

All right. Hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you are here with us today. We are in a season called Kingdom Culture 101. It's not really a series, it's a season. We're talking about, what does the kingdom look like? What are the kingdom's culture? What is the kingdom's values? As a way of reminder, we started this series, this season with two hopes, two prayers.

We said one is, is that we want to remind ourselves of who we are, what is the culture and the values of this church. Who has God created and called us to be? The second thing was, is we prayed and asked that God would interrupt our lives, that He would disrupt our lives, that He would turn some things upside-down. I think it's safe to say that God is answering both of those prayers. He's reminding us of who we are, and who He's created and called us to be, and He is also disrupting things. He's interrupting things. He's turning some things upside-down. I just want to fully acknowledge, to you, that this has been a really challenging and hard series. It's been challenging for me. It's been challenging for our staff. It's been challenging for our leaders. If you're sitting there and you're like, "Man, this has been a lot." You are not alone. God has been doing a deep work. He's been doing the hard work.

What I think is so important for you to understand is, I haven't said anything new in this series. All I've done is gone back and say the same things that we've said over and over and over again. In fact, when I first started this series, I was afraid that so many of you were going to be like, "Man, say something new. We've heard this before." But if you go back on ValleyCreek+ you can see 12 years of messages, we're saying the same thing over and over again. All I'm doing in this series is connecting the dots a little deeper for you. Saying, if this is really a value of your life, then this is practically how it plays out. I think the reason it's hard, it's not because we're saying new things, it's because we're connecting the dots and realizing that maybe, just maybe, our life looks a whole lot more like the world than we care to admit. That maybe, just maybe, we have a whole lot more of the world's values and the world's culture and the world's thinking in our life. When that is confronted by the kingdom, it's hard and it's challenging.

In fact, the whole reason that this thing is upside-down, some of you probably still think we made a mistake, is because the kingdom is upside-down from this world. The wisdom of God is foolishness to this world, and everything about the kingdom is upside-down. Jesus says, "If you want to live you've got to die. If you want to be great, be a servant; give and it will be given to you; forgive your enemies, bless those who persecute you." Everything about the kingdom is upside-down. It's disruptive by nature; it interrupts our lives; it disorients our lives. But the more we begin to look at it, the more we begin to see God's wisdom in it. What first feels confusing, over time, starts to become normal. If you've been here throughout this fall, what was first a disruptive logo, now all of a sudden, your mind has adjusted to it, and you think it's normal. It's in alignment. That's how it works in the kingdom.

First, it disrupts our lives. But, then, all of a sudden, what seemed like foolishness becomes the very wisdom of God. What I love about what's happening in the series is God is creating a

hunger and a desperation in people. He is stirring up the coals of revival and there are a whole lot of us saying, "God, I want Your kingdom to come and Your will to be done in my life, more than anything else." We say, "Come, Lord Jesus come. Keep reminding us of who You have called us to be. Keep interrupting, keep disrupting, come and have Your way." You see, 20 years ago, when I graduated from college, in a matter of a few short months, my whole life fell apart. Everything that I thought, everything I was expecting, everything that I could control - in a matter of, what seemed like a few moments, just completely fell apart. In that season of brokenness, God got a hold of my heart and for the first time, Jesus became Lord of my life.

You see, I knew about Jesus. I'd heard about Jesus. I'd been to church plenty of times, but Jesus wasn't Lord of my life and until that season. I moved out to Colorado to go to grad school. When I got there, I looked for a church and I went into this church for the first time, and I experienced something I'd never experienced before. I walked into the atrium, and it was full of people who actually wanted to be there. There was joy, and hope, and anticipation. Nobody had that grumpy, religious frowny face on. There was this sense of anticipation and kindness and friendliness. I went into the Worship Center, and I went, and I sat in the back row. When worship started, I experienced something I had never experienced before - the tangible presence of God.

It was like God filled the whole room. I just stood there, and I couldn't even sing. I just sat there and I wept. It's, tears, just streamed down my face, because I had never experienced God like that before. I came back week after week, and sat in the back row and just sat there and just wept. I had never seen anything like it before. I had never seen a worship team with humility, and hunger, and personal holiness in their lives and love for scripture, and a passion for God. I had never seen students down front leading the way in worship with lifted arms and lifted hands not worried about if their peers saw them or not. I had never seen generations of people from front to back with their arms up and their voices lifted, and the whole room engaged and fully participating in every way, shape, and form. It was life-changing for me. In fact, in that season, in that experience, I grew up in the presence of God.

"The boy Samuel grew up in the presence of God." Do you realize we grow up when we get in the presence of God? It was in that season, in that presence of God experience where I was grown up. I was getting rid of childish things, and worldly things, and fleshly things, and sinful things. I was maturing, and growing, and changing into the image and likeness of Jesus. Why? Because when we get in the presence of God, we begin to grow up and mature in Jesus. This is why worship is such a big deal to our church. This is why we want all the students sitting in worship with us. We don't create a separate environment for them. Why? Because we want them to grow up in the presence of God. This is why we write so many kid's worship songs, so that you can take those songs and play them in your house for your children, so your children grow up in the presence of God; because God can do more in one moment in His presence than we can do in a lifetime of effort.

I began to grow and change, and then, a couple years later, Colleen and I, we moved to Texas to be a part of Valley Creek. There were a handful of us that were here that had these different experiences and encounters with God in our background, and we came together as a few little leaders. We were just like, "Man, I'm hungry. I'm hungry for God. I want to see His kingdom come. I want to know Him. I want to meet with Him." We just had this echo amongst each other. We didn't even know what to say or how to do it. We just started declaring we want to be a worshiping church. We did not even really know what that meant. We were not sure what we were doing. We just knew we wanted more of God. By faith, we spoke it into the atmosphere, and we started pursuing it. Slowly but surely, we started learning how to worship, and how to sing to the Lord, and how to lift our hands, and how to turn our heart to Him. Low and behold, the presence of God started coming and He started changing people's lives.

People started walking in. They started weeping in the presence of God. They started growing and finding healing, and wholeness, and people started maturing and transforming, and becoming disciples of Jesus. Why? Because we were growing in the presence of God. What started as this really simple declaration, 'We want to be a worshiping church,' has become the value - 'We are passionate about the presence of God.' We are passionate about the presence of God. We want to be a worshiping church. We want to say, "God come and have Your way." We want to create space and opportunity and environment for God to do that, which only He can do. We want to meet Him, and know Him, and encounter Him, and experience Him, because God can do one more in one moment than we can do in a lifetime. The presence of God is the greatest change agent on the face of the earth.

You see it all over the Bible. We take Isaiah. Isaiah the prophet, he is transported into the throne room of heaven and the moment he sees God, the presence of God, he humbles himself; hits the ground and says, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I come from a people of unclean lips." Who told him he was a sinner? No one. No one has to tell you what's broken in your life when you get in the presence of God. Then, an angel grabs a burning coal and comes and touches his lips, and says, "You are now made clean." Then Isaiah, stands up and says, "Here I am, Lord, send me," and everything changed. Or how about Peter? He doesn't really know Jesus yet. One day Jesus asks if He can borrow Peter's boat, and they push out, and He tells Peter, "Throw your net over the side of the boat." Peter says, "We fished all night and haven't caught anything." He says, "Just do it anyways." Peter throws his net over, net full of fish, and Peter realizes, and he hits his knees and says, "Away from me Lord, I'm a sinful man."

Who told him he was a sinful man in need of a Savior? No one. It was the kindness of God that led him to repentance. It was the presence of God that created a fear of God in his heart, and Jesus said, "Don't be afraid." He helped Peter up and said, "From now on, you're not going to fish for fish, you're going to come with me and fish for man." Or how about Paul and Silas. They're beaten, they're persecuted, they're tortured, they're thrown in jail. It's midnight. It says, they were worshipping and praising and singing songs to God. In that moment, the presence

of God came. Because the presence of God is attracted to the praises of man, and brought an earthquake that shook open the entire jail where every cell door flew open and everyone was set free. Why? Because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. The presence of God is the great change agent. Or how about Jacob? He goes to bed one night, has a dream, sees an open Heaven, and angels ascending and descending on stairs, has an encounter with God. When he wakes up in the morning, he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

This is what we're trying to create - an environment where people walk in and they're, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't aware of it." We want to create an environment where people can "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Taste, experience; see, perception. We want to help people experience and perceive that God is good to them, so we're passionate about the presence of God. I mean, do you realize you were created to live in the presence of God? You go all the way back to creation when God makes Adam and Eve and He brings them to life, it says God walked with them in the garden, in the cool of the day. Life was about being with God and enjoying His presence. Yet, when we sinned, and we died, what we lost in that moment was the presence of God. Our sin separated us from God.

Jesus came. He went to the cross, and "My God, why have you forsaken me?" He was forsaken, so you'll never have to be. In that moment when Jesus died, it says the veil of the temple was torn into not so that you could go in, but so that God could come out and once again be with you. Come on, this is what it says, "In Him, in Jesus and through faith in Him, we may approach God with freedom and confidence." In other words, you can have as much of God as you want. The question is, is not, is God with us? It's, are we aware that He already is? If you can have as much of God as you want, the question is, how much of God do you want? What are you actually passionate about?

Look at these verses with me. David says, "One thing I asked of the Lord, this is what I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple." David says, "I only want one thing. I want God. I want to know Him. I want to experience Him. I want to meet with Him. I want to dwell with Him. I want to look at Him." Can I ask you a question? What's the one thing that you're asking for? What is it that you're seeking, above all things? Or how about this one, the Psalms says, "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked." In other words, he says, "I would rather be a servant in the house of my God than be a King, alone in this world." He says the kingdom is better than the world. Can I ask you a question? What do you think is better - the King and His kingdom or the world and its pleasures?

Would you rather be a servant and be with God or would you rather be a King alone in this world? Or how about Jeremiah where God says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." He says, "When you seek Me the way you would look for treasure,

rubies, gold, silver, wealth, honor, prosperity. If you will seek Me like that, you will find Me." Are you seeking Him like that? You see, "In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." In other words, everything you actually want and need in life is found only in His presence. We're passionate about the presence of God. That word, passion, is such an interesting word. Because we don't even know what to do with that word anymore in our world of apathy, in our world of, why bother, who cares, it doesn't matter anyways. In the world of great resignation, and quiet quitting, and apathetic minds, and lives and spirits and all this, we don't even know what to do with the word passion.

But you know what the word passion actually means? It's not like excitement and a little golf clap. Passion literally means, that what you're willing to suffer for. It's the actual definition of passion - that which you're willing to suffer for, that which costs you something, that which is costly in your life. If you want to know what you're passionate about, just look at what you're willing to suffer for. For example, if you're passionate about health, you're willing to suffer through five in the morning workouts while the rest of us are sleeping. You're willing to pay a great cost and go to Whole Foods and buy all the organic, holistic groceries that cost an insane little fortune; you're willing to do things different than the rest of us, because it's the passion of your life.

If you're passionate about your kid's sports, you're willing to drive your kids all over the metroplex, pay great money to get them on select teams, travel with them all around the country. Why? Because you're willing to suffer and pay a great price because you're passionate about it. If you're passionate about work, you'll come early, you'll stay late, you'll do the extra, you'll work on the weekends, you'll think about it when you're offline, because you're willing to suffer for that which you are passionate about, that which you love. If you're passionate about hunting, you will sit in a treestand in the freezing cold for hours on end, just waiting for one encounter with a deer. Everyone else looks at you and thinks you're crazy. That's what passion is. The question for you is, what are you passionate about? We've been saying, in this entire series, you don't get to answer that question for yourself. What would the other people look at your life and say, "You pay a great price for this. You're willing to suffer for this."

Are you passionate about the presence of God? See, I love what David says when he says, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." David wants to give God an offering. He has a great friend who says, "Here David, take the threshing floor, take all of the animals, just take it, offer it to the Lord as a gift." He says, "No." He says, "I can't offer the Lord a sacrifice, a worship that costs me nothing. I refuse to give God my leftovers, my extra. I refuse to make it be comfortable and convenient." Why? "Because I'm so passionate about God, I am willing to pay a great price and suffer a great hardship in order to honor Him with my heart and my voice and my life." My question for you is, does the presence of God cost you anything in this season?

It cost Jesus everything to give you access to His presence. But, in your pursuit of that presence, does it cost you anything - time, money, comfort, convenience, dignity? Does your pursuit of the presence of God cost you anything? If the answer is no, then you're not passionate about His presence. You might enjoy it, but you're not passionate about it. Hear me, we are living in an era of time, when it's going to take a whole lot more than church every other week, a devotional on Tuesday mornings, and following your favorite Christian leader on social media to really walk in victory and freedom with the spirit of overcoming. We're going to have to say, "No, I refuse to offer God anything that costs me nothing. I will pursue Him with everything I've got." We are responsible to seek and steward His presence.

Come on. Do you remember when Jesus was baptized, and it says, "The Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove." It doesn't say the Holy Spirit is a dove. It says the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. I want you to picture for a second, if a dove just came, flew down and landed on your shoulder for a moment. An actual dove is here on your shoulder. If you want to keep that dove there, you've got to be super intentional and aware that that dove is there. It's going to change how you move - very slow. You're not going to do things or move in ways that startle it. You're not going to go places that that dove wouldn't like. That's a great picture of the Holy Spirit in our life. When we walk in-step with the Spirit, it means it changes how we live because we're so aware of its presence in our life, that it slows us down, it changes what we think, it changes what we say, it changes where we go.

Because we don't want to quench Him, we don't want to grieve Him. Why? Because we want to just be present in His presence. We need to seek and steward it. Are you with me on this? Come on. Do you remember King Solomon? He's David's son. He's a young man, and he takes over as the King of Israel. God appears to him, literally. This is the Old Testament. This is a big deal. Jesus hasn't yet released God's presence on the earth in the way that we think of it. It says God appears to Solomon. He says, "Solomon, what do you want?" In a dream, Solomon says, "Lord, I don't know how to lead, so give me wisdom." God says, "I am so pleased that you didn't ask for wealth, honor, or long life but that you asked for wisdom, so I will give you wisdom and wealth, honor and a long life." In His presence, we get all that we desire. Then, years later, when Solomon is building the temple, it says literally the exact words. It says the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time; a second time, He appears to Solomon.

He has his great encounter with Solomon. Tells Solomon these really important things in his life. You would think, this is the Old Testament. He has two personal encounters with the presence of God. You would think that that would change everything about Solomon's life. But look at this verse, "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other Gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God." Solomon, the guy who the Lord appeared to twice did not steward God's presence in his life. Instead of growing up in the presence of God, he grew old in the presence of people. You get the choice. You can grow up in the presence of God with a childlike heart, with the spirit of freedom, or you can grow old, hanging out with all the people of this world. We need to steward His presence in our life. When you have an encounter

and experience with God, it's meant to change you, it humbles you. It creates repentance in your life. You start putting away worldly things and selfish things and fleshly things, and sinful things.

Why? Because now you've seen God, you know God, you've experienced God, and something inside you has changed. Now, you want more of Him, and you want to steward it, and keep it alive. You now have faith that you met with God, and there's even more of God to find. We've got to seek and steward it. Maybe you're here and you're thinking to yourself, "Yeah, I used to sit in the back row and weep when I was in church, because of the presence of God. I used to feel really close to God, and I used to be really connected with God. Honestly, I would say just even just two years ago, I used to walk with God. But I don't feel or experience those things anymore." My question for you then is, who changed? You or God? Because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Maybe the problem isn't that God has removed Himself, maybe the problem is, is we didn't steward the last experiences and encounters we had with Him and apply them to our life and allow them to change us from glory to glory, more into His image and His likeness.

You with me on this? Now, I know some of you are sitting here like, saying, "Okay, presence of God, never heard anything about this. Warning. Warning. Boop..., boop..., boop..., is this the scary thing?" No, stop. Stop. The presence of God means God wants to meet with you. It's not about an emotion or a feeling or even an experience. It's about the very fact that He is right here with us. There are five dimensions of the presence of God. I've taught you this before, but I just want you to jot these down. First one is this - His presence holds us together. "In Him, all things hold together." In Him, in His presence, He holds all things together. The presence of God right now is holding the very fabric and fiber of the universe together. It is the presence of God that's holding the atoms, the DNA, the protons, the neurons of your life. He's literally holding the very molecules of your body together.

That if God's presence was removed right now from the seat that you're sitting in, literally it would disintegrate and fly off and you would fall to the ground. If God's presence was removed from your life right now, your entire body would just literally come apart. Why? Because in His presence, all things hold together. Are you aware that God is holding you together even when it feels like everything is falling apart? Second dimension of God's presence is, His presence surrounds us. "Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" He says, "There's nowhere I can go to get away from God." No Valley that's too dark, no place that's too broken, no place that's too lost, he's right there. He's above you, beneath you, in front of you, behind you, to the left of you, to the right of you right now. God's presence is surrounding you. God's presence is surrounding you, then the very air you're breathing in, breathing in the very presence of God.

Are you aware that He is surrounding you, in the midst of your daily life? Third dimension is, His presence is within us. "Jesus breathed on them, and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" The

moment the resurrected Jesus came back to the disciples, He breathed on them and the Holy Spirit came inside of them. Everyone who believes in Jesus now has the Spirit, the presence of God, dwelling inside of them. God is not somewhere way off, somewhere in the universe in some mystical cloud, floaty heaven. No, no, no; He's literally inside of every believer on this face of the earth. Are you aware that God Almighty lives inside of you? Fourth dimension is, His presence is in our Godly relationships. "For where two or three" - believers who have the Spirit of God in them - "come together in My name, there I am with them." Now, when two or three of us get together in the name of Jesus, to seek Jesus, it literally says that Jesus Himself pulls up a chair, sits down and joins our circle.

He's like, "Hey, I'm right here." There is a unique dimension and experience of God's presence that can only be experienced in the small gathering of two or three, five or six, 10 or 12, multiple people coming together. This is why you should get in a Circle and on a serve team. Not for religion, not because we say, "You should." But because you're so hungry for the presence of God, you realize there is a unique aspect of His presence I will never experience on my own. When you're with other believers, are you aware that He is with you? Then, His presence is tangible in our worship. "You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel." In other words, God inhabits the praises of His people. When we gather together like this as believers, and we come in, and we worship like we did, what we are literally doing is we are building a throne of praise in the spiritual realm in the center of this room, and Jesus Himself comes and sits on it, and He comes to be Lord and where God rules, His life reigns.

This is why, in worship, there are these experiences and encounters and healings and words of knowledge and prophecy and strategies and encouragement and comfort that happens nowhere else because it's the people of God, building the throne and saying, "Jesus come and rule over our lives." This, for no other reason, is why you should never forsake the gathering of the assembly of the people of God. I get that all kinds of people want to tell you, "You don't need it," whatever. If you really want God, one day, you wake up with a faith to realize there is an aspect of God I will never encounter outside of this. Do you see how these build? Everyone in the world experiences God holding them together, everyone in the world has God surrounding them, but only believers have Him in them, that only believers who get together with other believers have Him pull up a seat next to them, that only believers who get in a room with other people and with humility worship God, experiencing God coming and ruling and reigning over their lives.

There's one more. His presence is in our humility, hunger, and holiness. "Then the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God." When they were dedicating the temple, there was such humility, hunger, and a personal and corporate holiness, that God's presence came and filled the environment with His glory in a way that they could not even stand. This is what we're going for - that the glory of the Lord comes and fills our lives and our families and



our church and our city in such a way that it's like heaven on earth, His kingdom has come and His will has been done.

The question is, not is, is God with you; the question is, are you aware that He already is? Are you aware that He is with you on Tuesday afternoons at two o'clock? Are you aware that He is with you in the middle of the night when you wake up and you can't sleep? Are you aware that He is with you on your drive to work? Are you aware that He is with you in school? Are you aware that He is with you when you're being tempted? And when you gave into that temptation and start sinning? He is still right there! Are you aware He is in your anxiety and your depression with you? Are you aware He is in that fight, in that circumstance, in that hardship, in that situation? See, we have to learn to practice, practice the presence of God. Practice stopping the chaos and all, and stopping. He is right here, and He is with me. I don't feel it. I'm not experiencing it. But by faith, by golly, I'm practicing the presence of God. Lord, You are here, and if You are here, everything's going to be alright.

Come on, look at what God says. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." God's presence is the antidote to the discouragement and the fear of our lives. Could it just be that a whole lot of us are not strong nor courageous, we're terrified and defeated, because we're just not aware that He is with us, and we have no interest in seeking nor stewarding His presence. Come on, you with me? Listen, I've said this for years. We've said this for years around here, that if your life is so busy that you can't be here for a 65-minute service, then I would encourage you to come on time, stay for worship, and leave early, as opposed to come in late, missing worship, and getting here for the message.

If your life is so busy, you can't be here for 65 minutes to meet with God, then let me encourage you - don't come late and come for the message; come early, stay for the worship, and then leave. Why? Because you don't need more content, you need more connection. You already, then, have enough content to live out in a lifetime. What you need is a connection and experience and encounter with God. Do you know in all the years I've said that, I've only ever had one person, come and say, "I'm taking you up on it." One man, he came up to me, and he said, "Hey, I'm going to take you up on that thing." I said, "What thing?" He said, "That thing, because my life is so busy, and I can't be there for the whole thing, so I'm going to come for worship, and then I'm going to leave." I had so much respect for that man, because he understood. He didn't need more content, he needed more connection. Come on, do you realize that the main event of church is not the message? American Christianity right now, we're like, this is the main course, and we're deciding if we like it or not.

That is a lie from the pit of hell. The main event is meeting with God. Come on. Look at it -- sorry, that's for another day. "May He give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know Him better." The whole point of getting wisdom and revelation, that you're getting right now, is for one reason - that you may know, not know about, no, experience and

encounter Him better. The more I experience and know Him, the more I want wisdom and revelation, the more I get wisdom and revelation, the more I want to experience Him. Do you see how this thing works together? I get it. Some of you are here, and you're like, "But worship isn't my thing, bro." I got one for you. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation of people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His light." Worship takes a whole lot of forms, but you can't say, "I worship God in every way, but an expressive praise to Him." Why? Declare the praises; that is this.

Declare the praises. There's an action, there's a response, there's a movement to the goodness and the grace of our lives. You are literally created to worship God, so you don't get to say you're not into what you were created for. I mean, think about it, what it means to worship? What does it take? It takes faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and He is the rewarder of those who seek Him. It takes humility. We've got to humble ourselves under God that He may lift us up in due time. And then, it takes focus, fix your thoughts and your eyes on Jesus. What is the world struggling with? Doubt, pride, and distraction. Could it actually be that God invites us to worship Him more for our good than even for His? I get it. Some of you are like, "But I don't know the song." Okay, here's the good news. The Bible says, "Sing to the Lord a new song." Over and over again.

Sing to the Lord a new song, one you don't know. Why? Because God is always doing a new thing, so it should always be something new to sing to God. In fact, I hate to break it to some of you, the moment we know a song so well in here that we start singing it from our head instead of our heart, we call it a band song and we put it on the shelf. You're like, "That's why you stopped playing my favorite songs." Yes. Because the moment you sing it from your head, and you're not thinking about the words, it's religion. "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." Singing a new song is amazing, because it forces you to lock into the theology and think about the words, and be like, do I -- like, we're singing songs, "I lift my hands." Let me encourage you. Don't sing, "I lift my hands" if you don't lift your hands. Why? Because it's religion. You're hardening your heart. I'm honoring God with my lips, but my heart is far from me. You say, "But that's embarrassing to lift my hands." I know, it might cost you some dignity. Because I refuse to offer God something that costs me nothing. Some of you are thinking, "Okay, why do we like, shout and cheer and clap and do all the things and do 'Aaa-oo, ooh,' all those things? Why?"

That's like our battle cry. It's like a shout of victory. It's a shout of, we're overcomers, we're free. It's the Holy Spirit praying words and groans that we don't even know how to do. Come on. Some of you are like, "Hey, why do we take the same tag or chorus and sing it over and over? How many times are we going to say, 'Holy Spirit, we invite you in,' like, goodness, gracious." Number one, God is worthy of it until the end of your life. Number two, sometimes we've got to sing it that many times to actually start believing it. Number three, you're actually aligning with creation, because the Bible says, "The angels day and night declare, 'Holy, holy,

holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was who is and is to come.'" That's it. Over and over and over, because He's worthy of it.

Then, some of you are wondering, "Why do we make such a big deal about being late?" Because we're here to meet with God. He's worthy of my time. Some of you want to know, "Why can't you bring coffee in here?" Because this isn't a Breakfast Club. We're here to meet with God. Seriously, and it's not -- I hear you, you have tradition and expectation and all that. We're here to meet with God. I need my hands to be ready to receive from God, to give to God, to worship God, to write down what God's saying to me. I'm not a spectator. Why do we have students in the front counting, "Ten, nine, eight --" wouldn't you rather have students counting down in anticipation and in expectation of meeting with God than counting down the things of this world? Like, come on, do you see it, do you see it? Come on. I know I'm going fast. I'm ditching so much content, you have no idea. Stay with me for a couple more minutes.

Look at this. Do you remember when they brought the Ark of the Covenant, which is a picture of the Old Testament presence of God, into the city of Jerusalem, "As the Ark of the Lord was entering the city of David, Michal, daughter of Saul, who was David's wife, watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart." There are worshipers and there are watchers, and she despised her own husband for worshiping the Lord. She says to David, she says, "How dare you take off your royal robes and dance like a fool in front of those slave girls." David says, "I will humble myself before anyone at any time in order to honor my God." "Michal, daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death."

When we reject the presence of God, we become barren in life. When we choose to be a watcher instead of a worshiper, and we separate ourselves from God's presence, we become barren in life - barren in our mind, barren in our heart, barren in our work, barren in our family, barren in our destiny, barren in our calling, barren in who we were created to be. But when we choose to leap and dance and worship God with all our heart, we become incredibly fruitful. If you're sitting here, and I just need to say this to some of you, and you've been trying to have children, this is not for you. In fact, the Lord wanted me to say to you, may the power of the Most High overshadow you, may the Holy Spirit come upon your life, and may He grant you the desire of your heart. It's in His presence, that there's fullness of joy. This is for the rest of us to realize when I shut God out, I choose to become barren in all the things I do.

Whenever the Ark of the Lord was, the Ark of the Covenant, there was life and blessings and favor and prosperity, and the same is true today. Do you know what hell is? Hell is a literal, real place that anyone who rejects Jesus chooses to go. But what is hell? "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus" - who reject Jesus as Lord - "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power." Hell is the complete absence of the presence of God. We don't talk about it a lot. We don't spend a lot of time on it, nor do I want to, but you need to

understand that hell is where people who reject Jesus choose to go. That's a place where there is no presence of God.

Now, what's Heaven? Heaven is, "Then I saw a new heaven... and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them, they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.'" Heaven is the unending experience and encounter with God's presence. Isn't it interesting that we choose to live in our own mental hell? Isn't it interesting that we choose to live in our own hell on earth when we choose to become unaware of the presence of God? Catch it, it's not actually hell, because His presence is still holding you together and surrounding you. If you're a believer, He's in you. But when you give no thought to the presence of God, and you are not aware that He is with you in any way, you're literally choosing hell on earth when He offers us heaven on earth.

"Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "You can have as much of Me as you want." "Approach Me with freedom and confidence because of who Jesus is, and what He has done." Do you catch how that changes? See, when the King comes, so does his kingdom. When we keep saying, "God, Your kingdom come," we're not praying for a thing or an it, we're literally saying, "King, come." When the King comes, everything in his kingdom comes with it. In fact, if you can catch it, God is not in the kingdom, the kingdom is in God. God is not in the kingdom, the kingdom is in God. The Bible says, "For the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." When we're saying, "God, your kingdom come," we're really saying, "King, come, that I may know you."

We are passionate about the presence of God, and He is passionate about the presence of you. See, this whole thing was to bring you to this. Yes, we are passionate about the presence of God, but God is passionate about the presence of man. Yes, we sing to the Lord, but look, the Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save, He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, and He rejoices over you with singing. You might not want to sing a song to God, but guess what, God is singing a song to you - a song of hope, and love, and freedom. If passion is that what you're willing to suffer for, then God looked down and He saw us and He had such a passion. He was willing to pay such a great price that Jesus stepped out of heaven, took on humanity, came to our mess, and our brokenness, moved into our neighborhood with grace and truth, and then He went to the cross.

He was beaten, and He was whipped, and He was persecuted, and a crown of thorns was put on His head and He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" In that moment, the presence of God forsook Jesus, so it will never have to forsake you. Jesus went to hell, so you don't have to. Then, He rose again, and He showed the disciples the scars of His passion for you. He literally wears the scars, that which He was willing to suffer for, that which He paid a great price for, because that's how passionate He is about you. In fact, you remember when Jesus turned over the tables in the temple. There are very few things that are recorded in all

four Gospels, this is one of them. Jesus goes to the temple, the place where man and God would meet.

There are money changers with all these money tables, selling and buying things. They were making it difficult for people to come in and meet with God and Jesus, who we think of this little soft man, He grabs a cord, He turns it into a whip, flips over their tables, and drives them all out. The disciples remember Him saying, "Passion for God's house will consume me." Passion for God's house consumes Him. Who is God's house? You. God's house is not a temple made by man nor a church building made by man. No, no. God's house is the heart that submitted and surrendered to Jesus, and passion for you consumes Him. What's been happening in this series, Jesus has been turning over tables in our hearts. His anger is directed at anything that interferes with His love for you.

Anything that creates a distance between you and God, that's where His anger is directed. He has been turning over tables in our heart - tables of idolatry, tables of worldliness, tables of sin, tables of ungodly beliefs. In that we're reacting and we're not sure what's happening. What's happening is He is so passionate for you that it's consuming Him and He refuses to allow you to be lost to the brokenness of this world. When you start getting that He is passionate about you, you start to become passionate about Him. I've run out of time to pull more of it together, but I want to say this to you. If you're here and you're like, "Ah, that's a lot, man. It's kind of not for me. I wish I wanted more of God, but I really don't." Listen, that's okay. Don't focus on your passion for God. Focus on His passion for you.

Because the problem isn't that you don't want to worship, the problem is you forget how much you've been forgiven. He who has been forgiven much, loves much, but he who has been forgiven little loves little. In other words, our understanding of how much we have been forgiven in Jesus will directly equate to the worship and the passion we have for the presence of God. If you feel like it's dried up and it's not there, it's not that worship has dried up or that God has gone, it's that you've forgotten how much His grace has forgiven you. Everywhere you've ever been, everything you've ever done, anywhere you will ever go, and anything you will ever do has already been forgiven in Jesus.

He died for our sins once and for all to bring us to Him because He was passionate about the presence of man, and now we get to be passionate about the presence of God. This is what the kingdom looks like. Jesus, thank You that passion for us consumes You. Thank You, Lord, that You have called this to be worshiping church, a people passionate about Your presence. Teach us more, show us the way. May humility and hunger and holiness get stirred up in our lives. Thank you God that this is not religion, this is not a show, this is not a performance, this is not doing something from You - this is just about being with You.

Holy Spirit, I just pray that You would come and inhabit the praises of Your people. Fill our worship centers, fill our buildings, fill our homes, fill our families, fill our city, and most

importantly, fill us with Your presence. King, would You come, and bring all of Your kingdom with You? We're hungry and thirsty for more, Jesus.

Can I just encourage you if you feel like your hand is resistant towards the Lord, just even prophetically, pull it down, and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come and fill my life." In Your name, we pray. Amen.