

## ANNOUNCEMENTS / INTRO:

One of the things we often talk about is the really beautiful metaphor of family that, all-over, Scripture gives for the church. Jesus Himself, for example, in His Lord's Prayer, instructed us to see God as our "**Father.**" The NT often refers to our salvation as "**adoption**" into God's family. Christ-followers/you and me are referred to as "**brothers and sisters**" in Christ. Not to mention, as those created in the image of God we're hardwired to live in community. WHICH IS WHY, honestly, the church isn't LIKE a family. It IS a family... And ya know, in any family, the mark of health and success is of course, not how big or small it is, or how many activities it's got going on, but that there's a kind of culture of "belongship" about it. And no that's not a real word, but what I MEAN by it, is that those OUTSIDE the family are always invited to belong WITH the family; while those INSIDE it/BECAUSE they belong take ownership FOR the family! Everyone participating! BECAUSE when that happens, everyone is blessed. As Jesus said in **John 13:35**, those who are in the family are blessed by being being loved and cared for, while those outside of it, get a life-transforming taste of what it's like to be a part of God's family, through faith in Christ.

So I share that off-the-top here, for two reasons: **One**, because as you've seen these last few weeks since we re-booted in-person Sunday Gatherings, we really want THIS time reflect what it looks like for an expression of God's family to gather together. In other words, we want it NOT to have a concert or programmatic feel, but a kind of back-yard family-reunion feel, in which we're ALL contributing; eating together, singing, discussing, different people reading Scripture, praying, setting up beforehand/all of it... And I'll tell ya, that's gonna be ESPECIALLY true as we move through the summer and into fall, when God-willing, we'll be able to **re-launch** these gatherings with some fun, new elements, which I'll talk more in the future. But for now I would just ask that you to be praying: **About how YOU can own the health and growth of this church family! How YOU can move from being a consumer to a real believer, especially in these Sunday Gatherings? Would be pray about that?**

But **Two**, I mention it because TODAY we're talking about what it looks like to center our lives on God/a huge part of which of course is commitment to God's church. But in his devotional on the Psalms, Tim Keller says this/listen: "*There are various forms of foolishness... But the ultimate foolishness is to make anything the center of your life besides God. That will always lead, he says, to disappointment and breakdown. As Jesus said, the 'foolish man' is the one whose home is built on sand instead of the solid rock of God.*"<sup>1</sup> Understanding that our lives are always centered on something, it behoves us to know how to let that something be God... So follow along as we continue our series and hear the reading of God's word... **Whitney > 1 Kings 8.12-21...**

## TEXT:

Thanks **Whitney**... So what you have here is a prayer by King Solomon, that acts as a kind of commencement address he delivered at the dedication of the Temple he built. You recall 2 weeks

<sup>1</sup> "The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotionals In The Psalms" - Tim Keller, p.7

ago in **2 Samuel**, we saw the kingdom of Israel in it's infancy with David rising to prominence after defeating of Goliath. Well, if you read the rest of 2 Samuel before **1 Kings** here, you see David had a kind of peak-and-valley life. Had this big moment with Goliath, making him a national hero (so...peak). But then shortly thereafter, because King Saul was an egomaniac and got jealous at the attention David was getting, David was forced to live on the run, as Saul essentially took out a state-sponsored hit on him (so...valley)...And David lived on the run until Saul died and he was able to be anointed as King (peak)<sup>2</sup>...So in many respects, David's life, though not without SERIOUS sin, was nevertheless lived in real gratitude toward God for getting him through all the peaks and valleys. That's why David's the author of so many Psalms. And as a part of that gratitude David set in his heart to build God a temple. Because you see, one of the great truths in the Christian life is this: ***The more you see how much God has done for you, the more you want to do for Him.*** We don't do things for God in order to GET Him to do things for us. We do things for God BECAUSE of all He's done for us...And so David wanted to build God a temple where God could consistently meet with His people. BUT for a variety of reasons God told David, "*thanks but no thanks.*" Rather, He wanted David's son Solomon to build it.

And so in **1 Kings 8**, King Solomon has built this MAGNIFICENT temple, much of it layered in gold. **1 Kings** actually tells us that Solomon used more than 4000 tons of gold AND 40,000 tons of silver, which today would be a building cost of...\$160 trillion...in 1 building!<sup>3</sup> This thing was magnificent. And it was intended to be since the Temple, again, was to be THE place where God connected with His people until the Messiah came. So needless to say, a commencement address for it is more than appropriate!...Now all of us've heard commencement addresses right? Highschool/College. Someone gives you a few nuggets of "wisdom" on which to center your life? Well Solomon's address here is no different EXCEPT that his challenge is for Israel to center their lives NOT on some arbitrary nugget of wisdom, but on God, AS God's revealed Himself...So let's look at the 4 things this address tells us God has revealed about Himself, and on which we're to build our lives! 4 things.

**First**, you see that God is **Mysterious**: **v.12** Solomon says, "*The LORD has said that He would dwell in thick darkness.*" Stop there. That's a reference to how God connected with His people, specifically Moses, on Mt. Sinai, when He gave His 10 Commandments. Specifically, **Exodus 20:21** says, "*The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.*" And if you know the story you know between Moses being up on the mountain alone for days, and the people anxiously awaiting his return below, and God speaking out of the darkness, the whole thing was a picture of God's grandeur. That He's, in a sense bigger, greater and more incomprehensible than we can possibly imagine. And in that way, **mysterious**...You think about God creating the world. **Isaiah 40:12** says that God "*measures the oceans in the palm of his hand.*" Think about that! Scientists tell us that the earth contains about 333 million cubic miles of water/give or take a cubic mile. Just one cubic mile would be the size of a box that's almost 15

<sup>2</sup> Context of David's life adapted from "Patience//1 Samuel 24:1-12; Psalm 57//Search for a King, #6" - J.D. Greear

<sup>3</sup> Facts about temple from various sources cited in "Solomon's Knowledge of God" //1Kings8//TheManWho Had It All #3" - J.D. Greear

football fields long, 15 wide and 15 deep. Just one much less 333 million.<sup>4</sup> And we're told, not only is God big enough to create all that, but He holds it all in the palm of His hand. He's so enormous it's incomprehensible/mysterious.

And you know, one application for us in light of that is to realize that centering our lives on a God like this, means learning to become comfortable with tension. Because this is a God, who you understand, will be about and do things that you and I just don't always understand. I mean with the exception of maybe my wife's phone number, I'm not sure I could actually recall for you a single phone number if it's not already plugged into my phone. So to think that with capacities as limited as mine/and as limited as yours, that we should expect to understand everything about God BEFORE we trust and obey Him...is ridiculous. As John Piper says, "*at any given moment God is doing like 10k things in your life and you're aware of about 3 of em.*"<sup>5</sup> To center your life on God, by definition, requires that you surrender your need to understand everything before you trust and obey Him. ***Where do you need to surrender that need to know***, or as ***Proverbs 3:5-6*** says, *Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding...and God will make your paths straight?*" ...God is **Mysterious!**

**Second**, He's, as J.D. Greear says, **Narrowly-Accessible**: You notice in **vv.17-19**, Solomon makes a contrast. He's just said that God is mysterious and dwells in "*thick darkness*," BUT that He's also willing to dwell in "*a house built for His name*" - even pleased to do so. And what he's saying is, while God is, by nature, beyond our comprehension, that doesn't mean that we CAN'T comprehend anything about Him. We CAN precisely because He's revealed Himself to us/been pleased to dwell with us. This is why the contemporary argument that there's many paths to God and none of us could ever claim to know absolute truth about God, but we can all have "our truth" about God...is frankly...garbage. Cuz among other reasons, who would you ever approach like that? Like would you ever get on an airplane and be comforted to find out that the pilot loves flying, loves the ability to soar in sky and serve passengers by getting em where they wanna go, "*but ya know, everyone has their own way of flying. If you wanna using landing gear, use it; if you don't, it's your truth - you do you!*"...Uh...We know approaching people and things that way is ridiculous. WHY would we do it with God?... We can know about God precisely because He's revealed Himself and been pleased to dwell with us.

But here's the thing: If God really is mysterious, BUT has made Himself accessible in a specific place and way, it follows then that the only way to really know Him is to seek him at the place and in the way He's designated!<sup>6</sup> For Israel that was the Temple. It's why their whole life as a nation revolved around it. For you and me though, that place is Jesus' church! And by church I don't mean a specific building; I mean "the body/family of Christ"<sup>7</sup>...If you're gonna center your life on God and experience the blessing of God, you HAVE to be committed to the church.

<sup>4</sup> Fact from *Indescribable: 100 Devotions About God and Science* by Louie Giglio, p.82

<sup>5</sup> Quote cited in "Solomon's Knowledge of God" //1Kings8//TheManWho Had It All #3" - J.D. Greear

<sup>6</sup> Insight about seeking God adapted from "Solomon's Knowledge of God" //1Kings8//TheManWho Had It All #3" - J.D. Greear

<sup>7</sup> Specifically Eph. 1:23

And I know I'm kinda speaking to the choir here, cuz you're here, but the reality is, we can ALL/ even me/too easily have too casual of a relationship to the church... **Ephesians 5** calls the church "*the bride of Christ.*" You know what that means? That means Jesus sees the church as His beloved/the one for whom He was literally willing to die! So how can we expect Jesus to bless us when we're so casual and non-committal with His bride? It's like someone coming to me and saying, "*Pastor Charlie I love you/love spending time with you. Just appreciate how much you add to my life...But your wife? I'm just not a big fan.*" Now to be clear, that has never happened. If anything it's the reverse. - But if someone WERE to do that, I can tell you, we're not gonna be close... Why do we think we can be close to Jesus when we're so casual and noncommittal with His bride? When we engage with the church, in all it's spaces: Sunday's, Missional Family Meetings, DNA Groups through this lens of convenience, comfort, or preference, rather than generous and sacrificial commitment?... Because God is **narrowly-accessible**, centering your life on Him means, at least in large part, centering your life around the life of His church. **What would it look like for you to do that?** Cuz you can't have Jesus without His bride.

**Third**, we see that God is **Faithful**: In **v.20** Solomon says, "*...the LORD has FULFILLED his promise that he made. For I've risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, AS the LORD promised.*" And then back up in **v.15** he says, that God fulfilled everything He promised to do "*with his own hand*" and "*with his own mouth.*" In the Bible the "hand or mouth of God" always communicates God's sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> Solomon's saying, God is a god who's **faithful**, because when He promises, He fulfills.

And isn't that such an important truth these days? Like doesn't it seem as if, in our world of spin, it's becoming increasingly hard, to know what's true and what's not? Yeah, and of course the problem with that is, it leaves us vulnerable. Cuz write this down: **Wisdom means aligning your life around what's certain and true.** But since it's so hard to know what's certain and true, it's hard to be wise... THAT'S why God's **faithfulness** is so important. His **faithfulness** means that His promises are certain and true even if nothing else is. And so really what we oughta say is, as one person does, "**wisdom means aligning your life around the promises of God.**" You say, "*Pastor Charlie, what does it mean to align my life around God's promises?*" I love the way J.D. Greear says this. He says, it means "*living in a way that if God's promises aren't true, then you'll come out looking like a fool.*"<sup>9</sup> I'll give you an example; Corrie Ten Boom you might know was a Holocaust survivor. In one of her writings, she talked about how foolish it sometimes feels to trust God's promises. She says this. I'll just read it to you: "*It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. (solider) who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. She says, "He was the first of (my) actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there - the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanching face...Betsie was her sister who died at Ravensbruck... "He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming. He said 'How grateful I am for your message. To think that, as you say, (Jesus) has washed my sins away!' ...His hand was thrust out*

<sup>8</sup> 1 Kings 8:15-21 (EBC 1Ki-Job)

<sup>9</sup> Quotes from "Solomon's Knowledge of God" //1Kings8//TheManWho Had It All #3" - J.D. Greear

*to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? 'Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.' I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I couldn't. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer: 'Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.' ...As I took his hand an incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me...And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on Jesus'. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself." ...Everyone would you tell you that to forgive a Nazi soldier who'd imprisoned you and lead to your sister's death might not only be foolish, it might be wrong! But God's promise is that as we forgive, so we're forgiven. And as we're forgiven, so we forgive. **Are you ordering your life in a way that assumes, because God is faithful, His promises are true?***

**Finally**, we see that God is **Gracious**: You notice in **vv.16 and 21**, Solomon's bookends his address here with a statement about God having brought Israel out of Egypt<sup>10</sup>...Cuz here's what he's saying, "*at the end of the day, while we wanna center our lives on a God who's mysterious, narrowly-accessible and faithful, the reality is...our hope...is not in OUR ability to center our lives on God at all...but on God being Gracious to us!*"...You understand, the only reason Israel's in the position of to do a temple-dedication and center her life, as a nation, on God, is because God first delivered her/was **gracious** to her!...And you gotta see that order: Israel was looking to center her life on God NOT to GET God to be gracious, but because God HAD been gracious. You understand, that order makes all the difference in the world! Because if you're living to try and GET God to bless you; when will it stop? When will you know you've done enough? How will you know God is pleased?... You can't!...And the result will be a life of fear, anxiety, enough-never-being-enough, or WORSE pride, posturing, and pretending when you think you have or haven't done enough!...BUT if you know that God is already gracious toward you, then you just have to decide: Will you believe and center your life on Him or not? **Cuz let me ask you:** Was Israel free to NOT do this whole temple thing and not center her life on God?...In some respects, Yes! Cuz God had already delivered her. He'd already chosen her as His people, and set His love on her, and covenanted to bless her, and bring the Messiah through her. Now did that mean NOT centering her life on God would be good? Of course not! Just read the book of **Judges** and the rest of **1 and 2 Kings!**...But she was free to do it...It's like if you win the lottery: Are you free to get all that money and blow it on worthless things until you run out and find yourself in debt? Of course. Now that doesn't mean that's good for you. But because "the grace" that is that money, is already yours, you're free to do it...In the same way friends, God's grace is already yours too...Cuz while Israel, knowing that God was gracious, nevertheless needed to continually make sacrifices at the temple for sin; As **Hebrews 10** says, when Jesus Christ came into the world He said, "*Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired (God), but a (people) you have prepared for me and I have come to do your will...and be the*

---

<sup>10</sup> Insight about bookends from 1 Kings 8:15-21 (EBC 1Ki-Job)

*once-and-for all sacrifice.*"<sup>11</sup> And on the Cross He was! Jesus proved Himself to be this, literally, larger-than-life, completely accessible, utterly faithful, and totally gracious God, who was willing to stand in the place of your sin and mine, so that God's dealings WITH our sin... can be "*finished.*" **Grace! God's. Riches. At. Christ's. Expense...** So are you free to live for and center your life on something other than Jesus and God still be loving and gracious toward you. In some respects, Yeah! He's already died for you. But why would you, when anything other than Jesus will only disappoint, and nothing BUT Jesus is willing to die for you! We center our lives on God, not because we have to, but because we get to. We GET to live for and worship a **mysterious, accessible, faithful and gracious** God, who never disappoints!

So before we move into a time of discussion, let me close by asking you to consider this question: Here it is: ***How do you think your life might be different if you believed that this mysterious, accessible, faithful, gracious God was inviting you to let Him be the center of your life?*** - Take a moment to think about that, after which we'll discuss with one another....

---

<sup>11</sup> Expository paraphrase of Hebrews 11:1-3, 5,7,10