

Introduction

Good Morning; good to see you this morning. Glad that you are here. If you have a Bible, I want to ask you to go ahead and open that up with me to the Book of Matthew. We are going to be in chapter 16 starting in verse 13, and this is going to be a continuation of our series. We are doing a series entitled "What On Earth Am I Here For?" It's actually more than a series. It's a church-wide campaign where every single one of our Life Groups, all the way from our preschoolers up to our senior adults are looking through a curriculum and asking the question "What on earth am I here for? What is God's purpose for my life?" As part of that, we are also studying the life of Peter on Sunday mornings here in worship. Then we are all enjoying a daily devotional together. I've downloaded that book to my phone. I've been listening to those daily devotionals on my way to work, and it's been a lot of fun. I'm really seeing some great things and God is reminding me of some very, very important and powerful truths. I hope that you are joining us in that. Now, as Pastor Tom already mentioned, if you have yet to pick up one of those devotional books but you would like to join in with us on that, then you can pick those up either here in our worship atrium, in our elevator lobby, or in the children's building atrium. They are only five dollars apiece. If you have a friend or a family member you would like to pick one of those up for, then you are certainly welcomed to do that today as well. Also, I've got great news from our Life Group front. I think the final numbers are still being tallied up a little bit, but this was just really incredible, I thought. We had asked everyone to take a chance and to try out a Life Group for six weeks and sort of average adult Life Group attendance for us as a church has been somewhere around 325 to 350 over the last year or so. This last week, we had 650 adults that went to Life Groups. I was looking at those numbers, and I see that 200 of you guys are trying a Life Group here at Houston Northwest for the very first time. Thank you for doing that. Thank you for taking the opportunity to discover what God's purpose is for your life. If you have yet to take the opportunity to join into a Life Group, I want to encourage you to go ahead and do so. There are lists of those Life Groups available around the church, and we would love for you to just jump into one of those and really discover God's purpose for your life. I really want to ask you to do that. So, this is what we are going to be doing today. We are going to be looking through a lot of Scripture. We are going to be looking at Matthew chapter 16 and actually the first part of chapter 17. Later in my sermon, I'm going to skip over to 1 Peter chapter 1, and we are going to read a pretty good section of 1 Peter chapter 1 as well. So what you are going to want to do is you're going to want to have something to hold your place in Matthew 16 and also in 1 Peter 1, so that way you're not losing time and flipping back and forth in between those. Alright, does that sound good? For three of you, "Yes." (Laughter) Alright, that's good. So here we go, let's pray and we will get started this morning.

"Lord, we're so grateful for Your Word; Father for the fact that You continue to remind us that You are our Father; you're Daddy. I don't know that I can ever completely comprehend that truth, and I don't even know if I'm supposed to, but Father I pray that I can walk in it, that I could trust that Your Word is indeed true, that You're my Father. Lord, my hunch is that there are many people who are here today who don't completely understand that. So Lord I pray that You would encounter them, encourage them, surprise them today, that in a moment of worship and of recognition and was clarity that You would simply invade their heart and just surprise them. Let them be surprised by Your love today God. Father I pray for us as a church that that recognition of who You are would change us. So Lord I pray that we would stop worrying about everything else and, for just a little while, hear the great truth that You love us. Lord, I pray this in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen"

Matthew 16, starting in verse 13. *"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist,*

others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' Then He strictly told the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ.

"From that time, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised, and Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke him saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord. This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man.'

"Then Jesus told His disciples, 'If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.'

"And after six days, Jesus took with Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Him. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when, behold, a white cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified... And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only."

What is happening in these stories? Just kind of some interesting scenes that seem to all flow right together. First, Jesus is asking them who He is, and then after that He is getting on to Peter. And then He is sort of giving this stern lesson, and then suddenly He is transformed before their eyes. What is taking place in this particular passage of Scripture? Well, I think that what is happening here is something that you and I really need to come to grips with and things that we have to discover and really begin to understand. You see, last week we talked about being called by God, that every one of us has been called. This week, I want us to see sort of what the first aspect and implication of our calling truly is. What is it that God is calling us into? What is it that God is asking us to step into, whenever He calls us?

1. A question to answer. (Matthew 16:13)

So I want us to start there, in verse 13. I want us to think about what it is that God is actually calling us toward. It starts with the question in verse 13, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Whenever you are called by God, there comes this moment where a question is posed to you, and you have to answer the question. This is the question: "Who is Jesus?" Whenever you are called, you can't really take a step into that calling until you come to a place where you answer the question fully and completely, recognizing, believing, understanding who you think that Jesus Christ is. Now I've shared this with you before, but when they came into Caesarea

Philippi, that city was a place where Herod was building a giant palace and then there, in the center of the town of Caesarea Philippi, there was a place to worship the god Pan. You may have seen pictures of him in your mythology textbooks whenever you were in high school. He's the guy that is kind of half goat and half human. He has these little horns on his head. You've heard of the pan flute. Pan would play the flute, and there was sort of this interesting worship cult that was surrounding him that primarily had to do with fertility. There was a lot of drinking involved in worshipping Pan and this sort of thing. So, Jesus is there, standing in the middle of the square. Now most people think that there was actually a statue to the Greek god Pan right there. And off to the side... it's still there to this day... there's a cave and that cave was a place where people would go into the cave to participate in the rituals and certain licentious acts that were involved with worshipping the god Pan. This cave had a gate on it that had been built by those who worshipped him, and supposedly the cave descended all the way down into Hades. Jesus stands there and He asks his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" After they say, "Well, some people say this and some people say this," He says, "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?" And then they say... Peter actually is the one who says it... "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In other words, "This statue that we're standing next to, this is a dead god. This is a false god. This is not a real god. But You, You're the Chosen One. You're the One that God has sent. You're the One that we've been waiting for. You are the Christ. You're the Messiah. You're It. You're the Anointed One. You're the One that God has given." And Jesus says, "Yes, you are correct. That is who I am." Whenever He tells them, "Yes; you're correct. That is indeed who I am." He then goes on and He says, "And I'm going to build My Church on you, and the gates of hell won't stand against it." There that cave right there with a gate that apparently they thought descended all the way into Hades. "The gates of hell won't be able to stand against it. These false gods and these gates won't even be able to stand against what it is that you want to do through Me." That's what Jesus says.

Whenever you are called by God, the way that it starts is this. It is that God looks to you and to me and He asks a question. "Who do you think Jesus Christ is?" The identity that you give Jesus will actually shape the opinion that you have about Him, and it will shape the action that you take in response to Him. In the same way that many people here and the disciples said, "well some say you're John the Baptist, some say Elijah, some say Jeremiah or one of the prophets." In that same way, many people in our world today have confused opinions about who Jesus is. You've probably heard them yourself. Maybe you even hold to one of these opinions that I am about to share. Some people would say Jesus was a good Man. He was kind of a moral example. Other people would say He was a political revolutionary who was a martyr, and He stood up for the people. Other people would say, "No, He was just a great spiritual teacher, to understand that all people are important before God." And those are all things that people have said, sort of popular opinion, but none of those are what the Bible says about who Jesus is. You see, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Chosen One. Identity matters because identity affects how we respond.

A few years ago, I was at a Christmas party with my wife. The Christmas party was kind of winding down, and things were sort of wrapping up. I go to the back of the house and I'm telling some of the people there "Bye; we're leaving," and I walk in and as I walk to the front of the house, and only person at the front of the house as the party is wrapping up is my wife and another man in the room. As I walked in, I see this man reach for my wife, hug her, and say, "I love you." (Laughter) Now, how would I respond in this situation? Well, you know, I've got these illegal weapons here, you know... you can respond in that way, and you might even be feeling for me that I should respond in that way. But what if I then told you that the man was her father? Well, then you're like, "Well, what's the big deal?" Right? You see, identity always shapes the way that we respond, doesn't it? Whenever we know who someone is, then it begins to shape our perception about the situation, and then it affects the way that we act forward. If you think that Jesus is

only a really good example and moral teacher, that will affect the way that you move forward with Him. However, if you think that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Chosen One, the Messiah, that will also affect your participation and your reception and your response to Him. What you think about His identity greatly affects how you act toward Him. You have to answer the question, "Who do you think Jesus is?" The funny thing is that then, once Peter says, "Oh, I've got it. You're the Christ, the Son of the living God," then he goes on and Jesus begins to tell them in verse 21, "*From that time, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*" And how does Peter respond to this? Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord! Jesus, You can't be like this. You can't be the sort of god that gets killed. You can't be that because You are God's Chosen One. You're the Messiah." And then Jesus says, "Get behind Me, Satan." I always wondered what it would be like to have Jesus call you Satan. I mean, that's about as low as it gets. But He says, "You are Satan because you are attempting to deceive. You are attempting to attack the things that God has planned for Me." This is the other thing that's exceptionally important about the identity of Christ. It is that many of us love the idea of a Jesus that is a holy God, but we don't want to take the other part of His identity and bring it in. If Jesus does not suffer and die for our sins, then He is not the complete Messiah. Simultaneous to that, we are scared of that. Why? Because we think if God would allow His Son to suffer, those of us who follow Him may suffer as well. Of course the truth, and we know this if we read the scripture, is that Jesus even guarantees that you will suffer if you follow after Him, and in suffering you will somehow discover and understand even more fully who God is. You must understand and know Jesus, not only as the Son of God but also as the suffering servant prophesied in the Book of Isaiah. You must know that completely as His identity so that you can know completely who God is. If you don't know that, then you're worshipping a sort of false God, a false picture of God. And so Jesus says... you have to know this... what does He say to him at the end of verse 23? "*You are not setting your mind on the things of God but on the things of man.*" You're trying to make a God that you want. I'm telling you who God really is, so I want you to take God as He really is, not the God that you think that you want. So then Jesus explains, "You'll have to suffer; you'll have to take up your cross and follow Me."

So this is actually sort of an interesting exercise. Peter has this moment where he is rebuked, and He says, "I want you to answer the question of 'Who is Jesus Christ?'" As he begins to discover the answer to that question, he begins to realize, "Jesus is not Who he originally thought He was."

Later in his life, in fact right before he died, Peter wrote a couple of letters and one of them we want to look at today, 1 Peter chapter 1, so turn over there. Right before Peter died, he wrote these letters. He had been the bishop of the church in Rome, and the church was experiencing persecution and he wrote a letter the believers that had been scattered all around the area. You can kind of imagine Peter; he is an older man now. He is reflecting back on the things that he has learned. He is reflecting back on the fact that he was scolded one day by Jesus, that he tried to make Jesus something that He wasn't. So there's this letter and he writes it, and the very first thing that he says, things that you might think that he would say... You might think that he would say, "This is what I want you to do. This is the way I want you act. How does Peter start his letter? In verse 3 he says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have*

not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

I think that this introduction really surprised me as I began to look at how Peter ended his life because Peter, to me, when you look at him early in his life. Do you know what he is doing? He is always the guy that is giving an opinion and jumping out there. "So, who do you say that I am?" Peter's the one who speaks up. Jesus says, "I'm going to die." Peter is the one who goes and he rebukes Jesus. I want you to just think about that for a second. How much nerve and self-confidence do you have to have to pull Jesus aside and say, "Hey, You're kinda messing this up. So, You probably ought to change Your strategy here, Jesus. Okay? Think about that." I want you to think, "What would it take for you to pull Jesus aside and rebuke Him?" You have to have a lot of confidence. You're kind of that active doer. You're that individual.

2. Gift to receive. (1 Peter 1:3-4)

But Peter has been changed, by the time you get to the end of his life because he doesn't start his letter by saying, "I want to share with you things that you have to do." The very first thing that he says, starting in verse 3 is this: *"Blessed by God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you..."* Why does that matter? Because Peter has been transformed by understanding the identity of who Jesus is, and he no longer starts with what it is that he has to do for God. He simply first exhorts the church and says, "I want you to just receive the gift." You see, it starts with this sort of question. You answer the question of "Who is Jesus?" but once you know who Jesus is, you're first response is not to do anything, it's just to receive this. I want to explain this because this has been blowing me away all this week. I've been thinking about this and the more I think about it, the more incomprehensible it is to me, and the more it really rushes past me. My entire life growing up in Church, I think that I always thought this, "You need to do great things for God. You need to sacrifice boldly for God. You need to go out there and share the Gospel for God. You need to get off your duff and go do something and be somebody great for who God is. That is not what Peter says. The first thing that you have to do is nada... nothing. Just sit still and bask in the glorious truth that God has chosen you as His child and receive the gift. If I could say anything to you today, your first call, the first thing that God has given you, is not that you need to go out and do something for the Kingdom. The first call that God has placed on your life is this: Just receive the grace that He has given you. Many of us struggle with that because we have been taught our entire lives, "You have to go do something." No; first you just have to take it, just receive it. This goes against basically everything I've ever been taught my entire life because my whole life I've always been taught, "Anything worth having is worth working really, really hard for." So since I'm a logical person I think, "Well, since God is the greatest thing to get, therefore I must work harder to get God than to get anything else, because God is the greatest reward I can have...which would be true if I was the one getting God. Many of us think like that. But here's the crazy truth of 1 Peter 1... with you ready? You're not getting God; God gets you. Whoa! (Clapping) I don't think we got that. Let's say that again. "You don't work to get God; God has worked to get you." He has pursued you in Jesus Christ. He has given Himself up on the cross. He has raised the dead, and He has done all of those things so that He can have you as His great reward. Many of us are tricking ourselves into believing that we have done something in order to achieve or work toward or gain or get God's presence in our life, when really, if you have God's presence in your life, back to 1 Peter, guess what? By His rich and great mercy, He gave you an inheritance. God got you. You are the reward for God, and so He is pursuing reconciliation in all the world, and He is coming after you. This is hard for us because we are Americans, and Americans, like man, we work, we get out there, we do it, we're making it happen. And

He says, "No, the first thing I want you to do is just receive this truth: I love you." That's hard for us isn't it? That the first and greatest thing that we have to receive in Peter and really in all of scripture, is that God's first call is that He loves you.

Have you ever really stopped to ponder the love of God? I mean, just kind of let it sink into you? I have a friend who said one day he was sitting in church and the pastor was talking about the love of God and all of a sudden it just kind of, for the very first time, came over him and he understood it. He was sitting there in church and he said he began to realize what God had done in order to get him. It just began to emotionally come over him and the more he thought about it the more he understood it. He began to weep and he said, "I'm this grown man and I'm sitting in church and I start to cry and then he said the more I thought about it the harder I started to cry, the more embarrassed I got. I tried to stop but I couldn't. He said, "Finally, I had to get up and leave the worship service and go out to my car and just sit there." He said, "I sobbed because I finally understood how much God had loved me and had received me." That's the kind of love that love is pursuing you with. In fact, that is the love that God has pursued you with; the sort of love that gives up a Son. The sort of love that God says, "I will do anything so that I can have you. I have chosen you. I have pursued you. I am chasing after you. Please hear Me. I want you to know that I love you. Please hear that." I think that so many of us we've heard "God loves us"; it's become a bumper sticker to us. We've lost out on the majesty and the power that the first great gift that we get is this. It's that according to His great mercy, He caused us to be born again to a living hope. He did it for us. it's hard for us. Do you know why it's hard for us? Because we don't like the idea of receiving something without earning it because it puts us in a position of debt; we owe someone something. We owe God something. It's difficult for us because suddenly we're in a place where we have no control.

For many of us, we think of God sort of as a landlord. Whenever I was in college, we rented an apartment and you know, it was a pretty simple transaction. Right? You pay the rent every month, and as long as you pay the rent on time, then you get to live in the place that you have rented. You pay the rent; they take care of the repairs and that sort of thing. They do that because you are paying the rent. I've never actually lived in one, but I've some friends who have from time to time have rented out rooms in their house. As they rent these rooms out, they say that it really kind of creates an interesting dynamic because at first it's business, but the longer that someone lives in the house, things become a little fuzzy because you start to know these people and you start to kind of have a relationship with them and sort of this business/friendship relationship begins to emerge. You already know this; it is not easy to be friends with people you do business with because there's always that messy time. Some of you have to supervise people whom you are friends with, and you know that becomes difficult from time to time because there comes a moment when you have to turn the screws, and you don't like doing that. Right? It's an awkward moment. What's funny is that many of us would never want to be in that sort of position from the top, but if we had been in that position down below, we would have certainly taken advantage of it. "Nah; they're not going to fire me. I mean, come on. We're friends." We've always been able to enjoy and take advantage of that relationship. This is the funny thing. It's that many of us think that many of us think of God as a landlord because this is the way that we approach our relationship with Him. "Well, of course my prayers should be answered; I paid the rent. Of course God should love and receive me; I've paid the rent. But it's never described as that sort of relationship, is it? Instead, He calls it what, in verse 4? "You are given an inheritance." An inheritance. How hard do you have to work to get an inheritance? I mean...you can't; right? I mean, think about this. At the end of the week, if you've worked hard all week and someone gave you your paycheck, you wouldn't be like, (with enthusiasm) "Ohh..Thank you so much!" (Laughter) You would just say, "Yeah, I worked for that; I deserved that." But, if you receive an inheritance, what happens? It blows you away because you've done nothing to receive that. One day I will die. Maybe my children will receive an

inheritance. It seems pretty unlikely at this point but perhaps they will. (Laughter) If that happens, what will they have done to have earned that inheritance? They won't have done a thing. They will have just been my children. That's it. That's why Peter uses the description of inheritance. You see, for many of us, what we are attempting to do is to earn our paycheck or to earn our keep with and before God. When Peter and Paul keep saying it over and over in their writings, and in fact Jesus Himself said, "You cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless you are like one of these little children." Why? Because He wants us to understand that you have to be in a position of powerlessness where you recognize you have nothing to give, nothing to offer that God simply brings you into the family of God, adopts you, and now that you are his child...His daughter, His son...then He gives you an inheritance, and you didn't do a thing to earn it. And that is a great gift to receive. Once you have received that gift, then it changes us. Some of us today... do you know what I would like us to do? I want us to leave here in a little while and just not even think, "I have to do something for God." I just want us to go home, some of us, and just think, "How can I just receive God's grace in my life?" Some of us today will just need to pray and say, "God teach me to stop earning your favor and just receive the blessing that You have given me." It seems so easy. It seems so scandalous and it truly, truly is.

3. The response to live. (1 Peter 1:6-9)

So when Peter gets to the end of this passage and he says, "So now, once that's happened to you, once you've received that grace," then in verse 6, ...*"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found..."* are you ready for this? *"...to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory..."* You see, once you answer the question of who Jesus is and you truly understand His identity, then you understand He is the God who died for me; therefore, I receive this grace. I don't do anything to get it; I just receive it. Have you ever received a gift so great that there was nothing that you could do? All you could do was simply just say, "Thank you." You were in no power to do anything. They just gave you a gift that was so incredible all you could do was say, "Wow; thank you. I can't repay you. I'm powerless to really even begin to repay you. Thanks." This is the sort of gift that is being described. So what does Peter say is our proper response? This is what he says, *"In this..."* verse 6 *"...you rejoice..."* Then you get down into verse 7, and then he says, *"... it will result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus..."* In other words, once you know who Jesus is, it makes you praise and glory and honor. And then he gets down to the end of verse 8, and listen to this, *"... you rejoice with joy that is inexpressible..."* You rejoice with joy that is inexpressible. Think back now to Matthew 17. What happened after Peter understood his identity and after Jesus said, "No, my identity is wrapped up in suffering." What happened then? Then He transfigured Himself. Transfigured basically means, "He dropped His flesh and said, 'This is who I am completely glorified. This is the way you will see Me in heaven one day.'" Do you remember what happened in Matthew 17 whenever Peter saw that? He bowed on his face and he worshipped. Back to 1 Peter, what does he say? He says this, "You will rejoice." Why? It will result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Once you see who Jesus is, you only really have one thing you can do. Say "Thanks." You worship. Once you really finally understand who Jesus Christ is, the only thing that you can do is you can worship. He says in verse 8, "I want you to ...*rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory..."*

When we start talking about worship, we're talking about what happens in here. Let's be real honest. Sometimes we come in here, and we are in synch in God, and sometimes we come in here and we're a

liar. I mean, we really don't want to be here. We certainly aren't thinking about what God wants for us, but this is what the scripture says: "Once you understand who God is and once you receive that grace that He gives in that moment, You only have one response and that is to say, "Thanks." And it is inexpressible.

Have you ever thought about some of the things that we do in worship and wonder why it is that we do them? Psalm 47:1 says "*Clap your hands*" and "*Shout to the Lord.*" Whenever I was a kid, I was taught that it was disrespectful and irreverent to clap your hands in church. I don't know if anyone else was taught like that. Of course, I normal also taught in church we should do whatever the Bible says. What was that verse again? "*Clap your hands*" and "*Shout to the Lord.*" So clapping your hands is in the Bible; we should do what it says. It's not wrong or irreverent. Why do we clap? Because we don't know what else to do. We're just trying to say, "Thanks," so we're clapping. Then it says, "*Shout to the Lord.*" Oh, oh. When was the last time that we really shouted that we were overcome with the response of God's grace. You don't shout because you're trying to be disruptive or distracting. What you are doing is you are recognizing at the revelation of who Jesus Christ is. You don't have words for it, so you just shout out and say, "Thank you, God, for what You have done." (Several in congregation say, "Thank you, God") There it is right there. (Clapping) That's what I'm talking about. Now listen to this one. Psalm 134:2, "*Lift your hands toward the holy temple and bless the Lord.*" And 1Timothy 2:8, "*I want men everywhere to lift holy hands in prayer.*" I was also taught that it was disrespectful to raise your hands in worship. Do you know why? Because they said you were distracting other people. Let's go back and read that again. "*Lift your hands toward the holy temple and bless the Lord.*" I want men everywhere to lift holy hands in prayer. is it distracting if you raise your hands? I guess if you stand in front of the person that is behind you and are trying block their view, that would be distracting. But that is not what's happening. What are you doing when you lift your hands? It's sort of an inexpressible emotion that is taking place. When you lift your hands in worship, what you are saying is, "God, You're all I need. You're it. I'm lifting my hands to You. It's an act of prayer, an act of adoration, an act of praise." If you're looking around at people thinking, "They're raising their hands. They shouldn't be doing that." No; they should because the Bible says. Now, this does not mean that you have to clap or you have to shout or you have to raise your hands. It means that if the Holy Spirit moves in your heart that that moment and says, "I want you to express with joy who I am and the grace that I have bestowed on your life." Then you say, "Alright; I'm doing it right now." And you can do that. You can feel the freedom to do that because scripture has said that it is okay to do that. But it doesn't just stop like that. You see sometimes whenever we talk about worship, people think, "worship is only what happens in this service, in this hour, on a Sunday morning." No, because Romans 12:1 tells us, "*Therefore brothers, in view of God's mercy, present your bodies...*" not just your heart, not just your mind, your entire fleshly body... "*present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship.*" You don't just come in here, raise your hands and shout to God, clap your hands, sing, listen to the Word, be quiet in prayer, be still... whatever. This isn't the only place where we worship. The other place where we worship is with our lives. Holiness and obedience to God is an act of worship. So whenever we talk about obeying God's commands and saying, "Okay, the Lord has commanded us that we should love one another, bear one another's burdens, and we should do those things. That is not saying, "I'm going to guilt you into doing this." That is instead saying, "Wow; God has graced me and poured His love out on me, so therefore what will I do? I will show him my worship by living in the way that He has asked me to live, because worship is an inexpressible way of saying "thank you" to God. So I just keep saying "thank you" to God again and again and again. You see, if we come in here and we worship falsely, then we are a liar. What would it look like?

Have you ever had this painful experience, I know I have... of walking up on someone or hearing a conversation on the telephone or something like that... you hear those conversations and you hear people

that you thought loved you, saying bad things about you. Have you ever experienced that before? that's painful isn't it? That's betrayal. I thought that you loved me, but now you honestly don't. If you come into worship and you're not really right with God and you stand up and act like everything's hunky-dory, that's lying. So what should you do? It is okay if you get to a place when everyone else is praising in the Lord, if what you need to do is get on your knees and bow before God and say, "God, I'm in a bad place right now. Help me see you. You see, I think a lot of times we think we need to come in here and do exactly what's happening at the same time. No. Worship just means, "I want to come in here with my life and get my life right, because holiness means that sometimes my worship are be a little incongruent with what's taking on around me, because I have to match up with what God is doing in my heart and if that means that I need to confess or repent, then I can certainly do that. So why do we do this? Well, you see, worship has been hardwired into each and every one of our hearts, and we all worship something. Every single day we are all worshipping something, whether that's fun or pleasure or our jobs or our status or our spouse or relationships or money, we're all worshipping something. So what the Bible says is very clearly and very simply this: "You need to worship Jesus, because when you worship Jesus, you actually bring God pleasure. You may not know this, but God gets pleasure when you worship Him. You know what's funny is that most of us, whenever we worship, we worship because we feel like it brings us pleasure, and it does, doesn't it? I mean, you've got a broken heart, you've been betrayed, or you've been hurt, nothing will make you feel better than worshipping. If you feel as if you were at the end of your rope and you have nothing left to give, guess what will happen? When you worship, you will say, "God, You are still there; You are still provider." That is good that whenever we worship it heals and corrects us. But sometimes I think we forget about the fact that the Bible says that God finds great pleasure in us worshipping Him. He loves it when we worship Him. So think about that now. We know we answered the question that Jesus is indeed God, The God who has graced us. We receive that love. Once you receive that grace, you receive that inheritance and you've received that love, all of a sudden you just want to say, "Thank you." When you say "Thank you..." oh, man... He says, "That's My child and My child gets it. My child gets it. He understands. She sees who I really am." So that would be my prayer and my wxhortation to us today; that we would recognize that the first call that God has placed on our lives is starting in this place, saying, "God, I see who You really are and what You have really done, and therefore the first thing that I will do is just say 'Yes' to it, say 'Yes' to the love that You have extended me through Jesus Christ. And then I will worship You because of that. I will worship You in this room, I will worship You with my life. I will give it all to You because You gave everything to me." Let's pray.

"Lord, thank you for what You are doing and for what You have done in our hearts. Father, I pray right now that some of us who have not known who you are would answer the question truthfully and rightly and they would say "yes" and say "You're the Messiah; You're the Son of God." They would recognize and know that today, for the first time. Father, I pray for those who have known that but have been running around trying to impress You or do great things for You would stop and simply receive the truth that You God love them and God just let them stop and receive that love, not do anything else just receive it. Then Father, finally, I pray for those of us who have received it, that we would be authentic in our worship, living holy lives and turning this place of worship into a place that brings You glory and honor. Father, may we worship You completely, whatever that means. Whatever You are asking for, God, we give it to You. We pray this in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."