If we desire to be rich, we’ll make decisions in order to try to get there. If we desire to be famous, we are going to make decisions to try to get there. What we desire determines the course of our life, so it’s really important that what we desire is the right thing so we end up in the right place, right? So the question today is what do you desire? What do you desire most? I mean imagine you are on your way home today and you see a garage sale and you see something, and you say, hey, I need to stop. I don’t have enough junk in my house. I need to get some of their junk and make it my junk. You go in there and you see one of those Aladdin style lamps, right? So you go ahead and buy it. It’s like ten cents. It’s a dime. You take it home, and you are showing it to somebody, and you are like, wouldn’t it be hilarious if I rubbed the lamp and a genie popped out?

Ironically, sort of, you rub the lamp and a genie does pop out, but he doesn’t give you three wishes. He says, hey, you bought me for a dime. I’m a discount genie. You get one wish. That’s it. One wish -- and you have five seconds. What do you wish for five seconds, go? What would you say? Chances are, most of us -- we would knee-jerk reaction, something related to finances or a career or house or car or relationship, maybe it’s health or healing or something like, and there’s nothing wrong with any of those. Nothing inherently wrong with any of those, but what if I said to you today that every one of those kind of natural wishes would be a waste of your wish. What if I told you all of those are the distractions from the one way, way better thing you should be wishing for, and what if I told you that one way, way better thing you should be wishing for, you don’t have to wish for because you can actually have it right here, right now.

Why don’t you go ahead and grab your Bible and make your way to Psalm 84? Let me show you what I’m talking about. Psalm 84 begins with a little kind of a preface, a note. It says for the director of music, according to the gittith, of the Sons of Kora, a Psalm. Now, there is at least one word there, I’ll be honest, we don’t know what it means. The word gittith, what we know, we know it’s a musical term. What we don’t know is exactly what it means. It may be saying, hey, this Psalm is intended to be played on like a guitar, or piano, maybe an instrument, or they could be saying this is the kind of Psalm it is. This is a rap Psalm or R & B Psalm. We don’t know. We just know it’s a musical term. Sons of Kora, however, Sons of Kora were worship leaders at the temple in Jerusalem, and so they wrote this, and they called it a Psalm.

If you are not familiar with that word, if you are new to the Bible, that’s awesome. We are so glad you are here. A Psalm, think of it basically as a song, okay? This was a song written by the Sons of Kora, by the worship leaders of the temple for people who are on the way from wherever they were to the temple, and what we need to understand about the temple is the temple is a really big deal to the people of ancient Israel because the temple was where God lived. And I know, you might go, hang on a second, God’s too big to fit inside a temple. He can’t be housed in any building, and you are absolutely right. God is too big to be contained by a temple or a city or a country or a continent or the whole planet or all of the planets in the solar system or the galaxy. I mean the universe, as vast as it is, is not anywhere near big enough to contain God. That’s all true, but -- in His infinite wisdom in the Old Testament era, God chose to manifest His presence, to make His presence known and get in a tangible way in one particular place, and that was in the temple in Israel, so when people went to the temple, they were going to experience the presence of God.

This is what the Psalmist says as he thinks about getting there. Verse one says, how lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty. How lovely is your dwelling place? He is not just saying, hey, how pretty is the temple. I mean it was true, the temple was beautiful, which was fitting for a temple that is intended to house the presence of God himself, that should be beautiful, but the Psalmist isn’t saying I love the temple because it’s so pretty. What he’s saying is I love the temple because it’s your what? It’s your dwelling place, because the presence of God is there, and he’s incredibly excited about getting to experience the presence of God because as we are going to see throughout this Psalm, in the presence of God, we find so many of the things that we are desperately longing for, and we are trying to satisfy these longings in other places, and we are constantly frustrated because we are looking in the wrong places.

Welcome to Mission Hills. So glad you are here in all of our campuses and online. I’m thrilled that you are here for the beginning of a new series. I loved the Book of Daniel. God taught me so much through the Book of Daniel. I loved it. Oh, so glad God used that in your lives too. I loved it. I’ll be honest with you, I’m ready for a little bit of a break from prophecy. I know of no more refreshing place in scripture to go than in the Book of Psalms, so over the next few weeks, we are going to do a deep dive into some powerful Psalms. Today we have a powerful teaching from Psalm 84 on desire. It’s so, so important that we get this right because what we desire determines the course of our lives. Did you know that? I mean that’s not really deep theology. It’s not really complicated. It’s just common sense. What we desire determines the course of our life.
It’s only in the presence of God that we find these things. We are going to see a whole list of these things. The very first one, the first thing he says we experience in the presence of God is safety. He says, we find safety in the presence of God. Why do I say that? It’s tied up in this word that he uses for God. He calls him Lord God Almighty. Lord Almighty. And the literal Hebrew for that is Lord of Armies, or Lord of Hosts. It’s the title for God that we get that song “God of Angel Armies,” from. It’s a title that pictures God as the commander of huge forces. And it pictures God as the commander who fights on behalf of His people, who protects His people, who keeps them safe because He has all of these resources at His disposal.

Now, this particular title is fairly rare in the Psalms, actually. We only see this title six times in all of the Psalms, but three of those six are actually here in Psalm 84, which tells me this title is really important to this Psalm writer. He looks at God and goes, you are the Commander of the Armies, and because of that, I’m safe in your presence. My safety doesn’t come from my money. It doesn’t come from my power. None of those things keeps me safe in the way that You do. So he finds safety in God’s presence.

He says, verse 2, he desire soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for/to the living God. He’s using really powerful language and kind of building an analogy. He’s saying in the same way that my flesh cries out for things that I need like water and food, and when I don’t get them, I feel weak, he says, I feel the same way about your presence, God. My whole being, my soul, my heart and flesh, they long for You. They cry out for You. When I don’t have it, I feel like I’m missing something. What he’s saying, really, is that we find sustenance in God’s presence. We find sustenance. We find what we need. In the same way that when you don’t get water or food you feel weak, when we don’t get the presence of God, we feel weak.

That’s not something the world teaches us anymore, right? I remember sitting in a freshman psychology class, at Kent State University in northeastern Ohio as a freshman, and we were talking about Maslow’s hierarchy of human need. Anyone remember that thing? Yeah, it was a chart that psychologists developed and said they said these are the things that human beings need. These are the things that sustain human beings, and at the bottom of the chart are the foundational things like you need food. You need air. You need water. And then as you move up, you need clothing. You need shelter, and sort of at the top you need love, and they said if we don’t have these things, we break. Something goes wrong in us, and we are not healthy psychologically. We kind of went through that, and then the professor, very secular university, he stopped, and he looked around checking to see if the powers that be were listening in.

He said, guys, I need to be honest with you. After years and years of clinical work with patients, I have come to realize this chart’s not complete. There’s a big missing element. He said, after years of working with clients as a psychologist, I have come to realize that we need God every bit as much as we need all of this other stuff, and when people don’t have God, they are broken, and that’s the only thing that satisfies, the only thing that sustains them. I remember going, I can’t believe I heard this at this secular university. But he was forced into it because he says, it’s unavoidable. It’s an inescapable conclusion in working with people who are suffering from the lack of the presence of God. You see, we were made to be in a relationship with God. We were made to experience God’s presence. When we don’t have it, we start to fall apart.

The Psalmist said thousands of years before this psychologist recognized it, we need God. We find sustenance in God’s presence. Verse 4, sorry, 3, he says, even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may have her young. The picture he’s painting is that in the temple itself, it had these really tall walls, and these eves at the top, and the sparrows and swallows would come and make their nests there to have their young because they were safer. They experienced the safety we have already talked about, but what’s really important is really the first word in that sentence. It’s even. He says even the sparrow and the swallow have access to your presence and the safety that comes from it. Why does he say “even?” The answer is because sparrows and swallows are not V.I.B.s. Very important birds. They are just not. They are even the first word in that sentence. It’s even. He says even the sparrow and the swallow have access to your presence and the safety that comes from it. Why does he say “even?” The answer is because sparrows and swallows are not V.I.B.s. Very important birds. They are just not. They are common. Nobody pays a lot of money for them. Nobody even wants them, honestly. They are not important yet he says even these things that the world thinks are unimportant, they are important to God.

God gives them access to His presence. What he’s really saying is this. We find truth worth in God’s presence. We find true worth in God’s presence. The world is constantly ranking us, right, and there are all kinds of scales. We are ranked and we are determined whether or not we have worth because of our bank accounts, right? The positions we have in the companies we work for, the kind of kids we have, the kind of house we live in, the cars that we drive, the clothes that we wear, the friend that we keep, the amount of influence we have, the number of followers we have on Instagram or whatever it is, right? We have all of these ranking systems, and the world says, that’s how you know whether or not you have worth. The problem is we are constantly feeling like we are coming up short. We are constantly wondering, am I really worth something? And what the Psalmist says is yes, you are absolutely worth something because God invites you into His presence. Even those that the world says you have no worth, he says, that’s not how God sees you. You do, and in God’s presence, we begin to recognize our true worth because of His love.

He says, they have a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my God and my King. They have a place near Your altar. And the altar and the temple was one of the most important parts of the temple because it was a permanent reminder of both bad and good news. The bad news was that the altar is a permanent reminder that we don’t actually belong in God’s presence anymore. We were made for God’s presence. We were made to be in a relationship with God, but -- but something got in the way, something that we have contributed to every day of our lives, something that creates a barrier between us, creates a gap so that we are not able to experience his presence. It’s a little thing that we call what?

We call it sin, and sin creates a barrier between us and God, and it’s not a barrier that comes because God goes, oh, you are going to sin? Well then
I don't want you anymore. I don't love you and I don't care about you. That's not what happens. The problem is that sin actually begins to make it so that we are actually repelled by the presence of the God that we long for. I mean it's like -- I'm going to drop some really deep theology on you here. Are you ready? I don't know if you knew this, but God is God. All right? I know, right? But He is. It's really all about Him because He's God. He's all knowing, and all powerful, and He's everywhere, and He's gracious and He's wise, and He's everything, so He gets to call the shots, right? The problem is we are over here on the other side and saying, I know You are God, but I would kind of really prefer if I called the shots. I know, God, You said not to do these things, but I'm not sure You took into account how much I really want to do these things, so I'm going to do these things.

And I know You said I'm supposed to do these things, but I'm not interested in those, so I tell You what, I am not going to do those things. You understand what we are doing at that point is we are playing what? We are playing God, and here's the problem, gods don't play well together, they just don't. So us little “g" gods, on some level we are drawn to God but at the same time, I don't want You to be God because I'm God. It's like God is the positive pull of a magnet and when we try to choose to be God by our sin, what we are saying is I would like to be the positive pull. What happens when you put two of the positive pulls of a magnet together? They push apart, and so sin creates this barrier between us and God. On some level we long for the presence of God, but on some other, we are repulsed by the very presence of God, and we find ourselves in this very strange place, and so the altar is a permanent reminder of that, but it's also a permanent reminder of the Good News.

Which is that God is willing to accept us. God is not content with that state of errors. God continues to love us. God continues to long for us to experience His presence and be in a relationship with us, and so God has fought for our acceptance. By the way, notice, he uses the same title for God again, Lord Almighty, the fighter, the commander. He's saying God has fought for our presence. He's fought for our acceptance. And the way that, that was done in the Old Testament was every day they came to that altar, and they offered sacrifices. Because --sin's a big deal. You can't just say, just forget the sin business. Well pretend you never did it. Sin is far more profound than that. We are told in the Book of Romans that the wages of sin is death. Death is the only way to pay the price of sin, so God can't be just and say, oh just forget it ever happened. Death has to be involved, so every day they came to the altar and killed animals. They spilled their blood out.

And that was their act of faith that God would provide forgiveness, that God would provide a way, but what they didn't understand fully, that we do now, is that every day when they slaughtered those animals on the altar, they were anticipating what God Himself was willing to do to purchase our acceptance, our forgiveness, and that is that about 2,000 years ago, He sent His own Son, Jesus, who came and he lived a perfect life. He was a spotless sacrifice, and he himself climbed on the altar in our place, the altar we call the cross. He died in our place, and he purchased our forgiveness, and so the altar is a permanent reminder of both the bad news and the good news that God Almighty is willing, because of His love for us, to purchase our forgiveness, and our acceptance, and so in the presence of God, we find acceptance. We find acceptance in God's presence.

And are we not all longing to be accepted? Do we not all remember times that there was some group that we wanted to belong to, and for whatever reason, we didn't fit in or they wouldn't fit -- and that need for acceptance, it's deep and it's profound, and we all know how hard it is when we don't experience it. And many of us spend all of our lives constantly in a desperate search for acceptance. Everything you are longing for can be found in the presence of God and at His expense, that's how much He's willing to except you. He's willing to pay the price to forgive you and bring you into His presence.

It says, verse 4, blessed are those who dwell in Your house. They are ever praising You. Blessed, it's a spiritual sounding term, right? But honestly, it just means happy. He says happy are those that are in your presence. We find happiness in God's presence. How many of us want to be happy? Come on, get your hands up. Come on. Anyone here going, I really prefer not to be happy? Because we have a counseling department. I would love to hook you up. If you feel like I don't want to be happy, there's something wrong. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be happy. You understand that the United States of America is founded on the concept that we should want to be happy, right? What do we believe in? We believe in life and liberty, and say it with me -- the pursuit of happiness. And it's because America recognized that happiness is an intrinsic human need, and we said we are going to allow people to pursue happiness, and because of that, the United States of America is the happiest nation on Earth?

[Laughter]

No? Oh, I'm sorry, yeah, that's Disney. Disney. Disney's the happiest -- except Disney's not even all that happy, right? If you ever go to Disney, there's long line, there's people griping in the lines. It's hot. It's expensive. There's whining. There's complaining. It's not so happy. But you see the problem is not that we shouldn't be happy. Not that happy is an inherently bad goal, the problem is, we don't know where to find it. We don't know how to experience this intrinsic longing that we have to be happy, and so we go, well maybe it's this, or maybe it's that, or maybe if I get rid of this, I could experience it, or maybe if I go over here and have this -- and in this constant search for happiness, the problem is, we are looking in the wrong place. We find happiness in the presence of God. He says they are ever praising You because they have experienced it.

Verse 5, blessed are those whose strength is in You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. I mean on one level he just says that we find strength in the presence of God, but at the same time, he also says kind of an interesting thing here. He says strength comes to those whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. It's a very interesting statement. Pilgrimage, by the way, it's a religious trip. It's a journey. It's a journey from wherever they are in Israel to the temple, to the presence of God. A pilgrimage was that journey to get to the presence of God, and we would sort of expect them to say when you get there, you will experience strength, but what he says is, strength comes to those who are on the journey, those are on their way.
What he really says is that we find strength not just in the presence of God, but we find strength in the pursuit of God's presence, the very act of fixing our eyes on Jesus, going, you are where I'm headed, you are who I'm going toward, that begins to pour strength into us.

You find strength in the pursuit of God's presence. It's a strength that changes not only the journey, but it changes the world that we are traveling through on the way. Look what he says next. He says as they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. The Valley of Baka was a dry and desert place. What he says is, the people who are pursuing God's presence, the people that are on their way to Him, he says, as they travel through this dry desert place, they make it wet. They are like -- like the autumn rains that come and they fill up all of those dry, empty pools. The people of God on the way to the presence of God, they change the world around them as they travel. It's an unbelievable reality, because the strength of God doesn't just flow into them for the journey. It flows out of them to transform the world as they are traveling.

You know the church used to be known for this. It used to be that the church was known for being the kind of people that changed the world around them for the better. It used to be that people would look at Christians and go, I'm not sure what I think about your faith, but I'm glad you are here because we made a huge difference in the world. Hospitals, for instance. You understand that Christianity gave birth to the hospital concept because it was the followers of Jesus who said, even if you don't know Jesus, God loves you, and we are going to take care of you. We are going to provide bed and medicine, and we are going to do these things, and they made the world better for people even though they didn't necessarily know Jesus. We are really glad you are here. They made springs in desert places as they passed through them, and I think in the world's perspective, Christianity has become a little different than that now, right? And I get it on some level, and on some level there's not much we can do about it because the reality is this, in a world that no longer believes in absolute truth, in a world that says the only solute truth is tolerance is good. Tolerance is the best. It's the only virtue, tolerance; Christians don't fit in all that well because we can't say that.

We have to say, no, no, no. There is truth. There is right, and there is wrong. We have to say yes to what God says yes to. We have to say no to what God says no to. We have to call sin, sin. We just have to. We don't have to be unkind. We don't have to be mean. We don't have to be unloving. We can be kind and loving, but we have to speak the truth, and so even if we are being kind and loving in that process, a lot of the world will look at us and say, I feel judged. I don't like you people. I wish Christianity would go away. They don't look at us as people who make springs in the places they pass through, but you know, we can fix that. We can fix it not by compromising truth, not by changing our understanding of what is or is not true, and what is and is not righteous, we can fix it by being people who bring springs everywhere that we go. Listen, we should be the kind of followers of Jesus that cause the world to say, I don't know what I think about Jesus, but I don't know what I would do without them.

We should be the kind of church that does such good in our community, the community, if for somewhere reason the church were to go away the community would come together and say what do we need to do to keep you here because we don't know what we would do without you. We need to be the kind of people that the world says, I don't know what I think about Jesus, but I know what I think about his followers, and I don't know what I would do without them. What the Psalmist says is that we find the ability to make a difference in the pursuit of God's presence. We find the ability to make a difference even in the pursuit of God's presence. We change the world even as we travel toward Him. It says verse 7, they go from strength to strength 'til each appears before God in Zion.

And what he's saying, basically is, different stages of the journey take different kinds of strength. If you are going up a mountain that uses one kind of muscles, one kind of strength, going down takes another group of muscles, another type of strength. If it's a long, boring road, you need the strength of perseverance and patience, right? The point is that at different points, we face different challenges, and each of those challenges takes a different type of strength, but if your eyes are fixed on Jesus, if you are pursuing his presence, we find whatever we need for each challenge as we pursue God's presence. I don't know what challenges you are going to face this afternoon or tomorrow or a year from now or a decade from now. What I do know, if your eyes are fixed on Jesus, if you are pursuing him, if you are desiring him and his presence, you will find whatever you need for each and every challenge that you will face along the way.

Every single one of them. He says verse 8, hear my prayer Lord God Almighty. Listen to me, God of Jacob. He's praying for God to give him all of these things that come from His presence and from pursuing His presence, and it's not a prayer of hope. It's a prayer of confidence. He utters this prayer knowing full well that God is going to do all of these things, because, two factors right there. First off he says in the title there, because You are The Lord God Almighty. You are The Lord of Armies. I know You have the ability. I know You have the power. I know You have the wherewithal to provide all of these things. I know You are able, but he also calls Him the God of Jacob. He's one of the Jewish ancestors. What he's doing, he's looking back, and he's going, not only do I know You are able, I know You are willing because I have seen You do it over and over and over and over again.

Throughout our history, when we have had our eyes on You, You have given us everything we need along the way, so I know You are able, and I know You are willing, so we find confidence in God's presence.

It says verse 9, look on our shield, oh God. Look with favor on your anointed one. He's praying here for the king. The king was called the shield of Israel. He's the anointed one. He's been put in that place to protect the people, to care for them and protect them. What's interesting is that the king did a lot of the things, provided safety, that the Psalmist said comes from God's presence. But what he's really saying is, he's just recognizing
a basic truth which is that God often provides through others. God often provides through others. It's easy to forget that. It's amazing to me how often we forget it, you know, and I see people on a regular basis, they kind of get bitter. They are like, I really needed God to give me a word of encouragement today and he didn’t do anything. I'm really glad that my friend actually came over, and she had exactly the right word that I needed. God wasn’t on duty, but at least she was.

I was in a desperate situation. I didn’t know what I was going to do, fortunately this family came along and they helped. I don’t know where God was, but at least they were on the job, right? The reality is that those conversations, those other people that God brought along, they didn’t happen by accident. The person that calls you and says, hey, you have been on my mind lately. I don’t know why, but I wonder how you are doing? Well, actually, I’m struggling, and they have just the right word. That is not an accident. That is God sending those people. He is providing for you through them, and here’s the reality, then, it means that we have often experienced God’s presence without even knowing it. We need to open our eyes to the reality that God often provides through others, but it is no less God in that moment showing up.

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. There is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. What he says is, we all have places we want to be. Maybe it’s our career. Maybe it’s a place we want to go on vacation. Maybe it’s a place in life in a relationship, we all have these places, if I could just get there, everything would be fine. If I could just get there, I would have everything I need. If I could just get to that place, I would be satisfied. But the problem is, we get there, and we look around and we are like, huh. I don't know. It’s not everything I thought it was going to be. It’s not as satisfying as I really expected it to be.

Yeah, because those places can’t satisfy. He says I would rather spend one day in the courts of God, one day in the presence of God than any of those places that I long to be. Why? Because we can finally be satisfied in the presence of God. It is only in the presence of God that we can come to this point we go, huh. This is what I was looking for. And that frantic desperate search for satisfaction that exhausts and that wears us out, can go away. We can have peace in the presence of God. He says I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wicked. What he's picturing is the wicked who have grown rich by their wickedness. They have lied, and they have stolen, and they have gotten to this point where they are wicked rich. They have all of this money, and so they have these opulent palaces and these amazing places. They have parade of homes tents, basically, right?

They are just the best, and he goes, but I know that they are not. I would rather be a door keeper. I would rather be a servant who doesn’t even live in the temple, live in a meaningless tent outside of the temple, a little pup tent outside the temple. I would rather do that and serve at the temple of God and be close to the presence of God than to live in those opulent palaces. What he’s saying is we find humility in the presence of God. We get to that moment where we go, I don’t need to be all that if I can be near the one who is. Do you hear me? I don’t need to have achievements. I don’t need to have prestige and power. I don’t need any of that stuff if I can just be near the one who is everything. Humility is not just what comes from the presence of God. It’s required to get into the presence of God because as we have already said, you can't get into the presence of God apart from accepting His gift. The sacrifice of Jesus is the only thing that makes it possible to come into the presence of God, to be forgiven of sin, to be washed clean.

You can’t earn that. You have to accept it. Here’s the thing, without humility, you cannot accept that which you cannot take for yourself. Without humility, you cannot receive the gift of new life that is offered in the person of Jesus Christ, so in the presence of God, we find humility. It says for The Lord God is a sun and a shield. He says in the presence of God we find provision and protection. The sun is provision. A shield is protection. We find provision and protection in the presence of God. He says The Lord bestows favor and honor. We find approval in the presence of God. You know, an awful lot of us spend our whole lives desperately seeking other’s approval, don’t we? Maybe it started out in the home. We just wanted dad to approve us. Say he was proud of us, that he loved us. Now maybe it’s a boss, or it’s a spouse or it’s a boyfriend or girlfriend, it’s the people in the fraternity or sorority, it’s the people in our neighborhood, it’s a group of friends -- we are constantly seeking the approval of others, and always feeling like we never quite measure up. We never quite get it. It’s always on the verge of slipping away, even if we have begun to sense it for a little while.

But he says The Lord, His presence; He looks upon us with favor and honor. He says, I approve of you. You are washed clean and you are my child. You have an approval that will never slip away because it’s not based on what you have done. It’s not based on what you do for me. It’s based on the fact that you are my beloved child. We find approval in the presence of God. He says no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless. He says, we find every good thing in the presence of God. All of the things that we long for. All of the truly good ones, we find them in the presence of God, and this is the only place I am a little uncomfortable with the translation itself because the N.I.V. says no good thing does he withhold from those who walk is blameless. And in the English, at least, that sounds like you can only get all of these things if your walk is what? Perfect. How many of you are perfect? Really?

The Bible says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. No one's perfect. What kind of terrible Psalm is this then, right? You are going to tell us all of these great things you can get in the presence of God, but you can only get them if you are perfect. Psych. Sorry. Not for you. The translator’s word is blameless, and I understand that, but literally, I think it's important to understand the literal translation is no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is sound, is correct. In other words, from those who are walking in the right direction. Towards what? Toward God. No good thing does He withhold from those who are walking in the right direction towards Him, towards His presence. Their eyes are on Jesus, and they are focused on Him. For those, no good thing is withheld. He says, Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in You. Why?
Because nothing is better than the presence of God. Nothing is better than the presence of God. Would you say it with me? Nothing is better than the presence of God. And here's the crazy thing to me, the Psalmist wrote this -- the Psalmist obviously is crazy excited about going to be in the presence of God in the temple. He gets to go maybe once, maybe twice a year. He gets to spend a few days, maybe a few moments on the temple grounds near the presence of God, and he's crazy excited about it. He's like, I can't believe in the presence of God all of these things. It's unbelievable. There's safety. There's protection. There's favor, there's honor. It's amazing, and he just gets it for a few moments of every day. For the few days that he's at the temple. Maybe once, maybe twice a year.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul says writing to those who put their faith in Jesus. He says this verse 11 of chapter 8 in Romans. He says if the spirit of Him, that is of God, if the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of His spirit who what? Who lives in you. You understand what Paul is saying, when we put our trust in Jesus, when we come into a relationship with God through faith in Jesus, he doesn't just say, okay, you are allowed to come to the temple every now and then. He says, no, no, no. Forget that. How about I just make you a temple. How about I just bring myself into your very heart. And so the Psalmist is crazy excited because he gets to have a couple of moments, a couple of days a year in the presence of God, and yet what Paul says, because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our faith in it, God Himself lives in you. The presence of God is available to us every moment of every day, and yet -- we often find ourselves acting as though other things are just as good or maybe even better than the presence of God, don't we?

We understand that no thing, nothing -- is better than the presence of God, but in reality, we often find ourselves looking for other things, so what do we do? The first thing we do, we just check our course. Where are you headed? What are you pursuing? What -- what are you chasing? If you caught what you are chasing, where would you be? Check your course. Second thing, is identify counterfeit sources of satisfaction. Because I think we all have these things like, yeah, yeah I know nothing is better than God, but I feel like this thing over here would really help. If I also had this, and the thing is that also having this eventually becomes if only I had this, and somehow we are kind of off course, right? Because this counterfeit source of satisfaction is adjusting our heading, so identify these sources of counterfeit satisfaction, and then, we just course correct. If you are in Christ and the Spirit of God lives in you, you don't have to turn around and go in the opposite direction. You just sometimes have to adjust course, and go, yeah, I need to get my eyes on Jesus, course correct so I'm pursuing him.

There are several ways the Bible teaches us that we do that, the little touches that keep us on track. One of them is worship. We come together on a regular basis. We praise God for who he is together. Worship is a course correction. We read His Word. We talk about it in services like this, but also we read His Word ourselves, and we find course corrections happening. We serve. There is probably no better remedy for that little god complex than going, I'm going to serve somebody else because it's not about me at that point, it's about them, and that's a course correction, so if you are not serving, find a way to serve.

But then ultimately at the end of the day, honestly, what needs to happen is something that's deep in us. It's a surgery, basically, that only God can do. Only God can really, thoroughly change our desires, and so we pray, and probably the most important thing you can pray for is pray for a satisfaction overhaul. Pray for God to give you a heart for Him and Him alone. In fact, let's do that right now. Would everybody pray with me? At all of our campuses watching online, watching on Facebook, would you pray with me? Let's say, Father, nothing is better than Your presence. We agree with the words of this Psalm. Nothing is better than Your presence. Father, thank you for inviting us into Your presence. Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross in our place to make it possible for us to enter the presence of God, to be approved, to be accepted, to be favored. Holy Spirit, thank you for bringing the very presence of God directly into our lives, making it available to us every moment of every day.

If you would just continue in an attitude of prayer, in all of our campuses, including our online campuses, including those of you watching on Facebook right now, if you are ready to say, I have to admit it, I have a relationship with Jesus, but I have had eyes for other things, and you know, lately, I have been pursuing false sources of satisfaction, and if you are ready to say, I get it. I know those things will leave me hungry and hurting and hopeless, I need a course correction. If you are feeling that conviction from the Holy Spirit right now that you need to course correct, would you just join me, would you just slip your hand up right now if you are ready to say that right now, slip your hand up. Keep it up. If you are watching online, just click the button right below me. If you are on Facebook in the comment section, just say, hey, that's me. If you are feeling that conviction of the Holy Spirit, would you just pray with me right now and say, Father, I have had enough of the counterfeits. I want You.

I confess my sin of seeking after false sources of satisfaction. Jesus, give me eyes for you and you alone. I'm going to course correct. I'm going to cooperate with your work through worship and through reading your word, and through serving and prayer. Go ahead and put your hands down, but I'm going to ask everyone to continue in an attitude of prayer right now. And if you are here, if you are listening to this, wherever you are right now, if you have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus, would you just begin praying for the people around you? Already this weekend we have seen a large number of people come to an important realization. I believe in all of our campuses right now at this very moment, there are a number of people having a very powerful experience with The Lord. They are recognizing for the first time that they need God. For the first time, they are realizing that all of the things they have been pursuing have utterly failed to provide satisfaction. They have utterly failed to provide what they were longing for. In fact, they threw them into the big hole, hoping that it would fill the hole up, and all it did was crumble the edges, and the hole is bigger now, and for the first time you are realizing right now that it's because you have a Jesus-shaped hole in your heart, and you have been trying to fill it with stuff that's not Jesus.

So right now, if that's you, and you are ready to say, I'm done with the imitations. I want the real thing. If you are ready to give your life to Jesus, if that's you and you are ready, would you just slip your hand up right now? That's awesome. That's fantastic. Wherever you are right now, just
pray this. Jesus, I'm tired of the imitations. I'm done with them. I want the real thing. Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to forgive my sins. Thank you for rising from the dead so that you can offer me new life. Jesus, I want that new life, so I'm going to give you my life. I give you my life right now. I receive back from you new life. I enter into the very presence of God. I'm yours, Jesus, from here on out, I'm yours. Amen. Can we celebrate the goodness of God and those that came into the presence of God for the first time? God bless.