

Hour of Power Deutschland
Steinerne Furt 78
86167 Augsburg

Telefon: 08 21 / 420 96 96
Telefax: 08 21 / 420 96 97

E-Mail: info@hoursofpower.de
www.hoursofpower.de

Baden-Württembergische Bank
BLZ: 600 501 01
Konto: 28 94 829

BAN:
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz
Seest. 8
3594 Güttingen
Tel.: 071 690 07 81
info@hoursofpower-schweiz.ch
www.hoursofpower-schweiz.ch

Spendenkonto:

PostFinance AG, 3030 Bern
Konto: 61-18359-6
BAN:
CH1609000000610183596

Hour of Power, 24.05.2020

GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

HS: Welcome visitors and church family. We are still so sad not to be with you in person, but we are together in spirit, and I do believe that God is calling all of us to pray fervently. I have a friend who said we need to be praying like the prophets. Elijah prayed fervently for God to stop the rain and He did! God can turn this crisis into redemption and recovery. Your prayers matter. Your prayers change things.

BS: Amen. That's a good reminder to all of us. And of course we're also taking all the important medical precautions. Even here in the church, I just want to say thank you to the choir and the orchestra for being willing to come, even though with all of the spacing and everything. I love the new set up. It looks like a music video or something but it looks great.

So we're doing our best here to gather in the best way we can without spreading the virus and making sure that everybody at home can participate with us. So we're just so, so glad that you're joining us now. And if you're watching on Facebook or YouTube, maybe share the video or text a friend and let them know that they can join us right now in church, coming to you live.

Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much that you love us and that you've called us. And I pray God that you would help us during this time of this virus to find the treasures within the obstacle; to find the opportunities that only make themselves available during these difficult times. I pray that your Holy Spirit would give us a fresh vision for our lives that when we do get back to work, when we get back to our normal lives, we will be bringing something with us that we didn't have, something wonderful, good that we didn't have before this time. Pray for health and healing over everybody. And thank you, God, we love you. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen. Turn around to the person in your living room and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Luke 10:33-37 – Hannah Schuller

Thank you choir and orchestra. In preparation for the message, Luke 10:33:

But a Samaritan as he traveled came where the man was. And when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he took out two denari and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? The expert in the law replied – the one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him go and do likewise.

Church family, loving your enemies is the best way to show Jesus you trust Him with your life. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER – Chad Blake

You know its moments like this that we are reminded that the church is not a building. The church is the people of God. And as we look for new ways to communicate with one another and be in community with one another through phone and text, email and streaming online, we remember that we are the people of God gathered together in this place wherever you are.

So would you join me in prayer this morning? Father, we come to you with heavy hearts as we look all over the world.

The Cross of Loving Your Neighbor

Lord, we pray for those who are sick. We lift up our government officials; we pray for clarity of mind. We pray for avenues forward. Lord, we pray for answers. We pray for a flattening of the curve and we remember all of those who are so susceptible to a virus like this.

Yet Lord, in the midst of this, we know that you are a God who is active and alive in our world, and so Lord, we give you praise. We haven't lost our praise, as we just sang. We look to the good in some of these quarantine situations: time spent with family, time to connect with loved ones where maybe we didn't have a chance to before; the beauty of nature that surrounds us. So Lord, give us eyes to see the good. Give us eyes to see where you are moving. And Lord, help us be your church. Help us be your hands and your feet in this world in whatever way we can. Maybe it's a phone call. Maybe it's a text. And for all of us its prayer. Lord, remind us of the power of prayer, that prayer changes things.

So Lord once again we pray for the doctors, the scientists, the government officials, and Lord we pray for an end to this virus, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Well thank you so much for joining us wherever you are. Wherever you are in your living room or in your car or on your cell phone, if you'd like to stand, please stand with me or stand with us and we're going to say this creed together. Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord, let's say this: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world.

Thanks, you can be seated.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "The Cross of Loving Your Neighbour"

Well welcome again, we're so glad that you're here and how about the coronavirus, huh? We haven't heard enough about that. Everybody's scared right now. Who knew; it's one of these black swans that this little tiny bug that nobody can see would shut down our economy, bringing it to a total halt. Lots of people are scared, in particular 1099 employees, people with small businesses, nobody's going out anymore and if they are, it's very short and that's a good thing in terms of preventative, but it's a bad thing for the economy and for loneliness and for boredom. Man, Disneyland is still closed! And things like that.

And when people get scared, as many are, sometimes people do stupid things. Like the guy who I said you better have IBS who had a grocery cart full of toilet paper going back to his car. There are other examples. There was a guy who said that he was talking to a checkout lady from Whole Foods, and she said every time at her lunch, she just goes into her car and she just cries for half an hour because so many customers have been mean to her. Or we also had the Florida incident. We don't need to get into that, but spring break where these kids all went together.

So there are definitely outliers where people get mean. But can I say that I'm actually surprised because I feel that the majority of Americans, and I think the majority of countries that are struggling with this, are doing what is right and doing what is good. I actually believe that this is an opportunity where the best of who we are as a people can come out in love of neighbor.

When you're scared, it's difficult to love your neighbor. When you've got that last bit of hand sanitizer, or that last loaf of bread and you see someone that needs it and you give it to them, that is an act of kindness and bravery that I think is needed today. And I'm reading all sorts of great stories online of people loving their neighbor and doing selfless things. I know grocery stores have made a change to allow the elderly to come in first in the first hour that the store is open. I think that's wonderful.

I remember reading a story where a checkout person from Costco said that there was an old lady in line and she had forgotten to grab bread or the bread was out and there was a kid behind who had a loaf of bread, and he gave her his loaf of bread and he said if there's anything else, can I run back and grab it for you? People are just reaching out. People are sending texts and calling each other, comforting one another, and praying for each other.

We even had lots of pastors and friends and family text us or call us this week. Even we pastor's who are supposed to do the ministry, are being ministered to! We had good family friends of ours who sent us purple roses and flowers because I had purple lavender behind me and now our house is full of flowers and full of this great fragrance.

The Cross of Loving Your Neighbor

And the strange thing is that when we get into these moments of shut down, sometimes we actually remember what is most important, and what is most important is our friends and our family and our life with God, and those things don't need to change. Yes, we have these boundaries and these barriers and these things that make us difficult. It's almost like a war time situation, but yet we're still able in these times to recognize how much we need each other. Sometimes the space actually creates more intimacy and compassion and a longing to be with one another.

All this to simply say that this is our time to shine. If it were ever a good time to be a Christian and be so boldly in the way you live your life that time is now; to be a light to your neighbor, to be merciful, forgiving, friendly and kind. And to have eyes to see the needs of those who are suffering. And in fact even when we're suffering, maybe you're even sick right now or you're feeling scared. One of the best things you can do is to love your neighbor.

In fact, I would just say that the best way to get your mind off of all this stuff that's stressing us out and making us feel bored or frustrated or scared about the future is instead to stop focusing on that and look at how can I help someone. One of the best ways to get your mind all of this is to help someone – is to reach out to someone. And although we probably shouldn't be visiting people, there are things that we can do to have eyes to see of ways that we can support, help and love our neighbor in this difficult time.

And I'm just so proud of you. You are that type of a person. You're not the type of person to be scared or worried. You are relaxed, joyful person overflowing with love and compassion. Don't let the news and all of these things keep you from being creative in the way that you're able to help your neighbor while still being responsible. I know you're going to continue to bless your neighbor and reach out to them and help them in this difficult time.

Today I'm going to tell you the parable of the Good Samaritan.. well Jesus is going to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan, and I'm going to assist Him. But we're going to talk about this parable.

Before we get into it, we have to understand the Jewish idea of parable. You know parable, I do not believe that Jesus told parables to confuse people. It's easy in the modern era when we read the Bible in English to read a parable when Jesus says, so that their eyes would be closed or their ears would be closed, and think He's trying to confuse them, or He's trying to curse them. But that's not at all how a first century Jewish person would have heard what Rabbi Jesus was saying.

In Judaism, parables were used to clarify an idea. Of course they would, it's a great teaching element. The parable of the Good Samaritan doesn't confuse us, it helps us be a more generous, loving and kind person to our neighbor, and that's what Jesus intended the parable to do.

In those days, there was this expression that if a rabbi told you a parable or a teaching, and you answered that teaching correctly as a student, he would look at you and he would say 'you have heard and you have heard. You have seen and you have seen.' What does that mean? Well sometimes people hear us and then other times they really hear us. Sometimes people see what we're saying, and then they SEE what they're saying. Does that make sense?

If it doesn't, one example that a rabbi used, I heard, was the story of Nathan and David. Remember when David kills Bathsheba's husband by putting him at the front of the army line and ends up taking her as a wife, and the prophet Nathan confronts King David and he comes before him and tells him this parable about this wicked rich neighbor who stole the one lamb of the other neighbor and killed it as a hospitality gift. And remember what David said? He said this man shall die! Rabbis say that David heard but he didn't hear. He saw but he didn't see. And then when Nathan said that person is YOU, then David heard and he heard, and he saw and he has seen. How many of you have a husband or a spouse that sometimes when you talk to them, they hear but they don't hear. They see but they don't see. You have a kid and you're trying to teach your child or your grandchild or you're mentoring somebody and you're like you've heard but you haven't heard. You've seen, but you haven't seen.

And this is what Jesus is saying that they would hear and not hear; they would see and not see. He's saying that they hear what He's saying but they're not taking it to heart. They're not owning it. They're not making it theirs. They're not obeying with all their heart and all their soul and all their mind and all their strength. And this is what Jesus is attempting to do is to take them from just hearing. He wants them to hear that they would hear and see that they have seen, and that's His attempt.

Now before we get too far into this, Jews are way more comfortable with the hierarchy of goodness than we modern Christians are. We like to say that all sin is all sin, which by the way isn't in the Bible. I'm not going to go too much into that, but all sin does separate us from God, but it's not all the same. And in Jesus' day, they wanted to sort of rank commands.

The Cross of Loving Your Neighbor

So there were kind of seven or eight schools, depending on the time period, of Pharisees, rabbis and teachers, and they loved to wrestle with this question: how do you inherit eternal life. That is, how do you live the right kind of life that's overflowing with goodness and shalom and all of these things? And every rabbi answered this question, the first answer to the question the same way. They would say number one, its Shema. Remember Shema from a couple weeks ago? Shema. "You shall love the Lord with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength." That's number one. And every rabbi, every Pharisee, everyone agreed on this.

But number two, what's number two? Well, this is where they diverged. Some would say number two is honor the Sabbath and keep it holy. And I would say like imagine in this group of Pharisees and theologians and teachers that are wrestling with these, there's sort of a strict group, and then there's the more gracious group, that on the most strictest side they would say the second thing is honor the Sabbath. And then they would say maybe third or fourth is love your neighbor as yourself, or love your neighbor.

This is from Leviticus, by the way. Jesus doesn't make this up. It's something that rabbis say, but there was another group, a more gracious group that say number one is love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and number two is love your neighbor as yourself. Now I can see Him losing everybody, this is good, but catch me here, okay? This is a normal response. Number two is "love your neighbor as yourself." Then they would say well who's my neighbor? And the most gracious group would say, is my fellow Jew, religious Jew my neighbor? Yes, absolutely. What about my fellow Jew who's not religious? Some would say no. Some would say yes. The gracious group would say yes, your fellow non-religious Jew is your neighbor. And then some would say well what about the Gentile that's a man of God? Yes, that's your neighbor. And what about this person? Yes. This person? Yes. And the most gracious school would say yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, until you said what about the Samaritan? Even Hillel, the most gracious kind of free, hippy, like really loving rabbi was like no, not the Samaritan. Nobody in Jesus' day believed of everybody that the Samaritan could be a neighbor. They were the worst of the worst. Who were these Samaritan guys?

Well 722 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians who were the most evil blood thirsty group ever, and out of that came a region that was called Samaria, and Samaria was full of obviously Samaritans who were viewed by Jews as half breeds. They were mud bloods. They were this like weird mix of Jews and Assyrians. And this created a type of racist thing towards their neighbor where these groups just started hating each other, and they called each other vile names, and each group said that the other was disgusting. You talk about a neighbor, they're literally next to each other, right next to each other.

There are all sorts of examples that fueled this fire, but for example the Jews a hundred years before Jesus, destroyed the holy temple of the Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim. The Samaritans in turn went to the holy temple in the middle of the night and littered the holy of holies with dead corpses in order to defile the temple so it couldn't be used. And they just continued to sow bitterness and hatred towards one another until they became the ultimate rivals; the Montague's and the Capulet's; the sharks and the jets. This was them. It was this deep, deep hatred where they would say literally everyone is a child of God. Every single person is a child of God and is my neighbor and needs to be treated with dignity, except Samaritans. They're demons, they're horrible. We got it?

Luke 10, chapter 30. Jesus is teaching and a theologian comes to Jesus to test Him. Now to test Him is a compliment. You don't test people you dislike, you test someone that you're thinking of becoming a disciple to. You want to understand more. It's an honor to be tested by a theologian. Okay? This is not a bad guy. And this theologian who clearly loves what Jesus is saying, and clearly is interested in following Him, says to Jesus 'rabbi, how might I inherit eternal life?' Remember that question has been debated a lot. Jesus says 'what is written in the law? How do you see it?'

And the theologian answers from the gracious party, right? The loving party; the group that's the most tenderhearted. And he says to Jesus, 'love the Lord' and this is how he would say it. You don't say the Shema half heartedly. You say 'you shall LOVE the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.' When he says mind, he's quoting Jesus, by the way. He's actually saying I've been listening to what you're saying. And number two – 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Okay? Then Jesus says, 'you have answered correctly. Do this and you shall live.' Right? They think it's over.

And then he's kind of like thinking about.. and it says because he wanted to justify himself, he looked at Jesus and he said well, who's my neighbor? And of course Jesus, being a rabbi, responds with a parable.

The Cross of Loving Your Neighbor

He says there was a man that was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. By the way, this is a famous road called the Jericho Road. It's a very treacherous, very treacherous thin road that goes from Jerusalem, obviously, to Jericho. At some points, it's only 18 inches wide; sometimes its two hundred/three hundred feet in the air. I don't know if you can see it, but this is a road right here, look. This is it, right here. You see a little donkey? This is the road. You take a slip and you're going to fall into the Grand Canyon here. Not really the Grand Canyon, its Israel.

So he says traveling on this road. So there's no way that the people traveling by would have missed the man. They're going to have to, in an effort, get around him. And he says that he was robbed and beaten, that he was stripped naked, that he was given wounds, he was bleeding and that everything was taken from him. And it says that he was half dead. Now this term half dead is important. Half dead - it kind of reminds me of Billy Crystal from "Princess Bride" when he's like "he's not dead. He's mostly dead." Like he looks dead, he's white, he's pale, he's stiff, but he's still alive. And so there was a term for this, that he was half dead, meaning that all accounts yes, he was technically alive, but he looked like he was probably dead. Plus he was cut so he was unclean.

And it says first that a priest came by and walked around him. Now here's what I want you to see. In the Jewish mind, what the priest was doing was not an evil or bad thing. In Levitical law, the priests and the Levites are not allowed to touch anything unclean, which includes anyone or anything that is bleeding, or any dead person. They're not allowed to touch them. And so what the Jewish person would have heard was oh that poor Levite who would have wanted to help his fellow Jew couldn't because he would become ceremonially unclean. So the heart of the listener actually would have gone out to the Levite. I think that's something that we miss. The Levite and the priest, they're walking around out of a sense of duty to Torah more than out of a sense of like oh, I don't want to mess with that.

So in other words, they are putting honor the Sabbath, honor these rules and regulations over love your neighbor as yourself. They had to make a decision, and that was the decision they made. Keep in mind, the Samaritan's also have a Torah, and the Samaritans also have these rules. In other words, the Samaritan, according to the Samaritan religion, because the man is bleeding, is also obliged, because he's dead, is also obliged not to touch the man. He has the same religious rule.

So a priest goes by, a Levite goes by, and then Jesus says.. and then remember He's talking to this theologian who hates Samaritans, and He says "then a Samaritan comes." Samaritan comes through the desert and comes along and runs into this man, sees him lying on the road, and the Bible says that he has pity on him. He sees him there bleeding, and he bandages his wounds, he puts oil and wine on the wounds, which is expensive. He puts the guy on his donkey and carries him to the nearest inn. You know how far the nearest inn was back then? Twelve miles! He had to go twelve miles on the Jericho Road. That's easily a day and a half travel to skip whatever appointment he was supposed to have to bring this guy to an inn.

And when he gets there, he tells the innkeeper 'take care of this man.' He gave him a couple bits of silver and said when he gets better just keep taking care of him. I'll come back and I'll pay whatever bill is there.

And then Jesus looks at this theologian, this Jewish theologian, and He asks him the question: who was the neighbor to the man? Was he the priest? Was he the religious guy? Was he the guy that honored the Torah? Or was he the Samaritan? And the theologian can't even bring himself to say Samaritan. He just looks at Jesus, probably ashamed, and says 'the one who had mercy on him.' Interesting.

I love this story and I think it's just so important. Jesus tells him 'go and do likewise.' Now to go and do likewise doesn't mean.. we always read the Good Samaritan as a story about helping people on the side of the road. And it is that, but really it's a story about loving your enemies. It's a story about loving someone you think is subhuman. Loving someone that you can't stand. Loving someone that you think is against all you believe in. And you might even be right, but you still love them. I'm looking at you, political people. I'm looking in you, religious people. I'm looking at you who struggle with that neighbor who always leaves their trash out on the thing, or those people who have hurt you in the past. There is a calling from God, we should have boundaries, we should be wise, but there is a calling from God to nurture love in our hearts for those who feel unlovable.

And I think the most important thing to pull from this, it's not it's just the enemies, but it's just kind of everybody. It's your near dweller. Remember, Jesus never tells us to love the whole world. Jesus tells us to love our neighbor. That's the person near you. And sometimes a person near you that you're supposed to love is somebody that's really fun to love.

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If I see a puppy on the side of the road with a thorn in his paw, I'm like oh, I'm going to help my neighbor, and that's fun. But if I see someone that needs help from me and this is someone who insulted me recently, or someone who is against us, or someone who has lied about me, it becomes harder to be a loving person towards them. But during these times, it's the time when we love our neighbor the most.

And I just want to say that is who you are. You're not a vindictive, angry, bitter person. You are a loving person and the love and the compassion and the joy that you bring to your neighbor means so much to them. You're a loving person to your spouse. You're a loving person to your kids. You're a loving person to the person at the checkout stand, or to the people that are helping you. And it's going to be really easy during these times of stress and fear and financial crunches to be short with people or to yell with people or to feel like others are taking advantage of you. Sometimes people will cut in front of the line in front of you, or take your bread. I heard one story that at Costco, two people were reaching for the last bit of Eggos and it was a young guy with his teenagers and another lady, and the guy looks at the lady and he literally says "leggo of my eggo." That somebody actually observed that. It was a sweet line, but that's going to be the temptation. But now more than ever, I feel like acts of compassion and love strike harder and deeper than they normally would.

Like right now, when most people are acting scared or pausing or freezing, doing something kind or loving to your neighbor is going to strike deeper and mean more than it normally would. In other words, it's an opportunity to show your neighbor how loved they are. The people that receive the least amount of love, I think, are the ones that say and do the least. The ones that are hidden. The ones that you're not able to see them. The ones that are not going to get mad at you if you don't do something nice. And that's the great opportunity is to notice people that are in isolation or that are feeling lonely or need help, and you can do that for your neighbor.

So I think that this is a time when I look around and I think there's not going to be people, hopefully, bleeding on the side of the street as you're driving around, as little as you do, but there are people who really are in need. The elderly and shut-in's not only need help getting the supplies that they need, but they're also going to feel lonely. Heck, I feel lonely. I feel bored. And so many people, many people that you love that can get out, are feeling stressed about their jobs, and feeling alone or feeling like maybe people don't love them. And there's also going to be huge financial need, especially for 1099 employees. That is anybody who's in hospitality or servers at restaurants; people who are in entertainment, people who are professional musicians and actors and things, that a lot of their gigs are getting canceled. And these are problems that the church can't completely solve, but they're problems that you can help with, and then if we all help with, we can make a difference.

I think that all of us can practice digital kindness, which is as simple as checking in – hey, how are you doing, or hey, I'm praying for you today, or hey, I just want you to know I love you and I miss you and I can't wait till this is all over so we can hang out with each other. Even sending funny memes, which I do with my sister and brother-in-law all the time is a way of being loving, it's a way of keeping it light-hearted and saying hey, I'm thinking about you.

I think just the main thing is just that we become those that have eyes to see the needs of those around us. That we have eyes to see. That we're not so focused on ourselves that we don't take pity on those who need to be seen. There are a lot of people that will be near dwellers to you who are going to be invisible unless you see them. And I'm really imploring you because I think you're the type of person that can make the biggest difference in their life; to remind them how needed they are, how loved they are, how this is all going to be over very soon, how if they need anything, you're happy to help them. And even if you don't end up doing anything, just the words themselves can be a salve to the soul. And I'm so grateful for people like you because you really do have eyes to see.

When Jesus is in the Sermon on the Mount; let me ask you a question: if a pastor gets up and says 'who is the light of the world..' let me ask the choir: who's the light of the world? It's a mix. See the gut response, if I ask this in a Sunday school class and ask a bunch of kids: who's the light of the world, all the kids are going to say Jesus! And they're right. They're right. But Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount does not say I am the light of the world. He says you are the light of the world. You are. You are the light of the world. It almost sounds like a heresy. It's not. It's the words of Jesus Christ. You are the light of the world. If you want more light in the world, if you want things to brighten up, you want things to feel better, be you! Be you! Be a loving, kind, sweet, generous, friendly, enthusiastic (sometimes) person. Not all of us are enthusiastic, and that's okay. But be you. Be you. Full of life, overflowing with mercy and joy and friendliness, and watch how that makes all the difference.

The Cross of Loving Your Neighbor

There's going to be people who after this is over, they're going to be like I am so glad for people like you. Without people like you, I wouldn't have gotten through this. Thank you. And I think that that's great.

So keep being that person. I know a lot of us feel stressed and worried, but we're going to trust the Lord and continue to not worry as much about ourselves and continue to bless our neighbor and make sure that we all help each other through this, and we will. Everything will be just fine.

So Father, we thank you, and we love you that you loved us first. And so one of the greatest responses of faith we can have is to have eyes to see those who are invisible. Eyes to see ways that we can love our enemy and love our near-dweller, and love people that otherwise would be unwanted or forgotten. Thank you for the people who are under the sound of my voice who are the lights of the world, and each one of them makes the world brighter, and we're so thankful for that. Lord, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

Thank you, especially to those of you, if you made a gift to the church today, it really means a lot, and it helps us a lot get through this difficult time.

Thank you for joining us. Join us next week live at 9:45 and we'll just keep doing this as long as we got to do it because we love you and we think is a great thing.

Now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.