

HOUR OF POWER OF 20.07.2008

PROGRAM OPENING/TRUMPET FANFARE/V.O.

VO: Today on the Hour of Power: Bill Strickland has drawn the attention of both Harvard University and the White House as he transforms the culture of inner city Pittsburgh.

BILL: We believe that people are born into the world as assets, not liabilities. And people are function of environment. You build hopeful spaces; you get hopeful kids.

VO: Also, the incredible Mr. Piano, Roger Williams.

MUSIC: (PIANO PLAYING)

VO: Then overwhelmed with trials and tribulations? Start counting your blessings.

RAS: Here's God's blessings and let's weigh God's blessings against this bad thing we have, the news we have, the problems we face and let's just see how they weigh.

VO: Join us today for the best hour on television, the Hour of Power with Robert Schuller.

HYMN - "Joyful, Joyful.."

Joyful, joyful, we adore You, God of glory, Lord of love; Hearts unfold like flowers before You, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the dark of doubt away; Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day. Amen! Amen! Amen!

GOOD MORNING/OPENING SENTENCE/INVOCATION

RAS: Good morning! And at this time I want to give you an opportunity to welcome those who are standing next to you and behind you. Shake their hands and say God loves you and I do too.

Let's have a moment of prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for the opportunities we have to be here in Your presence and in Your house. And so You've called us here, You've placed us here for a purpose and for a reason. And so it is with thanksgiving in our hearts that we sing praise to You today, tomorrow and always, Amen.

HYMN - "Medley – Take My Life/Wonderful Words"

Take my life and make it new, let me walk, O Lord, with You. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Your love, at the impulse of Your love.

Take my lips and let them share Your great love and boundless care. Take myself and I will do all things, only, all for You, all things, only, all for You.

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life; Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life. Words of life and beauty, teach me faith and duty; Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life. Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.

Christ, the blessed One, gives to all, wonderful words of life;

Quickly answer His saving call, wonderful words of life. All so freely given,
leading us to heaven; Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
wonderful words of life, words of life.

SCRIPTURE – Colossians 1 & 2 - Donna

DS: Please be seated. So reading now from Colossians page 1239 in the Power For Life Bible.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all of His people. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of His people in the kingdom of light. For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

This is the word of the Lord.

ANTHEM - "Living for Jesus"

Living for Jesus a life that is true. Striving to please Him in all that I do. Yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free. This is the pathway of blessing for me.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior I give myself to Thee, for Thou in Thine atonement didst give Thyself for me. I own no other master, my heart shall be Thy throne; My life I give, henceforth to live. O Christ, for Thee alone.

Living for Jesus wherever I am. Doing each duty in His holy name; Willing to suffer affliction and loss, taking each trial a part of my cross.

Living for Jesus through earth's little while my dearest treasure the light of His smile seeking the lost ones He died to redeem, bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

O Jesus, Lord and Savior I give myself to Thee, for Thou, in Thine atonement, didst give Thyself for me. I own no other master, my heart shall be Thy throne; My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ for Thee alone.

INTERVIEW – BILL STRICKLAND

RAS: ROBERT A. SCHULLER BS: BILL STRICKLAND

RAS: My guest today is Bill Strickland. Bill grew up in one of the poorest areas of Pittsburgh and today is one of the most recognized citizens within that city. Bill's personal success story has drawn the attention of Harvard Business School and the White House. It has won him the McArthur Foundation Genius Grant. Bill Strickland is now giving back to his community and he is using art to rescue at risk school kids and is teaching adults how to work. He is the author of a new book titled Make the Impossible Possible. Would you please welcome with me to

the Crystal Cathedral, Bill Strickland. Bill, God loves you and I do, too. So you grew up in a pretty rough part of Pittsburgh right?

BS: It was the neighborhood with the highest crime rate in Pittsburgh, people were dying, there was drugs, there was theft and almost an absence of good mental health. It was a place of great darkness and not a place of great light.

RAS: And that's where you grew up.

BS: Yes, sir. Absolutely.

RAS: What happened to most of your classmates and people you associated with?

BS: Most of them died or were in the penitentiary. They didn't have the benefit of having my mother who had a different idea about how her kids were going to be raised. And although she scrubbed floors for a living and worked as a domestic she never lost her dignity, she never lost her vision of how life could be at least for her kids.

RAS: So she made a difference in your life obviously.

BS: She made a big difference in our life. She was determined that we were not going to die the same kind of spiritual death that many people, particularly people sitting on our front stoop were experiencing. And how she did that is a miracle in and of itself to maintain her vision and her hope under such trying circumstances.

RAS: So somehow she gave you this vision and this realization. And even though you saw death and crime around you consistently, you broke through it and you succeeded.

BS: I got lucky in that I met an art teacher at our public school. And I think my mothers training over the years prepared me to accept what came to be a revelation. And I've come to accept somewhat reluctantly initially that I actually had a religious experience as a high school kid. And at first I denied it, but I've come to accept the fact that when I met Mr. Ross I saw light in that room. The same light that's in this room today and I said to myself quite literally I'm going to follow that light because I think it will get me out of the darkness and into a place where I can live.

RAS: And that's how your faith really started to blossom. Is that right?

BS: Yes, sir.

RAS: And then your mother did something else as well. You were telling me before the service that she would make you sit down and watch the hour of power.

BS: We had it on every Sunday and the only sad part about this day is that my mom is not here in this earth to see her kid speaking at the Crystal Cathedral.

RAS: Today you've really dedicated your life to turning urban America around. Tell us about that.

BS: We're starting to build centers. The center we built in Pittsburgh was designed by a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. I have a Frank Lloyd Wright building in the worst neighborhood in Pittsburgh with the highest crime rate, which is exactly where it needed to be built. It's flooded with sunlight, we have workers at the front desk, we have a music hall, we have training, we have vocational education. We have culinary arts and we are actually taking people who have been given up on by life and transporting them into being productive citizens on the vocational side and over 90 percent of the kids we work with in the arts go to college and this has been true for seventeen years in a row for kids that have been given up on essentially by the community and the public school system. The principles that run this room, this church, are basically fundamentally the principles that run my center and in the four centers that are open, we've never had a drug or alcohol incident or a police call since they've been open. When you come to visit my center in Pittsburgh, there's no metal detector, there's no police,

there are no cameras in the building. We have millions of dollars in computers and we've never lost a screwdriver in 24 years because we believe that people are born into the world as assets, not liabilities. And people are a function of environment. You build hopeful spaces, you get hopeful kids.

What we discovered is there's nothing wrong with these children that sunlight and affection and good food and flowers can't cure. And that's exactly the culture that we build at our center and now we're beginning to build other centers based on the same principles.

RAS: You mentioned earlier that you're building a center in Jerusalem?

BS: Yes, as it turns out, last Christmas I was in Jerusalem the day after December 26th. We started in Jerusalem, worked our way up to the Galilee and by the time I got to Tel Aviv the Jews and the Arabs were sitting at the same table talking about building a center modeled on the one in Pittsburgh. So we're pretty excited about that prospect. I will be back there June 27th we're looking for a site, we think we have a conversation going and if that is not a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit I don't know what is.

RAS: You've written this book entitled Make the Impossible Possible.

BS: Yes, sir.

RAS: And you have a definition for success in here. Would you tell us about that?

BS: My definition of success is what you do for others not what you do for yourself. The measure of your life is determined by your willingness to share the abundance that you have somehow acquired with people who have lost their way and lost their vision. It is not a function of how much money you make or the great titles that you have, but is a function of helping those who have nothing and no longer inspiration to live. And I have discovered this in my own work, that I feel better because I have actually saved a life and in my cases many lives. It allows me to know that on the very last moment of the very last day all I'm going to have are my memories, but I'm going to have some great memories. And I believe that that is fundamentally the formula that can get us to the Promised Land.

RAS: One of the significant things about your centers are orchids. Tell us how orchids got involved?

BS: Well a fellow came over to my house fourteen years ago and brought an orchid. I had never seen one. I started reading about these things and so I said I said, I can do that. So that was the genesis of building a forty thousand square foot greenhouse in the middle of a black neighborhood in the high crime rate center in Pittsburgh and we are now are selling orchids to all the retail grocers and the flower association and we're taking people who have been on welfare and transforming their lives to become productive citizens in the horticulture industry because I discovered that orchids are a part of the cure for spiritual cancer.

RAS: What role has your faith played in your success?

BS: My faith has provided the lifeline. Now that we have evidence that the faith was redeemed in the physical spaces that we have, you can see a concrete manifestation. But when that is not there all you have are your belief systems. And I believe that I have been selected to do this work. Joe Williams, the great jazz singer, came to my center; he saw the center and at the end of the visit he said, "God's picked you to do this work, man. And you are required to take advantage of the gifts that He has given you on behalf of others." That is ultimately all we all have and it's my bet that based on this insight I will come to be recognized as a person who contributed in some small way to the alleviation of this suffering.

RAS: Well Bill you are alleviating suffering in Pittsburgh and other places in the United States and ultimately around the world. And I want to thank you for writing this book Make the Impossible Possible. And I want to thank you for your humble spirit and your heart and for everything you've continued to do for the Kingdom of God and for ministry, and so let me just thank you..

BS: Thank you.

RAS: ..by saying God loves you and so do we. I want to give you a gift as our token of appreciation for all you've done for us. I want to give you this leather bound copy of a Power for Life bible and use this, read it, share it with others and I know it will give you power as it's given millions of people throughout generations power.

BS: I will put this bible next to my first presidential appointment so that everyone who visits this center will see this for all time. Thank you.

RAS: Thank you Bill. God loves you and so do we.

RAS INTRODUCES CCHS CHOIR

RAS: So this morning we have seen that the value of art in the lives of children and teenagers makes a huge difference. It is my privilege to welcome a fantastic group of young men and women, the Crystal Cathedral Choir and their director Anna DeLeon, and we are proud of our high school graduates as they have been accepted to colleges and universities all over the United States, including full scholarships to Stanford, Berkeley and USC. So let's give them a very warm welcome as they sing the Lord's Prayer in Swahili.

ANTHEM – CCHS CHOIR – “Baba Yetu (The Lord's Prayer)”

(SUNG IN SWAHILI)

Baba yetu yetu'uliye mbinguni yetu yetu amina. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mjina lako elitukuzwe. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mbinguni yetu yetu amina. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mjina lako elitukuzwe. Utupe leo chakula chetu tunachohitaji. Utusamehe makosa yetu, hey! Kamanasi tunavyo... Helele! otukosea. Usitutie katikamajaribu, lakini utuokoe na yule muovu emilele!

Baba yetu yetu'uliye mbinguni yetu yetu amina. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mjina lako elitukuzwe. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mbinguni yetu yetu amina. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mjina lako elitukuzwe.

Ufalme wako ufike utakalo lifanyike duniani kama mbinguni. Amina. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mbinguni yetu yetu amina. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mjina lako elitukuzwe. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mbinguni yetu yetu amina. Baba yetu yetu'uliye mjina lako elitukuzwe. Utupe leo chakula chetu tunachohitaji. Utusamehe makosa yetu, hey! Kamanasi tunavyo... Helele! otukosea. Usitutie katikamajaribu, lakini. Utuokoe na yule muovu emilele! Baba yetu yetu'uliye. Baba yetu yetu'uliye. Jina lako elitukuzwe.

RAS THANK YOU TO CCHS CHOIR

RAS: Thank you Anna DeLeon, Daniel McGrew and all the young people who make up the high school choir. Well thirty years ago my mother Arvella Schuller started the Crystal Cathedral Academy: A positive and private Christian high school with the specific mission of not only providing excellent academic education opportunities, but to emphasize the development of the performing arts in children who would express their talent on the Hour of Power. This school now has an enrollment of nearly four hundred young people. The performing arts,

along with the fine arts, rigorous academics and a positive faith filled life style remain our commitment to the generations of tomorrow.

ROGER WILLIAMS INTRODUCES PIANO PIECE

RW: I've just got to tell you, you people have been so good to me over the years. Here I am 83 years old soon to be 84 and you're still cheering me on. Thank you. You know I joined this church back in the 1970's and since then I have been playing here hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of time. Hour of Power, Christmas, Thanksgiving, oh all the programs all these years. And I've had one ambition in the meantime and that is to really have the fastest hands and the biggest hearts when playing for this congregation. And I've been blessed, I really have. I feel like there's a hand on my shoulder because actually I'm playing better than I've ever played. And I got to tell you honestly I really think that the best part of my career is ahead of me. I'm going to do it.

PBS has just asked me to do another special and they're calling this one the pianist of the President's and that's because I've played now for nine chief executives, starting back with Harry Truman. Boy does that make me feel old. But one of the songs that I'm going to play for you, in fact a couple of them are Presidential favorites. And they're also favorites of Dr. Schuller. I played that song for him back in the 80's; that's when we celebrated the 1000th telecast of the Hour of Power. And here we are, 2000, 2000 and they tell me that sometime in the year 2030, we'll be celebrating the 3000th telecast. Now with the good Lord willing, I'm going to be there. And I expect you to be there, too.

PIANO SOLO – ROGER WILLIAMS - "The Impossible Dream Medley"

RAS THANK YOU TO ROGER WILLIAMS

RAS: Well Roger you just always out do yourself. He is just spectacular and he's as good a heart as you could ever possibly imagine. And so we just love you Roger and thank you so much for sharing your music with us.

MESSAGE/PRAYER - ROBERT A. SCHULLER

"God's Little Blessings"

RAS: Well you know it's easy to get weighed down with life's problems today. You look at society and you look at the states and what's taking place in our country today and it's very easy to get discouraged. Foreclosures are looking higher and looming. People are having problems with their homes, the price of fuel, is that enough? People have struggles today; there are problems that we face. There's abuse; I look around our society and I know that there's abuse all around Orange County, Southern California across the world. Addictions continue to loom large and long with drug addiction, alcohol addiction. There are people who have lost their hopes and their dreams. Many of us lost loved ones. And so the problems loom large and big and they block out the ability for us to be able to see all the beautiful, wonderful blessings that God has for every single one of us. But the fact is that God is blessing us all the time.

In fact my text for you this morning is I Timothy 4:4 and if you have a Power for Life Bible that would be on page 1253, one thousand two hundred and fifty three. If you don't have a Power for Life bible the page numbers won't match so you'll have to look up I Timothy 4:4 and here's what it says: "For everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving

because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. Everything God has made for us is good.”

Today I brought some props with me because I think it helps us to communicate things. This got the most interest from everybody that I walked in with this prop. They said what is that? Somebody else said, don't step in it. And this is what I call; this is my prop for a blob of bad. Just a great big blob of bad. That's what this is, that's all this is. That's my prop so you can say okay there's our blob of bad. Can you see that? Can the cameras get that? So you can see there's our blob of bad. Let me put it over and put the camera to work there. Get the cameramen working. Can you still see it there? Is that a good place for it?

Now I brought this with me because this will often get in the way so we can't see anything. If that's all you see you don't see anything else, but the facts are God is blessing us in so many ways and there's so many little blessings taking place all the time that we can't even begin to count all of the blessings that God has for us this very moment right now.

So I brought another prop with me. This is my prop of blessings. It is actually a bowl that we gave away a few years ago to our Eagle Club members and so around the top it has Isaiah 40:31 that says: “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall walk and not faint.” There's my prop. And inside I have it filled with sand. I went down to the beach yesterday and filled it up so this is pure 100 percent California sand from the beach. Now how many people here can count how many grains of sand there are? Anyone like to take a chance at this? I can give you a little teaspoon and maybe by tomorrow afternoon you may have counted all the grains of sand. I know quite frankly I don't wish to count them all; it's too many. But do you know what? That goes along with the facts of how God is blessing us all the time, in all the different ways. As many grains of sand there are that's how many blessings God has for us in fact far more.

Case in point. I had a cup of coffee this morning. How many people had a cup of coffee this morning? Okay the rest of you had a cup of tea or a glass of milk. It doesn't matter what you had, this illustration will work. I had a cup of coffee this morning. How many people do I have to thank for a cup of coffee? Let me start to think. Well first of all I drank it out of a mug and I noticed the mug had a little painting on it. It was a specially designed mug so somebody, somewhere along the line got the idea of this mug. And this individual went and pulled out a piece of paper and a pen and he started drawing this design of this mug. Well I have to begin by thanking the person who designed the mug because I couldn't drink my coffee without the mug. I can't exactly hold the coffee in my hand can I? I have to have a mug so I've got to thank him. Then I have to thank all the people who made it possible for him to have a piece of paper and a pen. How many people is that? Well there are all the loggers, there are all the people who run the paper mill, there are all the people who packed the paper, all the people who shipped the paper to whatever distributor it is, there are the people who unpack it. There's the people who sell it to me at the cash register or sold it to him at the cash register. And how many people are we up to? A couple hundred? Three, four, five hundred? Now we get to the pen that he wrote the design with. Then we go to the fax machine because he had to fax that design probably to China where he had this thing manufactured because that's where most of our mugs are manufactured in China. And then you have the miners who went and got the clay, the people who refined it and the people who made it. You have all of the shippers who shipped it from China here. Now how many people are we up to now a thousand? two thousand? Then you have all the people who unpacked it; you have all of the

people on the dock. Then you have the truckers who brought it to the store. You have the people who packed it and put it on the store. I went and bought it. Took it home, now I've got a mug. Now we get to the beans. And how many people do I have to thank from Colombia all the way here and all the different people, and then the water. And I didn't even have sugar or cream in my coffee and already I'm up to thousands of people that I have to thank for one little tiny cup of coffee. How many blessings do we have constantly taking place in our lives as we experience the reality of God's blessings? But it's so hard for us to see all of God's blessings because we have this blob of bad and it blinds us from being able to see anything else. It holds us back from being able to see all of the beauty and the good and the wonder and the grace that God has for us all the time. So today I want to encourage you to stop and to look and to find all the blessings God has for you. Count your blessings.

My daughter Christina was just a little over a year old when she had a fall. It wasn't a serious fall and we weren't too concerned. She fell a couple feet and she cried for a little bit and after she cried we brushed her hair off and said okay go out and keep playing, have fun. And she went outside and that evening when we were putting her to bed we noticed that she had a bump on her head where she had fallen and we still weren't too concerned until we touched it. And when we touched it, it wasn't hard. It was like a bubble. And then we became very concerned and we took her to the doctor and the doctor checked it out and x-rayed it and came back and told us she had a skull fracture. And so we then had to take her and get a cat scan. Now the cat scans at the time took a long time. Because she's twenty-two years old now so it was probably twenty-one years ago that we had this CAT scan taken. And it took up to four minutes she would have to remain perfectly still as she laid on this bed and they slid the bed inside this giant donut which would then take all of the different layers, x-rays of her brain compromising and compiling this cat scan. And I thought to myself how in the world am I going to keep a child whose less than two years old still for four minutes? Donna, my wife, was pregnant with Anthony at the time so she wasn't able to be in the room at all. So it was my responsibility to keep this child still, completely still for four minutes. So I thought about different things like taping her head down, you know if I had enough duct tape I might be able to keep her down there. And I didn't think that would be very humane so I thought maybe there's got to be another way. And I go you know when all else fails, what do you do? When all else fails what do you do? You pray right? That's what you do, that's the way out. So I go okay if that's what we do, that's what we do. So we prayed. I said Christina we're going to pray. Okay let's pray. So she had just learned to pray so she folded her hands, she had her bottle, she's holding her bottle with her teeth, the bottle was laying on her chest, she had her blanket and I said let's pray and she folded her hands over her blanket and her bottle and we started to pray and after I prayed for a little while I said amen and she immediately got up and they go oh no, no, no you have to hold her still for four minutes. I go okay, okay so I said let's pray some more. So we started praying and I started praying for every single part of her anatomy that I could think of. Dear God thank You for Christina's hair and thank You for her right ear and her left ear. And dear God thank You for her right eye and her left eye and her eyelashes and her eyebrows and her nose and her upper lip and her lower lip. And you could go.. there's a lot of body parts to go through in four minutes. And I couldn't believe it when finally they said that's enough and I said and thank You God. Amen.

And when we start thinking about everything that God has given to us and we start beginning to list all of the ways that we can thank God for what He's done for us it doesn't take long. And we realize that there are more thank you's and more things to be thankful for than we could ever possibly imagine. And all these little things add up and they add up as we begin to realize that God is in the state of constantly blessing us but we get sidetracked by a bill that we get in the mail, we get sidetracked when suddenly we pull into the gas station, holy mackerel it costs me thirty dollars more than what it used to. We get side tracked when the doctor says you've got an ailment. We get side tracked by all these different things.

And the next time that you get news that isn't the news you want, I want you to start counting immediately all the blessings that God has given to you. Go out and take a walk and as you take a walk I promise you, you will see things that God will point out to you if you look. Even weeds have flowers. And we have to realize that the flowers bloom some place all the time. And there are ways for us to be able to experience the glory of God and the splendor of God in mighty wonderful ways.

This past week my wife and I were enjoying the stars. We got away from the light pollution. Went out a little bit into a desert area and we saw the lights and it's one of the things we love to do is we love to look at the stars. And if I started thanking God for every star I'd still be out there. There isn't a single star I'd want to say goodbye to. And so we sit there and we look at the stars, but what we like to do more than that actually than looking at the stars is we like to watch for the satellites. If you've never done that it's a wonderful thing. Go out there, go out and get away from the light pollution where you can see the full host of the sky and just sit there and look for satellites. Looks like star at first, but the difference is it's moving slowly across. And we'll go oh I see one it's moving there, it's moving from ten to four. Do you see that really bright one right there? It's right below that really bright star and it's moving ten to four this way right down there. And then oh there's another one, it's coming the other direction. It's going from five o'clock to one o'clock. And sometimes they'll be orange and sometimes they'll be flashing and sometimes they'll be yellow. And we go out and we count the satellites. How many people do we have to thank for just one of those satellites? And we look and we realize all of the blessings that we have. All around us this very moment, but it's hard to see the little blessings.

When we go to the beach my wife will typically disappear for a while. And when she disappears I know what she's doing. She goes and she kneels down in the sand and she'll sit there for an hour or so and she always comes back with something that nobody else is able to find apparently. She comes back with a handful of little tiny shells. I don't know if you can see this or not, but this is a complete; I'm going to hold it completely still. Believe it or not this is not a piece of a shell but this is the whole thing. It's a quarter inch long, it's white and as you can well imagine it disappears in the sand. So I just walk right over them along with everybody else who goes for walk on the beach and says oh you don't have any shells in California. Well we do they're just really small. And this thing isn't broken, it's complete, it's twisting. It's a gorgeous little white shell, but the blessings are often small. And we have to look for them because God wants us to take appreciation of all that He does. Because as we continue to look at all of the blessings and count them all together we soon find out that you know the blob of bad is really overcome with all of the good that we have.

So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to weigh this. As you can see I've got a little contraption here that represents my scale. I'm going to put this little thing

right there, that blob of bad. Now, if we take our.. I'm going to use a different one. How about this? Here's God's blessings and let's weigh God's blessings against this bad thing we have. The news we have, the problems we face and let's just see how they weigh. Nothing has the ability to stand up to the beautiful little blessings of God that He has all around you.

And today you're sitting here surrounded by people who care about you. You may not know the person who is sitting to your right or your left or behind you. In fact I know there's someone here you've never met before. And there's a reason why you're here and there's a reason why you're sitting next to them. And it's a way for God to bless each of you because God has given us to each other to express His love and His care for one another.

There was a young man who decided to go to Costa Rica and have a little vacation. He was walking on the beach and as he's walking on the beach, he saw this fisherman come in and he dragged his boat across the sand and pulled out a couple of big tuna and started dragging them to his car. And the guy saw these tuna and saw this man with his boat and he went up to him and he says do you realize the value of those fish? There's a huge commodity for those fish in Japan. We could ship them to Japan and we could make a fortune. He said how long did it take you to catch those fish? Oh a couple of hours. So what do you do the rest of the time? Well I just go and see my wife and my kids and hang out with my friends and maybe play a little soccer and that's about it. So you fish a couple hours a day? He says yes. Well you know what? If we went into business, you have to realize I'm a business grad from Harvard. I know how to do this. We could go into business. We could make millions of dollars. We could get all this money; it would be fabulous. And the guy goes well why do I want to do that? He goes well you could make all this money then you could retire and you could find a nice little community where you could just fish for a couple of hours and hang out with your friends and be with your family.

So often we get sidetracked from all the blessings that God has given to us right where we are.

So today I want you to see all of God's little blessings, to thank God for every single one and to realize that with God you could never go wrong. Dear Heavenly Father we thank You that You're alive today and that You're touching our hearts and our minds with Your goodness, that You're here. And so help us to open our eyes and see the tiniest little blessings You have for us today. We love You Lord, Amen.

HYMN - "Count Your Blessings"

When upon life's journey you are stressed or tossed, when you are discouraged thinking all is lost, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your blessings see what God has done; Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your many blessings, see what God has done. Count your many blessings, see what God has done.

BENEDICTION - RAS

RAS: And so with that let me give you this closing benediction. And now may the blessings of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit open your eyes and allow you to see all His beauty and love around you everywhere, amen

HYMN - "God, Make My Life a Happy Song"

God, make my life a happy song that comforts all the sad, that helps all others to be strong and makes the singer glad.

God, make my life a glorious flower that gives such joy to all,
content to bloom in tent or tower wherever I hear Your call.

God, make my life a holy light within the world to glow, a warming flame that burns so bright wherever I may go. I may go.