

150th Anniversary Celebration Part 2

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Date: 11 November 2018

[0 : 00] All right, Marty, settle down. Now, I tell you, this is one of the things I love the most, is the fellowship and the love and the acceptance of one another in God's house.

Amen? So we never want to stop that short, because it means so much to so many people in so different ways. I'd like to bring up one of our former pastors who was here from 1973 to 1977, and either he couldn't get enough of it, so he came back, or God told him the congregation was hard-headed and they needed to hear it again.

I don't know which one it was. But hopefully Brother Roland will be able to tell us what that's all about. Come on up, Brother. Share with us whatever's laid on your heart. Well, it didn't get that right.

They let me come back, see if I could get it right. They gave me a second chance. As he said, I was not the first pastor.

I'm probably old enough to be the first pastor. But this building is amazing. It wasn't this way in 1973. After Billy Joe serves another 20, 25 years, I want to come back.

[1 : 22] I'm just 80 years old, and I'll just be 100 in 20 years. That's all right. But thank you, pastor and church, for inviting me to this special time and letting me come 150 years.

Psalms 127, the verse first says, Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Well, there's been 150 years in this house or this church, and I think the Lord built it because I haven't seen any labor in vain.

Just a side note to the history you used to talk about there, Mildred Armstrong, maybe you may remember her or maybe not.

She was a sister to Brother Christian, and she was going to school here in the early years, and the schoolhouse burned, whatever year that was, she told me.

And they was looking for a place that could have the seniors at least finish school and graduate. And there was a potato house down here that potatoes hadn't, it was open, vacant, I guess, and said we met in the potato house in the last months of our senior year.

[2 : 47] And we said everybody that year got a PhD, a potato house degree. Well, it's been said earlier, and I'll repeat some of the things he said, probably talking about the time that I was here.

This is not the original building, of course. It started in Horse Mountain and came here. But I was called here in 1973. The name Wallace was already on the sign.

Because Brother Wallace Owen was the interim, and he'd been here for some time. But he had been the pastor of the church years before. Now retired as a pastor and retired school teacher, living here in Wartorace, the church just called on him.

And Brother Owen told me that he threatened to move from Wartorace unless they called someone else's pastor. Well, that desperation brought them to me.

There were three retired preach pastors attending the church. There was Brother Owen, and there was Brother British Christian, who had B.V. Christian store here in Wartorace.

[4 : 01] By the way, Brother Christian pastored Wartorace Baptist Church for 16 years. Then there was Brother Wilson, whose grandson was a songwriter in Nashville.

Brother Wilson had pastored both the Methodist church here and the Baptist church here. But all three of those retired preachers were here and very supportive of this young fellow.

I was in my 30s when I came. And Brother Owen, who'd been a school teacher and a very educated man, would come up to me after the service on occasion and say, Brother Roland, I think the word is pronounced this way.

Always kind, never critical, you know, and I appreciated that. Brother Owen was a college roommate to Brother Herbert Gabhart, who became president of Belmont College, now University, in 1959.

They were roommates in college. Well, in 1973, there was no air conditioning in this building. I mean, it was rough, as you might know, in condition and comfort.

[5 : 14] And the baptistry wouldn't hold water. They said we hadn't used it in three or four years. But in about a month, some of them were saved.

And I asked Brother James Ayers, would he fill the baptistry? He said, I don't know if it'll hold water or not. They filled it up, and we looked there on Sunday morning. It's dry. It didn't hold water.

And I was just trying to be funny, and I said, well, there must be a hole in the baptistry, or a camel came along and drank the water. Well, when we was leaving, the lady spoke to me and said, I'm Miss Campbell, but I didn't drink the water.

Well, the baptistry was repaired, and we used it quite often. Roscoe Stevens was the mayor of Wartreys. He was the chairman of Deaconshire, and he was the song leader.

Carolyn Floyd, now Lemons, was a pianist, and Miss Edith Tribble was the organist. William Albert Odle was the Sunday school secretary. My wife, Marianne, taught a Sunday school class that met here in the sanctuary just back there.

[6 : 31] And all three of those retired preachers were in her class. Now, Miss Ashley was in that class, and she wanted to sit under the balcony. And she didn't want to get this away for some reason or another.

You mentioned the OKH class. You know, there's a class that met OKH, and they had that on the back of their chairs, the Order of Kindly Hearts. Well, David and Shirley Shifflett had moved here from Florida.

They'd bought a house out the road here, and they were members here. Somebody asked David Shifflett one day if he knew what OKH stood for. And he thought to me and said, old cranky hens? Well, I wanted the church to grow in numbers, but the church had not reached out beyond war trace, so I convinced the church to buy a bus. Clarence Shirley drove the bus. It was painted light blue.

Leroy Cunningham, Miss Bush's son, painted the light blue for us. It was an old bus, and some black smoke was coming out the tailpipe.

[7 : 40] Shirley Shifflett, as I mentioned, Shifflett, said, we need to do something about that smoke, or we need to draw attention away from it. She was an artist, I'll tell you about that.

And she painted around the tailpipe, holy smoke. I decided to preach through the Gospel of John on a Sunday night, and Shirley came to me and said, I'll do a chalk drawing of the theme that you're preaching on.

And it's interesting that when Jesus was part of the scene, she always drew him from the back. She never drew his face. And people would line up to get that copy, and it was given out every Sunday night, and different people, maybe some of them still have them, I don't know.

But down here on what's called the well house used to be a painting about the walking horse. The cradle, war trace is the cradle of the walking horse, as you know.

Stroll and Jim still buried behind the building down here, the hotel. Got a tombstone for Troll. As you know, Stroll and Jim was the first winner of the national walking horse celebration.

[8 : 53] They buried him behind the hotel down here. There's a tombstone down there for him. But Shirley Shifflett painted a painting on that well house, the cradle of the walking horse, and she had a big cradle and had a horse in it with his legs sticking up.

Some of you have seen that maybe years ago. It's not there now. But Shirley was a fun person.

Now, she would do dumb things, and she would tell on herself, well, you did something dumb.

And there was a door right here, maybe it's still there, would swing both ways. It didn't lock, it just swing both ways. And Shirley was down here during the week sometime, whatever she was doing.

And she went in there, and the door shut, and she thought she was trapped. And said she got down and clawed underneath the door trying to get out.

And finally, something she just pushed against, and the door opened. Miss Elizabeth Tanner and Miss Lucille Ashley were sisters, and they sat in this class back here.

[9 : 59] They were sisters who lived together, side to side, on Hill Street right up here. And she called it Widow Hill because almost everybody on that street was a widow.

Some of you may remember that TV show, Hill Street Blues. Miss Tanner says we live on Hill Street Blues. But speaking of Miss Tanner, I was visiting her one day, and she told me about a person who had visited with her earlier, had been to Atlanta, and was telling her how much Atlanta had

grown.

And she said, I told him, War Trace is growing. It's got to where when I go to the mailbox, I have to look both ways. The church began to grow, and as we reached out beyond the town, and one of those families we got their attention was the drivers.

Ernest and Ophelia had four girls and three boys, and all the girls' names started with S. There was Sandra, Sarah, Sybil, and Susan.

Those girls began to accept Christ. We'd fill the baptism, heat the water, baptized. Then another would accept Christ.

[11 : 24] We'd fill the baptism, heat the water, so on and so forth. Wasn't long until somebody says, You know, the preacher's in the hot tub with the driver girls. Well, there were some sad times, funerals.

There was the Bennetts, the Wrights, Brother Wilson, Brother Owen, Brother Christian. I'll mention a couple of youth. Virgil and Pauline Wright's son was killed in the car wreck.

The wake was at their house. Atmosphere was pretty tense. You know, when a young person passes away, all the young people come.

We got through the funeral fairly well. It was here in the church. When we got to the cemetery, we have Hollywood Cemetery. You know that. Hollywood came to War Trace.

That's Hollywood Cemetery. When we got to Hollywood Cemetery, I read subscription, had a prayer. I just did just simple things. After prayer, Pauline Wright stood up.

[12 : 36] Went over and placed her hand on the casket of her son and said, Enough has not been said. I guess every young person in the area was there.

And she looked out at those young people and she did a sermon to them that make cold chills go up your spine. Harold and Mary Bennett's daughter was killed when she got off the school bus at Webb School.

Mary and Harold was working at the school. They were employees at Webb School and the kids would get off the school bus there. If you've been to Webb School, you know there was a hill there and the bus stopped at the top of the hill.

The girl got off and somebody coming over the hill didn't see her and she didn't see them and hit the girl. She was killed. Church, the funeral was here and Webb School dismissed.

The church wouldn't hold them. Mary and Harold and Christie still suffer this day from that. Brother Owen passed away and Brother Gabhart, as I said, they were college roommates, but Brother Gabhart still had fairly good health and he preached Brother Owen's funeral.

[14 : 13] I had the funeral of Brother Wilson. There were others, of course. And there were weddings. There was Larry and Paula and Mike and Peggy and Donald and Melissa and Debbie and James and Lonnie and Louise and Carl and Debbie and David and Pam and Ricky and Roger and Sharon and Sybil and Marty and Sharon and Patricia and Phillip and Brenda and Scott and Tina and Ronnie and Stephanie, you know.

And then we had a lot of babies. And then we had a lot of babies. Bob and Karen Gay were members here.

They were teachers at Webb School and they decided to come to church here. And Bob, a lot of those boarding students wanted to get out, of course, and they just wanted to go anywhere.

So they came with Bob and Karen to church. And we got to meet a lot of those Webb School boarding students and among them was Mel Tillis' daughter among some other people that you might know that children were there.

Bob's daddy was Attorney General down in West Tennessee. And Bob told me, he said, Daddy told me, if you get two degrees, your life will be good. He said, I got two degrees and I'm starving to death. He said, I got to do something else.

[15 : 55] So he contacted Edward Jones, took their training and he became a stockbroker. And they put him up in Greenville, Tennessee, up in East Tennessee. And we correspond swap cards every Christmas.

Bob says, my biggest problem is knowing how to give it away. He just got rich. Just a fantastic guy. Good guy. I mentioned Clarence Shirley earlier. Clarence and Mary had a daughter named Cynthia. Cynthia went to Belmont and in her second year, she called me and she said, could we have a youth day?

And I said, yeah. She said, we got preacher boys here. We got musicians. We got singers and so forth. And I said, sure. We can have a youth day.

We had a lot of youth days. One of the preacher boys was Russ Stevens who married the daughter of Carl Smith of a Gown Smith and Gown Smith funeral home.

[17:05] Russ, his name you may have, maybe wouldn't have noticed it, but he was a Baptist reflector within the last month, retiring as a pastor. He pastored large churches in Lebanon and Mount Juliet.

He and his wife had just done wonderful, wonderful work. Another one of those preacher boys was Sidney Gibson. Sidney married Belton Flippo's daughter from Longview.

Sidney is the most sought after interim pastor in Duck River Association. I think he's now at Rutledge Falls. And I'll not forget Bill Maxine's daughter, Valerie, as you mentioned earlier, who made a profession of faith and it's my privilege to lead her to the Lord and baptize her.

She married Weldon Payne, son. Weldon and his family are members at First Baptist Manchester and they served a number of years in Thailand, took early retirement.

They now live in Mount Juliet, have three children and somebody says all missionaries have three kids. Then there was Miss Irene Smith who married one of the local guys.

[18:18] She was from Mount Juliet. Both of those were seniors and they met at the funeral. And he was from War Trace so they moved to War Trace.

He was a member of the local Church of Christ and she was Baptist. So, first time she came was on a Sunday night and an invitation given she walked down the aisle.

I had no idea who that lady was. She came and introduced herself and told me who she was. She said, I want to join this church. Told me she was a Baptist and where her from okay.

I think she was in her late 60s. Then she said, I want a job. I don't want to sit. I want to work. I like to do things. What do you got I can do?

And I thought, what am I going to do with this woman? I said, we've been trying to get a young adult class started but we hadn't had any success. She said, how many have you got? I said, we got two couples.

[19:15] She said, tell me who they are and give me a room. Gave her the furnish room up there. The furnish was there and I sent a room up there. It might, six, six, seven, eight, might get in. Some of you remember when that old furnish was up there.

The gas furnish was up there. Put her up there. She asked me where the young people are around. I gave her a bunch of names and I wasn't in a few months she came to me and said, I need a bigger room.

We moved around, gave her a larger room. She filled that up. She loved those young people and those young couples. She told them, if you want to go out, I'll babysit for you and if they ran short of money at the utility bill was due, she loaned the money to get them through.

She knew about war trace and the people that lived here a long time and on Wednesday night when we'd ask about prayer requests, she'd tell about more needs than anybody else and somebody asked her, how do you know that?

She'd say, you got to know it first before you can tell it first. She was quite a lady. Then there was Miss Barnes and Miss Rubin who lived across the street and there was James and Marie Ayers and Elmore and Lorraine Bell.

[20:24] Elmore was a local mail carrier if you remember. Evidently, Elmore had a curiosity more than the cat.

He could tell you who on his route had the largest utility bill. He looked at all of them apparently.

Then on one Sunday a five-year-old boy, we saw him coming across the parking lot there.

I'll not call his name because he still lives in the area. He needs to be in church. And he was carrying a large Bible, a five-year-old boy. He was carrying the family Bible.

He had a new suit on, a little five-year-old boy, a new suit on. He was coming to church and he wanted a Bible and I guess they had the family Bible. And Marianne said, you gonna preach today? And he said, I can't even read. Guys like to pick on Marianne.

[21:33] Buster, Shannon's husband. Buster would say to Marianne, I'm trying my best to like you. Buster would always go out for lunch.

We was all in our 30s and we'd go to lunch together at the restaurant after service and we'd park somewhere and Marianne sort of ran to catch up. Leora Cunningham said, Marianne, if a policeman

saw you, he'd tell you to park in a handicapped place.

Saw you run, he'd tell you to park in a handicapped place. We had a lot of fun. George and Kay Dennis joined the church.

Kay was from Florida and George was from the north. I remember which state. They met at MTSU in Murfreesboro. Kay was there to study horse science.

She loved horses and she worked with walking horses. As a matter of fact, she stayed with that. As a matter of fact, about 10 years ago, she had the champion, world champion walking horse, Kay Dennis did.

[22 : 42] George and Kay Dennis came to church here. They just got married and she was Baptist. He'd been raised as a Catholic. And we were having people saved along and I'd have a new members class about almost once a month every six weeks or something.

And I had Marianne teaching it because she knew what the church believed and what I believed and what we're going to believe and I wanted her to teach that new members class. She was teaching that class when Kay joined.

Kay said, you know, I've been a Christian a while but I've never taken that and I'm going to take that class. And George came to me and he said, can I take it? I thought a minute, you know, here you are a Catholic.

You hadn't done joined the church. You had nothing. I said, yeah. He went in that class and about after three sessions, George Dennis came down and I all made a profession of faith.

Dear friends, still have contact with them. We had a lot of fun here at War Trace. We played church league softball. We'd go skating with teenagers and we had picnics and overnight camping.

[23 : 56] We had a youth choir that would perform in other churches and when I had a revival somewhere else there would always have for the youth choir to come. Keep up the good work.

Keep up the good work. I sure would like to preach in this building. When I was here, you could see the daylight over there.

There was no air conditioning, no water. We didn't have that over there. We had to jump across the ditch and come across there. But you've made progress, good progress and I'm thankful for it and I'm thankful for her husband, Jimmy.

He's done a lot of good work here. You standing on his shoulder, he's done a lot. He and I are good friends. He had a funeral of my wife's aunt just within the last month or two.

Thank a lot of Jimmy. But keep up the good work. Heaven's waiting with rewards from a lot of you guys. Lord bless you.

[25 : 05] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Brother Wallace. If you're able, will you stand and turn to page 407? We can all agree that we're here today because he lives. So we're going to sing this loud.

God sent his son.

They called him Jesus. He came to love, heal and forgive.

He lived and died to buy my bondage.

[26 : 07] An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives. Because he lives, I can face tomorrow because he lives.

All fear is gone because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives. How sweet the hope a newborn baby and feel the pride and joy he gives but greater still the calm assurance this child can face uncertain days because he lives.

because he lives. Because he lives. I can face tomorrow I can face tomorrow because he lives.

Because he lives. All fear is gone because I know because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives.

[28 : 06] And then one day I'll cross the river I'll cross the river I'll find life's fine no more with pain And then as death gives way to victory I'll see the light I'll see the light I'll see the light and glory and I'll know he lives because he lives because he lives I can face tomorrow I can face tomorrow because he lives all fear is gone all fear is gone because I know he holds the future and life is worth the living just because he lives

You may be seated. Brother Roland we want to thank you for your service to this church and to this community we appreciate your comments and sharing with us your experience here and we are well blessed as a congregation because of your service and we want to thank you very much.

The next speaker I guess you could call her the former first lady I don't know of War Trace Baptist Church I want to share with you real quick the first time I met this lady she was standing right in front of the pulpit reading a letter from her husband with tear-filled eyes when he was recovering from his heart attack after the men of the church sowed the grass in the yard.

It's the first time I ever met her and that message or that letter that she shared with the congregation stirred my heart and eventually God used that to lead me to salvation.

Not only that her husband led both my kids to salvation and now their names are written in the Lamb Book of Life.

[30 : 42] So this family will forever be tied to my family and I will always show the utmost respect for this family and I just want you to know that War Trace loves you and I know you know that and my family loves you and your husband as well.

And once again she's here to clean up Brother Jimmy's mess. Come on up here Ms. Susan. Whoa! I wasn't going to cry. Oh, of course you know I'm not Brother Gray. You tell by looking. I've got more hair.

It's sad to say that he couldn't be here today because we had a tragic thing to happen in my family up north.

58 year old cousin of mine got up on a normal day and got sick and had a massive heart attack. Of course, and I'm recuperating for surgery but God give the glory you can tell I'm great.

[31 : 57] So saying all that we talked and hoping and praying you know we said you know Jim can be there for you but he's got commitment on Sunday.

But you know God has the plan. It's not us. So saying this the only cousin I have left in this family called Jim crying and said Oh, what am I going to do?

Jim said Look, you make the plans I'll take care of Shelbyville. So I'm lying on the couch and he said Susan you're going to speak for me on Sunday and I'm like He said Brother Billy Joe and talk to him.

I said Oh, okay. So he gets on the phone and calls Brother Billy Joe and he comes back and he said you can't speak. And I said He said because he said you wouldn't stop in 15 minutes.

But the sad thing is didn't say that. And then he said Brother Billy Joe is going to have and he's going to ring it so you'll make he'll make sure that you finish in 15 minutes so ring your bell.

[33 : 27] Let's begin with prayer. Dear God I just want to thank you first of all for the sunshine and this beautiful day dear God that that has given us.

And dear God right now I just pray that every person in this auditorium not on me not on a preacher but you and your faithfulness in all that we do and say.

And Lord that we could exemplify the love that you have for each and every one of us. In 2004 we came here.

The first Sunday at this church for worship we had 23 people. If you were that at that point in time would you stand and I know Miss Sue probably can't but Thank you.

Thank you. Oh my goodness. I'm telling you God just blessed us in a mighty way and the scripture that I want to use that says it all is Proverbs 3, 5, and 6.

[35 : 01] Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. Lean not on thy own understanding but in all thy ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path.

And let me tell you sweet church family that's what God did here at War Trace Baptist Church. The attendance increased.

The fellowship increased. And you know because we had God. God was the center of our lives of this church.

And that's what kept us going. But as time went on and we grew and we were blessed beyond measure and we were just one big happy family.

And we're so grateful for that. with the dedication that was at this church was above you could ever imagine because they were faithful sweet family.

[36 : 13] they were faithful. They weren't just fans of Christ. They were followers of Christ. They were here for everything that was needed to be done. And every time the doors were open these faithful people were here.

So with all of that the harvest we begin to see we got to reap the harvest of what God had set for us. and the blessings began.

And I'm just and I may leave out something I'm sorry but I just wanted what we saw in the 10 years. Vacation Bible School.

People just worked and stood up to do all these things. WMU. Children's Church. Nursery. When we left here we had to have two nurseries. That's how many children babies we have.

Youth class. Library. Decorating of the church. Kitchen committee. Christmas programs.

Community wide Easter egg hunts.

[37 : 22] Community wide yard sales. We had big old fish fry every year. A wonderful thing was the quilt ministry. For not only here but we touch lives all over.

If anyone was sick or hurting we would mail them a quilt. Renovation of this church. Renovation of the kitchen. New flooring in bathrooms in the fellowship hall.

We put new flooring back there. New tables and chairs. Repaved the parking lot. Sound system.

God blessed us with a nice trailer for storage.

But all of this is nothing for us but it is for God and God's faithfulness. And the scripture that I want to read is thanking God for what he has done and with us Psalm 100 Make a joyful noise Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God. He that hath made us and not we ourselves We are his people and the sheep of his pasture enter into his gates and into his courts with praise.

[39 : 02] Be thankful unto him and bless his name for the Lord God is good his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations.

Father Gray and I give all the glory to God for what took place But we were blessed with all the people that supported and worked hard.

We've been in the ministry for over 40 years and we've been blessed we've ever been at. But no blessing has ever been any greater than what we had here at Ward Trace Baptist Church.

For that we will be forever grateful for you all for blessing our lives and for loving us as family.

Thank you so much.

But in closing, nothing makes me and Brother Gray, or Brother Gray and I, I should say, any happier than what is going on right to this day.

[40 : 18] Your dedication and Brother Billy Joe's leadership in this church. And it just blesses our heart for that. So as I end in thanking God for this 150th celebration and this chance to glorify his name, I'm going to sing To God Be the Glory.

To God be the glory, great things he hath done.

So loved he the world that he gave us his Son. Who yielded his life and atonement for sin.

And opened the life gate that all may go in. Sing with me. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord.

Let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Let the people rejoice.

[41 : 30] O come to the Father through Jesus the Son. And give him the glory, great things he hath done.

Amen. Thank you, God. Just thank you, God. And I'm telling you today, if you don't know the joy of God in your life, don't leave this place.

Because in the end, that's all that matters is that you have him to be the center of your life. Amen.

Thank you, God.

Thank you, War Trace Baptist Church. Brother Gray and I love you all dearly. Do you have to ring the cow's bell? Thank you, Ms. Gray.

If you're able, will you stand and turn to page two? We're going to sing Holy, Holy, Holy. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.

[43 : 04] God in three persons.

Blessed Trinity. Holy, Holy, Holy, Holy.

All the saints adore thee. Casting down their golden hands around the glassy sea.

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee.

Who were dead and armed and evermore shall be free. Fourth verse.

[44 : 19] Holy, Holy, Holy, Holy. Holy, Holy, Holy. Lord God Almighty.

All thy works shall praise thy name. In earth and sky and sea. Holy, Holy, Holy.



When I was laying out the schedule for this, it was actually last week, last Sunday night during our dual wedding shower we were offering for the two young couples preparing to get married and we knew we had to kind of lay out a sketch of the order of service and I was laying it out with Miss Tricia and my wife and making sure it was okay with Miss Lynn, you know, all the right channels. And my son was at the table and my, one of my sons and my daughter was there and they said, Dad, you can't get your introduction in in 15 minutes. There's no way. But I'm going to try. Okay. I'm going to try to keep us within time. I want you to see three things as we celebrate his faithfulness. And I won't take time to elaborate on them too long, but I want you to see three great truths. Number one, look at the celebration itself. You know, these Psalms were written by men who knew what it was like to be in the presence of the Lord. They were written to be used in temple worship. Really, this Psalm was probably written and sung at the time of the Thanksgiving offering where they would go and offer on the altar an offering of Thanksgiving, a physical picture of an internal reality. They were hanging out in the holy place of the temple and they were near the holy of holies where the Shekinah glory was at. So when they sang these truths, it was with meaning. It was, it doesn't seem to make sense to us because it doesn't always resonate. It doesn't translate real well over into the English. It doesn't always rhyme, but they meant these from the bottom of their heart. And look at the celebration that it commands people to go to. Just in the first two verses, we see three things. It says to shout joyfully, serve with gladness, and to come with joyful singing. These are displays that are noticeable. This is not just a quiet, reverent type of worship. While that is appropriate, there are times where I can be still and know that he is God. And I stand in the wonder of his presence and I have to be quiet. Each one of us is doing that. And if we don't experience that, I pray that you would experience that holy reverence of knowing God is in that place and you don't know what to say. But then on the other side of that, there are times where you know God's in that place and you can't help but say what you ought to say. And you ought to be vocal and you ought to be display. And their celebration was something that was physically evident to everyone around them.

[52 : 29] Why? Because the people of God were called to be the billboard for God for the world who didn't know him. And God wanted the people of the world to see someone authentically, accurately worshiping him.

What a joy it is to shout before the Lord, to proclaim it. That's okay. I get a little excited, you know. I'm okay. I didn't come to Christ until later in light. Well, not later. I was probably 20. It was right before I turned 21. But I didn't grow up with all the right Baptist stuff. I grew up in a totally different environment. So this isn't like a heritage for me. This is something that's amazing. Brother, you were talking about some of the youth speakers who would come. It was Brother Sidney Gibson who ordained me into the ministry and licensed me. And licensed me first and ordained me later. Brother Sidney, I've followed him twice now. He was interim at my home church at Normandy before I was pastor there. I was interim to the interim. They were desperate. They were really desperate. And then he was interim here before I came here. So I count that as a joy. He couldn't be with us today because of his own celebration. They were celebrating 125th where he is at. But you see here that this is something worth getting excited about. The praise and the celebration of God is something that is commanded to us to display for a watching world. You can't help but notice a joyful shout.

You can't help but notice someone excited. It was A.W. Tozer who once wrote the same people who would scream like banshee Indians at a football game on Saturdays set like wooden Indians in our pew on Sunday. When there's something a lot more worthy of shouting about on Sundays than there is on Saturdays. Some of you say, well Tennessee beat Kentucky yesterday. That's worth shouting about.

[54 : 08] Right. But God saved us and redeemed us and has set us free from all kinds of things. And that's worth shouting about. Tozer didn't say don't shout on Saturdays. He just said don't shout so much you can't shout on Sundays. Because it says shout to the Lord. Make an evident display. Shout joyfully.

Serve with gladness. Isn't that a great testimony when you watch men and women. It's already been said they were coming in and serving gladly. Not compulsively. God is not a mean taskmaster who calls us to serve him because we ought to. We get to serve him because we can. And it is a great thing to labor and serve the Lord. He's the best taskmaster ever. And it says to serve him in celebration gladly. And it says and to come before him with joyful singing. We see the act of

celebration itself. It was something to be on display for all to see. And it was something that would be authentically lived out in every believer. Not only do we see as the celebration comes with these commands. It also has this call. What does it say? All people. Aren't you glad that God didn't just call a select number of people to celebrate him? I don't know about you. But I would have probably been on the outside of that circle. Looking at my life and knowing who I am. I would not be one that was chosen first. I never was the guy. I was always a little shorter, a little stockier, and a whole lot slower back in the day. So when it came time to pick in teams I was you know if I wasn't captain I might not have made the team. But I always made myself friends enough so I could pick the good athletes to be on my team. But you know when it came to the thing of God I'm so thankful. God didn't say I only want a few people to serve me. I only want a few people to worship me. I only want a few people. It says all the people. God's call is for all people of all places of all times and all circumstances and all conditions and all failures and all faults to come before him. Listen Genesis 3 tells us that the purpose of man was you were created to worship and to serve him and obey him. And he calls all people all of his creation to come before him with praise and adoration. That's the celebration.

I look forward to the day where we are gathered in that heaven that is waiting and we are gathered together with a mixed multitude of individuals looking across every every spectrum of humanity and we're all shouting joyfully. The song that was sung before I came up holy holy holy and Miss Lynn is so good she remembers things that I point out. One of my favorite hymns I know she did it intentionally before I came up her and Miss Tricia worked that thing out. And the reason why that one is is I will never forget a service that Carrie and my family and I were setting in in Moody Church in Chicago and they were playing that song and the orchestra playing it was great. They were playing holy holy holy but I was surrounded by these I messed up and sat in the balcony. Pastors don't sit in the balcony but we sat in the balcony and we were surrounded by college students. And here I am I'm like not the old guy well I am the old guy at that point. Surrounded by all these college students and these college students are shouting at the top of their lungs holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty.

And you begin to see this mixed multitude of individuals just praising God and you knew you were in his presence in that place. Because God's command is to celebrate. You know we spend a lot of our days down and out when reality is we have a whole lot to celebrate. The second thing that we see not only is the celebration we see the conviction. Why should we celebrate? And I make my way quickly.

We see the conviction here it says no no that means that's an emphatic right you should know or you ought to know or you must know. Know that the Lord himself is God. Here's the reality the world has manufactured a lot of gods with a lowercase g but there is only one great God and that is the Lord himself. That is capital L capital O capital R capital D in your Bibles right which means Yahweh.

[58 : 07] That's that covenant God that most reverent of names for the nation of Israel the most reverent of names throughout the Old Testament. It is the loveliest of names because it speaks of Elohim making a covenant with people. There is but one God and there is but one thing one person one almighty being who is worthy of our praise. The first conviction is we know that the Lord himself he is God. It is not anyone else.

It is not anything else. It is not something else. It is not our health our prosperity. It is not our comfort. It is not our conveniences. The conviction is this there is but one God and he has called us to worship him and he has called us to celebrate him. I don't care what the world says and I don't care how the world behaves. I know that the Lord himself he is God and it is he that I will have to stand before because we go on. It is he who made us and not us ourselves. You know that we are not self-made individuals. You didn't get where you are just as when brother Jimmy called me. He said pastor I'd love to be there. I love the way brother Jimmy calls me. I got to share this with you guys. He always calls me.

He said well how is the bishop of war trace of the greatest group of people on the face of the earth and I said well I guess I'm doing okay. He has a way of words. Brother Jimmy and I have had the sadness slash blessing of doing a number of funerals together over the past year of members of this congregation and we've had the joy of sitting in that room in the back where pastors gather just the two of us and always speaks very lovingly of every one of you. He told me when I first came here I'll never forget I saw him in association meeting. He said pastor you messed up. I said why?

He said you messed up and followed a long-term long-tenured pastor. He said I was there 10 years and you followed me. I said yeah but I let 18 months go by before I came. He said well I guess you're right.

So but what a joy but you see here this conviction we're not self-made. It is not only is there one God it is the creator God it is he who made us. Friend you are not where you're at merely because you decided to be there. You're here today because God created you designed you and enabled you to be here and he led you here. There are no self-made men in the conviction we have. Why must we worship?

Paul says to rejoice in all things and again I say unto you rejoice. Paul wrote that sitting in prison being persecuted for the faith preparing to die and be poured out as a drink offering he said for the faith. Why could he do that? Because he knew he was not self-made. He knew he was not world defeated.

[60 : 41] It was the Lord who created him and called him and formed him and he was convicted that God had fashioned him to worship him. The world has told you you are made for a lot of things and the world may have told you you are created to do a lot of things and the world may even try to convince you you can do anything you want to but the reality is that God created you to worship him and if you're not doing that I really don't care what else you're doing you're not fulfilling your purpose. We are called to celebrate his faithfulness and we are convicted because he is God.

He is the creator. He made us. We didn't make ourselves. Here's another conviction we see. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Why is it that the church should be so excited? Why is it that the church should get carried away? Because there's but one God and it is the God who created us and we belong to him. Isn't that good? Isn't that exciting? There is one great God. He created us. He formed us. He spoke the world into existence and we're his people. I don't care where else you're accepted. I don't care what other society you belong to. I don't care whatever place you may be a part of. There is nothing greater than belonging to the family of God. There is nothing. There is no position. There is no prestige. There is no accomplishment. I don't care where you don't belong as long as you belong to the family of God. You belong somewhere and we need to celebrate.

Listen we can walk with our head held high. We can walk with a song on our lips and we can walk with joyful celebration when the world may look at you and say you ain't got anything and you can say oh but in heaven I have everything. We are his people. I don't know how long it's been since you've been convicted but you are his people. You are the sheep of his pasture. You are his. That's something to shout about. So we see the celebration. We see the conviction and here's my third and final one okay.

We see the confidence because when we understand who God is we understand that he is Elohim. He is the almighty God. Then we have to as we said every time we see an Old Testament scripture every time really we see in the Bible someone comes in the presence of God they always do the same thing. They always fall flat on their face. Every time God shows up and reveals himself to man everybody ends up on the ground on their face right because this is holy God. So we said well maybe God doesn't want me. Maybe God doesn't. Maybe I've done too much. Maybe I've went too far and the lie of Satan whispering in her ear saying we've committed too many things. We've fallen too far. We're too far away. There's no way God wants me to stand up and shout and wants me to stand up and get carried away. There's no way he wants me to celebrate his faith. Let's look at this. It says enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise and give thanks to him. Bless his name. What is this? An invitation to come in. To come into the courtroom of heaven. Invitation. You know this past week I had to go to court not that I had done anything wrong. Many of you know what's going on in our life. We're in the process of just beautifully adding to our family in a way. So I had to go into the court. Before I went into the courtroom I had to walk through the metal detector. I had to empty my pockets. Thankfully your pastor had left his pocket knife at home. I knew. There's a police officer standing on the other side of the metal detector who looked at me. He said okay you can go in. I had to have permission. I came out of the courtroom for a while. I stood right there in the lobby. I asked him I said do I need to empty my pockets again?

[63 : 57] He said no I've been watching you the whole time. You're good. You can come on back in. I had to have permission to enter the courtroom of that judge. How much more when God gives us permission to come into his courtroom. Enter into his courts. Come into his presence. Look at the confidence we have. How can I do it? For the Lord is good. Do you understand that there are a

lot of people that want to convince you God's a big bad God. The Bible says the Lord is good. As a matter of fact we wouldn't know what good was apart from God. The Lord is good. We can be confident he wants us in there because he's a good God. God is good all the time and you know the rest of it all the time what God is good. We can almost get a little carried away with that and he's so good. He invites you to come into his presence. No metal detector. No searching of your pockets. No because he already sees you. He's been watching you the whole time. He knows your every fault. He knows your every stumbling. He knows your every sin. He's had his eye on you when you were knit in your mother's womb. It says before you were born I fashioned you and I knit you in your mother's womb and I've been watching you your whole life and what I'm asking you is come on into my courts because I'm a good God.

And you can be confident that he wants you there. Why? His loving kindness or the other translation said his mercy is everlasting. That word loving kindness in the Hebrew the original language is the word hesed. H-E-S-E-D. Hesed means to be a loving relationship that is worked at holding together to be bound by commitment to one another. God is bound to you because he wants to be.

He doesn't stop and we see and finally his faithfulness to all generations. What we have done today and I'm closing we want to have a song. What we have done today is we have celebrated his faithfulness for the past 150 years but I want to tell you something. God is just not faithful in the past. He's faithful in the present through your every trial through your every circumstance.

Whatever problem you're dealing with right now God is faithful to meet that and he wants you to come into his presence and to bring that to him and he's faithful in the future. God's faithfulness in the past is just a reminder and encouragement that we can trust him in the future.

Probably my favorite hymn is Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing. Kind of an odd hymn but I like Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing. I like Miss Lynn knows that. Tricia knows that too. I like the story that goes behind it and I say this in closing but there's a line in there that says here I raise my Ebenezer. That Ebenezer we find in the book of 1 Samuel and it literally means my stone of help. [66 : 40] I raise my stone of help. There was a practice in the Old Testament when God did something amazing they would just stand up this big rock. This stone of help. Why? So that later on when you were in what does it help you with? It doesn't help you see farther. It doesn't help you get up. It's just a rock standing up in the middle of nowhere because this far the Lord has helped me. It helps you realize in the next struggle and in the next trial and the next difficulty you're walking around and all of a sudden you see this big rock sticking out of the ground and you're like oh I remember. I put that there because God was faithful then and if he was faithful then he's faithful now. What we've seen today is a bunch of Ebenezers. We're not talking about the Christmas play or a Christmas story Ebenezer. We're talking about the stone of help. God has helped us this far. Friend listen I am confident he wants to help us until the day he calls us home. I don't know where you're at today but I hope that you can celebrate his faithfulness. Let's pray and then we'll close in a song. Lord I thank you so much.

God as we bring this service to a time of close there's been much said much celebrated and there's so much more that could be said. Lord our great desire, our great heart cry is if there's someone here today Lord who cannot celebrate your faithfulness because they've never surrendered to your lordship.

They've never accepted you as their savior. Lord the best way that I know to celebrate 150 years is to see people continuing to come to Christ. So Lord would you by the presence of your Holy Spirit show that heart, show that individual their need for you and before they leave here today Lord would they find someone to talk to how can I celebrate who God is and Lord that you can draw them into your kingdom and we give you thanks in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

■■■■■ Thank you.

[70 : 15] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways Who you are Who I am Who I am Who I am Who you are Who you are Who you are Who I am Who I am Who I am Who I am Who I am Who you are

[74 : 02] You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways You're perfect in all of your ways Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.