

## “A Taste of Transcendence”

### *Who Needs the Past?, Pt. 3*

We are spending the rest of the summer discovering ancient solutions to modern problems through what has for 3,000 years been the prayer book of God’s people, the Psalms. We’re not looking at all of them – that would take three years if I did one per Sunday. But we are cherry picking some that I think show us how much the wisdom of the past – when handled correctly – can lead to a flourishing life in the present.

We are very confused right now as a society about what to keep and what to reject from our ancestors. We are in a transitioning age – it’s a very interesting and exciting time to be alive. Of course some of you are saying, “Yes, and a roller coaster is interesting and exciting as well, but I’d prefer not to *live* on one.” Fair enough, but none of us get to pick when we get to live. However, we can all pick *how* we will live. And I believe the Psalms can help us to live well.

Now, every interesting age gets a name – the Classical Age, the Medieval Age, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution. We’re now living in the Post-Modern Age. I’m sure future historians will give us a sexier name – I mean nothing stays “post” anything forever. Eventually we’ll be defined by more than what we are *against*. And what we are against at the moment are the excesses and failures of “modernity”. The ideas that emerged from the 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment of the Western world.

Now, this is a mixed bag. The contemporary public protests are taking to the streets to object to racial ideas that emerged from the Age of Enlightenment – and I think they deserve to be objected to. But here’s the tricky part, the very idea of “public protests” emerged from that *same* Age of Enlightenment. And this is what makes things especially tense in America because our very nation – for better and for worse – is a *product* of that great Enlightenment experiment.

So when we tear down a statue of Thomas Jefferson – and I’m not saying we should or we shouldn’t - but we are tearing down the guy who is largely responsible for *both* of those things. What do we keep and what do we reject? Tricky, tricky. But I think the Bible – as a book God intended to apply equally to every culture in every time – can give us some wisdom.

Now, today, I want to talk about the idea of transcendence. The simple dictionary definition is “existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level.” One of the great sins of our Enlightenment heritage is that science and technology, have tried to reduce everything to commodity; tried to explain and reduce everything down to natural causes and natural components. The only thing that matters is what can be dissected and weighed. So we know you have a body because we can cut on it, but no one can weigh a soul – even though they tried. Therefore, you have a brain...but maybe not a mind. You have a body...but probably not a spirit.

There is a billboard across the street from the church that has been up for a month or two and I absolutely hate it. I see it every day on my drive home and it galls me. I took a picture of it for you. It's for a medical insurance company, so it's already of the devil - sorry if that's your industry, but many of you work for the devil. It's a picture of a newborn baby and it reads, "Proud to serve the most advanced machine on earth."

That's what the modern age thinks you are, a machine. That's how your company views you. That's how your government views you. It's how advertisers view you. It's certainly how your insurance views you. Do you like being a machine? Even an "advanced" machine? Think back to the most advanced machine you bought in 2005 – remember how happy it made you? Where is it now? It's either in the attic or at Goodwill or in the landfill.

I've been reading some essays recently by the farmer philosopher and poet, Wendell Berry. He has written on this very idea of creatures as machines. Listen to what he says, "Anyone who thinks that the scientific reduction of creatures to machines is merely an issue to be pondered by academic intellectuals is in need of a second thought. I suppose that there are no religious implications in this reductionism: **for if you think creatures are machines, you have no religion.** For artists who did not think of themselves as machines, there is one artistic implication: don't be mechanical." (*Life is a Miracle*, 165)

He's right, if you are just a machine, there is no religion. Because religion is about transcendence. Listen to me carefully. You are *not* a machine. God created you in His own image. Not from a set of blueprints on an assembly line. And God created you to know Him. Do you know what transcendence is? Let's go beyond the dictionary. Transcendence is intimacy with the infinite.

And this morning's psalm – Psalm 63 - tells us about the irreplaceable knowledge that we need to be connected to the infinite. All of humanity share a thirst for transcendence that cannot go away, and that this psalm says is fundamental to the human heart, has its only resolution right here. It's a "dry and weary land" that calls babies machines. Let's find the water.

Now, I decided this week that I have made a mistake thus far in the series. I've been reading the text to you, but psalms are meant to be corporate and they are meant to be vocal. At the ball game, we don't all read the lyrics to the national anthem, we sing it together. So we're going to start reading the weekly psalm all together. So even if you are at home watching, I want to you say this out loud with all of us here in the auditorium...

## Psalm 63

*1 O God, you are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you,  
my body longs for you,  
in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.*

*2 I have seen you in the sanctuary  
and beheld your power and your glory.*

*3 Because your love is better than life,  
my lips will glorify you.*

*4 I will praise you as long as I live,  
and in your name I will lift up my hands.*

*5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;  
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.*

*6 On my bed I remember you;  
I think of you through the watches of the night.*

*7 Because you are my help,  
I sing in the shadow of your wings.*

*8 My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.*

*9 They who seek my life will be destroyed;  
they will go down to the depths of the earth.*

*10 They will be given over to the sword  
and become food for jackals.*

*11 But the king will rejoice in God;  
all who swear by God's name will praise him,  
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.*

There is a thirst in the human heart for transcendence that will not be denied. It *cannot* be denied. And this Psalm tells us there's only one resolution for it. So let's take a look and I'll just break down the message of Psalm 63 into two parts. First it tells us *that* the human heart needs transcendence. Secondly it tells us *how* the human heart can find transcendence. That it needs it. How it finds it. This is an extremely important biblical teaching.

**First, the human heart needs transcendence.** It *needs* to be connected to something greater than itself. It *needs* intimacy with the infinite. It says right here in v. 1, "*O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*" Now when the psalmist says, "my soul thirsts" and "my body longs" that's a typical Hebrew redundancy, which is trying to say, "My entire being cries out for connection to God."

The psalmist is *not* saying, "Well it's hard for me to account for reality unless there *is* a God." He's not saying, "I need a God hypothesis to account for what I see out there." This is not a matter of reasoning! He is saying, and this is the best way to put it, "I find in myself a need for transcendence as primal and as elemental in my *spiritual* being as my *physical* body has a primal and elemental need for water in a desert." He says, "My soul *needs* transcendence like my body needs water." It is as deep a drive as that.

I don't know if any of you have ever been in a situation where you really were deprived of water for a long time. Do you know what actually happens? It's just like this. Your soul *and* your body cry out. Psychologically and physically, you go crazy. Psychologically, you start to see water everywhere. You have mirages. You have hallucinations. You see it where it's not. You find it everywhere...even though it's not there.

And your body goes crazy even when it gets near even a little bit of moisture. Even just grubs...you'll start to grab hold of horrible things you would never think of putting in your mouth, but now you almost *have* to. And the psalmist is saying the human need for a connection with the infinite, for that which is beyond the natural, beyond the physical...the human thirst for transcendence is that irreducible.

Now, we're calling this series "Who Needs the Past?" as a critical reflection on what to keep and what to reject from our history. A near universal trend in the early part of the twentieth century, most of societies experts – science, philosophy, humanities, all of them - said in a country or a culture in which science would advance and technology would advance, religion will diminish, religion will erode.

This was the dominant view of the last century. In 1955, *Life* magazine put out a very important series of special editions called *The World's Great Religions* – six different issues, East and West. They compiled them together into a book – I'll still come across it at Half-Price Books every so often. It was very popular. But the idea behind it was sort of presented like visiting the zoo of religion. "Look at these endangered species, see them before they disappear!"

And the reason they gave was because when human beings see nature as being kind of overwhelming and uncontrollable, then they need God; but as science whittles nature down to size, as science takes us and shows us nature isn't as mysterious as we thought, that nature isn't as uncontrollable and as overwhelming as we thought...When all *that* happens, then there will be less and less of a need for God.

You may need Zeus on a mountain to explain the scary thunder, *until* you understand meteorology. So all the experts predicted there wouldn't be much of a need for religion and religion would diminish in those countries and those societies that managed to advance. Now, do you see the hidden assumption in the heart of that so-called "objective" and "rational" prediction? The assumption is the thirst for transcendence is really a kind of primitive response to helplessness.

As long as human beings feel helpless, as long as they don't understand their surroundings, they will need God; but as soon as they come to understand their surroundings...they understand what lightning is, they understand what thunder is, they understand how the physical body works...they won't need God. That was the assumption.

And here's what's so amazing. To the absolute horror and shock of all kinds of experts, the opposite has happened. The *more* we've explained things, the *more* technological we have become, the *more* scientific we've become, and the *more* we have tried to say we can explain *everything* by natural causes...

Instead of that thirst for transcendence going out, it has been aggravated. It has gotten stronger. There's not an anthropologist, psychologist, sociologist who would disagree with me today. Oh sure, "establishment western Christianity" is in decline in Europe and many parts of the US – it's booming in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world, I can tell you - but spirituality in general is exploding on a global scale. Even here, I meet so many educated people who are "spiritual but not religious" – that's about transcendence.

In fact, Austin is a perfect example of the tension. We are home to the 10<sup>th</sup> ranked University for the publication of scientific research *in the world!* Don't slouch Aggies, you're 38<sup>th</sup>. But here we are, a city in which science should have reduced spirituality. And yet, look around, the belief in reincarnation, the reintroduction of witchcraft, of paganism, of astral projection, tarot readings, of all sorts of pantheistic meditation, of astrology, of spirit channeling? Everybody said, "That will just die out." It's growing as fast as possible.

The experts said the reason there's a thirst for transcendence was simply because human beings couldn't control their environment. But you see the *more* we control our environment, the more we're told there really *isn't* anything beyond the physical. There really *isn't* anything beyond the natural. The more we find in ourselves an irreducible knowledge that reality is awesomely vast and that there's a dimension beyond the natural...It's amazing.

And here's an irony, listen, *Life Magazine* doesn't exist anymore. Those six religions they profiled in 1955? Booming all around the world. Even more ironic, there have been a lot of churches in this country that bought into what they said in that Life magazine series.

They were saying modern human beings don't have the same thirst for transcendence anymore, so we need to sort of strip ourselves of all the supernatural elements to Christianity. So the Bible is a nice book, but it's not the authoritative Word of God through the prophetic authors. And Jesus was a very, very good man - great man – but he was *just* a man. He's certainly not the preexistent second person of the Trinity born of a virgin and physically resurrected from the dead.

And being a Christian means to be a very good person living a life of justice and compassion, but being a Christian doesn't mean you're miraculously born again through some kind of mysterious and wonderful conversion experience. Oh no! Nobody would buy that anymore, they said. So let's get rid of all that kind of talk. Do you know what the irony is?

Today, the churches that are dying are the ones that decided people just wouldn't buy that anymore. *They're* the ones that are dying. They're the ones that are empty. Such is the thirst for transcendence; there is a primal elemental need for connection with the infinite in the human heart, as primal, as elemental, as the body's need for water in a desert. You can argue all you want about whether God exists or not. That's not the point of this psalm. That's not the point of this sermon.

I'm not trying to talk about whether God exists or not. I'm trying to say there is no way we can get rid of the human drive for God. And whenever people think they've understood why we had that great thirst for transcendence, we find there's no way it can be eradicated. The Bible actually says the reason for it is because you were *built* for God; by God for God. So the first thing we learn here - it's a critical thing - is the heart needs transcendence. You can't live without transcendence. Some of you are dying on the vine for lack of it. So the text shows us that the human heart need transcendence.

**But secondly it tells us how the human heart finds transcendence.** Let me, before I tell you what the passage tells us - it gives us three principles for how to find and experience the transcendence of God – but let me give a word of warning. Some of you are saying, “Well, I'm a Christian. I have faith in Christ. I've received Christ as Savior, so I *have* a relationship with the transcendent God.” That doesn't necessarily mean you really are experiencing the transcendence of God as the human heart needs it. A lot of Christians have their little doctrines. You know, “I believe my doctrine and I have my doctrine all in order, and there it is.”

Great. And then you have your morality. “I have all of these things I do and this is my biblical Christian lifestyle and I do it.” Fine, but do you have transcendence? Have you experienced the transcendence of God? Does your soul cling to Him? Do you *see* His power and glory? Do you experience His love? Or do you just have a smug little evangelicalism? “Here’s my ‘born again’ certificate. I know I’m a Christian because five years ago I went forward and I did this, and now I have my doctrine straight and I have my morality straight.” Do you *know* Him? Your heart can’t live without Him. It can’t.

It’s one thing to know honey is sweet, but it’s another thing to taste it on your tongue! So how do we get a taste of transcendence? Well there are three things here, we’re told. I’ll just go through them fairly briefly. Here are the three principles. And they’re very important. If you want to experience the transcendence of God in your life, you must understand these three principles.

First of all, you have to make knowing the transcendent God an end in itself. It has to be your highest priority. You’ll never *have* the transcendence, you’ll never experience the transcendence of God, if it’s a means to an end. It must be an end in itself. Where do I see that? David says, **v.3**, “... *your love is better than life* ...” and that is a *remarkable* statement at anytime, but especially under these circumstances.

What are the circumstances? Well, if you read this in your Bibles you will notice that very often there are headings at the top of the psalms – kind of introductions. At the top of Psalm 63 it says, “A psalm of David, when he was in the desert of Judah.” Do you know when he was in the desert? His son Absalom was trying to take the kingship. His son had rebelled and raised an army. His son was trying to *kill* him to get the kingship. And so David fled into the desert.

His life was at stake, so David comes to God, and he begins to pray. And what does he say? He doesn’t say the expected. He doesn’t say, “O Lord, I need strength so my life can be saved. I want you to give me a safe life. O Lord, I’ve done my duty. I’ve been a good king. I’ve done many, many things. Now I have this request. Give me my life! Save my life!” He doesn’t say that. He says, “Show me your love because your love is better than life.” Do you see what’s going on here? It’s profound.

I recently read an article from the Mayo Clinic – it’s headline caught my eye – something like “Building Your Spiritual Life During the Pandemic” – and they had different practices and one of them was do something for other people. And they used the example of Mother Theresa, you know lived in a slum but cared for the unwanted orphans.

The conclusion was “Nothing will make you feel more spiritual than if you do a selfless deed of goodness to other people.” And I was thinking, “What’s wrong with this picture? How could this be a selfless deed if the reason you’re doing it is so you *feel* spiritual?” I don’t think Mother Teresa moved to Calcutta to “feel spiritual”.

I’ll tell you something. People are continually coming to church...people are continually coming to Christianity saying, “My life is falling apart. I need strength. My career is falling down. My relationships are falling apart. Things are difficult. I need an experience of God, so I can have the life I want.” David doesn’t do that. David says, “When I have your love, I have my life. Your love is *better* than life. Your love gives me all the life I want. I have all the honor I want. I have all the safety I want when I know your love. Lord, I just want to *see* your power and glory. I want to *experience* your presence. I want to know your love.”

That’s pretty frightening, because I think if we take a look deep in our hearts, we’ll see there’s a great tendency for us to say, “I would like to experience God, *so that*...I’ll be the person I want to be, so that I’ll have the life I want to have.” David says, “No. No. Thy steadfast love is better than life.”

You will never know the transcendence of God, you will never experience intimacy with the infinite unless you’re first willing to say, “You are an end in yourself. Knowing your love and serving you and pleasing you is my *highest* goal.”

It’s normal for people, regardless of what they believe, when they get in crisis to pray. Do you know what you usually say when you pray because of a crisis? You say, “God, if you’re there, I’ll do *anything* if you’ll just answer this prayer.” Most all of us in this room have done that at some time or another; said something like that. Maybe we were very young at the time, but it’s there. “God, if you’re there. I will do anything if you could answer this prayer.”

And the irony is you’re not giving God the one thing He asks. What is the one thing God asks? He says, “I want you to come to me and love me and serve me because of who I am, unconditionally, regardless of whether I answer this prayer or not.” You know the irony of the whole thing, the paradox and the glory and the irony of the Christian life, is when you get to the end of this psalm, and you see David has all kind of strength. He’s ready for a fight. He’s ready to take on the enemy.



Notice the last verse, **v.11**, “*But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God’s name will praise him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.*” When I pray to God, I don’t say, “The pastor will rejoice...Oh Lord, the Rev. Dr. Scoma praises you...” What’s *that* about? One commentator says this shows David experiencing “a reassertion of his calling.” You can just hear him, “Dang it, God anointed *me* as king, not my son.”

He has the confidence. He has everything he wants because he didn’t *start* asking for that. He said, “I just want to see your power and glory the way I used to back in the temple. Your love is better than life. It *is* life.” That’s the first principle, and a profound one. The first thing is you have to understand God cannot be a means to an end. He *is* the end. Knowing his transcendence must be an end in itself.

The second principle is you have to realize that in Christ the transcendence of God, - the experience of the transcendent power, glory and love of God - is your right. Now look. David doesn’t start out saying, “O God, wherever you are ... O God, if you’re there. O great and powerful God, I know I’m not worthy of you listening to me; but if you could just find it in your heart to carve out a few seconds for me...” He doesn’t say that. He says, **v.1**, “*O God, you are my God...*” and everything else in the entire psalm is predicated on that.

He says, “Because you are *my* God, I would like to see your power and glory and love, please.” Do you know how he’s acting? He’s acting like a son. Sons don’t say, “Do I have a right to ask my father for something?” They just come right in. I happen to know. They never question it. Why? They just *know* it.

See the only persons you call “my”...think of how nuanced that is. I don’t even really use it in marriage, “This is my Deanna”, will raise some eyebrows. Roger Thomson is our youth pastor – what if I introduced him to some minister colleagues as, “Gentlemen, this is my Roger.” What’s that now? But my son...“Hey guys, this is my Ari. This is my boy.” And he can say, “My Daddy.”

But have you thought about why we tend to express intimacy between a father and a son with a possessive pronoun? And yes, it works equally for mother and daughter, I’m just sticking with masculine because of the nature of the Psalm. But think about it, Ari can claim, “My daddy” because I’m not my own anymore. You know it’s wonderful to have a child, but as soon as you have a child, you’ve lost your independence. I’m his. My time is his. I have an obligation to him. He has to lean on my life. He has to lean on my time. He has to lean on my resources!

The only way a greater party can enter into an intimate relationship with a lesser party is at a cost to the greater party. And that's exactly what the gospel tells you. How is it that in the Bible we're able to call God, "my God?" Think of any other non-Judeo-Christian religion, it wouldn't work. The Buddhist doesn't look at the All Soul and say, "This is *my* universal force, *my* All Soul." No. Can you imagine a Muslim saying, "My Allah?" It would never work. Allah is not somebody who makes himself obligated to anybody.

Yet when Jesus Christ died on the cross for us, and when we receive him as Savior, the Bible says - this is the amazing thing - the gospel says - this is the staggering thing - when you receive Christ, his righteousness is transferred to your account. You have the cosmic right to lean on his resources.

And that's why, when God looks at you, He sees no stain on you. He only sees something holy. And that means God is obligated. He says, "I am obligated to give you all the honor and all the welcome and all the love I would give to my perfect Son, Jesus Christ. I am yours! You have claims on me. You have a *right* to my love. You have a right to my heart." Just like my little boy has. David walks in the front door, "God, you are *my* God, that's why I want this transcendence."

Now let me tell you something. There are a lot of people who are religious but who think that's scandalous of me to say. That's insolent, even. They would say, "What are you talking about you have a *right* to the transcendence of God? Of course not! You try your best to live a holy life and *then* you can come to God, but the audacity to claim a demand on God's presence..." You may think that's impertinent. Let me just tell you something. You don't yet get Christianity. You may be religious, but you're not a practicing Christian. I know this sounds harsh.

If you don't understand that in Christ you have a *right* to the power and glory and love of God, you have yet to understand the gospel. You may have a religion of reverence but not transcendence. A religion of obedience, but you still will *never* receive what David asks for until you know that because Jesus died for you and you've received Jesus Christ, He is *your* God, "My God." We sing it in worship. Do you understand it? Do you take hold of that? If you can't it's because you're coming in your own name saying, "Hi God, it's me Margaret. I'm a pretty good person. I've lived a pretty good life. God, would you maybe do something for me?"

See you know better than to say, “You’re my God.” You don’t feel like you have that right. You don’t feel like you, in a sense, possess God. This actually tells you this God can be *your* God. So the second principle is you’ll never experience the transcendence of God unless you see it’s your right through Christ. You have a *right* to it. You won’t experience the transcendence unless you make it your first priority and you will not experience the transcendence unless you see it’s your right in Jesus Christ.

But thirdly, you will not experience the transcendence of God unless you meditate on your bed. Now what I mean by that is there’s a discipline here that David is practicing that many of us - though we may have principles one and two down - we don’t have principle three down, and our life is pretty much a spiritual desert. I hope, Christian friends, you listen to this carefully.

When David says, (v.6) “*On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.*” That second word “think” is usually translated from the Hebrew as “meditate.” It’s the word meditate. A lot of Christians say, “Well, I have my quiet time. I study the Bible so I learn my doctrine and I pray and I ask God for things.” Friends, that’s not meditation. That’s not your soul clinging to God. That’s not seeing His power and glory.

Meditation *starts* with Bible study - because it takes truths from the Bible - and it *ends* in prayer - because it propels you into prayer - but it’s really neither and yet it’s both. And until you understand the discipline of it, you are not going to experience the transcendence of God. What is it? Well, Jesus on the night of his arrest taught his disciples about “abiding in the vine”. It’s probably my life verse. **John 15:5**, “*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*”

Meditation is the discipline of “remaining”. Let me illustrate it like this; the difference between meditation, and Bible study and prayer, is the difference between being a tree branch and being a Tesla. Tesla is coming to Austin, so I have decided to begin to use their products in my sermons in hopes of corporate sponsorship! Both the branch and the Tesla have a power source – something that sustains their life. So you plug the Tesla into the power outlet, but most of the time it’s out running around on it’s own battery. And when the battery gets low, you pop into Whole Foods and hog the good parking spots to recharge. And then off you go.

Ah, but a branch cannot for one minute disconnect from its power supply. The instant the life giving sap ceases to flow through the branch, it becomes a stick. And sticks make good firewood. So Jesus says, **(John 15:6)** “*If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.*” And I don’t think that means “hell”, but I do think it means “a dry and weary land”. No water. A life void of transcendence.

And meditation is the act of remaining. Meditation is taking the truths of the Bible and thinking about them, dwelling on them, insisting that you think and act and feel through those truths. “I’m a son of the King. Am I living that way? Jesus did this for me. Do I understand that? Do I realize that? Look at what Jesus did on the cross. Am I drawing on the resources he placed at my disposal?” *That’s* meditation. It’s talking to yourself and it’s looking at God *through* these truths. Do you know how to do that? If you do it, it’s taking these truths and screwing them down into your heart until they catch fire, until your heart starts to melt with them. And then you begin to experience the transcendence of God.

To mediate is to remain, and **John 15:7**, “*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*”

Talk about transcendence! Whatever you wish? But what if you wish wrong? Do you remember the classic episode of *The Twilight Zone* about the six-year old boy named Anthony who got anything he wished for? He was a monster. He held the town in sheer terror. Believe me, you don’t want Anthony to get everything he wishes for!

But that’s only because Anthony gets disconnected from the life source. If I *remain* in Christ. If I *meditate* on the “law of the Lord” – from last week’s Psalm – if I meditate on the gospel. If the life of Christ is really my life, then I *can’t* wish wrong, because it’s Christ in me, not me myself. And when I am in Christ and he in me, I experience an intimacy with the infinite. Transcendence.

It means his reality begins to press on you. It means the truths you’re thinking about start to become vivid and real to you. Do you know what I’m talking about at all? If you don’t, you haven’t really ever experienced transcendence. The transcendence of God, which your heart needs above everything else. Paul says in **Colossians 3:2-3**, “*Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*” “But Anthony, I haven’t died, I’m not dead!” I know, and that’s the problem.

“Man, this is deep.” Of course. This isn’t “four steps to improve your career” – a TED talk can do that. This isn’t “six ways to save your marriage” – go see a counselor. Listen, does the Bible have practical applications for living a flourishing life? Of course it does. But that’s the after-thought. That’s the icing, not the cake. God is offering you so much more than even cake. You’re not a machine. You are a radiant soul that mirrors the very image of God. Now take *that* to work! Take *that* into your marriage!

Let me conclude this way. If there’s anybody here who’s very skeptical about all this. You say, “Hey, I’m a modern person. I don’t believe in the miraculous. I don’t believe Jesus was raised from the dead. I don’t believe that sort of thing.” There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. I hope you can look at your own heart and see your own *soul* thirsts for this transcendence. I hope you’ll face the facts that the human heart is built that way, and you are no different than other people. Where are you from, Mars? You’re not. You’re a human being, and you need the very same thing. Seek it.

And Christian friends, let me just tell you. You have friends around you who are hurting. You have a city around you that’s hurting. Do you know what the people around you need more than anything else?

They need for you to know God. There’s this interesting prophesy in **Zechariah 8:23**, “*This is what the Lord Almighty says: “In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard **that God is with you.**’”*

Do you know what that’s saying? Do you want to help people? Do you want to spread the gospel? Do you want to reach out and help the people around you? Do you know what the people around you need more than anything else? They need for you to have the radiance...they need for you to have the calmness...they need for you to have the greatness that comes if you know God. They need for you to experience the transcendence of God. That’s the best thing you can do for anybody around you. That’s what your children need from you. That’s what your parents need from you. That’s what your friends need from you.

Go to the sanctuary. Look on God’s power and glory. Mediate on the gospel from your bed – first thing in the morning until last thing at night. Remain in the vine. Until you too can sing, “My soul is satisfied with the richest of foods, and with singing lips my mouth will praise you.”

Let’s pray...