

If We Are Chosen...

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you very much. I think as we think about the things that are going on in the world and try to discern, I think it's the best starting place and posture to consider God's mercy towards us.

So thank you for that. That God has shown you and I mercy is really quite incredible, undeserved, and we ought to have a healthy dose of humility and thanksgiving as we consider things that are quite beyond us.

This morning, I'm going to look at John chapter 15. If you have a Bible, there might be one in front of you. John chapter 15 in the church Bibles, it's page 848.

And I know many of you will have varying degrees of connection or understanding, some more, some less, and the things that are going on.

I would ask just that you would bear with me. And really, as we open John 15 to say that if you're here this morning as a Christian or if you're wondering about Christianity, then I want to forewarn you of something, really using Jesus' words, to forewarn you of something that will be true of Christians that we've seen to other people for their entire existence.

[2 : 1 9] And so let me read John chapter 15, verses 16 to 19. And I want you to notice the contrast in ideas that Jesus is telling His disciples moments before He's going to be arrested and unjustly tried and crucified.

John 15, verses 16 to 19. Jesus said, You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you.

These things I command you so that you will love one another. If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you.

If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

These two things are juxtaposed, love and hate. Love coming from Jesus, hate coming from the world.

[3 : 5 0] Jesus loved the world. The world hated Jesus. Jesus gave His life for the world, the world wanted to end His life.

He came as light into darkness. He came as love into hatred. He came into the world to bear witness to the truth. That's what He told Pilate in John 18, that He was born for this purpose, to bear witness to the truth.

He came to make peace between man and God and thus man and man. And He came, that we may have a life in His name. So, when you look out anywhere in the world, if what you see is hatred, then it is not of God.

If what you see is darkness, then it's not of God. And if people want to find their way out of hatred and out of darkness, it will ultimately only be through the love and the light of Christ.

If we want to find truth in a world of lies, if we want to find peace in a world of conflict, if we want to find life in a world of death, it is only possible through Jesus, and we must look to Him.

[5 : 15] We have this conundrum of peace in the Middle East, and the whole thing about whether or not Jesus is the Messiah is because, as we have heard, one of the things the Messiah would do was bring about peace, the Prince of Peace.

And some people say, well, because there's not peace in the world, He cannot be the Messiah. But I would ask, how is it that there can be Arabs and Jews sitting at table fellowship together, those who believe in Christ?

The Messiah is bringing peace. The more we love and obey God, the more we will value other human beings. And so, let this be the litmus test.

What are you doing in the name of your God? Let that be the litmus test of anyone in the world, wherever they are, what are you doing in the name of your God? And this will either say something about you, or it will say something about your God.

And there have been extremists in every religion in every religion. And sadly, throughout the history of the church, there have been people who have committed atrocities in the name of Christ.

[6 : 29] And it will either say something about you, or your God. Is that just a wicked person, or is it a wicked ideology? I had this atheist friend called Nick. He was a lovely, beautiful guy.

Nick. And I said, Nick, Nick, we often talked about Jesus. Nick really liked Jesus. But he always expressed that he felt like Christians just were not doing what Jesus told them to do.

And I felt really sad about this. And I thought, we need to be doing better if we represent Jesus. Now, obviously, he didn't encounter every Christian. I'm not saying that every Christian gets it wrong. But there was something in that.

He really looked at Jesus and thought, I can get behind this guy. But what do we do? So, we've been going through Exodus.

We've been seeing how God wanted this nation to represent him to the world. And so, we're going to look at what that means. What does it mean to represent God in the world? What should they do to represent God in the world?

[7 : 33] And also, what does the world often do to those who represent God in the world? And so, I'm going to be looking at just four points today.

Firstly, if Israel was chosen by God, then why? Secondly, if Israel was chosen by God, are they still chosen? Thirdly, should we take sides?

And fourthly, if we are chosen by God, how do we represent Jesus in the world? And so, if Israel was chosen by God, why? What does it mean to say that Israel is chosen?

It's not to say that they are better. God is clear about that in the book of Deuteronomy. They were not chosen because they were better than other nations, neither in number nor in righteousness.

That's not why they were chosen. Another thing Scripture is clear about is that God is not partial. He doesn't play favorites. So, why? Why was Israel chosen?

[8 : 37] I remember being in school in December. In fact, I'm pretty confident everyone in here is of the age that they will remember this. School in December was a terrifying place when it came to the Christmas dances.

I remember being lined up against the wall with a hundred boys that were better than me. I remember not particularly being chosen. As far as I recall, no girl was running towards me.

No one was fighting over me. I was among what would you class the leftovers. The ones the teachers would have to pair up with people and then you'd put your sleeve over your hand.

I was not chosen. Now, when we think about this term chosen, is that the kind of idea that when we hear this word? Why did God choose Israel?

It was not that they were chosen against all the other nations. We must be clear about that. They were chosen for the nations. God chose Abraham so to make a nation out of him, a nation, Genesis 12, that would bless the world.

[9 : 50] You see, it's not that God wasn't interested in any other nation. Precisely the opposite. It was that God wanted to bless Genesis 12, 3. God wanted to bless all the families of the earth.

And it would have to come through someone. And so we see a micro example of this in the Apostle Paul. I mean, he was a terrible guy. The church wanted rid of him.

He was a murderer and a scoundrel. He was like the terminator of his day. In Acts chapter 9, Jesus said to Ananias, you must go to him. And he said, surely not. You know about this guy.

And Jesus said, he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

A chosen instrument to carry Jesus to the world. God. It's not that God is about playing favorites. It's about God giving someone a task and responsibility.

[10 : 51] I was saying earlier, it was that thing, I think it was in The Fiddler on the Roof, where they said, you know, we know we are chosen. Can you not choose someone else? It's not that they're God's favorites.

It's that they've been given a task for the world. Israel was chosen to be the instrument of God's blessing to the entire world. Chosen to be light, to be a light, finish the sentence, to the nations.

Isaiah says, a light to the Gentiles that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth. That was God's purpose, that his salvation would reach the ends of the earth. Chosen to be a kingdom of priests.

Why? To bring God to the world and the world to God. They were to be stewards of God's grace and stewards of God's truth to and for the world. Being the light is not for people to feel superior to those in the darkness, but rather to be a light to guide those in the darkness to God.

And so we've seen in Exodus how they were to represent the rescuing God by walking in his ways. They were to treat people with the value that God places on them.

[12 : 04] They were to seek justice and love mercy and walk humbly. Now, we are all aware that they may not always do that and they have not always done that, but that's a different matter.

If they were chosen to be the vehicle of God's blessing to the world, then we need to see that this chosenness has put a spiritual target on their back ever since that moment.

For the devil doesn't want the world to have God's blessing and salvation. He doesn't want it to come to you and me. That's why he tried to put the disciples in jail and stop the good news from going out.

And so, it puts a spiritual target on your back. It's because of that that the devil wanted to destroy Job, consider Job.

Why did the devil have a problem with Job? Because God put a fence around him. God put a fence around Job and the devil had a problem with that. Ever since God put a fence around Israel, other people have tried to destroy them for the entirety of their existence.

[13 : 14] And so, this salvation to the nations would ultimately come through the Jewish Messiah. But see how many times the powers of darkness have tried to stop that happening. It's a miracle that they survived as a people up to the point of Jesus.

And so, from Jesus, we see that the crucifixion itself was an attempt by the powers of darkness to prevent the fulfillment of God's blessing to the world, to you and me.

But as is the way of darkness, it cannot see, and so its attempts to stop the Lord of glory were in vain. If Israel was chosen, secondly, are they still chosen?

This is perhaps one of the biggest points of contention. Many people would say that the church has replaced Israel. This is what's known as replacement theology or supersessionism.

It's to say that all of the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in and by the church. Now, perhaps this is because the promises were fulfilled in Jesus.

[14 : 22] For instance, the purpose and promise given to Abraham in Genesis, in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed, Peter says in Acts chapter 3 that God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

So, Peter is saying that the blessing to the world is being turned from wickedness to God. And he's saying that God delivers this blessing to the world through Abraham's offspring, i.e., Jesus, the Savior and no other name.

No one else, for there's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. And so, when Isaiah said that Israel was chosen to be a light to the Gentiles that salvation may reach the ends of the earth, Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, fulfills that.

From Israel was going to come the Savior of the world to the ends of the earth. And that happened through Jesus. Now, because this is fulfilled in Jesus, the disciples of Jesus have been carrying the name of Christ to the world.

Witnesses, Acts chapter 1, to the ends of the earth. But Christians have been divided over texts like 1 Peter. When Peter writes, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, some people would say that Peter is using these terms that belong to Israel and applying them solely to the church.

[15 : 56] Hence, replacement theology. But is that what Peter is saying? You see, many disagree, saying that Peter is actually writing to Jewish Christians, to Jews.

He's writing to faithful Jewish believers. And he's basically saying to them that following Jesus is what being a true Jew is. And so, he's saying to these Jews who are believing in Jesus not to think that their belief in Jesus is something separate from their initial calling as a Jew.

You're not abandoning your heritage by following Jesus. That's what he's saying. It's not something different. Christianity is not something new or different. Peter is encouraging believing Jews to be who they have always been called to be in contrast with the unbelieving Jews who are not, who they're failing to be who they were called to be.

Now, does that mean just because they are not believing that they are no longer called or chosen? No. Peter is definitely not promoting replacement theology.

Peter is encouraging his fellow Jews to believe in Jesus and not to be under pressure by his unbelieving kinsmen. Paul would say that he would even count himself accursed for the sake of his kinsmen.

[17 : 18] And so, Peter is encouraging his Jews to follow Jesus because that would be who they have always been called to be. The point should be made that while the church is in many places across the world carrying the name of Jesus, sometimes exclusively in non-Jewish contexts, what a wonderful thing that is.

It wouldn't happen without the initial Jews bringing it to the Gentiles. But Christianity is not something different from Judaism. It's not. It's not a new or separate religion.

It's true Judaism. It's the fulfillment of Judaism. And this only began because faithful, believing Jews, the disciples, took the gospel to the Gentiles, fulfilling their calling as a people.

And so, it's not separate. If we Gentiles believe it's not a new religion, we've been grafted into the original olive tree. Jesus himself is the Jewish Messiah, yet he's the Savior of the world.

And he's fulfilling the promise of God both to Israel and to the world. And his first disciples, the Jews, were bringing the light to the world. And so, if you're a Christian, you're not part of something new that Jesus started with non-Jews.

[18 : 31] We have been grafted into something that has existed for millennia, true Judaism. And those who rejected their Messiah are actually not practicing what they've been called to practice.

And this is why Jesus said, this shows that it's not something new. Jesus could say to those who were refusing to believe, he could say in John chapter 5 that even Moses would accuse them.

Moses would accuse them. Now, we recognize this is not about arbitrarily taking sides or politics or anything like that. We recognize that the nation of Israel is hardly made up of Jesus following Jews.

It's not. Anyone who's been there would tell you that's not true. But does this mean that God has abandoned them and revoked His calling? The whole issue is, is that what God is like?

Is God one who fails to fulfill His covenant? This is the issue. This is what's at stake. Is God not a covenant-keeping God? Does God abandon them and revoke His calling?

[19 : 39] Paul says in Romans 11, although as regards to the gospel, they may be enemies for your sake, as in the believers, Paul did this himself as a non-believing Jew.

He was an enemy of the gospel and he later got a taste of it from his fellow kinsmen when he was spreading the gospel and they were hating on him. as regards to the gospel, they may be enemies for your sake, but as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

And then Paul says, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. When we say that the Jewish people are chosen, we're not saying that they're always wonderful. We're not saying that they're always saved.

We're not saying that they're more deserving of God's grace. No one is. None of us are deserving of God's grace. We are not saying that God has favorites. We're not saying that they are saved apart from Christ.

No one is saved apart from Christ. We are simply saying that God does not forsake those who chooses and God does not turn aside from his promises. That's what we're saying.

[20 : 51] We're not saying that Israel has a free pass. Let me say this clearly. No one in the earth has a free pass. No one. We are not saying that God will not hold them accountable for the things that they do.

God will hold everyone accountable, Christians included. What we are saying is that God keeps his promises and there are certain promises he made to Israel.

Now, even although many Jews reject God, it should be said that Jesus himself was clear when he said in John 14, no one comes to the Father except through me. And John 16, he said, whoever hates me hates my Father also.

You can't say that you love God and you hate Christ. And John the Apostle wrote in 1 John 2, no one who denies the Son has the Father.

So you can't have the Father while denying the Son. This means that you cannot have God apart from Jesus. God will not accept a person who comes to him while at the same time rejecting his Son.

[21 : 59] After all, he gave his Son for us. However, this does not mean that God will revoke his calling and promises. And Paul talks about that in Romans 9-11, that when the fullness of the Gentiles come in, all Israel will be saved.

And again, this is not apart from Christ. It's not a free pass. But it's simply to say that God still has a future for this people. And while individuals may reject Christ, collectively the Jews will turn back to God.

And what a day that will be. The Messiah in the end will be recognized by everyone. And they will be saved.

But the thing is, because they've had this calling on their life, they've had a target on their back for hundreds and hundreds of years. So we should pray for them. We should plead with them to accept their Messiah.

We should bless them because God was clear in Genesis 12 that blessing them you will be blessed and cursing them you will be cursed. And whenever a nation has turned their hand against Israel, it has not gone well for them.

[23 : 09] And we must ask ourselves, why, among all the peoples on the earth, why are they so hated? Why are they so hated? Now we could say the same thing, right?

We could say we recognize that Russia have committed war crimes. We stand by Ukraine. Not arbitrarily, there are people in Russia that don't like any of this.

But have Ukraine been hated all of their existence? Are Ukraine just now being accused of war crimes themselves? No.

So there's a difference here. There's something that has been happening for hundreds of years that has been a hatred of Israel and the Jews.

And as Bill said, this is not flesh and blood. There is a spiritual battle going on. Now, should we take sides?

[24 : 08] This is not about taking political sides. I like that prayer, what was it? It was open doors.

The way the open doors presented that was very good and fair and right. This is not about just arbitrarily taking sides. But standing with Israel, we should recognize standing with Israel does not mean standing against Palestinians.

That's not what it means. Nor does it mean endorsing the actions of Israel. That's not what it means. we need to be wise about the support we show and we should not be fools or ignorant about the information we receive.

The Jews are sinners, just like the rest of us, just like everyone in this room. We do not support sin, nor should we support anyone that sins in terms of their sin.

However, we should seek the preservation and protection of all people, Palestinians included, but we should certainly seek the preservation of a people who have been hated the entirety of their existence.

[25 : 14] Giving that the hatred they receive comes from darkness itself. And so, if it's ever about taking sides, let us take the side of light against darkness.

Let us do that. Let us take the side of love against hatred. There's a spiritual war behind these earthly conflicts. And let me tell you, the devil's not only interested in one group of people being killed, but everyone, everyone.

The hatred that Hamas has shown in the horrific terror attack last year is the same hatred the devil has for you. Let me be clear about that.

That kind of hatred, he hates you with that hatred. The devil hates the Palestinians as much as the Jews. The prince of darkness would have everyone killed.

Why do you think Hamas are hiding behind their own people? Because hatred and darkness are at the heart of Hamas. And so, we're not about unequivocally taking sides.

[26 : 22] That's not what we're being about. But we should not be ignorant in our judgment of these things and our discernment. And so, if you will bear with me, let me present some facts. Okay? And if you want to talk to me about this later, I've got references and links and all of that kind of stuff.

But we need to press into these things. And so, bear with me and let me give you some key distinctions so that we can think about this in a more sober way.

Here are some key distinctions. Israel's war is not with Palestinians. Israel's war is with Hamas, a terrorist organization.

Their war is not with Palestinians but with Hamas, a terrorist organization. The refusal of people to admit that Hamas is a terrorist group and that they are committing war crimes is unbelievable.

The refusal of the BBC to recognize Hamas as a terrorist group is unbelievable, unbelievable, and unacceptable. It is on the same level as the propaganda that Nazi Germany used to justify invading Poland.

[27 : 34] You can read about that, go and research what Hitler said that he would make up a propaganda about Poland to justify invading them. And why does this matter? Because Paul said in Ephesians 4 that we are being tossed back and forth by every wave, by the cunning and craftiness of people and their deceitful schemes, we're being lied to.

And these lies are affecting how we treat one another and how we speak with one another in our unity and truth. Another very crucial distinction is that Israel is not targeting civilians, but Hamas, on the other hand, specifically targeted civilians indiscriminately and barbarically.

they purposefully targeted and attacked with no warning, abused, kidnapped, raped, and killed civilians, including babies, women, children.

Excuse me. They targeted the defenseless, and they paraded it on their social media, all the while praising their God.

I'm not saying that if anyone's innocent. Okay. But Israel have gone to extreme lengths, not only to inform citizens to evacuate, with calls, millions of calls, millions of messages, millions of leaflets, drones with speakers, warning people to evacuate, and even when they went in, they went in with medics, even when they went in, they went in with water and aid for Palestinians.

[29 : 45] civilians. And so, look at how they're treating civilians, and Hamas targeted civilians indiscriminately. Another thing we're being lied to is about the ratio of civilian to combatant.

Israel, civilian to combatant deaths have been lower than any other, any other nation in history. they've conducted war better than our country, better than America, better than civilized countries, that we accept the ratio, we accept the ratio.

Yet, they've been doing that under very different circumstances, because their enemies not only massacred civilians, but they went and hid behind their own people, setting up bases, they set up their military bases under hospitals and schools and mosques.

In the most heinous way, they invited this war to their own home, and they used their children as a shield. We should be moved at the lives that have been lost on both sides of the border.

We should be moved. We shouldn't try to justify the deaths, but let us not be ignorant of the vast differences of these attacks. One group is a dark terrorist organization.

[31 : 10] The other is fighting for their existence. I'm not condoning everything they do. And over the course of Hamas's governments in Palestine, Palestine has been sent billions of pounds in aid from America, from Britain, from the UN, yet it has been found that much of the money was funneled to the likes of Hamas, and it was used to fill their pockets and also to build a vast number of tunnels for terrorist activity.

And this is awful. You can read about this, you can listen about this, that their government could have made a much better economy, they could have made life better for their own citizens, but instead they didn't.

They could have used this money to make life better for their citizens, but they used the money to build vast tunnels for terrorist activity. And they could have used the tunnels to protect their citizens, but no, what they used the tunnels for is to hide terrorists terrorists and torture hostages.

Folks, I know this may seem sobering, and it should. We need to see the extreme darkness and hatred going on in the world right now. We're not used to this in our country, and this may one day come upon us.

I'm not saying we should support every choice the Israel government make, but let us not be fools to call light darkness and darkness light. Ask yourself where hatred is coming from. Is Israel operating by hate, by giving the Palestinians water?

[32 : 54] Yet what is Hamas giving the citizens of Israel? They're giving them nothing but terror. And let me say this, please, if you want to support Palestinians, that's great, do something about it.

Please do something about it. If you want to bring aid to the people that are caught up in this mess, do something about it. Get in touch with some churches out there or some organizations. But know this, for decades, the government has been taking the aid money away from them, from their own citizens.

Do something, please. people. And we must also know that in our own country, much of the pro-Palestinian activists are more about demonstrating hatred towards Jews than actually about helping Palestinians.

It is a good thing to want to help people. But you need to ask yourself, are they actually doing that, or are they just demonstrating hatred towards Jews? Is it about love, or is it about hate?

Are they moved by compassion to do something, or are they just expressing hatred? If you want to do something to help the Palestinians, this is what it's going to take, ironically.

[34 : 19] If you want to help the Palestinians, you will need to stand up with them against their own terrorist government. And ironically, it seems like the only people who are trying to remove their terrorist government is Israel.

Ironically. Now, if you want links about this, I'm happy to give it after the service. If you want names of reliable sources, ask me afterwards. One person trying to fight the propaganda, engaging with people on both sides of the discussion, put it well when he said it's hard because he's dealing with a lot of overly emotional and underly informed individuals.

It's just the way it is. But is that us? I watched the other night, someone on national television lying about facts and telling the viewers to Google it to see the lies that this person was saying.

I don't know if you know about this NHS doctor down in London who was part of an extremist group. Anyway, this person was on national TV lying to the public and politicians, asking them to Google it and see if you Google it.

It's just obvious that he's lying. He's not even Googled it himself. And so we need to be smart about this. But in the end, peace is not going to happen except through Jesus.

[35 : 43] There are many Jews and Arabs who want none of this. There are many Jews and Arabs who have both turned to Christ. And our battle is not with flesh and blood. As I said, if you're going to take sides, take the side of light.

Take the side of light against darkness because there's a spiritual war behind these conflicts and it will not always be far from home. Jesus said, the world will hate you and it will try to kill you.

We must remember that this world is not a neutral place. It's the domain of darkness. Where all kinds of sin flourishes, is there sin over there and not here? Is there sin in them?

And not in us? Satan not only wants to destroy Israel, he wants to destroy Gaza. He wants to destroy Scotland.

He wants to destroy me and he wants to destroy you. 1 John 5, 19 says, the world lies in the power of the evil one.

[36 : 45] And so, Jesus said in John 15, if the world hates you, it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of the world and I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

This might not be apparent yet in our country, but hatred has been felt by the Jews the entirety of their existence. And Christians in many places throughout the world, we only need to look at open doors to know that Christians throughout the world have felt this hatred ever since Jesus uttered those words.

Behind the hatred is the evil one. He is full of hatred. God is love. John 8 says, he was a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies. But 1 John 4 says, God is love.

What other God is like that? The world may be in darkness, but 1 John 1 says, God is light. What other God has shown that? And so, we may despair at all of this war, but Jesus said in John 16, in me you have peace.

We may feel like we have been overcome by all this trouble, but Jesus said, in this world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world.

[37 : 58] And so, Paul says, if you want to do something, Romans 12, 21, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. And so, it's not about arbitrarily taking political sides.

Take the side of light. Take the side of love. Take the side of truth. If we are chosen, if we are chosen to represent Jesus in the world, if we are believing in Jesus, then let us not so easily be divided by the lies and schemes of darkness.

Let us see hatred for what it is. Let us remember that if we are chosen, it's not for us. It's not merely for us. It's neither because we are better than others, nor is it so to keep God's blessing to ourselves.

If we are chosen, it's not suddenly to look down on those who do not know Jesus. We are chosen not to hate. We are chosen to love as Christ loved.

We are set free from darkness to be a light to those who are still in darkness, to show the way. If we are chosen, we are chosen to speak the truth to people who are fed nothing but lies.

[39 : 07] And primarily, that truth will not be political, but it will be pointing people to Jesus. We are chosen to bring the peace of Christ to a warring world, and we are chosen to hold out life in Christ to a world that the devil wants to destroy.

Folks, we have the greatest aid to a dying world, so will we take Christ to them? Any of them. If we are chosen, we are chosen to push back against hate with the love of Christ.

We are chosen to push back against darkness with the light of Christ. We are chosen to push back against lies with the truth of Christ. We are chosen to push back against conflict with the peace of Christ.

We are chosen to push back against death with the life of Christ. And if we are taking sides, then we take the side of Christ. And if we take the side of Christ, then automatically we are taking the side of love.

We are taking the side of light. We are taking the side of truth. We are taking the side of peace, and we are taking the side of life. If you don't see those things, it's not of Christ. It's not of God. And we don't do so against people.

[40 : 18] We do it against the spiritual powers and principalities of darkness. This doesn't mean we sit back and do nothing. We should seek justice and love mercy and walk humbly with God.

If we are to represent the rescuing Messiah, we must likewise take part in rescuing people from hatred, rescuing people from darkness, rescuing people from lies, rescuing people from war, rescuing people from death, and doing so with the love and light and truth and peace and life that only and always comes from Christ, who is Himself the love of God, the light of God, the truth of God, the peace of God, and the life of God. He is the great and only solution.

In all of this, let us act faithfully as Jesus' body. Let us trust fully in Jesus' sovereignty, and let us pray fervently in Jesus' name. Thank you for being with me. May God help us. Let me pray.

Amen. God, our heavenly Father, we ask for Your will to be done and for Your kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. And Your kingdom is not a kingdom of hatred but love. It's not a kingdom of darkness but of light. It's not a kingdom of lies and confusion but a kingdom of truth, a kingdom of life and not death, a kingdom of peace and not war. Father, please help us. Please help us to follow Christ and to be as Christ was to other people. Please help us to be wise about this. And please help us to act faithfully in Jesus' name. To those who need it most, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.