

Our Hearts on the Altar

by Michael Koulianos

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being intentional in our worship and prayer, and putting our hearts on the altar to experience the manifest presence of Jesus and experience revival.

Duration: 36:24

Scripture: Joel 2:28

Topics: "Surrender", "Spiritual Discipline", "Revival"

Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the urgency of placing our hearts on the altar as we approach Pentecost, urging the church to prioritize Jesus over worldly distractions. He reflects on the significance of the outpouring of the Spirit and the need for intentionality in worship, encouraging believers to seek a deeper relationship with God. Koulianos shares personal experiences of past discouragement and the transformative power of community and prayer, highlighting the importance of being disturbed by the Spirit to foster growth and revival. He calls for a collective commitment to prayer and spiritual discipline, inviting the congregation to engage in a 21-day Daniel Fast to deepen their connection with God. Ultimately, he stresses that true ministry is birthed from a heart devoted to Jesus, not merely from organizational efforts.

Transcript

The church, primarily in the West, is about to start celebrating Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, or the Feast of Harvests, or the Feast of First Fruits. Those are all the same name for the same feast. Now, technically, we enter the age of Pentecost on the day of Pentecost.

Peter said, in the last days, quoting Joel chapter 2, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, right? So it has been the last days since the day of Pentecost. So here's my question. You know, people ask me this a lot because of everything that's going on in America.

How many of you know this is the worst time to make the media your shepherd and the best time to make Jesus your shepherd? Everyone's got skin in the game, so let me just help you out. Follow Jesus right now. Look higher.

I don't care who your aunt listens to or anyone. Follow Jesus right now. Read your Bible, follow the Lord, love people, and follow Jesus.

Amen? All right. So if the day of Pentecost was considered the last days, then how late are we into the last days today? That was 2,000 years ago. So we're in the age of Pentecost right now, and interestingly enough, Pentecost is also called Feast of Harvest, as I mentioned earlier.

In other words, the harvest of the wheat, as the ancient Jews would bring on Pentecost, is connected to the outpouring of the Spirit. So something we're praying right now as a team, and I want all of you to engage in this prayer because we have to move together as a family and watch many mountains cast into the sea together. Together.

One example is we will have our building in Jesus' name. So you know we have been under contract on land for months, but we've run into challenges with officials, and they're not insurmountable challenges. It's just requiring a tedious process of meetings.

All of these mountains will be cast into the sea. There will be a house. There will be a facility.

There will be prayer gardens. Your grandchildren will grow up ministering to Jesus there in Jesus' name. Amen? So we're going to watch many giants fall.

We're going to cut the head off many Goliaths together. We're going to watch the Lord make many paths straight and many mountains low and straighten crooked paths. We're going to do that together.

So we I feel like, and I don't feel like, the Lord's been showing me in dreams and visions lately at an increased rate that we have to intentionally put our hearts on the altar. We have to give God permission right now, listen carefully, to disturb us, to disturb us. Anytime you step into a moment of favor or the goodness of God, and this is a beautiful example of that, and the Sunday nights are a beautiful example of that, and Jesus' school is a wonder.

I cannot believe we've gone through three years of Jesus' school already. It's just a miracle, and to see all of you growing in the Lord. Things have not always been like this.

The church we had in California when I pastored, our first service, we had 400 people, and we grew in one month to 70, because I did it with my father-in-law. Finally the people figured out, oh Benny's not preaching at all. Who is this Michael guy? We're out of here.

And other people came in and knew what they were doing. Jess and I really didn't. And I always used to say, if you wanted to stay lost and never get healed, we were the church for you back then.

There's nothing going on, except in my heart there was a stirring. It's why I have such a focused pursuit on the right way to birth a people and birth a church. Churches are not planted.

Churches are birthed. All right, let me say it another way, because you can't plant them. Paul said that.

Churches are not, you cannot start one. Only God can start one, and they are birthed. And that labor process can be painful.

So I've walked through the discouragement. For years this morning I got up, I could not wait to get here. I'm not joking.

I look more forward to coming here on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights than I would a stadium. Absolutely. Just to be honest with you, as much as I love our events, I love this more.

When I get on a plane now, I start going, I want to get home before the plane out or even takes off. Literally, when Austin or O will take me to the airport, I get out and I go, I can't wait to come home. Like on the curb at MCO, I can't wait to get home.

So God has changed my heart. But in California, I dreaded Sundays. Dreaded them because everyone was dead.

There were some nice people. In case, I don't know many of you are watching. There were like 10 of you that were nice to me.

10. 10 out of the 40. I tried to get these guys to stack chairs on Saturday nights to put the chairs up for the Sunday morning service, and they wanted money.

Oh, yeah. Yeah. We had a keyboardist.

He used to play at Disney World, and he'd wear a Hawaiian shirt, big Hawaiian shirt. And after every time I said, amen, he did this little Disney thing. Remember that? I called our worship leader.

I said, dude, tell the guy to stop doing the Disney. It was like Disney mixed with a camp meeting. It's horrible.

Horrible. He's a wonderful man. But I'm just saying, it hasn't always been like this.

I know what it's like to walk through seasons and years of discouragement. But what's very important that we never forget is in seasons of encouragement and seasons of breakthrough, which this is, we still have to throw the cross into the center of our life. You take the cross, which speaks of self-denial and death, and insert it into your season.

So we need disturbance in our hearts. It's one thing to be at rest. That's an eternal promise.

But you get too comfortable, and that can be a dangerous thing. Somebody asked me from Bethel, BSSM. They're in town right now, and I think they'll all be at service tonight.

There's about 40 of them. They came to Jesus Image for their missions trip. I said, bro, we're already born again, but y'all can come have fun.

So they came. And one of them said, what is revival? I did a panel with them on Thursday. What is revival? I said, revival is when God comes to live with people.

It's when God steps down and He comes to live with people, when Jesus Himself finds it fitting to live with a group of people. That's why every worship set counts. One of the greatest, listen carefully, one of the greatest roadblocks to the manifest presence of Jesus in our lives is a lack of intentionality when we have the opportunity to worship.

When the opportunity comes our way, God entrusts His presence to those who seize that opportunity consistently. The people I love and have chosen to submit my life to are the most intentional worshipers I know. They provoke me.

I've watched them day in and day out. When a moment comes where the Lord becomes real to them, they instantly give Him their affection. Religion destroys that.

Some of the most jacked up people I know are the ones who use the most Christian verbiage. No, really. It's the truth.

Thank you, Jesus. I'm like, uh-huh, you know you don't thank Him. It's the truth.

That's the difference between a heart that's been numbed and dumbed down and it's become calloused and it loses the sense of the presence of God. So to keep that from happening, the cross must be central. When I say the cross, the life that says, my life is not my own, disturb me.

And if you don't seem to disturb me, I'm going to put my heart on the altar. Does that make sense? And what I told our team in the back during prayer is this is the season for Jesus' image to throw its heart back on the altar. Whatever that looks like.

For me personally, I have increased my time with the Lord and as of tomorrow, we as a team are starting a 21-day Daniel Fest. You are welcome to join it. I would love you to.

I cannot force you to. I'm not telling you what to do. I don't know what your limitations are physically, but you can do something.

I mean, if you really want to know what would probably bring an encounter is if you just put social media away. Don't clap and not do it. We can watch you through your camera.

Do something. If the Daniel Fest doesn't work for you, put your heart on the altar. Give God 21 mornings.

Beat the sun to its rising. Does this make sense? Last night I got into bed. Benny and I had a wonderful two days together.

We just had Father's Son time. It was wonderful. And I got home last night and laid down to go to sleep and I felt the voice of the Lord.

I heard Him come and He said, I'd like an hour. Will you give it to me? I want to be with you. Isn't He wonderful? I got out of bed and told Jesse, I'm going to be with the Lord for an hour.

This is the type of stuff I'm talking about. This is what it takes to keep the breakthrough from becoming God to you. Don't get stuck in the status.

Don't let your calling replace Jesus because your first calling is to adore Him. I've thought a lot about creating space for pastors who want to birth environments of His presence because there's enough training out there on how to build churches without God. I'm not interested in that.

You find that in the Bible. Tell me where in the Bible it says that you can systematically franchise Holy Spirit families. Now, if church is an organization, you can do it.

But if church is a family in the presence, birthed by Jesus Himself, you cannot do it without Him. So I've thought about making the space for pastors on how to live and see a family of people literally live in the cloud in the manifest presence of the Lord and to live with Jesus Himself as a people. But even if I did this church training type thing, I would tell them about Jesus the whole time.

Because I actually believe that. That has been the testimony of my life has been that even if you fall in love with Jesus and overflow, He will come. Does that make sense? Pay attention.

Does that make sense? Never let your office or your calling become the message. Let Jesus be your message. So if some of you are called, let's say within the five-fold context, all of you, by the way, are called to be ministers of the Lord.

You minister to the Lord and you minister on behalf of the Lord in that order. But let's say you are a prophet. Your chief message is not this is how you prophesy.

Because all you create are robotic employees who know how to get addresses but don't tell you about Jesus. Does that make sense? The message of the true pastor is not this is how you build, you, you build a church. Because Jesus said, I will build my church, by the way.

All right. So the message is not this is how you do this. The message is Jesus the chief shepherd.

Does that make sense to you? Now, it's okay to do that, but it's not the primary message. It's not illegal to do that in the spirit, but it's not the primary message. The primary message is not this is how you do what I do.

The primary message is this is the wounded one. This is Jesus. Jesus.

So we have to be careful as a church, as a church family, that Jesus remains more important to us than Jesus' image. Does that make sense? And we need that disturbance, the disturbance of the spirit. We need to pay attention to what we're hearing and who's coming around us in a good way and allow them to provoke us.

We need to find people who are burning and not be offended by them and be insecure. Even if they're young, let the young fiery ones who haven't found a public platform set you on fire. Does that make sense to you? Because sometimes burning people expose our iciness.

And we have two choices in the moment. Distance ourselves or serve them. If we go low and serve them, we catch on fire.

So we're in that season right now, and I'm just telling you, I'm going north. I'm going north. That's north, huh? Yeah, I'm a fisherman.

I'm going north. I'm going north. I told the Lord, here comes the Daniel fast.

I could feel it offered to me. I'm taking it. I'm taking it.

Disturb me. What my summer is not going to be filled with is preaching engagements. But I'm going to shut the door.

And I think you should shut the door. Yes. If you've never tried it, I dare you.

If you hold on long enough without giving up, God will change your life. But this is the season we're in. Say, my heart on the altar.

What's the date today? 25th. So Pentecost is, is it next Sunday? Can you check on that for me? Someone just look up Pentecost. I think it's this Sunday.

I had my whole teaching ready, but teachings don't necessarily bring an outpouring. May 23rd is Pentecost. Okay, we've got a few weeks here.

We've got a few weeks to let the sandpaper of the Spirit prep us for fire. Amen? Did you know what I mean by that? I mean, let the Word cut you and fillet you and trim you back and prune you. We're in a season shift right here.

I feel it in my bones. We're going somewhere together. But if you don't come, I'm going.

I'll tell you what. Jess will just hang back and take care of you. I'm going.

No, she won't. She'll come with me. She's already preaching my stuff.

The whole choir thing. That's mine. She stole my line.

That's how you know you've become one. I guess I've done it to her a few times. Amen? Amen.

All right. How do you enter a time where God is shifting, or offering, I should say, an opportunity in the Spirit? How do you seize it? I think, I learned this from my father-in-law, and I think he's right here. I feel the Lord now.

It's wonderful. I think there are four or five opportunities in life. Now, I want to encourage everyone here to not hear this as a message, but as a prophetic message that you have an opportunity to grab onto.

I feel this in my bones. There are four or five opportunities in life that some people grab and get right, and some people do not. And history tells the difference.

Number one, will you yield your life to Jesus? Number one, will you receive the Lord's salvation? That's the first and foremost, the most important moment in anyone's life, when they yield their life to Jesus Christ. Number two, receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, so that other people receive Jesus through your life. Now, hopefully, this remains true for the rest of my life, but I can honestly tell you that the story of my life has been this, fall so in love with Jesus that His love overflows, and people come to drink.

That's been the simple story of my life. Become so filled with His presence, that His presence overflows, and people come to drink, and people trust you, because they sense the Lord on you. That's number two, receiving the power of the Spirit.

Number three, who do you choose to marry? Oh, give me an amen. Oh, yeah. Now, the know-it-all demon lives right around the corner here.

You can give people advice, especially pastorally. If you've got a school, you can help them out, but you try to help them if they don't want it. On this one, I heard from God.

Okay, you heard from God on that one. Right. He doesn't know Jesus.

I know, but I heard from God. I'm going to get him saved. You're really good.

All right. Do you want any advice? Yes, I do. Don't marry him.

I don't want your advice. You're controlling me. Oh, yeah.

I've been around. I've done this thing a little while, since 1989. Yeah.

Who are you going to marry? You ready? Number four, who are your people? And I don't mean your ethnicity. How I wish you were all Greek, and you all brought me land. I wouldn't be so skinny.

If y'all were all Greek, I'd be ready for winter. Well-insulated. Smell like garlic.

No love. No love. Y'all don't give me any love.

I'm not talking about ethnicity here. Who is your tribe? Who are your covenant people? Who has God put in your life? Who are your people? Yes, that includes local church. Absolutely.

Church is not, as I said, an organization or a building. It is a people who live in the presence of God. Who are your people? Number five, where is your land? Where has God called you to be, and who has he called you to be with? It's very important.

Jesus was assigned to a people and a place. Okay, lastly, I'm going to give you this one. You have, this is six.

I'm adding it, because of our old teaching, you're getting increased now. All right. Lastly, number six.

I don't know how else to put it. I can't, I'm gonna have to say this one in the spirit, and you're gonna need the Holy Spirit to interpret it. I'm not going to say it in tongues, just so you know.

Okay. I heard, this is the truth what I'm about to tell you right now. I heard there's an actual, in a foreign country, a friend told me this.

A dude made a dictionary for every word in tongues, and says he's got the interpretation. It's like a big thick book. So Shabba means something evidently.

It's a joke, but anyways, there is an actual book. This one I'm going to say in the spirit. You're going to have to get this.

Listen up, listen up, listen up. You have to know when Elijah's walking by. You have to know when Jesus is walking the shore, and says, come follow me, I'll make you a fisherman.

You have to know when Jesus is walking past Matthew's tax collecting booth, and he says, come follow me. You got to know that, and here's the deal. Few people even get this far, but even fewer know the moment that I'm talking about, and even fewer than that grab it, because that requires everything.

I mean, right now you can get online, go do something for six months, and you get an ordination certificate. Well, you can get the certificate, but you don't get the anointing. You can't get that online.

You cannot get an anointing online. You have to get that from above. I feel like preaching.

You can't buy that, but you'll never grab it if you don't know the moment. Can I have 10 extra minutes this week? Okay, listen carefully. When the Lord told Matthew to follow him from the tax collector's booth, that was Matthew's office.

That was his business center, his building. It'd be like Matthew owning AT&T, and Jesus walking by, and Jesus saying, leave it all. Come follow me, without a disclaimer, without a retirement package and benefits.

Just come follow me. And what else? Nothing. You want me to leave all at the mere thought of simply following you? Yep.

Come follow me, and I'm not going to stay still long. I'm going to keep it moving. There's a side of Jesus that it disturbs us.

May it ever. Don't you think God could raise up a community in a day like this one? No one's that good here. No one's knocking on your door.

No bagels and biscuits. We got good coffee, but you didn't get a goodie bag when you walked in. You didn't get a little plastic bag or card so that we could get a hold of you and hopefully get you in the seat so our ties would grow.

No, that's not happening. That's a demon too. Oh yeah.

Yeah. See, I've been on the back end. You ever go use the bathroom at Disney on Main Street? You walk around the corner, and you realize every single building is gray.

None of them are beautiful. I did it once. I said, I have to go to the bathroom.

I should have hid in there. It would have been a shorter, easier day. But you leave Main Street.

You go leave Main Street. You go walk around the corner to go use the restroom. You get on the back end of all those shops on Main Street.

There's not a single color back there. It's all gray wood. And when I got back there, I'll never forget it.

I said, it looks way different from behind the scenes. The Lord spoke to me. He said, much ministry is that way.

It's beautiful on Main Street, but you get behind the scenes, and it's gray and dead and ugly. I said, Lord, never give me a ministry like that. I don't want to be in the ministry.

I want our ministry to be more glorious in the prayer room than it is here. And you know what? It is. It is right now.

And may the Lord have mercy. May the Lord have mercy and keep it that way. The Lord has this side to him where the kingdom of God suffers violence.

In other words, it is moving with pace. God has an agenda, listen, that is bigger than Michael. The literal Christ will tear the sky open over the eastern sky, land on the Mount of Olives, crack the olive in two, and walk into a procession through the eastern gate and set up his eternal kingdom and then distribute accordingly where we will rule and reign and how much we are given.

There is a lot going on. There is a procession in place. We are going somewhere.

Jesus is walking on the water. The disciples see him. And the Bible says, had they not stopped him to come into the boat, Jesus would have kept on moving.

Because Jesus had a job to do. And he wasn't going to disobey his father because Andrew and Peter were too slow in inviting him. It is either you have the privilege of coming with me or I am going alone.

Am I talking to anyone? Matthew, come follow me. Leave everything. Elijah comes to Elisha.

Elisha is plowing the field. That speaks of prayer. Plowing the soil.

Plowing the fallow ground. God chooses people who are spending time with him because he can trust them with power because the presence has forged their character. He does not want to give somebody much power unless they have learned to walk in the presence.

It is the presence that forges character, not the power of God. Does that make sense? The power to do great exploits does not keep you honest. The presence of Jesus makes you meek.

Miracles do not. We need miracles. But one prepares the man.

The other rests upon the man. Does that make sense to you? Elijah is walking, looking for a man he can trust. He finds a man plowing.

He finds diligence. He finds a man plowing through the soil of his own pride, his own heart. He throws his mantle on him and says, let's go.

In that culture it meant come on and move fast. Move now. And Elisha says, oh I just have a few things to take care of at home.

And Elijah, you think Elijah would reply and say, oh that is right. You need a balanced life. That is so true.

You are operating in wisdom. You need balance. This is a long race brother.

We have all heard this stuff. You know what Elijah says? How long do I have to deal with you? You don't know what I just threw on you. You put your hand on the plow and look back.

Jesus said, you are not worthy. There is this aspect of the kingdom that is moving. And Jesus is moving.

And he has a job to do. He has a job to do in us. And it is up to us to say yes.

But we will never latch on if we don't know the hour is there. And I am telling you right now by the Spirit, the hour is here for this family. I am telling you this.

Let the Lord disturb you. If you have to give Him an evening, give Him an evening for the next 21 days. Give Him your ear.

It is as though the Lord is bending His ear right now. And He is looking for communities. I believe He is doing this in the upper room right now.

He is looking for communities who are... His ear is pointed toward communities, searching for communities that are saying, we want you at any cost. We are not sure we know exactly what you want. But we are going to wait on you until you tell us what you want.

Even if that in and of itself takes a year, we are going to beg you to come. But this Sunday morning, this church is... I am telling you, if you think it is intense now, it is about to... 10 times would be an understatement. I am well aware of something.

If I start going, the team is going to start coming with me. And then the leaders are going to start coming with me. And then the students are going to start coming.

And then it is going to get on you. I am just saying, this is not going to be the place that you check off your Sunday morning box and just keep it moving after. You might be so drunk in the Spirit after Sunday morning church that you may not get to brunch.

I am just saying, that is where we are going. And God will take the least and disturb the rest with the least. Oh, the ones who feel like they are disqualified.

I have been stricken with the thought, we get one shot. One. Just one shot at this whole thing.

One shot to really burn for Jesus. Like one. One.

One to see what we all dreamed about. God. God.

Living with a people. Why don't you just close your eyes. Just gently pray in the Spirit.

Calm Holy Spirit. Calm Holy Spirit. Calm Holy Spirit.

Calm Holy Spirit. Calm Holy Spirit. So you have got to go low in these seasons.

To grab these seasons, you have got to go low. Your heart has to bow. Your heart has to go low.

You have got to put your heart on the altar. Listen. Listen carefully.

Jesus is about to enter His ministry. Don't miss this. Jesus is about to enter His ministry.

He comes to His own creation. John is very cousin. And Jesus goes low.

He submits and He is baptized. And then He is entrusted with power. Jesus is about to die on the cross.

He moves on from His ministry as teacher and rabbi to the actual ministry, bleeding on the cross as the Lamb of God. What is the bridge He connects it to? He washes feet. You go low.

You catch those seasons. You can't catch them with pride. You cannot.

You can't catch them in the lofty place. You catch them in the hidden place. Your heart has to go low.

Jesus goes from what? From the Last Supper in the upper room to the cross? Yeah. But what is in between, Gethsemane?

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