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Hour of Power - 22.05.2022

WELCOME – Bobby & Hannah Schuller

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

HS: Hello visitors and church family. I want to welcome you this morning with my favorite C.S. Lewis quote: you are never too old, and I like to add or too young, to set a new goal or dream a new dream. Thank you so much for being here today. We love you.

BS: Yes, we're really so glad that you're with us this morning or this evening, wherever it is you are around the world, and we're so glad that you're with us and believe that you're going to leave here full of joy and full of life. And we serve a God that can always help us press through the pain, the difficulty, onto triumph and victory and to better versions of ourselves. And that is really one of the great promises of scripture. That's what heaven is, but that's also what heaven on earth is when we become more and more like Christ, full of life. And so we're going to believe that maybe we'll take one more step in that direction. Amen? So let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you and we love you, and we ask in Jesus' name that you would cause our hearts to be on fire for you, Lord, totally passionately devoted to you, Lord, so that we can press through the difficult things that come along our way. Lord, we pray that we would never take the path of least resistance but be willing to do the difficult things so that we can be full of joy, full of life, and Lord we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen. Turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Isaiah 40,27-31 - Hannah

You may be seated. Amen. In preparation for the message, Isaiah 40:27: Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God?" Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER – Tim McCalmont

Would you join me in a time of prayer together? Today, Lord, we celebrate a new year, grateful for your faithfulness to us in all that has gone before, and hopeful about what is to come. In awe of your glory, we are thankful for all you have given to us. You have raised us up on eagle's wings, born us on the breath of dawn, making us shine like the sun, all the while holding us in the palm of your hand. In the stillness of this moment, grant us your peace and your grace. We believe you have come with the promise of forgiveness and as we come in repentance, we hear your voice echo through the word of the prophet. I, even I am he who blots out your sins for my own sake and remembers your sins no more. We ask for conversations of peace and justice to emerge.

On Wings of Eagles

We lift up those affected by the wildfires in Australia. Bring relief and an end to the devastation down under. We ask your blessing over all who are here or those who are joining in on the broadcast, those who are facing health challenges, anyone who is stuck in the malaise of unemployment, or those facing broken dysfunctional relationships. Father, your word is about to be spoken to us. Bless our pastor Bobby as he delivers your message of hope. Give each of us ears to hear and may our intentional response be obedience to your word. We pray your blessing over the offerings we bring in a few moments. Use them to unfold your purposeful will among us. And now Lord hear us as we pray the prayer you taught us to pray, saying: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, will you hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Holy Spirit. Let's say this together: 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 "On Wings of Eagles"

Well we're beginning a new series today. One of the reasons I'm doing this, we are beginning our offer for the Eagles Club. Now the Eagles Club, as an Hour of Power ministry, we have to raise money like PBS or anybody else to pay for airtime and the filming of our broadcast, and so if we don't, we'd go off the air. And so at the beginning of each year, we always do Eagles and Sparrows asks, and I've been to houses where there are houses covered in eagle's statues, and honestly it always really touches my heart because when you see all of those eagles, what you're seeing is someone who, and not always easily, has faithfully given every single month to support this ministry. And so anyway, we are doing that this year, and to double it down, I mean what's amazing, one of the most amazing things about this year is it's the 50th anniversary of the Hour of Power. So this is a broadcast that has been reaching people for 50 years. And we're going to have 50 more years and beyond that, I hope, and believe that God's going to continue to reach more and more people. So we're in countries all around the world. People are watching us now in tons of different languages, and it just means the world to us that God is using us in this way to encourage people and inspire people. So one of the ideas that I had for a sermon series is I'm going to do, believe it not, a series on birds of the Bible. And we're calling it Consider the Birds of the Air, which is a line from Matthew. For the Jewish people and the ancient near eastern teachers, they love imagery, and love using the things that are around us as symbols of how to learn; this is like that, this is like this. We in the west don't do that quite as much. In the west, we really like abstract imagery, especially when we get theological. Even the word theological is abstract. We will say things like immutable, impassible, omnipotent, omniscient. If I say to you think of the word omniscient, like picture omniscient in your mind – we would all really struggle. Even if I said a less abstract word like picture love in your mind, that's still an abstract word. We'd really struggle to even picture the word love. We would likely bridge it to something else. But what the ancient near eastern rabbis did is they wouldn't say God is omniscient or omnipotent, even though they believed and knew He was and is, but they would say God is a tower. God is a spring of life, like of fresh water. God is a shepherd. God is this, God is a mother hen. And what they're doing, if I say to you picture a shepherd, picture a mother hen, picture a spring, instantly you have something in your mind to link the teaching to. So these images in the Bible are very important at how we understand ourselves, and our world, and our neighbor, and the Lord.

On Wings of Eagles

And one of the images that is very common in the Bible is actually different types of birds. Sparrows are in there a lot and eagles are in there a lot, but there are others as well, and I might do a one on honorable mentions, as well because there's some other fun ones. Anyway, today we're going to talk about the eagle. And it was interesting, that picture that we just showed of our eagle offer was taken by Caitlyn Fonda who works here in the ministry. She just told me that today, and I had no idea, today is national bird day! What are the chances of that! Can you believe that? Yes, I just found that out. Today! You guys don't believe in miracles, that's crazy. What are the chances? The symbol of the eagle is an important symbol in the Bible, and the verse that we always think of and will be teaching from today is the Isaiah 40 passage, which we're going to read in a bit. Hannah read it earlier and it was wonderful, Hannah, but that was a hyperlink, actually, to an earlier passage in Deuteronomy, I mean we're going to get to all of that. But in short, the eagle is the triumphant bird. It's the king of the birds. It's the one that soars above all the rest. It's probably one of the older birds. It's something that we think of as regal and powerful, and it's also a symbol of Israel. The eagle is the image that when we go through difficult times, when we go through tough times, when we're facing trials, when we're facing illness and difficulty, God sometimes doesn't see that the way we do. Sometimes God sees that as the thing that causes a little chick to grow up into an eagle. The process of a hatchling becoming an eagle is a difficult one, one that requires pain, persistence and eventually triumph but there are difficulties in the way. In the west, we have sort of lost that anti-fragile message that to grow, to be better, to be stronger sometimes we have to press through the pain. I think my dad said in one of his sermons recently that he's concerned that we're becoming sort of a soft country, I think, was the phrase he used. And that is not something that the ancient near east would be happy about. I don't think that's something that we would be happy about nor something that we're going to own, right? We want to be the kind of people that trust that even though we're going through pain and difficulty, God can use it to do something awesome in our lives. And maybe you're going through something right now. Maybe you're going through pain, maybe you're going through something you didn't think you'd be facing, maybe it's a sickness. I want you to know that if you align that pain with a passion for God and with faith, He can turn it into something great. One of the most astonishing things that I've seen is to see a people who have been trained to have faith, to have a positive outlook on life. It has been such an encouragement to me as a young man to look at my elders and see that for most of them, pain has not made them bitter, but it has made them better. It's made them fuller, deeper, more loving, more empathetic, and more powerful. It's hard to listen and follow someone who has never been through pain. It is. When you see someone that has been through pain and they are saying something wise, it's easier to listen to them and to trust that what they're saying is true. I want to encourage you, all of us we're going to go through difficulties and pains, but we need to encourage each other and remember the training that we got to endure to the end, and watch the great things that God is going to do, not only in spite of, but sometimes because of your pain! There are some great treasures. I don't think that God causes many of those things, but I think He can cause them to become wonderful things. Amen? Let's believe that. So I know this to be true. I know it in my own life and I know it in observing others that challenges, difficulties, times in which we're being stretched, if we align that with faith, that great things can come about because of it. I remember years ago when I came to faith as a 15-year-old, I was recruited to go on a missionary trip to smuggle Bibles from Hong Kong into China as a 15-year-old. And this was interesting that my parents were kind of like sure, go ahead. And I was like great I'll go. Looking back as a dad, I'm like that's amazing, but I love that my parents sort of gave us the freedom to do some of those things. But because that was the year that Hong Kong was being handed over to mainland China, the missionary trip was scrapped and the team moved from China instead to Thailand and it was an awesome experience for me, but it was a lot more difficult than I thought.

On Wings of Eagles

First of all, Thailand, though it was very beautiful, is very hot. It also has a lot of illnesses that people in America have never experienced. Every morning, we had to wake up at sunrise and have a one hour quiet time, a time of prayer with God. Then we would have breakfast which every single day for two months was chicken, rice and eggs. That's not bad the first couple of days, but like day 52 you're like oh what's for breakfast – chicken, rice and eggs. We had to wear these masks because the smog in Bangkok was so bad that you would come home and the mask would be totally gray and brown to protect your lungs. So it was a difficult thing. But that was also probably more than any other experience in my life the time where I saw God move, not only in profound ways in the lives of the people we were ministering to, but I saw miracles. I've told many of them to you before, but the girl who got hit by the car and she was fine, we prayed for a tumor and it disappeared, we prayed for rain, it started raining, we prayed for a guy who'd never walked, he started walking. Growing up in a Dutch Reformed church in Southern California, that was not the kingdom of God that I was used to. And there was something about entering into a difficult place as a teenager, that summer not being at the beach every day surfing and like hitting on girls and doing whatever you normally do when you're a teenage boy in Southern California, but being in a place for God, doing something that was difficult for the Lord, spending my summer doing something that's harder than school, it brought my faith to life! And I think that Hannah and I, between the two of us, have done over 20 missionary trips, and we can say that an important part of it is not suffering but suffering with a purpose; pain with a purpose. That we are doing these things, we are making these hikes to help people and we're doing it for the kingdom of God. Maybe you can remember a time in your life where you had a coach or a teacher who was difficult, maybe they were strict. And yet you look back at that time and you feel thankful that you had that person in your life. Have any of you had that experience before? Perhaps in music or in another discipline where they were loving but there was also this part of them that believed in you enough to trust that you could press through the pain to get to the best version of you. I think God's a little like that. Not maniacal, not mean, not angry, but God sees your life in a way that He can use the pain to reach a greater purpose in your life. I want you to leave this morning believing one: that whatever difficulty it is you're going through, trust me, it's not going to be forever. He will get you through it, okay? So don't lose hope. But number two: when you get to the other side, I believe you're going to be stronger, you're going to be more joyful, you're going to have a deeper soul, you're going to be more empathetic, and you're going to have power, especially power. That is the symbol of the eagle. The eagle is the chick-ling that went through all of the difficult stuff and became this great thing. That brings us to Moses. Moses is one of my favorite characters in the Bible. He's the first rabbi. He's the great teacher; full of passion, full of life. Moses' life is broken into three sections of 40 years, did you know that? Some of you don't know the story of Moses. There's a great movie with Charlton Heston in it called Ten Commandments. Check it out. It's very good. There's also Prince of Egypt is not bad. Moses is 40-years-old when he kills the Egyptian guard and flees. Moses is 80-years-old when he receives his calling from God in the burning bush. Did you guys hear that? He is 80-years-old. Okay, in the ancient world 80, I know it's not old anymore, but in the old world, 80 was old to receive his calling. I think about that a lot. Many of us who are older in the U.S., those last twilight years of our life very often, we use that time to have fun, and I think that's great. If you like to golf, invite me sometime. I'd be happy to go, especially you pay for it. I'm still Dutch. But I think never forget that the older you are, the more authority you have, the more believable your wisdom is, the more experience you have. There was one time I was trying to hire a guy who was 76, and I went after him with all my might. I tried for two years to hire this guy, and one time he said I'm old! You need a young guy. And I said that's why I want to hire you! You've got 46 years of experience. I don't want a young guy. I'm young. I need an old guy! And he put his hand on me and said, thank you for saying that. I said well will you work for me now? He said no.

On Wings of Eagles

But I really do believe that. I believe that the older we get, the more experience in life and if we can continue to live with passion and joy, young people will listen to what you have to say. I think some of the biggest impact I've seen in people's life is when they're older. Moses is 80-years-old when he receives his calling from God, and then it's another 40 years when he dies at 120. And at the twilight of his life, right at the end, Moses sings this famous song in Deuteronomy 32. This song would have been memorized by Jewish kids throughout the centuries; they would have known all this stuff. And remember the Bible is written like a website where it has hyperlinks where when you hear eagle in your mind you're supposed to think of all the places where eagles are mentioned in the Bible. We don't think that way as much because we don't memorize the Old Testament. But remember the audience of Isaiah and of the Torah, they had all this stuff memorized. So when they hear eagle, they're thinking about this passage from Moses. He sings this beautiful song to his people at 120-years-old. Can you imagine what that would have been like to hear Moses singing that at 120-years-old? I imagine he might have looked at it and said something like: "In a desert land, he found him." Who? In this passage he's talking about really Abraham and Jacob. He's talking about their family. "In a desert land he found him in a barren, howling waste." In other words, we were nobody's. Our family, our people, we were just shepherders in the middle of nowhere, and God looked among all the most powerful influential amazing civilizations, sorted them out and found a little known people – the Hebrews – in the middle of nowhere and said "them." And this is what Moses is reminding his people. God chose us. And then what? "He shielded him" that is Israel "and cared for him. He guarded him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch at them and carries them aloft." This is the most famous part of the song. The image is that God is an eagle like a mother eagle, and that we as Israel, that when we fall out of the nest when we're trying to fly, He's going to swoop down and pick us up and help us get to where we need to be. After Moses sings this song over his people, he ascends the mountain of Nebo, he blesses the tribes, and then he turns and he looks and God speaks to him one more time, and says this is your future home of your people. You'll not enter it, but you can see it. A wonderful song. And then it says that he died there. And the Bible says that as 120-years-old, it says that even though he died, "his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone." Isn't that a nice line? I really enjoy that. Years later, Isaiah will write the famous passage that we so often quote about the wings of eagles. In Isaiah, he says "why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say oh Israel my way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is disregarded by my God." Do you ever feel that way? You feel like God doesn't see you or notice you or listen to your prayers? I want you to know He does. He does. He sees you and He loves you. It's just that God sometimes just takes forever and it's utterly annoying, but He does. He sees what you're going through. He loves you, He's not forgotten you and He's got a plan. Isaiah says "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the heavens and earth. He will not grow tired or weary and his understanding no one can fathom." In other words, God knows things we don't know. He knows it, okay? You can trust Him. "He gives strength to the weary." Anybody here weary? God's got some strength for you. "And increases the power of the weak." Anybody feel weak? God has power for you today. That's what the Bible says. "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." And here's the famous line: "They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint." Isaiah wants us to see a hyperlink back to Moses' song. In Moses' song, who's the eagle? No. In Moses' song, the eagle is God. The eagle is God overlooking the chicks. In Isaiah, who is the eagle? It's Israel. Isaiah is telling us that God's plan is to move us from being little hatchlings; it's the little birds that can't fly that need the worms fed to them. He wants us to go from that to being an eagle! An eagle! One that can do the protecting, one that can be the power. See this is the thing: it's always God's plan to make you more like Jesus.

On Wings of Eagles

It's always God's plan to make you in His image! But that is not an easy road and only a few will find it. That's what Jesus says. It's so worth it, though. It is so, so worth it. I believe God has so much power, life, joy, oh yeah and did I say power? For you! But it comes through finding purpose in your pain, and it comes from not giving up. So many of us, we think the game is over, we think it's done and we're just kind of like waiting for it to wrap up. You know I love baseball, and I remember years ago, one of the things that annoys me so much, I go to probably 5 – 10 Angel games every year, and I always stay to the end no matter how bad the Angels are doing. But I remember years ago, there was like a really key game, and I can't remember all the details, but I do remember in the 7th inning, our team was down by like 4 or 3, something like that, and the same thing that always happens was happening – all these people start trickling out of the stadium and going to their cars because they want to beat the traffic. And in the 9th inning, there was this amazing come back, I think it was like a walk off home run or something. And the whole stadium was electric and there were fireworks and all I could think after that was all those people that left; all those people that gave up. Why did they come in the first place? The main reason people go to baseball games, which are usually pretty boring, is for those kinds of amazing electric experiences. Don't give up. Wait till the end. Don't change God's ending to your story. It's going to be great. It's really going to be great. That is God's message to us. It's always God's plan for you to be made in His image. This one last thought and I'll probably teach on this more later because this is super important, but discipleship: can you be a Christian and not be a disciple? You can't. To be a Christian means to be a disciple of Jesus. It means you're a student. It means you're dedicated to following the rabbi. You've heard this a million times from me, but in Jesus' day, there was a system of training up both men and women to become like the rabbi; to do everything he did. In Jesus' day, what I haven't said is there were two types of rabbis. The most common was a rabbi that was called a Torah teacher. These were rabbis that had some authority to go around and teach what the written Torah, the first five books of the Bible said. But there was a second type of rabbi, and that was a rabbi with authority, or a rabbi with "smicha." Everybody say smicha. Now there were only a handful of rabbis with smicha every once in awhile, and smicha had to be passed on to you as a gift by another rabbi with smicha. Rabbis who had smicha, and you might be surprised to know this, performed miracles. So there were other rabbis before Jesus who reportedly performed many of the miracles that Jesus performed. None of them raised the dead, but they had this power to do things and to help people and to heal the sick, so much so that there were rules about when and when you couldn't heal the sick, particularly on the Sabbath because they didn't want smicha rabbis breaking Torah. All that to say whenever you see the word "authority" in the gospels, the Greek word there is for smicha. It's referring to the type of rabbi who has this sort of power to proclaim the truth, to perform miracles, to do amazing things. So here's an example. You remember, they say this many times in the gospels, "for he did not teach as those who were Torah teachers," or teachers of the law, "but as one having" what? "Authority" – smicha. That would have been clear as crystal to any Jew reading that. That He was a rabbi with smicha like Hillel or Akiva or Gamaliel or some of these other famous smicha rabbis who had this incredible power. Or remember when He's in the temple and He's performing miracles, and some are claiming that He's doing miracles; remember they never rejected He did the miracles, they all believed it, but they were claiming that He was getting the power from Satan. Remember that? The authority from Satan. Remember when they say where did you get your smicha? Where did you get your authority? And Jesus replied to them is I will tell you where I got my smicha, if you tell me where John the Baptist got his authority, his smicha. And it says that they wouldn't answer Him because if they say well he got his smicha from God, its legit, it's from the Lord, then they will say well then why didn't you believe John the Baptist? But if we say he didn't have it, or it wasn't from the Lord, then they'll stone us. So this is Jesus' brilliant way. And they said well we won't answer. And He says well I won't answer either.

On Wings of Eagles

But in a Jewish context, rabbinic context, everybody knew what He was saying. You always answer a question with a question. Where did you get your smicha? I got it from the John the Baptist. And I got it from God! Remember when He baptized me and the heavens opened up and said “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Listen to everything He says. Look – Jesus’ intent as a smicha rabbi is that His disciples also live with His power. That is the role of a disciple is to be like the rabbi – to do what the rabbi does – to imitate him, to be a clone of him. That’s why when they see Jesus walking on water, the Bible says it’s almost like He was walking by, so imagine they’re in the boat and they freak out and He’s like oh hey guys, like this kind of a thing. They all look at each other like we’re supposed to do that? That’s how disciples would think. So Peter gets out of the boat and walks on water. We always think it’s just Jesus; Peter did it, too. And I mean yes he sank, but I’m still kind of impressed, aren’t you? I mean that’s still pretty.. he still got in like five steps, and even when he started sinking it was like he was sinking into Jell-O not water so he was like slowing it down. So all of that to say it’s my clear belief that God wants to give you that kind of power. But Jesus has made it clear what sort of path you have to walk to get to that kind of place of power. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear. I am saying clear as day that I think almost like a package, you think with every tragedy, travesty, sadness, grief, loss, pain, that if we choose not to give up but just open our lives to the Lord, with faith, like children, trusting Him, God can turn those things into real power in your life; real authority. Do you want to have authority to lead? Do you want to have influence? You want to make a difference in the lives of people? God wants you to do that. But people will not follow others if they don’t have like a limp; if they don’t have some kind of pain or difficulty. Can you follow somebody who’s never suffered or never been through pain or never been through difficulty? I sure can’t. I just believe this is a church full of leaders. I believe people on television that God is calling you to be a leader, like a smicha rabbi, full of power, but you have to trust that He’s going to turn this pain into power for you, somehow, and to a purpose. There’s a reason behind it. And don’t leave the game too early, don’t leave the party too early, don’t close the book before it’s finished. Finish it. Finish the race and watch what God’s going to do with the difficult thing you’re going through. It’s going to be good. I know you’re going through a lot. It’s a lot, I know, and God sees it, too, but He’s going to give you everything you need to finish. You and God will get through this together. Lord, we pray and ask that it would be so. Help us get through this with your spirit. Increase our faith, we pray, and we ask that every difficult thing we would go through would actually give us more authority, more power, more life, more joy, more empathy, more believability, more compassion. Pour it out on us, I pray, with your Holy Spirit, Lord. Fill people, God, with the knowledge of the heavens, with a passion. Help us to think, not just with our heads, but with our hearts the way the scripture says: the thoughts of our hearts. Let them be focused on you, Lord that we would live for you with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength in Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION:

And 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 His peace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.