

Lord Lift Me UP!

Overview

And for those who are part of 20 Church Kids, we ask for you to go around with Miss Erica. Wonderful. Thank you, friends. Thank you so much. What a pleasure to be here this morning among friends. Really.

Well, we just got kicked out of Europe. Actually, it's not true. We had a great time in Germany and in France. Wonderful services. And now we're back with friends. Isn't that great? But it's more than friends. We're brothers and sisters in Christ. You know, this morning I had my phone off. Actually, I wasn't near my telephone. So, Pastor Dave tried to reach me earlier. I guess when he did his thing with his toes. And I didn't get the call until quarter after nine.

Could you help me out today? I promise I'd do that any time. So, here I am. I'm trying to help David out. But actually, I'm helping myself out. It's so selfish. Isn't it selfish to come into the house of God and expect to be blessed? Is that wrong? No, it's not wrong. It's fantastic. So, I thought, what will happen? I might as well play a few pieces. Not a few, but we'll sing in between the messages.

I've got a message that sort of spills over from the ones that did in Europe. And if I'm not careful, it'll be in German. Because, you know, in Paris, we spoke in Paris at a large church. And I had to speak in German. And they translated me into French. And so, that's great. So, I only had to speak half a message. So, I came to Germany, I'm speaking in German. And I'm waiting for the translator. No translator. So, I gotta speed up. So, guess what? Several weeks ago, I was at another church that we've been to many times.

And just before the service started, they said, oh, by the way, you know, there's a Spanish congregation joining us today. And they're gonna have a translator. Would you mind? So, isn't that wonderful? How many different cultures and people can share in the same message of the risen savior? That is so fantastic. I'm so happy and excited to be sharing this today. So, I wanna play a song that I've, anything I've played here, you've heard before. So, just forget it. Actually, almost. This is a song, it's one of my favorite songs. I thought it was originally German.

Because Jonathan Powell did the translation, the words of this. But I found out that I think it was originally English. But who knows, it might have been French. I don't know, it doesn't matter. The text is so fantastic. And by the way, the choices of the choruses this morning, the worship team, you wouldn't have known what I'm preaching on. It's exactly what I would have picked. So, God's here this morning to bless us. This song is called, Lord, Plant My Feet on Higher Ground.

I'm pressing, here's the English version. I'm pressing on the upward way. New heights I'm gaining every day. Still singing as I'm homeward bound. Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. Lord, lift me up and let me stand. Now, listen to this. By faith, by faith, on heaven's table land. In German, the last two lines I find actually encapsulate this song so perfectly. Only in that way, only, as I put my feet on higher ground, it's a choice I make. No, I can't do it, Lord. You lift me up, let me stand.

Only then, all of my fears, my problems, all of my things disappear. And my spirit gets made whole. And my soul can rejoice. Only that way. So, this morning I pray, I'll play that song. I'll play a verse, a couple, whatever you'll hear. And then, I've asked, I know you will find it. And then, you can even stand up, you can sit, you can sleep. It doesn't matter.

Just sing a verse and a refrain of that wonderful song. So, here goes. And the devil wants to take it away from us. So, this morning, I want to speak on the topic of let God be God. So, the preface is, well, first, I'll read a text to you. You all know this text, in your sleep for sure. We are His workmanship. First of all, it says before that, by faith, on heaven's table, by faith are you saved? By works. That's a new translation, by the way.

Huh? No, no. What's it say? By faith are you saved? What? By grace. Exactly. And not of yourselves. It's the work of the Holy Spirit. And then it says, we are His workmanship. Now, take a load of this. We are His workmanship. If we're His workmanship, that means we're not done. He's not done with us. I know many of you create things. They're still in the process of being made. And sometimes, they're so nice, you put them up on the wall. Even that's not done. Because someone has to share this joy with you and look at it and say, oh, look what I, look what I, look what I find in this work of art or this piece of music or this creation or whatever, this sculpture, whatever.

But God, through Jesus Christ, is still working in our lives to make us like Him. And that can only happen if we allow Him to be God. That's the preface. But that's not all. Created for what? Good or deeds. Huh? That we might walk in them. You know, that verse really struck me many times, but quite late in life. And so I'm going to combine that with three other, two other verses and then get into the text of the message of let God be God. If I know that I'm His workmanship and I'm letting Him be God, then I have to understand a couple of things.

God's speaking through the prophet to His people, His chosen people, Israel. He says, my thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways are not your ways. And my word will not return void. The word of God is what brought everything into existence. His word. I'm His workmanship. He's working on me. Working on you. Working in our lives until we're ready to see Him. We're created in His image. And yet His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

His ways are deeper. He's unfathomable. So, Psalm 95 verse 7 and 8 says, today if you hear His voice, and you might be here today, either online or anywhere, today if you hear His voice, on this premise here, do not harden your hearts. Well, the question is, if we want to let God be God, the first thing we have to figure out is who is God? Well, there's just a few books written about that.

The history of mankind is filled with a search about who God is. If I didn't know who God is, I'd run away. But we get a glimpse of Him. We've heard this often, lately in our church especially. John 1. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was God. And the Word was with God and the Word was God. He spoke everything into existence. In other words, He's active and He breathes His Spirit. So God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, they're all together. In Colossians 1, verse 16, we read, By Him all things were created through Him and for Him.

You know, I've often wondered about this part of the creation story as you know crosses over Mesopotamia, the Chaldeans have some similar stories, and all of them have an element of truth, an element of something, but the Scriptures encapsulate it so perfectly because it's God breathed. And what I find amazing is that everything started with a Word. We can't understand that.

There's such power in our words. And because we're created in His image, now here's the difference. He spoke everything into existence except man. Man He formed with His hand. And how did He make him? What are we like? In His image, in His likeness we are created. This is very dangerous by the way. The devil knew how to use this. What did God do to make us alive? He breathed His Spirit into us. Well, take a load of this.

This is incredible to me, so incredible. When I think about it, it's overwhelming. I'll never understand it. We never will. We can't. We can't even get close to God. We can't even get close to His thoughts. We can only see little snippets of it and be blessed by the privilege of Him sharing that with us in our lives. But the incredible beauty of the power of His Word to create everything.

But you and me He made with His hand and breathed His Spirit into us. Just the other day I had a chance to share with somebody. Do you know the beauty of God in His creation is His creativity. God is creative. And when He breathed in us He made us creative. That's why we are His workmanship. He's working in us with His Spirit to do the deeds that He already thought a long time beforehand that we should walk in them. Isn't that incredible? I think that's incredible. What authority we have.

What authority the Word has. So, for starters, we have to say the first situation that we think about is who God is. Well, he was from the beginning. He is and He always will be. And the devil knew exactly what he was saying. The devil was the best liar there ever was. He could say to Adam and Eve, you know, if you do this you will be like God. He was not entirely wrong. You know, there is only one God. I am exalted above the heavens. We sang that this morning. He is the true and only God.

But He said, hey, but you know what? If you do this you will be like God. You will not be wrong because God made us in His image. That's the biggest fallacy among mankind. That's our biggest problem. We know who we are. We think we have a certain authority. We are created. Even if we don't believe we are created we have this power in us. It's God breathed.

And the devil knows how to twist that. And in doing that we don't accomplish the purposes that God has made for us to begin with. Number one. It's a life journey. Somebody told me once, you know, life is like going to school where the exam happens first and then the learning begins. It's got a lot of truth to it. So often we'd say, oh, I wish I'd never said that. I wish I'd never done that. I think you might have learned from your mistakes and then you go and do them again. And then you, and then by the time you're ready to pass on maybe you'll have learned something. That's how life is. It's just a journey.

Constantly finding out new things. Finding this, finding that. But the exam happens very quick. Sickness, death, illness. Learning how to walk even. Whatever it is we do. That test comes first. And then we learn from the tests. But you know, when we want to find out who God is in this journey, I've got to ask one big question.

In my learning process, in this journey, are my desires, my wishes, and my plans, do they further or hinder God's plan? I remember when it was, in the years, when all of us were in different stages in our lives and you read a lot, some people still read a lot, which is actually a good idea if you can. But the biggest problem is when we, so I always had this problem. If I read a book or something profoundly moving, it could be poetry, it could be history, it could be any literatures or something philosophical.

I said, Lord, is it bringing me closer to your heart or is it going to take me away from your heart? Do you know there's nothing wrong with opening our mind to a lot of things, but if the Holy Spirit lives in us and He's working in us, we can take these things and we know where they belong and how to appropriate them. That makes our journey actually valuable. That's how we become His workmanship in Christ.

It's a self-solving process. It doesn't happen right away. So are my desires, my plans, my thoughts, they are not His. He says, my thoughts aren't yours, but they can become pretty close to Him as I search the heart of God. So the first problem is problems. I thought when you're in your teens, you have a big problem choosing a career.

If you want to get married, finding the right person, that's a problem. Some people find it two or three times. I've played at a lot of weddings. I've suggested they don't ask me to play anymore because looking back on them, a lot of them didn't make it. I said, if you want your wedding to be the last, don't ask me to play. No, no, I'm just kidding. Things happen in life. You run into problems. Then when you're in your 20s, you get a job.

You want to get a job, you want to earn money. Then you have children. You know what? The problems never stop. And now when you get older, you practice flying downstairs like I did. And it doesn't work without a parachute. You run into problems all the time. Or you put your car in race mode. It's actually R, which means reverse, and you smash the guy behind you. Well, there's a problem. Learning problems. We run into problems of our own making very often. And sometimes we get bad news. We have a prayer list for people that are sick. And I appreciate the prayers of all of you here. Even as we travel and share the gospel, we share each other's burdens, but we have problems.

And these problems actually get us in the way of God's will in our life. And so my question is, first of all, are the problems that we experience, forget the desires now. My desire is to serve God. Okay, my choices and the problems I give it, are they keeping me from allowing God to do what He wants in our life? Now, that doesn't matter what age you are. You could be 60, 70, 80. It doesn't matter. Those problems are at 90, the same problems. It can hold us back from the blessings and the things that God has prepared for us ahead of time. That's the first thing I'd like to point out.

And with that comes fear. 2 Timothy 1 verse 7. God has given us a spirit of fear. Oops, wait a minute. What's it say? God has not given us what kind of a spirit? What is it? Power. What's this? Love. And a sound mind. What a combination. See, there's where the power is. John said, in love there is no fear. He cast out all fear. And this is at a time when they were being persecuted. When there's real fear for your body, for your livelihood, for your being able to live.

But you know, as we put this in the perspective of eternity and say, wait a minute, I want to let God be God in my life. I recognize you are the almighty. You are the only God. Anything I choose to do, let me do it according to your plan for my life. So your will can be accomplished. Not only in my life, but in the life of others. And that's how the power of God multiplies. So let's not have a spirit of fear because love casts out all fear. 1 John 4, 18.

But then there's another thing. We might have all this. We might have the knowledge, okay, God is God. Okay, I know I have problems. Oh Lord, take my desires and this. But take, what about this? The next step is to acknowledge who God is. That's not that easy. The best example I can think of in scripture is Jacob. There are very few people that had as many promises for their life as Jacob did. This guy, actually when you think of him, when you read up on him, he says, God, I don't know. He was sure, he knew how to get what he wanted, didn't care how. And then he got what he didn't want.

Got the wrong wife for his wedding night. He didn't expect to see her. Got Leah instead. It worked seven years. Can you imagine? He has to work another seven years for the other one. That's the time. Can you imagine doing that? No, anyway, well. Yeah, but you know, it's on the way there at Bethel. When he saw the heavens, remember the ladder in heaven? It's Genesis, Genesis, Genesis. German is Genesis. He asked the book, what was it? So it's Genesis. Sorry.

Chapter 28. Remember? He's at Bethel and he sees the ladder. And you know, it's really interesting about that passage. If you read that carefully. Oh, he saw the presence of God. Oh, and he said, this is my place. This is a place where he lives. This is where he is. He's here. But then he goes and makes a deal. I mean, how can, I can't see it. If, you know, this might be worth reading. Genesis chapter 28, verse 10. Let me just go there. You can find it too if you want. Genesis 28, verse 10. Oh, I was looking at the German Bible. It's in a different spot.

It's laid out different. I've got the English one. I'm so sorry. But he said, he dreamed. He said, now Jacob went out from Beersheba and came to a certain place and so on. He says, at the end, he made a vow. Verse 20. If, if, if. Can you imagine? God spoke to him.

He made a vow. If God will be with me. But he was just with him. He was with him on the journey. But no. If God will be with me. And if he will keep me. That's many years. I mean, I can't figure this out. You know, maybe you've made a deal with God. Maybe you said, Lord, I need to hear from you now. I need this and this done. Or I lay a fleece out. And I want this and this done. But God's timing says, if we, that's us.

If you will do it then, then. And if you will give me food. And in other words, increase my wealth. Give me a big family. Make me healthy. Then you shall be my God. He made all these conditions. Now I would say, God promised him all this stuff. God promises you and me so many things. And so often we say, well God, you know, I've still got a couple of things that I'd like to do. I need to hear from you for this job. I need to hear from you.

I need to hear from you for this healing. I need to hear from you. And then we make these rules and conditions and put them here and there. And yet we know who he is. He's the creator. We know that my desires, I want to please him. But, but if, if, if. And I want to tell you something happens. At Peniel. In chapter 32 of Exodus, we don't have to go through the details. That's when he wrestled with God and he knew the moment came. And you might be here this morning. I don't know. If you know the Lord and you've been walking with him intimately, you know exactly. There's a moment in time where he said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.

And it's a moment that is the intersection of everything that happened before. And that happens right there and then. Then I will know you are my God. Do you know, there's a couple of, I won't use the German. I'll just use English here. Be still and know that I am God. I will give them a heart to know me. That I am the Lord and I will be their God. Ezekiel 36, 28. He will give them a new spirit, a heart of flesh. That's pliable. So they can receive him and revive the old, the tired people.

So today, if you hear his voice. It's funny, Hebrews quotes that as well. If you hear his voice, don't harden your hearts. But there's another thing about this and I, and God is gracious. His mercies are new every morning. His faithfulness is great. But you know, I think the biggest problem that you and I have in our life is our pride. Whatever God has endowed you with is your gift, not mine. What he's given me is the gift he's given me. And what he gives, he gives without repentance. But you know what happens in our life? How often have we not heard this? Oh, look what I did. I just built this house.

Look at my family. Oh, look, look, look, look. And all the accolades you read about on the tombstones and all the obituaries. You know, it's not like that at all. Our pride keeps us from knowing God. I'm speaking this for myself. Do you know when, when you grow up in an environment where you do many things, you're involved with activities that are in the limelight and you're competitive and you have to put your way through. It can be in business, too. It doesn't matter what, in what area of life it is.

And you succeed. It's so easy to fall into the trap of pride. Do you know when, when you, well, we don't have to go into the detail of pride, but Jacob says, half-brother of, and it's in James, too.

It's in, I say Jacobus, it's in German. It's James in English. Sorry. Excuse me, I just got back from Germany. I'm messing up my, the words. Jacobus is James. There you are. And James is a half-brother of Jesus and he said, God resists the proud. But to the humble, what does he do? He puts him down to the ground and leaves him there. Huh? What does he do? He lifts up the humble. And those are the kind he can use. So if we let God be God, the only way it can happen is if we humble ourselves before him.

That's the only way. And do you know what? I don't know where you are in your life, in your discussion with people, with friends. I know for myself, that's the biggest problem that I've had to deal with and continue to deal with. It's, there's something about knowing who we are in Christ through His workmanship, but at the same time to be humble and pliable in His hands. That's a, that's the gift of God. You see, that's why we are His workmanship, created in Christ.

But when He, when God breathes His Spirit in us, we become pliable. We become usable. And our pride falls away. But God cannot use anyone with pride. He pushes against it because that's the sin of the devil. That's what destroys life. That's what destroys relationships. That's what destroys churches, families, homes. It's to be so proud and not to be breakable and pliable.

So, I come to the fourth point near the end. To let God be God, I have to make a choice. And there's power in our decisions. And the first choice is the words. I, I've played, I was, I was gonna play it this morning. I, I'm not so sure I should. I don't think I will. It's too long. It's six minutes long. It's a piece by Liszt. That's for another day. But the poem that this piece is based on is wonderful.

It's by Freilichgrat, a romantic German poet, who talked about loving, loving as long as you can, but watch your tongue most carefully because with the words you say, oh, I didn't mean to hurt you, but the other person that you just hurt with your tongue goes away and weeps. And you know, to take our words back is impossible. We can't take them back.

But we can lay them at the throne of Jesus and say, Lord, help me. Help my words to be your words. Help my thoughts to be closer to your thoughts. Plant my feet on higher ground so my heart is filled with your spirit so I can say what you want me to say and think what you want me to think and take away any pride that stays in the way of making you usable, me usable for you. And if I make mistakes, well, 2 Peter 3 verse 9, he's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It's an incredible thing, Psalm 1 verse 1. It's a great psalm because it actually describes this whole message.

You understand, blessed is a man but he starts with no. Who doesn't? Who does not walk in the council and does not stand and does not sit. Does not do those three things. Walking, standing, and sitting. These three actions. These three motions. We do not do those but what do we do instead? We delight ourselves in the law of the Lord. That's a choice. This morning, you and I have a choice. It doesn't matter how long. It doesn't matter how old and how inexperienced makes no difference. We have a choice.

Today, I want to not just start over. I want to continue. I want to know you better.

I want to walk closer to your heart. I want to let you be Lord. Of my life. Amen. So, I thought to connect that is you know the song He is Lord. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead. You see, Jesus showed us that way. He made it possible and He's working in our lives today. Working in your life today. Forming you. Making you in His image.

Creating something good out of you. The work that He's prepared ahead of time. Isn't that wonderful to know? Only when He is Lord. I'd like us to stand up and sing that chorus. And then, after we do that, we'll go over to I surrender all. All to Jesus I surrender. And if you're here this morning and you don't know that. You have never experienced this. Or you watch.

To surrender all your heart to Jesus. Let Him recreate something beautiful and then create something new in you. That's the power of letting God be God. So why don't we stand up. I'll play the intro of that song. He is Lord. First verse of the song. You know I I'm sorry. You have a seat. I had the wrong key because I knew we had to go there and then I forgot to get out of there. So you sing. It happens you know in life. I couldn't sing that song for years. I knew who Jesus was. I experienced Him as a young child.

I experienced His healing touch in my body when I had ulcers. When I was 12 years old I had three stomach ulcers. I passed out at the table. And my dad carried me up and I got meds. Strong meds. Didn't go away. It was painful. I still remember to this day the pain was excruciating. Partly my fault because I'd never slept. But that's part of the deal. And I believe that if I called on Him He would heal me. So I closed the door and I said Lord Jesus I believe You can heal me right now.

You're here. Just take away this pain and heal me of these ulcers. So to prove that I believe You I took all the pills and flushed them down the toilet. And all the liquid there's some liquids I had to drink. Threw them down the sink. And I've never had an ulcer a day in my life. Well it sounds pretty encouraging doesn't it? It was. I kept it private. I wouldn't tell anyone for a long time because those kind of things await. Really I never had it. I've had other problems but I could never say I surrender all. I don't know why.

I could play it. I played that song so many times. I like that song. I love the way it goes and the harmony and the text. Oh the text is fantastic. But I could play it but I could never really deep in my heart say I surrender all. And most of you know my story when I crushed my hand in the garage door in 1990 when we moved to our new house. And I'm 38 years old and we've got two little kids and this is my career. I was playing concerts.

I'm done. I'm I almost lost my two fingertips in my left hand. The whole door went right shut down. I pulled thinking I had the handle I had the cracks and the whole door shut right on my hand. You know the story but and three and a half years later I experienced a miraculous healing that my hand is completely restored 100 percent right away. But that didn't happen nothing I could do about it by the way. There's nothing you can you can't manipulate you can't think your way into health when that kind of thing happens. It was at that time in our life for my wife for Linda and me that we decided for some reason I don't know what I couldn't tell you what it was. I can't tell you.

And that's what I'm saying is to you as a church family as friends. I don't know what it is. You might be hanging on to something a thread of something that does not allow God to be God in your life. It could be a dose of pride it could be the timing of things something you want to still do yet that you want to do that's in your heart and I'm encouraging you today to let it go. Maybe today's the day you say Lord I give you absolutely everything. You know the young man who was so wealthy he did everything he did everything right.

And Jesus was sorry to see him go. He doesn't demand everybody to sell all of your your goods and your things. No what he wants is your heart. He wants my heart. He wants to be make it a heart of flesh that he can work with so that his spirit can live in our lives and we can do his will that he and the things he created for us to do. So I'm encouraging you this morning to hang on to that truth.

We are his workmanship and only then will we be his workmanship as if we surrender everything to him. And if there's anything in your life anything in your heart that's causing God not to be who he is in your life and in my life bring it under the cross of Jesus. He is Lord. He is Lord. He's alive. He's risen from the dead and he is Lord.

And I would suggest they close the service now it's 12 that we sing in closing this wonderful song Hallelujah and I'll play it in a key that you can sing it in. Why don't we stand up you all know this Hallelujah Hallelujah and then I'll play it and we'll close it. Our separate ways today may your spirit live and dwell in us.

May your Holy Spirit lead and guide our thoughts. We not only invite you into our hearts again and in a fresh way but we ask you to find dwelling there. Help us to do nothing that would grieve your spirit in our life.

Nothing that would hinder the work that you've prepared that you're working at in our lives beforehand. That we would be a finished product in your hands and that you could say to us well done. Help us to find your will and seek your will in all that we do and we ask you to give us your special blessing for this week.

The many challenges that everybody's facing there are so many in our perilous tier in our church and our families and our homes. We commit them all to you with a thankful heart because you are Lord of all you're the King of Kings and you are our Savior and we thank you for this morning and your word. Amen.