



A CHURCH WHOSE GOD CANNOT REST **Isaiah 62:6-7**

With that as our prayer, I invite you, if you have a Bible, and I hope you do, to open them with me to Isaiah 62. Isaiah 62, and you may not have a Worship Guide, but hopefully, you have some notes that you received when you came that will guide our time together tonight in God's Word.

Last week, during the end of our time together, I challenged this faith family and called this church to begin fasting and praying. We saw a picture in Exodus 33 of Moses, after all he had seen of the glory of God, crying out, "I want to see more glory." We talked about how we engage the glory of God in the face of Christ, and I called us to begin fasting and praying.

We set Tuesday this last week as a day when we would begin to corporately fast together, and we opened up this worship room from 6:00 to 8:00 that morning, and at least a couple of hundred folks were here at different times throughout the morning, praying in different ways all across this room, and I just don't think that was supposed to be a one-week thing. And so, I want to call us to continue to do that, and this worship room will be open again this Tuesday, and I want to call us as a faith family to fast and to pray that God would show His glory, His power, His majesty; He would pour out His Spirit and His fullness on us as His people.

The thing is I realized, though, after I had challenged us in that way last Sunday, that there's a lot of people who have never fasted before, and a lot of people who may have fasted before but have never participated in a regular fast and have a lot of questions about fasting. Why is it important to fast? How does this fasting thing work?

The first time I can ever remember fasting was when my youth minister, when I was in high school, challenged a small group of us to fast one day, and he brought us together in the morning. We came with our water bottles and went out to a park there in town, and we sat around, and we studied the Bible together, and then we prayed together, and we split up to pray on our own. It was a powerful morning. The only problem is that by 2:00 that afternoon, we were in the drive-thru at Burger King ordering some Whoppers and youth minister leading the way, and I thought, "What was that about? I thought we were going to fast, and I'm eating a Whopper."

So what is fasting all about? What is the purpose of fasting? Why would you go a meal or two meals, or three meals or longer without food? We know that, well, in the Old Testament times, fasting was a very regular thing. In fact, a few chapters before the chapter we're studying here in Isaiah 58, there's a whole chapter on fasting, particularly as it relates to social justice and the justice of God.

It was an Old Testament practice for sure, but not just a biblical, Old Testament thing. It's a Muslim thing. Muslims fast during Ramadan. You have different castes in Hinduism that fast,

and you've got a lot of people who fast for completely non-religious reasons. I was on the website of Fasting Center International. I want you to check these guys out. They claimed to supervise the world's largest fasting clientele with clients in 220 nations. I don't know if you're a part of their clientele, but they have tons of people from modest backgrounds to billionaires, and they say, "Fasting is the greatest of all healing modalities." Okay, follow with me here. "Fasting is a healing modality with more testimonials among our species' greatest thinkers..." Which, by the way, we're a species. And so, "among our species' greatest thinkers and spiritual teachers, and this is the greatest of all healing modalities."

Now, they offer a variety of reasons why you should fast, and I wrote some of them down. Number one: "You fast to remove unnecessary weight the natural way, plus learn how to keep it off for the rest of your life." And so, you don't eat, you don't gain weight. So, that's one idea. Number two: "You fast to remove the..." And I'm quoting here, "the five to ten-pound inner toxic waste dump now polluting your cell tissue and organ system, including chemical toxins, heavy metals, metabolic wastes, excessive cholesterol and triglycerides in the bloodstream, arterial plaque and intestinal parasites." So, you want to get rid of the toxic waste dump, then you can...you can fast.

Third reason: "Fast to elevate yourself out of the clouded consciousness most people spend their entire life in and vault yourself into the stratosphere of human potential." So, if you're interested in other stratosphere, you fast. Then, fourth, "Fast to move yourself back towards your life's birthright potential of optimal health, increasing your happiness and healing power as you scientifically reset your body's odometer and greatly enhance your quality of life." And I read that and I thought, "You know, maybe I should just preach that. You know, put the notes aside. 'Here's four reasons you should fast. Number one, you can lose weight. Number two, you can vault into an entirely different stratosphere than you ever could have imagined. Number three, you can reset this Tuesday your body's odometer, and number four, you can finally get rid of the toxic waste dump that has been plaguing you for all these years. So with that said, let's do an invitation and move on from the evening.'"

So there are...there are reasons people fast and all of it begs the question, "If there's so many, quite frankly, pagan purposes for people fasting, then why would it be important for a Christian to fast? Is it important for a Christian to fast? Does Scripture even teach us to fast now?" You go to the New Testament, and you won't find one command to fast. We're never commanded to fast in the New Testament. Now, does that mean that fasting is not important or not necessary? On the contrary, I think it is. I think it's very important. I think when Jesus is teaching at the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 through 7, and you get to Matthew 6, He talks about praying and fasting and giving, all in the same area. And in each one of them, He says, "When you pray, do this; when you fast, do this; when you give, do this." Now, of course we think, "Well, we're supposed to pray," and of course we think, "We're supposed to give."

I actually got a letter in the mail this last week from a pastor search team. It was looking for recommendations for a pastor, and one of the requirements in their qualifications profile of a pastor was a potential pastor needs to be able to preach well on giving. So, we obviously expect people to give in the church and pray in the church, but Jesus also put fasting in that category, and unfortunately, no profiles that I've ever seen of a potential pastor say that he needs to be able to preach on fasting, but Jesus put it in the same realm.

In fact, once Jesus died on the cross, rose from the grave, ascended into heaven, the early church picture in the book of Acts shows them fasting. In Acts 13, the whole mission movement to the Gentiles, was birthed in fasting. It says, "*While they were worshipping the*

Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart Paul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them' (Acts 13:2). So fasting is definitely there.

So, when you take a step back, and you look at the whole of Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament together, what you'll see is the commonality that unites the picture of fasting all across the board as a picture of God's people. Whenever they come to a place of deeper dependence or deeper desperation on God, you often find them fasting. In the Old Testament, it's even associated with mourning. In Nehemiah 1, when he saw the gates of Jerusalem had been burned down, and its gates had been burned with fire, it says, "He mourned and he fasted, and he prayed." He called out to God, and he did it through fasting.

2 Chronicles 20, Moabites and Ammonites are about to take out the people of Israel, and Jehoshaphat is panicking, and so he calls the people of God to fast, to seek the Lord. They're at a point of desperation, and I think it's the same thing in Acts 13, when they are wanting to take the gospel to the nations. They don't know how to do that. They were asking, "How are we going to take the gospel to people that are ready to persecute us?" And they fast. They're worshipping the Lord and fasting, a point of desperation long forgot, and that is the central picture of fasting. It is saying to God, "More than my body wants food, my life wants you; my soul needs you. In a way that supersedes even the basic daily necessity of food, my life longs for you."

And it's in fasting, we really come face to face with the question, church: "Do we want God? Really, do we really want God? Do we really want more of God? Do we want more of God in our lives? Do we want more of God in our families and our marriages? Do we want more of God in our relationships? Do we want more of God in His church? Do we really want more of God in our city?" If so, then fasting is a central expression of us saying to God, "More than we want the basic daily necessity of food, we long for you, we desire you, we crave you and we are hungry for you." And I think that's the question that God has brought before us as The Church at Brook Hills at this moment in time. "Do you really want me? Do you really want more of who I am? If so, then fast and pray."

And that leads us to Isaiah 62. This is actually not a chapter about fasting, but it is a chapter about a longing for God in prayer. It's one of the most incredible images in the Old Testament, and it's little known what this image of what praying is about, but I think it informs...the longing we're going to see here informs our understanding of fasting. Whenever you fast, whether it is for a meal or two meals, or for a day or for longer, inevitably...and some of you experienced this just last Tuesday...inevitably, you will experience hunger pangs, discomfort. You will want food; you will crave food.

I was sitting on a staff meeting this last Tuesday and a staff member, who will remain nameless at this point...I was sitting there, and I had taken some Chapstick out of my pocket, and I was just putting some Chapstick on my lips and he...and he looked at me, and he said, "Can I take your Chapstick? Can I use your Chapstick?" And I said, "Sorry dude, I don't really do that. I'm not into the whole sharing Chapstick thing." And he said, "No, I don't want to use it." He said, "I want to eat it."

Inevitably, when you're fasting, you experience hunger pangs. You experience desires for food, and the purpose of fasting is, in those moments when you crave food, that you would pause and say to God, "God, more than I want food right now, I want you in my life. More than I want to eat, I want to feast on your Word and your greatness. I need you more than I even need food right now." And it's through that God begins to expose the desires and the cravings in our lives that are not for Him, and they begin to come to the surface.

I want you to see the craving that is represented in Isaiah 62, and the prophet here who is calling out for God. Start with me in Isaiah 62:1.

"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you."

[Now pay attention close to verse 6; get this imagery.]

"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Is. 62:1-6).

Ladies and gentlemen, I want us to be a church that gives God no rest, because we are calling out to Him day and night. The watchman is consumed, never silent day or night. This sounds like a description of a newborn son. Never silent, day or night, giving himself no rest and giving his mother no rest.

Why Are We Fasting and Praying?

What consumes the prophet so much that he would be up day and night? That he would be longing, crying out? What is he so focused on that he wants that doesn't even allow him to sleep at night? And this picture of longing, I want us to use to answer the question of, "Why we are fasting and praying as The Church at Brook Hills?" And I want to give you three reasons why we are fasting and praying right now as this church.

Because we hunger for God's glory to be restored in His church.

Reason number one: Because we hunger for God's glory to be restored in His church; we hunger for God's glory to be restored in His church. This picture of not being silent day or night in verse 6 goes back to verse 1. He said, *"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet"* (Is. 62:1a). This is the picture. Why? I can't keep quiet because of Zion's sake, Jerusalem's sake.

Here's the background of Isaiah 62. This is a time...context here...where the people of God are experiencing the judgment and the discipline of God for their sin, and they are suffering in their sin as a result. The picture of them is deserted or desolate. The Northern Kingdom of Israel is being overtaken by Assyria. Years later, the Southern Kingdom would be overtaken by Babylon, and the prophet sees this picture, and he can't remain silent because of the state of the people of God. The prophet has a holy dissatisfaction with the state of the people of God. He sees where they are, and he sees where they could be, and he's saying, "Jerusalem is not meant for this. The city of God, the people of God, the place where God dwells is not meant for this, is not meant for desertion and desolation. The people of God

are meant for righteousness that shines out like the dawn." He is wholly dissatisfied with the state of the people of God. He sees where they are and where they could be.

Let me ask you a question tonight. Take this Old Testament context, bridge across through the New Testament, into our lives today. Do you, Christian...do you have a holy dissatisfaction right now with the state of the people of God in the church today? Do you have a holy dissatisfaction? Do you see where we are and do you see where we could be? Do you see what we are intended for? Do you see the picture of the early church in Acts? One sermon, and thousands of people immediately were cut to the heart and repent, and turn to Christ, just like that.

Next chapter, a lame man who has never walked is jumping up and down and praising God. Power; he's been healed. Next chapter, thousands more are coming to faith in Christ. Next chapter, they're being persecuted, and they're happy about it. They're rejoicing because they're being persecuted. Something powerful at work. Next chapter, the number of disciples is increasing rapidly. This picture that we saw in Acts 2 is happening. The Lord is, literally, adding to their number daily those who are being saved. Day by day by day, people are coming to faith in Christ every single day.

The number of disciples is increasing rapidly. Churches start getting planted all over the place, infiltrating the nations, all of Asia during that time. Churches are sprouting out; the gospel is spreading with power. Demon-possessed people are having demons delivered from them. It's a picture of power. Do we want that kind of picture in the church? Do we want to see the gospel spreading with power? Do we want to see people added to the church daily? People who we'd never expect turning from sin and turning to Christ. Do we want to see that?

Do we long for the glory of God to be restored in His church? This is a huge question. Ladies and gentlemen, are we tired of meaningless programs devoid of Holy Spirit power? Are we tired of man-centered worship services devoid of a Christ-centered spirit? Are we tired of relationships, marriages and families that are devoid of righteousness? Are we tired of activity, so much activity that is devoid of authenticity? Are we tired of sitting back and faking it like everything is perfect in our monotonous routine version of Christianity, when we are missing out on the power of God and what we could be? Do we long to see the glory of God restored in His church? Do we long to see the holiness of God restored in His church, where we're not covering up for sin and pretending like it's not a problem in our lives, where we're being honest with God about sin and seriously confronting sin in our lives, and seriously experiencing the grace of God in our lives? We want that.

If you don't, don't come next week. I'm just warning you, don't come next week unless we want to see the holiness of God restored in His church. Do we want to see the justice of God restored in His church today? Do we want to see the church caring about poverty and hunger and disease and AIDS and sickness? Do we want to see the church beginning to care about the things God cares about? Do we want to see the power of God restored in His church? Do we want to see the Word of God restored in His church where we are no longer content with great stories and practical instructions and applications?

We want to hear the Word. We want to stand, fall on our faces just to hear the Word being read. Do we want to see the power of God's Word restored in His church? If we want any of these things then fast and pray, church. Fast and pray, and when you want a bagel or you crave a burger, stop and look to God and say, "More than I want food right now, I want your glory to be restored in your church."

Do we want God like that or are we content to sit in the watchtower asleep? Are we content to go through life watching TV and surfing the Internet and enjoying the pleasures of this world without longing for God's glory to be restored in His church? God, make us a church that is consumed with this kind of longing where we cannot sleep at night because we long for God's glory to be restored in His church. God, wake us up.

Because we hunger for God's praise to resound among the nations.

The second reason why we pray, fast...number one, because we hunger for God's glory to be restored in His church; second, because we hunger for God's praise to resound among the nations. We hunger for God's praise to resound among the nations. We continue in verse 1. He says, *"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, until her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your righteousness and all kings will see your glory"* (Is. 62:1-2a).

This is the same exact picture. When you get down to verse 7, it talks about giving God no rest. It says there, look at it with me. We see the same phrase. Until what? *"... Till [God] establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth"* (Is. 62:7b). Now, what's that about? Does that mean that we are calling out to God until people praise the church, until people praise the people of God? No. Here's what this is giving us a picture of. It's what the whole Old Testament, New Testament are about. It's about God calling out His people. This is from the very beginning, Genesis 12:1-3, when God called out Abraham to be the father of the people of Israel and said, "I'm going to bless you. I'm going to pour out my blessings on you, and through you all the peoples, all the nations of the earth will be blessed."

From the very beginning, God has chosen to bind up His reputation, His character, His renown with the state of His people. He displays His holiness through His people; He displays His majesty through His people; He displays His love through His people. He blesses them, and they're a reflection of His character to the nations.

And that's what the prophet is crying out for here, that her righteousness would shine out like the dawn, salvation like a blazing torch. The nations would see the righteousness of God in the people of God, and so when the prophet can't sleep day or night, the reason is not just because he's concerned about the church. It's because the nations need to see the glory of God, and they will only see the glory of God in the people of God.

So, the picture is the prophet praying for the church for the sake of the nations. Let me translate that into why we pray and fast today. We fast and we pray for God's glory to be restored in His church in a way that will astonish the world. Don't miss that. I will say it one more time: We fast and we pray for God's glory to be restored in His church in a way that will astonish the world. We want Birmingham, Alabama to be astonished with the glory of Christ, and that will happen when God restores His glory in his church. And so, we pray for the church on behalf of the nations. We want salvation to go out from The Church at Brook Hills like a blazing torch in the city of Birmingham, Alabama. That's what we're praying for; that's what we're fasting for.

You've heard me talk about the "Layman's Prayer Awakening" is what it was called. It was about almost exactly 150 years ago, 1857 and '58. What happened was a small group of men began praying together. It was up in New England one day. They began to get together again and again and again, and before long, there were people all across this one particular city praying, seeking God and asking God to pour out His Spirit in an unusual way, and God did.

I want you to listen to what one historian said in describing what was going on during that time. Listen very closely. Just imagine this 150 years ago. It was called the "Mighty Visitation". This historian said this: "Like a spiritual tornado, the Spirit of God swept through the land, and New England became the center of the Great Awakening, resulting in great numbers finding salvation. In some towns, it was reported as being almost impossible to find anyone who had not been converted." Is that cool or what?

People come to me and say, "Pastor, I know I'm supposed to share the gospel in Birmingham. The problem is I can't find anybody who hasn't believed the gospel. They all love Jesus. Everybody in the town." But listen to what this historian said:

"Like a great spiritual epidemic, tremendous conviction of sin swept through the land and thousands turned to Christ: Drunkards, as they stood at the saloon bars, gamblers as they sat at the card tables, congregations as they sat in churches. Even passengers on-board incoming liners came under the influence of this strange and wonderful moving of God, and kneeling in repentance, wherever they were, they found pardon.

"In many places, dance halls, theaters and gambling dens were closed or emptied. New churches began to spring up everywhere. Family altars were restored and the spirit of prayer grew in intensity, until anyone could cross the land and find a mid-day prayer meeting in almost any town. It was estimated that as many as 50,000 decisions were made in one week when this gracious visitation was at its height."

God, do it again. Do we want to see God's glory restored in His church so that salvation goes out from The Church at Brook Hills like a blazing torch in Birmingham, Alabama? God, may it be so and don't let the torch stop until it gets to the Bedouin people in the Middle East.

Do we want that? Then fast and pray this week; fast and pray. And when you experience hunger pangs or discomfort, pause, look to God and say, "More than I want food, I want your praise to resound in Birmingham and to resound among the nations." This is why we fast and pray.

Because we hunger for God's Son to return for His people.

Third reason we fast and we pray is because we hunger for God's Son to return for His people. Now, here's where it gets really interesting. You come to the end of verse 2 and verse 3 in Isaiah 62, and you see promises for the people of God, and you get to verse 4, and it says, "*No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married*" (Is. 62:4).

Here's the picture: Because of their sin, and their judgment and their suffering they were looked at by the nations as deserted and desolate, alone, isolated. The prophet is talking about a day when they will no longer be alone and deserted and desolate. They will be married. That's what "Beulah" literally means. It means "married."

In fact, you continue on in verse 5, "*As a young man marries a maiden, so your sons will marry you; as a bridegroom—listen to this—rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you*" (Is. 62:5). Here's the picture: You've got a bride alone at the altar awaiting the bridegroom to come, looking for the bridegroom to come and to rejoice over them, and the bride can't sleep. She wants her bridegroom.

In fact, that's the whole picture of watchmen here. When we look in the Old Testament, we see this picture of watchmen a few different times. In Ezekiel, when you see this imagery of watchmen looking at her from a watchtower out over the city, watchmen are primarily playing the purpose of guards there, looking out to look for enemies that are coming. When the enemy comes, they're warning. So, this imagery of watchmen is a picture of us warning each other against sin, warning each other against the Adversary, that kind of picture. But that's not the imagery that really dominates in Isaiah when it comes to watchmen. In fact, turn back with me over to Isaiah 52 and let me show you where this imagery is used there, and it gives a picture of what's going on in Isaiah 62. Listen to what it says. This is really, really interesting. Isaiah 52:8,

"Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together, they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God" (Is. 52:8-10).

Did you see what verse 8 was saying? This is the picture we've got all throughout the Old Testament. The people of God are longing for the coming of the kingdom of God. They're longing for the Messiah. They're longing for God to come and save His people. That's what they're longing for all throughout the Old Testament, and the watchman is not just a guard to look out for enemies. The watchman is looking out on the horizon, looking for a friend or ally who will come to help, who will come to take out these enemies from the rear. The watchman is on guard looking out, looking for help, looking for who is going to come. This picture of the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. So, the watchmen are on the wall looking for when God is going to come to save His people. The bride looking for the bridegroom.

Now grab hold of that picture, hold your place here and go with me to Matthew 9. You've got to see this. Matthew 9, first book in the New Testament; Matthew 9. And I want you to look with me at what is probably the most important New Testament passage on the subject of fasting. This is where this whole picture starts to come together. You've got to see this. Matthew 9, look with me at verses 14 and 15.

You see the deal was, Jesus' disciples were not fasting. That was a problem for some people. Listen to what happened, verse 14, *"John's disciples came and asked Jesus, 'How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus answered, 'How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast'" (Mt. 9:14-15).* Don't miss the picture here. Jesus says, "You fast for the coming of the bridegroom when the bridegroom is here. You really don't need to fast. You don't fast for the coming of the King when the King is right in front of you. You enjoy the presence of the King."

But then we've got this picture of when the bridegroom will be taken from them, then they will fast. You see the bridegroom would die on a cross and rise from the grave, and ascend into heaven. He would be taken from them, and Jesus says, "Then they will fast." Why will they fast then? Because they don't have the bridegroom? Well, in a sense, we all know that, yes, they have the bridegroom; yes, the followers of Christ have the presence of Christ in us. We are not like the Old Testament longing for the coming of the king. The King has come, but at the same time, the King is not with us. The King is on His throne in heaven, and the picture is, Jesus is saying, they will fast for the coming of the King. They will long for the bridegroom to return for His bride. That's when they will fast.

Now, put this together with the picture of watchmen in Isaiah 62 looking out over the horizon, and the reason in the New Testament why we cannot keep silent day or night is because we are watchmen on the walls looking out over the horizon, and as the Adversary is bombarding the church, we are a people who are fasting and praying and looking for the coming of the King. This is good news, ladies and gentlemen. No matter how much the Adversary bombards the church in our day, no matter how much sin creeps into the church, no matter how much false teaching creeps into the church, no matter how many times you struggle with certain sins week after week, some of you month after month...some of you struggle with sins year after year after year, the same things struggling with them...no matter how horrible the suffering and pain is that we go through, even when your two-year-old son drowns in a pool, look out over the horizon. Ladies and gentlemen, there is a King who is coming. We'll fast and pray because we long...we long for Him to come and deliver us from sin once and for all, to deliver us from suffering and pain, and He is coming, and we fast, and we pray calling out for Him to come, and to come quickly.

As we get to the very last chapter of the New Testament, Revelation 22, Jesus says, "I am coming." The New Testament cries out, "Come Lord Jesus; come quickly. We want you to come." This is why we fast according to the New Testament. We fast because we want the King to come back for His people, because we long...yes, we know...we know His presence in one sense now. But we know we do not know Him as intimately as we could. We don't know His power and His mercy, and His majesty and His grace as intimately as we could, and we want Him, and so we fast and we pray because we want Him to come to us.

This is the point where I am most convicted in studying these texts. Could it be that one of the main reasons, if not the primary reason why fasting is so not talked about in the church today, at least the American church...could it be the reason is because we have grown content with the absence of our King? We have good lives, we have nice homes and nice cars that we came to this building in tonight. We have good jobs, and we have money, and we have pleasures in this world, and we enjoy the things of this world. We run after them in a rat race day in and day out, and we enjoy those things to the point where we're okay with the fact that Christ is not coming quickly.

We fast and we pray because nothing this world can offer us can compare with the coming of our King, and we long for Him, and we desire Him more than the basic daily necessity of food, more than the best food this world has to offer. We long for our King to come. That's why we fast. We want His glory restored in His church. We long, we hunger for the nations to see His greatness, and we want Him to come.

Therefore, we will not give God rest from ...

Our praising.

And so, Church at Brook Hills, let's be a people that don't let God rest. Let's call out to Him day and night, day and night. Let's fast like we're hungry for more of God, and so let's not give Him any rest, number one, from our praising. We will not give God rest from our praising.

We will exalt your name, O God. You will never grow tired of the exaltation we will give to your name as your people. We will call out over and over and over again. Your greatness and your glory and your beauty and your majesty and your power, and we will ascribe to you the praise that is due you and you alone. You will never tire of our exaltation. You will

not be able to go to sleep, because we will be calling out our praises to you day in and day out. We will not be able to sleep at night, praising you.

Our confessing.

We will not give God rest from our praising; second, from our confessing. Not only our praising, we will exalt His name, but our confessing, we will not grow weary of confessing our sin. We will be finished and done as a people of God with sinning and going on like it wasn't that big a deal with sinning and thinking, "I'll confess that later." We will confess our sins constantly before you, and we will be confident that you are faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and you will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We want to experience the fullness of your grace, and so we will confess our sins boldly before you. We will not fear to be honest with you about our struggles and our sins, and we will trust that you will cover our sins with your righteousness, that you will give us power over those sins. And God, we will reflect your holiness. We will reflect your character to the nations.

Our praying.

We will not let you tire, God, from our praising and our confessing, and third, from our praying. You will not be able to rest because of our praying. We will pray day in and day out, day in and day out. This is where we've really got to decide if we really want God. Luke 18:1-8, you might write it down and go back and look at this week, Jesus teaches us to pray and never give up. He's talking about the coming of the King, and He says, "Pray and never give up." God listens to those who cry out to Him day and night, day and night.

Listen to what Jonathan Edwards said in the middle of the Great Awakening. Please listen closely.

"It is very apparent from the Word of God that God often tries the faith and patience of His people when they are crying out to Him for some great and important mercy. He tries their patience by withholding the mercy they seek for a season. Not only so, but at first, he may cause an increase of dark appearances, and yet He, without fail, at last prospers those who continue urgently in prayer with all perseverance and will not let him go until he blesses them."

What he's saying is—and there's biblical precedent for this—when God's people begin to call out for Him, He will often wait to see if they really want what they're asking for, and maybe even at the beginning, give dark appearances. He may seem to be not answering at all, to see if they really want what they ask of Him, and inevitably, He will bless those who hold on to Him and say, "We're not letting go until you bless us."

This is the picture of Jacob wrestling with God in the book of Genesis. "I will not let go of you God until you bless me." Is that bold to say that to God? "I'm not going to let go of you until you bless me. I'm not going to stop calling out to you until you bless me." God is honored in that kind of praying, and this is where we must decide if we really do have a fast food version of Christianity that says, "If we don't get things our way right away, then we will get bored and move onto something else next month, to the next program, to the next emphasis, to the next this or that." Or are we willing to be a faith family, who week-in and week-out, calls out to God, and if He doesn't answer this week or next week, and if He doesn't answer next month, if He doesn't answer in the next year, He will still find us on our faces crying out and fasting and praying for Him to show His glory and resound His praise among the nations, and for Him to come back, and even if fifty years later, He still hasn't come back, He will still find us on our faces calling out in hunger for Him. Will He find that kind of faith on the earth? Luke 18 asks this.

We are a quick-fix people, and we do not serve a quick-fix God. How much do we want Him? I pray that we want Him enough to say, "God, we will bombard your throne. We will come before you day and night, day and night, and you will never be able to sleep from our voices praying to you, and we will pray, and we will not give up."

Our working.

Let's give God no rest from our praising, our confessing, our praying, and finally, from our working. Please do not mistake this whole picture as saying that we are going to fast and pray, and then just kind of sit passively by and hope that something good happens. On the contrary, we fast and pray, and we work, especially when it comes to this coming of the kingdom thing. Matthew 24:14, "*This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all nations, and then the end will come.*" Catch that: "*This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all nations, and then the end will come*" (Mt. 24:14). Then the King will come, then the kingdom will come when the gospel is preached in all nations.

Now, that verse has really perplexed a lot of people, and a lot of scholars debate, "Well, Jesus is going to come, kingdom come in its full consummation when the gospel is preached in all nations. How do we know when that has happened?" I love what George Ladd says about this. He says, "God alone, who has told us that this gospel of the kingdom should be preached in the whole world...God alone will know when that objective has been accomplished. But I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned, therefore the task is not yet done."

When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms of our task; our responsibility is to complete the task. So as long as Christ has not returned, our work is not done. Let us then get busy and complete our mission. God, may it be so. We will fast; we will pray. We will not give you rest from our praising, our confessing, our praying and our working, and in the end, God, we will accomplish your mission. We will accomplish your mission because we want your glory, because we want your praise to resound among the nations and because we want your King to come. That's why we go to the nations in 2008, Church at Brook Hills; because we want Jesus to come. We want Jesus' glory to reign. That's why we go.

That's why we work, that's why we pray, that's why we fast. Do we really want God or are we content with the status quo, business as usual, come sing some songs and listen to a sermon, and by the time we get to a restaurant this evening, we've completely forgotten about the glory of God, and by the time we get up to go to school or work in the morning, we have no zeal for His glory? Are we content with that? Or will we say as a church, "We want more; we want more of your glory; we want more of your majesty. We want more of your power, and you will find us on our faces fasting and praying until you bless us. We won't let go until it happens."

Will you bow your heads with me? I want to invite us to pray toward that end. I want to invite us in these moments to pray like we are hungry for the glory of God to be restored in His church, and to pray like we want the praise of God to resound in the nations, and like we want Jesus to return to His people. And whether you sit where you are, kneel where you are, come to the front and kneel across the front here or the sides, I want us to pray as a church, and we're going to start just in silence. I'm praying that God would give us grace to be gripped with the kind of hunger that causes us to be faithful watchmen on the walls who give Him no rest.

You pray as God leads you, whether that's sitting where you are or kneeling here at the front, wherever across this row. Let's call out to God.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical.
Website: Radical.net