

[00:00:00] This is a historic morning.

[00:00:05] At least one good reason I'm going to speak to you. And my primary verse is going to be from Ezekiel 39. Never happened in Hope Church before.

[00:00:15] My knowledge that we've had a message based in Ezekiel.

[00:00:19] Well, the kicking off point. So if you've got a Bible, go to Ezekiel 39.

[00:00:29] And I'm.

[00:00:31] It's great that you're here and you know we're missing loads of friends today and I am going to use the mic because still record it. You don't need it to hear me, but it's for the recording and I'm going to use this so I can look at my notes. Be kind of a bit more appropriate and a few sofas but you know, we'll. Well, we'll get on with how we are doing it today.

[00:00:55] So Ezekiel 39, I'm going to give you longer to find it because it's not like your regular go to scripture, is it? It's not like John 3:16 or Romans 8:28 or something like that.

[00:01:11] And you want to, if you've got it on a device, you want to scroll down a bit. We're in verse.

[00:01:18] Just going to read a few verses from verse 25.

[00:01:22] I'm reading the ESV.

[00:01:26] Got it? Everybody got it?

[00:01:28] Yeah. Okay, good. So therefore, thus says the Lord God now restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel. And I will be jealous for my holy name.

[00:01:41] They shall forget their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me.

[00:01:47] And they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid.

[00:01:51] When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies lands and through them have vindicated my holiness in the sight of the nations, then they shall know that I am the Lord their God. Because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore.

[00:02:14] And I will not hide my face anymore from them when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord. And really sort of the last scripture there is where we're going to home in. I will not hide my face anymore from them when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God. And you've got this whole situation where most of you know Israel, God's chosen people, he's got a land for them and yet they disobey, they fall away over and over and over again. And in the end he exiles them. So they get invaded and he exiles them out of their land.

[00:02:59] And some of these prophets are speaking, like Ezekiel and Jeremiah are either prophesying it's going to happen or they're prophesying that it's going to end, there's going to be a restoration of it. Get that in Isaiah. And this is what Ezekiel's saying is, all that calamity has happened to you, but there's a day of restoration coming to the whole nation. And I'm going to

once again prove that I am God by restoring you completely, despite all your waywardness, despite all the things you got wrong, despite all your sin and all your profligacy with other gods. I am going to demonstrate my goodness and bring you all back into the land and cover your sins and protect you from your enemies, and on and on and on. And this summary verse is that I will not hide my face anymore from them when I pour out my spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Lord. And last week I spoke about the priority of kings and the priority of King David, that his number one priority was God's presence.

[00:04:08] Although he had a huge amount of responsibility and he was leading a nation, he was fighting many enemies. He obviously had the political side of being a king to deal with. He had the warfare side of being a king. He had the, I don't know, the finances of a kingdom. But David, through his skilled leadership, led what Bible commentators called, led the people of Israel then into what was called the Golden Age of Israel. So him and then most of, but not all of Solomon's reign after him. And in that period, David defeated all Israel's enemies. He had peace on his borders. He established a tabernacle of worship. He amassed enough wealth and money to build a fantastic temple, except he wasn't going to build it, but his son did. And all this is going on. And yet David's declared focus is not on any of those doing any of those things.

[00:05:07] And all the legitimate responsibilities that he had were not his primary focus. And I've found that I have legitimate responsibilities and they can sometimes interfere with. With the one thing I should really be focused on. And what David said was, the one thing I'm after in life is Basically, it's Psalm 27. The one thing I'm after is the Lord is to dwell in his presence, is to see his beauty.

[00:05:36] I think with all of that stuff going on, surely there's one thing you'd have to be like military might or financial skill or, you know, none of that. The one thing, the one thing was the face of God And I sometimes wondered the contrast between David and that was his one thing. And then his son Solomon, you remember, he gets this moment, he gets this dream. And God says to him, you can have anything you want.

[00:06:02] What do you want?

[00:06:05] Now? He doesn't ask for riches. He doesn't ask for. He asks for wisdom to rule the people.

[00:06:11] And I'm like, and God commends him for it. And it's good. But I wonder if he was really his father's son. He should have been saying, I just want your face, Lord.

[00:06:22] That's my one thing rather than the skill to do this stuff.

[00:06:27] Just something to think about. But David was very clear. And the summary verse about David in Acts, I think it's Acts 13, basically pulls out of what God said to Samuel about him, is this was a man after God's heart. For all that he did and all that, you know, both. He also did quite a lot of sinful and damaging things.

[00:06:55] The Bible's God's version or God's opinion and God's declaration of his life was, this is a man after my heart. And some translators and commentators talk about how he was after God's will. No, he was after God's heart. Now God's will is in God's heart. But he wanted to know the heart of God. He wanted his presence.

[00:07:18] And really. So this is continuing on with that one thought. Here we have. I know it sounds. It's like, why are we in Ezekiel? Because in this restoration process, the thing that God says to the whole house of Israel is, I'll not hide my face from you when I pour my spirit on you,

declares the Lord.

[00:07:42] And there's such a connection here between the face of God and the Spirit of God being together.

[00:07:52] And we sometimes get the Holy Spirit still treat him as an it, a force, a power, a thing doer. But he's the face of God. He reveals the face of God. He is a person.

[00:08:09] And we can also think, I'll get onto this in a minute. We receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on us and all that's good, but actually the most important thing is when the Spirit's poured out, the face of God is revealed.

[00:08:26] I didn't put it in my notes, but there's a couple of other scriptures you could go to.

[00:08:31] Proverbs 16, I think it is, but I can't remember. That would point. It's this connection between, you know, the reign of God is the Spirit of God is the face and the favor of God. There's that kind of theme in this all woven together.

[00:08:50] So he reveals his face by pouring out his spirit.

[00:08:55] The revelation of God's face. And we know, because we've taught it often that the Old Testament word for presence is also face.

[00:09:07] So if you just study the Hebrew word out and it's easy to look up, you'll find that often the word translated, his presence through the Old Testament is also face or countenance.

[00:09:20] So he's saying, I'm restoring my presence, the ability to see my face by pouring out my holy Spirit. This whole sense of intimacy, this whole sense of presence, of encounter, of connection, is all wrapped up in the moving of God's spirit.

[00:09:41] And I think it echoes right back to walking in the garden. So if you. If you read Genesis carefully, you get this sense that God is walking with Adam in the cool of the day. So you've got God walking with Adam. But the word sometimes translated cool is also breath, which is ruach, which is also spirit. So God's walking, the Father's walking with Adam in the spirit.

[00:10:12] Literally, Adam's experiencing the breath of the spirit around him as he walks with the Father. And that's kind of what he starts to doubt and move away from as he and Eve eat from the tree.

[00:10:26] So this whole beauty of the Holy Spirit producing, preserving, revealing, and giving that intimate place of union with God for us as individuals and even this prophecy is to a community. I've come to show my face to you again, people of Israel, because I'm going to pour out my spirit.

[00:10:50] And you say, well, it's a bit Old Testament, but New Testament. You'll know the verses, 2 Corinthians 3:18, that we behold the glory of the Lord and are changed from one degree of glory to another. It says, this is by the Spirit.

[00:11:08] So it's by the Spirit that the Holy Spirit is the way that we behold God.

[00:11:15] He is the active person of the Trinity that is revealing both Jesus and the Father to us in a tangible, ongoing and powerful way.

[00:11:29] Isn't that beautiful?

[00:11:31] And so. But there is a move of the Spirit of God in the land.

[00:11:37] And I've been thinking, what's a good word for this? Because we use the word revival, and that's fine. But I think there's something about awakening.

[00:11:48] See, we are His.

[00:11:52] The whole world is His.

[00:11:54] Everybody's His.

[00:11:56] And as Paul says to them on in Athens, he's talking to the philosophers, he says, not far from any of us.

[00:12:07] In fact, he says to these Greek philosophers, in him, we live and move and have our being.

[00:12:16] So what is it when we have a move of the Spirit, God moves to make us aware of God's presence.

[00:12:24] God moves to awaken something and reveal something that he's already established.

[00:12:35] And I think the restoration of our lives of church, of the culture of the nation happens in the presence of the Father by the Holy Spirit. And I think that's what he's about. He doesn't want to see the UK go slide even further into moral degradation than it has already and confusion and people's hopelessness. And he is breathing on the nation.

[00:13:03] And we just need to posture ourselves to get breathed on, to be awakened.

[00:13:13] It's God's means of restoration.

[00:13:17] It's the breath of His Spirit revealing his faith face to people that it's happening across our land. And the Holy Spirit, really, I think I've said this already, but I'm going to say it a different way because we talk about, you know, we talk a lot about and remind ourselves of the verse, we're seated with Christ in heavenly places, right? So our reality is we're seated in heaven.

[00:13:43] But, you know, let's be honest, this morning, that was not the first thought in my head.

[00:13:50] It took me, you know, a double espresso and a good, you know, good breakfast to start to feel like I was even awake, let alone seated in heavenly places. Now, I know all of you were just like, there. You're just in the glory instantly.

[00:14:05] But it's the Holy Spirit who makes us aware of the reality of who we are.

[00:14:14] And he's the revealer of these. So when we talk, you know, he reveals all truth. He's the revealer of that word. Truth is reality. He's revealing reality.

[00:14:24] And we need Him. We need Him. We need to tune in to his wavelength because then he brings us into his and shows us who we really are. We're included in this family trinity.

[00:14:38] And we constantly need the awakening that no double espresso can actually give

you, which is, good morning, Holy Spirit, help me remember who I am and where I am and what you've got for me.

[00:14:55] And we saw how David prioritizes presence.

[00:15:00] And I think there's a lot of things we seek for we need to deprioritize.

[00:15:09] This is a.

[00:15:12] I'm going to mangle it. But it's a quote from C.S. Lewis that basically says if you put second things first, you don't get first things.

[00:15:23] If you put first things first, second and third things will automatically follow.

[00:15:29] And so the fulfillment of our dreams and the breakthroughs we long for and the stuff that we pray for and we want to see and we haven't seen isn't in the seeking the answer to the things we haven't seen. It's in prioritizing his presence.

[00:15:47] Are you seeing what I'm saying?

[00:15:49] So for me, a simple way of doing that is time with God would be predominantly in thinking about him, worship, meditating, rather than here's my list of things I need you to do.

[00:16:05] Because the fulfillment of things comes as a byproduct of his face.

[00:16:13] That's why he's saying this in Ezekiel. That's why David said. David had cottoned on that this is where stuff really happens.

[00:16:25] And the New Testament. I just want to.

[00:16:28] I quite like doing a bit of Bible teaching. You doing all right with this? Let's kind of weave together some scriptures. So in the New Testament, there isn't a bit where it says to all of us we should suppose to seek his face. We're pulling on the psalms, we're pulling on a lot of Old Testament ideas.

[00:16:45] The primary command in the New Testament of what to do first comes from Jesus on Sermon on the Mount. And, and he says, seek first the kingdom and his righteousness. And notice all these things will be added to you.

[00:16:58] So all the stuff we need will come not by seeking it.

[00:17:03] Remember, first things, first works, but put second things first. You don't get first things.

[00:17:09] So the stuff that we need to live, to breathe, to raise our families, we get busy with that gets added when we seek first the kingdom. But what does. And his righteousness. But what does that mean?

[00:17:24] Is there a connection from David's passion, from the promise to Ezekiel and the people of Israel to the New Testament reality of seek first a kingdom?

[00:17:36] You ask, and I'm so glad you did, because of course there is in Romans 14, it tells us this, trying to help us understand what the kingdom is. The kingdom of God isn't eating or

drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[00:18:00] Okay? The kingdom of God isn't eating and drinking because he's trying to deal with the controversy about should they eat food offered to idols and all this kind of stuff. And he's trying. Hang on a minute. The kingdom of God is even above all of that. It's not about what you eat and what you drink. It's. It's righteousness, peace and joy in hello, the Holy Spirit.

[00:18:24] And it's a while ago I studied this, but studied that out. And literally the way that's put together is saying that the kingdom of God is in the Holy Spirit.

[00:18:38] And you see that in the life of Jesus when he says, if I by the Spirit of God, or depends which of the gospels you're reading. If I by the Spirit of God, or if I by the finger of God cast out demons, then what? Remember what he says.

[00:18:53] If I by the Spirit of God cast out these demons, then the kingdom of God has come amongst you.

[00:19:04] So to seek first the kingdom is to seek first the Holy Spirit. And if the Holy Spirit reveals the face of God, then we're back where David was.

[00:19:15] Seek first intimacy.

[00:19:18] Seek first the Holy Spirit. Seek first the face of the Father.

[00:19:30] I think as we understand this and it becomes rooted in our lives, actually some of these other stuff flows.

[00:19:42] So these things we need and we want are byproducts of putting first things first.

[00:19:51] But it takes devotion and it takes letting the Lord win our hearts to a level of devotion that we find our affections for his stuff are superior than our affections for the other stuff.

[00:20:09] So there's a genuine alteration of our internal desires and affections that are drawn to him as a priority.

[00:20:22] You know, this isn't about, well, I learned it in church. This is about.

[00:20:27] And I know the concept. This is about something happening inside of us that says, oh, I got all these distractions, I've got all these decisions, I've got all this. But somehow in my day and in the way that I posture myself, I am going to get my internals pointed at the face of God.

[00:21:03] It's interesting that in Acts 18 it says, you will receive what when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

[00:21:14] That's right, you will receive power, Dunamis, literally miracle working power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

[00:21:23] Now if that is true, and of course it's true, because it's in the Bible and everything we've said this morning so far is true.

[00:21:31] What's the doorway into power?

[00:21:37] Holy Spirit.

[00:21:40] Intimacy with Holy Spirit.

[00:21:42] So when he says, I'm going to pour out my Holy Spirit on you and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. When the Holy Spirit comes on you, you're going to receive an ability to behold the FAI of the Father and have deep intimacy. And out of that intimacy flows power. So power isn't a. How do I get notches on my belt for God? Power is an overflow and expression of my intimacy with Him.

[00:22:12] And if you look in the way Jesus talks about how he did what he did, it's all about intimacy with the Father. I only do what what I see him doing. He's engaged with the Father in intimacy in a way that means that he's moving with the Father.

[00:22:31] He does, and he says what he hears the Father saying. And the Holy Spirit gives every single one of us the ability to be exactly that.

[00:22:41] So this isn't something strange or foreign or something you have to earn. This is something that every single one of us is given. We just don't always know what to do with it or that we've even got it for free.

[00:22:56] Do you see what I'm saying?

[00:22:58] So as I.

[00:23:01] Part of my life's journey is I don't want to be a powerless Christian.

[00:23:08] The kingdom of God. Another thing about the kingdom is not talk, but power.

[00:23:13] And I'm so glad for what I have seen. I'm so glad for what.

[00:23:18] I was going to read a story from the book, but it involves Gideon and he's not here. So I'm going to cook.

[00:23:23] We've got lots of great stories. We have lots of great stories. And I'm going to talk to you about that another week because I think it's important that we don't get embarrassed by them. We get inspired by them for the future.

[00:23:35] But I was just thinking, what else could I use if I don't use Gideon? One that I often think of.

[00:23:41] And I think I think of it because we're trying to create a supernatural culture. And it was something that happened at the end of a Christmas guest service, like when we were in the school and we did, you know, carol service kind of hope style.

[00:23:59] And I was kind of quite insistent that we reflect this new culture we're trying to build so that we are going to pray for people. At the end of the carol service, we're going to offer to pray for the sick. And because this is who we are now.

[00:24:13] And so we did, and people came out for prayer. And I remember praying for this lady who was the mum of someone who was around at the time as a student around or something, who had lost her driver's license because she couldn't. You know you have to pass a certain sight test, don't you? You have to be able to see reasonably well to get the license. And she

failed the test, lost her license, wanted prayer for her eyesight. So, like, okay, here we go. And one of the good things about this is the solid outcome. So me and some of the people prayed anyway, I hear about later, she's got her license back, so somebody's actually retested her eyes. And that's a story coming out of our worship and intimacy.

[00:24:59] This is who we are and we should be proud of it and be inspired by it.

[00:25:07] We did a trip to Maastricht. Do you remember? We had a connection for a while with some people in the Netherlands. And you've seen. We showed the video a few years ago. But I remember not feeling that great that weekend.

[00:25:20] And I don't think you were with me that time. And I remember just feeling a bit rough, but sticking headphones on with worship music, just trying to soak in his presence and then go to the meeting and get through it. And was with the team a bit like what Jan's doing in Austria? And we were doing.

[00:25:41] So there was. It wasn't particularly big meeting. There was 40, 50 people in the room, including the team, you know.

[00:25:48] And then we did an appeal and words of knowledge and people come out. And then there's the one guy in the wheelchair. And all the team gravitate to everybody but the wheelchair.

[00:25:59] I'm the team leader, I get the wheelchair guy. It's that kind of. It was really. That kind of. I was watching everybody avoid the obviously really difficult case.

[00:26:10] Were you there for that one? Yeah, you were. And so we.

[00:26:15] His name was Wheels and he was in a wheelchair.

[00:26:19] And he had prostate cancer, but they treated it with chemo, but it overdosed him. And it had. Actually, the chemo was so strong, it dissolved the nerves to his legs. So he couldn't. He couldn't stand up because his nerves were gone. And he was in pain because of prostate cancer. Anyway, we started to pray for him. God started to move on him. And then suddenly all the team got interested. Interestingly enough, this is how I tell the stories. Well, their version of it is different.

[00:26:54] They come out better in their version of it.

[00:26:58] Anyway, this guy gets up and starts to. And we dance with him like he couldn't walk. And he gets up and I'm just saying it's a fruit of intimacy. Power is a fruit of that intimacy. It's not a fruit of feeling great or being the best. Whatever.

[00:27:37] It was amazing. And he showed up in church the next day and walks in very proudly.

[00:27:44] And his psa, they test a PSA indicator for prostate and it was in the hundreds. It was outrageously bad. And it dropped, dropped and dropped. So that got sorted as well. Amazing, amazing story.

[00:27:58] So the Holy Spirit is constantly wanting to reveal his power through us by revealing the face of God to us.

[00:28:15] That's kind of what I've been trying to say for the last.

[00:28:19] It's sort of putting the pieces together. Because I think we can often get distracted by the outward stuff or get overwhelmed by the stuff we need to do or the responsibilities.

[00:28:30] But actually developing an internal posture which points my affections to the Lord. Sunday morning, learning to worship is a great place to do that. But that, that becomes.

[00:28:44] However you do that, it becomes part of your life that you're living.

[00:28:54] And if you look at some of the mystics and that like people, not. Not weird people, I mean, people that really develop devotion to the Lord, but in years by. It's worth reading about some of these people.

[00:29:08] And one of the things they discovered in trying to practice the presence of God was the power of giving thanks.

[00:29:16] So one of the things that happens to me the easiest is I get grumpy even after coffee.

[00:29:27] Now, it's probably not true of any of you. If more people were here, we'd probably have some of those other people who aren't here, the ones that get grumpy.

[00:29:35] But do you know that we kind of get that?

[00:29:39] I get grumpy with God, get grumpy with Teresa, grumpy with myself.

[00:29:44] Do you know what I'm talking about?

[00:29:46] Just smile, just have sympathy on my grumpiness.

[00:29:49] But the antidote. But what that does is it pulls us. It's not that he's leaving us, but it pulls us in our affections away from him. Because we're like, oh, God, you didn't do that. You didn't do this. And this hasn't worked.

[00:30:06] So gratefulness is the antidote to grumpiness.

[00:30:11] And what these mystics discovered is they restored their sense of his presence and the activity of the Spirit in their lives. The key to it was developing an attitude of gratefulness and thankfulness.

[00:30:27] So 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ for you in all circumstances.

[00:30:37] Even the horrible ones, I don't think we give thanks for them. I think we give thanks in them because we know God's in it somehow. He's going to work this out somehow. Sometimes you can just face the most horrible thing you think.

[00:30:52] And we've been there. And I'm sure you've all been there. And you're like, how can this ever be a good thing?

[00:31:00] Giving thanks to him who is good in the midst of those is so, so powerful and so restorative to our relationship with Him.

[00:31:12] And he does have the ability to win with any hand he's dealt.

[00:31:22] And there's some things I'm still hanging on for on that. But I Believe the goodness of God will be seen in the land of the living, in my life.

[00:31:31] And I don't know how he'll turn some of these things for good, but he will. And me just staying grumpy about it is not going to accelerate that.

[00:31:41] Hello.

[00:31:44] And so learning to give thanks and restore the devotion and the priority of my affections for him is absolutely key to walking, seeing the answers, but also just walking in a place of connection to the Lord through difficult times.

[00:32:07] So don't let this just be just. I'm coming into land. Don't let this be like a. Don't nod your heads and say yes. I agree with the concept and great teaching. And this is something where we let God woo our hearts and where we learn to point our hearts at Him.

[00:32:28] And I think it's more than just.

[00:32:32] I mean, I like playing worship music in my house, but sometimes I get a bit sick of it because actually, I don't just want to have the music. I want to have the connection.

[00:32:43] I don't want that to replace, to make me think I've got something going on that isn't really going on. So I'm not knocking having the music, but what I want to do is engage with him in it and not just sing about someone else's experience or, you know, sort of kind of piggyback on a good track.

[00:33:06] I want to be able to look at his face.

[00:33:09] He's got the most beautiful face.

[00:33:13] There's a song, I think we need to learn about that, that he has the most beautiful face. And when you've seen it, you're stuck.

[00:33:23] You really are stuck.

[00:33:25] And when he's touched you with that, you are marked.

[00:33:31] And that mark will never leave you, no matter how difficult or challenging things get around you.

[00:33:41] So just learning to realize his love and acceptance of you, warts and all. So I'm trying not to land this on what you've got to do. Spend more time with God. That would be really great.

[00:33:53] But don't beat yourself up about that. This is about our posture, our affections. And time with him will naturally come out of this place.

[00:34:02] Developing that gratefulness and that thankfulness will really, really help.

[00:34:08] And when you get into a place of worship, make it personal.

[00:34:13] Really engage with the words. Allow your mind and your affections to go with the spirit who is in you, who wants to lead you into an encounter with the face of God. All right.

[00:34:27] You're not on your own trying to find God. God's already found you and wants to lead you into this place. Of encounter as we yield ourselves and surrender, which is the theme of what truth to him. We are immediately led by the spirit into encounter.

[00:34:48] There you go. That's about as practical as I can offer you today.

[00:34:54] So let's just pray together. And I'll hand it back to the marks, the duo Marx.

[00:35:09] Yeah. Lord, Holy Spirit, will you pour yourself out on us again? Thank you. That. That isn't a prayer because you're not here. It's a prayer because we want more and we want to be increasingly awakened.

[00:35:25] We want to be alerted to the reality of what you've given us. And I pray for each one of my friends here that they would know how they would get their affections tuned into you.

[00:35:40] They would make the first thing the first thing and not think by running around filling their life with all the second things. The first thing will take care of itself, and it just doesn't work that way. But when we seek first your face, when we seek first your kingdom, when we seek first you, Holy Spirit, all these other things start to happen and fall into place.

[00:36:03] Thank you, Lord.

[00:36:05] Thank you for your presence, God.

[00:36:10] Thank you, Jesus.

[00:36:18] Thanks, Lord.

[00:36:20] Thanks for all the miracles that are going to happen as we just retune to you in our individual lives, all the things that have got stuck that are going to get unstuck.

[00:36:32] Amen.