



Exodus (Part 24) – The Way into His Presence

Matt Chandler – April 2, 2017

[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in. Like the Israelites, we still await the promised land in the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

[End of video]

Good morning! It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, let's go ahead and open those up to Exodus, chapter 27. I am loving walking through this book with you. David Brooks, who is an op-ed writer for the *New York Times*, wrote two weeks ago in his weekly article that Exodus in a very real way is tied to the identity of Americans in that throughout our history, it has been the narrative that has shaped and formed us as a people. He pointed out he thinks all the issues that exist in the United States today are because of a loss of that narrative.

If we begin to think about our history just briefly (because there are other things I want to cover), the Puritans and Pilgrims who made their way over were doing...what? They were fleeing. They were participating in an exodus of their own to a new promised land. Then when we began to think about the Revolutionary War, the language that surrounded that was the language of the exodus.

Then as there began to be conflict over slavery and we began to lead up to the Civil War, all the language around that was language rooted in the exodus. Then the Civil Rights Movement was rooted in the exodus.

We are a people who have been shaped and formed by the language and the ideas in the book of Exodus. Brooks goes on to argue that what's wrong with us now is we've lost that narrative. We're no longer a people on a journey to a promised land, but rather we're something else altogether.

Then he wrote a follow-up piece that wrote about the fact that faith has been pushed to the margins, but guilt and shame remain.

Now what it means to be American is to have guilt and shame in the deep parts of our lives and have nothing and nowhere to go with that guilt and shame. I don't know if Brooks is a Christian. I certainly hope and pray he is. He wasn't I know for sure a decade ago, but it seems the Lord seems to be at work in his life. I love that.

J.T. English did a phenomenal job last weekend teaching and preaching on the tabernacle. Don't clap for him. He is in here. He'd be insufferable. All right? Just let me do it. He did a great job on the tabernacle, what the tabernacle is, and the idea that God is with us. He rightly said in that sermon that your greatest need and my greatest need is not these felt needs we might identify, but what you need and what I need is the presence of God in our lives.

Now if that's true, that begins to solve some real kind of deep-level spiritual, emotional issues in our lives. Augustine would say it like this: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." Right? This idea of tabernacling. God with us. God in us via the Holy Spirit because of Christ. That restlessness we feel (that maybe even right now you feel in here) that you just can't quite get past something, and you're not sure what it is.

Because we have a creator, our heart will only be at rest when we're with our Creator, because that's what we've been designed to do. That's who we've been designed to be, not just *do* but *be*. Then C.S. Lewis would say it like this: "If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world." Do you hear it? Again, if there's restlessness, if there's unsolved angst, then what that points to if...

As you've grown older, you got your spouse, you got your house, you got your job, and you got your kids. If still that angst remains, Lewis is saying well then there's only one logical conclusion. Nothing under the sun will be able to satisfy your deepest need, which takes us back to J.T.'s excellent sermon on the tabernacle. God with us. We look at this kind of initiating love of God to dwell among his people, and yet there's a problem that remains.

What I want to do in my time with you is I want to talk about how to get into that presence. That's the big issue. God has tabernacled. We know God is among us. God is with us. How do we then get into that presence? Because there's a really big obstacle we haven't quite fully addressed that we

need to address. That is addressed in the priestly garments, in the consecration of the priest, in the lampstand, and in the altar of incense.

Here's the problem: God's holiness and our sinfulness. That's just a huge, huge problem. The Bible on repeat calls God in his holiness a consuming fire. Now if you've been around church for a long time, your mind is going to go to "refiner's fire." "Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire..." No, no, no. This is a *consuming* fire. The holiness of God burns so brightly and beautifully that anything that is not holy is utterly destroyed and consumed. This is not *refinement*; this is *destruction*.

The idea that God is among us is a really terrifying idea because of our sinfulness, because nothing sinful can be in the presence of the holiness of God without being utterly destroyed and consumed. There's no kind of cute word study to do. That consumer fire both in Hebrew and Greek means to utterly consume or destroy.

How do we then kind of get past, "Okay, what I need is the presence of God in my life, the presence of a holy, righteous, beautiful King, sovereign of glory. Yet I'm sinful. We're all sinful, so how do I get into that presence without being utterly destroyed?" Well, that brings us to Exodus 27. Exodus 27, starting in verse 20.

I want to just point out briefly that what I'm about to say, you need to hear as I'm saying it. Verses 20 through 21 seem to be out of place. We know biblically they can't be out of place. It's the inerrant Word of God. He discussed the lampstand back in chapter 25, and now all of a sudden right before he explains the priestly garments, he talks about keeping the light on.

It would seem like if you wrote this paper and turned it into your English prof, she would circle this, draw a red line back to chapter 25, and tell you that you misplaced this, that this should go with the rest of the description of the lamps. Anytime something like that happens when you're reading your Bible, just pay attention to that. Something is happening. We'll get to that more in a bit. Look at verse 20.

"You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. In the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel." Chapter 28, verse 1:

"Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood.

These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen."

Now flip over to Exodus 30, and we're going to read verses 1 through 10 about the altar of incense. Then I want to kind of give you the outline of this text. Then we'll dive in. Exodus 30, starting in verse 1:

"You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns.

And you shall make a molding of gold around it. And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.

And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony..." Listen to this. **"...where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps..."** Which we just read about. **"...he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations.**

You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a

year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD."

Now let me do the outline of these three chapters. You have directions about the lampstand. "Keep the light on." That's the command. "You make sure that light is on." The light is always on. God is always home. Then here are the priestly garments in all their detail. Then here's the consecration of the priest. Then the altar of incense should always be burning.

On the bookends of these commands about the garments of the priests and the consecration of the priests, you get, "The light is always on, and incense is always burning. Don't you ever let those two out. This will always be so for the people of God throughout all your generations." So what's going on? Well, let's talk about it. That's kind of our point, so don't be pushy. Let's just talk about it.

In chapter 28, you began to get the garments of the high priest, so let me walk through those quickly. You get a breastpiece, and the breastpiece is gold, blue, purple, scarlet yarn, fine twined linen. There are four rows of stone set in gold, each with the names of the sons of Israel with twisted cords made of gold and a pocket that contained Urim and Thummim. We'll talk about those in a bit. Then there was an ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet yarns and of fine twined linen.

Then there were two shoulder pieces attached to the linen and two onyx stones set in gold. On those were also engraved the names of the sons of Israel. Then there was a robe. It was all blue fabric with pomegranates and bells of gold sewn into the hem. Then there was a coat of checkered work, and then there was a turban. On that turban was a signet. Engraved in the signet was, "Holy to the Lord." Then there was a sash, and then there was a variety of gold chains and medallions and bells. This is what it would look like for you visible learners.

Now yesterday as an April Fools' joke, as I was walking through the slides to make sure they all worked, the production guys superimposed my face on this guy. So on your way out, you can say goodbye to them. If you're interested in production, shoot us your résumé. Oh, you guys actually put it up. Y'all want some of this, huh? All right. There are several elders in the room. Meet me in the green room between services.

I want you to think about a couple of things. First, how heavy would this have been? It's just near impossibly heavy, but here's what I want to talk about. Here's what I think is going on in the garments. The garments are a picture of the ideal high priest. Here's what's interesting. The

consecration of the priests is in chapter 29. Why are we starting with the garments before we start with the priests? It's not, "Consecrate the priests, and here are the garments." It's, "Here are the garments. Now let's consecrate the priests."

It's because the garments are a picture of the ideal high priests. Let me point out what I mean by this. Here's what we know from the garments. The ideal high priest will be a man of heaven. Notice that everything in the garments of the high priest is made up of the same material the tabernacle is made out of. In fact, all of the colors and the people who make these garments are the same people who made the curtains to the inner sanctum of the temple, of the tabernacle, into the Holy of Holies.

The ideal high priest is a man of heaven who walks in all the beauty and glory of the presence of God himself. Not only do we see this, but we also see in the garments that the ideal high priest is a man who both represents and is responsible for his people. On his heart and on his shoulders are engraved the names of the sons of Israel so that he is a representation. He represents walking into the Holy of Holies.

He doesn't come with his own name! The high priest isn't coming with his own name. He is coming with the names of the sons of Israel on his heart and on his shoulders. He bears their weight as he enters into the Holy of Holies to atone for their sins. I wrote here, "He carried them as one making himself responsible for securing their entrance into the presence of God." He bore their entire burden and brought them with him because they were on his heart.

To be a high priest is glorious and terrifying. You're going into the presence of God. What can't stand in the presence of God? Unrighteousness. What are all of us? Unrighteous. He is literally carrying the burden of the sins of the people of Israel. "God, don't kill me. I'm bringing in everybody's sins. I'm going to make the atonement. I'm going to put the blood on the horn." He has bells on just in case. He represents the people. He doesn't come bearing his own name. He comes bearing the names of the sons of Israel.

Then the last thing I want to point out here in regard to what the garments represent is the garments represent one who trusts in and has in his heart the pleasure of God for those who are his sons and daughters. There's this pocket on the breastpiece, and in that pocket are two things we don't know a ton about. You can look at external biblical sources, and you still just don't know a ton about it. It's Urim and Thummim.

As best we can tell, those are two stones (one light-colored and one dark-colored) the people of Israel would use to, by faith, discern the will of God. They would have a question, and they would ask God the question. They would draw stones. You don't need to do that anymore. You have a Bible in your hand. You have the Holy Spirit inside of you. What they did is they would draw a stone, and they would know, "This is the decision of the Lord."

Now here's what's strange. Why does he have these two stones on his chest pressing into his heart? The decision has been made. The Word of God has gone forth. "Come in. I'm going to forgive sins. Bring the sacrifice in. Make atonement for it, and I will forgive the sins of my people." The decision has been made. The high priest doesn't need to make a decision while he is in the Holy of Holies.

"Are you going to accept the sins?"

"Yes."

"Phew!"

No, no, no. The decision has been made. "Come in" makes sense. Here's what I think is happening. I think to encourage and strengthen the heart of the high priest, the stones press against his heart to remind him the decision has been made. He is not in there to figure out what the decision is. He is in there, and in his fear of the holiness of God... Think of what these guys have seen! I mean, there's been quite a bit of bloodshed, right?

Think about a mountain trembling and shaking. Think about smoke descending. Think about kind of the awe of the holiness of God these people have seen. They've had a front-row seat to these things. Now God is like, "Don't touch the mountain, or you die." It's like, "Hey, get in here. Let's talk." I mean, that's a little nerve-racking.

The stones pressing into the high priest's chest are a reminder that mercy will triumph over judgment. Approval has replaced wrath. Acceptance and belonging have now replaced... As J.T. said, we will never be pushed out again as the Lord tabernacles among us. This is a beautiful reality, and yet as much as the garments represent the ideal high priest, you still have to put a man in these clothes.

Now as we move to chapter 29, I think the main subject of chapter 29 is how ordinary, sinful people (in this case, Aaron and his sons)... We'll see if you keep reading through the Pentateuch that this family has some dysfunction. In fact, Aaron himself in just a couple of weeks is going to get a lot of people slaughtered for the type of silly idolatry you would think these people are past, but we're never past it, are we? Calvin said our hearts are idol factories. They just keep making them.

The main subject of chapter 29 is how ordinary, sinful people (in this case, Aaron and his sons) can enter their priesthood. See, they are sinners ministering to sinners, and it's as sinners that they entered into the priestly office. So chapter 29 then becomes about how these priests are consecrated. There are four elements to their consecration that I think bear weight on us as a kingdom of priests as the Bible has told us we are as Christians in 1 Peter.

In verse 4, Aaron and his sons are washed. It's a serious washing, right? It's not the feet and the head. It's like a full-on scrub down. Then they're robed in verses 5 and 6. They put these garments on them, and then they're anointed with oil. Then there's this three-fold cycle of divinely appointed sacrifices in verses 10 through 25.

This is the consecration of sinners as they began to minister to other sinners. They put on the garments that represent the ideal high priest, and they walk in to atone for the sins of God's people. They are the representative of the people, they bear the weight of the people, and they go in with confidence as two stones dig into their chest that God's decision has been made that judgment will be overcome by mercy.

I think you can take these four things, and we can talk about what they mean for us, but I think we can't get there until we talk about the fact that we're not wearing these garments. I tried to get Communications to do this up for me so I could preach this message in this, but we ran out of time. Why aren't we wearing this as priests of God? Well, listen. You're on, because Jesus is our Great High Priest. Let's look at Hebrews 10:10 through 18. I'll put it on the screen for us.

"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,' then he adds, 'I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.' Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin."

Christ becomes the High Priest. There's this compare and contrast where the Levitical priests are just constantly having to make sacrifices. You can't quite get out of the temple before you sin again and have to come back in and make another sacrifice. If you remember that whole sacrificial system, I mean, just constantly, day after day after day, atoning for sins. "If you do this, whether you know it or not, you need to make this sacrifice once you become aware. Here's the burnt offering. Here's a grain offering."

They're doing this every day, all day long. Then here comes Jesus who does not wear these garments. He is the ideal High Priest. He is a man of heaven. He is coeternal with the Father, the second person of the Trinity, God the Son. He is the man from heaven. According to this text and many more, according to the point of the Scriptures, he bears the burdens of sinners on his shoulders. In his heart he ushers in an understanding of the pleasure of God for sinners who are saved by his grace.

He is the ideal High Priest. Here's what his death accomplishes as we move toward Easter. Think of the thousands of sacrifices that are made by these priests, and yet in a single sacrifice, here's what we learn. He sat down after that single sacrifice. That doesn't mean anything to us, but it's something significant for the readers of the book of Hebrews. He sitting down means it's over. There's just nothing left to do, so he just sits down.

Then I love this. He is making his enemies his footstool. Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of the Father making intercession for the saints. I think that has everything to do with union in Christ, which is another subject for another day. Now every act of victory, every time a sinner is saved, every time deliverance is done, every time sanctification grows, God's enemies become more and more and more the footstool of Jesus.

Think about the finished work of that where now just Jesus' feet are getting more and more lifted until it's time to get up and come make all things new. He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. When I say to us all of our sins past, present, and future have been fully, freely, and

forever accounted for in the death and resurrection of Christ, this is where I'm getting it from. How many of your sins were future sins when Christ died on the cross? Hint: all of them!

But you were perfected once and for all for all time by this death of Christ. Then from there the law is written on our hearts and on our minds. We have now been enabled to joyfully be obedient. It's imperfectly executed, but the law is in me, driving me toward obedience, the Spirit of God convicting me over sin, and the law lighting my path toward joy in Christ all the more as I follow him.

Then listen to this. Because of this sacrifice of Christ, he remembers our deeds no more. Look right at me. How many of you have deeds you're really grateful God has no longer remembered those deeds? Yeah! Your past certainly does. Then (love this) there's no longer any offering for sin. He just shut the shop down! All this sacrificial system, he shuts down the altar for good. He has made it antiquated and old. He is the fulfillment of all it pointed to. He has brought in a whole new deal.

How many of you have that yellow Sony Walkman you put a tape in and listened to anymore? None. My kids don't even know what it is. They just have no concept of like reel-to-reel where you have to kind of use a pencil to tighten. This is what Jesus does. He shows up on the scene, and he makes all that old news.

Now here's what I want to talk to you about. There's this growing thing in my heart. I'll share a lot more about it tonight at Elder-Led Prayer here in Flower Mound. Bleecker and I talked through the weekend. I didn't realize how many of our songs this weekend had the word *hallelujah* in them. Here's what's interesting. *Hallel* is a Hebrew word. It's where we get this word *hallelujah* from. Here's what it means. In the Hebrew, *hallel* means, "Lose your mind! Freak out!"

Don't you dare whoop, hiss, or anything else. Have you ever been to an A&M game? They have these guys called yell leaders. They'll start making signs. The only ones I actually know are inappropriate so I'm not going to show them, but they begin to make these signs. Then everybody kind of looks, and they pass the sign back. Then when they start, a hundred-and-some thousand people begin to shout and chant to try... "God, help us to get something going on the field." When you read in the Bible the word *hallelujah*, the worship leader is saying, "Hey! This is huge!"

Now my son this spring has started playing tackle football. Listen. I love you. Don't email me about CTE and how irresponsible. My daughter is a barrel racer. Daily she is getting on top of a 900-pound

mammal. A 60-pound kid slamming into my kid, we'll just trust the Lord with that, all right? He is playing tackle football.

Here's what I've found. We're not doing well. I mean, we're just not doing great right now. We're 0-2. Everybody is kind of learning the game. It's way different than five-on-five flinging around, which is what we've been doing. I went to the early game (8:15), and I was on the sideline. I was doing stuff like this. I was like, "Come on, boys. Come on, boys!" Then there was this play later in the game. We were down, so forget the run game. Right? "Let's spread this mug out and go for it."

Our quarterback let go of this beautiful pass. Another one of our boys (a kid named Evan) reached out, and he grabbed it. He got blown up, but he hung on to the ball. I mean, we were not winning this game, but I was like, "Nice job, Evan! Whoo!" I was just pumped. Then here's what struck me. Why am I not in worship going, "Come on, Lord! Come on! We need you! Man, we're stuck. Will you do something here? God, will you help us? Our passion is weak. Our confidence and zeal is waning. God, help us"?

What stops me from being able to do that? Why am I going, "Great job, Evan," but when I read about the fact that my sins have been forgotten about, I've been covered and clothed in the blood of Christ, that he sees me, I can't do it? I'm like, "Oh, that is so interesting." What's stopping us? I'll tell you what. There's a stupid spirit of cool and togetherness that is killing us and robbing us of power. It's just robbing us of power.

We want to be perceived as something that is anti fully belonging to Christ. I am not drawing a distinction between passion and the intellect. You don't choose. They both work together. The mind fuels the heart, and the heart feeds... The mind is this beautiful kind of process of growing. We're stuck, guys. I don't know if you can feel it. There's something here that's just blocking our ability to *hallel*.

May God help us. May God help us, because this right here that Jesus is sitting down, that he has made his enemies his footstool, that we've been perfected for all time, that the law is on our hearts and our minds, that he remembers our sinful deeds no more, that there's no longer any offering for sin... Are you kidding? With Evan's little catch, "Come on, 11-year-old boys, who aren't being scouted and more than likely have no future in this game!"

If some of you parents are here, maybe your kid does. I mean, probably not statistically by getting eaten by a shark in a tornado, but maybe so. We're getting all amped up. Look at me. I'm for all of this. I'm for it. I love youth sports. I love watching my kids compete. I want to cheer them on. I want to rejoice, but how paltry and weak is that compared to what we're talking about today?

This kind of reserved, "Mmm..." I'm not trying to make us some kind of weirdo, but I'm telling you there's something in the weird. Aliens and strangers. Have you been to a foreign country? There's weird stuff there. I went to China, and they had split pants. They don't wear diapers. They just have pants that are split. They just go to the bathroom wherever they are. That's weird! Put a diaper on that kid.

Aliens. Strangers. It's what we've been called to be. Look at me. Don't despise being aliens and strangers. Embrace it. Embrace it! The Bible says we are a royal priesthood. We are! You and I! We're a royal priesthood. Do not punt your priestly duties to me. Don't do it! *You* have priestly duties. Don't punt them to Michael, Trevor, Josh, the eldership, and me. No, *you* do.

Here's the good news. You and I were consecrated like Aaron and his sons. We were washed with water. Here's the problem with water. You know this. Water will get you clean, but what happens? You get dirty again. Right? You take a shower. You need another shower soon, right? I don't think I need to have this conversation. I'm having it with my 11-year-old boy right now. "Yeah, I know you did two days ago. It's time again. It's time again. You're starting to stink, buddy. It's time. Get in the shower."

Water is weak in that it will not clean you once and for all, but you and I were not washed with water like Aaron and his sons. We were washed with blood, the blood of Jesus. We cannot...will not...get dirty again. You and I are clothed in his righteousness alone. How jealous are Moses and Aaron of us? "What? The Holy Spirit lives in you? Are you kidding me? I have to wear like a 900-pound suit. You just have the Spirit of God in you, and you have access just by crying out to him?"

They would be jealous. Don't look at the life of Moses and go, "Oh, how awesome would it be to have that kind of staff?" Oh, he is so jealous of you. He would so rather have what is living inside of you than all he walked through. You and I have been anointed by the Spirit of God for the works God has for us in Christ. You have a purpose and a power *now*. Don't punt your priesthood to me. I don't want yours. I have my own.

Lastly, in Christ, the shedding of his blood is his substitutionary atoning work on the cross for you and me so our sins are seen no more. Now we've talked about this is how we get into that tabernacling presence: the blood of Jesus clothed in his righteousness, washed in his blood. Let me end with this.

It explains the lampstand, and it explains the altar of incense. How then are you and I to live as a kingdom of priests in the world around us? Well, let's chat about it. I'll give it away. *Presence and prayer*. That's how you and I are to live as a kingdom of priests in the world around us. Here's what I mean by that. In chapter 27, verses 20 through 22, we read about the lampstand always being on so the lights never go out in God's house. He is always home.

What that means for you and me as priests of God is Jesus is the light of the world, and we are reflections of that light as he tabernacles inside of us via the Holy Spirit. Look right at me, because I want to set you free a little bit by the grace of God. Almost all of the really beautiful, profound things God is going to do in your life are going to take place over a long period of time through a lot of ordinary. Look right at me. Almost all the beautiful things God is going to accomplish in your life he is going to accomplish over a long period of time in a whole lot of ordinary.

Last night before the five o'clock service... I love just walking in to Little Village and thanking those men and women who give up a chunk of their time to pray over and teach our children. I was just walking in there thanking them and talking with people, meeting people. Dub Alexander was in there. Dub is one of the original 168 who were here when I got here. Dub's daughter was with him, and then there were just grandbabies all around him. I said to Dub, "Bro, you are a patriarch! How amazing is that, Dub?"

Man, Dub has had some really high highs, and he has had some really low lows. He has a whole lot of ordinary, and God is not done yet. In that room last night, he had giant smile on his face helping his daughter get his grandbabies checked in to rooms. His everyday steady faithfulness has provided the kind of fruitfulness we desire. Faithful presence at work, at home. This is how we're a kingdom of priests.

Listen. Don't overthink this. It means we love our wives. We love our children. We work hard at our jobs. We sacrifice for our family's growth. We don't sacrifice for silly things; we sacrifice for righteous things. I need my son to know that football is a game, and when we study the book of

Proverbs, it's different than when we're studying his playbook. I need him to know that! We don't look at plays until we look at Proverbs.

I want him to succeed. I want him to do well. I mean, he has my genes. I don't like his chances, but we'll see. Right? I just need him to know that's just an everyday thing. I want to love and serve my wife. Sometimes that's easy. Sometimes that's not easy. Amen, spouses? Oh, we can't do that, huh? Sometimes it's really easy. Sometimes it's not easy. Yet by faithfully serving over a long period of time, you wake up one day, and you're 60, 70, and you're surrounded by the fruit of faithfulness, everyday presence, the light of Christ burning.

That's not all, because remember you have the lampstand, but then you have the altar of incense. Here's what you have to know about me. I'm full-on. I'm full-on Baptistical. I am the combination of two streams of thought that provoke and drive me forward. My Baptist side is sufficiency of Scripture, the weight of God's Word. It's the centrality of what makes and forms the people of God. But then I have that "-costal" in me, yo. Here's what I know. You have right here the light burning, but then you have the altar of incense.

Yes and *amen* to decades of faithful, ordinary service to God, family, and church. Yet I'm also asking for breakthrough. I love process. I love patience. I love long-term faithfulness in one direction, but I am pleading with, almost always fasting for, the Spirit of God to break through and do something that blows our minds. Think about this. The altar of incense represents the prayers of the saints. You can read that throughout. You see it in Psalms. You see it in the book of Revelation where these bowls of incense are the prayers of the saints.

Now here's what's interesting to know. If you've ever paid attention to the life of Jesus Christ, he does some amazing things. Right? Let's just talk for a second. Jesus tells a storm to stop, and it does. He tells sick people to not be sick, and they're not. How cool! Do you know how easy hospital visits would be if we could do that? He casts out demons, and no demon ever argues with him. It's not loud. It's not big. It's not show. It's like, "Yeah, get into the pigs."

Do you know what the disciples never ask him? How to do any of that. We have no record in our Scriptures of Peter (because you know it would be Peter) going, "Hey, man, that Lazarus thing was bananas! Hey, will you teach us how to do that? Will you teach us how to raise the dead, Jesus? If you're all about your name and your fame and we can go around raising dead folk, man, people are going to love you, worship you, follow you."

But that question never gets asked. Do you know what they want to know? "Teach us to pray. Will you teach us to pray?" Follow me. A front-row seat to the power of God in Christ... This is Trinitarian, guys, because what you'll notice as you read the Scriptures is sometimes you'll read sentences like this: "When Jesus saw the power of the Spirit was present to heal the sick, he..." I mean, that's just good stuff. Jesus, the Spirit-empowered man.

When they have a front-row seat to healings, demons being cast out, deliverances occurring, the sick being made well, they saw on that front-row seat the real thing behind it all was prayer. How are we to be priests in 2017? Faithful presence. Enjoying the ordinary. Being faithful husbands, faithful wives. Loving our children. Working hard at work. Belonging to the community of faith. Faithfully serving one another. It's slow. Sometimes it's exhausting.

It's just faithfully doing ordinary things over and over and over and over and over again for a long period of time while simultaneously going, "Please, God, help. Break through. Heal. Move. Save. Drive out. Bind. Open. Help us" and then expecting him to do it and embracing the ordinary when it takes awhile before he does.

If you're here and you're just like, "Oh gosh! I'm just so ready for something explosive and amazing," I want to just encourage you. Do you know what's really explosive and amazing? The fact that you got up this morning and helped your family get ready to come to church on a rainy day. That's explosive and ordinary, and it's going to bear fruit. That's a win. You should celebrate that. That's a huge win today!

Then at the same time, I would want your heart earnestly praying for a breakthrough in your family that leads to greater faithfulness and fruitfulness beyond what you could even imagine. I just pray crazy prayers for my children, crazy prayers for how the Lord might use my life. I want to walk in spiritual power, not just make good arguments. Are you tracking with me?

Maybe that's not you, though. Maybe you're just so crusty that you're a little anxious about what I'm talking about. You're just like, "Uh, I mean, I can kind of see that in the Bible, but you're making me weirded out a little bit. What does that even mean: power of God? Isn't the power of God found in his Word?" Oh, absolutely. You devour, consume, digest the Word of God, and let it fuel in you a hunger to see the things that are in that Word activated in your life. Don't put these things at odds. They're not at odds with one another.

My hope for us as a church is we might live out our lives together and outside of these walls as a kingdom of priests embracing faithful presence in the ordinary and praying and pleading with God for breakthrough, grabbing hold of the Lord like Jacob wrestling the angel and saying, "I will not let you go till you bless me."

This is what the Lord has for us. If you're bored in your faith, God is probably bored with your faith. Oh, y'all don't want to *amen* that, huh? Why not believe God for greater things, bigger things? Why not be bold enough to ask for things in the spiritual realm that do really beautiful things among our community? What it means to be a priest in 2017 is faithful presence and radical prayerfulness.

I'm not a fool. I know praying is hard for many of us, which, by the way, should reveal something to us about kind of how we think spiritually. If we could be honest, most think prayer is boring. I mean, you would never say that. Notice I didn't even ask you to raise your hand. We just think prayer is boring. It's certainly not as compelling as Facebook, Twitter, or something else that could be calling our name. There are so many shows we have to binge on right now. We're so hopelessly behind in *House of Cards* Season 4. There are always sports on.

There are always these things that compete for our prayerfulness, and yet if you want to see the power of God in your life and if we want to see the power of God in the life of our church, we must be a people marked by serious prayerfulness. If you don't know how to get there, get around weirdo prayer warriors. You giggled, but I mean, there are some really weird people who this is what they do, man. I mean, they are intercessors.

Then you're kind of uncomfortable around them, because if you even said... You were eating at El Chico here. You're like, "Hey, man, I just want to learn to pray." They're like, "Praise God. Let's get on our knees right here on the floor." You're like, "No, I'm not getting on my knees in El Chico." "You're right. Let's get on our face." "This floor is filthy. I'm not getting on my face in El Chico."

That's the kind of thing we need to draw us out of this kind of faux religiosity where we attach Jesus' name to a lot of dry and weary emptiness. Let's pray about learning how to pray. How great is that? You're like, "I pray for everything I know (including global revival), and I'm 30 seconds in, and I don't know what to pray for anymore." Well, let's just start to pray like we started at Night of Worship: for an enlarged heart that knows how to pray. We will surely see the Lord do mighty things in the land of the living. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these men and women. I thank you that Jesus is our High Priest. We have been washed from our sin by his blood. We are clothed in his righteousness alone. You have anointed us, Spirit of God, for the work you have for us. By the shedding of Jesus' blood as our substitute, our deeds are remembered no more. There is no longer any offering for sin, and we have been perfected once and for all time. It is finished. Hallelujah! It's for your beautiful name we pray, amen.

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