

He's A Hands On God!

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[0:00] It's so good to be here at DOJC in Houston. I'm just excited to, I'm excited about what I feel in the house today. It's been an interesting couple of years in preaching.

It's His Word that I'm preaching, and so these are His messages.

But He's given me a few messages in the last couple of years that I have preached, some of them three to four times in different locations, because I just felt it was a message that needed to be heard, again, from the Lord.

And today is one of those days. I have actually preached this message once in Bakersfield, once at home, and then I felt very direct, very strongly directed to preach it here today.

And then at the opening of the service, your pastor, the Lord used him to just, and this is not why the Lord used him to do what he did, but it confirmed what I feel to preach today.

[1:15] So thank you for following the Holy Ghost, Pastor Eccles. Again, so good to be here. We absolutely love the Eccles family, all of them, every one of them. And so thankful for each of them, and just thankful that the Lord allowed our paths to cross many, many years ago.

I reminisce often when Trevin and Taylor were, when they first got here.

I could tell a couple of stories on you, sis, that I'm not going to do it. So I'm not going to embarrass you publicly. I'll wait and do it privately. But, no, I love them.

And then Haley coming into the family, I love her. And, of course, little Miles just brought a lot of joy into the family. So we're thankful for him. It's good to see Noe and Sandra. I warned them when they got here.

I said, you've heard this before, so you still want to be here? And they said, yeah, we still want to be here. Because I know they're not here for that reason. So good to have them here. Sister Becky, good to see you. God bless her. Appreciate her so very much.

[2:17] And, of course, Suzanne and Hannah, love y'all. Good to see you guys in the house of God. Good to have my wife with me. We were both tired today.

And it's been a long week. And I said, getting ready to leave, I said, you're going to stay in? You're going to go with me? She goes, no, I'm going with you. And I want points for that. I want to make sure I get points for the fact that I'm going with you.

And I'm just grateful that she's here with me. And I love and appreciate her so very much. Amen. Genesis 2, verse 7. I'm going to read there.

And then I'm going to go to Isaiah 45. Genesis 2 and 7. And Isaiah 45. One verse in Genesis 2, the Bible says, And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

The Lord God formed man. Then over into Isaiah 45. We're going to start with verse 9.

[3:27] Isaiah 45 and verse 9. Woe unto him that striveth with his maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.

The potsherd is just a broken piece of pottery. Let the broken fight with the broken. If they want to fight, let them fight together. Woe to him that striveth with his maker. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?

Or thy work he hath no hands. Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begattest thou? Or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

Thus saith the Lord. And when you see that in the Word of God, pay attention. Thus saith the Lord, The Holy One of Israel and His Maker.

Ask me of things to come concerning my son, And concerning the work of my hands command you me. So if you want to talk to somebody about it, come talk to me.

[4:30] I have made the earth and created man upon it. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, And all their hosts have I commanded.

I want to read that portion of Scripture in Isaiah from the New King James Version. If you don't mind just standing for one more minute as I read that. Woe to him who strives with his maker.

Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him who forms it, What are you making? Or your handiwork say he has no hands.

Woe to him who says to his father, What are you beginning or to the woman? What have you brought forth? Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and His Maker. Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, And concerning the work of my hands you command me.

I have made the earth and created man on it. I, my hands, the Bible says, Stretched out the heavens, And all their hosts have I commanded.

[5:37] And I want to preach to you today for a little bit on this title. He's a hands-on God. He's a hands-on God. One more time. Lift up your hands unto the Lord.

And just talk to Him for just a minute. Ask Him to help you today. Ask Him to challenge you today. Ask Him to speak into your life. In the name of the Lord, God, I thank you for this precious group of people.

That have gathered together in this building in the city of Houston. I pray, Lord, that you would challenge us today. I pray, God, you would speak into our hearts and our minds. And help us, Lord, to be closer to you.

But also help us, God, to meet, to be quickened. To do what it is that you've called us to do. And we ask all of these things in the lovely name of Jesus. And everybody said, Amen. Amen.

Turn to your neighbor. Tell him he's a hands-on God. You may be seated. The world that primarily belongs to those we call creatives is rapidly changing.

[6:38] My son, he's a creative type. That's what they call a creative. Somebody that is very creative. Painters, artists, graphic designers.

These are creative people. But in that world, what used to require a paintbrush or a charcoal pencil and a canvas and hours and maybe even days, weeks, and months can now be created in seconds with a keyboard.

Just a few strokes and it can be done. With the constantly evolving AI technology. The creative genius at our disposal is astounding. I forget what it was we had late last year.

It may have been Hope's Giving. But the Eccles were there. And I remember Brother Eccles sent me a video of a couple of tables in the sanctuary.

Because we had food in the sanctuary, tables in the sanctuary. And it was some of our elders, Brother and Sister Johnson, Sister Marion. And all of a sudden, there's this image of all of them sitting at the table.

[7:42] And then at one time, all of them rise up and they're throwing food up into the air. And I knew that that was not real because I knew those people wouldn't do that. Well, some of them would have done it.

But most of them would not have done that. Come to find out later, it was him. Took a picture of them. And with AI, whatever app he used, he caused them to look like.

And it really did look. In fact, Zeke saw it. Saw some other video that he had made. And Zeke, Brother Gwen's grandson, was not happy because of what they were doing in this video.

But that's what we're living with today. Despite all of that creative technology that's available to us, we must not ever forget that the Lord was and is the original creative.

When we read the creation story in Genesis, we're reminded that the Lord didn't use a paintbrush. He did not use a charcoal pencil. Nor did He use a canvas. He did not have a high-powered iMac.

[8:41] The Lord spoke the world into existence. When the Lord spoke, and I feel a little bit of unction on that phrase, when the Lord spoke, when the Lord spoke, a dark and chaotic world submitted to His voice.

And what was without form and void now had order. When the Lord spoke, light was released and darkness no longer dominated the world because the Lord spoke.

When the Lord spoke, the waters above were separated from the waters below. When the Lord spoke, plants and trees came into existence.

When we read Genesis 1 and 2, the Lord gives us a fantastic description of His powerful creative abilities.

But when it came to creating mankind, the Lord did not use His voice. He got His hands involved. I'll read to you again Genesis 2 and 7.

[9:39] The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground. He got His hands involved. The Strong's Concordance notes that the Hebrew word formed, or that we use in English formed, that's used in Genesis 2 and 7, translates to several other words like fashion and frame and make.

And for the purpose of this message, I'd like to point out that it's the same Hebrew word used for the word potter. One who makes pottery. And it's used 17 different times in the Word of the Lord. When the Lord made man, He got His hands involved. You and I are the handiwork of the creator of this world. He is a hands-on God.

And since you and I are the handiwork of the Lord, I want to preach to somebody today. It is not His will for you and me to live below what the Lord would have us to live.

We are not just some form that came from an amoeba. We are the handiwork of God. We are the handiwork of our creator.

[10:46] We are the handiwork of the one who put all of this into existence. He made you and I, and He's got plans for us. It's not the will of God for us to live with addictions that are ravaging our existence.

And I just feel to expound on that just a moment. Whenever we hear the word addictions, we usually think of drugs and alcohol. And those are all addictive things. But I want to go beyond that. If you're addicted to gossip or if you're addicted to anger and if you're addicted to depression and if you're addicted to anxiety and if you're addicted to whatever it is that you might be addicted to, it is not the will of God for those kind of things to be destroying our lives and our families.

It is just simply not the will of God. God has better things for us. It's not the will of God for us to live with regret. The Lord wants you to rise above all of that stuff and be victorious through the power of the blood that He shed on Calvary.

It's the will of the Lord for us to be holy. It is the will of the Lord for us to be Holy Ghost-filled warriors in a dark world so that all those we meet can see and hear what the Lord has done for us.

[12:00] They need to see it and hear it. See it and hear it. That means you have to live it and talk about it. Amen. You're not just another human being.

You are the handiwork of God. Yet we read in verse 9 of Isaiah 45, this message from the Lord to His people through Isaiah.

Woe to Him who strives with His Maker. I'm not going to read all of that again, but I wanted to read that portion again. Woe to Him who strives with His Maker.

The New Living Translation puts it this way. What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. The Bible gives the example what son would go to his father and say, Who in the world do you think you are bringing me into this world?

Or to the mama, Who do you think you are giving birth to me? But what role do you play in my life? Well, I brought you in. I can take you out. Make another one look just like you.

[13:08] Amen. Why is it so difficult sometimes for us to submit to the Lord when it comes, and this is where I'm zeroing in. The Lord is allowing me to zero in on what your pastor was talking about a little while ago.

Why is it so difficult for us to submit to the Lord when it comes to our calling? Because every one of us are called. Let's get that settled right now.

Every one of us are called. There's not a one of us in this room that the Lord saved you to sit. He didn't save you to be comfortable. He didn't save you to be lazy.

He didn't save you just to be casual. He didn't save you to show up when you want and leave when you want. He saved you to serve. He saved you to lead. He saved you to love.

He saved you to reach. He saved you to live for Him. And He saved you to talk about it. Amen. But why? Why is it so difficult to submit to that calling?

[14:07] Why do we argue with the Lord when He attempts to direct us through His Word, in prayer, to the man of God that's in our lives? Because how is it that far too many children of the Lord are not being used in the kingdom of God?

I'll tell you why. When adversity comes our way, we invest too much time asking this question, Why is this happening to me?

Listen, been there, done that. Why is this happening to me? God, why are you allowing this to happen to me? We waste way too much time asking that question, Why?

When we should be asking, What are you wanting to birth inside of me? What are you trying to pull out of me to be used in the kingdom of God? When the hand of the Lord begins to form us and shape us so that we might be a blessing to the kingdom of God, we must never mistake that for the punishment of God.

We must fight and resist thinking, Oh, it's the enemy. He's attacking me. He's being brutal to me. We've got to resist that mindset because oftentimes the reality is it's the Lord putting his hands on you and preparing you either to be blessed or to be a blessing.

[15 : 27] He's preparing you to have something come your way, or he's preparing you to send something somebody else's way. I cringe at how many chances I missed to bless others because I saw my situation as punishment rather than a push forward.

I focused too much on my circumstances, thinking, Poor me. Instead of asking the Lord, Are you pushing me towards the fulfillment of your will in my life?

Can we just settle some things in the house of the Lord right now? If the Lord is doing something in your life, one of two things is certain. It is either for your good or it is for his good.

And even if it's for your good, ultimately it is still for his good. Never allow the enemy to convince you that the Lord is attacking you. That's not how God operates.

He might chastise you. He might give you a little bit of correction through the Word or through the preaching of the Word or in prayer. Yes, but he does that so that you might get back on the right track so you can do the will of God.

[16 : 32] And when you do the will of God and he has his hand on you, your life will be blessed beyond measure. Amen. The day that you and I surrendered ourselves to be a servant of the Lord.

And the day we gave ourselves to the Lord because we came to the revelation that we've been bought with a price. And that price was the blood that Jesus shed at Calvary. That was the day that we effectively gave the Lord control over our lives.

And we in essence said, Lord, I want you to get your hands involved one more time. You formed man in the very beginning. You formed me in the womb. God, I want you to do it again.

I want you to get your hands involved in my life. I want you to remove what needs to be removed. I want you to add in what needs to be added in. I want you to nudge me when I need to be nudged.

And if I got to have more than a nudge, then God, do whatever you got to do. Get your hands on my life. Get your hands in my life, God. Because I want to live according to your will and your purpose.

[17 : 38] Amen. God's handiwork will remove what needs to be removed. His handiwork will reveal the things he wants you and me to see. His handiwork will make us ready for the next chapter in our lives.

He's not trying to kill us or humble us or humiliate us. He's not doing it because he's angry with us. He's not punishing us. The Lord will use anything and all things necessary to prepare us to better serve him in the way he has called us to serve.

He's making us ready for what he has planned next. Somebody say next. The Lord wants you and me to realize that what we may be walking through is not punishment.

It is the Lord's hands readying you and preparing you to do what he has called you to do. You've got a choice. You can fight it. You can resist it.

Or you can submit to it and say, God, I'm ready to do your work. I'm ready to do your will. Whatever it is you're sending me and whatever it is you're calling me to do, I want to be a part of what's going on.

[18 : 51] Amen. Amen. We read, or when we read about Joseph in the book of Genesis, we find that the Lord gave him a few dreams. And this hit me pretty hard here last year when I put this together, when the Lord gave this to me, I should say.

The Lord gave him a few dreams. Then the Lord allowed him to walk through hell and back to prepare him to see those dreams fulfilled. And if you've read about Joseph, you know the dreams in that moment to a young boy named Joseph, having people bow down to him and pay homage to him.

I mean, I think he already had a coat from daddy that nobody else had. He had a good life at home. He was the youngest. He was spoiled. Had everything given to him.

Now he's dreaming dreams. His older brothers are going to serve him. It was a pretty good time for Joseph until he had to be prepared, until God had to put his hands on him to make him ready for the dreams to be fulfilled.

I believe that the last year, I believe today, your pastor said today is your one-year anniversary. Congratulations, you didn't quit. You want more than that?

[20:12] I'm sorry. Congratulations, you didn't quit. That may sound a little harsh. I don't mean it to be harsh. I'm just telling you, after almost 23 years of pastoring, congratulations, you didn't quit.

Because there have been years, huh, Sister Hanks? There have been years. We've had those years, Pastor. We've had those years. We walked into the living room after a Sunday or on a Monday morning. We woke up, and all we just did was look at each other.

We didn't want to open our mouths. Didn't want to talk. Didn't want to say anything because we were afraid of what we might say. And we had to come back to that moment several times over the last 22-plus years and just look at each other and say, well, congratulations.

We didn't quit. High five, Sister. Amen. The Lord gave him some dreams, some visions.

Then he took him to hell. Literally, he was lied about. He was thrown into prison. He was sold as a slave. His brothers deceived him, deceived his daddy.

[21:14] There was all kinds of junk that happened to him. But every time Joseph faced a difficulty, yes, was it difficult? Absolutely. Every time he faced a difficulty.

Every time he was thrown into a worse situation. He was accused of coming on to somebody else's wife. He was thrown into prison. He faced a certain death at times.

He was a slave. He was a servant. But every time he was thrown into those situations, the Lord protected him along the way. And I believe the two things that kept Joseph and allowed him to finally see him being the second most powerful man in sinful Egypt was the fact that, number one, God said it's not going to happen the way you think it's going to happen.

And number two, Joseph did not quit. He kept on coming. He kept on serving. He kept on worshiping. He kept on putting God in his rightful place.

He kept on saying, I will not defile my relationship with God. He's got his hands on me. And as long as I know his hands are on me, I will keep going forward.

[22:23] In the name of Jesus. Here's where the struggle lies for you and me. What time do I need to be done? We're good? Okay. Don't panic.

That doesn't mean I've got eight. Okay. I think I can make that. Don't let my wife look at me. Here's where the struggle lies for you and me.

Here's where it is. We look at our hands and all that we see are our flaws and our limitations.

When the Lord intended us to see them as instruments given to us by him to be used to fulfill his work.

Let's consider. I'm going to throw some scripture at you here. I'm going to shotgun it. Let's consider what God has done so that we might learn what he desires us to do.

[23:26] Y'all with me? The Lord has creative hands. We established that. Amen? He forms and fashions life. And so our hands should reach for those in need.

Genesis 2 and 7, the Bible says, the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground. Psalm 19 and 1, the heavens declare the work of his hands. Isaiah 64 and 8, we are the clay.

You are the potter. We are all the work of your hand. You and I ought to be willing. Ladies and gentlemen, hear me today. We ought to be willing to get our hands involved in building up the body of Christ and reaching for those in need of a Savior.

Because that's what he did. If he did it, then we ought to do it. We are the embodiment of him. He's no longer walking on this earth. Now, we are not the same as Jesus.

I'm not putting us on the same level as Jesus. We're not going to be required to go to Calvary and be crucified. We are required to pick up our cross. Can you see the imagery there?

[24:33] He's not asking us to go as far as he did. But he is asking us to go part of that journey. You don't have to hang on a cross. I mean, someday you might. I don't know. The world's getting kind of weird right now.

But I don't believe he's requiring that of us at this moment. But he is requiring of us right now to pick up our cross. You and I ought to be willing to get our hands involved in the work of God.

His hands are delivering hands. His hands redeem. They uphold. They defend. Our hands should lift others up and extend mercy. Exodus 13 and 3, by strength of hand.

The Lord brought you out from this place. Deuteronomy 26, 8. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. The 37 and 24 of Psalms.

Though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down. For the Lord upholds him with his hand. When we reach out to help and comfort or restore somebody, we become an extension of the saving hands of the Lord.

[25 : 39] I couldn't go past this portion of the message without reading Jude 1, verse 20. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Now watch this. This is our hands. God's commandment to you and I.

And of some have compassion. Make it a difference. Now I'll pick on Noah. Noah, come here.

Sometimes we're going to meet some folks.

They just need a little loving. You're doing okay. You're going to make it. I know you're struggling. I know you're not very talented. You just can't play any of your instruments at all.

You have no skill set in that area. I feel for you. But you're going to be all right. We have compassion on them. We encourage them. Of course, that wasn't very encouraging. That was kind of mean. But we want to encourage them and lift them up.

[26 : 38] And the Bible supports that on some. Have compassion. And making a difference. But then there's other times, ladies and gentlemen, that the Lord. This is in the Word of God. The Lord says in verse 23.

And on others. Or and others. Save with fear. Pulling them out of the fire. Excuse me. Out of the fire. Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

Just sit down on that altar right there. There are times. There are times. And I've had to do this in ministry over the years. There are times I've had to get up into somebody's grill. I'm going to be a little mean to you right now. I've had to get up in somebody's grill.

And I had to tell them, listen, you are out of line. You are not doing what you're supposed to be doing. You're not living the way you know you're supposed to be living. You need to knock it off.

You need to get into an altar. And pray through.

And beg God for forgiveness. And quit acting like you're acting. And get a hold of them. And say, now knock it off. I've actually told somebody, knock it off. Quit living that way. You can go lick your wounds now.

[27 : 37] Amen. Quit talking like that. Quit treating people like that. Quit being rebellious like that. Sometimes there are those moments when our hands have to reach into the fire of sin.

We don't like it. We don't want to do it. We hate it. It's disgusting to us. But, oh, I'd rather reach in and do my best to pull somebody out of the miry depths of sin.

Somebody did it for me. Somebody did it for you. Somebody did it for you. And there may be a moment. There should be a moment when God says, I'm ready for you to reach out. Because God did it for us.

We ought to be willing to do it for somebody else. His hands are guiding hands. His hands lead.

They correct. They empower His people. Our hands should serve under His direction.

Psalms 139, verse 10. Even there your hand shall lead me. And your right hand shall hold me. Isaiah 41, 13. For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand saying, fear not.

[28 : 43] I will help you. Ladies and gentlemen, it's going to cost us something. It's going to cost us something to live like this. It's going to cost us our time.

It's going to cost us our money. It's going to cost us our energy. It's going to deplete you. There's going to be some moments you're going to walk away from a coffee shop. You're going to be physically and emotionally and spiritually depleted.

It is the will of God that that happens every once in a while. And then when we walk out of that office or that room or that coffee shop and we're depleted, then you and I go back to an altar and say, God, I poured myself out.

I gave it all at that table. I gave it all in that encounter. I gave my all in that Bible study. Now I'm asking you to fill me back up, God, so I can go do it again. So I can go find somebody else and do it again.

He is a hands-on God. He did it for you. We ought to do it for somebody else. The pierced hands of the Lord. Just helping anybody today.

[29 : 46] The pierced hands of the Lord. His hands took on sin for us. What does that translate to for you and I?

Our hands are to serve sacrificially. Isaiah 49, 16. See, I have engraved you, the Bible says, on the palm of my hands.

Luke 24, 39 and John 20, 27. The Lord told Thomas, behold, my hands and my feet. It is I, myself. Reach your finger here, Thomas, and look at my hands.

The pierced hands of Jesus redefine what power and service look like. You want power and authority with the Lord?

Serve. I want that to sink in. New Year's Eve. We'd had the married couples of our church over.

[30 : 53] And everybody was gone. And it was about, I don't know, it was probably 11 o'clock our time. And my phone rings. And it's from a pastor friend in Tennessee.

And so it's like 1 o'clock in the morning for him. And I picked up the phone. I said, hey, my friend, how you doing? He goes, I was thinking about you. I've been thinking about you for the last three days.

And so I figured you'd still be up. It's New Year's Eve. Good thing I was. And he began to talk to me. And we shared some things that are personal, so I won't share them here.

But we shared some things. And he began to talk to me about the moment when the Lord partook of the communion.

But we would refer to it as communion. And there was foot washing. He said, he said, you, he called me by name. He said, do you know why they did communion first and then foot washing second?

[31 : 59] And I had never thought about that. And I told him I'd never thought about that. Never thought about why. He said, you think about it. In that culture, the very first thing that they did when you walked into their house was wash your feet.

But today, in that moment, Jesus did communion first and foot washing second. The reason why he partook in communion with those brethren in that room is because until there is unity in the group, you will never have cleanliness.

Until unity takes place, until unity is in the family of God, in the house of God, you're never going to get to anywhere else in the kingdom of the Lord. He said, there has to be unity first.

When you get unity among the people that you serve and unity among your family members and unity in the house of God that you're pastoring, God then can begin to do things that he wants to do. Ladies and gentlemen, when we look at the hands of Jesus and the side of Jesus and him serving people the way that he did, if we would be in unity with the Lord and realize that we must be servants, servants in compassion, servants in humility, servants in willingness to be wounded in love.

[33 : 14] I'm going to talk about that for a minute. Willingness to be wounded in love. I'm not going to tell you sad stories, though I have them.

I'm simply going to tell you that in serving people, you will be wounded. Somebody say amen.

Amen. You will be wounded. And when you are, the temptation is to quit. The temptation is to stop serving.

The temptation is to stop loving. Because why would I love if I'm going to get hurt? Why would I love if I'm going to be rejected? Why would I continue to serve if my hand that I'm extending is going to be slapped or worse?

Slammed with a hammer. Because that's what Jesus did. That's what Jesus did. Because he is a hands-on God. And so the Lord is calling you and I to be like him and continue to serve.

[34 : 23] Jesus has empowering hands. The resurrected Lord empowered you and I. He places his work in our hands. This is where it comes down to you and I in Scripture.

Mark 16 and 18. The Bible says they will lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. That's you and I. They are you and I. They will lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

Acts 13, 2 and 3. The apostles laid hands on Paul and Barnabas. And they commissioned them to do the work of the Lord. Everybody got prayed for today. Not a one of you in this room including your pastor and his wife that got missed being prayed for.

We pray for every one of you in this place. That was somewhat of a commissioning moment in this service today, this afternoon. You are commissioned to do the work of the Lord. You are already commissioned to do the work of the Lord.

Now it's public knowledge. Now it's been spoken verbally between you and the Lord. You are commissioned to do the work of God. If somebody needs to be prayed for, you don't need to call

your pastor.

[35:22] Hey, would you come pray for this person? You've got the Holy Ghost. Pray for them. They need a Bible study. You've got the Holy Ghost. Teach them a Bible study. You are empowered to do the work of the Lord.

And this powerful image in this last Scripture I want to read to you in Luke 24, 50, and 51. The Bible says that Jesus lifted up his hands and blessed them and was carried up into heaven.

Picture this. The last image of Jesus that the disciples saw was him lifting up his nail-scarred hands and blessing them.

The same hands that blessed and healed are now extended through the church, through you and I. And our hands have become his hands on earth.

Here is our challenge. And I'm closing with this. Here is our challenge. I started out with this a little while ago. We determine the power of God available to us by the human limitations within us.

[36:35] That's how we filter what God wants to do. By our human limitations. Let me read you some Scripture. 1 Kings 18, verse 41.

And Elijah said to Ahab, Get up, eat, and drink. Because there's a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink.

And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. And he cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees and said to his servant, Now go up and look toward the sea.

And he went up and looked and said, There is nothing. Sorry, pastor, there's nothing. He said, All right. Go seven more times.

Seven more times? You've got to be out of your mind. I went up once. Maybe two or three more times. I can see that. But seven more times? Go up seven more times.

[37:33] And it came to pass at the seventh time. And he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.

And when he was standing on the precipice of that hill or mountain or wherever he was standing, looking out across the sea, and he could see off in the distance a cloud.

This is just what I believe happened. He put up his hand to measure what God was doing. That clock back there is bigger than my hand.

But when I put my hand up, I can't see it. Sister Eccles is taller than my hand. When I put my hand like that, I can't see her anymore. When we use our human limitations to determine what God can do, we miss out on the blessings and the miracles of God.

In this scripture, the people have been devastated by a three-year drought. The man of God had just fought a battle that exposed the enemy and gave glory to the Lord. Then Elijah told Ahab, Eat.

[38:50] Get some strength, Ahab. It's about to start raining. There's been a drought. It's about to start raining. So Ahab obeyed the man of God. He readied himself. Got some food. Elijah went up to the top of the mountain, humbled himself.

He began to pray. And at the time that he felt God released him to do so, he looked to Ahab. He said, All right, it's time. Get up and go look toward the sea. Ahab looked and said, Pastor, there's nothing there.

Nothing's happening. Go again seven times. On that seventh trip, he said, Wait a minute. I see something. There's a little cloud the size of a man's hand. Now, Scripture does not specifically say that Ahab doubted.

However, instead of coming back to Elijah and saying, Rain is on the way, Pastor, I just feel it. I see it. I see the evidence. I see the witness. Rain is coming.

I saw a cloud. He didn't say those things. He said, Well, I saw a cloud, but it's just a little thing. It's just tiny. What did he use to measure the size of that cloud?

[39:52] But he used his hand. Far too often, you and I want to see the miracles of God happen in our lives and in our families and in our church, but we use our limited physical humanity to measure what God wants to do.

Let's all stand right now. We say, God, this is all that I see. Listen, I know of which I preach because I struggle with this.

I've had to work since I was 12 years old, my first job, washing dishes at 12 years old. Since then, I have this mindset. If it's going to happen, I've got to make it happen. I've got to go do it.

I've got to make this happen. I've got to do this. I've got to do that. And it's a constant battle for me to say, wait a second. No, I don't. I've got God.

God is in me. God is with me. God is leading me. But if I constantly are, I just looking at my limitations and what I think I can do, what I know I can do, what I know I can't do, that I am limiting God.

[41:13] Well, I can't, I can't see myself being healed. I can't see myself being delivered. I can't see myself getting that new job. I can't see myself being part of that ministry.

I can't see myself teaching that Bible study. Can I flip the script today? Yes. The Lord wants to use you. Trevin and Haley, the Lord wants to use you.

No, I'm serious. He wants to use you. When we think of that in those terms, that the God of the universe wants to use us.

Hosea and Hannah, God wants to use you. It's not that he has to because there's nobody else. Oh, there's plenty of other people. There's people better talented than you, more talented, better looking, richer, taller, shorter, whatever.

But no, he wants you. Taylor, he wants you. No strings attached. Well, what about, what if? No, no, no, no.

[42:19] He wants you, you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and you. He wants to use you. He wants to bless you.

Listen, I've been, and I'm kind of going off script here. I want to be careful. If this goes against what your pastor teaches and preaches, then he needs to clean that up later.

I've been, I've read three books now in the past probably six months just on, on how God approaches prosperity.

I've struggled with living for the Lord and finances. And I've always believed that the Lord wants to bless his people.

Now, there's a difference, and I don't have the time to go into this, but there's a difference between riches and prosperity. Riches, let me, let me just very briefly explain the mindset.

[43:25] If you're rich in your mind, that's my money. But if you're prosperous, that's God's money. So if he says to give it all, then I give it all, because it's not mine, it's God's.

But if you're rich, if God says give it all, whoa, whoa, that's mine. Riches and prosperity. And this is, this is what I've come to understand.

If God wants to, wants to bless people through you, he first has to give it to you. Now, listen, I'm not saying everybody's going to walk out of here and get a raise and somebody gift you a 4,000 square foot home and a Maserati and a Rivian, because that's what I want is a Rivian.

I'm not saying God's going to gift that to you. I'm not saying it's not. I know of people that God has, they've gotten phone calls. Hey, the Lord told me to buy you a vehicle. Whatever one, whatever one you want, you pick it.

I know these people. I've had conversations with the person this happened to. Whatever one you want, you go pick it up and let me know how much it is. Done. Ten years in a row.

[44:35] Done. Done. Done. Done. But until we can have the mindset that, wait a second, he's not doing that for me.

He's doing that so that he may use me the way he desires to use me. If he has given that to me so that I can give it to somebody else, or if he's given that to me so I can give what I have to somebody else.

I'll share this with you. I won't share the amount. But my wife and I last year, we've tried to be generous for a long time. But about middle of last year, we actually began to budget every week. We get paid once a week. Every week we budget. This is blessing money. We put it aside. And it builds up until we feel the Lord says, give it away. And whatever is in that amount of money that we put aside every week, we don't touch it for nothing else.

What if a bill needs to be paid? We'll figure it out some other way. That's not for that. What if you want to go out to eat? Tough. That's not for that. That's blessing money. And we have been able to give people money and just say, here, God told us to bless you.

[45:48] It has been one of the greatest experiences of our life to be able to bless somebody because we want the Lord to know, listen, we understand you're giving this to us to be able to be used in the kingdom of the Lord.

But let me move beyond the money and get back on track here. It's every aspect of our life. The Lord wants to use you. The Lord wants to form you and fashion you into the man and woman that He's called you to be.

But we need to let go of the idea that our limitations restrict the Lord. We must remove the doubt from our minds and the fear from our spirits so that we can get victory over our past that has us chained, bound, locked up, and allow the Lord to get His hands involved so that His will can be done in our lives.

Now, your pastor started out this service talking about what was the first thing? Together. Serving and winning.

Together, serving, and winning. He had you come up to the front. I'm going to have you do that again. But I'm not going to come lay hands on you. You already did that tonight. Come on up to the front. Lord, this is what I'm asking you to do today.

[47:15] I want you to begin to pray, Lord. Help me to see what it is and to know what it is that you've called me to do. I feel this so strongly this afternoon.

That we have to get our minds made up. I'm no longer just going to coast. I'm deactivating the cruise control button. And I'm going to work.

And I'm going to serve. And I'm going to have my head on a swivel. Everywhere I go, my spirit is going to be engaged. Everywhere I go. Because the Lord is going to connect me with somebody that needs Him.

Do you all believe that today? That the Lord wants to connect you with somebody that needs Him? Do you think, Trevor, do you think the Lord just put you into this family and in this church and saved you by accident?

Is it because He had nothing else better to do? I think I'll give Trevor the Holy Ghost because, well, because I'm kind of bored today. No. He gave you the Holy Ghost because there's things inside of you that He put there.

[48:22] That He wants to use. But until we fully surrender and submit to Him and quit living like knuckleheads. Because we all do it. Every one of us standing up here. Myself included.

We live like knuckleheads. I'm not Sandra. Sandra and Taylor. My wife. We've got to say, God, would you put your hands on me one more time?

And form me and fashion me into who you've called me to be. We begin to pray that prayer right now. Lift up your hands unto heaven and just say, God, I can't go another day without being used of you.

God, I can't take another step without being used of you. And, Lord, when I walk out of this building tonight, the day is not spent. It's not time to go to bed yet. There's an opportunity for me today before this day is done to connect with somebody.

To share what you've done in my life. Help me, Lord, to let somebody know that they can have this as well, just like I have it. Help me, Lord, today to be reminded. And today, God, to be able to connect with somebody that needs to hear that you love them and that you care about them.

[49:34] I'm praying, Lord, today. Today, God. Today. Let it happen today. Let me connect with somebody today. Help me, God, to see what it is you want me to do today. Help me, Lord, to be reminded that you placed me in this church and in this city for a reason.

I know some of you drive from out of town. But don't let that cloud your vision. God connected you with who he's connected you to be able to be in this building and to do the work of God in this city, in this hour, in this day.

He could have picked anybody else. Of the 1.2 million people, that's in Merced County, in Stanislaus County, in San Joaquin County, 1.2 million people.

He could have chose any one of them. But he chose you. He chose you to be in this place. He chose you to be in this church. He chose you to be connected to this pastor. Pastor, he chose you to be in this city.

He gave you the house that you have. He gave you the job that you have to do what it is that you're doing. He put you in this city for a reason, not for a season. He put you in this city to accomplish a task.

[50:40] And if you will be faithful, and if you folks will be faithful along shoulder to shoulder with the man of God, you will reap if you faint not. Hallelujah.

Come on, somebody, would you just pray a little bit longer? God, help me, Lord, to serve. Help me, God, to be your hands in this city. Help me, Lord, to be who you've called me to be in the name of the Lord Jesus.

In the name of the Lord Jesus.