



HIGHER

Sermon Growth Guide

May 28, 2023
Saved and Serving



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Higher - "Saved and Serving"

1 Chronicles 16:34-43

Key Verse: 1 Chronicles 16:35 "Cry out, 'Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise.'"

Big Idea: Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service.

Foundations

King David takes worship very seriously. He role models a life of worship. In our **Higher** series, which concludes today, we've watched a victorious king give all praise to God and point the nation's focus on worshipping God.

We've reminded one another that we too must take worship very seriously. We must make worship a priority on our calendars. God alone is worthy of our full focus.

Worship flows from salvation; gratitude flows from grace. Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service.

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the day we celebrate the Holy Spirit filling God's people to accomplish God's mission in the world.

Today is also My Part Sunday, when we celebrate and reaffirm that church works best when every member plays their part. You're invited to enter in or reaffirm your place of service here within this body.

As you circle up this week, give thanks for your Life Group! Give thanks that you do not walk alone. Thank God that right before you is a first place of service within this body as you serve one another in your journey of conformity unto Christ.

Begin your time together in prayer, asking God's Spirit to guide and guard this time.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read 1 Chronicles 16:34-43. According to verse 35, what will be the result of God saving His people?

Changing gears, now read the history of Pentecost in Acts 2. What catches your attention in Acts 2?

Applying God's Word

Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service.

Describe your season of life. Where are your places of service? Do you feel like you're serving too much or too little?

How's your soul in the season you're in? Help one another discern how the Lord is shepherding you.

Witnessing God's Word

John 13:34-35 says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

They will know us by our love.

Host a conversation on how loving and serving are natural expressions of the Christian life and how growth is accomplished through a life of service to others.

When is the last time something happened to you that forced you to react? Cause and effect. I remember one time Cassie and I were on a hike and a thunderstorm came down on us hard and fast. We were in a steep, narrow canyon in Rocky Mountain National Park. The lightning was so bright and the thunder so deafening and immediate. We spotted a large boulder with a section to climb up in, so we took cover. Never mind if it was a mountain lion's siesta spot, we needed cover. We needed help.

Full transparency, I need help this morning. Yes, I need your help this morning! Today is My Part Sunday. Today is also Pentecost. Today is also the conclusion to our **Higher** series in 1 Chronicles. And today also lands on Memorial Day weekend.

Are you guys ready for some homiletical jiu jitsu? Can we work through this together? In reverse order, knowing we're all headed to a My Part Sunday moment immediately following the sermon, here we go, one step at a time. Briefly, but deeply, it's not cliché, it's heavy reality: freedom is not free. I think of my dad's dad landing on Omaha Beach in Normandy or my mom's dad piloting the Flying Fortress over the Himalayas, but centrally this weekend for those who gave it all, who never came home, we're thankful together this weekend and we remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

In our **Higher** series, we've been looking at the story of King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant has just arrived in Jerusalem. And now King David writes a song of exuberant celebration. We've been looking at this song for three weeks now. This song closes with a prayer for deliverance. Hear the word of the Lord in the final three verses of the psalm found in 1 Chronicles 16, here beginning in verse 34: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Cry out, 'Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise.' Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said 'Amen' and 'Praise the Lord'" (1 Chronicles 16:34-36).

In the strongest years of Israel's national life, their king leads them to cry out together, "Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations." I love this about King David: victorious in so many ways, yet broken and maintaining a heart of contrition before

the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. King David leads the nation of Israel to continue to focus on the salvation of the Lord. He does this in part by bringing the Ark back into the central life of the nation and leading the nation in worship according to the patterns established by the Lord.

In other words, King David takes worship very seriously. He role models a life of worship. In our **Higher** series, we've watched a victorious king give all praise to God and point the nation's focus on worshiping God. We've reminded one another that we too must take worship very seriously. We must make worship a priority on our calendars. God alone is worthy of our full focus. King David role models that serving the Lord is the natural reaction to being saved by the Lord.

Our big idea this morning is this: Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service. Today in the church calendar we come to Pentecost Sunday. Today we celebrate the moment when God empowered the church to fulfill the The Great Commission to go into all the earth and make disciples, teaching them to obey all that the Lord commands. Of all the major salvation periods in Scripture, Pentecost is the most proximate to the church today. We live in the Pentecost era.

Imagine this: To mark the start of a race, the starter commissions all the runners by firing the starting pistol. "Pop!" And the runners are off to the race. Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." And then a short time later Acts 2:1-4: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Pentecost, "Pop!" And the church comes alive in the power of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the glory of God, the majesty of God, the splendor of His holiness, to bear witness to the grace of God in Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

Brothers and sisters, we live in the Pentecost era. Or, said another way, we live in the era of the Great Harvest. Matthew 9:37-38: "Then (Jesus) said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord

of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” The Harvest era. The Pentecost era. Friends, we find ourselves in the great season of grace. The time of harvest. The years when we are all of us commissioned into the harvest field to bring in Christ’s reward from His work on the cross, the salvation of the sons and daughters of God that outnumber the stars in the sky, that outnumber the grains of sand on the beaches of all the earth. The season of grace before the present things become “the old order of things.” Revelation 21:4b–5a: “There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” Don’t you see it, friends? We’re in the Pentecost era, a season of grace. We don’t know how many days are left in this present Pentecost era, but with every hour we are given herein, we join together in God’s mission to seek and to save the lost, to the ends of the earth, to the ends of the earth.

I want to come back for just a couple minutes to our series in 1 Chronicles. Remember, lots to hold together today, and we’re doing a great job staying together! Our series in 1 Chronicles 13–16 concludes with King David commissioning the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the geographical center of worship that God establishes to usher in the coming Messiah to fulfill the longing of the human heart for ultimate deliverance and salvation. 1 Chronicles 16:37–38: “David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the Lord to minister there regularly, according to each day’s requirements. He also left Obed-Edom and his sixty-eight associates to minister with them. Obed-Edom son of Jeduthun, and also Hosah, were gatekeepers.” “Wait, what?” you may be asking yourself. Here’s the main thing here: King David establishes for the regular worship in Jerusalem according to the patterns established by the Lord. The text goes on to clarify something about the quality of the worship, verse 40, “in accordance with everything written in the Law of the Lord.” Throughout our *Higher* series, we’ve been considering how God establishes specific textures and topography for His people to walk in. When we commit to the ways of the Lord, we find our true freedom and joy. When we choose other paths, we come to learn that no matter how alluring they looked at first, they only lead us back into captivity. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10).

A central piece of practical application as we head into the summer months is considering

the textures and topography of our own life patterns and discerning in Christian community whether or not we too can say that verse 40 can be said of our own lives—that in our own lives we are committed to living, “in accordance with everything written in the Law of the Lord.” Lifting God higher is a life discipline and therein we come to find a deeper sense of the joy of the Lord. What in your own lifestyle do you need to adjust to lift God higher?

Our text also gives us a refrain that is echoed throughout the entire Psalter—we see it here in 1 Chronicles 16:41: “for his love endures forever.” Why should we lift God higher? Why commit to the ways of the Lord? Why restrain from the ways of the world, so many other ways look so pleasurable and comfortable and safe. Why constrain ourselves to the precepts of the Lord? The reason given by David in our passage today and affirmed throughout all the Scriptures is “for his love endures forever.” God loves us. God loves you. Why does God save? Because He loves. Why does God put up with so much rebellion from the human race? Think of this: nations have Memorial Day weekends across the earth—ours is this weekend—so what does this tell us about the human race? Exactly. So why does God put up with us, we who kill one another generation upon generation? Because He loves us. Why does God keep chasing you down and resting His overwhelming arms of salvation upon you in such a way that you can’t move an inch? Because He loves you. He loves you and chose you and died for you. Why are you seated here this morning? Because He loves you. You are loved—“for his love endures forever.” In God’s love, God saves.

We turn now, and thank you for staying with me here, to our response to so great a love. How do you respond to God’s love for you? What do you do to say “thank you”? We respond to God’s love in part by living lives of service to others. Remember our big idea today: Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service. To love is to serve.

We host My Part Sunday on Pentecost Sunday because as the people of God we are commissioned and empowered to live as God’s people on God’s mission; for us, that mission starts right here at First Pres. Today you are invited to participate in My Part Sunday by letting the church know where you believe God is calling you to serve at First Pres. Maybe it’s something new. Maybe it’s a reaffirmation of your place of service that you’ve fulfilled faithfully for decades. What does serving look like at First

Pres? It can look like a hundred different things. Here's what it looks like for Sara and Alex. (A video testimony plays showing Sara finding a home in MOPS leadership and Alex finding a home with the worship team playing bass as they say, "We respond to God's love by serving out of a heart of gratitude.")

What a beautiful testimony, amen? Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service. We are a church that joins together, thousands of hands joining together to lift Jesus higher here in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs, thousands of hearts responding to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Karl Barth paints a beautiful image here: "Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning." Earlier I was painting a picture of Cassie and I being chased by an overwhelming thunderstorm up into a large boulder for shelter. Cause and effect. Barth's picture here considers thunder and lightning in a different way. God's grace to you in Jesus Christ is the eternal bolt of lightning that saves you and gives meaning to your entire existence. We wake up every day afterward, recognizing that lightning bolt of salvation in lives of thunderous gratitude. Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service. We join The Church in creating an eternal rumble of gratuitous thunder in response to God's work of salvation on the cross, generation upon generation upon generation. Grace of God in Jesus Christ; lives of gratitude walking out empowered service. Cause and effect.

The presence and power of God is what Pentecost is all about. The final verse of our series in lifting Jesus higher reads like this: "Then all the people left, each for their own home, and David returned home to bless his family" (1 Chronicles 16:43). After all the worship, after all the work to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, "David returned home to bless his family." After all the energy poured out to lift God higher across the whole of the national life, David returned home to bless his family. David received the blessing of his forefathers. David receives a special anointing from God to lead God's chosen people. David is given a covenant promise that from his lineage the Messiah will come and will save.

I want you to walk out of here this morning knowing that, like David, you are blessed and can join David in "returning home to bless your family." God's people, all of God's people, are blessed to be a blessing. Come into the

Sanctuary every week and receive the blessing that God pours out when God's people gather and lift high His name. Go out from this place ready to bless your family—and don't stop the blessing there. Bless your barista. Bless your boss. Bless the whole borough where you live. Let the blessed go from this place to extend the blessing.

Consider this: King David walked so closely with God, yet David knew nothing of the Pentecostal pouring out of the Spirit upon all of God's people. We live in the Pentecost era. The people of God now experience the power and presence of God in a way ancient Israel could only dream of. We live in the era of the Great Harvest.

First Pres may be a small piece of God's unfolding story of salvation across the earth, but for us this space is our Kingdom Embassy where we worship, where we lift God high, above all other gods, and where the Spirit empowers us to serve, declaring to Colorado Springs and beyond that the Lord reigns—and because the Lord reigns, the earth is made glad.

Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service. On this Pentecost Sunday, our My Part Sunday, where is God inviting you to serve joyfully? What ministry lies in the intersection of your deep gladness and the church's great need? Church works best when every part does its part. Where's your part? We are thousands of hands coming together in unity to shine brightly as Light + Life for the City.

Hey, you all did great. You helped me and you're kind. We just tied together multiple major themes for one morning of worship. If you don't remember anything else, remember this: Lives that are saved naturally become lives marked by empowered service.

Let's pray. *God be lifted high. You saved us and we're thankful. May your Kingdom harvest in Colorado Springs be so much greater this year and every year because we your people gathering in this space lift high your name. Your name is above all names. Your Spirit has been given. We are empowered with your very presence to serve together on your mission. Be magnified, King Jesus. We pray in your name. Amen.*