

Humility

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Date: 16 September 2018

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Hinson

- [0 : 0 0] Good afternoon, good evening. It's great to see you all, great to be back. You may, most of you know that last week was my first Sunday back after being gone for four months.
- I was away on a four-month sabbatical thanks to the incredible generosity of this church. And two of those months we were more or less here.
- The first month we were in and out of D.C. We did a couple of little trips, spent some time in the woods in West Virginia. And then on the back end we came back. Our kids started school.
- We transitioned back to being here. But the middle, those middle two months, we spent traveling abroad in Europe with our family. And I can absolutely tell you as one who is from time to time maybe prone to a little hyperbole.
- This is not hyperbole. It was the absolute best experience of my life. Hands down. It was amazing. We traveled. We were based in the northeast of France thanks to the generosity of some people there.
- [1 : 0 6] We had a house. We had a car. And so we made no less than 12 road trips over the course of that two-month period. So we saw much of France, the eastern side of France.
- We saw a lot of northern Italy. We went hiking and exploring in the Alps. It was the trip of a lifetime. And before we left, we told people we were doing this.
- And they said, well, sabbaticals are supposed to be restful. They're supposed to be relaxing. And you're traveling in Europe with three young children. That sounds really stressful and hard.
- And they were exactly right. It was incredibly stressful and incredibly hard, but so much fun. So much fun. We began to realize how stressful this trip was going to be, how challenging it would be on day one.
- We left. We packed up. We did an overnight flight from D.C. to Munich. The plan was to sleep overnight. We'd be refreshed and ready to go the next day. Didn't sleep at all.
- [2 : 0 8] Nobody got any sleep except for Emmeline, who had the best attitude of anyone on the trip, including me. She's one. And so we fly overnight.
- We get into Munich. We're exhausted. All three kids are feeling sick. We're groggy. And so we're in the airport. And we realize, as we're kind of managing our kids, that there's been a gate change.
- And we realize that our plane is about to take off. And our gate has literally moved to the other side of the airport. And so we look at each other in a blind panic.
- And we say, we've got to get there. And so we all just grab bags. And we're throwing bags into our kids' hands. And we all just start running. And Laura and Maddox and Emmeline in the stroller, they just take off like lightning.
- And they're gone. And I'm yelling after them, go, go, get there, get there. And then I turn around to tell Riley to run. And Riley, Riley has lost most of the color in his face.

[3 : 04] And he's about a kind of a light greenish color at this point, kind of a pale green. And he says, Dad, I feel really sick. And I said, we've got to go, man. Let's just go. And so we start running, right?

And I'm running. And Laura's gone, you know. And I keep looking back at Riley. And I'm like, come on, a little further. And he's got his, like, backpack on and his little bear. And he's like, but I feel really sick. And I'm like, you've just got to go a little further.

And when we get to the plane, you can relax. You'll feel better. And I'm like, come on, man. And we're running. And then I turn back to see if he's with me. And he just stops. And he's holding his bear.

And he just looks at me. And then he just heaves all over the ground. I mean, and I'm talking Munich Airport. Like, there's stores. There's restaurants.

There's hundreds of travelers. It's packed shoulder to shoulder. And we're right in the middle. Beautiful. Not just clean tile floor, but, like, German clean tile floor. Spotless, you know.

[4 : 01] And he's just everywhere. And so, and then we're both standing there frozen. And I look at him and I say, do you feel better? And he kind of says, yeah.

And then we both look around to see if anybody saw what just happened. And then I look at Riley and I say, we got to get out of here. And then we just take off running.

And he starts running with it. He says, but we did a bad thing. And I said, I know. It's my fault. I'll explain on the plane. And we made it to the plane.

And I try to explain why that was kind of okay, but not really. And, you know, the kind of funny thing is, before this, one of my highest resolutions and goals for the sabbatical is that it would be a time for me to really be an amazing dad.

I decided I'm going to be the dad I've always wanted to be. I'm going to knock it out of the park. I'm going to double down on being the dad that they need. And, you know, day one, right?

[5 : 08] Not my best moment. Not going to make the highlight reel of parenting, right? But it was almost as though God was saying to me, if you're going to be the kind of dad I want you to be, the first thing that you need is a little humility.

And it was very humbling, right? And the reason I tell you that story is because I think that God says something similar to his church, to us, in the beginning of Romans chapter 12.

I think that God is saying there, particularly in verse 3, if you're going to be the kind of church that I want you to be in this world, if you're going to be the kind of church that is willing and able to love and to serve and to give sacrificially and generously of your time and of your possessions, if you're going to be the kind of church who's able to bring healing where it's most needed and go to the uttermost parts, right?

If you're going to be the kind of church that is able to hold aloft and glorify the name of Jesus Christ, the first thing that you need is a little humility. It's a little humility.

So we're going to look at Romans chapter 12, this great chapter. We're primarily going to focus on verse 3, and we're going to talk a little bit about humility in the church. We're going to talk about the need for humility, why this matters.

[6 : 33] We're going to talk about the source of humility, where it comes from. And then finally, we'll talk about the fruit of humility in the lives of believers in the church. What's the impact of this?

Why should we care? So Romans chapter 12, verse 3. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you for your word, and we thank you that although we most of the time forget, most of the time don't believe this, we actually need it more than we need food, water, that the most important thing, the most important need is your word because that is what enables us to be in fellowship with you, to be able to hear your voice, to have you speak, and to bring the same voice that brought order out of chaos, that brought life out of the grave.

We need that in our own hearts. We pray that your Holy Spirit would make that possible. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. So humility, the need for humility, why is it so important?

Why talk about this tonight? Paul, if you know anything about Romans, spends 11 chapters laying out what I would consider to be the most theologically profound explanation of the gospel ever written.

11 chapters. And when he gets to chapter 12, he shifts and he begins to talk about the so what. If you believe the gospel, if you begin to live out the truths of the gospel, this is what's going to happen to you.

[8 : 13] And in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 12, he says essentially total complete transformation, the entire renewal of your mind, of your imagination, everything is going to begin to shift.

Now where does all of that begin? Well, that brings us to verse 3. That total whole life transformation begins this way.

For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, that means everybody in the church, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

In other words, all of this radical transformation, and if you go down in the chapter, all of the willingness to use our gifts to serve others, all of the willingness even to love and to serve our enemies, all of that begins with a shift in how we see ourselves.

Our self-perception has to change. More specifically, the gospel has to knock us down a few pegs in our own estimation.

[9 : 19] Now, I grew up in the 80s and 90s, and the 80s were the kind of peak for something called the self-esteem movement. They continued into the 90s, into the new century.

They, I think, continue in the online world today. But the self-esteem movement was essentially this. It was the idea that the best thing we can do for our kids is to heap praise and affirmation on them.

We need to protect them from criticism. We need to protect them and insulate them from adverse consequences. And so, for instance, playing games with kids where there are winners and losers, that was discouraged because some kids might have to deal with losing.

And so it was very much about building and affirming and encouraging. If you've ever seen the Saturday Night Live skit with Stuart Smalley, who does the daily affirmation, what is it, I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it, people like me.

Right? That's the self-esteem movement in a nutshell. And so I grew up in the midst of this. It continues online today. People put a persona out into the public eye for everyone to see.

[10 : 31] And the implicit expectation is that everyone around you should heap affirmation on that self-expression. And if there is any hint of pushback or critique, it is seen as being among the greatest evils.

Right? So this is the culture that I grew up in. It's the culture that I think continues to permeate our public life in certain ways. And it's interesting to think about that because that is part of how people criticize Christianity.

People will point to verses like Romans 12.3, don't think so highly of yourself. And they'll say, see, this is why I don't like Christianity. It's not good for your self-esteem. It actually gives you and encourages low self-esteem.

But what we need to see is that underneath the sugar candy shell of the self-esteem movement, there is a rotten and, dare I say, wicked core.

Here's the problem with this entire way of thinking. Living in this world as a human being is extraordinarily difficult. It's extraordinarily difficult.

[11 : 41] Because as much as we like to think, especially among more privileged classes, that life is about pursuing happiness and fulfillment, the reality that most people, I think, across history would agree with is that life, if anything, is suffering.

Life is extraordinarily hard. And life forces you to face your inadequacies, your failures, your most embarrassing mistakes, your most besetting sins.

You can't live long without having to come to terms with those realities in your own life. And the cruelty of the self-esteem movement and that entire way of thinking is that it tells you your best way of dealing with those things in your life is to ignore them.

And to minimize them and to bury them and wallpaper over them with platitudes. And this does enormous damage.

I think that what we've come to see since the height of the 80s is that this approach, this shallow, feel-good sentimentality, does not actually produce healthy, integrated, mature people.

[12 : 54] It produces brittle, delicate, underdeveloped people. It produces people who cannot handle criticism, people who are threatened by the success of others, people who have a very hard time admitting that anything about themselves is anything less than amazing.

So what Paul is saying is this. He's saying that in order to live and even to flourish in a world like this as human beings, we don't need a high self-esteem.

We need an accurate self-assessment. We need to be able to see and embrace and live into reality. Even if it's painful. We need a way to do that.

And so the real question that this raises is this. How is it possible to fully face and own and accept my worst failures, my most besetting sins, my most embarrassing moments and mistakes?

How can I do that and still live with myself and even love myself? How is that possible? And that leads us to the source of Christian humility.

[14 : 11] Paul is giving us that answer in this verse. He says this. Think about yourself with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Now, when he says think of yourself with sober judgment according to the measure of faith, what's he talking about? Well, that measure of faith is what he spent 11 chapters laying out.

That's the gospel. That God has gifted each of us with a measure of faith in the gospel. So he says that needs to be your yardstick. Does anybody know what a yardstick is?

Yeah. It's a stick that's a yard long that you use to measure things. That's your plumb line. Do you know what a plumb line is? Yeah. It's a string with a weight on it that you use to tell what's actually up and what's actually down.

It's very helpful if you're cutting down trees in the woods to know which way the tree is going to fall. Right? So he's saying the gospel needs to be your plumb line. It needs to be your yardstick. In other words, it needs to be your objective unit or standard of measurement that will then give you an accurate read of yourself.

[15 : 25] How does this work in practice? Well, the first thing I think we need to realize is that we already have standards of measurement that we use to assess ourselves.

For most of us, that's other people. Right? If I want to know how I'm doing in a particular area of my life, the quickest, easiest way to do that, to evaluate myself, is to look at other people.

And social media enables this to happen a million times more than it used to. But I can look and whatever my value is that I'm trying to evaluate myself based on, you know, am I good looking?

Am I successful? Am I wealthy? Is my, where I am in terms of my life stage, is that where I should be at this age? You know, am I educated enough? Am I smart?

All of the things that we might care about. The quickest, easiest way to figure that out is to look at other people around you. And a lot of us do that. And what that results in is if you're around a lot of people who are, you perceive to be in a worse place than you, you feel good about yourself.

[16 : 28] If you're around a lot of people who are in, as you perceive, a better place, you feel bad about yourself. That's why when people around you succeed or have big breaks in their jobs or, you know, get married and start having kids or have good things happen, you're kind of happy for them and you kind of hate their guts.

You know, if you can be totally honest. And it's hard to really celebrate those things. Right? This is human nature to compare ourselves, but it's profoundly unhelpful because it's completely arbitrary.

It's completely arbitrary. It's just based on some random selection of people that just happen to be around you at the time. Right? It's completely arbitrary. So what we need to see is that the gospel offers a far better way of assessing ourselves because it is a perfect combination of two things.

It's a perfect combination of truth and love. truth and love together. On the one hand, the gospel tells us the truth about ourselves, the hard, unvarnished, unpopular, painful truth about us as human beings.

Right? It tells us that we are completely and utterly corrupt. It tells us that we are broken. It tells us that we are hopelessly lost. Now, that doesn't preach very well and it's not a very popular message.

[17 : 49] And particularly, honestly, I think in the West, in societies like ours, that runs completely against what most people think of when they think of human nature. The prevailing idea now is that children are born pure, unspoiled, undefiled.

They are full of potential. And when we say, well, where does corruption come from? I think the prevailing answer is to point to institutions. Well, it's institutions that are corrupt.

And they corrupt people. And they have a corrupting influence. So if you have corruption in people, there's an institution somewhere to blame. Right? What's interesting about that way of thinking is this.

If you look throughout history, I think you can make a pretty strong case. I don't think I have to really convince you that virtually every human institution ever created has been corrupt on some level. Some a little bit, some a lot.

Churches, governments, educational systems, all of it, has had some level of corruption. They're built up, they do some stuff in the world, and then they fall apart.

[18 : 54] That's virtually every institution. So the question then becomes, well, why is every institution created by human beings corrupt? Well, I think the easiest Occam's razor answer to that is that human beings are corrupt, that we have some fundamental corruption in us.

You know, this idea that human beings are born and that children are pure and unspoiled and untainted in every way and that we just need to kind of get out of their way, that was popularized most widely by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Rousseau was a huge proponent of this idea, really took hold of the imagination in the West. Interestingly enough, if you know anything about Rousseau, in his own life, the moment his children were born, he sent them to an orphanage.

He never even met them. I think if Rousseau had actually been a parent, he might have drastically revised his theories of human nature in children. I think if anybody questions whether or not human beings are inherently corrupt, they need to have a two-year-old.

Two-year-olds can be vicious. They're sweet, but they're also violent and they have really no conscience or sense of guilt. And so they're like sociopaths. They're just not strong enough or capable enough.

[20 : 09] They don't have enough coordination to do real damage. Right? But they would if they could. Right? So what we need to understand is the Bible tells us this very hard truth about ourselves.

It tells us this very painful reality. It says, this is the thing that you need to admit about yourself. It's very difficult to swallow. And yet, right along with that is the love of the gospel. And the love of the gospel means that God has gone to unimaginable lengths to give us a new nature.

Right? The gospel says that even though we are hopelessly lost, God looks at us and he loves us. And he says, I will do whatever it takes to gain that person back, to bring them back into my arms.

He sends the thing that he loves most, the person he loves most, Jesus Christ, to die and to suffer, to redeem and then to reclaim the people he loves.

and then he goes to work in those people. Through his Holy Spirit he begins a massive full-scale renovation, renovating their hearts. Right?

[21 : 17] So God looks at each of us and he says, I want you to belong to me. Not just in some general sense but in a very specific personal sense. And then the Bible promises that as this work goes on in our hearts and in our lives that one day we will have new natures, no longer corrupt, no longer broken but entirely new natures, new hearts and we'll be like Jesus in that way.

Right? So this is the source of true humility, the twin pillars of God's truth, the hard truth but also God's tremendous all-encompassing love and they come together as grace.

When we talk about grace it's the bringing together of the truth and the love of God on the cross. that's what it is. So Paul is saying that needs to be your gold standard by which you examine yourself, by which you think about yourself with sober judgment.

So it works both ways, right? If you're tempted to think too highly of yourself, if you're tempted to sort of overestimate your worth and value relative to people around you, if you're the kind of boss that only hires people who are worse than you so you can feel better about yourself, if you tend to shy away from criticism because you have to feel excellent, right?

If you're that kind of person, then the truth of the gospel helps bring that into perspective. It says, whatever your credentials, whatever your resume may look like, whatever level of education you achieved, however much your job pays you, you were so lost and so depraved that it took nothing less than the death of the Son of God to save you.

[23 : 02] So bring it down a few notches, right? But then on the other hand, if you're the kind of person, I think like a lot of us are, who is prone to self-criticism, one of the things that I do that I hate is that I will wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning and I won't be able to go back to sleep and it is as though my mind says, oh good, you're awake.

I've prepared 10 short films about the worst things you've ever done and I'm just going to hit play and I'd love for you to watch this. And I'm laying there thinking that I've been betrayed by my own mind, by my own imagination.

I'm like, all I want to do is go to sleep and this part of my mind is like, yeah, but there's this film series and I really want you to binge watch it right now. You're going to binge watch all the worst things you've ever done and I just lay there thinking about it and hating myself, right?

I don't know if anybody else does this. Maybe it's my own little weird thing but you know, the only thing that I can do to shake that off is to begin to look to the love, the love of God and I begin to counteract those images by praying, by sometimes in my half awake state just crying out to God, I know you love me.

Help me know you love me. I know you love me. Help me know you love me. Help me feel your love. Tell me a different story about myself because I can't handle this story. I can't handle these short films.

[24 : 18] These are horror films, you know. And that's how I talk myself out of those places, right? I go back to the love of God. I consider myself with sober judgment and the love of God says this, that you're worth everything to God.

There's no price that is too high, right? There's no links that are too far that no matter what it costs and it costs everything, God paid it with joy because he wanted you.

That's what the love of God says, right? And so in this way we're called to consider ourselves with sober judgment and measure ourselves against these twin pillars to achieve an accurate assessment of who we are in the kingdom of God.

You know, it's been said that humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. And I hope you see that that's really the point here.

That the movement that Paul is trying to catalyze in our hearts through the Spirit is a movement away from thinking about ourselves much at all. The more we consider ourselves with sober judgment by the standard of the measure of faith that we've been given in the gospel, the more we actually end up thinking about the gospel.

[25 : 38] In other words, the more I stop looking at myself and I start looking at the cross. And that's where humility really begins to take hold and begins to actually permeate our way of being.

And the more that happens, it actually begins to produce fruit in our lives. So the third point is simply, what is some of the fruit that comes out of this kind of humility?

Well, first it begins in us. I'll just tell you what I've noticed in people in whom I see this thing happening. I see that people become more open to admitting their faults and mistakes.

I see them becoming less defensive. I see people over the course of my ministry who over the years I just noticed they become more receptive to criticism. The walls don't immediately come up.

They're able to pick those little nuggets of truth out of their critiques. Even if their critiques come from a bad, poorly motivated place, they're able to see truth. There's a pause before they fire back that begins to happen in people.

[26 : 41] I see people becoming more patient because they know that they require patience. I know that people have to be tremendously patient with me. So I'm a little more patient.

You see people becoming more compassionate toward themselves. Self-compassion. That's not just sentimentality. That's not just platitudes.

That comes out of a genuine place of seeing yourself through God's eyes. Bernard of Clairvaux has that wonderful illustration of what it is to grow in the love of God. And he says, first out, we start loving ourselves for our own sake.

And then we start loving God for our own sake. In other words, we love God for what he can do for us. And he says, but as we grow, some people come to a place where they actually begin to love God simply for God's sake. Then he says, even beyond that is when you begin to look back at yourself and you actually begin to love yourself for God's sake.

You begin to see yourself through his eyes. Self-compassion. You see that growing in people who are contemplating themselves in light of the cross. And then what happens is this begins to radiate out this kind of grace-centered humility begins to produce fruit in our relationships with other people.

[27 : 52] Right? We become less preoccupied with ourselves and so we begin to notice there are actually other real human beings around us and they have needs. And we begin to have these moments where we think, I think that need might be more important than my need.

And we begin to have these little moments of genuine selfless concern. That's why this chapter goes on to describe people using the gifts that God has given them to serve and to love the people around them.

That's the fruit of this kind of attitude shift. Right? We become less judgmental. We start to become willing to forgive things we never thought we would forgive because we know we need forgiveness.

You know, there may have been a time back in your life when you said, I can never forgive that. That was too bad. It was too far. It was too much. And then you begin to realize how much you need forgiveness.

You begin to reconsider. Maybe I can forgive that person. Right? We become more open to other points of view. Can you imagine that in this culture? Being more open to other points of view because you're not as afraid to admit when you're wrong.

[28 : 53] And you realize, you know, I don't always get it right. And that's okay. I'm a human being. You become less threatened by the success of others. That's a big one.

I had breakfast earlier this week with a bunch of pastors I get together with regularly and there's one guy who convenes it and he's an older, retired pastor and he said something that I love.

He said, for a long time in my ministry, whenever I would meet another pastor, I would immediately look for something that I didn't like about that person. Now, why would he do that? Well, if the person was successful, he wanted a quick and easy reason to discredit and write that guy off.

So he would say, well, you know, they preach this theology, it's not a good theology or they do church this way, you know, they do liturgy or they don't do liturgy or they're contemporary or they're too traditional or they're too focused on emotions or they're too intellectual or they're not diverse enough or they worship the idol of diversity or, you know, you could just go on and on and on and on and on.

Every reason in the book to write these people off so he could feel better about himself. And he was alone. He didn't have any fellowship. He was alone. And he says then later in his ministry he made a shift and then when he started meeting other pastors who might be potential friends, even if it was a pastor of a completely different church, even if it was a pastor that made him feel threatened, he said, the first thing I would start doing is I would start looking for something to like in that person to get excited about, to champion.

[30 : 22] And you know what this guy does now in his retirement? He is literally building bridges among all different kinds of pastors all throughout the city. He's bringing these people together in fellowship with one another. He's doing things that, you know, ten years ago we didn't think was possible because of that little shift, because of the humility that is growing in his heart because of the cross of Christ.

Right? And lastly, humility means that we become less concerned with the approval of others because our confidence comes from the love and the approval of God. And this is an important point simply because of this.

Some people may hear me say the church needs to become more humble and you say, well, I actually think the church needs to become more bold. Well, here's the amazing almost paradoxical reality of true humility.

The more humble you become, the more concerned you are with this and the less concerned you are with this or with whether or not other people approve or disapprove or like or dislike who you are because you know you have the opinion of the only one who matters.

And so guess what happens? You actually become more bold. You become more courageous. You become more willing to say the hard thing, to hold the line. Even if it costs you social capital because you don't care as much because you know it doesn't matter.

[31 : 35] Right? So in this way, humility actually produces tremendously courageous and bold proclaimers of truth. And the reason all this matters is just to bring this together. If we're going to be the kind of community that God has called us to be in this city, if Church of the Advent is going to be the kind of community that is willing to serve, willing to meet people in their most hopeless places of need, if we're going to be the kind of community that is able to and willing to joyfully and generously give sacrificially of our time and our money and the things that God has given us to help those who need it, if we're going to be the kind of church that is able to proclaim the full reality of the gospel, to hold aloft and to glorify the name of Jesus Christ even when it costs us, if we're going to be that kind of community, it begins with our own hearts and our willingness to allow the gospel to humble us.

To humble us. Because frankly, the social fabric of our society is being torn apart. It's being torn apart. And you know this. I don't have to convince you of this. I mean, tribalism, closed-mindedness, partisanship, people are subdividing themselves into smaller and smaller and smaller units.

There's very little common ground anymore. People are increasingly balkanized, atomized. The thing that we need to realize as we look at this, it's easy to look at it now and to say, the world's falling apart, it's never been this bad.

But the thing that we have to realize if you look at history is that tribalism, hating and wanting to kill and destroy people who aren't of your tribe, of your group, right, wanting to destroy the others in the world, the strong trampling and oppressing the weak, if you look at history, those are normative.

Those are normative. That's the norm in history. Right? There was a time when every society on earth took for granted those realities. Right? If you're somebody who owns slaves, if you're strong and wealthy and powerful and you're able to trample everybody around you, people assumed that meant you have divine blessing.

[33 : 51] The gods must like you. They're giving you these things. The real miracle in history is that things ever changed. Is that there was ever a society that said, we should consider this crazy idea called universal human rights.

We should consider this crazy idea that everybody, even slaves, every single person is a person. You know? We should consider this crazy idea called justice. We should consider this crazy idea called lifting up and freeing the oppressed.

You know, we should build our society around this idea of inclusion of lots of different kinds of people. Right? The miracle is that that ever happened. That ever took hold in the imagination.

And the reason? It's directly a result of the impact of the gospel on the hearts and minds of people. And it's a direct result of the impact that that gospel had on the way we see ourselves and the way we see other people.

A radical transformation that changed society. And what that means is that the church is, as the keeper and proclaimer of the gospel, we are uniquely positioned to bring healing to the social fabric of our society.

[35 : 06] But what that requires is that that begins with us. It begins with our ability and willingness to become humble and thus emboldened by the truth and the love of the gospel.

All of this is one of the main reasons we're excited to be back. It is. It's a good time to be a Christian. And it's a great time to be in this community. This is a tremendously loving community.

It's a community that cares about the truth of the gospel, cares about the love of the gospel. Community that again and again and again over the last 10 years I have seen rally around need, rally around people, do what needs to be done.

Not perfectly. Sometimes balls are dropped. Sometimes things get overlooked. But I've seen people again and again and again striving and diving into the messiness of living our faith out in this world.

And that's the kind of community I want to be a part of. You know, we did some amazing things. We traveled, we saw beautiful places. You know, we ate bread and wine and cheese and you know, it's no cliché that they're amazing.

[36 : 11] I have thoughts about cheese now that nobody should have about cheese and I feel that I need to confess them to somebody. I'm like, this isn't healthy to think this much about cheese.

And yet, in all of that, the reason that we're able to come back and be so revitalized and so energized, it's not because we were able to travel Europe as memorable and amazing as that was.

It is literally because of the love of this community. It's because we knew that every day we were there, we were there with the enthusiastic love and support of you all.

And we felt that so much that it revitalized us. It enlivened us. Never experienced anything like it.

The outpouring of love and encouragement that we got. So I'm able to come back and stand up here and say I'm truly, genuinely excited to be back. And it's going to be an amazing year together. Let's pray.