

BLESS YOUR HEART

Title: Part 3 – “Permission to Shine”

Date: March 8, 2026

As we continue in this moment of worship and prepare our hearts for God’s Word, let’s take a minute and make some space for God to work in our lives. One of the practices we often incorporate into our services is a chance to pause and give God all our cares and worries. For some of you this might be the first time you have really done this in a few days so let’s pause now and give God EVERYONE and EVERYTHING. Close your eyes and just say that under your breath, “God I give you everyone and everything...” Now as the band plays softly just take a few moments and give God all the things and all the people on your heart. Lovingly detach yourself from the cares of this world.

[PRAYER TIME]

Hey before you grab a seat take a :30 seconds and say “Hi” to some people around you. While everyone here in the house is saying “Hi” to each other I want to say “Hi” if you are joining us online or on our app, thank you for spending some time with us! We consider you a part of our church family so let us know how we can pray for you or serve you—we’d love to walk alongside you in any way that we can.

Well, I am excited for today! We are in week three of a collection of messages affectionately called “Bless Your Heart.” How many of you know what that phrase actually means? It’s not a compliment, right? So, we’ve been redeeming that phrase from Southern passive-aggressive judgment and discovering what it actually means when GOD says, “I’ll bless your heart.”

To get all of us back in the flow. Week one, we talked about the most miraculous heart transplant of all time. That God doesn’t just forgive your wicked heart—He replaces it with a good heart! Ezekiel 36:26 tells us that God gives us a brand-new heart, a heart of flesh, that in Christ you are a new creation.

Why does that matter? Because as a follower of Jesus, you’re not a sinner trying really hard to be good. No, what you actually are is a saint learning to live from who you already are! We are not fighting for victory over our old nature; we are learning to live from victory!

It also matters because if you have a good and noble heart now—Jesus words—then you can actually trust your deepest desires. This was last week. Not your surface cravings, but your soul-level longings, the desires of your heart you can’t shake, those are breadcrumbs God leaves to lead you to your calling.

AND today we're going to take it one step further. Because if you have a good heart, and if you can trust your desires, then that means something pretty radical: You actually have something unique to offer the world. You have a **GLORY**. And before you freak out at that word, just stay with me.

Today I want to preach a message I'm calling:

Permission to Shine

Turn to two people and tell them you have "Permission to Shine."

A couple weeks ago I was checking out at Publix, I had run in just to get a few things and was kind of in a hurry, and the cashier is this young guy, based on the time of day probably just out of high school. BUT he was so GOOD at his job. Like, genuinely good. He was fast, he was efficient, he was making conversation, making people smile, remembering regular customers' names. The whole line is moving smoothly because this kid has turned grocery checkout into an art form.

So, I said to him, "Man, you're really good at this! You've got a gift." And you know what he did? He looked down, got embarrassed, and said, "Thanks but I'm just bagging groceries. It's not like I'm doing anything important." Now I didn't, shockingly to my kids I'm sure, but I wanted to stop right there and preach him a sermon! Because that young man has a GIFT for connecting with people, for making mundane moments enjoyable, for bringing order to chaos. But he's been told—or he's told himself—that his gift doesn't matter because it's "just bagging groceries" while his friends are off at college doing something "important."

How many of you know someone like that? Someone who's really good at something, who has this natural ability that makes them come alive, but they dismiss it as "nothing" or "not important?" Better question: How many of you ARE that person?

Let me read three passages that are going to shape what we talk about today. First, Ephesians 2, verse 10. The Apostle Paul says:

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Then in Romans 12, verses 6 through 8 he says:

⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

And finally, Peter, 1 Peter 4, verses 10 & 11:

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

So, much to unpack, did I mention I was excited about this message?

I don't know if you noticed this or not, but in all three of these passages, the Biblical authors are talking about God's plan for our lives. AND that got me thinking this week. When you think about "God's plan for your life," do you picture something you WANT to do, or something you HAVE to do? Be honest. When you think about what God might be calling you to do, like we said last week talking about our desires, but does it excite you or exhaust you? Does it make you come alive or make you feel trapped?

If it's the second one—if God's plan feels like a prison sentence, like divine drudgery, like something you just have to grit your teeth and endure—then we need to talk before we go any further today.

Because look at what we just read. Paul says in Ephesians 2:10 that you are God's **masterpiece**—literally the word means poem, you are His poem, His work of art, you're not mass-produced, you're custom-designed—to do good works that God prepared in advance for you. Not works He's forcing you to do. Works He prepared for you. Works that fit you. Works that match who He made you to be.

In other words, God's plan for your life isn't a prison sentence. It's not divine drudgery. It's not Him saying, "I'm going to make you do the thing you hate most to teach you humility." NO! God's plan for you is the LIFE YOU WERE BORN TO LIVE. It's the thing that makes you come ALIVE. It's the work that fits who you ARE. It's using your unique gifts in your unique way to make your unique contribution. AND that means you have something no one else has...

You have your own unique “glory.”

And this glory isn't about accomplishments. It's not about performance. It's not about being better than other people. Your glory is the unique beauty and strength you bring to the world simply by being YOU. It's the essence of who God made you to be. It's the thing that makes you come alive. It's the contribution only you can make.

And the tragedy is that most of us have spent our whole lives hiding our glory because we've been told it's pride to acknowledge we have one. SO, over the next few minutes I want to convince you of three things:

- You have a glory.
- You've been hiding it.
- It's time to offer it.

If you're taking notes, let's start here:

1. You have a glory (and it's not arrogance to say so).

This is where most of us get stuck. We hear “you have a glory” and we immediately think, “That sounds prideful. That sounds arrogant. That sounds like what Satan got kicked out of heaven for in eternity past. Christians are supposed to be humble.”

But here's what we've confused: HUMILITY and SELF-DENIAL are not the same thing. Right? Humility and self-denial are not the same thing. True humility isn't denying who you are. It was C.S. Lewis who famously said:

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.”

Did you catch that? Real humility isn't pretending you don't have gifts. It's not acting like you're terrible at everything. It's not fake modesty where someone compliments you and you say, “Oh, it was nothing” when you know it was actually really good.

Real humility is knowing who you are—strengths *AND* weaknesses—and using who you are to serve others *INSTEAD* of serving yourself.

False humility says: “I'm not good at anything. I have no special gifts. I'm just average.” But true humility says: “God made me good at this. Not better than you, just different from you. And I'm going to use this gift to serve others.”

And when we do that we acknowledge this God-given glory He has given to us. When I talk about your glory I'm talking about the unique beauty and strength you carry. It's not what you DO—it's who you ARE.

It's the thing that makes people say, "Man, you're so good at that" or "You make that look easy" or "I don't know how you do it." It's what comes naturally to you that other people have to work hard at.

AND here's what's important: your glory is different from my glory. It's not a competition. When exercised properly it is complementary. That's what Paul says. We're all part of the same body (1 Corinthians 12). The eye has a different glory than the hand. The ear has a different glory than the foot. They're not better or worse. They're different. And the body needs ALL of them to function properly.

- Your glory might be creating beauty—art, music, design, hospitality.
- Your glory might be bringing order—organizing, systematizing, problem-solving.
- Your glory might be compassion—seeing the hurting and caring for them naturally.
- Your glory might be teaching—taking complex things and making them simple.
- Your glory might be building—taking raw materials and creating something functional and beautiful.

None of these are better than the others. They're all image-bearing. They all reflect different aspects of who God is and His glory.

Maybe this will help. Let me give you a framework for understanding your glory. Think of it like a house with four rooms, room 1 is:

Your personality.

This is how you naturally show up in the world.

- Are you energized by people or by solitude?
- Do you process out loud or internally?
- Are you spontaneous or a planner?
- Do you see the big picture or the details?

Your personality isn't a mistake. God made you that way on purpose. The introvert isn't a failed extrovert. The detail person isn't a failed visionary. You are wired a certain way for a reason. Amen?

That's the first room, your God-given personality. Here is the second:

Your passions.

This is what makes you come alive. What gets you fired up. What you could talk about for hours and not get bored.

- Some people are passionate about justice.
- Some about beauty.
- Some about health.
- Some about learning.
- Some about adventure.

And here's the key: Your passion isn't random. It's a clue to what God designed you to do. Room #3:

Your gifts.

This is what you do better than most people with relatively little effort.

- Some people are natural teachers.
- Some are natural encouragers.
- Some are natural leaders.
- Some are natural mercy-givers.
- Some are natural organizers.

In fact, Romans 12 lists some of these: prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy just to name a few.

SO, personality, passions, gifts and the final room for understanding your unique glory is:

Your story.

This is the unique perspective your life has given you:

- The pain you've walked through.
- The joy you've experienced.
- The lessons you've learned.
- The places you've been.
- The people who've shaped you.

Your story isn't random either. God has used every experience—good and bad—to shape you into someone who can minister to others in ways no one else can.

This is all a part of what Paul was talking about in our opening text. Look at Ephesians 2:10 again:

10 For we are God's HANDIWORK, created in Christ Jesus to do GOOD WORKS, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

I mentioned this, but the word we translate as handiwork or masterpiece is the Greek word *poiema* {poy-AY-mah}. It's where we get our word poem from. Paul chooses this word to emphasize that humans are not accidents, but crafted with care—we are literally His “poetry in motion.” He put thought into you. Care into you. Purpose into you.

And then He prepared GOOD WORKS—specific works—that only YOU can do. Put it all together and this means acknowledging your unique glory isn't pride. It's just agreeing with God about who He made you to be.

So, if we all have a glory, why do most of us spend our whole lives hiding it? Why do we downplay our gifts, dismiss our passions, and apologize for being good at things? That takes us to this:

2. You've been hiding your glory (the lies we believe).

So, why do we downplay our gifts, dismiss our passions, and apologize for being good at things? Great question. I'm so glad I asked... The answer is because we've been lied to. Over and over again. By well-meaning people who didn't know any better.

See if any of these sound familiar. These are four messages we've all heard that make us hide:

Who do you think you are?

This is the shame message. The one that says: “Don't get too big. Don't stand out. Don't call attention to yourself.” Some of you heard this growing up. You were really good at something—sports, music, art, academics—and instead of being celebrated, you were shamed. “Now don't brag... Stay humble... You're not THAT good.”

And over time you learned it's safer to hide than to shine. What about this:

You'll fail.

This is the fear message. The one that says: “If you actually try, you might fail. And failure is unbearable. So don't even try.” Some of you have a dream you've never pursued because you're terrified it won't work out. You have a gift you've never developed because what if you're not as good as you think?

So, you play small. You stay safe. You never risk finding out what you're actually capable of. So, shame, fear and then:

That's being prideful.

This is the religious message. The misapplication of Scripture that says, “If you acknowledge you're good at something, that's pride. Pride comes before a fall. So, the safest thing is to pretend you're not good at anything.”

But that's not what the Bible teaches! The Bible says USE your gifts. DEVELOP your gifts. OFFER your gifts. Pride isn't acknowledging your gifts. Pride is using your gifts to elevate yourself instead of to serve others.

One more message we have all been told either implicitly or explicitly:

It's not about you.

This is the opening line from one of the best books ever written called “The Purpose Driven Life.” BUT we miss the context. We take this message and assume that, “A good Christian never thinks about themselves. It's all about Jesus. You should decrease so He can increase.” And yes, there's truth in that—we ARE supposed to point people to Jesus, not ourselves.

But here's what we've missed: You decrease Jesus when you hide your glory. BUT you actually increase Jesus when you offer your unique glory for His Kingdom. John Eldredge says it this way:

“Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

BUT here's what happens when we believe these lies: We spend our whole lives trying to be invisible. Trying not to draw attention. Trying to be just average enough to not get noticed.

- We hide our personality because it's "too much."
- We suppress our passions because they're "not spiritual enough."
- We downplay our gifts because we don't want to seem arrogant.
- We dismiss our story because "everyone's been through hard things."

And the result? The world misses out on the unique contribution God designed YOU to make. Because here's the truth: **You can't give what you won't acknowledge.**

If you won't admit you have a gift for encouragement, you'll never intentionally encourage people. If you won't acknowledge you're creative, you'll never create. If you won't own that you're a natural leader, you'll never lead. Your glory isn't pride. Your glory is your OFFERING!

And when you hide it, everyone loses. SO, number 3:

3. It's time to offer your glory (and live from who you really are).

If you don't get anything else I say today I hope you walk away understanding that human glory is not vanity, but rather the reflection of God's splendor, power, and goodness when individuals are restored, healed, and living out their true, God-given passions. That's what early church father St. Irenaeus said.

SO church, it is time to stop hiding and start offering. BUT how? Right? Where do we even begin? Let me give you three steps. This is gonna feel like drinking from a fire-hydrant so get ready to write or work those fingers:

Identify your glory.

First, you've got to actually figure out what your glory is. Because some of you have been hiding for so long, you don't even know anymore. So, here are some questions I put in my notes to help you discover your glory:

What did you love doing as a kid?

Before the world told you who you should be, what made you come alive? What did you lose track of time doing? Question 2:

What do people consistently thank you for?

What do friends and family regularly say you're good at? What do they come to you for? What do they consistently thank you for? Question 3:

What makes you feel most like yourself?

When are you in the zone? When do you feel like "This is what I was made for!" What makes you feel most comfortable in your own skin doing? Then ask, and this might surprise you:

What injustice makes you the angriest?

Your righteous anger often points to your calling. If injustice toward kids makes you furious, maybe you're called to serve kids. If waste and inefficiency drive you crazy, maybe you're called to bring order. What do you see wrong in the world that makes you go, "That should not be that way... somebody should fix that."

Last one:

What would you do if money and fear didn't hold you back?

If nothing was holding you back, what would you spend your life doing? Write down your answers. Don't edit them. Don't spiritualize them. Just write... THEN:

Validate your glory.

This is where most of us get stuck. We identify our glory and then immediately dismiss it as not important. Not spiritual. Or just a luxury we can't afford. Stop it!

If your glory aligns with God's character—if it creates beauty, or brings order, or shows mercy, or pursues justice, or builds community, or teaches truth—then it's probably from God! AND what did Peter say in our opening text? Look at 1 Peter 4:10 again:

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Your unique glory is a gift. It's a manifestation of God's goodness that He's entrusted to you. So, validate it. Own it. Say out loud, "God made me good at this..."

AND He made you good at it so that you could then:

Offer your glory.

You've got to actually give it away! Because here's the thing about glory: It's not FOR you. It's THROUGH you.

- God gave you your personality so you could connect with people in a way only you can.
- God gave you your passion so you could solve problems others don't see.
- God gave you your gifts so you could serve in ways that bring Him glory.
- God gave you your story so you could minister to people walking through what you walked through.

So, offer it! Use it! Give it away freely!

AND here's what's amazing, when you live from your glory—when you stop hiding and start shining you come alive! You stop going through the motions. You stop feeling like you're faking it. You feel like "Oh... THIS is what I was made for."

Not only that but others are also blessed! Because your glory meets a need in the world. Your unique combination of personality, passion, gifts, and story serves people in a way no one else can.

AND when that happens, God is glorified! Because when people see the beauty God put in you, they don't think you're amazing—they think God is amazing for making you!

But here is what is also true. Some of you have been hiding your whole life. You've made yourself small. You've dimmed your light. You've apologized for being good at things. And you think that's humility. You think that's holiness. You think God is pleased with you for staying invisible. BUT I'm telling you: God is not pleased when you hide what He made!

Can you imagine an artist spending months on a painting, pouring their heart into it, creating something beautiful—and then you take that painting and hide it in a closet? The artist wouldn't say, "Hey, thanks for helping me stay humble." NO! They'd say, "What are you doing? I made that to be seen!"

That's what God says when you hide the glory He put in you! He says:

- "I made you CREATIVE—why are you pretending you're not?"
- "I made you COMPASSIONATE—why are you ignoring the hurting?"
- "I made you a LEADER—why are you hiding in the back?"
- "I made you FUNNY—why are you so serious all the time?"

You're not serving God by playing small! You're robbing the world of what God put in you!

What did Jesus say in Matthew 5? He said:

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light [your unique glory, let it do what?] **SHINE** before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Church, it's time to stop hiding! It's time to stop apologizing for being good at things. It's time to stop pretending you're average when God made you extraordinary. The world doesn't need more people trying to be invisible. The world needs people who know who they are and aren't afraid to be who God made them to be!

SO, as we bring this to a close, let me give you three practical steps:

This week, I want you to actually write down your answers to those five questions I gave you earlier:

What did you love doing as a kid?

What do people consistently thank you for?

What makes you feel most like yourself?

What injustice makes you the angriest?

What would you do if money and fear didn't hold you back?

Don't just think about it. Write your answers down. There's power in seeing it on paper. Then...

I want you to tell someone about your glory. Maybe don't use the word "glory" but find one safe person this week and tell them what you discovered. Say it out loud: "I think God made me good at _____." AND when they agree with you—which they probably will—RECEIVE it. Don't deflect. Don't dismiss. Just say, "Thank you. I'm learning to own that."

And finally, this next week, do one thing that expresses your glory. If you're creative, create something. If you're compassionate, serve someone. If you're a teacher, teach something. If you're organized, bring order to something. Just ONE thing. Small is fine. But do it! Because action breaks the pattern of hiding.

Come on, I dare you to do this. I dare you to spend some time praying and reflecting on this even if it doesn't feel spiritual to you because I think it is actually one of the most spiritual things you can do. To reflect back the glory God gave you in a world desperate for the light.

Some of you are here and you've never experienced the new heart we've been talking about. You've never placed your faith in Jesus. And if that's you, here's what you need to know:

You DO have a glory. God did create you with unique gifts and passions and purposes. But right now, your glory is either hidden, or it's being used to serve yourself instead of others. Because without Jesus, we use our gifts for our own glory instead of God's.

But when you place your faith in Jesus—when you trust that He died for your sins and rose from the grave—God gives you a new heart. And with that new heart comes a new purpose for your gifts. You stop using your gifts to build your own kingdom and start using them to build God's kingdom.

That's the Gospel. That's the invitation today.

For those of us who are already friends of Jesus, I think you know what I am about to say... stop hiding your glory. God didn't give you those gifts so you could bury them. He gave them to you so you could offer them. And the world desperately needs what He put in you.

So, this week, stop playing small, stop hiding. Figure out your glory. Validate it. And offer it.

Let's ask Him to lead and guide us, would you pray with me?

[PRAYER TIME]