

Hour of Power Deutschland
Steinerne Furt 78
86167 Augsburg

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

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

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

IBAN:
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz
Seestr. 8
8594 Güttingen
Tel.: 071 690 07 81
info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch
www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch

Spendenkonto:

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

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GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION – Bobby & Hannah

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

HS: Hello visitors and church family. We love celebrating the Christmas season with you. Scripture is the same thing as your cell phone ringing and Jesus being on the other line speaking it directly to you. Everything in the Bible is for you right now. You are loved.

BS: Amen. We're glad you're here with us today. We're going to believe that maybe if you're going through some challenges or you're worried about seeing your family on Christmas or you're just stressed out from all of the holiday things, or whatever is going on, we're just wishing that this Christmas season is a life-giving, joy-filled, awesome experience for you. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we ask in Jesus' name that you'd continue to bring within us new life, rivers of living water. That was your promise to us, that we would never thirst again. Lord, I ask for it in Jesus' name, and it's in His name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen.

HAVEN: Turn to the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Isaiah 11,1-10 - Hannah

In preparation for the message, Isaiah 11:1-10: A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord - and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. Hallelujah.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING (PEACE) – Bruce & Cecile Cramer

BRUCE: Last Sunday we lit the candle of hope, which is for noobs, as we learned last week. And this week we light the candle of peace. During advent, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who was known as the Prince of Peace. See peace is not simply the absence of war; it is the state of every person's heart who carries Christ within them. And the kingdom's work works through us through God's people as we band together to be instruments by the power of the Holy Spirit to peace to the entire world. So because of that, let us pray this prayer together as a congregation: Faithful God, you are at work to restore all of creation to its intended harmony. Make your face to shine upon us, so that we may be reconciled with you and with your enemies. We pray that your peace would come over the many troubled areas of our world this Christmas season. God of hope, God of peace, into our darkness come. In the name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

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DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

BS: Well whoever you are, we're so glad you're here. Would you stand with us? Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord. We're going to say this creed 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. Its 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. Amen!

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "All Things Made New"

This famous passage, advent passage from Isaiah that was read today, I sort of want to begin there. And it's a prophecy about the stump of Jesse. Jesse. When you hear the family of Jesse, think a royal family. That from this stump, this thing that once was a great house, a great tree, a great living thing that's been chopped down, that out of that, a shoot will be born, there will be a new king, and a new line, and this king will set things right. And it won't be like the kingdoms that came before, the many that came before, that were ones of ego and selfishness and violence, but that this kingdom that is coming will be one of the heart, will be one that will be even led by a child, will be one that will set the lion and the lamb to lay together. And this is, of course, the king Jesus who came on Christmas, and its who we remember. But of course there's a deeper metaphor, as well, for us who believe. Of course the broken stump, the chopped stump is Israel, and if you're a believer, you are grafted into that family. You're Israel. Maybe you're here today and you feel like I've been chopped down. Maybe something has happened in your life where you feel like a stump of your former self. You are a stump of who you used to be. You remember when you were young and you had a heart for God, or when you were young and you had lots of vision and life. Or maybe you used to have a great life, a great family or great organization, a great job, and you lost it all or lost most of it, or there's something about it that feels hollow you and you feel like a stump today. Well I first want to say welcome to the club. Many of us feel that way in life. But today, if you feel like you've been chopped, I think that the greatest reason sometimes we feel like a chopped tree is because we're alone, and very often we've made ourselves alone through pride, ego and sin. And I want you to stop picturing yourself as a chopped trunk, and rather think of yourself as grafted onto the tree of life, a living tree, who is Christ Himself, and that on that tree, when you're cut, you're never really chopped, you're just a pruned tree. You're a pruned branch, and you're being prepared for something better. I want you to swap those visions of your life, because that is a Biblical image that we find in John 15 and other places. Sometimes in life we feel chopped because of tragedy. It's amazing how life can be like a glass house. If it were just left alone, it would remain perfect forever, and beautiful, but all it takes is one little stone and the whole thing can come crashing down. Maybe that's how your life was. Maybe you lost a kid, or a loved one, or something in your life had some kind of health tragedy or a betrayal or a lawsuit or something happened where you just, from no fault of your own, just feels like took years and years and years to build this life, and with just a few careless swings of an ax, your life came crashing down, and you think it can never go back to where it was. Maybe I'll have something, but it'll never be like that. That might be true. It might not ever be like that. But I want to promise you that what God has in store for you will be better. Actually, it'll be better. It'll be different, maybe for some of you, but it will be better. Maybe you feel like a chopped tree because of your own, like you just did something really dumb. Join the club. Out of pride and ego, or trying to please people, you did something dumb. You went back to that old relationship you knew you shouldn't have gone to, or you sinned, or you crossed a line you shouldn't have crossed. Or you did something and now you just feel like you were the one who swung the axe. You were the one who did it and you know that, and you still, you just feel well that makes it almost worse. You just wish there was someone to blame, but the only one to blame is the person you see in the mirror. Can I tell you, that even if that's you, God is still on your side, and your best days are still ahead. God will restore the chopped tree. God will restore the chopped tree. There's green shoots coming from your life, and even if it was your fault, isn't it great that we don't live under the blood of pigeons and goats anymore? Isn't it good news that we live under the blood of a living God, Jesus Christ. The ancients understood this very, it feels to us, negative, medieval to think blood, and I get that. It's weird. It is weird to think of blood. But the ancients understood in their food, even, they were dealing with blood all the time. Blood is life. We know that even scientifically. Blood carries oxygens and nutrients to the muscles. It warms the body when you're cold. It cools the body when you're hot. Blood is life. For a long time, the ancients lived under the blood of pigeons and goats and sheep and cattle, but no longer. The blood that replaces and covers the sins and mistakes of our life is the blood of the

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creator Himself, who laid down His life that we could be redeemed to Him. All that to say God cares more about your life than you do. He proved it on the cross. He would do anything for you in the same way a loving father would do anything for his daughter or his son. He loves you, my friend. He loves you. And the last thing we should do is beat ourselves up, push ourselves down, live bogged in shame. God will renew what was chopped down. God will restore what was destroyed. God will rebuild what was undone. He will bring it back in your life. I had a friend once who was like this: someone who chopped down their own life. He was in his early 20's, and he was in this long relationship with an amazing girl, beautiful, wonderful, intelligent person, but they had been dating for couple of years and she wanted to get married, and she said I have to know – are you serious about this, are we going to get married or not? And they had this conversation back and forth, and she basically needed to know, not got married right now, but I need to know, do you want to get married? Am I wasting my time here? And he finally said, I don't really, really want to be married, and I don't think it's best for me, and I'm sorry, and I think maybe then we should breakup. He ended up breaking up with her. And a few weeks went by and he realized how dumb he was, and he went back to her and he said I made a terrible mistake, and you know what she said? Sorry. Sorry. And he tried his hardest for months to get this girl back. Never did. Never could. By the way, I really like this girl. I like that attitude, by the way. I think that if you make a commitment like that, and you stick to it, so be it. She ended up meeting another man, another good man, married him, moved on with her life. And my friend, the poor guy, just honestly, for like two years, was suicidal; just spinning his wheels about how could I do that. How could I throw this person away? I had the best girl ever and blah, blah, blah. And I will tell you, that it took some time, but he ended up meeting someone just as wonderful and got married and is happy now. But I know that feeling. I've thought a lot about when you, just in your own pride and ego, you have something great and you don't realize what you had until its gone. Talk about being human. And we all do that, not just in our relationships, but with all sorts of things, that once they're gone, we like oh, man, and it's just gone forever, we just spin our wheels. Well I want you to know God's going to renew the good things in your life. Years ago, I read this book by Erwin McManus called *The Barbarian Way*, and this is the course that a lot of us take in our life. Now this was about organizations, and I'm probably not getting this completely right, because it's like 16 years ago I read this book, and I couldn't even find a copy. But it's something like this, all right? So and maybe this is just Bobby Schuller, but I think its Erwin McManus. He said, and this is for sure true in countries, but he was talking about organizations that many organizations and groups and things take this long arc of rise and decline; and this is true of many things, but there are barbarians and managers. There's some barbarian, some wild-eyed crazy guy, a guy like Walt Disney, he's got these dreams, got these vision, these ideas, he wants to do all this stuff, but is probably bad with money, bad at making a plan, but he has these big dreams and ideas. And then a manager comes along like Roy Disney, or somebody like that, and the two together make this stellar combination of barbarian and manager. And that causes the business, the organization or whatever, or nation to launch and take off. Big risk taker with a great manager bean counter, and these two kind of like really do well together. What happens over time is many businesses follow this long twenty-year arc or so of growth and innovation and whatever, a great organization. And then as they begin to do well: they get an IPO and their stock does well, and they're lush with cash, they are in a position where they can more than manage, but create a bureaucracy. And that's when the death spiral begins, when the paperwork comes in, and it's like too much, too much management becomes bureaucracy, and eventually the stage before, full crashes, aristocracy. That is, we started this thing, the resting on your laurels, the 'aren't we great,' the just big inflated ego that the barbarian went from all the way over there, to all the way over here. You see it in nations, you see it in cultures. I think it was Voltaire that said history is an ever-changing tide of one guy walking down the stairs in silken slippers and another guy walking up the stairs in wooden shoes. That the day you stop being a barbarian and a manager is the day somebody else is ready to take your place. All that to simply say that I have also seen, not only in business and countries, I have seen this arc in my life. I've seen it in your life. I've seen it in the church. I've thought about this a lot, and I've never really written it down. I'd like to put an essay together on it someday. It would be a historic essay. But I feel like the church, the Christian church in general has always sort of had a kind of spiritual center that is always moving. And it's hard to pin where it is, but it's always somewhere. And of course it starts in the Middle East; it starts in Jerusalem. And that's the first center, and its barbarians and managers moving with the gospel, but then this sort of religious bureaucracy and aristocracy sort of takes over, and it's not that Christianity leaves Jerusalem, but you do see it sort of move to Antioch, to Syria.

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And so in Syria it grows, and then the same arc happens there, so it moves to Egypt and Alexandria, and it happens there, so it kind of moves up to Asia Minor at modern day Turkey and Constantinople, then it happens there and then you see it move to.. and on it goes to Ireland, to North Umbria, then back down to Germany and Holland and then eventually makes its way to the United States where that was, and I say was, the heart of Christianity. It's not here anymore, right? We know that. We know the heart of Christianity is not in America anymore. Doesn't mean it can't be. Could be if we repented, we sought after God with all our heart, but there's so much religious bureaucracy and aristocracy here, it's very hard. It's not that Christianity has left us, but are we the center anymore? It sure feels like the center is in places like Africa or Latin America or maybe China. That when you go to those places, there is a like wow, God is on the move here. That's not a criticism, it's just that so.. it's like this old story I heard that once Thomas Aquinas was with the Pope and the Pope took him to the treasure room, and he showed him all of this gold and jewelry and fine things and he said look, look Thomas, no longer can I say silver and gold have I not. And Thomas Aquinas grabs him by the arm and he says, neither can you say rise up and walk. You see there's such a trade there. There's a trade. Its anecdotal. It's not an essay, it's just a thought I've had for a long time. That the center of our faith is going to where people want it the most. It's going to where people desire it. Like a thirsty man desires water. It's going to a place like where a hungry person, a hungry woman desires food. Right? That's where it is. And in the life of the disciple, we always have, we live somewhere on this plane, on that left side is barbarians or managers, or on that right side its aristocrats and bureaucrats. To me, I would say that in the life of the disciple Bobby Schuller, if anything crushes his discipleship, it will not be tragedy. It will not be hardship. It will not be any of those things. It will be the temptation to rest in the plane of aristocracy. To rest on my laurels, to become lazy and complacent in my walk with God, and to not want it anymore. That is the place on which the faith of most believer's die is on a pillow. And I just tell you that that is preceded almost always by ego. Ego. Wow! Look what I did! Isn't that great! Woo! Pretty awesome. The great program Leading Like Jesus, it's a little bit cheesy, but it's really easy to remember. They say ego is an acronym for, and it's always precedes failure, it's an acronym for Edging God Out. Notice it's not pushing or shoving God, it's just like slowly over time, just edging Him out ever so slightly over time. And then wow, look at me. Isn't that great? Hey, I'm Bobby. I did it. Look at me. Right? What happens when we're stuck in ego – edging God out, we're filled with all the wont's, the wont's that we won't do for God. I won't love my enemy. I won't forgive my parents. I won't love the person that hates me. I won't take a risk. I won't try and make my marriage work. I won't call my kids. All the things we won't do. For most of us, there is probably a big spiritual wont that is between us and our destiny. And the thing that keeps it there is the ego – edging God out. Edging God out. This is a common theme in the Bible. Over and over, you see this arc happening. You ever read the Old Testament and just go how do these people always, they see God do this great thing and they always go back to idols, and neglect the poor, and embrace injustice, and just bowing down to like Baal all the time. Like what is the deal with Baal and just always, this type of thing. What we forget is these stories take place over hundreds of years. It's so easy to forget in ten years what God did. Imagine a hundred years. Do you remember what God did in the lives of your grandparents? You know what a hundred years ago was? Actually it's interesting to think in 1922, if I'm right, that was right before the crash, right? That was great Gatsby days. Like things were better than ever! Wow, they had no idea what was coming, did they? Do we remember that on a day like today? That things are going better than ever? So we see this thing through the scriptures, we see this theme through the scriptures. The book of 1st and 2nd Samuel, first of all, is one book, not two books. The reason its 1st and 2nd is because the scrolls were too big to haul around, so you have old rabbis trying to haul around these 40/50-pound scrolls, they cut them in half. I don't know how they picked, but anyway, they did. And so the original writer wrote it all in one thing. And you follow this arc over and over and over. The rise and fall from barbarian to aristocrat over and over. It becomes like just predictable. It begins with a woman who has an amazing name, the best name in the world, bet you can guess what it is. Hannah. It's a good name. Pow, pow, pow. Yes, Hannah, it's a good name. Hannah begins with this; she's infertile and in those days so much of your worth as a woman sadly was having a family, and she's crying out to God for a child. And she says if you give me a child, I'll dedicate Him to you. She's given this child, Samuel, who becomes the prophet Samuel, and she begins with this song, and the song makes three promises that become the theme of all of Samuel and Kings. And its three things. Number one: God lifts up the humble and lays down the proud. Number two: God wins, always, despite human evil. Human evil will come, but God will win in the end. And number three:

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God will raise up a king that will set things right. The king like we read in Isaiah 11. A messianic king to set things right. The first king we see is a guy named Saul. He follows this same arc – meteoric rise, good looking, he’s about my height, 6’3. That came off really weird, especially on a sermon about ego. Just takes off. Does great. And right around the top when things are at their best, it’s the beginning of the end. He starts cracking a little bit, mentally becomes paranoid, totally wrapped up in self-deception and ego, and right at the top of this arc in Saul’s life, a new arc is beginning in the life of a young man named David. We see that Saul’s life just sort of crashes down and unravels and falls apart as he tries to control and manipulate everything. He gets worse and worse. And then David comes in the middle of that. He’s the youngest of eight sons. Pretty ignored, unwanted, but when he’s picked, God doesn’t see the way that man sees, He sees the heart, He picks David. David’s anointed to be the future king of Israel, and then as a teenager, he goes and kills Goliath, this epic thing. He becomes a.. in the first service, I said the organist accidentally. I forget like.. a minstrel, I guess for King Saul’s court and becomes a commander and has all these wins, and then Saul becomes insanely jealous and tries to kill David. So young David flees into the desert and he’s always trying to get away from.. he has two opportunities to kill Saul, one where Saul is using the restroom in a cave. He could have killed him right there. And both cases, he has mercy on him. And then when he becomes king, he has this incredible crescendo where he conquers Jerusalem and makes it the capital and unites the 12 tribes. He brings the ark to the temple. He renames Jerusalem Zion, becomes the king of Israel. Amazing story! Just an incredible rise of a king. I think it’s in 2nd Samuel 12, you begin to see it. A chapter begins by saying “and in this season where the king would normally go off to war, he sent out his commanders instead, and he stayed home.” Did he stay home to rest? It gives you the impression.. I grew up on Hannah Barbara Bible films, those like cheesy cartoons. They were great when I was a kid. So I always picture David laying on like a cot with like three hot Egyptian girls with like palm branches like keeping him cool, and like some servant with like grapes dropping the grapes in his mouth while he says ‘how are my men doing at war?’ Like this kind of like.. That’s kind of what I picture in my head. That he’s gone from being this giant slaying amazing man to kind of just resting on.. he’s an aristocrat. Its during that time, he goes out on his roof, he’s kind of bored, probably, he sees a beautiful woman bathing, Bathsheba. Takes her to his room, sleeps with her, she gets pregnant. It’s another man’s wife. And so because he’s so embarrassed about this, he kills her husband, Uriah, who’s one of his own men and one of his friends. Kills the guy to cover up the adultery. Now how did that happen? The man that had the opportunity to justly kill his enemy Saul, twice, and has mercy on him, is the same man who later kills his friend in an honor-less, disgusting, weird way. How does that happen? How does that happen? It’s this thing. It’s the ego. Its edging God out. Right? That’s what happens to us. This weird thing that happens when we start to do well in life, or succeed, that we just edge God out. And then we become the worst versions of ourselves. And what you see as the story goes on is same crash with David, civil war with Absalom, his favorite son who dies, and then he hands it off to Solomon who has the same rise and crash, and then the book of Kings has 40 different kings that are mentioned. Only eight of the 40 are even decently good kings. The other 32 are horrible and they all follow this thing. The book finishes with the worst king of them all, Manassas, who’s doing like child sacrifice and bringing in idols. And then there is this promise at the end that someday out of this mess there will be a king. And that king will set it right. That king will set it right. And that’s what this passage is about, Isaiah chapter 11. The stump of Jesse. See all those kings, almost all of them were in the family of Jesse. They were all related to the king, and they all had promise, they all had meteoric rise, they all got obsessed with ego, they all fell into bureaucracy and aristocracy, they all collapsed. What’s the message to us? God lifts up the humble and lays low the proud. God will have the victory despite human evil. And God will send a king to set things right. And that’s who Jesus was, of course, that’s what we believe. But you remember what Jesus taught about the kingdom of all these ideas of the kingdom. We talk about the kingdom all the time. Anytime you talk about government, politics, policy, anytime you talk about the president, the senate, the republic, proposition whatever it is, we are talking about a kingdom. And what Jesus taught us was the kingdom is not out there, the kingdom is within. You will never have a good nation made of bad people. You will never have good laws obeyed by bad people. We need new creatures, a new creation and a new heart. The kingdom is here. I’ll just finish with this word. If you say today, I feel like I’m a chopped down tree, I’m not what I was before, you’re like David that says create in me a clean heart, oh God. Renew a right spirit in me. Or you’re like this stump. You can tell what it used to be.

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Used to be strong, used to be beautiful, but now it's just a symbol of something that used to be. Might be able to count the rings, and how many winters it went through, but that's about it. Let me say, this is you without the Lord. If you're all by yourself, and you're doing it in your own power, this will be you. That's also what the word says. But if we are grafted to the tree of life, which has always been and will always be, even in the coming of the end of the age, that if we're grafted onto the tree of life who is Jesus Christ, we're not a stump, we're just a pruned tree. Get this image in your head. See its like that. Still ugly, right? Still looks unhealthy, still looks in trouble, but if you know anything about trees, you know this tree's best days are not behind it, but ahead of it. You know that when spring comes, that tree is going to have; it's going to be thick and full of whatever fruit it bears. It's going to be green and beautiful and lush. Begin to see your own life, not as a solo life that you're doing by yourself, but see yourself as a pruned branch on the tree of life. If you stay there, you will bear fruit. You will thrive. Don't edge God out of your life. Don't be consumed by ego but trust in Him. God loves you right now. God loves you just as you are, whether you feel like a winner or a loser, He is so for you. You have done nothing to earn God's love, and you have done nothing to lose it. He loves you. Isn't that great? And the last thing we ought to do is be wrapped up in pity and shame and all of these things. Today I want to encourage you to get some faith and hope in your heart, begin to take a step towards that thing that God has set before you. Lord, we thank you and we love you and we trust you. We thank you that you're here with us now, and I ask in Jesus' name, Father, that you would give us a fresh vision for a new life that you're creating in us. We may not be able to see what it is, but we can smile today, we can let our shoulders drop, we can take a deep breath and know that we are living under the loving care of Jesus Christ, and every moment we can walk in joyful confidence of this. Lord, we love you. We're your disciples, we want to learn from you, and it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

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.