

Donkeys for Jesus

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Why is it called Palm Sunday? Because on this Sunday, many churches all over the world remember when Jesus rode on a donkey, and palms were put on the ground in front of the donkey. And he rode into the temple, and that's when he turned over the tables. And he said that his house would be called a house of prayer.

Introduction: Palm Sunday and the Prophetic Donkey

So we want to just begin this morning by reading the passage in Luke chapter 19. This is five days before he was crucified. Luke chapter 19. And believe it or not, the prophet Zechariah prophesied of this moment more than 400 years earlier than Jesus did it. I just want to read from the prophecy of Zechariah. Zechariah 9:9 says, "Rejoice, greatly, daughter of Zion. Shout, daughter of Jerusalem. See, your King comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." So Zechariah was prophesying this. And 450 to 500 years later, Jesus fulfilled it. So let's read from Luke 19, verse 29. "And it came to pass when he came near to Bethphage and Bethany at the mountain called Olivet, that he sent two of his disciples." Verse 30 is saying, "Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter, you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose him and bring him here." So it's a young donkey. It's like a child less than four years old. "Ever sat on before," verse 31. "And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing him?' Thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of him.'" Verse 32, "So those who were sent went and departed and found it just as he had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, 'Why are you loosing the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of him.' Then they brought him to Jesus, and they threw their own garments on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as he went, they spread their clothes on the road. And as he was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'" And some of the Pharisees called to him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." But he answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." Now as he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." Let's go down to verse 45. "Then he went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, 'It is

written, "My house is a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves.""" Let's pray. Father, we just thank you for your word. We thank you for speaking to us this morning. We thank you, Jesus, for your grace. Give us the ears to hear your voice, renew our minds, transform our hearts. May we hear your word and mix it with faith. And may we never be the same in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Do I sound OK? A little bit of a-- OK. That sounded a bit strange to myself. OK. Right. Are you surprised that Jesus saw the donkey before the donkey saw Jesus or the disciples? Before the disciples turned up, Jesus had already seen the donkey. And you wonder why didn't he use a horse? Why a donkey? And I'm reminded-- when I read this, I read about Nathanael in John chapter 1. He talks about how Philip was telling Nathanael about Jesus, and Nathanael asked Jesus, "How do you know me?" And Jesus said, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." And sometimes we forget that Jesus notices us, that we are seen by the Lord. We think, why should he notice me? I'm just a donkey. I'm just tied up somewhere. I'm just in my office. I'm just at my desk. Nobody, nobody. But God sees and notices you. And he sent his two disciples.

I. Why a Donkey? The Lord's Choice

And I wondered and I asked, what was it about the donkey? And so if you want to give a title, I will call this message, "Donkeys for Jesus." Why did God choose a donkey? You know, if you look at-- if you think about a donkey, they are known for more negative things. I don't have any positive thing. Well, maybe they carry burdens. That's the one positive thing. But donkeys really are known for being stupid, foolish. Right? The older generation used to insult people by saying, "Don't be a donkey, you stupid donkey." Right? They use the term donkey in a derogatory insult. Donkeys are not the brightest animal. So not only are they foolish, but they're stubborn. Okay? They-- you kind of think of a donkey as something you have to pull and push and force. And they carry burdens. Sounds a lot like us, doesn't it? Like Christians. Without the Lord, we are foolish. And how do you know we carry burdens? We always stress out or worry, right? Because of all the burdens we carry. And many times, you know, as-- every time I see a-- you know, when you push a trolley, you know, I don't know how many have had this problem. You go to Lotus, you get a trolley, and guess what? It doesn't go in the direction you're pushing it. And that is a picture of many of us. You know, I say, "Go straight," and it's going left, it's going right, and you're redirecting, redirecting. And I don't know how many times it's like-- the whole issue of saying, "Redirect." You know, we are not-- so there's something about human nature that we want to go our own way. And that's what sheep are like. You know, this characteristic of a donkey is a lot like sheep. "We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way." And sheep are not the brightest animals, too. Right? And they're not known for their smarts. But God is showing us something, this power in this. Is to see the power of his presence. Right? So in-- why did they choose a donkey? I think one reason is, in 1 Corinthians 1, it tells us the kind of people God chooses. He doesn't reject someone because they are wealthy or smart. Okay? The main criteria is how we see

ourselves apart from him. And so 1 Corinthians 1 tells us who God looks for. What attracted Jesus to these two? I'm guessing, I'm wondering. Not only to fulfill prophecy, but 1 Corinthians 1:26 says, "Consider your calling, brothers and sisters, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." For example, the disciples, most of them were fishermen. Not many noble, not highly educated. Okay? Verse 27, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. And God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong." Verse 28, "And God has chosen the insignificant things of the world, and the despised God has chosen." Donkeys are among the most despised animals. "The things that are despised God has chosen, the things that are not-- so that he may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God." So rather than say, "What can God do with me? I've got nothing to offer him. I'm a nobody," you qualify. The people who think they're somebody without God, they're disqualified. Right? So many of us, we kind of limit ourselves by thinking, "Who am I?" And notice, this donkey was tied up. Right?

II. Set Free for the Lord's Use

So what does God want to do? He wants to set donkeys free. So the question is this morning, what is binding us? You know, this is the reason for the anointing, His presence. Luke 4:18 says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he's anointed me to bring good news to the poor." Okay, the poor in spirit, not just poor naturally. "He sent me to proclaim release to captives, like the donkeys were all captive, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free all those who are oppressed." God wants to set us free. Why? Jesus said, "I have need of them." He has need of you, and he has need of me. So the purpose of our freedom is for our Lord's use, not for our own pleasure. We have not been set free to fulfill our own wants and needs, but to fulfill the Lord's needs, because that's when you really fulfill your purpose. Someone asked, "Isn't a railway track very confining and restrictive to a train?" Not really, because the train was designed to run on tracks. Remove the tracks, it's going to be derailed. So sometimes we can think, "Oh God, to follow you, there's so many things I can't and shouldn't do." That's what brings freedom.

III. Carrying Burdens and Wearing Garments of Praise

What else? They said, "Donkeys are known to carry burdens." What did Jesus say about carrying burdens? Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." That's what we heard Paul share. Verse 29, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." So like the donkey, we need to have the right perspective of ourselves. Not to think of yourself less than you are or more than you are, but to see yourself as God sees you, beloved sons and daughters. So what happened? So the disciples went, they loosed the colt, they took the colt to Jesus, and what did they do? They put garments or cloth on the colt. What do the garments speak of in the Bible? The Word of God tells us, "Put on the garment of grace, the robe of

righteousness, the garments of salvation." It's interesting that he sat on those garments, and then the people began to praise him. They remembered all the marvelous, amazing works that he did. Right, Isaiah 61:10 tells us this. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels." So God wants us to live in thanksgiving and praise, because that inhabits his presence. So Jesus sat on the garments on the colt, and guess what? Now the colt, the donkey became a V.I.D., very important donkey. Not VIP. Okay. Wow, can you imagine what the donkey was thinking about? I don't know. I don't know what the donkey thought. "Wow, how come people are praising me?" I hope not. "Wow, they're putting the palm leaves on the road." What was that special treatment for? Was it because of the donkey? It was because of who the donkey carried. And the honor the donkey received was because of who it carried. Apart from God, we are nothing, we can do nothing. When you host his presence, may we never forget that we are favored because of him and not because of us. Many of us are like the foolish donkey that thinks, "Wow, I must be a very important donkey. Maybe I'm from a good line. People are praising me and putting things on me." No, because always remember it's the favor of God.

IV. The Exchange of Burdens in His Presence

So what happened? Jesus got on the colt. What do you think? How do you think the colt responded? Did it kind of collapse under the weight of Jesus? I don't think so. And I think the colt was probably shocked. He says, "Hang on, this feels a lot lighter than it should." I don't know, I'm just wondering, I'm just curious. Jesus obviously was not a burden to the donkey. I mean, this was a young colt. And it had never been sat on before. And here's the key. In his presence, there's an exchange that occurs, of burdens. Many times the word of God says, "Cast your cares upon me." Why? "For he cares for us." It was very interesting in maybe like 1 Peter 5. When we looked at this briefly a few weeks ago on talking about pride and humility, it says, 1 Peter 5, verse 5, at the end of verse 5 it says, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Verse 6, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." So the context of casting your cares is humility. Why? Verse 6 is, "Humble yourselves under His mighty hand, that He may exalt you." How do you humble yourselves? Verse 7, "Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." So you can't receive His care unless you cast your care upon Him. So as long as you're hanging on to your cares, He can't care for you. So many times we wonder, "God, why are you not solving? Why are you not dealing with this issue?" He says, "Because you're hanging on to it. I can do nothing unless you give it to me." But here's the most powerful verse, the warning. When we hang on to our cares and don't give it to Him, guess what happens? Verse 8, "Be sober, be diligent, because your adversary, the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." So whom is the lion looking to devour? In this

context, those who have not cast their cares to the Lord. When you hang on to your fear and your worry and your stress, you become a target for the enemy. Because now you're on your own. Your God can't take care of it because you're hanging on to your cares. So the enemy, like a lion, is roaring looking for those who have not cast their cares to Him, because they become an easy target. So if you want the fear of God, you've got to learn how to cast it. You confess it, say, "Lord," and gift the situation to you. "I put this care in your hands." I refuse. See, God doesn't want us to be careless but carefree in Him. Not because we don't care but because our trust is in Him. So literally, Christians are meant to be the most peaceful people on this planet. Because the enemy can't touch a peaceful Christian. Their peace comes from His presence and not from perfect circumstances. And so, like the donkey, you know, I don't think the donkey wakes up every morning wondering, thinking about life's problems. It's like, "Okay." I mean, this is a young donkey, but all of us have got cares, have got worries, have got issues. And the temptation of life is to try and solve it ourselves. And the Lord says, "Lean not on your own understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, not your mind." Trust is in the heart. Understanding is with your mind. "Lean not on your understanding. Trust in the Lord with all your heart." And He will, what will He do? Direct your paths. Commit your way unto Him and He will establish your thoughts. All right, so Jesus said, "In this world, there will be tribulation, but His peace He gives to us. Let not your heart..." We've got to let not. Nobody else can let not our hearts be troubled by this. So how do we protect our hearts? By casting our cares to Him. Right, so when we begin to focus on Him, enter His gates with thanksgiving and praise, it's like the garments upon us. God sees this. It's a bit like the garment on Jacob. Was it Jacob? No. Jacob deceived Isaac, right? So Jacob wore the garments of Esau. And the Father who couldn't see well, smelled the garments, felt the garments of his brother and gave him the blessing. And similar to that, when we put on the garments of praise, we are blessed not because we are perfect, because praise is the language of faith. Because when you begin to praise God, you're magnifying Him more than your problem. So that's one way you cast your cares. By choosing to praise the goodness of God, not pray because there are no problems in life. Choosing to praise because of what He's done, it gives you faith for what you believe He will do. See, faith for the promises comes from gratitude for your testimonies. I'll say that again. Faith for His promises comes from gratitude for your testimonies. So keep rehearsing your testimonies. Never forget what the Lord has done. Don't take anything for granted. When you rehearse your testimonies, it helps keep us not only grateful but humble because lest we think it is because of ourselves. "Wow, you know, I'm so blessed because of me. I'm a self-made person. I work hard. So I'm so blessed because of what I have achieved." If not for the grace of God, the seed will not sprout. You can pay the highest value for an expensive seed. You can buy the best quality earth. But if there's no rain that comes from heaven, you can't control the rain. There's no fruit. So apart from God's grace and favour, our works will not be fruitful. So we've got to live in thanksgiving and praise. And when God's presence inhabits our praises as a lifestyle, guess what? It's one way we cast our cares upon Him. And you

protect yourself from being a target of the enemy. How does the enemy try to devour those with fear?

V. Transformation and Setting Others Free

God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind. The first question is, what is tying us up? Is there anything that is holding you back? Do you think of yourself, "Who am I? Can God use me?" The donkey for example, "Is anybody important going to use me? I'm just a burden bearer." No. God wants to transform. Can you imagine the transformation? Here is the donkey known for stubbornness, carrying, hosting the presence of God, the lightest burden ever, fully submitted and yielded. It's not budging like Balaam's donkey. It is not refusing to move. Nobody had to pull the colt. It was just walking, yielded to the presence of God. Why? It's surrounded by the praises of God's people. So God not only, we're not only like the donkey, but God wants us to be like the disciples to set other donkeys free. And that's why the gospel really is not for, it is for everyone, but it will not be appreciated by everyone unless you're poor in spirit. Unless you know you need to be set free. Until you recognize, you see, a patient will not see a doctor or will not take medication if they believe they don't need it, no matter what the doctor says. So lots of patients self-medicate. They look at the prescription, "No, that's not, I'm going to take less. I'm going to take more. I'm going to find my, do my Google search and take my own medicine." And so, we're not going to submit and yield and appreciate the answer if we don't recognize the problem. "Hey, I need to be free. I'm bound. I'm bound by stress. I'm bound by fear, by worry. Lord Jesus, I invite you to set me free." Why does God want you and me to be free? So that we in turn can set others free. Because that is why the spirit of the Lord is upon you. The spirit of the Lord is upon us too. To preach the good news, the gospel of the good news to the poor in spirit. Who are the poor in spirit? Those who recognize their need. Those who are not too proud to not ask for help. You notice that Jesus never did anything for anyone that didn't cry out for help. That didn't ask Him. He never volunteered to set people free simply because He recognized their need. He didn't walk past blind Bartimaeus and say, "Hey, Bartimaeus, I notice you're blind. Would you like me to open your eyes?" He walked right by him until Bartimaeus kept calling out. He walked through many crowds until someone stopped Him and asked. Why? Because when you ask, you're acknowledging your faith, and one, acknowledging, you're humbling yourself to recognize and acknowledge your need, number two, you're acknowledging His ability and willingness to set you free. Because God resists the proud, who refuse to acknowledge what they need, and those who refuse to believe that He can and wants to set them free. But He gives grace to the humble who are willing to say, "I need help, Lord, and I believe You can set me free." So we're going to recognize what are those ropes that are holding us, that held the donkeys. What are them that is keeping us from hosting His presence? What are them that is keeping us from putting on those garments of praise? Are we distracted by circumstances? Are we distracted by the words of people that pull us down? Are we distracted from the goodness

of God? So we need to rehearse His testimonies. When He sets us free, guess what? The Spirit of the Lord is upon us to preach the gospel to the poor in spirit, to heal the brokenhearted. Those wounded through prices, traumas, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, whatever area of captivity. You may make yourself held captive by past offenses, by things done to you. Recovery of sight to the blind, those who are unable to see spiritually, to recognize the goodness of God. You need the anointing to set us free. The Spirit of the Lord is upon us to do all these things. Okay, there are limitations with counseling. Counseling is not bad. But most methods and techniques of counseling just deal with the symptoms, not the root. It helps us to cope, to manage our symptoms, but only Jesus, the great physician, can deal with the root of the problem. Only He can heal hearts and mend hearts. And so He wants to set us free so that we can bring freedom to others, so that we can host His presence.

VI. The Temple: Becoming a House of Prayer

And in His presence, there is fullness of joy. In His presence, we are casting our cares upon Him. And so where did Jesus lead this donkey? He went straight to the... I don't know about straight, but He ended up in the temple. Who is the temple of God? You and I are the temple of God. And what was the problem? What did Jesus do? You all know the story, right? There's even paintings about this. I saw somewhere, I think it was in Cebu, there's this painting of Jesus overturning, one of the speakers showed the slide, of Jesus overturning the tables in the temple. And Jesus said, "You have turned my house. My house should be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." And I was reminded of many times prayer and lifting up hands are mentioned together. Lift up holy hands, lift up your hands in prayer. And yet, and that's why Psalm says, "What is God looking for? Clean hands and a pure heart." Clean hands is hands that are not doing what is not right. Okay, like a lack of integrity in business. But here's the thing, God's house is not a place of merchandise. It's a house, what's God's house meant to be? A house of prayer. So what kept them from praying? The love of the world, the cares, the deceitfulness of riches. "Hey, let's use God to bless ourselves. Let's take advantage. People are coming to worship God. Let's see how we can get money out of them." So they took advantage for themselves. Right now, there was, it was pretty good, you know, offering sacrifices, it was selling stuff. But God says, "My primary purpose for you and me is to be a house of prayer." We are the house of God. Because prayer is the foundation of our work with God. Prayer is the foundation of everything. What is prayer? Basically, it's fellowship, communion. Making it mindful that God's presence is with you. Okay, the donkey, I'm sure, I don't know whether the donkey forgot that he was carrying Jesus because I'm sure Jesus was very light. He wasn't a heavy burden. And so we need to remember that, not to use his blessing, don't let the blessing of God distract you from becoming a house of prayer. It's like, "I'm so blessed, I have no time to pray." "I'm so blessed, I'm so busy, I've got no time to serve God." There are two things, two extremes, many times, Christians fall guilty of. They either neglect their family because they're serving too much or their family

becomes a distraction from serving at all. And so we need to know the balance. Don't let the blessing of God keep us from being a people of prayer. Because without prayer, because what is prayer? Prayer really is the language of humility. You're saying, "God, I depend upon you, I need you." The person who is just not praying, they're saying, "I don't need you God, I can manage without you." So prayer is the language of humility, of dependence upon God. Why? Because it comes from recognizing that every good and perfect gift comes from Him. So when you recognize that God is the source of every good thing in your life, you want to praise and pray. When you think that you're the source, then why pray? It's like, it's your own hard work, you're getting the fruit of your own labors, why bring God into the picture? We've got to remember that everything good is by the grace of God. And so that should make us a people of prayer. And so God wants us to be, I mean, He could have said, "My house should be called a house of praise, a house of worship, a house of evangelism, a house of warfare, a house of many, many other things." And these things all occur, right? But the foundation of God's house for you and me is prayer. That's the first thing Adam and Eve did, you know that? What's the first thing they did with the Lord? They prayed. How did they pray? They walked together, communion, fellowship in the cool of the garden. That's why God is called the Word, because you can't fellowship without the Word, without speaking, without hearing. So one encourages, just as the donkey carried the presence of God, the presence of God cleansed the temple. God's presence will cleanse you and me. It will set us free from the things that are holding us back, that are binding us, those weights and snares that are holding us back, those cares and fears and worries, God wants to set us free. Then we in turn set others free. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. From fear, freedom from stress, freedom from worry, freedom from looking at yourself, putting yourself in God's hands. The fish and the loaves remained a small boy's lunch until it was put in the hands of Jesus. So without Him, we can do nothing. Someone said, "Without God, we can do nothing. Without us, God will do nothing. He'll find somebody else who will trust Him." So God has a purpose for each one of us. He sees us. Just as he saw Nathanael under the fig tree before Nathanael recognized Christ, the Lord saw the donkey before the donkey saw the disciples. God sees you where you're at, but He doesn't want to leave us that way. He sees the things that are tying us up. He wants us to be set free by His presence. He wants us to walk in the freedom of His presence, to be free from fear, to be free from unbelief, to stay thankful with all that He's done, with who He is, because faith attracts the favor of God. And if your focus is wrong, you can never walk in faith. You'll always be walking in fear. So don't make yourself a target for the enemy. The lion is seeking whom he may devour. The lion is looking for believers without peace, believers carrying their own burdens, believers full of stress. And that's why there are many believers who are defeated, because they've been overcome by their problems rather than humbling themselves and casting their cares to the Lord by putting on the garment of praise, by living in response to the goodness of God. And the goodness of God will change. And the more grateful we are, the more we want to please God. See, the kindness of God will lead us to repentance, Romans 2:4. So when you recognize that God is the source of kindness, of His goodness, it should

make us more, it should make us grateful, it should make us dependent, it should make us humble. Say, "God, I thank You." So your prayer is driven by gratitude, not just by need. Don't just pray every day because you want Him to do something. Come before Him and enter His gates with thanksgiving. "Lord, I come before you today because of who you are and what you've already done. And I recognize you're doing something. And I trust you that you're going to do what you said you will do. I trust your timing." So come to God with a heart of thanksgiving. Before prayer many times, praise is mentioned. "Rejoice always and then pray without ceasing." "Be anxious for nothing," Philippians 4, "but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." But you know why people don't thank much? Because they're anxious for lots of things. They can't be anxious and be thankful at the same time. "What pastor, you don't understand? A lot of things make me anxious." No, it's your focus. Don't focus on those things. Focus on what leads to thanksgiving, which is what God has already done for you. Focus on what He's doing. Focus on whatever happened, that it was not worse. Focus on His goodness, on His faithfulness. Focus on the testimonies, and you believe that every test will become a testimony. And whatever happens, the good news is He makes all things work together for the good of those who are called according to His purpose and love Him. Like the song we sang, He takes what the enemy meant for evil and He turns it for good, because we love Him and are called according to His purpose. So like donkeys, don't be proud of ourselves. Without Jesus, we're all donkeys. Without the Lord moving in our life, we're all stubborn, we're all bound. We're all just silly old foolish donkeys. We need to host His presence, and the favor of God will come. Not because of us, because we are carrying His presence. He will cleanse us, He will set us free, and we become a people of prayer again to establish that foundation for everything else. Because prayer is not just a one-way conversation, it's so that you can hear God speak to you too. He will speak to you in how to pray. And as you pray in the Spirit, many times you find yourself praying and understanding the things that the Holy Spirit wants you to pray. And it may be the interpretation of your tongue. So 1 Corinthians 14 Paul says, "Pray in the understanding, pray in the Spirit." Sing in the understanding, sing in the Spirit. The prayer language of the Holy Spirit is so powerful. When you come together, prophecy is more edifying, because everyone can understand the word of encouragement. But by yourself, pray much in the Spirit and in the understanding. Pray in tongues whatever you're doing. And then mix it, and then as you pray in tongues, you may find yourself praying things that you never thought about. The Holy Spirit may remind you of things, because the Holy Spirit is praying through you, the language of the Holy Spirit. And so sometimes it gives you the interpretation of what you're praying through you. So I want to encourage you to let your prayer come out of praise, and let the praise come out of gratitude for what he's done, that leads to faith for what you believe he will do. Amen.

VII. The Fickle Crowd and the Call to Faithfulness

So Hosanna to the son of David. People were praising him for his marvelous work. But here's the scary part. What happened five days later? Right? Palm Sunday. Everyone is

shouting, "Oh God, you're wonderful. All the mighty things you're doing." Five days later, what were the multitudes shouting? "We want Barabbas. Release the murderer. This day is after how wonderful you are God." And that's the deceitfulness of man's heart. It's so fickle, it can change just like that. So don't put your trust in man. The Lord God says, "The fear of man is a snare, it's a trap." Because people can change anytime, when they forget God in the picture. When they forget, when they lose the fear of God. And so we need to guard our hearts, not to judge anyone, but we need to guard ourselves, that we are consistent. That we are consistent. That we don't become a target of the enemy, but that we walk faithfully. You know, what do we want God to speak to us when we stand before him? "Well done, good and faithful." Not perfect and famous. Okay, it's not about how well we are known or how much we are known. It's about how faithful with whatever God gave you to do. Character and faithfulness. He who is faithful in a little, will be faithful in more. He who is faithful in another person's, will be faithful in his own. Right, so David had to be faithful in his father's sheep. Moses had to be faithful in his father-in-law's sheep. Everyone God used was faithful in the natural things for a long time. Even Jesus for 30 years was faithful in the natural things. Right, because at the end of the day, a son wants to be led by the father's will.

VIII. Knowing and Doing the Father's Will

And we are going to close with this one point. You know, when Jesus responded to those who stood before him and who said, "Lord, Lord," you should know this, "We have done many things in your name." And what did God say? He said, "Depart, I don't know you." Why? Because they did not do the father's will. Matthew 7 and Luke 13. And the question is, why didn't they do the father's will? Obviously, they thought they were doing the father's will because they said all the things they thought were the father's will. "God, we prophesied in your name, we cast out demons in your name," and then he says, "I never knew you." So they thought they were doing God's will. But why did Jesus say, "You weren't doing God's will"? How do you know the will of God in order to do it? You can't do what you don't know. The key to knowing the will of God so you can do it is, Romans 12:2, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you will be able to test and approve the perfect will of God." So you cannot know God's will without transformation, without growing in Christ-likeness. You cannot know the father's will unless you've learned to hear what the Spirit is saying. See, many people assume that their good ideas are God's will, like Cain. "God, I'm going to give you this best sheep, surely." I mean, "these vegetables. You know, I worked hard for you. You got to accept." God says, "No, that's not what I'm looking for. You know that I want what Abel brought. You can do the same thing." Martha said, "God, God, I'm going to prepare the best meal for you." You carry on teaching all those in the living room. "I'm busy in the kitchen." It was a good idea, but it wasn't God's will. And so there's nothing wrong with prophesying or miracles. God wants us to do that. That's part of our assignment. But the danger is when we replace growing in Christ-likeness and hearing His voice with our good works. Because the gifts and calling

are without repentance. Romans 11:29. All right? So if we want to know the will of God, we need to allow His word to change the way we think. When our minds are renewed and our hearts transformed, we will recognize His. We will be like, "My sheep hear my voice." We will hear His voice. We'll be led by His Spirit. We'll be led by His peace. We'll be led by His joy. Let the peace of God guard your heart. That's the best discernment. Somebody can sound perfect on the outside, but you don't have peace. You can think, "It makes sense. It makes sense, but I don't have peace." Trust the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will often lead you by His peace. We're called to wear shoes, the shoes of peace. Our walk is going to be a walk of peace. Because in peace there is wholeness.

Conclusion: Living Free and in Prayer

So to kind of conclude and summarize this morning, remember this. God wants us to be free. We need to be free to glorify Him, to host His presence and to set others free. And a free person is free from stress. A free person has cast his cares upon Him. A free person is walking in the favor of God. A free person is distracted by the goodness of God. That doesn't mean that your life is without problems. No, it just means that you're not distracted by them. Faith does not deny a problem, but denies the problem the right to rob your peace and joy. It robs the problem of its authority to rob your peace and joy. That's what faith is. I'm not saying, "No, no, I'm fine. Everything's fine." No, acknowledge your issue but you're still walking in the peace of His presence. You're still walking in the joy of His presence. Because you know that God will make it work for good because you love Him. Amen. Let's stand. Thank You, Jesus. God wants us to become a house of prayer. I want to encourage you to not just make, number one, you're not making time, make time. Don't just make your prayer life multitasking. "Oh, Pastor, I pray, but I only pray when I drive, when I clean, when I work." Can you imagine if that's the only time you spoke to your loved ones, when you're doing something and you happen to be near them? No. Just as we... When you value someone, you want quality time with them. You don't just talk to them when you're busy doing something else together with them. How much more does God want quality time with us? So make time. Make time and don't forget Him when you've made your time. In other words, "Okay, Pastor, I've done my 30 minutes, my one hour in the morning or my time at night, then I'm forgetting Him the rest of the day." The purpose of the quality time is to be aware, to stay mindful of His presence throughout the day. Not to think of it as a duty, you're done, wipe your hands, now you can act just like the world acts. Time with God, prayer is not meant to be a religious duty. It's simply living with the awareness of God's presence, of His goodness. And so when things happen, you pause and say, "Holy Spirit, how should I respond?" You no longer are driven by circumstances. You no longer live in a reactionary way. You're mindful of His presence and say, "Holy Spirit, how do I need to respond?" You're not sure? Say nothing, do nothing and wait till He speaks. Father, we just thank You, Lord, for Your word this morning. We thank You for giving us hope that you're not looking for perfect people, but those who are willing to be perfected, to be changed by You, in Your presence, by Your presence. And Lord, we

pray, Lord, that You would lead us into increasing freedom. That many times, sometimes we are in and out. There are days where we are full of faith and trust and joy, and other days that we are battling with fear and stress. Father, help us remember to cast our cares upon You daily, to live in response to Your goodness, Lord. We thank You, Lord, that in Your presence You change, You transform our character. You made a stubborn, a donkey known for stubbornness, yield to Your direction, to Your leading, to Your guidance. And we thank You, Lord, for giving us a mind of Christ. Apart from You, You said the wisdom of man is like foolishness to God. So, Lord, we need Your mind, Lord. We thank You, Holy Spirit, for transforming us, for setting us free, to host Your presence, Lord, that we walk in Your peace, that we'll be mindful of opportunities that You're bringing to us, to encourage others, to build up others, Lord, even to give out what we have received from You. So, we cast all our cares to You, and just encourage You this morning, if there's something that keeps You awake, You falling asleep, just say, "Lord, I give this care to You, and I receive Your care." Make that exchange. Say, "Lord Jesus, I cast this care," and tell Him what Your care is. And You can confess, "I let not my heart be troubled. I receive Your peace, Jesus. You are my Jehovah Shalom." So, thank You, Jesus, for being our peace, for receiving our cares, for protecting us from the lion that seeks to devour, that he'll find nothing in us. We thank You, Jesus, for Your grace. We thank You for Your mercy. We thank You for setting us free, that we walk in that freedom and bring freedom to many. That Your kingdom come, Your will be done, Father. Father, may Your blessings and keep us, make Your face shine upon us and be gracious to us, and You lift up Your countenance upon us and give us Your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.