

Thurs. Evening Service (2002 C&ma Council)

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the power of worship and God's faithfulness through the story of David's trials and triumphs.

Duration: 1:52:07

Scripture: 1 Samuel 30:16, Psalm 22:3, Matthew 6:33, John 10:10, Acts 10:34-35, James 5:16, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of maintaining one's first love for God. He criticizes churches that prioritize attracting 'nice' and 'clean' people instead of reaching out to the lost and dirty. The preacher argues that the church should be a place where anyone can come and be transformed by the power of Jesus Christ. He warns that Satan is cleverly stealing the first love and devotion of believers, putting them under a spiritual sedative. The preacher calls for a return to consecration and spending quality time with Jesus and the Word of God.

Transcript

Good evening. Let's try that again. Good evening.

Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Let's stand together as we sing, and we offer this song up to the Lord as a sweet aroma of praise. Aroma of praise.

Lord, we lift up a sweet aroma of praise to you in song. I want to teach you a quick little chorus. A chorus we sing at Allegheny Center.

It's actually a chorus I learned here at Council one morning in Portland, Oregon. It's called Make a Joyful Noise, Son to the Lord. Very simple.

It goes like this. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Serve the Lord with gladness, and make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

You try it with me. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Serve the Lord with gladness. And make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Second verse is come before his gates with joyful song. And then we'll serve the Lord with gladness. Let's try it together.

Here we go. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Serve the Lord with gladness. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Serve the Lord with gladness. Serve the Lord with gladness. Open the eyes of our hearts.

that we might know you, that we might make you whole. For you are a holy God. Though the darkness hide thee, though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see, only thou art holy, only thou art holy, thy being perfect in power, in love, and purity.

God in three persons. We bless your name. Amen.

Amen. You may be seated. And as you take your seats, let's give a warm general council welcome to Spirit Bound.

Living, he loved me. Dying, he saved me. Buried, he carried my sin far away.

Rising, he justified. Free thee forever. One day he's coming back, O glorious day.

Living, he loved me. Dying, he saved me. Buried, he carried my sin far away.

Rising, he justified. Free thee forever. One day he's coming back, O glorious day.

Just gotta thank him. Just gotta praise him. Just gotta give him all the glory today for all he's done for me.

Living, he loved me. Dying, he saved me. Buried, he carried my sin far away.

Rising, he justified. Free thee forever. One day he's coming back, O glorious day.

Just gotta thank him for saving my soul. Just gotta praise him for making me whole. Just gotta give him all the glory today for all he's done for me.

Yeah! Living, he loved me. Dying, he saved me. Buried, he carried my sin far away.

Rising, he justified. Free thee forever. One day he's coming back, O glorious day.

Living, he loved me. Dying, he saved me. Buried, he carried my sin far away.

Rising, he justified. Free thee forever. One day he's coming back, O glorious day.

One day he's coming back, O glorious day. One day he's coming back, O glorious day. Yeah! Yeah! Since we are in our home tonight, Nashville, Tennessee, we're gonna do this one Nashville style.

Well, I heard it all. Oh, they became the glory. He has broken... Well, it looks like several of you knew that song.

As he mentioned before, we're all from Nashville, and we travel all over the country and sing to different denominations, different age groups, and we had a lot of kids come up to us saying that southern gospel is not my favorite way to hear a song sung. I don't know if you recognize, but that was southern gospel, just

for the record, those of you that came from the north. But we also, we love these hymns that we grew up with so much that we decided we'd take one of these hymns and kind of update it a little bit and make it a little bit more relevant for those kids that wanted to hear something else.

So, are you going to hang on with us for this one? Oh, they're ready. There's another song, you might recognize this one too. And it goes, Trust and obey For there's no other way To be happy in Jesus But to trust and obey Now, how do you recognize that song? Yeah, most of you do.

Well, we'll see if you still do recognize it. How many of you have heard of a group called the Backstreet Boys? Yeah. This might be what it would sound like if they sang this song.

When we walk with the Lord Aren't you glad tonight that the truth remains the truth, whether you sing it fast or slow, modern or old, or whatever you want to do, the truth remains the truth. We are here tonight because we need Him. That is the greatest truth of my life.

I can walk It's not because I know the road beneath my feet is steady to me When trouble comes and I'm still standing People wonder how can that be It's not by any power on my own My strength I do not understand He turned His back on wealth and fame Gave up a throne to follow love's command But someone had to die So it was every stroke of scarlet red He could have made all creation testify To say those words It was His blood It was His blood Like a river glorious Is God's perfect peace Is God's perfect peace Over all victorious In His bright increase Perfect yet it floweth Fuller every day Perfect yet it groweth Deeper all the way Peace like a river I've got Peace like a river I've got Peace like a river in my soul My soul I've got Peace like a river I've got Peace like a river I've got Peace like a river in my soul In my soul I've got Love like an ocean I've got Love like an ocean I've got Love like an ocean in my soul I've got love like an ocean I've got Love like an ocean I've got Love like an ocean in my soul I've got joy like a fountain I've got Joy like a fountain I've got Joy like a fountain in my soul In my soul and I've got joy like a fountain, joy like a fountain. I've got joy like a fountain, I've got love like an ocean, I've got peace like a river, glorious river in my heart. If you have your Bibles, if you'd open them up to Psalm 91 and if you'd stand for the reading of God's Word.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings you will find refuge. His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling, even the Lord who is my refuge, then no harm will befall you.

No disaster will come near your tent, for he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that they will not strike your foot against the stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra.

You will trample the great lion and the serpent. Because he loves me, says the Lord, I will rescue him. I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation. Thank you. You may be seated.

Thank you, Dan. The history of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, both past and present, is intimately connected with the city of New York. And it is our privilege again this evening to have with us one of the people that God is using to take back that city and to proclaim the gospel and to proclaim freedom in that city.

We're just so grateful that Pastor Jim Cimbala from the Brooklyn Tabernacle can be with us and we welcome you and we anticipate your ministry this evening. Please come. Good evening, everyone.

Good evening. Can you hear me? Good evening. Good.

I wasn't sure if the mic was on. I just want to make two apologies here before we sing something together. Last night, as they were getting ready to introduce me, it dawned on me that somewhere in the back of my mind, with all that's happening lately in my life, that my secretary or someone told me there's going to be a book signing there that they want you to do.

And I looked around to ask someone, is that on? No one had mentioned it to me since I got here. And sure enough, I learned this morning it was last night at the end of the service, and I didn't go. And for anyone who went down there, I apologize.

What they've given me permission to do is tomorrow afternoon between 2.30 and 3.30, I'll be in the bookstore area there, which is very beautiful. And for what it's worth, if anyone would like to have me sign something, I'd be happy to do it. So that's tomorrow afternoon from 2.30 to 3.30. I also misspoke when I said, I don't know what, I was thinking only America, that I've never preached in an Alliance church.

But that's not true. I've made about 17 trips to Peru and go quite a bit to South America. And we started a church in Lima, the capital city.

And just about four years ago, I forged a friendship with Pastor Julio Rosas, who is the head of the Missionary Alliance churches there, as they say in Spanish, Alianza. And I had always heard how God had blessed the Alliance churches in Peru. I've been going to Peru since the early 80s.

And he invited me, told me that he had read my book in Spanish, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, and would I come and speak at his church to some pastors. We got a further friendship developed. And I flew down there and spoke at the Mother Church there in Lima, which is a huge building, beautiful church.

From my observation, if you stacked up all the other denominations and fellowships in Peru, which I have visited and moved among and put them all together, it would not even equal how God, for some reason, has shown His grace upon the Alliance churches there in Peru. If you ever get a chance to go to Lima and you want to see some beautiful things happening in the name of the Lord, the Alliance churches there are doing great. So I've never preached in one in America.

Maybe some of you will break down and invite me to come to your church. But I have preached in Peru and going back this fall with a little team to help Pastor Rosas and the work there. Let's all stand together, shall we? If you could just lift that piano in my monitors, it will help me.

Thank you. We're going to sing a song together. Ready? Sing with me.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. For I once was lost, but now am found, was blind and now can see. A hand clap offering.

All hail the power of Jesus' name. Okay, now I noticed last night that you all sing beautifully, but you don't sing a lot of you with all of your strength. Did you know that there's no passive singing anywhere found in the Bible? There's no laid back singing.

You ever go to American churches sometimes and you'll see people like that going, All hail the power of Jesus' name. I learned in Argentina in the 70s, late 70s, I was around people who, the pastors, no one's counting the crowd, no one's distracted. They just sing muy fuerte, very strong in Spanish.

And that's the way we should sing. Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and what? Not half of what's in me, but all that's within me. Bless his holy name.

Now, if Jesus Christ were to walk across this stage now, and I just dropped the mic and fled, and he just stood in front of you with his nail prints still in his hand, and we were going to sing, all hail the power of Jesus' name, and he looked at you, guess how you'd be singing it? The point is, he is here. Because where two or three are gathered, he said he would be there. So I want to sing it for him, not singing it for you.

Jesus is the audience when you worship God. We're not trying to create a warm, fuzzy moment or an atmosphere. We're praising the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Amen? Let's do it real loud together. Now, I want everybody, I don't care how you sing, and don't tell me it's your culture not to sing loud. People go to football games and silly basketball games and they cheer, and then when it comes to church, you can't get them to make a beep.

That's wrong. Let's praise God. Amen? With all of our heart.

Ready? Let's sing. Everyone. Now the Bible says, in both Old and New Testament, that for some reason God loves when we lift our hands.

I have no idea why he loves that. But the Old Testament says, lift your hands, O ye people. And Paul says in the New Testament, I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands.

Oh, but pastor, I'm not used to that. It's not what you're used to. We're worshipping God now.

We're not trying to make everybody feel comfortable. We're worshipping God. How many believe he's worthy of our praise and our worship? So, listen.

Listen. Lift up your right hand with me. Everybody lift up your right hand.

Ready? Let's sing it again, loud. Praise the Lord. It's good to praise the Lord.

Amen. God doesn't inhabit our worries. He inhabits the praises of His people.

We've got to get folks in our churches to praise the Lord. He inhabits the praises of His people. Christianity is something to be happy about and to rejoice about.

If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn to the book at the end of 1 Samuel, the 30th chapter. And at the end of 1 Samuel, in chapter 30, I'll tell you the story and the setting later. It's too long to read, so let's look

at verse 16 of 1 Samuel 30.

Verse 16. He led David down. I'll tell you who he is later.

He led David down and there they were, the Amalekites, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking, and rebelling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day and none of them got away except 400 young men who rode off on camels and fled. And David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives.

Nothing was missing, young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else that they had taken. David brought everything back. He took all the flocks and the herds, even of the Amalekites, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, this is David's plunder.

Now, David's life is like the perils of Pauline in the Bible. David went through more things than you could imagine in his life. And this is an obscure little story that not too many people read, but God has it in the Bible for some reason.

And sometime in the most obscure places in the Bible, we can find some wonderful truth that will encourage us along the way. I don't want to preach to you as ministers and leaders. I just want to preach the Word of God as if we're just all just believers in Jesus Christ with our problems and our challenges that we face.

David, of course, began as the young shepherd boy who providentially went out and was on the battle line where Goliath was taunting Israel and David slew Goliath by the grace of God. And David overnight became the toast of the town and all of Israel began to not only appreciate him and love him, but began to even sing about him. He led as a young warrior, young officer, he led them out on several battles.

God was with him. The only thing, it's this music and this song that got him in a lot of trouble because one of the first gospel hits back then was a song that went this way, Saul has slain his thousands and David has slain his tens of thousands. That was a big song back then.

And that was unfortunate for King Saul because what King Saul got in him is something very ugly that could happen to any of us. He got envy and jealousy in him for David. He didn't like that thing that even though David had saved his neck by slaying Goliath, he didn't like the fact that they were singing about David.

And you know, the Bible says that wrath is terrible. I'm paraphrasing and anger is horrible, but nobody can stand before envy or jealousy. When someone is jealous of you or envious or when you and I are envious of someone or jealous, and it can happen right in church, it happened among preachers.

Then you can't reason with it. There's no reason people are going to criticize and get nasty, but at the root of it is this envy, this jealousy. Well, from there David lost everything as it were, because he had to flee.

Saul tried to kill him several times, pinned him to the wall with his spear. And even though Saul's son Jonathan was David's best friend, David had to leave his best friend, had to leave his family, had to take care of his mom and dad until he found out what, as he said, what God would do to him and what God would do for him. He was on the run.

With Saul and the entire army of Israel hunting for him. By the way, this is, during this time he wrote some of the Psalms that we have. God, will you deliver me? Lord, help me.

Everybody is against me. And it's been a great comfort to people who go through trouble to know that David went through these times where he was hunted like an animal. And the Lord, as he kept inquiring of the Lord, the Lord kept him one step ahead of Saul.

And David ended up in the desert, in caves, hiding. And during his travels, he ended up at one point living with the Philistines, which is the setting for this story. He actually went to King Achish of the Philistines and lived there for a while, over a year.

And while he was living with the Philistines, he had accumulated a militia or a small army of 600 men who were loyal to him. And even though he was a renegade and an outcast, they believed in God's anointing on him and God's selection of him. And David had these 600 men with him.

And while they were with the Philistines, they lived in a city in the Philistine territory called Ziklag. So here he was, all these soldiers, David, their wives, their families, their children, all their possessions, living in Ziklag. And lo and behold, the impossible happens.

King Achish declares war on King Saul. So now David is in the soup. Should he fight with the Philistines? But this would be against his own people.

But David is a warrior. David has been so mistreated by King Saul. The Bible tells us that he lines up with his men at the rear near in Aphek, a town where the Philistines gathered together to line up to go to war against the Israelites.

And David and his men were in the back with King Achish. And King Achish says, I want you to go to battle. David said, I will.

King Achish says, and if you do well, I'll make you my personal bodyguard for life. Well, as he's lining up to go to battle, some of the Philistine commanders spot David. And they go to King Achish and say, what's the deal here? Who is this? This is David.

Don't you know who this is? How could we go to war with him? And King Achish says, listen, David's been with me for over a year. He's been loyal to me. He's never done one thing wrong.

Can you find fault with him? And they said, listen, King, time out. Listen to us. This is David, who in the middle of the battle could turn on us to gain favor with King Saul and the people of Israel.

We can't go out to fight with David on our side, but he's a mighty warrior. We know that. But this is David.

Remember that hit song over there in Israel? Saul has slain his thousands and David has slain his tens of thousands. Some of those tens of thousands were us. They said we're not going out to fight if David's with us.

King Achish realized he can't convince them, so he calls David to him. He says, David, you've got to go back to Ziklag with your troops. David says, no, I want to fight for my lord, the king.

He says, you can't. And don't make problems for me. The commanders are against it.

Don't make trouble. I've got enough trouble. I'm going to battle, going to war here with King Saul.

Just go back. So that's the setting for David's return trip back to Ziklag. And as David and his men go back to Ziklag, three days journey, heading from north down to south, where Ziklag was.

As they get within sight of Ziklag, they're almost sure they see some smoke. When they get closer, they see a lot of smoke. Now their walk turns to a trot.

They do double time and now they start to run. What they don't know is that while they were away, Ziklag has been raided by the Amalekites. Now the Amalekites stand in the Old Testament as a people that always were God's enemies.

They always were against God. In fact, God declared that they had to be totally destroyed. That, you know, those of you who know your Bible know God's prohibition about permitting the Amalekites to mingle with the people of God.

Well, these Amalekites had formed a raiding band and had been messing up cities and towns in that area. So as David gets there, he doesn't know what's happening. He just finds out that the city has been burned to the ground.

And what he doesn't know is that the Amalekites have taken every woman, every wife of David and his men, and every son and every daughter and all their possessions, and they have disappeared and gone their way. All David is left with is a burned down Ziklag and no wives and no children. Even though David's soldiers are tough guys and hardened by battle, the Bible says in this story that they begin to weep convulsively.

Their hearts are agitated because in those rough and tumble days, you could imagine what they were thinking about their 15-year-old daughter and what might happen to her, their seven-year-old son, the wife that they love so much. And the Bible says they became so embittered and they were weeping so much, including David. But the bitterness turned the men against David, which many times happens to a leader.

When people are frustrated and they're bitter, they have to vent it some way. So they vent it against the leader. And in this case, they vented it against David and they probably started to say, what's the deal? Why were we even with King Achish? Why did we leave our families? Why did this happen? And they actually talked of stoning David.

So David had not only lost everything, now his own men were talking about taking his life. And there's a little verse earlier in chapter 30 that says at that moment, but David found strength in the Lord his God. He must have got away some way and began to pray and said, oh, God, strengthen me.

God, strengthen me. You know, brothers and sisters, when things are going real tough and we don't know what to do, we got to get alone with God. How many say amen? We've got to seek the Lord's strength.

God gives strength to his people. But we have to take time to get that strength. You can't figure things out.

You've got to get God's strength to get you through the thing the way God wants you to. Well, the next thing David did is he got some strength and gathered his equilibrium. He did one of the great things that he always did.

You study that carefully in David's life. All the times he inquired of the Lord, David inquired of the Lord, sometimes through a prophet. But many times through the high priest who he had traveled with him and somehow through the upper garment of the high priest, there was a way that they consulted what God's will was for some matter.

It was called inquiring of the Lord. And David wasn't about to rush into anything, but David wasn't about to do anything unilaterally. David gathered his spiritual senses, remembered how God had been so good to him, and he inquired of the Lord.

What a good lesson for us to inquire of the Lord what to preach, how long to preach, what songs to sing in a service, how long to sing, when to interrupt the service with something else. That's a message for another time. But I'll tell you what, when you inquire of God, God is faithful to talk to you and tell you what to do if you're open and willing to inquire.

Well, he says to God two things. God, should I go after whoever did this? And number two, will you give me them into my hand? Will you give them into my hand? And God speaks to David like he'll still speak to us and says, go up after them and I will give you the victory. I will make your your movement successful.

So David takes off with his 600 men and they go led by God. They didn't know which way to travel north, south, east or west. But when God is leading you, he knows exactly where to go.

And they follow the Lord's direction. And as they're traveling through some rough area, they see an Egyptian half dead in the sand. They get a hold of this Egyptian and they give him some food because he hadn't for three days had anything to eat or drink.

He was just about gone. He happened to be an Egyptian slave to the Amalekites, but they didn't know that until they talked to him and they said, who are you? And he said, I'm an Egyptian. I'm a slave to the Amalekites.

And we've been doing some raiding. We've been traveling in this area. That slave didn't know who he was talking to.

We've been doing some raids and knocking out some towns and getting some loot, kidnapping people. In fact, we had here, there and everywhere. In fact, we even hit Ziklag and we burned it to the ground.

When David heard that, he knew the Lord had led him to this man. So he said, tell me, will you lead me to where this band is? Do you know which way they went? Will you lead me to them? And the slave said, I will just promise me you won't kill me or turn the, turn me over to them. David said, it's done.

So the Egyptian got up with his David and his little army and he took off. And sure enough, in a little amount of time, David came to a crest of a hill and looked down in a valley and there they were eating, drinking, celebrating. The Amalekites were having, high-fiving each other, having a big time.

Why? Because of all the plunder that they had gained. All the children that they would use and abuse on all the women. They hadn't killed one of them.

They just had them. And the Bible tells us that about dusk of that day, David started down that hill. And from dusk of that day to the next day evening, he fought victoriously.

And that was the day for the first time in his life that David found out that God recovers stolen property. The Bible tells us that every wife was recovered. Every child, every son, every daughter, all the livestock.

And on top of that, he ripped the Amalekites off of what they had. So he got not only everything back, but he got something else on top of that. Now, you might say to me, Pastor Simla, that's such an obscure story.

What has that got to do with me? Well, I'll tell you, it has a lot to do with you and me. God recovers stolen property. Now, I live in a city where things get stolen all the time.

Some years ago, I had a car. I think it was a Toyota back then. And somebody broke into my car and stole the airbags right out of my car.

Just the airbags, because for drug addicts in the city, the airbags are a very valuable thing. They can turn it over for quick money at a chop shop where they have stolen cars. And it's just a very valuable thing.

They can get money usually for crack cocaine. I reported it to the insurance company, went through all of that. Then your rates go up.

You know the whole deal. Very expensive item. Had him put in again.

Three weeks later, parked in the same exact spot. The same guy, I'm sure, broke in and stole them again. I thought if this keeps up, I ought to just leave some cookies and a note for him and say, let's become friends or something, because I'm running out of airbags here.

That one, I had to replace myself. We have houses broken into in New York. You get anything stolen in New York? When we say the benediction at the end of a service, many times at our church at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, we'll say, God, get everyone home safely.

No thefts, no anything. Now, you don't think I came all this way to talk to you about airbags or your house or your car. No, I want to talk to you about another kind of stealing.

John 10:10 says the thief, Jesus said the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Listen, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. Speaking of Satan.

But I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. But the thief, Satan, comes only to steal, kill and destroy. Notice not kill first, not destroy first, steal.

Now, what would Satan want to steal from you? What would Satan want to steal from you, my sister, you, my brother? You don't think he's interested in your house, do you? He's a spirit being. He has no use for your house, your cars. It wouldn't matter how nice your car is.

He gets along fine the way he's moving about now. He's an angelic being, angelic being, he's Lucifer, so he doesn't need your car. He doesn't need your money.

He has no use for money. So if you're locking up all your money and saying the devil wants to steal, I can assure you he's not interested in an iota with your money. Well, if the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, but steal first, what would he be stealing? And what kind of property does Jesus Christ, what kind of stolen property is Jesus Christ in the business of still recovering? Oh, there's lots of things happening right now while I speak, probably going on right now, right now in this building, possibly God in the next

few moments is going to show you something that Satan is stealing from you.

You're being ripped off. And this is the worst part. You don't even know it because Satan is a very clever thief.

He he kind of puts you under like a sedative before he starts stealing because he wouldn't want to alarm you that he's stealing. He comes in very opportune moments. He has a whole con game that he runs, but only on a spiritual level.

Well, what are you talking about, minister? Well, let me tell you. How about your first love? How about my first love? Now, there's something Satan would like to steal your first love, that first consecration, that devotion to Christ, of wanting to spend time just with Jesus and enjoying his presence and spending time, long times, good time, quality time in the word of God. You know, some people, when they find the Lord or they make a fresh consecration of their life, they become like A.B. Simpson, your founder.

They just live to be with the Lord. Read what Simpson says about the presence of the Lord. And in that presence, there's fullness of joy.

In that presence, there's peace. And the word of God becomes food more important than any restaurant or anything you could buy at a supermarket. The word of God becomes your very food.

Thy words were found and I did eat them. And they became unto me the joy and rejoicing of my soul. That's the that's the language of a first love that a church could have or a movement could have or a pastor could have.

But you know what? Satan steals people's first love. In other words, if you're here today or it's happened to me or anyone on the on the platform, if we've lost our first love, you don't think the thing evaporated, do you? You don't think the thing just floats away, do you? Oh, come on. Be real.

Satan steals. The thief comes to steal. He'll steal your first love.

He'll get you so busy doing for Jesus that you spend no time with Jesus. You're so busy with the construction program or making all the details of the ministry work and all the planning meetings and all of that that you very slowly, imperceptibly, you lose your first love. Remember what Jesus wrote to the first first letter that he wrote in the in the book of Revelation to the church at Ephesus? I have this against you.

You've lost your first love. Oh, that's a terrible thing when you see people lose their first love, especially when they get older. Oh, they rationalize it and they justify it.

Oh, I used to be emotional then, Pastor Symbola. I used to be, you know, I'm I'm more mature now. Oh, come on.

That's just the song and the dance. You've lost your first love. We're supposed to get better the more years we walk with Jesus, not worse.

We're supposed to go from faith to faith and from glory to what? Glory. No, it's just you lose your first love. Think of all the denominations and fellowships it's happened to think of Wesley would come back from the dead and see what the Methodists are doing that he began today.

Think of what he would think of the Methodists, what's going on, or if Luther came back and saw what's going on in Lutheran churches, some places ordaining homosexuals. Where does it all begin, though? Just a loss of your first love, your fervency, getting your direction from the Lord. Now you get it from magazines and books and you go to these these church growth seminars and copy what's working.

That's not the way it was when you were really close to the Lord. You were hearing from God directly. But when you lose your first love, you start taking shortcuts and they all lead nowhere because what's born of the flesh is flesh.

But what's born of the spirit is spirit. And you can't copy any church. Don't ever copy the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

I'm still trying to figure out what to do. You need to seek God and say, God, what do you want me to do in Pennsylvania or Indonesia or Michigan or California, wherever God has put you. But when Satan steals your first love, ministry becomes very hard.

It becomes very strenuous because it's you going through the motions, but you've lost the vigor and the fervency and the joy of just being with Jesus and feasting on his word. Not for sermon material. That's the worst way to read the Bible, reading the Bible just to hear him talk to you.

And that's something Satan will want to steal. He doesn't want your car. He doesn't want any of your stocks and bonds or your retirement fund.

He has no use for that. But now first love. Now we're talking.

Or how about your calling? You know, some of you here might be here today and this is happening in churches across the land. People have their their calling stolen by Satan. In other words, God speaks to their heart and puts a longing inside of them and a little vision of what he wants them to do.

But they try and they get disappointed or somebody lets them down or a church leader mistreats them or they get ignored or they're not appreciated. Oh, Satan's got a lot of these shell games that he runs. And the next thing you know, everybody's a victim.

Oh, I was going to work for the Lord. I really be busy in the church. But, you know, they they're a bunch of they're a clique.

You know, there's a lot of phonies in the church. No kidding. There's always been phonies in the church.

There always be phonies in the church. What else is new? Why don't you face the real truth? Somebody stole your calling. Used to have a desire to teach children.

Think of people in your church right now, you pastors, that the calling of God, that thing that God put in people's heart to sing in in in the choir or to to be a prayer warrior. Now there's a ministry that's totally gone out. We're all so sophisticated and clever now.

We don't have anybody praying as if we're going to do this by mirrors. God laid a ministry of intercession on you, but you got disappointed. You the devil makes you look this way, distracts you, befuddles you.

And the next thing you know, you just say, ah, what's the sense? Come on, what's the sense? Let the preacher up there do what he has to do. Or ministers were in Bible school. How about some of you guys

that were in Bible schools and some of you sisters and you laid out on a carpet? You had the blessing of a Bible school.

I sure wish I would have gone to a Bible school. You'll be responsible to God because you have more light than I do. You had better training, so you'll be responsible for more than me.

And you laid out in some chapel service one day and you cried out to God and God put a heart, a burden on you to have a real New Testament church where people get converted and people love to pray and wait on God and they love their Bibles and they want to live Christ-like lives and they're colorblind and don't care who walks in the door and they're not interested in generation X and generation Y and all this foolishness. Trust me, when the Holy Spirit is leading, he can take care of meeting no matter what the ages the people are. Can you imagine Peter on the day of Pentecost saying, boy, I know there's a huge crowd here.

All the generation X-ers, would you please go over that other auditorium because I can't talk to you. You wouldn't fit in with the rest of them. Oh, what silliness.

What absolute silliness. People like Moody and Finney and A.B. Simpson, they must be turning over in their graves watching this. And I say to anyone who does it, where are the results? Show me the churches that have prayer meetings.

You know why most churches don't have prayer meetings? Oh, they'll tell you it's family night and the schedule of people. That's funny. Those same people are watching football games for three hours.

Oh, come on. The reason everyone knows why they don't have prayer meetings, nobody will come. Come on.

You know that. I know that. So a pastor doesn't want to have a meeting, a public meeting with three or four ladies usually showing up and nobody else.

So they say, you know, we're going to have family night, try to get everybody in the building under some pretense. But we all know how that works. But you never can see the blessing of God that way.

Churches lose their first love. Churches lose reaching for people that are dirty, that are lost. They want nice people.

They want God to clean the fish before they catch him. Hey, listen, listen. When you have your first love for God, you realize that the church is not supposed to be a nice place for the family.

Show me that any place in the Bible. Remember what your founder taught you. Some of you need to read a little bit along with your Bible, what he said.

The church is supposed to be a holy ghost hospital where any kind of person can walk in and be changed by the power of Jesus Christ. But you know what happens, brothers and sisters, when we lose our first love, those pastors who once consecrated themselves to God, they're running some Mickey Mouse kind of church now with little one hour Protestant masses just to keep the people there and keep their tithes coming in. Listen to me.

Don't laugh and don't clap. They're doing they're doing that. What's going to happen on the day of judgment where Jesus is going to say to us, who told you to do that? Who told you to do that? Where did

you find that in the Bible? Where did you find that church in the Bible where nobody wants to come out? Nobody's interested in being in the presence of God.

And don't tell me times have changed. Times might have changed, but God never changes. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever.

You know, when you lose your first love, when Satan robs that and you can justify it and say, be you're sophisticated. You don't believe in altar calls anymore because it's not the era of an altar call. Listen, any way you can get people to pray, do it.

Because God said my house should be called the house of prayer always. But when you lose your first love, it all becomes justifiable. I know I've been there.

I'm preaching to myself. One other thing before I close, not just first love and people's calling, what God really called you to do. Maybe some of your call to the mission field now, then you're sitting right here and God wants you overseas.

But but that calling has been robbed by discouragement and distractions and. So sad the thief comes only to steal, but I've come that you might have a life. But the last thing I want to leave with you is Satan is stealing children left and right across this land.

Listen to me, all of you, your children, your grandchildren, if they're not living for God and don't dance with yourself and make excuses, if you know they're in trouble spiritually and not living for God, what are you going to do about it? I'm finding out much to my sadness as I travel around the country and the world that a lot of ministers are just saying, listen, Pastor Symbola, I gave my I tried my best and grandparents instead of drawing a line in the sand and interceding for their grandchildren. And these kids were dedicated to the Lord. They were brought to church and dedicated to the Lord.

And now Satan has them not even going to church. And we're just going to sit back and say, woe is me. I don't know what's going on.

Won't somebody shake themselves and say, wait a minute, Jesus recovers stolen property. I'm going to get up like David and chase those people down through prayer. We're very vulnerable when we're hit with our children.

And if you're a pastor, that's a very strong target. Three people in the in in in the halls today and then two more while I was having lunch with some of your delegates here came up to me and grabbed my arm and either left me a name of someone to pray for. And I was undecided what to preach about.

But as one of them grabbed my arm and told me something, I felt the Holy Spirit say, that's what you preach. And I don't like to preach this message because I want to tell you what I went through and what my wife and I went through back in the late 80s. Our our oldest girl, Chrissy, our first child, model child growing up by the time she had about 16, 17.

It's not easy raising kids in the inner city because sometimes it's right in the church that they meet people who can be a very terrible influence. Kids went to public school. Chrissy did.

But around 16 years old, and I take partly the blame for it in this sense, I took my eye off of her. You know, I'm busy preaching, starting other churches. We're renting Radio City Music Hall, having outreaches from

the music hall, starting other churches.

My wife's making albums. You know, we're we're killing ourselves the best we know how for Jesus, trying to lay down our lives. And Chrissy and Chrissy got away from us, but she not only got away from us emotionally, she drifted away from God.

And she got very hard. Our model child got very hard about 16, 17 years old, very hard. The next thing you know, we tried to do this.

We tried to do that. I tried to use money. I tried to use crying.

I tried to use threatening. I tried everything. She got worse.

She didn't get better soon. Eventually. She was out of the house.

My wife and I went through a two and a half year nightmare. We were in a tunnel with no light, it seemed at the end. Many, many, many days that only God and I know about, I got in my car in front of my house in Queens, one of the five boroughs of New York City and drove to church and cried from the moment I turned the ignition on until when I was approaching the building twenty, twenty five minutes later, I would be weeping hysterically and have to ask God, God, pull me together, pull me together, because I've got to preach.

I've got to do three services at that time. I've got to do three services, Lord, each two and a two to two and a half hours long. You got to pull me together emotionally.

Sometimes we'd be singing one of the hymns and my spirit would go to the throne of grace and just begin to intercede for Chrissy. Sometimes when I was preaching, I would pause and suddenly I'd feel my heart go up and say, God, bring Chrissy back, bring Chrissy back. At times we didn't even know where she was.

Right around that same time, my wife had a hysterectomy. And while she was very vulnerable and talking about not wanting to live anymore, the devil came to her and said, fine, start your churches, kill yourself for Jesus. But I'm coming for your three children.

I have one, but I'm coming for the other two. And my wife up and announced one morning to me, I'm leaving the city and I'm taking the children with me. And I said, Carol, you can't leave the city.

We can't unilaterally just take off. She said, no, listen, I've tried my best. She wasn't feeling well.

I don't blame her. She was going through a lot. But she said, I can't I'm not going to let my children go down the drain.

Two and a half years. Crying, praying, pray without ceasing. Huh.

I couldn't do anything without praying for Chrissy. Had a few close friends praying for her. Getting harder, harder by the month.

I came to a point around Thanksgiving of this one year where she went and saw a minister friend of mine with this friend that she was with, this fellow. And the minister called me and told me I was in Florida at the time he told me, listen, I spoke to your daughter. And you know what, Jim, I love you, but you got to accept certain things in life.

You know, you're going to have to accept certain things. Chrissy's 18 now. She's going to do what she's going to do.

I said, excuse me, you talk to my daughter. Yeah, I talked to your daughter and. She's she's off, but she's determined that you got accepted.

I hung up the phone. I could feel the hot tears still coming down my eyes and something deep in my heart moving. And I said over my dead body, will I ever accept my daughter not serving God over my dead body? I made a covenant with God that day and I felt the Lord impressed me.

Don't talk to her. Only talk to me. Don't talk to her until I change her.

And I began now really to pray. I've been praying a little bit before, but now I really got in gear. We had a rough Christmas that Christmas, two of our children there.

But you know, when one is missing. It's not Christmas. January rolled through and then one Tuesday night in February in our Tuesday night prayer meeting, we were singing and waiting on the Lord and a woman, a young lady in the church who hears from God, who's spiritually sensitive.

She sent a note up to me and she said, Pastor Symbola, for some reason, I believe we're to pray for your daughter, Chrissy, tonight. And I have been preaching about boldness from the book of Acts and the people were all in prayer. But I felt like there was something to this.

So so we stopped the prayer meeting at a certain point and I had all the people join hands together. The building was filled with people on our Tuesday night prayer meeting. And I said to them, listen, my daughter's out of it.

She thinks up is down. She thinks down is up. She thinks black is white.

White is black. She's harder than this this platform. And somebody feels impressed that we should pray for.

I'm going to give it to Pastor Boakstaff, one of my associates, and he's going to pray. Would you please pray for my daughter? My my tear ducts had run dry. I prayed all the time, but crying had, you know, would come intermittently.

But my tear ducts had just been worn out. He started to pray. Yeah.

Have you ever been in a labor room? You ever you ever you ever go to a labor room where women are giving birth? Because that's what happened. The people started to travail for my daughter, Chrissy. I know for some of you sophisticated people with your user friendly and secret sense of ideas, that would be very, very unusual for you to to see people travail and grown in the spirit.

But, you know, go to a labor room. Those ladies are not usually whistling Dixie in there while they're having children. Paul says, I travail like a mother giving birth to Christ be formed in you.

Oh, Pastor Simba, that's the old way. Oh, no, that's not that's not the old way. That's the only way it was so strong.

This sense of prayer and intercession that it almost drove me back. Now, I had said to the Lord during this time, Lord, when you bring Chrissy back, I'll rejoice. And God seemed to put it in my heart.

At least I felt. When this happens, I want you to tell everyone wherever I send you when I prompt you to do it, what I did for your daughter, will you do that? And I said, yes. And that's why I'm speaking tonight.

I do not enjoy this message because it goes back in some corridors in my mind that I've tried to block off. I did a lot of crazy things back then. Well, they began to pray when I got home that night.

My wife hadn't been in church. It was right during that time she had written a song, which is her most famous song. She's written over a hundred songs, but she wrote a song.

He's been faithful. That's right at that moment when she during that surgery and during all of this time with Chrissy away. God was encouraging us that he is faithful.

He recovers stolen property. Jim, if you go to the keyboard. I got home that Tuesday night and told my wife she was drinking coffee at the kitchen table.

I can still see her. I said, Carol, it's over. She said, what's over.

I said, it's over. Chrissy Chrissy's coming back. She said, how do you know? I said, if there's a God in heaven, Chrissy's coming back.

You don't know what I witnessed tonight. It was just about the next morning when I was shaving and my wife burst into the bathroom and said, Chrissy's downstairs. I hadn't seen her for five months.

I was wiping the shave cream off my face. She said, you better go down. She wants to talk to you.

I went downstairs into the kitchen and I saw somebody on the floor. When I walked into the floor, she never got up. When I walked into the room, she never got up.

She just grabbed my pants leg. She pulled on it and she said, Daddy, I've sinned against you. Sinned against myself.

I've sinned against God. Daddy, please forgive me. She lifted herself up.

I put her arms, my arms around her. I looked at her for the first time in her face. Her face had changed.

I said, Chrissy, I'm so happy. She said, Daddy, who'd you have praying on Tuesday night for me? I said, what are you talking about? She said, what happened Tuesday night? Tell me what happened. I said, Chrissy, something happened in the prayer meeting.

We all prayed for you. She said, I knew it because I went to bed that night and God gave me a dream and I was heading toward a chasm, a black hole. I was speeding toward it.

There was no bottom to it. And just before I got there, God stopped me. And Daddy, instead of yelling at me, he put his arms around and he showed me that I was destroying myself.

And I looked at her eyes and it was the girl that we had raised. It wasn't this hard creature that she had become. Chrissy's written her own songs now.

She has three children. She and her husband, Al Toledo's Cuban brother, a wonderful man of God. They're in Chicago now.

They worked with me for the last three years, but now they're in Chicago to pioneer a new church in a difficult area right downtown Chicago. Jesus recovers stolen property. Listen, Jesus recovers stolen property.

But what a shame if written over some of our lives would be you have not because you asked not. Don't do a theological dance and say, well, God's will will always be done. No, that's not what that Bible verse teaches.

You have not not because I didn't want to give it to you. You have not because you asked not. You know, it's about time some of us drew a line in the sand and say, you know what? Satan's robbed enough now.

I'm going to believe God and fast and pray and however the spirit leads me. But God's going to recover my stolen property. And while I was praying about this this afternoon and I rarely do this, my friends here will tell you I rarely ever say anything like this publicly.

I don't like sensationalism or mysticism in the wrong sense of the word. But while I was praying, I felt God prompt me to tell somebody here your daughter is going to be driving in a car even though she's away from God and the glory of God is going to hit her just while she's driving and all the teaching you gave her growing up and all the verses you instilled in her heart. God's going to ignite them and bring that girl back to you because God can do that.

They can be taking a shower and God can turn them around. The glory of God can just feel where they're taking a shower. No case is too hard for Jesus.

No, nothing is too hard for Jesus. Let's close our eyes. If you're here today and you're a dad or a mom or you're a grandparent and you know one of your kids is in trouble.

Singers, would you just go up and stand there? I need thee. Oh, I need thee. Every hour I need thee.

If you've got a son or a daughter who's away from God, stop kidding yourself. Be like David. Rise up and go after those Amalekites.

God recovers stolen property. I'm here to tell you that. This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all of his fears.

Call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, God says. Call upon me and I will answer you. At the sound of your cry, I'll begin to move.

That's what God says. There's no newfangled way. There's only God's way.

If you're here and got a son or a daughter or grandson or a granddaughter that you know Satan is messing around with and trying to steal precious property, you want to hand it over to Jesus tonight or the calling on your life or your first love or whatever it might be. I wouldn't care if five parents came up here or 500. I'm not here to try to gauge the altar call.

I want to do business with God. We're going to turn this place into a house of prayer. Opryland Hotel as of this moment becomes a house of prayer because we're going to go after this stolen property.

Satan, I come against you in the name of Jesus Christ. I resist you. You're a liar.

You're a thief and a liar. And we plead the blood of Jesus Christ over all of these cases and you will release them because Jesus recovers stolen property. If you're here and want to pray, get up out of your seat and get up here quick.

Don't dawdle around. Come on, get up and come and get close to me here. Right up in the front.

Say, I come. I need thee, oh, I need thee. I need thee.

Father God, if what I preach tonight is not true, then nothing's true. You are a rewarder of them who diligently seek you. You're the God who led us to pray by saying, call upon me in the day of trouble.

Call upon me and I will show you great and mighty things that you can't even imagine. Would you say that, Lord, only to frustrate us? Would you put that in the Bible and cause us to pray and inspire us like that only to not answer our prayers? Never. You're not a man that you should lie.

Your word is true. The devil is a liar, but your word is true, oh Lord. And we don't care what we see.

We don't care how hard they seem and how far away they've gone. Jesus, you recover stolen property. The thief only comes to steal and kill and destroy, but you've come that we might have life and our families and enjoy it more abundantly.

People here, Lord, who have lost their first love, restore it tonight, oh Lord. Begin tonight, Lord, to get those embers on fire again, Lord, for you. And you're the only one who can do it.

We could no more stir ourself up, Lord, than we could jump over the moon. We're asking you to do your work by your Holy Spirit. For those, Lord, who have been running from a calling on their life, who have been making this excuse and that excuse, but the fire is burning within them while they muse, the fire burns, Lord.

Don't let the devil rob them of their calling, Lord. Doesn't matter how they've been let down or what disappointments have come. Fulfill your calling in their life, oh Lord.

And we've gathered in the name of Jesus tonight, Lord. We've gathered in the powerful name of your son, Jesus. Not for some little melodramatic moment, but we're doing business with heaven now, Lord.

We're bringing you these sons and daughters and granddaughters and grandsons. Start tonight to turn them around, oh Lord. I speak it by faith, Lord.

Turn them around and bring them back, Lord. Restore the years that the locusts have eaten, Lord, and bring them back, Lord. Wake them up in the middle of the night, if you have to, in a dream, Lord.

Speak to them while they shower or drive in a car, Lord. Bring back a verse to their memory, their remembrance, Lord. Send somebody to them, whatever it takes, but Lord, bring them back.

Bring them back. Bring them back, Lord. Not just to us, to you, because when they come back to you, they'll come back to us, Lord.

So that your name might be glorified, so we can tell other people that there is a God in heaven who hears and answers prayer. We're not going by our feelings and we're not going to be a depressed people. We're

going to rejoice in the God of our salvation who made these promises.

You are an awesome God. You are a mighty God, which you did for Chrissy. You're going to do for these men and women, Lord.

Yes, you are, God. We're calling on you in the name of Jesus. Go now, Lord, to the north and the south and the east and the west.

Find them where they are tonight. Make them miserable. Make them miserable, O Lord.

Don't even let them sleep at night. Whatever you have to do to get their attention. Give us wisdom how to respond to them and what to do.

But we are agreeing tonight in the name of Jesus, you're recovering stolen property. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Let's all say hallelujah. Hallelujah. Say it again.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. We bless you, O God.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

This is a sacred moment, God. You've made this place into a house of prayer. And you said when we would call, you would answer.

Ask and you shall receive. You said seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be open.

Lord, would you make these promises and then frustrate us? Never. We begin tonight not only to pray, we're going to keep on praying and we're going to keep on interceding and we're going to keep on doing whatever you lead us to do, Lord, by your spirit. But we're not giving up until they're back.

Until they're back, we will never give up, Lord. Never. Satan, you're defeated in the name of Jesus tonight.

And Lord, if there's any pastor now with a broken heart whose ministry has been affected by this heartache with him, you restore him now, Lord. You restore him and make him preach better through the pain, Lord. Make him more sensitive to you and more compassionate with the people.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry. Come on, Jim, let's sing that. Join hands with the person next to you.

Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry. You have passed me not. How many believe that God has heard our prayer tonight? Lift up your hand.

All right, listen. Here's what we're going to do. When I tell you to do it, I want you to start clapping when I tell you.

But as you clap, I want you to clap to the Lord for what he's going to do. Don't wait till the son or daughter comes back. Don't wait till the granddaughter.

You got to do it by faith now. So now the Lord led me one night. I was in my room like two months before Chrissy came back preparing a sermon, waiting on the Lord one o'clock in the morning on a Saturday

night.

And God spoke to my heart. It seemed he seemed to be saying to me, do you believe I'm bringing her back? I said, yes, Lord. He said, then why don't you start praising me? And I thought I'd wait to praise him after she came back.

But it doesn't work that way. You got to praise him before it happens by faith. And I remember standing up out of that chair and lifting my hands and began to praise God for something that didn't happen yet, but it was on the way.

So I'm going to ask you to clap your hands and to the Lord. And as you clap them, I want you to just say hallelujah, praise the Lord. Thank you, Jesus, whatever comes out of your heart, but we're going to praise him with the Bible says with the calves of our lips, with the calves of our lips, that's the sacrifice he wants.

He doesn't want an animal here tonight. He wants the calves of our lips, the fruit of our lips and the clapping of our hands. Come on, let's do it together.

Let's praise him out loud together. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Gracias, Senor, por todo, Senor. Gracias, Senor.

Gloria a tu nombre, Senor. Gloria a tu nombre, Senor. Gloria, Gloria, Gloria.

Senor, we praise you, Lord. Come on, everybody. Let's praise him.

We praise you, Lord. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah, Lord. Hallelujah.

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