

"Temple"

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[0:00] Good morning, brothers and sisters. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Tyler. I'm one of the lay elders. And it's a joy for me to bring you God's word this morning. And with that, let's go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll dive in together.

Father in heaven, what a comfort it is that you use vessels of weakness to accomplish your glorious purposes. And Father, you spoke through Balaam's donkey, so surely you can speak through me this morning to your people.

And Father, I pray that my words would not be plausible words of wisdom, but your spirit would come in demonstration of your power. Father, we lift this time to you.

Open our eyes to see wondrous things in your word, Father. Would you be glorified in Jesus' name? Amen. Perhaps, one of the most common questions today is not whether Christianity is true, but is it good?

Is Christianity good for the world? Is Christianity on the wrong side of history? One person who thought so was the 4th century Roman Emperor Julian.

[1:16] He hated Christianity. Despite growing up in a Christian family, serving as an officer in the church and able to quote scripture, he threw off the faith. And hence, he became known as Julian the Apostate.

And he didn't just want to throw Christianity off himself. He wanted to throw it off of Rome. Believing Christianity would lead to society's ruin, He sought to reverse the clock on the spread of Christianity.

To return Rome to its prior glory. The return to the Roman tradition. The paganism. The rituals. The temples. To Hercules, the ideal of the heroic man.

But it was not to be so. Despite his rejection, Christianity triumphed. At the end of his life, fatally wounded in battle, it is said, he gathered up a handful of dust.

And he raised his fist to the heavens. And he cried out, O Galilean, thou hast conquered. The Galilean had won. And sadly for him, Christianity continued to spread.

[2:29] And this sentiment about Christianity is not confined to Roman emperors from long ago. But it is the air we breathe today. One poet seizes on Julian's last words and wrote these haunting words.

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean, and the world has grown gray from thy breath. Jesus is portrayed as ghostly, ghastly, gray, and pale.

And because of him, the world is now gray, joyless, stale. Oppressing the human spirit. Christianity represents the wrong turn in history.

Christianity. This is common currency in the neighborhood and workplaces. Christianity is a cosmic killjoy. What a tragic mischaracterization.

Even more tragic is that it's even plausible in the first place. As we open up this chapter in Chronicles, we see something very, very different.

[3:41] We catch a vision of what life could be like if we lived under this Galilean's reign. And this chapter is like the Netflix show, Stranger Things, but in reverse.

It's the opposite. It's completely different. When the upside-down world of God's kingdom breaks into the world, it doesn't produce darkness and decay and demogorgons.

No, it's full of joy, energetic praise, and generosity. So let me invite you to turn to 2 Chronicles 29 as we see God's kingdom breaking forth into the world.

And you can find that on page 353 of the Pew Bible. And it would be helpful for you to open up your Bibles. And if you're not familiar with the Bible, the big numbers are the chapter numbers. Smaller numbers are the verse numbers.

And the main point of this passage is that God will raise up Hezekiah to spark a reformation for the joy of his people. And we'll look at this section in three parts.

[4 : 42] Point number one will be the character of Hezekiah. Point number two, the command for God's people to clean house. And point number three, the Christian joy that is the result.

So let's pick up in verse 1, chapter 29, 2 Chronicles. God's Word says this, Hezekiah began to reign when he was 25 years old. And he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened up the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.

He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square in the east and said to them, Hear me, Levites, now consecrate yourselves and consecrate the house of the Lord, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the holy place.

For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God. They have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord and turned their backs.

[5 : 53] They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. Therefore the wrath of the Lord came on Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes.

For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, in order that his fierce anger may turn away from us.

My sons, do not be negligent, for the Lord has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him, and to be his ministers, and make offerings to him.

We'll stop there. So, so far we've seen mostly bad kings, total failures. Hezekiah is an exception. He's not a perfect king, but he is a good one.

And verse 2 sets the stage for a spiritual reformation that will take place. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done.

[7 : 02] God is raising up Hezekiah, and God will get all the credit. Look down at verse 36.

Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced, because God was the one who provided for the people.

Out of darkness, light begins to shine. God will use Hezekiah to revive his people. And Hezekiah, in many ways, is a portrait and a model.

To tell you something of his importance, the chronicler gives him more airtime than any other king in the entire book. Four chapters. And coming out of the last chapter, we saw his father, Ahaz, was a bad dude.

He had a PhD in idolatry. But by God's grace, Hezekiah was not condemned to follow the pattern of his father. Well, how did he learn God and his word?

Well, we're not told directly, but it's probably from the influence of his mother. Look down at verse 1. Abijah. Her name literally means, my father is the Lord.

[8 : 05] God would use this woman's influence to shape her son, Hezekiah. So mothers, be encouraged. Even if there's not a father in the house who's a good spiritual role model for your children.

You may feel small, but a small pebble can produce a ripple effect far and wide. So trust your labors to him. Abijah's labors are unseen by us.

We don't know much about her, but God saw her. And God honors those who honor him. Her name is here forever. And the contrast between her son and his father is night and day.

Ahaz, remember, shuttered the temple. Darkness spreads over the land. You see that in verse 7.

They shut the door of the enterway to the temple. They put out the lamps.

The light of the world is now put under a basket. The doors are shut. The people were kept out from worship under the old covenant. Not only that, remember, Ahaz defiled and desecrated God's house.

[9 : 12] His evil was legendary. He was the first Judean king to sacrifice his son in a pagan ritual. He paraded idols in the city.

I wonder how Hezekiah's mother felt about that. Probably wasn't an easy upbringing for him. But now, God raised him up. And Hezekiah is like lightning flashing across the cold, gray sky.

Look at verse 3. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house. The moment he gets in power, no delay, he immediately gets to work to reverse the damage his father had done.

Now, this wisdom is not coming from where you'd expect it. He is 25 years old.

And this work of renewal is not coming from the older generation, but the younger. It's one of the examples in history where the younger generation is calling the older generation back to biblical faithfulness.

[10:17] He's not a thermometer basing his priorities on the weather of the day. No, he was a thermostat and he burned with zeal for God's glory. To give you a sense of his zeal, in 2 Kings 18, if you turn back there, we're told that the people sank into a deep idolatry.

And you'll see in verse 4 of that chapter, the people had erected a shrine to the brass serpent that Moses had made. Remember that brass serpent in Numbers?

Moses lifted it high up in the air and all who looked to it would live. But as is so often the case, this relic became an object of worship.

The people began to pray and began to offer incense to it. The bronze figure was treated as a piece of magic, a talisman. And so what does Hezekiah do? He would have none of it.

He takes the very serpent, a relic of antiquity, he destroys it. He smashes it to pieces, grinds it to a powder. And the author of 2 Kings commends him for it because he is obeying the law of Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 12 to tear the altars down, smash them, burn them up, wipe them out from every place.

[11:35] Show no mercy to idolatry. In a few chapters, we'll see Hezekiah, a tiny king in a tiny kingdom, defied a world emperor.

He had the courage not to surrender to Assyria. And he held fast to the God of Israel and the word. His prayer went up and God's help powerfully came down.

You know, in fact, Hezekiah is such a good king, according to Orthodox Jewish tradition, I had the opportunity to speak to an Orthodox Jew as I was preparing for the sermon. For a minute, some Jews thought He was the Messiah.

This is the guy. He's the worthy successor of King David, the one who's going to restore the entire kingdom. He almost made it to the end, but it was not to be so.

Like all of us, he had clay feet. He stumbled later in life. As the old adage goes, the best of men are men at best. His love grew cold and he began to walk around like a self-righteous peacock.

[12:39] You know, it seems to me how rare it is to see an older saint with the same zeal that Hezekiah had as a young man. I see it in my own life. Older saint, remember when you were like Hezekiah, burning for God's glory?

You were like a toy without an off switch. You couldn't stop telling people about Jesus. Now, granted, your life in Christ will look different. There are different seasons. Life with young kids, life caring for an aging spouse or an aging parent will look different than when you were in college. But isn't it also true that it is easy to lose our first love? We lose a passion and a zeal for God's name. The gospel becomes familiar.

We stop learning. We no longer courageously confront idolatry. We're more likely to fall into theological compromise. Older saint, let me encourage you to spend some time with younger Christians.

Christians who have a zeal for God's glory and His name in this world. The younger generation need your wisdom, but you need them as well. You need their burning zeal and pray that God would stir your affections for Him once again.

[13:56] Look at the one who is greater than Hezekiah who said, zeal for your house has consumed me. And look at Hezekiah's zeal in this chapter. At verse 6, he is honest.

Our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord, our God. He repeats that again in verse 19. He, that is, Ahaz's father, was faithless.

That is a specific word packed with meaning. A word that would have been ringing in people's ears. Unfaithful. Broken covenant vows.

Adultery. Rejecting the love that God had shown to them. And their faithlessness is why in verse 8 to 9 they are now under God's covenant curses. Objects of wrath, of horror, astonishment, of hissing.

They're living in a nightmare because of their disobedience. But after looking back in verse 10, he looks forward. And he expresses true repentance. It is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord.

[14:59] He expresses a solemn oath to put right what is wrong. And this leader uses his authority for the good of his people. He addresses the Levites as his sons.

He has affection for the people of Israel. Now to be in covenant with God is a profound thing. It's weighty. It's serious.

It's the opposite of the modern notion of being spiritual but not religious. When people say they're spiritual and not religious, what they mean is I want to have a relationship but no outside authority. No thank you. I'll take the relationship but I don't want anyone else to tell me what I need to do or what I need to believe. God is whoever I want him to be. A formless life force. My inner sense of subjective beauty.

But in the scriptures all true personal relationships with God are covenantal. It's the only kind of relationship with God there is. So covenants are unique blends of law and love.

[16:02] I submit to you God not out of duty but of delight. You know the word covenant doesn't really capture the meaning. The word love in it would be a much better word to describe this kind of relationship.

A deep and abiding commitment to put ourselves under God's authority out of love. I give you everything God because I love you. The closest approximation is the covenant of marriage.

Right? Each side saying I give you everything and I look for your good because out of love. And because Hezekiah loves God he is seeking to fix what is wrong.

So what needs to be fixed? Well point number one is the character of Hezekiah. Point number two is the command for God's people to clean house. Now in verses 4 to 19 Hezekiah will begin to put what is wrong.

He calls the priests and the Levites to a special task to restore temple worship by consecrating and cleansing the temple. Look down at verse 5.

[17:10] He says, Hear me Levites now consecrate yourselves and consecrate the house of the Lord the God of your fathers and carry out the filth from the holy place.

So he gathers the Levites in verses 12 to 14. Let's pick up in verse 15 through 19 as well. They gathered their brothers and consecrated themselves and went in as the king had commanded by the word of the Lord to cleanse the house of the Lord.

The priests went into the innermost part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it and they brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it and carried it out to the brook Kidron. They began to consecrate on the first day of the first month and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the Lord. Then for eight days they consecrated the house of the Lord.

And on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. Then they went into Hezekiah the king and said, We have cleansed all the house of the Lord, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils and the table for the showbread and all its utensils.

[18:17] All the utensils that King Ahaz discarded in his reign when he was faithless we have made ready and consecrated and behold they are before the altar of the Lord.

To restore the temple God commands the priest to cleanse and consecrate the house of the Lord. You see that in verses 5 and 15.

Now what is consecration? To consecrate means to put a reserve sticker on an object for God's special use. And it might be hard to wrap our minds around this in the 21st century but this process was vital.

for anything and everything in the temple. And what was so special about the temple that caused the need to consecrate everything?

Well, wasn't the beautiful design of the architecture? No. Under the old covenant the temple is where God dwelt. One thing have I desired to be in the house of the Lord.

[19:21] The temple was a meeting place between God and His people. The temple was the heartbeat of Israel's faith. The temple is where God was to be approached.

He was to be approached above the mercy seat on His throne. The one and only true God, the God who speaks, the God who has no rivals, who demands that there be no other gods before Him, who is personal, who hears His people's prayers.

this God was to be approached in the temple. And because God is holy, the temple needed to be holy. Now holiness means God is totally separate from His creation.

God is light and in Him there is no darkness. And to illustrate this for His people, God commanded that when they built the temple that there would be two cherubim statues to be placed in the innermost part of the temple.

And these statues had their wings spread over their eyes. So even the cherubim, heavenly creatures without sin, could not look directly upon the king in His incomprehensible, all-consuming holiness.

[20 : 37] And at the center of the temple in the Holy of Holies was the Ark. And in the Ark was the Ten Commandments, God's law. And God's law uniquely reflected God's character of holiness.

God is good, just, and righteous in every single way. And His law reflected that. And because God is holy, the temple was to be holy, set apart, consecrated.

And so to that end, you have the process of consecration. And consecration consists of a few parts as we see here. First is the cleansing, then the consecrating, and then third, the sacrificing.

So first, let's look at the cleansing in verse 5. In verse 5, we see the problem, don't we? There is now filth inside the holy place. God is dwelling in a garbage dump, a junkyard filled with idols.

And verse 17 shows the extent of the filth. Because how long did it take to clean out the garbage? garbage. You see, it took 16 days.

[21 : 48] On the 16th day, they finally cleaned out all the garbage in the holy place. Friend, imagine the amount of garbage that needed to be hauled out. This was a storage closet filled with trash.

The temple is in a shocking state of neglect. neglect. But you know, the condition of the temple mirrored the spiritual condition of the people.

While preparing the sermon, I had a conversation with a college friend. He's a pastor of a local church plant in Massachusetts. and his congregation had been praying and looking for a meeting place.

And a building was offered by a dying congregation. And one side of the building was in complete disrepair. Mold, water damage, leaky roof, filled with junk, you name it.

He said, you know, it's probably going to be cheaper to knock the whole thing down. Why doesn't God just knock the whole thing down here? Well, we might do that to a building, but friend, God is committed to his people.

[22 : 55] His faithfulness to his promises is the skeleton that prevents the whole structure from collapsing onto itself. Now, in the new covenant, we don't worship in a place, but through a person, through Christ Jesus.

But he is still faithful to his promises, brother and sister. And after the cleansing, there's the consecration. Now, as we see in this chapter, there's a moral consecration and there's a ritual consecration.

You see that the ritual consecration with a process of consecrating the objects. For example, the altar in verse 17. In verse 18, the utensils, the table, the showbread, everything had to be consecrated.

Nothing was off limits. People, places, and things. Everything that came into contact with God must be set apart and consecrated. Now, brothers and sisters, we don't consecrate ourselves through rituals any longer.

But as we heard earlier, we are to be set apart. You know, in fact, the word saint, which is used to describe all true Christians, is derived from the word one who is set apart.

[24 : 10] But by virtue of being in Christ, every Christian has been consecrated, has been set apart for God's special use. And being a Christian is not just showing up once a week to a worship service.

It's not just a good habit. It's not a way to instill morals into your children. No, to be a Christian is to be completely set apart for God's special use.

And God now calls our entire life to be put on the altar for His praise. In the New Covenant, we give ourselves, we give all of it. So this charge, the Levites, to cleanse and to consecrate applies to you, brother and sister.

Church, what are you but a royal priesthood? You see, while Israel had a priesthood, church, you are a priesthood. 1 Peter 1.9, as we read earlier, says this, but you are a chosen race, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession.

This is the priesthood of all believers. So, brother and sister, where are we impoverished as a people? We're consecrated once for all, but we need to put our whole life onto the altar and remove the garbage.

[25 : 27] Where do we need to cleanse and consecrate our lives in service to God? We know Orthodox theology does not guarantee true worship. We know this.

And as a church, it's easy to play the comparison game, isn't it? You know, you see the church over there teaching the prosperity gospel who have compromised on Christian ethics.

And we say, well, at least we're not like that church. But, friend, we must bring the whole of our lives under God's word. So, where do we need to be consecrated?

You know, perhaps in an increasingly angry and hostile world, do we find ourselves like that? The controversy meter always going from 1 to 11 overnight, always outraged, viewing others with suspicion.

Friends, 2 Timothy 1, verse 7, Paul writes, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control. Perhaps for some of us, we are so consumed in looking at our devices, checking social media, checking the news, checking our emails.

[26 : 39] We want to be efficient. And so, we can be in the same room with someone else, but be a world apart. Robbing you of fellowship with other Christians. Robbing you parents of spending time with your children and instructing them.

Spending what little time God has given you with them. Not giving them your undivided attention.

We need to take off our dirty clothes and put on resurrection attire that God has given us.

Paul writes to the church in Colossus, in chapter 3, he writes, put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Church, put that all away. Cleanse the garbage out from the holy place. Brothers and sisters, immerse, we must bring everything to God. Immersing ourselves in the scripture, we cry out to God, let us not be conformed to this age.

We pray, would your word transform us? Show us your good, pleasing, and acceptable will, oh God. Show us what is acceptable in your sight. We're constantly praying, Lord, make us more like Jesus.

[27 : 55] Friend, if we want to have the true joy this chapter we'll speak of, we cannot skip this step. However, before we can stand as a priest before God and rejoicing, there's an additional cleansing that needs to take place because we need to be cleansed from our guilt because there's a cleansing, the consecrating, there's also the sacrificing in verse 20.

So once the temple is ready, Hezekiah doesn't sit around wondering what he's going to do next. He rose early, and he hastens to perform the sacrifices. It's as if Hezekiah is saying, I delivered to you what was of first importance in verses 28 to 24.

Look down, it reads, Then Hezekiah the king rose early and gathered the officials of the city and went up to the house of the Lord. And they brought seven bulls and seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah.

And he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the Lord. So they slaughtered the bulls and the priests received the blood and threw it against the altar.

And they slaughtered the lambs and their blood was thrown against the altar. Then the goats for the sin offerings were brought to the king and the assembly and they laid their hands on them.

[29 : 11] And the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood on the altar to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

Now what in the world does this mean? I mean the priests are like butchers cutting up bulls and goats and lambs. This seems like a foreign language. But there is a certain grammar of the Levitical world.

And if you were to go back to Leviticus, you would discover that King Hezekiah is carefully following the instructions that God gave through Moses. There is a sin offering in verses 21 and following and that highlights matters of sin and atonement.

Our need for our sin to be covered before a thrice holy God. There is a burnt offering in verses 27 to 28 highlighting matters of wholehearted service to God.

There is a peace offering in verse 35 if you look down and it highlights their fellowship with one another. And finally, there is a drink offering in verse 35 highlighting this was not a duty but a delight, a joy in making the sacrifices to God.

[30 : 24] And each of these are picked up in the New Testament to describe the church's worship. For example, Paul would say his life is a drink offering to the church at Philippi highlighting his joy in serving them.

The burnt offerings are picked up in Romans chapter 12 verse 1 as Paul instructs us to put our whole lives on the altar as a pleasing sacrifice before God. But the priority here is the sin offering. This is of first importance. You see that in verse 21. Hezekiah rises early and that's the first thing he does. He gives it special attention.

Why? Well, in verse 24 it says it results in atonement for Israel. Okay, what is sin and why do we need atonement?

You know, in our modern society sin is a word that we don't like to use. But we tend to be very quick in recognizing it in others. When it comes to ourselves we think, I just made a mistake.

[31 : 29] My bad. That's not me. No one's perfect, right? But we want God to care about sin out there. I mean, Holocaust and terrorists. The worst of the worst. But we don't want God to care about the sin in our own lives.

In our own hearts. But friend, you cannot have it both ways. According to scripture, sin is rebellion. A crime, an offense. Crossing a forbidden boundary.

And verse 8 is very clear. It provokes God's white hot anger and wrath. God will punish sin. He will make the people objects of horror, of astonishment, of hissing.

If that is the disease, the sin offering is the cure. Because you see, the sin offering is a picture of the gospel, is it not? So the gospel says God made you and I.

And because he made you, he has authority over you and I. You and I were meant to live lives of honor and praise. Our lives were meant to be a temple.

[32 : 34] Serving him all of our days. But the sad reality is this, that we pursue the profane. We pursue the filthy. And God sees it.

He sees our sin. He sees our wickedness. We've been unfaithful and false. You know, he knows what you and I do when no one is around. There's no private browser to keep God from seeing your thoughts and your minds.

He doesn't need your passcode to get inside your phone. And how you feel about that, friend, how you feel about God knowing everything tells you something about what you already know about yourself.

Does not your conscience tell you that you need a mediator before a holy God, a priest, and a sacrifice? One to stand before you in this thrice holy God.

But friend, the sin offering is a picture of that great love that God has shown us. Because God provides a substitute, one who takes on the punishment that we deserve.

[33 : 38] Here we see a shadow of this substitute, a goat, in verse 23. Now we know, friends, that these animals cannot actually bring about the forgiveness of sins.

In Hebrews 10, the writer says, it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. No, this sacrifice foreshadowed a greater one.

You see, the Father in His great love sent Jesus, fully God and fully man, as the sin-bearing offering, a substitute, a sacrifice.

You see, we are faithless and false, but friend, He is the one who is called faithful and true. He is the blessed God who forever belongs in mortality and glory.

And unlike Hezekiah, He lives the perfect life of obedience to the very end. And He uses His authority for the glory of God and the good of His people because He voluntarily lays down His life.

[34 : 37] And the God man's flesh was cut open, blood poured out. To what ends? Well, He accomplishes what verse 24 calls atonement. God's wrath being turned away.

He took it on Himself. God's wrath was assuaged because of the substitutes. There was a price to be paid. Jesus paid it. There was a cup of God's wrath to drink, friend, and He drank it to the dregs. For who? We see, for all who would lay their hands on Him. You see the special significance of the laying on of hands in verse 23. You see, the hand isn't merely placed onto the sacrifice.

No, the Israelite was to lean on the head and apply pressure. What does that mean? Well, it's understood as a transfer of guilt. It's identification, putting your weight upon the sacrifice.

The same is true today. Your hands of faith and trust must be placed upon the perfect sacrifice. Oh, friends, a weak faith can still rest on the perfect sacrifice.

[35 : 46] But you must apply your pressure, your weight on the sacrifice. And He came for those who have put their weight upon Him. And on the third day, He rose from the dead.

He now lives to be our great high priest making intercession for His people. See, Jesus finished what Hezekiah started. The door of God's presence is opened wide and all are welcome. And friend, why would you give your heart to another? This is the one who offers true forgiveness and freedom by grace and unearned gift. He gave it all to us and so, friend, we give it all back to Him in worship.

And what effect does this produce? Well, point number three is Christian joy and generosity. A bunch of prodigals begin to praise loudly and joyously and exuberantly.

Let's read verses 25 and 30 together. He, that is Hezekiah, stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals and harps and lyres according to the commandment of David and of Gad, the king's overseer and of Nathan, the prophet.

[36 : 53] For the commandment was from the Lord through His prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David and the priests with the trumpets. And then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar.

And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also. And the trumpets accompanied by the instruments of David, king of Israel. The whole assembly worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded.

All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped. And Hezekiah, the king, and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph, the seer.

And they sang praises with gladness. And they bowed down and worshipped. You know, there are certain places where bitterness and anger are just out of place.

A wedding is one. Another is skipping down the street. Have you ever tried to skip down the street while you're angry? You know, it just doesn't go together. You need a little bit of joy when you're skipping.

[38 : 02] Worship is like that. You need just a little bit of joy when you're in the presence of God in worship. And when there's true worship, there's complete joy.

Verse 25, the cymbals, the harps, the lyres are playing. Verse 26, the trumpets are blasting. Verse 28, there is unity. The whole assembly is worshipping with one voice.

The singers are singing. Someone definitely is clapping their hands in this assembly. But look at the end of verse 30. They sang praises with gladness.

This is like a field of flowers after wintertime receiving the beams of the sun and they're blossoming. Their hearts and their minds are enraptured.

They're caught up in the greatness of God. And their joy is expressed in music. Friend, do you know that God loves music? He loves energetic music.

[39 : 00] Music that you can dance to. Psalm 150. Praise him with the trumpet sound. Praise him with the lute and harp. And get this. Praise him with the tambourine and the dance.

Church, praise God with your dance moves. He loves music that you can dance to. Energetic music. He loves jazz and orchestral music. He loves the joy that radiates from Bach.

The joy's heavenly anthem of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus and the Messiah. He loves the passionate poetic preaching of Christian hip-hop. He loves vocal music.

Singing to the Lord a new song. God, you are my exceeding joy. He might love other music, but that's the kind of music I like.

He doesn't, of course, God doesn't love every music. He doesn't love music that lies about him. But for he loves all music that reflects the glory and majesty of his great name.

[40 : 03] Music that is a Philippians 4.8 product. Something that's true and lovely and commendable. But no, this was not a free-for-all. You know, people running around the sanctuary running wild.

Look at their physical postures in verse 29. They worship by bowing down. They're kneeling. We glory in God even as we tremble before his greatness.

That's a picture of reverence. You know, many divorce sound theology and spiritual experience. But what God has joined together, let no one separate.

True doctrine and doxology are inseparable lovers. But notice something very important. Some of the people missed out on this joyous assembly.

Look down at verse 34 at the end. Some of the priests were absent. They didn't consecrate themselves and they were absent from this joyous occasion. Friend, joy comes in the obedience to God.

[41 : 06] I'm going to repeat that. Joy comes in the obedience to God. You see here, joy comes during the burnt offering. In other words, joy comes out when you're wholeheartedly serving God.

Joy comes when your time, your talents, your influence. All of it is in wholehearted service to God. Oh, friends, brothers and sisters, consecrate everything to Him.

God's is a living fountain of joy. If your life is governed by God, living under God's rule, under God's reign, that is a complete life of joy.

joy. You know, how many people have comfort and convenience at their fingertips but have not for one second felt true, actual joy?

Friend, this is a bread that will feed a perishing world. Friend, let us not water down the truth, give the world what they want and dress up in religious terminology. No, joy comes in obedience to God's commands.

[42 : 18] friends. Friend, this joy is held out to you today. This joy is only available in the gospel, living your life in wholehearted obedience to Him. He doesn't want your lips.

He doesn't want your actions. He wants your hearts, my friends. And joy is not just an emotion. It is a joy that is available in dark places, no matter their circumstance.

The Bible says there is always a reason to be rejoicing. The ascended Christ says, I will be with you always. There is more joy in His presence than all the world has to offer.

We rejoice a little now, but Jesus says, I tell you, your joy then will be full. Full joy, all sorrows removed. And the greatest sadness for us is that we have hardships, the biggest trials that we're away from our beloved.

Paul says to live is Christ and to die is gain. It is far better to be with Him. And not just joy, but generosity. In verse 34, there's a picture of overflowing generosity in their offerings.

[43 : 29] Out of thanksgiving, they gave more than enough. Isn't this the witness of Christians throughout the ages? Overflowing generosity.

Hospitals, orphanages, taking care of the sick and the lepers. Friend, this is the history of this church. Overflowing generosity.

And you know what? The more we give, that's the paradox of the kingdom, the more we have.

Didn't Jesus say, give your life to me and you will gain it? Friend, is this what the world sees?

Is this the impression that non-Christians get of the church? of a group of people with one voice singing, hearts liberated, free to give everything away because we have this treasure in jars of clay.

Oh, friend, this is not a pale Galilean that creates a stale life. This Galilean sends his spirit to give life. He is a divine defibrillator that brings something dead and gives it new life to be truly alive.

[44 : 40] His spirit animates his artists and his musicians to sing his praise. And being a Christian does not mean you lose your humanity.

It is, in fact, the best way to be human. The second century pastor, Irenaeus, says this, the glory of God is a human that is fully alive and that life consists in beholding God.

What he's saying is that true freedom is when we behold God in the face of Jesus Christ. That helps us to be fully alive.

Now, one illustration you can think about this is Kobe Bryant, the basketball player. You know, Mamba mentality. I don't know if you've read about Kobe Bryant. Think about his life.

He was completely mastered by the game of basketball. And if that were true of me, if I disciplined my body in my mind, unwavering commitment, relentless, and wholehearted service to God, if I give myself to learn to dribble and pass and shoot, soon, every move on the basketball court will become effortless.

[45 : 52] At that point, who's the freest person on the court? I know what some of you are thinking, that's a really realistic illustration, Tyler, after I've seen you play basketball. You would be the freest person on the courts if you disciplined your body.

Aaron is saying, behold Jesus in his glory, and if he becomes your master, and you give your life to all, you give your life for him, he, you become more free.

We fail, and we will fail, but we are secure, brother and sister. You are a dearly beloved child of God, so please your Father in all things.

let him be the master of your life. To conclude, you know, it's a practice of mine when I go to a wedding, and the bride begins her procession.

All eyes are on the bride. What I love to do is I like to turn around and look in the groom's eyes. I love to see the joy as the groom recognizes his bride.

[46 : 59] Friend, do you look at Jesus like that? Can you say with the hymnal, the hymnal, my Jesus, I love thee. I know thou art mine.

For thee, all the follies of sin I resign. My gracious redeemer, my savior, thou art. If ever I love thee, my Jesus tis now.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, Lord, we pray that we would put our whole life to you in obedience. God, you are sufficient for our joy.

God, would you visit us again? Revive your people so that we would live lives for your honor and praise. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.