

# Then Will I Hear From Heaven

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Help us to see the privilege that that is and to fall on our knees in worship. Long more and more for more of you, God. So be honored in the preaching of your word and we pray these things in Jesus' strong name.

Amen. Amen. So with Advent coming next week, we are closing out our fall series. We've been in a series on the theme of what? Revival.

Right? So this is the final sermon on revival. So no pressure. Right? All right? It's make it or break it today. Got to bring the fire and let the revival begin.

[ 1 : 0 7 ] Amen. Thank you. But you know, seriously, every time I come up here to preach God's Holy Spirit-inspired word of truth, I do pray, I do hope for, I do expect a revival of some kind.

And like, if not in this whole world, maybe in this country. If not in this country, maybe in this city. If not in this city, at least maybe in this church. Maybe if not in this whole church, then maybe at least in some of you.

And if not in even any of you, at least in me. At least in me. I'm always hoping for, I'm always expecting revival. And I'm hoping that that's something we can take away from this series.

That no matter the scale, revival is something that we never stop pursuing. Deeper intimacy with God. Fresh experiences of his presence and his power amongst us. The very dynamic, I imagine, of heaven itself.

This trajectory of plumbing the bottomless depths of our infinite God for all eternity. Here at Christ Church, we will never move on. We will never graduate from pursuing revival.

[ 2 : 1 2 ] As Jonathan shared last week in our congregational meeting, we are convinced that revival is the last great hope of the Bay Area, even of the entire secular West. Revival.

Not politics. Not civility and kindness and charity. Not reason and argumentation. Not money or prosperity. Not scientific or technological advancements.

What the Bay Area needs, we believe, is a revival. The supernatural work of the Spirit of God. To heal and mend all that's been broken. So see, this series, this hasn't been some kind of individualistic, religious insider piety that we're promoting and pursuing just inside the walls of this church.

No. We are seeking to lead people into deeper relationships with Christ for the city. For the world. And you know what I love about the Christian faith?

I love the Christian interpretation of history. The Christian interpretation of history is that even if we cannot force revival like on command, the story that God is writing in history actually assumes and expects and guarantees revivals.

[ 3 : 23 ] So even if we cannot determine or set the when and the where of a revival, we can be confident that revival is always coming. It's always on the way. And that guarantee, that promise, is found right here in our text this morning.

This text we've been repeating and alluding to throughout our series in chapter 7, verse 14. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land.

This guarantee that revival is always on the way for God's people when they pray. Now maybe this still doesn't excite you. This guarantee of a revival, maybe this entire series has been uninspiring to do.

Maybe you're quite content to continue living a prayerless life without revival. But what if I framed it this way? What if prayer, this global and historic phenomenon that you can find across virtually every culture and every religious tradition, what if prayer wasn't some religious task or duty, but an indication of each and every human being's longing to be heard?

Every person's longing for someone other than themselves to pay attention to their cries. Every person's longing for someone who can hear and who can help.

[ 4 : 45 ] You know, Chelsea and I, we love musicals, and one of my personal favorites is this one called Dear Evan Hansen. Anyone listen to or see Dear Evan Hansen? We love it. You've got to check it out. And what it's basically about is this friendless, socially awkward high schooler, his name is Evan Hansen, who has spent most of his life feeling like he's unseen and unheard and an outsider.

And so the musical opens with him. He's getting out of bed and his arm is in a cast. Because that summer, because of self, out of self-harm, maybe even suicidal ideation, he's allowed himself to fall from a tree.

And so he's got this broken arm, he's in a cast, and he's waking up in bed, and it's the first day of school, and he's just absolutely dreading it, right? And in the opening scene, he enters into the high school, and everyone's so excited to catch up except for him.

And he's smack in the middle of this whole sea of students, yet at the same time, he feels all alone, and this is what he sings. On the outside, always looking in, will I ever be more than I've always been?

Because I'm tap, tap, tapping on the glass. I'm waving through a window. I try to speak, but nobody can hear, so I wait around for an answer to appear. While I'm watch, watch, watching people pass, I'm waving through a window.

[ 6 : 02 ] Can anybody see? Is anybody waving back at me? He continues, when you're falling in a forest, and there's nobody around, do you ever really crash or even make a sound?

Did I even make a sound? It's like I never made a sound. Will I ever make a sound? And you know, I wonder if any of us really needs to be an awkward teenager to identify with dear Evan Hansen.

Like, you may not feel your need for revival, but everyone, everyone at one point or another feels unheard. Like nobody cares, like nobody sees. But that's what I love about our passage today.

Like, what if I told you of a guarantee, a guarantee that you would always be heard, always be seen, and not just by anyone, but by an all-powerful, good, and loving person.

Even if you are skeptical, in your skepticism about this person's possible existence, wouldn't you want this guarantee? Wouldn't you want a guarantee of this person to be true?

[ 7 : 02 ] And wouldn't you at least be interested in how to relate with and communicate with such a person? Well, that's what this passage illustrates for us, the privilege, the posture, and the promise of prayer.

And those are our three points, the privilege, the posture, and the promise of prayer. Now, to set this up a bit, because we're jumping right into the middle of another episode of the Bible, what's recorded here in our text is one of the most pivotal, great moments in Israel's history.

King Solomon's world-famous temple has finally been built as a permanent residence for God himself, this historic temple moment in their capital, Jerusalem. And so as it says down here in chapter six, verse 12, the scene for us is this picture of this kingly son of David, right, Solomon, and he's standing before the temple altar in front of the whole assembly, and he's lifting up his hands, and he offers up this prayer.

And see, when we observe how Solomon prays and what he asks for, we find that even for this great king of Israel, this son of David, prayer is not something that he just presumes.

He sees it as a privilege, and that's our first point, the privilege of prayer. Now read with me and notice how he recognizes the bigness, the transcendence, the sovereign authority of God in comparison to all other things.

[ 8 : 19 ] Verse 14, he said, Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth. Verse 18, will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you, how much less this temple I have built.

See, Solomon knows better than to presume that this temple is worthy of Yahweh, or even capable of housing him. He knows better than to assume that this temple could somehow harness the power and the presence of God.

He knows how silly to think this would be. Even this greatest architectural feat in all of Hebrew history, he knows that in and of itself, even with all the time and the sweat and all the resources they put into this temple, that compared to Yahweh's glory, it was but a tiny and insignificant box.

Solomon understood that apart from God's own actual commitment to be present and attentive to this temple, it'd just kind of be like, what is this, a temple for ants?

Right? Zoolander reference, thank you. And so with eyes wide open, wide open to the greatness of this God, who he hopes will dwell in his dinky little temple, Solomon does not presume that this temple is already a place of prayer.

[ 9 : 33 ] Rather, he pleads for this temple to be a place of prayer. Look with me at verse 19. Look at what he asks for, and especially notice how many times he uses the word here.

Verse 19. Lord my God, give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence. May your eyes be open toward this temple, day and night, this place of which you said you would put your name there.

May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven your dwelling place. And when you hear, forgive.

Verse 40. Now my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. Did you catch that? Here in this most momentous occasion of King Solomon's reign, his highest prayer and petition is basically for the gift of prayer, the privilege of prayer itself.

He's praying for prayer. He acknowledges that God is not obliged to hear and receive their prayers, so he pleads to God that God would hear them, hear their cries, hear their prayers, hear their supplications all the way from heaven, hear their pleas for mercy and forgiveness.

[10:47] Even for this son of David, the wisest king of Israel, prayer is not an entitlement, but it's an endowment in his eyes. It's not a presumption. Again, it's a privilege. And I wonder how many of us perceive and practice prayer for the great privilege that it is.

Or do we take for granted, do we take communication with the creator and sustainer of the universe for granted? You know, we live in this modern, egalitarian internet age where for better and for worse, people can be heard like never before, right?

Like think about it. Any one of us could conceivably go viral tomorrow, right? With just the right perfect video, we could get the attention of all the media outlets of the president of the United States.

You can shoot off messages, get into people's DMs, capture thousands of people's attentions just like that, right? You can share on a GoFundMe page about your personal financial struggles, and Kim Kardashian just might see it and donate a few thousand bucks.

Like this is the world that we live in. Or if I just tweet something that's clever enough, compelling enough, I might get retweeted by Steph Curry, right? We can get the ears and the attention of more people than has ever been possible in history.

[12:04] And thus it can be easy to take for granted our very right to be heard, right? And the obligation of others to listen to our cries for attention and our cries for help.

And I'll be the first one to say that we should indeed lend our ears to our neighbors, to one another. That there is a real sense in which we owe our ears to one another as fellow human beings.

And it is truly awesome to think that you can tweet at Taylor Swift and she just might see it. But while I mean no offense to the Swifties in this room, Taylor Swift's ears and God's ears are on two totally different levels, all right?

Like just because Taylor Swift might give her attention to your tweets does not mean we now have the right to God's ear. Just because. The right to God's attention and to God's responses to our pleas.

God is God and we are not. And he is not obligated to listen to or to heed our prayers and the request of sinful creatures just because we want him to.

[13:07] Do we realize that there are over seven and a half billion people on this planet? And before any of us there were billions upon billions of others, each one created by God in his image, each with their own needs and concerns and hurts and longings.

And yet do we presume that God would give his ear to any single one of us? One speck of sand amidst the vastness of the seashore of humanity.

humanity. And not to mention his holiness. Do we even know who we presume to be talking to in prayer? The Lord Yahweh, the high and exalted one seated on his throne.

Pure and sinless angels cover their faces day and night in his presence unable to speak anything else than holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come.

Do we presume to pray to this kind of a God with our unclean lips, lips we've used to deny him and dishonor him and disparage those made in his image? You know, some of us might be stuck today and hung up on this mystery of why God doesn't seem to hear and answer our prayers.

[ 14 : 15 ] But what if the greater mystery was that he might even be willing to? In Solomon's unsurpassed wisdom, he was preoccupied with this greater mystery, marveling at the privilege and the possibility of prayer, the possibility of having a conversation with God, being heard by God with all the attention of a patient and empathetic parent toward their beloved child, the possibility of bringing a personal request to the one for whom nothing is impossible.

Christchurch, we must pray. No, it's not that we must pray, we get to pray. We get to pray. We aren't doing God, we aren't doing the church a favor when we get on our knees, when we show up to the boiler room, to Wednesday, even song or to our prayer vigils.

Prayer is the privilege of the people of God and when we grasp the absolute privilege of prayer to the holy God of the universe, it should make sense that there is also a proper posture of prayer as well in point number two, the posture of prayer.

Like just because we are given the privilege of being heard by God, right, doesn't mean we should just come before him in any way that we want. And I know this might fly in the face of our kind of I'm just gonna do me, let me be myself culture, but honestly, unless you are a sociopath, everyone gets this at some level.

This is true of any respectful relationship. Just because you are given the privilege of a relationship with someone does not mean you should treat them and approach them in whatever manner you choose.

[ 15 : 48 ] If you are given the privilege of entering into the Vatican to meet the Pope, entering the White House to meet the President, you don't just go in there however you want, like yo, yo, yo, what's up my guy, right, fist bump, yo, no.

Or a better example, a better example might be this, if you've wronged someone, say you've cheated on your partner and they've granted you the privilege of entering back into a relationship with them, you don't approach them in any way that you want, in a lighthearted, flippant way as if they had not just shown you an incredible mercy.

If someone who is way out of your league, if someone you owe a great debt to grants you the privilege of a relationship with them, this cannot but affect your posture toward them.

How can you not be humble toward them, personal toward them, even penitent toward them? And that's what we get at in chapter 7, verse 14. God says, my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways.

See, a proper posture of prayer is one of humility. How could we not be humbled when we consider the great privilege of God lending his ear to our unclean lips?

[ 17 : 03 ] Prayer is inherently an act of humility, right? It's an act of dependence and it's an admission of our need and abandonment of our self-sufficiency and you know, I honestly think that this is the biggest reason why many of us don't pray.

One of our elders this past week in our session meeting, he was saying that, it was Wes, Wes Selke, he was saying that, he thought that our biggest problem and I agree with him, our society's biggest problem is that we don't feel our need for God and this is not outside society, this is the church's problem as well, this is why we don't pray.

It's not because we don't have enough time, it's not because we're not pious enough, it's not because we're not disciplined enough, it's because we're not humble enough, it's because we are not humble enough, it's that simple.

Humble people pray, prideful people don't. People who believe they need God are in touch with God and people who don't believe they need God will not be in touch with him.

Now a humble posture is also a personal posture, one that seeks God's face, that seeks God for God. Remember prayer is not a transactional exchange offered up to this cosmic gumball machine or this like your wish is my command kind of a genie.

[ 18 : 13 ] Proper prayer does not ultimately seek God's goods but God himself. prayer is not just worrying in the direction of God, it is seeking him, it's pursuing him, a relationship with the living God and this is the kind of prayer that God loves to respond to.

Listen to his words through the prophet Jeremiah to an exiled people, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you declares the Lord.

Isn't that such an amazing promise? Isn't that an amazing promise? God is after our hearts and what this also means then is that our humble and personal prayers, they also need to be penitent prayers.

Turning away from our wicked ways, God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

Like real talk here, if you don't want to be forgiven, God is not going to forgive you. If you do not want to be healed, God will not heal you. And I know this all seems kind of like no duh, but are our prayers really marked by this kind of humble and personal and penitent posture?

[ 19 : 26 ] Do we assume a Godward posture or a selfward posture when we approach God in prayer? Do we pray, thy will be done or my will be done? Are we truly humbly dependent upon him?

Do we really want God for God alone? And are there any wicked ways we might be holding on to that are obstructing our communion with him? God has laid out for us the kind of posture that pleases him, that captures his attention.

He says in Isaiah chapter 66, this is the one to whom I will look. He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. That's how we get the eyes of God.

It's not some manipulative technique, to force his hand, but it's a blueprint for walking in his light and life and love. It's a posture to set ourselves up for revival.

You know, my pastor in college, Peter Kim, he talked about this really helpfully. He said, you know, we cannot force the hand of God, we cannot manufacture revival, but though we cannot control the wind or the sea, what we can do is we can put up our sails, right?

[ 20 : 33 ] We can correct our rudders as we wait for the fresh wind of God's spirit to move us as he so desires. When our prayers are postured in humility and in seeking God's face and in turning from our wicked ways, God promises, he promises to hear, he promises to forgive, he promises to heal and that's amazing and that's an amazing promise and this is where we'll end the promise of prayer.

You know, this book, 2 Chronicles, though it records Solomon's prayer and God's response, you know, with the fire coming down, it was actually written hundreds of years later and in the traditional Jewish ordering of the Old Testament, this would be the very last book that you would read.

So in Jesus' Bible, this would be the very last book that he read. So the actual original readers of 2 Chronicles are not those Israelites who are there at the moment with Solomon, but they are the generation of Israelites who had returned from exile.

They're the ones who had returned from Babylonian captivity. So I want us to imagine reading 2 Chronicles like this generation of post-exilic Israelites, right?

Imagine being a post-exilic Jewish person reading this account in 2 Chronicles chapter 6 and 7. You're back in your homeland but you don't have a king, right? And technically you are still under the jurisdiction of the Persian Empire.

[ 22 : 01 ] Now imagine reading this event, Solomon's prayer, God's response, the fire coming down and God promising, promising that he would definitely hear his people's prayers at Solomon's temple.

But then you look outside your window, right? Do you see Solomon's temple? No, you see the second temple that you yourself built post-exile and you are told that this second temple pales in comparison to the original temple that Solomon had built where the fire came down and God met his people.

So like what do you do with these century-old promises that were given to Solomon and those people back in verses 14 and following? When God said hundreds of years earlier, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple, God said, so that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.

What do we do with that kind of a promise that's so tied to Solomon's temple, right? If we put ourselves in the shoes of the original readers of 2 Chronicles, it would be really confusing, I think, to read these words and figure out how they exactly applied to us.

[ 23 : 24 ] God, you said you'd be attentive to the prayers offered in Solomon's temple, but what about our temple? You said your name and your eyes and your heart would be there forever, but we messed up and we were actually exiled.

We turned from you and the temple, the original temple where you made these promises, it's gone. So where is your name now? Where are your eyes? Where is your heart now? Are you still with us?

Do you still see us? Is your heart still for us or has our sin disqualified us once and for all and is our land beyond the possibility of healing? While Solomon and the assembly before him saw the fire come down and while they received the promise of God to meet them in their temple, these original readers of 2 Chronicles, these 2 Temple Israelites were left in the same shoes many of us find ourselves in today, posing the same question as Dear Evan Hansen.

Might it be that we will go on unseen, unheard, unloved for the rest of our lives? For while the first Temple Israelites had their own son of David, their own wise king pleading on their behalf for the presence of God, their own consecrated Temple upon which the very fire and glory of God's presence visibly descended, what did the second Temple Israelites have?

And what do we have to assure us that God sees us, that God hears us, that God loves us, that we have his eyes, his ears, and his heart, that the forgiveness of our sins and the healing of our land are possible?

[ 25 : 02 ] What assurance do we have? I mean, if only we too had a son of David, right? An all-wise king to plead with God on our behalf. If only we had maybe even a son of God whose requests would never be refused by his Father.

If only we had a temple, a glorious point of access to God, a place for a real experience of the presence of God here with us on earth. If only we had such an incorruptible Temple that even if it was violently torn down, it could rise again in three days.

If only, right? Or is that not what we have in the person of Jesus Christ? The better and ultimate son of David, a king who, while crowned with thorns, begs his father to forgive them for they know not what they do.

And by his wounds, we are healed. Jesus is the ultimate temple who grafts us in and even makes us a temple with him of the very Spirit of God dwelling within us, a spirit interceding for us with groans too deep for words.

You know, in the musical Dear Evan Hansen, the kind of big feel-good song of the show is this song where he preaches the good news to all the misfits that you will be found.

[ 26 : 21 ] You'll be heard, you'll be seen, you will be found. There's a place where we don't have to be alone. But it's never really clear how he can guarantee that. It's never really clear how this is anything more than a wishful encouragement that outsiders will be seen and heard and loved.

But you know the beauty of the gospel is that in Christ we have the guarantee. We have the Spirit crying within us, not just you will be found but Abba, Father, you have already been found.

Our Father in heaven has seen his prodigal children when they were so far off that they could not even see him and he has run to us in the person of Christ. And just as God promised to David's son, King Solomon, that he and his people would have his eyes, his ears, and his very heart.

Guess what? All the promises of God are yes and amen in Jesus Christ. And so much more has he promised to David's son, King Jesus, that he and his people will always and forever have eyes, have his ears, and his very heart.

And this, this is the gospel. The promise of prayer. The privilege of prayer secured for us, guaranteed in Christ.

[ 27 : 36 ] Christ. So Christ, let us be a people of prayer. Let us be a church of prayer. Christ, let us be a people of humble, personal, penitent prayer.

And not just because we got to, but because we get to in Christ. Let's pray. Lord, these are your words.

Let's pray. If we will humble ourselves and pray and seek your face and turn from our wicked ways, then you will hear from heaven.

You said it. I will hear from heaven. You didn't say, I might hear from heaven. You didn't say, I'll think about hearing from heaven. You said, I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land.

Impress upon us, Lord, the privilege of prayer. Help us to assume the posture of prayer and help us to glory in the promise of prayer made possible by Jesus Christ, the great son of David, the temple we never deserved, who has come near to us and brought us to you at great, great cost to himself.

[illegible]

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.