

The Messiah Complex: Get Oil

INTRODUCTION

There's no more effective way to experience intimacy with the Godhead, the Trinity, and the reality to which we have been graciously invited through the gospel of Jesus, than through the paradigm of the Bridegroom God.

God has beckoned His people to intimacy from the beginning. The ability to really experience that intimacy is significantly enhanced in the hour of the preaching of the Bridegroom God. Meet Him and encounter not just God, but the Bridegroom God who is beckoning the people of God into deep heart engagement with the Bridegroom God.

Look at Matthew 25:7: "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps" (Mt. 25:7). They all responded. The cry went forth. Every one of the ministries was responding to this cry. It's the forerunner cry of verse 6. "They trimmed their lamps." Note in verse 7, as in verse 1, that all these ministries are virgin ministries. They're redeemed, born-again believers.

Here's the dilemma in verse 8. Here's where the great crisis begins in terms of ministry. There are a number of crises going on, but this is the crisis related to ministries in the Church. It's in verse 8. It's the ministry crisis, and it really will be a ministry crisis. This is a prophetic hint that will have an actual fulfillment across the earth. Remember in verse 7 how they all arose. They're all responsive now; they're all trimming their lamps. They're pruning some of the things in their lives that need to be pruned. They're making the necessary adjustments. Look at what the foolish ministries say to the wise ministries: "Give us your oil. Give us your reality in God" (Mt. 25:8, paraphrased). The word *your* is key. The oil is a personal encounter. It's our private history with God in intimacy and communion. No one can give you this oil. This is the interaction. It's the deep heart interaction of your heart and the heart of God.

THE SERMON THAT'S BORN OUT OF THE HEART REACHES THE HEART

"Give us your reality and your authority in the spirit." The authority in the spirit flows out of reality. It's the hour when God's ministries need to be the voice and not an echo. It's not just repeating a biblical principle, but resounding with authority that comes from a living experience in our being. "Give us your authority that flows out of your reality."

We want to speak and move the hearts of others. It has been said many times that a sermon born in the mind reaches only the mind. The sermon that's born in the heart reaches the heart.

A CRISIS IN MINISTRY THAT BEGINS WITH A CRISIS IN THE HEART

There's going to be a great ministry crisis, when the foolish ministries say to the wise ones, "Give us your reality so that we can have your authority so that we can have a voice and are no longer just an echo."

Why? Here's the crisis right here. Here's the outward crisis. The inward crisis is the lack of oil, but the outward crisis is the one that will really cause trouble. The one that most people will focus on is the outward crisis. The real problem is the inward crisis, which is the lack of oil of these ministries. The outward crisis is, "Our lamps are going out." The day is coming, and we're at the beginning of it. It's just the beginning of the beginning. I

can see the trend. It doesn't take a particular amount of discernment. I can see the trend where some ministries that are large today won't exist at all.

There won't be a trace of them in ten and twenty years. Ministries that you've never heard of right now will be ministries that God is using to release His power in the earth in biblical, eschatological proportions.

The size and impact of the ministry doesn't matter. That's not our number one goal in life, but that's what I'm talking about right now. In terms of impact of ministry it doesn't matter what the size is in the year 2000. It really doesn't. King David went from being a little harp player out in the back hills of Bethlehem to the greatest king in Israel's history except Jesus. It can happen in a moment. Of course, you've heard it said that kings can be appointed in a day; deliverers are formed in a lifetime. God is going to raise up His deliverers, but right now He's forming them. It's called oil in their lamps. The great deliverers that are being formed on the backside of the desert, in the Bethlehem back hills right now, those who will be well known in twenty, thirty, and forty years, many of them are completely unheard of right now. But while they're unheard of by men, heaven is listening to them a lot. They have a voice in their private life in God. They're cultivating their secret history in God right now. Hell doesn't know them yet, but hell will know them. The devil said, "Paul I know, Jesus I know, but who are you" (Acts 19:15, paraphrased)?

God is raising up deliverers. Right now they're getting oil in their lamps. They're known in heaven now, but they'll be known on the earth and they'll be known in hell. "Jesus I know; Paul I know. Who are you?" That's what the demons said in Acts 19. God is raising up deliverers.

THE CONFESSION OF THE FOOLISH VIRGINS

This phrase in verse 8, "Our lamps are going out" (Mt. 25:8), is the confession of the foolish virgins. It's their testimony: "Our ministry is dried up." What a statement! Beloved, there's going to be a tremendous shift. For lack of a better way to say it, I'll say it in a kind of carnal way. The power base in the kingdom is going to shift dramatically. The reason I'm saying that is not to make the unknown ministries happy. If it makes you happy, then you're not ready. It's not about being rich and famous one day: "Finally I made it! Mom, I told you I would make it." It's not about that.

When I say, "power base," I'm talking about the political, ecclesiastical power. I'm talking about influence with people. Just so you'll know, that was the problem that happened socially with the Pharisees and this young group of fishermen. The power base shifted. A lot of people ended up dead, for real. When the power base shifts, then martyrdom breaks out. The Pharisees had lamps until the new guys from Galilee who were the fishermen came on the scene out of the anointing of the Spirit. All the people began to go, and all the money and all the honor went with these young fishermen. The Pharisees didn't like it. A lot of people died in the wake of this.

A lot of disturbance takes place when the lamps go out. Ministries that are used to having lamps don't typically respond well when their lamps go out. They get angry at the new ones with lamps. That phrase, "Their lamps went out," makes me shudder. I don't say, "Hot dog!" I say, "Oh Lord." That's a frightening verse in the flesh. Men never give up their positions of influence and economics easily. They never do. Whether they name the name of Jesus or not, it's very rare, but that's a graceful process.

I love how Paul Cain says it. He says, "No one dangles gracefully." The coming decades are going to be a time of tremendous transition. God is raising up deliverers now.

ESCALATING SIN, DEMONIC RAGE, AND DIVINE JUDGMENTS

The question we need to ask is, why are their lamps going out? We looked at it a little last week. It's because of the escalating sin that's breaking forth, the rage of Satan and the judgments of God. Those are the three reasons. It's sin breaking forth, Satan's rage being vented upon the human race, and the judgments of God shaking everything that can be shaken. The combination of those three things—escalating sin, demonic rage, and divine judgments—causes complete upheaval in the human race.

MURDER, IMMORALITY, SORCERY, AND THEFT

It's escalating sin. Whatever level of mature anointing it takes to move a heart today will take a significantly greater manifest authority in the days to come because of the amount of people demonized. It's the increase of immorality. There are four major sins in Revelations 9:21: murder, immorality, sorcery and theft. Those are the four primary, manifest sins in the human race at the end of the age. Revelations 17:2, which we looked at last week, says, "The nations will be drunk with fornication" (Rev. 17:2, paraphrased). Beloved, what's happening in the technology industry today in the next ten and twenty years and what's going to happen in the realm of sexual perversion is beyond anything we can fathom today. The nations in Revelation 17:2 and Revelations 18:3 will be drunk with their pursuit of counterfeit passion. They'll be drunk with it. It says in Isaiah 63:6 that the people will drunk in their fury, drunk in their anger against God. They'll be enraged at God.

Evangelism is going to be the real deal, or it's not going to happen. Imagine the kind of anointing it will take to preach effectively to multitudes that are drunk with fornication. Their lives are steeped in sorcery. Murder is everywhere.

You say, "Murder everywhere? What are you talking about?"

Of course, the best example we have in natural history is the Nazi regime and the Stalin regime. Fifty million died in six years. There were fifty million. Murder was at its highest level imaginable in human history for six years. I don't mean all fifty million were murdered, but millions—maybe twenty or thirty or forty, no one knows for sure—were murdered. It wasn't just because of Stalin or Hitler. The shocking thing was how many professionals or cultured, educated men who were ten and fifteen levels of hierarchy down participated in murder when they had license to do it. You take a man's heart that's drunk with immorality and steeped in sorcery, and murder happens in all kinds of ways.

Then there are thefts: and again, in the Nazi regime one of the great statements is that a huge reason they murdered so many people in Russia and Nazi Germany was so that they could take their property. They had the generals and all the commanders who were the little guys ten levels down use their little badges to send people to murder camps to get their property for theft. It was motivated by theft.

I studied this six-year part of history because it's the clearest picture of what's coming under the reign of the Antichrist. It's murder and theft, immorality and sorcery. A billion people are going to get saved out of that. What kind of an anointing will be needed for a billion people? Right now people are angry with the Church because they ask for too much money, ministers are unanointed, they do dumb stuff, and they treated their parents badly. That's kind of the big thing today: "My dad was in the church. They got mad at him for no reason. I'm never going to church again."

Beloved, today we can hardly win them back. The level is going to be so much more intense than that. It will be murder, sorcery, being drunk with immorality, and thefts. It's accumulated demonic blindness on one end, and that's evangelism; it's the potential for the heart to get shut down even in the kingdom. There's only one answer: the authority of Jesus. There's only one fascination, and that's with God's beauty. Whether it's the billion getting saved from that darkness—and I mean darkness we can't even fathom—we're talking about what it would take to lead the evil men of the earth to the Lord. It's that kind of an anointing to break through the demonic strongholds. What is it going to take to keep a church in this kind of society from going over the edge into darkness? It will take one thing and one thing only: the anointing and the authority of the Lord. It will take oil in the lamps. It's really going to take oil in the lamps for real.

CANNED SERMONS WILL BE WORTHLESS IN THE HOUR OF CONFLICT

I don't mean to be really mean, but it doesn't take a lot of oil right now to build a 5,000-member church. You can build a 5,000-member church with some excellent oratory and some better leadership skills to organize people. You get some gifted people, some good music programs; some good "touch the heart" programs to minister to their felt needs, and excellent administration. I'm not criticizing it, but my point is this: it doesn't take significant supernatural power to build a 5,000-member church today. It takes a certain amount of synergism of a gifted team. The Lord is in the midst somewhat, and in some places more than others. All that's not going to work at all. When this thing breaks forth, they don't care how big your church was and how big your mailing list was back in the 1990s. They don't care. They want to know if the demon in their child comes out when you visit their home. That's all they care about. They want to know if, when you talk, their heart is moved under the authority of God towards God. They don't care what your degrees are; they don't care where you've been; they don't care how famous you used to be. That doesn't matter. Nothing will matter but meeting the real need of the hour.

The canned sermons that worked faithfully for decades will be worthless in the hour of conflict. They'll be worthless, worthless. Men will look at some of this and say, "You're pulling that on me right now in the hour of crisis?"

Again, I'm an amateur historian. My fascination with World War II is really only because of eschatological reasons, because of the end-times. It's a deliberate dress rehearsal hint to the human race of what's coming. I have no interest in and of itself except that it gives me the clearest picture of cultured societies turning demonic in a moment's time. It's part of the Lord's mercy in the midst of all the evil to give the human race a snapshot because it happens so suddenly. The great lament was the ineffectiveness of the Church in Europe and in Russia. I don't mean just the fearfulness. There were a number of men and women who stood their ground and were actually martyred. I'm not talking about fearfulness, although the majority were fearful in compromise. I'm not talking about boldness versus fear right now; that's a big issue. I'm talking about the power to deliver the nation with signs and wonders and through the spoken word. Even the bold came up short when it came to the anointing. It was the anointing to stand strong, but not the anointing to affect many people.

God is going to open up stadiums. They're going to be filled with God's people coming in with signs and wonders. There are a lot of lamps going out. In the midst of it a lot of wars are going to break out, if you will. I'm using that in a very figurative sense. A lot of conflicts will break out in the Church when the lamps go out. My point is that verse 18 isn't a small verse. This is a massive reality right here.

“GIVE US SOME OF YOUR REALITY, GIVE US SOME OF YOUR INTIMACY”

I guess because I've been a pastor for twenty-five years that I know what happens when the lamps go out. Sometimes even pastors don't like it. The foolish ministries said to the wise ones, “Give us some of your reality.” This is the inward crisis, which is the lack of oil. The outward crisis is that their ministries dry up. It's simply because the crisis of the hour takes men and women, old and young, who have authority flowing out of reality in their inward life. Their musical giftedness, their oratory skills, and their mental abilities to do theology won't deliver anyone apart from the anointing. That really, really, really is what's coming. I feel such a passion in my heart to convince people of the urgency of the hour. A king is appointed in a day; it takes a generation to develop a deliverer.

SPEAKING WITH AUTHORITY THAT FLOWS OUT OF A HISTORY OF REALITY

Beloved, in verse 6 the cry comes, “He's coming” (Mt. 25:6, paraphrased). In verse 7 they all rise up. They all rise up, yes; they're trimming their lamps. They're making the necessary adjustments. They're getting rid of that old, burnt wick that they have to cut off and prune away. They're making the real, necessary adjustments in their lives. However, even in the midst of responding to the Bridegroom in verse 6, and in even in the midst of rising up, they ran into the surprise of their life. They had no authority in the Spirit. They said, “Lord, we're responding. We're saying yes.”

He says, “Yes, I know you're saying yes. This is more than that. This flows out of your history.” You can't get a history in God in a few weeks or a few months. In verse 6 they said, “We heard the message,” and in verse 7, “We made the adjustments. We trimmed the lamps. We all arose. We took action. What more do You want?”

The Lord says, “I want you to speak with authority that flows out of a history of reality.”

They say, “Well, how do we get the history?”

IF WE DON'T ADORE HIM, WE WILL ACCUSE HIM IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL

He says, “Start now.” Their foolishness becomes evident in verse 8 when their lamps go out. They say, “We're responding. We want it.” They're eager all the way from verse 8 to verse 13. They're very eager. They aren't resistant. These are truly godly ministries. They're just empty. They're eager, but they're empty. They're sincere, but they're shallow in the Spirit.

“I've practiced the piano for years.”

“I've studied theology!”

“I worked on preaching gifts!”

“I studied leadership skills!”

Those are great things to do. But it's not the same thing as having spiritual depth. They had no oil. There was an inward crisis. Some think that because they hear the message it's all going to start flowing. No, it doesn't work that way. Last week I was talking to you and to myself personally that our hearts would be protected. If we don't adore Him, we will accuse Him in the great shaking that's coming. If we're not in love with Him, we will be vulnerable to accusing Him.

WE WILL SPEAK AND LIVE FROM THE DEPTHS OF REALITY IN THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

I'm not talking about us individually right now. I'm talking about the ability to deliver others. I'm not talking about my heart; I'm talking about my ability in the anointing to deliver others. I'm now thinking of my city, my neighborhood, my friends and my family: the ones I want to have a delivering word. I'm not thinking about being rich and famous in ministry; I'm thinking about getting the devil out of that person who has knocked on my door for help. I don't want to be empty. When they say, "What's going on right now? Fifty thousand people just died in the earthquake. I need answers," I don't want to say, "Well, all things work together for good. That's what I learned in Bible school."

I want to look them in the eye and speak with depth, reality, and authority about what's going on. I want to convince them that there's a plan so outrageously wise and glorious for the human race. I want to talk with conviction. I want to talk with depth and with power. I want to heal the sick and cast the devil out of them. I want to show them a way that sustains me in the midst of a society drunk with fornication, and that my heart is soaring without the counterfeit passions. I want to show them how to live in the midst of drunkenness, immorality, murder, and sorcery: to show how to hold my heart in the midst of threats and the fears of those around who don't like me, but soaring with my primary reward being my intimacy with God. I want to have authority when I talk to them. It's not like the society around is going to say, "Gee Mike, you're really a good guy. You're an upbeat guy. It's really neat that you stand with energy for everything that we're against. That's wonderful."

Beloved, there's going to be fear everywhere. The things that are burning in my heart and burning in your heart are going to quadruple with intensity before the Lord returns. These things will cause so many people to be mad. People are going to knock on our door and say, "How do you keep this thing? How do you keep from yielding to the sin? How do you keep from giving way to the fear of the people who you're making mad?"

"I carry my primary reward with me, which is intimacy with the Godhead."

"Is that just something you're hanging onto by faith?"

"No, it exhilarates me and it fascinates me! I live somewhere far away from here. I don't need to be drunk with immorality. I don't need sorcery and false power; I have real power. I have more power than the demons that you're worshipping. I have more fascination than the perversion you're dealing with. I don't have to steal and kill from anyone. I don't have to murder anyone. I have a relationship with the God of all the earth. He will supply my needs."

They say, "Where is this coming from?"

Beloved, a canned sermon is never going to deliver broken, blinded people in the hour of crisis. When the sin increases, when the rage of darkness increases, and when the shaking of God increases, the voice of the Lord will be in the midst of His people. The voice of the Lord will shake all the powers around (Ps. 29:9, paraphrased). The lamps will go out.

“GO BUY OIL FOR YOURSELF; TAKE THE TIME TO KNOW HIM FOR YOURSELF”

In verse 9, the wise answered and said, “No, we won’t give you our stuff” (Mt. 25:9, paraphrased). They said, “No?”

One of the wisest things the wise ever said was, “No.” The foolish ministries scratched their heads and said, “No?” They were expecting “yes.” This is the wisdom of God that they said no. I know it’s a little confusing on the surface.

They say, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves” (Mt. 25:9, NKJV). In other words, “Acquire your own inward reality by the God-prescribed means in grace.”

But while they go to buy, the Bridegroom comes (Mt. 25:10). I love this phrase: “Those who were ready went in with him” (ibid). Beloved, there will be a multitude in the earth that is ready. Isn’t that awesome? If you don’t mind writing in your Bible in big ink, I put my initials there. That’s the place to put your initials. If you don’t want to put your initials, then go ahead and put mine. Anyway, I look at that phrase, “Those who were ready,” and say, “Yes! I’m going for it. I want to be one of those who are ready and are filled with exhilarated love, fascinated in the beauty of God, and understanding, to some degree, what’s happening—strong in the might of our God.”

Of course, we know in Revelations 19:7 that the bride is prepared at the end. In Revelations 19:7 she’s made ready. Here it’s talking about it happening in actuality on the earth.

THE ULTIMATE PRIZE OF THIS LIFE IS COMMUNING WITH THE GODHEAD

“While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came.” I’m trying to get back to verse 9, but I have to play around with verse 10 for a moment. I don’t mean “play around,” but hover around it. “The Bridegroom came.” The universal revelation of the Bridegroom God will come. The Bridegroom comes. This doesn’t mean the second coming here. This means the breaking in with power. The Lord comes in three ways. In verse 6, the message is that He’s coming. In verse 10, He’s come. In Revelation 22:17, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come’” (Rev. 22:17). He comes to us, and that’s intimacy. He comes through us and that’s revival. He comes for us and that’s the second coming.

I’ll go through that again. It’s the threefold coming. When the Spirit and the bride say, “Come, Lord,” then He comes to us. It’s intimacy with the Godhead. It’s the ultimate prize of this life, which is communing with the Godhead. It’s understanding a little of what He’s thinking, feeling a little of what He’s feeling and doing a little of what He’s doing. It’s communing and oneness with the Godhead. Wow! He comes to us in intimacy. He comes through us. I’m now talking about anointed ministry. I’m just using the word *revival*. I realize there are other words to use besides *revival*; that’s just a generic word. It’s the power of God breaking out. He comes to us before He comes through us.

Then He comes for us; that’s the second coming. Verse 10 here is not the second coming; verse 10 is the coming to us and the coming through us. Beloved, He does come. There’s an hour when the reality of the Bridegroom God will cover the earth. I don’t mean that every human being will understand it, but the Church will. We’re pressing into it in the year 2000 a bit ahead of time, and we’re singing these songs, preaching these sermons. We’re talking it through; we’re dialoguing and rewriting all these lines of code in our brain called a

renewed mind. We're going through it; we're singing. The singers are singing the Song of Solomon. We don't even know what the Song of Solomon is about, but it doesn't matter. We're doing it.

We're putting our hearts in the midst of the fire. We're putting our hearts in the way of the fire. We're doing it. I tell you, it's growing and growing. One year turns into two, two turns to five, and five turns to ten. Before you know it, this reality will be covering the earth. I don't mean the reality from here; I'm talking about the reality sovereignly.

THE MESSIAH COMPLEX: THE MOST SUBTLE FORM OF PRIDE IN THE CHURCH

“Lest there should not be enough for us and you” (Mt. 25:9). What He's addressing here is one of the most powerful errors of the foolish ministries. It's the most subtle form of pride in the Church. It's called a messiah complex. It's the messiah complex that says, “If I don't deliver them, then no one will.”

Martha touched the messiah complex. Martha had no ability to say no. If she didn't deliver, then God's program would be in trouble. It's the inability to say no. What Jesus is saying is this: that people who have oil know their God-ordained weakness and limitations. They know the sphere of their mandate from God. Beloved, it's when we know our limited sphere because we know our weakness and we stay in our sphere. We don't try to be everything such as all the ministries to everyone in the Church. We stay in our position; then that's called wisdom. One of the great reasons the foolish don't have oil isn't because they don't love God. They do, because in verse 1 they had oil initially. They didn't maintain a deep engagement with God. They had it in verse 1; they went out to meet Him and they had lamps that were working. They lost it in the rigors of ministry. It's not talking about rebellious ministries that are insincere. They're not evil or wicked; they're foolish.

The folly of losing the verse 1 anointing and reality is in verse 9. They couldn't say no. They thought they were the answer, or they were so captivated by the fear of man that they couldn't bear disappointing anyone. They fell into the Martha syndrome. They were running around in frenzied activity all the time. They were making everyone happy, which is one type of personality, and imagining, “We're the sole deliverer,” which is the other type of personality. One person leans one way and the other person leans the other way.

Verse 9 isn't like a calloused commission from heaven to just let everyone go to hell. “Let them slide into the abyss!” It's not an anti-compassion statement, no. It's a divine boundary line statement. It's the boundary lines of redemption and how redemption works. It's understanding our weakness. In other words, they wanted oil. They wanted reality. They said, “We can't give you reality. It doesn't work that way. We can't deliver you of your unanointed ministry. We can't. God ordained your reality to win you. He doesn't want to give you our authority so you can bypass intimacy to be successful again. No! You can't bypass intimacy. You can't bypass the oil to get your lamp shining again and to get on the road for Jesus in the ministry. It doesn't work that way. You won't lure us into it. We won't yield to the fear of man and try to prop up your failing ministry. We can't do it. It's not because we don't care; it's because the God of the universe doesn't want you anointed and bypassing intimacy with His own heart. No! We can't bypass God's plan, number one. Number two, in the limitations of who we are we can't bring everything to everyone and maintain the fire in our own soul.”

Blessed is the wise ministry that takes their weaknesses seriously and stays in their boundary lines. They can't do it without a small amount of reality, because they'll be driven by the fear of man and making everyone happy.

I'll be the hero of my own story as I end here. At least I'm admitting it. I'll tell you plenty of bad stories some other day about me. I remember this was the verse the Lord used for me. It was this parable. I've shared this a few times over the years about how I was with John Wimber. John Wimber invited me to travel around the world with him, which I did for three years. Some of you don't know the name "John Wimber." He's a man who has gone on to be with the Lord now. He invited me and I did many conferences in many nations. I don't mean hundreds, but five or ten nations, or however many. It was a lot of places. A lot of the conferences were large for my little peanut brain. They were 3,000-, 4,000-, 5,000-, and 10,000-member conferences all around.

The Lord told me to go, but something was happening. I started in verse 1. I went with oil burning in my lamp. I went in the overflow of my life in God of the last ten years. I had a fresh word and it was burning in me. I had a spirit of prayer. I had tenderness. The Word of God moved my heart and tears of adoration and tenderness were almost my daily portion with the Lord. I could feel His heart and I loved it. I went and there were large conferences all around everywhere. They were all over the earth in various countries.

I remember sitting that day in that van in Denver, Colorado. I looked John right in the eyes. It was June of 1991. I had six more planned with him and then we were going to look at the future. I said, "John, how many more?"

He said, "Well, we have six more on the plan."

I said, "I have to ask you something."

He said, "What?"

I said, "I have to get out. I want you to release me today from all of them."

He got quiet and said, "Are you upset?"

I said, "Not at you, no."

He said, "Well, good, because you haven't said anything."

I said, "No, not at you at all." I said, "I'm backsliding, John."

He says, "I don't think you are." It was like, "Oh shucks," and he put his hand on me.

I said, "No, don't comfort me out of this thing. This is the gift of God. Take your hand off of me."

I didn't really say that, but he smiled like, "Oh shucks, that's neat."

I said, "No, no, no, I'm backsliding for real. I mean it. I'm not involved in a scandalous sin—nothing like that." I said, "John, I open my Bible and my heart doesn't move like it has for years. It doesn't move. The tenderness is gone. The spirit of prayer has lifted. The tears are dried up. I'm ministering on fumes from yesterday's reality. I won't live this way. I can't live this way."

I like how Gary said it. He said, "I'm just going to stand before the people and burn. I won't burn the wick; I'll burn the oil. I will live in the reality of who I am today."

I said, "John, I can't and won't live without my heart tenderized in God. I won't, and it's gone. I'm going back if you'll bless me. I promised I would be with you. You have to bless me, but I beg you to bless me."

He said, "You're serious?"

I said, "I don't want mercy. I want you to release me. The Lord loves me. It's not about that. I can't live with my heart unmoved like it is right now. Nothing happens. When I pray, it's just that old stone thing that so many others complain about. I won't live that way."

He said, "OK. You mean it?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "You're free from everything. I bless you."

I said, "I need your blessing."

He said, "I bless you."

I came back home and told our leadership team, "I canceled it all."

They said, "Did you and John have a fight?"

I said, "No, I'm backsliding."

They said, "You are?"

I said, "No more than you are." I did, because we all understood what I meant. I said, "Really, I am, but no more than you. Guys, what are we going to do? We'll have nothing to say in the next ten years if we keep going this way."

I look back at that event nine years ago. Obviously, that's the grace of God. I'm the hero of my story this time, but I see that as the grace of God. I'm saying, beloved, we have to have something to say when we go. I'm not just afraid that my lamp will go out and I'll lose my crowd; I'm afraid that when my lamp goes out it's because my heart has gone out and that I won't lose by the grace of God.

Amen. Let's stand.

MINISTRY TIME

Beloved, it's not enough to do our job and go through the motions. All I want is for us to be theologians. I really do. I want us to be skilled musicians and singers, but I want us engaged with the Bridegroom God.

This is about reality. Beloved, we're at that time of history. God will fascinate us far above the inferior pleasures of sin around us. We have the power to soar in the hour when multitudes will be falling into sin. We have the answer for them, but we have to go deep.

Lord, we love You.

Let's lift our hearts to the Lord. I want some of you to say in your hearts, "My lamp hasn't started yet, but I don't want it to go out, ever. I don't want it to go out."

Some of you, your lamp has gone out and the Lord wants to restart it. I don't just mean the mailing list will grow. I'm talking about having fire in our spirit. I don't mean we talk loudly; we have authority on what we say and do. It's not just that, but when we get alone, the authority of God is resting on our hearts in our private lives, amen?

We love You, God.

Carol, if you would just lead us for a few moments. Then I will invite people to come up if they want, or you can stay in your chair. Come up if you want us to lay hands on you. I believe that the Lord gives to the Church more when the Church prays for the Church. I just do. We want this crusty spirit to lift. Go ahead, Carol.

Jesus! Jesus! Lord, we want oil in our lamps.