

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](mailto:info@hourofpower.de)  
[www.hourofpower.de](http://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. 11  
8594 Güttingen  
Tel.: 071 690 07 81  
[info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch](mailto:info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch)  
[www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch](http://www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch)

Spendenkonto:

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

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### 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. Good morning.

HS: He is risen! (AUDIENCE: He is risen indeed) And because He triumphed, we triumph, and because He lives, we live! Thank you, friends, for celebrating with us today.

BS: We are so, so glad that you're here. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much for the promise of new life and resurrection. We're grateful today as we come here boldly before your throne, not as sinners, but as redeemed – the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, because you were crucified and raised from the dead for us. So we thank you that we're here as your sons and daughters loved by you. What good news that is to us today. We thank you, and it's in the strong name of Jesus we pray, and all God's people said, amen.

HS: Amen.

HAVEN: Turn to the person next to you and say He is risen.

### SCRIPTURE – Matthew 28,1-10 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Matthew 28:1-10. After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." Church family, He is risen!

### WELCOME / COME VISIT – Bobby Schuller

Good morning! Welcome to Shepherd's Grove! What a fashionable church we have! You all are looking so fine this morning. Welcome, we're so glad you're here. I don't know about you, but every Easter I have Christ the Lord is risen today. I was singing it this morning as I was like getting ready, but I only remember the first line, so then I just.. like I was warming up my voice because sometimes when you preach, like my voice will crack, or especially when I get excited because I'm an excitable person, I'll start to lose it halfway through the sermon, and I like pushing through. So I like to sing as I'm like shaving, and I was like (BOBBY SINGING – Christ the Lord is risen today, alleluia.) I was trying to remember the next line, I just started making up lines, I was like (BOBBY SINGING – nobody's going to listen to what I say, alleluia. No one will be here next week, alleluia. I'll see ya'll on Christmas Eve, alleluia).

### MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller – The Prodigal Father

Well, He is risen, amen? He's risen indeed. And for not just believers, but for all of creation this is the most important event in human history. Some of us doubt it, some of us are not sure, some of us believe it, but all of us will be impacted by this someday. One thing we can all agree on is we're all going to die. Hundred percent of us, whether we live to be 20 or a million, we'll cross that road. We'll have one last great adventure.

## The Prodigal Father

And I think what will happen to us when we get there, I think the first thing that will be a surprise is that death is more like waking up than falling asleep. And I think when we stand there before the throne of God, many people who don't have a lot of faith, they don't want to live their life in regret being like I missed out on all of these things I could have done because I was such a religious person. But I think that a lot of people are actually going to have the opposite experience. That when they come to God's house at the end of their life, they'll look back and say I wish I had lived my life with this in mind. I would have recognized that so many of the things that society thought was so important really wasn't that important. And I wish I would have given more time to this part of my life. And I wish I would have realized that eternal life wasn't just about going to heaven, but that eternal life is about the quality of God's life. That it's the kind of joy, compassion, love; it's the best, wisest, most exciting and joyful life I can live. And so when that day comes, many of us will experience it differently. But you have a choice. You can choose today to be at peace with God. Are you at peace with God? Are you friends with the Lord? I want to encourage you, I know you've been through a lot, and I know life is hard, but would you come home to the Father? Would you recognize that Jesus shows us what God is like, and that God's heart for you is very big, and that in a sea of people, He can see just you and love you and care for you and invite you home. Jesus made a way, by the way. He made a way so that we could come boldly before God's throne as beloved sons and daughters. In life, and it's interesting because in the Bible, the Bible never uses the phrase "heaven and hell." Did you know that? It talks about hell a lot, but hell's always by itself. The phrase that's always together is heaven and earth. Heaven and earth. I think that phrase is used over 200 times in the Bible. And in fact we believe that there was a time when heaven and earth were sort of woven together in harmony. And that because of our evil, because of the way we harmed each other and sinned and all the stuff that we human beings have done, that we divorced this world from heaven and that Christ made a way. The universe is just. It's balanced like this. And one way we can see this is to make something clean, you have to make something else dirty. Maybe if you go today and you wash your car, your car will be completely clean. That's great and it's going to look gleaming nice and you can drive to your parents for Easter. But then you'll have a bucket of dirty water. So you clean out the bucket, and all that dirty water goes through the sewer and into the ocean, and now the ocean's dirty. And the ocean waves clean and all of that dirt falls to the bottom, and a lobster comes along and eats that nastiness. And then Friday night comes around, and you eat that lobster and now you're dirty. Nobody ever feels clean after eating a lobster. They feel happy, but not clean. You never feel like oh I made a good decision by eating lobster today. That's more like a salad. Salad does that. Pat yourself on the back, if you eat a salad on Friday night. I digress. When we clean something, we make something else dirty, and the Jews recognized this. They knew that there was something rotten inside of them. And so this priestly order emerged that an animal could pay the price through sacrifice for their sin, and that way they could come atone before God. And yet it felt awful. If it feels awful to you, it felt worse for them, actually, because these were their pets, and it was a symbol of wealth. And so God, in His loving care for us, said no more dead goats and dead lambs, I will give my Son as an atoning work for my people. Jesus paid the price so that we could look to each other and say I forgive you. I forgive you. I've been atoned for and I've been forgiven. And so the scripture says that He who knew no sin, that is Jesus Christ, became sin that we could be called what? Anybody know the rest of this Bible verse? The righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. That we can come boldly before God's throne, not as wretched, shame-filled sinners – 'oh, I'm such a bad person,' but we can say, as Paul taught us to, to come before and say I am the redeemed of the Lord! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. I have been atoned for, redeemed and rescued. I can love my neighbor, I can love the Lord with all my heart. I don't have to wonder if He hears me. I know He's for me. No greater love has any man than this than he lay down his life for his friends. The Lord laid His life down for you, and the resurrection is the promise that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, that He has the power over life and death, and that He will save you if you're friends with Him, when the time comes that you face your own death, whether it be very soon or very long from now, you can have faithful confidence that you don't have to worry, that you're a friend of God, that you're home in Him. Christianity is unique as a religion, though Christians hate the word "religion." We like to say it's a relationship. But it is a religion. We've got all sorts of things that we believe. And maybe we can say as a faith, that other religions in general, this is a broad and completely unfair stroke, but just take it as it is, that in general, most other religions will say here's the list of things you do to be a good person, or to be, whatever – at peace with the universe or to go to heaven, and if you do these things and you get like a B-minus, say than you're nudging even closer to whatever it is.

## The Prodigal Father

But Christianity really shouldn't say that, though you might have heard that from some pastors, that really we want to make good people and we ought to be good people, but we don't become good by willing it. We become good by catching it. We become good by being home in Him. We become good by believing that God loves us, even when we're messed up, and our whole life just becomes a response to that. And so Christianity is not about good and bad as much as it is about being home or being lost. It's about being dead or alive. And the Lord today is inviting you to receive the free gift of His ever going, never ending, over flowing life in you today that's so bright and bold that even after you die, you keep on living. Won't you come home to God today? Won't you stop overthinking it? So many of us have tried so many things and we feel so lost, and we don't know why. It's because as Augustine said, you have a God-shaped hole inside of you. Only His love and care can fulfill that, and that will make you the kind of person that loves your neighbor, that goes to bed at peace at night, that is able to take life at an unhurried pace, and even enjoy a few cookies and cinnamon rolls this afternoon without feeling guilty. You see in our faith and in this church, we say you belong before you believe, and that is a very Christian thing to say. You belong before you believe, and I like to say, because I think it's funny, you belong before you behave. And that's true! You might recognize it in high school or college or at work, you start to become like the people you hang out with. You belong to them before you start behaving like them. And that's also true of the faith. When you belong to God's people, you start to behave like God's people, hopefully. And even if you don't, you're still home because we're saved, not by our works, but by grace; by God's kindness to us. Isn't that good news? That's good news, not bad news. Amen. Thank you, Jesus. And so that was how Jesus saved people. So often, even in His earthly ministry, and I say this all the time, that Jesus had an eating ministry. I want to have one of those. If you own a restaurant, you might understand what I mean by He had an eating ministry. There's something about hospitality that's good for the soul. In Jesus' day, to eat with someone was to call them an equal, a friend. Kings would often eat in elevated separate positions to say the exact opposite – I'm higher than you. I'm an authority. This is my office. And in Jesus' day, a rabbi, like Jesus, a famous rabbi, would have been seen as wow, this amazing thing. And so here He would sit around with prostitutes and tax collectors. You think that's weird today, and it is weird today. Imagine after this, you go to TGI Friday's with your family and I'm sitting at a table with a bunch of prostitutes. What would you think about that? Be like 'Bobby's doing it again?' But I mean seriously, that's what Jesus was doing with prostitutes and tax collectors. Tax collectors were actually bad people. They were really bad. They stole money from grandmas. They were like the sheriff of Nottingham that would go around and like hold the.. remember like in the Disney and they'd like hit the cast and like get that coin? That's what they were like. They were like that. And He was eating with them. And so the problem for the religious elite of their day is they clearly could tell Jesus was from God. He was full of wisdom and power. He performed miracles. He even raised the dead. So that's amazing, right? And yet, how could He become so unclean by keeping company with such people of ill repute. That's the last time I'm going to use the phrase "ill repute" in this sermon, but I thought it was cool. And they muttered amongst themselves, who is this man that welcomes sinners and eats with them. That's what they say. And then Jesus, hearing this, looks up at them from His table full of friends who are also sinners, and He tells them three stories. And the first story is about a hundred, the second's about ten, and the third is about one. The first goes like this. Jesus says, imagine that you lost a sheep, and He's looking at the pharisees, that is the pastors, we'll call them today. He's looking at the pastors, and He says imagine you lost one of your sheep. Would you not leave the 99 behind and go looking for that one? And by the way, they all would. Losing a sheep was no small deal. Not only was it materially worth a lot of money, but shepherds were connected, personally, to their sheep, the way you be to one of your pets. Have you ever lost a dog? You know that feeling? Isn't that a horrible feeling? You come home from dinner, the gate is open, or if you have a black lab, he just crawled through a crack this big and got out. They say if your gate can't hold water, it can't hold a black lab. And I used to have a black lab and that's true. And so you're looking everywhere for your dog, and driving through town, and that excitable feeling you get when you're like oh thank goodness! There she is! And the dog comes up wagging her tail, and is like (MAKES DOG NOISES) and you pet your dog and you're so excited, right? That's what shepherds were like when they were looking for sheep. And Jesus says this is what it'll be like when one lost sinner comes to Him. We know what happens, by the way, to sheep, right, when they get lost? One of two things will always happen to a sheep. Number one – it'll just die a horrible death, right? It'll get eaten by a wolf or a lion or something. Or this will happen. Now this is a real thing that actually happened.

## The Prodigal Father

This is a sheep in Australia that got lost, and they found this sheep, and they named him Barak.. actually I said it wrong. They actually named her this way: Baaaa Rock. That is the sheep's name. And they don't know who it belonged to, but they know it got lost, and the wool just continued to grow crazy like this. When they fleeced this guy, they found 80 pounds of wool, which by the way, is enough for 61 wool sweaters, or 490 pairs of socks. That's a lot. That's pretty good. And just as an image of how the world has become, this sheep is a perfect picture. This sheep looks fat, and even happy, but the poor guy is on the brink of death, skinny as a rail. When they shaved all of that wool off, you would have seen that he was completely malnourished; he could barely find enough to feed himself, and also the wool had grown over his eyes, so he couldn't see, or she couldn't see. And aren't so many people like that today? On the outside look healthy and fat and happy and pretend like they can see everything, but inside kind of dying a little bit. Maybe that's you, my friend. Maybe you feel like you put on a good show for everybody, but you feel like life has not been kind to you, and you feel like you're really thirsty or hungry for something, or you feel somehow lost and you don't know why. Everybody gets lost sometimes and we all get lost for different reasons. It's okay. God's calling you home and He's going to take care of you. All you have to do is say yes Lord. I turn my back on that old life. I come home to you. Your life is so much better in God's kingdom when you're right where you should be in His loving care and in His friendship. Won't you do that today? Won't you come home to God? So this is the first story Jesus tells is about one out of a hundred, and then He says one out of ten. He says that there was a young woman who lost one of her silver coins, one of ten coins. What He's referring to is.. this is a famous painting called the bride of Bethlehem, but it's a good picture of how a middle eastern wife would have looked in Jesus' day. Instead of wedding rings, women would wear these beautiful headbands. Sometimes they would have ten coins to symbolize the ten commandments, and they would be made of silver, very precious, beautiful metal. And maybe there'd be images on it. And she would have to wear that every day to show that she's married and to honor her family. And so one day one of these coins gets lost, and so every day she's going to the market, or she's going out with friends, or she's visiting family, people would be like 'oh Sarah, you're missing a..' she's like 'I know! I know! I can't find it.' She's looking everywhere for this silver coin and can't find it anywhere. I remember once when we lost our remote control. People don't understand, your TV becomes almost useless when you use a remote control. We turn every couch upside, we looked everywhere for that stupid thing, and finally we resolved to finding that little nub on the bottom of the screen that you push it to turn the TV on, and then you have to like go over to Netflix or Amazon, and then you pick your show.. it took forever, and then my son can't make up his mind. Weeks later I found it in a weight basket in my closet upstairs, and I came down, I was like guys, I found it! I found the remote! We can change the channel now. Jesus says there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one lost sinner than over Bobby finding his lost remote. No, but that's really.. I mean multiply it times ten, I mean this is.. like imagine losing your wedding ring and you find it. And that's what happens. She finally finds it in some crook somewhere, and the silver is tarnished now because it's been there awhile. Maybe it got wet or it got dirty, and it's taken on a green and brown color, and it doesn't even look like silver anymore, but it's still silver. She still wants it. It's still precious. How many here know that silver doesn't lose its value just because its tarnished. God looks upon you the way that bride looks upon that lost piece of silver. It can be clean. It can be made new again. I can use this. This is all I want! And so she rejoices with her friends. Friends, look I found it! I found it! And can you imagine the feeling. I love stuff like this, of popping it back into the thing, like (POPS) like that would feel great. I love stuff like that. Won't you come home to God? Won't you come home to the Lord? He's looking for you. His spirit beckons to you. And then finally the third story that Jesus tells. So it's from a hundred to ten to finally one, and that last one is a famous story of the prodigal son. I swear I just heard a guitar solo, but I'm not going to.. I don't know. Was that us? It's all good. You guys are not even listening, are you. It's all good. The brass section was. That's cool. That's the love, love you guys. We got like Easter over here and like Good Friday over here. Its great! Our orchestra is the best. They're all my friends, by the way, so I can pick on them. It's not like I don't know them. All right, good job, guys. So He tells the story of the prodigal son. Many of us forget this is actually a prodigal of two sons. They're both messed up and they both probably hate each other. It goes like this. Jesus finally says that there's this kind of a wealthy father, and he has land, and in those days if you had two sons, the first son would get two thirds of the land, and the youngest son would get a third of the land. And the youngest son comes to the father and says I want my inheritance now which in an honor culture is horrible. It's the worst thing you could say.

## The Prodigal Father

One Biblical scholar said that it would be as if the younger son had said to his dad, 'I hate you and I wish you were dead, so just give me your money.' And the crazy thing is the dad does it. He gives him his inheritance, even though he's still alive. And Jesus' audience would have been like (GASPS) oh. They were all story tellers back then; they were really into it. And it says that the younger son went into a distant land and he squandered the wealth. And we don't know what that means, but it says he squandered the wealth, blew it all. If it was me, it would be Oreos and cinnamon rolls. Gone in a week. It's all gone, and a famine hits the land, and it says that the son found himself feeding pigs, starving and wishing he could eat the pig food. Now in the ancient near east, this would have been the worst thing, and this would have been where the story normally would have ended. It would have been like see, young people, this is what happens when you dishonor your parents, you'll end up feeding pigs. And for them, pigs were the most disgusting, filthy creature on earth. You don't touch it, you don't go near it, you especially don't eat it. And here he is, he's feeding pigs. Be like if you got a job like.. what's the grossest thing you could feed? Spiders. If you work at a spider farm. Oh my gosh that's disgusting. Yes, it's like that. And one day, it says starving, wishing he could eat the pig food, he comes to his senses and he says to himself, if I just go home and eat crow, my dad's servants eat better than this. At least I'll get three square meals and a roof over my head. I'm going to go home. And then he begins to rehearse his speech to himself that he's going to say to his dad. Have you ever gotten in huge trouble with your parents or maybe your wife, and you rehearse a speech over and over and over – honey, I don't know.. Can't think of any.. whatever. Let's go with parents. And you're just like.. maybe they were out of town and you threw a party, and a bunch of stuff broke. It's like an 80's movie or something. Or I don't know, you wrecked the car, and you're saying this thing in your head over and over: dad, I'm sorry, I took your car to the mountains, and it doesn't exist anymore, or something. And this is what he's saying as he's going home – father, I have sinned against heaven and earth. I'm not worthy.. and this whole speech of shame and stuff, and the story goes that as the son is walking home, and just picture him, covered in manure and mud, barely scraps of clothing on his shoulders, no shoes, barefooted, long nailed, long hair, skinny and gaunt, starving and thirsty, he's coming home, rehearsing the speech, he's finally at the end of his rope, and the father sees him. And it's almost like the father's been looking every day to see maybe he'd come home. And the Bible says that the second the father sees his wretched son, he runs out to him, and mid-sentence the son's like 'father, I'm not worthy, I've sinned against heaven and earth.' And mid-sentence, the father throws his arms around the son, and he says 'my son who was dead is now alive. My son who was lost is now found. Go and kill the fatted calf' which is like saying we're going to throw a huge party, like a wedding for the whole village. Everybody's invited. And he puts a robe on his son's back, which is a symbol of honor, he puts a ring on his finger, which is a way of saying you're a member of this family again, and he puts shoes on his feet saying you are no longer a slave. You are free. And that's what God offers us. Honor, belonging and freedom. That is the power and the anointing of the kingdom of God. It's not about good or bad first. First, it's about are you home or are you lost. Are you dead or are you alive. And when you become alive in the person of Christ Jesus, things become in time the way they should through God's spirit and word. So won't you just come home. And in this story, the party goes on, and everybody's celebrating, and they open the best wine and they bring the best bread and pies, and they have this fatted calf, which is like serving lobster, actually. It's like serving filet mignon, the finest meat, and everybody is celebrating. And the whole village has come. And the brother says, the older brother, who's coming home late, because he works hard. He works overtime. He comes home and he's like what's going on, when he hears all the music, and the joy and the celebration. And one of the servants says, oh, your brother, who was lost, he's come home, and your father is throwing a huge party for him. And the older brother's like nope. No way. Listen to this. In that culture, to not attend would have been a subject of gossip. By not going to the party, the older brother shames the father. How dare you. Can I tell you, there are a lot of religious people today who shame God, they try to shame God. How dare. Shame Jesus? How dare He eat with those people. And there he is, the older son, always done everything right, and the father runs out, in the same way he ran out to the prodigal son, he runs out to the older son this time. And he says son, why won't you come in and celebrate? And the older brother says, that son of yours – notice he doesn't say my brother. That son of yours squandered his wealth on prostitutes. He doesn't want to work, he doesn't want to be home, he wants to be like what his little brother did. In psychology, apparently, I just learned this from a clinical psychologist, resentment is not rooted in anger. Resentment is rooted in envy. There was some part of him that envied his brother, but he was like no. I'm not like him. I do what's right. I do what's right.

## The Prodigal Father

That's who I am. And something in a desire to do good that actually made the older brother bad. Isn't that what religion does sometimes? That's why Christians hate that word "religion" actually. Is because we know that religiosity without the spirit of God leads to the worst kind of death of all because it's so hard to be free from that. The most important thing is that it's not religious people that show us what God is like, it's Jesus that shows us what God is like, and Jesus loves to eat with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus is the one that runs out. And by the way, this story, when it ends, you don't find out whether the older brother comes in to celebrate or not. It's like he's thinking about it, and then the story ends, and then you cut to Jesus looking at the pharisees. And what is He saying? Come and join us. Come eat with us. The kingdom of God is here. It's so simple! You've made it a big deal. It's just come and sit with us. So my friend, the Lord says to you today, won't you come home to Him? Do you feel lost? Do you feel dead? Come to Jesus. Come to God through Christ Jesus and you'll be saved. You never know when that time will come but be ready for it. The time I mean is when we die. Be ready for it. Know that you're at peace with God, and that He's your friend, that even though you make mistakes from time to time, you do your best and you forget the rest. You trust that it's not your work but the work of the cross that saved you. When I became a Christian, I didn't do really anything super weird. I was just sitting in a pew like you are in church. I didn't go down for an altar call or raise my hand or even pray a prayer, I just made a decision. I just said I decide today to follow God, and I've never turned back, and it's the best decision I've ever made. You can do that today. You don't have to tell anybody. You can right now just decide I'm going to follow Christ and I'm not going to turn back, and I'm going to do it the rest of my life, and I will make it my greatest goal in life to be friends with Jesus, and watch how that will change your life. Well, we're so glad you came today. And we trust that the Holy Spirit will do a good work in you through this. So let's just ask the Lord for it. Father, we come to you in the strong name of Jesus, and we thank you that even now, you're here in this room. Friends, I want to ask you to close your eyes and just open your heart and see if you can even feel and sense the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, would you confirm in our hearts the power and life of your presence. And we thank you for all you've done, and we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, and all God's people said, amen. Would you stand with us?

### BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

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.