore, introduced herself, found her way into the consecration room, and for two weeks never left.

She pastored that room. I met her the very last minute. She'd been there for two weeks, forming those young worship leaders into this kind of ministry heart of this North Korean crucifixion of self.

You hear what I'm saying here? These young leaders were stepping up there, and they weren't there. It was just Jesus. And I'm telling you, it became, Hughes Auditorium became a throne room, but with a nameless, titleless leadership and a purified worship like that, Jesus had the room, and he could literally do anything.

You know, you talk about, you know, we have green room, sort of the green room where you go to hang out before. I feel like green room culture was just upended. Green room turned to consecration room.

It's like, I'm not moving an inch so long as I have any awareness of sin. I want to repent. Y'all keep stirring it, unearth it, get it to the surface.

I want it out before I step forward. That kind of atmosphere, it has just completely shaken me in terms of what it is to prepare for ministry, how it is to lead. The worship, it was of a different order.

It was this whole atmosphere of lingering, of just unrushed lingering, to just sort of see a moment and not rush out of it. This, it was an outpouring of the presence of God so that Jesus could literally do anything. I was at the altar praying with people when a young woman came forward, and I could tell she was from India.

She knelt, and her very first words were, I have just met him. She was just crying. I said, you have? Tell me.

She told me her name. I'm 24. You've just met Jesus? Yes.

And I said, is there anything you want to repent of? And she did this. She said, everything, all of me, just like that. And I just realized she had encountered the Lord.

There had been no sermon. There was no sermon happening and no invitation. She had just encountered him.

Isn't that beautiful? Isn't that what we long for? And so we just prayed together. The ministry at the front was the easy, it was just like catching fruit. It was just like that.

Well, let's just ask him, you know? There's those kinds of moments. So I don't know, y'all. I just feel like that, you know, the last time I was with you, 2020, think what we've been through since then.

That weekend was the first death in America for COVID. I'll never forget it. It was right here.

It was right here. And all that we've been through with the disease, with politics, with race, with so much. Don't you feel like that we have just been living under a time of deep rebuke, deep repentance, deep... I feel like that the Lord has just had the church by the collar.

Are you listening to me? And I feel like that we're just in this kind of season of if we will, if we will humble ourselves, he will, he will heal our land. And this place of the most deep place of consecration, that's what we were learning from the worship. Second thing was the altar.

And I don't know. I just want to say this, that, I mean, we just saw people wait for seven hours. They would come in the door of Hughes Auditorium, and the very first thing they wanted to do was come straight to the altar.

They didn't even want a seat. They would walk in and go straight. I witnessed hunger like I have never seen before.

In fact, I don't think I would even use the word hunger anymore. I would call it starvation. I think we are living in a time, if we could actually step in.

Just yesterday, I was here a little early, stopped off at this tea shop waiting to meet somebody. And there was a young man who was just out in front pacing. I went out and talked with him.

He had tattooed menace to society. Just broken. I just thought, oh gosh.

My mom broke her, she fell and broke some ribs this week. And I was in the emergency room with her waiting to go back. And while I was there, a young man came in.

And I just saw him. And he just came in sobbing. Came to the check-in place in the emergency room, just saying, I'm having a panic attack.

Can you help me? Can you do anything to help me? And they brought him in and began to console him and give him some medicine. Such a picture. That girl who stood and said, I'm a ghost.

Can anybody help me? My daughter, I think I may have mentioned this before. My daughter is in high school. A year and a half or so ago, came out one day.

She's facing just kids that are so full of anxiety and depression all the way down the halls. She got in her car one day and literally just was about to turn it on and she just grabbed the steering wheel and just shouted, leave them alone. Just pouring out of her heart.

Just shouting at Satan over there, this generation. The level of hunger, the craving for encounter. People would be willing to do anything, go to any length to get to a place where they actually thought they could meet Jesus.

That, okay, he is real. We had so many students say that they would walk up the steps of Hughes Auditorium and start to hear the worship. And they would step inside the foyer and stop.

And say, wait a minute, what is that? What is that sound? And then walk in and just do something that was so authentic and so real. Probably the most, one of the most encouraging things for me was the number of students who were really in deconstruction. And you know what I'm talking about.

Okay, these are the kids who have been to the church camps, grew up in youth group, got a totally bad church hurt, really done with it. And they know all the answers. They're the hardest to reach.

You can't tell them anything they don't, I know, I know all that, I've heard all that. Does it work? Church deconstruction. And those students coming with tears and saying, it's Jesus, I have met him.

Reconstruction, we were witnessing that all over the place. I realized this is truly what we need. One thing that was amazing is that everything and then we had people, we had demons cast out, physical healings, tongues, people slain in the spirit, prophecy, everything imaginable.

All the, every good gift, every manifestation happening in the room. But it never lost Jesus staying in the spotlight. He stayed right in the center.

So he can do anything, whatever was needed, it was happening. But Jesus stayed right in the center. The altar was always under his governance.

It was always under his lead. He had such a place of authority and place in it. Never, he never lost the spotlight.

Okay, the worship, the altar, the young. We said all along the way that, you know, had it not been for those 15 students who lingered, none of us would have ever been there. They were the forerunners.

And we came to just really, I have to be honest, I think there is something about Gen Z. We're bleeding them away, the church is hemorrhaging them. And if you meet someone in that generation who is still chasing Jesus, they have a kind of courage, a kind of clarity, a kind of perception that I, it sounds to me like the voice of the Old Testament prophets. Do you not see this is the, you know, just clear as it can be.

They are in their shower, crying just over their lost friends. They're just walking across their campuses with tears in their eyes as they look and see, just like my daughter, just that kind of, there's something that is different about them if they're still with us. And I came to just realize the blessing of God on them.

There's a purification that's happened in them out of their coming of age on the smartphone, growing up with this addiction to porn, working their way through the mental health crisis, just coming through what they have journeyed through, and they are still with Jesus. They see things in ways that we needed to hear. So what we began to just realize, okay, our role is to step back and just be shade over their boldness and care for their hearts.

Come on, y'all go ahead and do it. You're good. If you mess up, bump around a little bit, we're gonna be right here, we'll pick you right back up, get back on your feet.

It really was a Malachi 4, hearts of the parents to the kids kind of atmosphere. You just go ahead. There are many moments when we would pray over one another.

We would pray and bless the young and they would pray to bless the elders in the room, just a deep mutual submission. They seemed to like having some older ones in the room to kind of support them because they could feel that they were being empowered. I think there's something so important for us in our churches around this to let it be more messy, let it be a little bit more spontaneous, let them try, let them speak.

They have a voice that is an important voice. I'm learning this. It's not to dismiss or sideline us who have years on them, but it's just to say, that Malachi 4 posture, I really believe is the, it's sort of this posture that does welcome the work of God.

It's sort of this prophetic position that we wanna reach in, reach toward that we were just trying to really experience there. So, the young. Whenever we first started, there were a lot of folks that came, everything under the sun comes out of the woodwork.

We had all the God hates fags preachers. We had all the crazy. I mean, it was rough.

Bullhorns, shouting and screaming outside. We had every possible expression of worship, all of which we respect. But we said this, I mean, everything.

We just said every day, listen, the students here at Asbury have been the forerunners. Because of what they did, we are here. And so, this is their house and they have a worship life.

Now, you would not go into anyone's house as a guest and rearrange the furniture. So, we asked you to respect this house. That means we're gonna follow their worship life and their lead.

And so, check your preferences at the door. And after a while, a kind of community started to form and hold up and it became sturdy. And it was, in the second week of it, there was not even a, there was no attempt to even mess with it.

It was just sort of like, had its own gravity. This kind of community with the students leading. So, just offer that to you.

Yeah, we did, you know, I'm gonna just kind of close with a few things and then an invitation here. What we began to see was, we were experiencing church. That this was, this is normal.

Generations together, power of God, exuberant, full worship, presence of God. God able to do anything he wished. No rush, no programming, not kind of some guided thing to lead to a certain emotional experience.

No, just allowing the spirit to lead. That is what Jesus died to make possible. Christ loved the church and gave his life for it.

That is what, that was worthwhile for him to die for. You know, when Jonathan Edwards said that revival, awakening is the intensification and acceleration of the normal work of the Holy Spirit. That's what we were experiencing.

It was just a little more intensified, but it was normal. And we wanted to just embrace it. The community we were experiencing, this is what we're after.

We were saying to all the young, we hope forever you are wrecked. We hope you're ruined for church. That you'll never be able to settle for anything less than this.

This is what we want. This is what we pray for, nothing less. We said, what would it be like if, that experience of Alpointe, what would it be like if you just had one or two churches like this in your town? It would turn the whole thing around.

If we just had a few churches like this, we began to try to understand it as normal. Yes, reading scripture, sharing testimony, simple messages every single day. There was a gospel presentation, there was a presentation on a complete surrender and death to self, being filled with the Holy Spirit, then following that in discipleship and living on mission.

Just simple messages. Just the Christian life, straight out, simple Christian church life. This was all the fruit of prayer.

But I will say this. If that's what God will do in response to prayer, I have never been so motivated to pray. If that's what he will do, I don't wanna ever leave my closet.

The closet is home. Don't we wanna actually see all of ministry as an errand from the closet? And let me get right back. That's the sweet place.

That's where I encounter him, that we are hidden away. Jesus, you only, I don't need this stage. I don't need, you've got to own the stage.

Just keep me in the closet. I've never been so motivated to pray, to press in and to trust him, that he hears us. He is hearing us and we can trust him to do more.

I also wanted to say this. That I came to a very deep appreciation around the crucial importance of trusted relationships. Whenever this began, it began in a group of people who had a lot of mileage and really loved each other and could just truly trust on reflex each other.

Listen, I'm good with you, whatever you think. It was just such deep trust. And it, whenever it overwhelmed that first group and it expanded, it expanded on trust.

Okay, I really trust this person. Will you trust me? I trust you. Okay, then we'll bring, it was just on trust.

And y'all as leaders, as pastors, I just want to encourage you to take so seriously the quality of your relationships. If there is any distrust, any breakage, any woundedness in trust, it is worth it to apologize and set that right. There was a lot of that going on.

There was one day I looked out on the steps of Hughes Auditorium and I guess there were 25 or 30 people texting apologies. Just, I'm so sorry, will you forgive me? And there was this kind of commitment to just relational integrity. So that's just a bundle of observations I offer to you.

See if any of that helps you. Secondly, there was just this simple idea of observe and respond. You know, in the American church, it's been a lot about cast vision, get buy-in, use metrics, keep moving, set goals.

This was all observe, what's God doing, and can we step into it just a little bit farther? Okay, I think five more, maybe two or three more hours, we know where to go. You know, it was just observance. We had no vision.

We had a vision for the next 15 minutes. I just wanted to commend that to you. I'm wondering if we need to, some of us just need to renounce all of our strategic plans.

And to say, Jesus, you're the plan. You're the planner. Have it.

I wanna encourage you to have an eye for the small. When this happened and alarms were going off in me and I went back to Kevin, it was nothing. It was so tiny.

And it's certainly not that I had the right judgment, but I believe awakening comes to people who are not looking for this massive explosion, but have an eye, wait, something's happening with this person. And I'm gonna just greenhouse that and stay with that. And wait, there's another one.

And I'm gonna, where the three of us will meet. And just hold it. It was a lot of just continuing to say yes.

Okay, yes, Lord. It looks, I see it. It was just that, to have an eye for the small, celebrate the small and stay with the small.

There was this deep commitment to radical humility. Always like, okay, how low can I go to serve? I'll be glad to do that for you. Let me do that.

I got that. Just this deep commitment over the pipe organ in the auditorium was this phrase from the holiness tradition, holiness under the Lord. That truly was true north of the entire meeting.

It was the commitment of everyone. And then I'll just close with this. I just want to encourage you all that this whole idea of the hope that we share for awakening, it truly is one you can anchor your life to.

I want to encourage you all to just know and believe. You know, so long as there's breath in these lungs, God's gonna keep hearing from me around this hope that I have, that he will come to my town, to my church. I'll just say this for the, Psalm 84, better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.

For the rest of my life, I would trade a thousand days for one more of those days. That's the hope I have. I know deep within me, this is exactly what we're needing.

We're just needing an unmistakable encounter with Jesus that it is indisputable and anything he wants to do can happen. That kind of position that we want. Love for the harvest, a love for the young, a love for our places where we live.

It's Psalm 126. It's amazing to me how that Psalm celebrates that the Lord, we were like those who dream, our hearts were filled with laughter. That verse three, the Lord has done great things for us and we are filled with joy.

I feel like I'm just here bringing sheaves. He's done great things. And then immediately turns to that same posture, but those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

We have seen, we thank him and we ask him for more. Isn't that the posture? We thank him and we ask him for more. We return to heart cry.

We return to the weeping. We believe him for more. I pray that there'll be outpourings like this in every one of the places where you are.

That we'll be telling those stories all along the way. This is what we need. This is worth selling the farm.

This is worth betting it all. This is worth everything we've got. This is the thing that the world is so longing for.

I really believe these are first fruits. So we wanna be done with false self. We wanna be done with distraction.

We wanna be done with careerism. I hope none of you will ever quit ministry, but I hope every single one of you will quit your ministry career. That it doesn't really matter if you arise or become known or anything like that.

That we'll all just lay that on the altar. That we will be done and put to death all flesh. That we will be only what he does.

That we will enter into this now more than we ever have. Please, be encouraged by those 16 days and nights of, you know, it was a revival that was hard not to like. It was just one of these things where it was the love and power of God.

And people, that, so many people were just sort of like hard to knock at it too hard. If you stepped into it, a lot of people who were critiquing it didn't actually come to Wilmore. But if you stayed any amount of time in there, it's like, wow, this is simple.

This is real. This is God. So, my question for you today is, you know, here we are, we have two days.

Precious days. I wanna invite you to not delay. Let's go.

Let's not waste these two days. Let's not waste one precious hour. What do you need to do? What do you need to do to make your heart more ready? To experience a personal awakening? Is there anything you need to renounce? Any measure of flesh that just needs to be set aside? Is there any way in which you have tried to orchestrate or strategize? And use your gifts, of course, but to a point that you've actually trusted your gifts.

You've trusted what you can do. You've trusted your talent. I want to invite you to say, no, I lay that down.

I'm thankful for the gifts you've given me. But you, Jesus, you are the gift. You and you only.

I want my life. I wanna be a coin in your pocket. Spend me as you wish.

Nothing more, nothing less. Or maybe is it so that someone here today just simply wants to say, you know, I want now, here at the beginning, in these two days, I want to refresh and renew my commitment to intercession. I want to be an intercessor.

I want to be a petitioner. I want to be a man or woman of prayer. I want to love the closet.

Oh, Jesus, call me back into the closet. Cause me to fall in love with the hidden places, the secret places with you. I want nothing more than that.

Is that anything touching you? I don't know. But I offer you the sheaves. Seed to sow.

Seed planted, a first fruit harvest, seed to sow. And you just make the decision, you just sort through. Okay, here's what I need to do as a sower.

I'll offer a prayer and then we'll just enter into worship and invite the spirit to help us. Father God, we are so grateful for an assembly of trust. A gathering of faith.

Thank you, Lord, that we're here among the thirsty. That's who we are, Jesus. We're just thirsty Christians.

We want to bring our desperation to you as a gift. We want to bring it to you, Lord. We offer it to you.

We offer our lives to you. So Lord, come and work with us and deal with us. We invite your spirit, Lord, to do what you know each one of us is needing.

What is it, Jesus? Is there something you need to unearth, surface? Is there something you need to take? Or is there something you need to give? Would you give us new faith? Would you give us some more tenacity? Lord, maybe you're needing to heal. I'm wondering if you're here to heal. Some disappointment with you, some disappointment with prayer.

Oh, God, I ask that you pour out hope into the room. Come, Holy Spirit, pour. Pour faith.

Pour out a spirit of prayer. Oh, God, we bring our lives to you as intercessors. Come and do this, Lord.

We're asking that you come. So, Lord, now just move in us. Cause this seed, Lord, to now take root and sprout into anything you're wishing.

It's from you, God, every bit of everything I've said. It's 100% from you. And that is now is back unto you.

It's unto you. It's yours. Do with it, Lord.

Multiply it. Jesus' name.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/KO99zu9dgNI.mp4>

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