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WELCOME – Bobby & Hannah Schuller

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

HS: And welcome visitors and welcome church family. It is a joy to be with you today. I love the Helen Keller quote that says alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much. Thank you, again, for being here. You are loved.

BS: Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much that you really do love us just as we are, just right where we are. And Lord, what you see in us is the possibility of a totally new creation. Father, we pray for that, that day by day you would help us to be a little more like Christ; that you'd bring to life the best that's within us, and we thank you so much for that. Thank you for the cross and your resurrection and we pray all these things in Jesus' name, 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 – Genesis 8,6-11 - Hannah

After forty days, Noah opened a window he had made in the ark and sent out a raven and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth, so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf. Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. Church family, as the dove represents the Holy Spirit in the Bible, may the Holy Spirit be with us and guide us in times of unknown and long waiting. Amen.

INTERVIEW – Brennley Brown (BB) and Bobby Schuller (BS)

BS: Brennley, hi.

BB: Hi!

BS: Brennley Brown is a country music artist from right here in Southern California, and she competed on The Voice in 2017, she's a frequent voice over artist and has a flourishing music career. Would you welcome with me Brennley Brown.

BB: Thank you.

BS: Hi Brennley, welcome!

BB: Thank you so much.

BS: Really, what an honor it is to have you in our church. A lot of people don't know, when you hear country music, a lot of people think Tennessee or Texas, but we have a pretty vibrant country music sphere here in Southern California, and you're a part of that?

BB: Yes, yes, sir.

BS: You started pretty young, didn't you? How did you get into music.

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BB: I did. Yes, I mean I've been singing for as long as I can remember, but I remember my first performance, I was five-years-old. It was in my kindergarten talent show, and I had a pink cowgirl hat and pink cowgirl boots and a pink guitar, so yes, I love pink if you're wondering.

BS: Yes, nice.

BB: And I sang Mississippi Girl by Faith Hill, which I'm a California girl, but from that moment on, I really never stopped singing.

BS: That's awesome, that's great. It was interesting because I was thinking like when I read this next question, I was like she's about my age, but actually you're 17.

BB: Yes.

BS: I know, that's a weird thing about.. I'm 38 and it's like kind of everybody feels like your age when you're 38. But then I was like she wasn't alive during 9/11.

BB: No, no, my mom was pregnant with me at that time, actually..

BS: Yes, so you were alive, you just weren't born.

BB: Yes, I wasn't born yet.

BS: Well anyway, what's it like as a young person, I mean you're still in high school, but you're on The Voice, and you have these albums, and you tour and stuff. What's all of that like for you? It must be pretty different than most kids your age, if I can call you a kid, sorry.

BB: Yes, no, that's okay. It's definitely been a journey and a lot of ups and downs. It's a lot of pressure to just be in the music industry, but honestly what's gotten me through all of the trials and all of the ups and downs has just been my faith in my God. And so just clinging to that in moments that are tough, but also the good moments, as well. He's always there, He's right by your side, so that's been my rock.

BS: Absolutely and I love your passion. It's so great, too, like when you think when Jesus called disciples, He was calling men and women your age, young people because there's something about that fire and that passion that really comes through in your music, and your heart, it's just even evident talking to you now. This next song, your album comes out February 7th, I got to hear the song in the last service. It's an awesome song, beautiful. I'm going to get your album which comes out I meant February 7th but it's called One More Hallelujah. This is an important song to you. Tell us about the song.

BB: Yes, I'm so excited, this song is like you said being released February 7th, and kind of the inspiration behind this song and why I'm so looking forward to it and excited is this song talks about and like I just shared with you in my own life, in my own journey as an artist but just as human, you go through trials but really God is the one that gets you through. And so this song, I hope, really just brings hope to people. That's what I hope for, that's my prayer, is that it blesses people and ultimately brings people to Jesus. And so I'm really excited and just excited for what the Lord is going to do through this song. I hope it ministers to you and many people, but even if it only touches one life, I'm happy with that, so I'm very grateful.

BS: We love you, Brennley. The album comes out February the 7th. Brennley, thank you so much for being here with us. We appreciate you so much. God bless you.

BB: Yes, thank you.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, would you hold your hands out like this as a sign of receiving from the Lord, 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.

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MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "On Wings of Eagles"

As you know, I've started a new series of birds of the Bible! And we'll see how well it goes over, but if you learn anything from me in my teaching of the Bible, one of the things I really hope you've gotten over the last year if you've really been following this ministry is that the Bible is a hyperlinked book that the people who wrote it and who added to it over time, every time a type of thing was mentioned like not just birds but a type of bird, or a type of tree, or the name of a location, or especially a number, they want you to think about all the other places in the Bible where that happened so that the story in which its taking place, you sort of jumble it together as one giant story. And part of my hope in teaching the Bible is to show you how amazing it is to read the Bible in that holistic way – to read it as one living document that's hyperlinked rather than isolated verses and stories. And that's why, for example, knowing the different types of birds and where they're mentioned is actually really important. So last week we talked about the eagle and as you think of the eagle, I want you to think of the nation of Israel and God hovering over it, and God taking younglings and making them stronger. And today, we're actually going to talk about another popular bird in the Bible. I'm going to talk about where it appears actually three times in a key way in the scripture, all three times it occurs in the presence of water. And the dove, I want you to walk away today thinking of the dove as the Holy Spirit as a guide and as an important part of getting through whatever it is you're going through – guiding the woman or the man who has built his or her life on the rock, and so we'll just jump right in. First of all, I want to ask you a question. What is the difference between a dove and a pigeon? One is a dove and one is a pigeon. Typically we think of pigeons as being in the city, a little more dirty. I've heard some people call them city rats with wings. Doves are elegant. I've done weddings before where you pronounce husband and wife, they release the doves and it flies over and it's wonderful and they swirl around they poop on people. So you may be surprised to know that this bird on the left, the white one is a pigeon. And this bird on the right, the gray one, is a dove. Did you know that? Absolutely. No! No! Yes, yes, sir. Yes, ma'am. Because a pigeon and a dove are the same bird. A lot of people don't know that. A lot of people, you know, it's the exact same bird. There are 310 species of I think it's called Columbidae, and they are all doves or pigeons. You get to choose which word you want. And the reason I'm starting here is because it's so funny how colloquial in America we sort of ascribe the word pigeon to the rock dove, which is a little bit of a bigger dove that tends to be in cities and stuff, but altogether doves and pigeons are the same thing. Pigeon is just the French word – pigeon. Le pigeon. If only we said it like that, it would probably be.. the white one would be the le' pigeon. The other one would be the dove. Dove. Anyway. So much of how we ascribe this bird, which is one bird, is based on its behavior and how it acts. We think of it like if this white bird on the left was really dirty and was eating some chicken out of a dumpster, or we'd be like oh yes that's a pigeon. Right? And if the one on the right was a little well manicured and maybe its feathers were a little lighter and it was like flying around a wedding, we'd be like oh that's probably a dove. It's a grey dove. And the reason I'm starting here is that so much of life, very often when we look at things in life, we have ways in which we ascribe good or bad to those things, right? Many of us will describe some things as pigeons and some things as birds, but very often we are impressing our own bias on things. Okay to get directly to the point, how many of you describe yourself as a pigeon and how many of you describe yourself as a dove? When you're looking in the mirror, you're human beings, right? And some of you, you look in the mirror, I mean this very seriously – many of us, we look in the mirror and we see a pigeon when God sees a dove. And many of us, we look in the mirror and we see a dove when God sees a pigeon. I mean it. See the things that the world values are not the things that God values, and frankly they're probably not the things that you truly value deep down inside. This morning I want to talk about building a life that matters. Building a life that floats on a storm. Building a life slowly and carefully with hard work to become the kind of person you're really supposed to be.

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If you were to ask people in our world what does it mean to be a dove rather than a pigeon? What does it mean to have a good life or a worthy life? Many people today are going to think of things like fame and wealth and things like this. I remember once Haven, we were talking, and I said what do you want to be when you grow up? And she's like I want to be a famous rich pop singer. I remember thinking you want to be a famous rich pop singer? I thought to myself, I don't know if I want you to be that. Because not that there's anything wrong with being a famous rich pop singer, but I mean I remember just thinking to myself like yes, I would want to be a famous rich pop singer, but maybe not you. Are you catching what I'm saying here? If someone said Bobby, do you want to be a famous rich pop singer, I'd be like well maybe. But do you want your daughter to be a famous rich pop singer? I'd be like maybe not. Not unless she was truly happy and truly good. And this is what we're getting down to is that the pigeon person in this story is the one that's unattractive and unlikable, but the dove is the likeable. But in the kingdom of God, it's different. If you have kids, and you can actually use your kids as like a cheat sheet. If you have kids or grandkids or maybe you're mentoring someone, or maybe you're a big sister or big brother or something like that, and you want different things for them than you want for yourself, I would recommend you change that. Right? So like for example Hannah and I remember, we were watching an interview I think it was from Oprah or someone, I can't remember, but she was interviewing actually strippers in Vegas. And there were like six of them, and listening to these strippers after about five/ten minutes, they made it sound like this was like the greatest job ever. They were making money and they're eating great meals. And they're like are you happy? Like, oh yes we're happy. Our life is great. This is awesome. And I remember even thinking, I looked over at Hannah, I said Hannah maybe I should be a stripper. This sounds not as bad as a I thought. Finally the interviewer, I think two or three of them had children, girls, and the interviewer asked them, she said would you ever want your daughters to be strippers? And all of them very gravely and solemnly, they said no, no. Our daughters will never be strippers. What do you think is happening there? See I think that all of us, we know what a good and happy life is, and we want it for our children, but for some reason we don't always want it for ourselves. I think that at the core of living a meaningful life is building a life that floats in the storm. Building the kind of life that matters; building a life that ought to be saved; building a life that ought to endure and today I want you to walk away with that. That the symbol actually that we'll see today of the dove in the Bible is the symbol of the Holy Spirit doing a new creation in your life. There are more than three, but there are three really key stories where the dove and the water appear together, so if I were to rename this sermon, I'd call it three doves and three waters. The first place is in the beginning, right? The beginning of the Bible says: "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Notice how hell wasn't created in the beginning, it was just the heavens and the earth, and it seemed to be sort of one place. And it says that the earth was formless in void, and that it was covered with water. Isn't that interesting? It was like picture some dark water ball, and over that water ball is the spirit of God flying over, almost like He's designing or she's designing in her head, the word is actually feminine, so do whatever you want with it. But that the ruach of God is moving over the surface of this watery ball. And out of the ball it says that light was created over this darkness and then the water begins to receive into the sky creating the atmosphere below, like where streams and crags are, and maybe to the edges, maybe we might think where polar ice caps are. But the water recedes from the earth, and so the earth just kind of appears as this muddy, rocky, craggy thing, and God creates life, etc. But when you read it in the Talmud, now the Talmud is a Jewish rabbinic description of the Old Testament, and we don't view it this way, but Jews, especially in Jesus' day, viewed this oral tradition, this Talmud, this rabbinic literature to be equal to God's word as the word was. We don't, but it's important when you're reading the New Testament to understand what the Talmud says. When the Talmud describes this verse of the spirit of God moving over the watery void, it says it like this:

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“And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the water,” so that specifically says in ours, “like a dove.” Everybody say like a dove. This same phrase is going to appear in all four gospels. But “like a dove, hovering over its young without touching them.”

We as westerners, we always want to read these creation stories through a scientific lens. We always want to be like well what year was that in the creation and how many liters and gallons of water, and that’s not how you’re supposed to. For Jews, the real thing you’re supposed to capture from this is a deeper wisdom about life, about God and about yourself and about your community. And so the image that they get in their mind is the image of a dove, the Holy Spirit like a dove, flying over water and that out of the water is going to come something truly good. Okay so that’s the first dove in the first water. And out of that comes Adam and Eve. The word Adam actually is the Hebrew word for humanity. Everybody say humanity. See this is important because if you’re reading it in Hebrew, you see both. You see Adam, a guy named Adam, but his name literally means humanity. And then you see the woman – Eve, and her name means life, so into the garden God places humanity and life. And He gives them the freedom to walk away from Him. Now I might be veering from some of our creeds here, but this is Bobby talking. I actually believe that a big part of God’s creation is God wanting to give people the freedom, the ability to sin in order that they could have real love. If I point a gun at Hannah’s head and said give me a kiss, and she gives me a kiss, is it a real kiss? Right? If I pay Hannah a hundred bucks to kiss me? That one is real, actually. That’s real. You want love to be legitimate. You want it to be true. You want it to be from the heart. I think that so much of what we’re going to see here is God desiring a people who truly want Him and want what is good, and will what is good, even at great cost. So out of this humanity, Adam and Eve, of course, we know they sin and it just begins this nasty downward spiral of murder and sexual abuse and slavery. And finally the whole world is mired in this. Many of us in modern America, especially those of us who are younger, have never experienced a world that was worth destroying. But if you grew up in Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia, throughout history you see armies killing millions of innocent old people and children by hand, rape and murder and burning, torture. There are times you read in historic literature where people just go has everybody lost their mind? Is there not one good person left on earth? And this is what the story says. This is how the earth became – that Adam and Eve.. it says that Adam walked with God. It makes it sound like Adam just loved God and they were friends and he was utterly good through and through. And how could it go from that to this?! When God looks at the world, we often think of God when He judges the world with the flood as angry, but He’s not. He’s sad. It’s like God is looking at this and is grieved. It says that He regretted making creation. The King James uses the word repents – that God repented of making creation. And at the moment when He was just going to destroy everything, He saw one man named Noah. And it says that Noah walked with God. It’s the same phrase that they used with Adam, word for word. Noah walked with God and that he was wholehearted; Noah’s full of passion, full of fire for God. And God looks at Noah and says there is a man worth saving. There is a person that should not be destroyed. And God calls Noah and his family to build this ark to prepare for the coming storm, and it takes years for them to build, or tradition says that people laughed at them and scoffed them and teased them. And they built this gigantic ark, and they brought on two of every animal, remember animals matter to God. They’re a part of His creation. He doesn’t just save humans, He saves everything, even the pigeons. Even the rats. Brings them all on board and saves it and the ark becomes this new Eden floating on a watery ball, just like it was in the first chapter of the Bible. So it’s like the whole world becomes just like it was at the beginning is God saying this is a new creation. I’m going to do something new here. Now if I were a rabbi, I would ask you not to think about all the things that we westerners want to think about. I would ask you to think about one thing and one thing only – how could you be someone like Noah? How could you be someone like Noah and not like everybody else?

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Someone that walks with God who is wholehearted, who is truly good, someone that God could never bring Himself to destroy because it is good. When we gear our lives to be like Noah, we are building a life that can sustain and endure floods. And that happens, doesn't it, when we're building the ark of our life, when we're working on being a better person and we're just trying to dedicate ourselves to your family or something that your calling or something that's really good, you have people maybe that mock you and tease you and whatever, but then the rains come down and the streams rise and you'll be saved. Many of us, we find ourselves in that place tempted between sort of between both, right, where it's like I want to do all this other stuff, but I also want to be a good person. Be the kind of person you want your kids to be. Be the kind of person that's in a life that's savable. So at the end of the story, here's Noah and he's floating on the ark, and the whole world is covered in water, and I imagine what that might have been like for 150 days just nothing but water. Anybody here get seasick? Anybody ever seen a seasick giraffe? I have. Just kidding, I haven't. Wouldn't that be an amazing story? I wish I had that story for real: a seasick giraffe. At the end, God decides to build a new creation through Noah's family. In video games you would call it, He re rolls. Starting all over. He started the game from scratch again. And even still, they become just as evil, just as bad. When you get to Jesus' day, it's probably one of the worst times ever. But at the end of Noah, there is this rainbow and this rainbow is a promise that God will never flood the earth again. And that seems like a simple thing, doesn't it, like oh thanks God. You're not going to flood the earth again, right? But really it's a symbol Jews will point that this is pointing to Moses and Aaron – that God's going to provide a different way to fix things. Rather than just wiping people out and re rolling and starting over, Aaron functions as the priestly side, the atonement for the sin, and Moses functions for the way: how do we live? How do we treat each other? The Ten Commandments. And both of these figures Christians will say culminate in one person and that's Jesus Christ. That He functions both as the eronic, the temple sacrifice, but He also functions as the new Moses – the one who teaches us how to live the kind of life that floats. So the first dove in the first water is the creation of the earth. The second dove in the second water is the re rolling, the re making of the earth and the guiding of the Holy Spirit for Noah. But the third dove in the third water comes with a guy named John the Baptist. Now it's interesting cause this story is in all four gospels. There is a really powerful prophet who is shaking the hearts of people. People are coming back to God with all their heart and all their soul and all their strength and they're flocking to him to be baptized. And he is prophesying that there is one who is coming; John the Baptist baptizes with water, but there's one who is coming who will baptize with fire and that He will change everything. And Jesus Christ enters the scene. He comes, He tells John, baptize me. John says I can't baptize you. You're perfect. I'm not even worthy to untie your shoes, which is something a slave does. And Jesus says in the Greek, dude, just baptize me. So we've seen it now twice, and this is what the gospel authors want you to see – in the Bible we've seen two places where water and a dove are combined. The first is the creation story and the second is Noah. So what does that mean to you? First, what does water mean in this if that's what it is? Nothing? Life? Okay, what else. To desert people, water is life, yeah, but in both stories the water is new creation; starting over. You're covering everything in water. What happens when you cover a whole body in water? It's like something brand new is going to begin. And then the dove, what's the dove? It's the Holy Spirit. It's the guide. It's the power, it's the life. And it says like a dove, the Holy Spirit comes down to make this new creation. So as Jesus sort of comes out of the water, the first century authors, they want you to see that Jesus Himself is the new Adam. That Jesus is the new creation. That Jesus is Noah. And Jesus Himself is actually the ark! That He's the one who's going to save us and carry us through the next whatever thing you're going to go through. All right. So maybe you're here today and you're like what's this all about, Bobby? Just tell me. I want you to see something. That Jesus tells us that there are two paths that you can walk.

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There's a broad path that really leads to death, and then there's a narrow path that leads to life. I remember hearing one preacher he was saying that somebody was like you're too extreme in your preaching. You need to teach the middle road, you know the middle road of faith. And he was saying oh that's funny, I thought there was a narrow road and a broad road. But instead there's this like middle road like right in the middle. But Jesus doesn't say that. He says that there's this narrow road that leads to life and only a few will find it. I think every single person in this room can be one of those few who builds the kind of life that looks like Jesus Christ; that doesn't look like all the other lives that the world says are the best things; that are not pursuing all the things that the world pursues. Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, He says do not worry, right? Don't worry about what you're going to eat, don't worry about what you're going to wear. And when we read this, we think oh like this is hippy Jesus, right? It's just like just whatever, man. But there's a caveat at the end of that. He says instead, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you. In other words don't worry, don't be afraid, don't be obsessed with tomorrow IF your life is geared towards His kingdom and His righteousness. If you do those things, if you pursue God with all your heart, you don't need to worry about the storm, you don't need to worry about the rain, you don't need to worry about any of this stuff, you just keep pressing after the Lord. Plainly, go after God with all your heart. Go after your family. Go after what is good. Be an honest person. Be honest even when it comes at great cost. Deal fairly with your neighbor. Be a loving person. Be the kind of person that loves your neighbor. Be a person that guards your words. Be the kind of person that's making a difference every day, not in the mass or not changing the world, but changing the heart of an individual. That's going after one or two people. That understands that God does great works through the seed – that out of the seed comes great life, not the other way around. Look, Jesus teaches us how to build the kind of life that matters, and you don't have to be beautiful, you don't have to be talented, you don't have to have any of these things. There's nothing wrong with those things. Those are great things. But you don't need those things to build the kind of life that truly floats on the storm. One final thought. The Jews, the rabbinic criticism of the Old Testament, Noah is not necessarily considered a great prophet because he didn't go after the people who were going to be killed. Did you know that? The three greatest men in the Bible, in the Jewish view are Moses, Abraham and David and all three of them went after people when God said that He would punish them. You remember Abraham is talking to God and God says I'm going to destroy Sodom and Gomorra and Abraham pleads with him to save Sodom and Gomorra and save Lot? Remember when God tells Moses He's going to destroy all of Israel and just start a whole new family from Moses, and Moses pleads with him not to do it? Or when David does this.. remember? The reason Noah and Jonah, for example are not included as one of the greats is because they only cared about themselves. And this is the other great thing about Jesus is that Jesus not only teaches us what it means to be good but Jesus actively goes after who are considered the greatest outcasts in His world. He doesn't tell people just to come to His synagogue, He goes out into the world and loves on people and eats with people. And He's with people just as they are; not asking them get your life right and then I'll have a glass of wine with you. He just breaks bread with them and does His best to allure them and draw them in. This is why, of course, Jesus is the greatest rabbi, the greatest prophet. He's the son of God. He's our ark. He's our salvation. And I want to encourage you keep going after God with all your heart, and all your soul, all your strength. Go after your family, go after your kids, go after your grandkids. Dedicate your life to what is truly good. Go after people who are in need and remember that when you do that, you're doing something that's truly great. So Father, we thank you and we love you. And we thank you, God, that you do love us just as we are, and not as we should be, but you also call us to be more like Christ. Help us, Lord, to understand that this is the best life we can possibly have, and Lord, we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.