

Evening Worship

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[0 : 00] As we've joined our voices praising God, let's now join our hearts in prayer.

! Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for this beautiful day, the sun that shines, the warmth of that sunshine, and the way in which it lifts our mood, and the way in which it just reminds us of the beauty of creation as we see the trees beginning to bud and flower, as we see the flowers coming and blooming. Lord, we are so grateful that you look upon us with love, with affection, that you provide for our physical needs, but not only so. You give to us a beautiful world that we can appreciate, the colors and the scents and all that you provide. You are gracious, you are good, and you are kind. And we thank you for that word that we just sang, that word of hope, that word that enables us to look forward and to look upward, not with fear or anxiety or uncertainty, but with that unshakable surety that you, oh God, are good and you do good, that you are great and you demonstrate your greatness. And Lord, we pray that you would lift our eyes and lift our hearts, and that our minds would be elevated above the world that we experience to come into your presence, the presence of the one who is seated on the throne, the presence of the one who is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-present. And we ask, Lord, that you would accompany the reading of your word, the proclamation of your gospel with your presence and with your blessing. We bring before you each of our own life circumstances, our joys and our sorrows, our trials and our triumphs. Lord, they are many and they are varied. Lord, for those who are going through tough times, might you be their strength and their shield. Might they know those words that you are an ever-present help in times of trouble.

And we ask those, for those who are enjoying the goodness and blessing of God, those who are enjoying the joys and the triumphs of life, that they may rejoice in your abundant goodness and may we join with them, rejoicing with those who rejoice, alongside of mourning with those who mourn. We thank you for all those wonderful commands where we can encourage one another, build one another up, bear one another's burdens, love one another. Lord, we recognize that these commands are impossible to fulfill apart from being in fellowship with your people. So help us to love one another, care for one another, and to build each other up. Father, we pray that you might remember this congregation of your people, this area, the south side of Edinburgh, this magnificent city, this capital city, this nation, this world. Lord, you are great. And what we often think of big requests, nothing is big to you.

We often think of those tough problems, nothing is tough to you. We ask that you would give us that faith that trusts, that faith that brings to you our prayers and our petitions, and that faith that expects not only that you hear, not only that you answer, but that your answer is always the best answer, your timing is always the best timing. So whether you answer with yes or with no or with wait, help us to realize that as our Father in heaven, you know what's right, you know what's good, and we come to you as children in need of help, in need of hope, and in need of comfort. And we pray these things in Jesus' name and for his sake, amen. I'd like to read from Daniel's prophecy. Daniel's a big book. The first half is narrative, very vivid, exciting stories, and the second half tends to be apocalyptic, you know, end of time stuff.

But here in chapter 9 we have one of the most remarkable examples of a recorded prayer. Now in our tradition here we often do what we call extemporaneous prayer, but when you have prayers recorded in the Bible they are recorded for our not only as an accurate representation of what Daniel said, but these are models or encouragements for us in our prayer, both in terms of our approach to God and also our recognition of ourselves. So let's read from Daniel chapter 9. This is in the, if you've got the Red Pew Bibles page 895. In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes, a Mede by descent, who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom. In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the scriptures according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the

prophet that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years.

[5 : 26] So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, Lord, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of love with all those who love him and keep his commandments. We have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled. We have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants, the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land. Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame.

The people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. We and our kings, our princes, and our ancestors are covered with shame, Lord, because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving. Even though we have rebelled against him, we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servant. The prophets, all Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore, the curses and sworn judgments written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us because we have sinned against you. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us this great disaster. Under the whole of heaven, nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does, yet we have not obeyed him. Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day. We have sinned, we have done wrong. Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to those around us. Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, O our God, and hear. Open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen. Lord, forgive. Lord, hear and act. For your sake, my God, do not delay because your city and your people bear your name. Amen. And may God add his blessing to this reading from his own word.

[9 : 03] Lord, we're now going to sing another hymn. We're going to sing the hymn, How Firm a Foundation, You Saints of the Lord. Let's join our voices together singing to God's praise.

How firm a foundation, You Saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in his excellent word. What more can he say?

Than to you he has said, To you for refuge to Jesus has fled.

Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed. For I am your God, and will still give you aid. I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand.

Upheld by my gracious, omnipotent hand. When through the deep waters I call you to go, The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow, For I will be with you, your trouble to bless, And sanctify to you your deepest distress.

[11 : 04] When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie, My grace all-sufficient shall be your supply.

The flames shall not harm you, I only design, Your dross to consume, And your gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus does lead for repose, I will not, I will not, I will not, Deserve to his foes.

That soul through all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake.

Usually on Saturday I have time for reading, Just for my own rest and relaxation.

[12 : 31] And on one of my bookshelves I can see them now, I've got the four greats. I've got Othello, I've got King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, And even the Scottish play.

But you know, I tend not to read these books. Great editions, I know the story. But right next to those is a P.G. Woodhouse volume that I've read many, many times.

And I put Shakespeare aside and I pick up Woodhouse. Not because Woodhouse is higher literature or more well written. But for this reason.

When I've got time and when I want to relax and when I want to enjoy, I want a story that ends with happiness. I don't know if you realize this, but even though Romeo and Juliet is kind of a love story, it doesn't end well, you know, there's a lot of sadness at the end of that story.

King Lear is not a happy ending for that family with three daughters and one father. You know, I don't want to read a tragedy. I want to read a story that ends with all the conflicts, however multifaceted, however contrived, all are resolved on the final page.

[13:50] And just a moment ago, we heard a prayer from Daniel. And Daniel was telling us that there's a problem. And this problem is multifaceted. This problem involves us and God.

This problem involves past decisions and present consequences. And it seems so irreconcilable, too complex to fix.

And you think this is just going to be another one of those narratives, another one of those stories that ends not with happiness, but with tragedy. But then we turn to chapter 12 of Isaiah.

And we realize that somehow, some way, God has a way of solving the problems that we've made. Somehow, God has a way of fixing the things that we have broken.

And actually, the Bible is not a tragedy. But the Bible is a good news story that ends well. And God wants our lives not to be tragedies, but to end well.

[14:57] And this chapter is one of the short chapters of the Bible. But boy, is it rich. Rich in hope. Rich in comfort. Rich in meaning. And rich in salvation.

So, turn with me to Isaiah 12. This is page 698. Now, the first half of Isaiah tends to be in the minor chord.

It tends to be solemn and somber. There are dark clouds on the horizon and storm is coming. But in the midst of these somber sections, there are bright glimmers of hope.

And bright comforts for the future. In that day, you will say, I will praise you, Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away.

And you have comforted me. Surely, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense.

[16:01] He has become my salvation. With joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day, you will say, Give praise to the Lord.

Proclaim his name. Make known among the nations what he has done. And proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things.

Let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion. For great is the Holy One of Israel among you.

Over the years, I've tried to characterize the Bible. Especially in a setting like this. Not tonight, but imagine this. And this is in my mind because I've got a couple weddings coming up in the next few months.

And these are weddings with people who are not Christians. They might not go to any church. They might never have read the Bible. But they've asked me to conduct the service. And at the end of the service, I always give the Bible that I've read from to the couple as a gift.

[17:11] And I used to say, here is the Bible I've conducted the wedding from. And this really is a guidebook for life. And then I thought to myself, I never read guidebooks.

I never read instruction manuals. Whatever I buy, I just figure out how to use it. I just put the instruction manual away and never look at it. So why am I commending the Bible in a way that I would never read it if I wasn't a reader of the Bible?

So what I've said now is that here, because especially at a wedding, wedding is a love story, isn't it? And I said, well, look, this Bible is a love story from front to back, from beginning to end.

It's a love story where God is declaring his love for people, but declaring his love for persons, individual people. And actually, I think people are much more likely to read a love story, especially a love story that ends well, rather than an instruction manual.

Now, of course, the Bible is an instruction manual. It gives a lot of good wisdom for living. But from the beginning to the end, we see that God is pursuing a people.

[18:23] Now, Daniel is quite honest, isn't he? He's being honest about himself. He's being honest about his people and saying, we have issues. We have problems. We have big problems.

We have big issues. We have lived as if we are God. And now we are facing the consequences of ignoring or disobeying or doing our own thing our own way.

And Daniel is presenting to God the sins of the people, his sin, their sin, our sin. And as you read that chapter, that chapter does not have much in the way of hope or comfort.

But apart from this, apart from this, that we have a God who is gracious, who is merciful, who hears the cry of his people, and who is at work in saving, setting them free, redeeming them, restoring them, and renewing them.

You see, we do have a God who loves. We do have a God who cares. And you see, this distinguishes the God that we worship from any other God you could imagine or any other God you could name.

[19 : 36] In theology, we say that God is one of a kind. He's not one of a group. You know, like if you go to Edinburgh Zoo and you can see different types of large cats.

I mean, you can see the tigers or the lions or different types. And you can say, well, that's a large cat. That one lives in India. That's a large cat. That one lives in Africa. There's one that lives in North America.

So it's one of a kind. It's one of a group. God is on his own. There is no God like our God who is holy, righteous, and pure, and who is gracious, merciful, and loving.

Not either or. You see, God is not just a multiplication of us. Isn't that good? That God isn't just a multiplication of human beings because the ancient gods were exactly that.

We're jealous. Their gods were jealous. Very jealous. We're petty. We're capricious. We're whimsical. Their gods were petty, capricious, and whimsical. You just multiply human beings and that becomes God.

[20 : 36] Not so with the God of the Bible. And as we turn to chapter 12, Isaiah, the prophet, has good news. And you see, the Bible is good news from beginning to end because God does not take sin to be the final word.

He does not take our first answer to be our last answer. God is at work in a way that we can scarcely imagine and we could never make up. Because as you read that account of Daniel, you would say we are helpless, we are hopeless, and there is only darkness and despair.

And then we are told, no, in that day I will praise you. You see, God has a people who will praise him, who will say thank you, who will acknowledge him.

Because what you have here, you have the before and you have the after. Now, I'm going to show my age that when I was younger, if you wanted to take photographs, you needed a camera.

I know young people, this is quite bizarre. You needed a camera, and if you wanted to use your camera, you needed film. Now, you had a choice, of course. You could do black and white, monochrome.

[21 : 54] Or you could do, I don't want to advertise a brand, but you could do color, kodachrome. Now, most of the time you want color photographs.

You want to capture the greens of the chair, and you want to capture the different colors of people's outfits. You want to capture the vivid colors that are in front of you. So, there are many colors here tonight, many different shades of green or blue or yellow.

When we look at the Bible, the problem of sin is like kodachrome. There are many different colors. There are many different aspects.

You see, the problem isn't just one, the problem is many. You see, sin is wanting to do things your own way, putting yourself at the center of life.

Sin is also rebellion. It's saying, God, I'm not interested. Sin is hostility. Sin is enmity. Sin is ignorance. Sin is indifference.

[22 : 54] You know, it's a multifaceted problem, which brings a multifaceted situation. You see, in Daniel's prayer, and also mentioned here in Isaiah 12, we're told that sin brings anger.

God is holy, righteous, and pure. God has created us. He's created us for himself. He's created us to know him, to serve him, and we have gone our own way.

Each one of us has gone our own way. And sin creates in a righteous or the response of a righteous, pure God is anger. So, sin brings anger.

We're also told in the Bible that sin brings estrangement, separation. We are separated from the God who created us. We are estranged.

We are no longer in relationship with him. Sin also brings slavery. Jesus himself said, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. So, you have anger.

[23 : 56] You have estrangement. You have slavery. You have also the reality of guilt and shame. That sin, the first example of sin, Adam and Eve, they hid.

They were naked. They felt shame. They heard God approaching, and they hid. They were afraid of him. And sin reminds us that there are many enemies.

The world, the flesh, and the devil. You see, our flesh is inclining us to go away from God. The world is encouraging us in that direction, and the devil is tempting us in that same direction.

Now, you think, this is a big problem. This is a multifaceted problem. So, therefore, if there's going to be a solution, there must be a multifaceted solution.

Isaiah says, I will praise you, Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away. God is able to turn his anger away.

[24 : 59] Now, how can he do that? Why can he do that? Why would he do that? Because sin prompts anger in a righteous holy God. We're admitting that we have sinned.

So, does that just mean that God is changing his character? Maybe letting bygones be bygones? Once Isaiah expands the picture. Surely God is my salvation.

Salvation. This is a big biblical word. It's a word, but you need almost a dictionary to unpack this word. Because I mentioned just a few moments ago the problems.

So, sin brings guilt. Sin brings shame. And you see, in order to deal with guilt and shame, God established a tabernacle in the Old Testament.

He established a temple in the Old Testament. And these were previews of coming attractions. Because sacrifices were offered in order that sin and guilt and shame could be dealt with.

[26 : 01] But all of these sacrifices were just a preview. So, when John the Baptist comes along and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Lamb is going to be slain in order that our sin and our guilt and our shame can be dealt with. So, you have this multifaceted problem.

Anger. Sin brings anger. God turns anger away. Why? Because he provides one who takes the anger upon himself. We're told that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

He is the propitiation for our sins. And not just for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. So, propitiation is a means by which the anger of God is diverted or deflected.

The anger falls on Jesus. So, that we now are the beneficiaries of God's smiling countenance. No longer anger. No longer separation.

[27 : 06] But now we are in fellowship with God because another has been provided. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. Jesus, the propitiation, the one who takes away the wrath of God.

We mentioned that sin brings captivity or slavery. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. But if the Son sets you free, you'll be free indeed.

That's why we read that Jesus described himself in this way. What was it? Mark 10, 45. The Son of Man did not come to be served. Though he deserved to be served.

He did not come to be served. But he came to serve and to give his life. As a ransom for many. A payment price to set captives free.

So, this word salvation, as we begin to unpack it, we realize very quickly why we now have cause to praise. We now have cause to celebrate.

[28 : 03] We now have hope, not despair, light, and not darkness. I mentioned that sin brings estrangement, separation. There's a relationship problem here.

The problem is ours. Now, over the years, when you're involved in ministry of one sort or another, you often are involved in counseling of some type.

Maybe you're counseling a couple who are struggling. Maybe you're counseling, you know, parents and children. But generally speaking, there's always two sides to every story.

There's always fault on both sides. But generally speaking, let's say that the fault lies primarily maybe with one party.

So, generally counseling is encouraging the party who has made a mistake to make amends. But the gospel, the salvation that we have here is this.

[29 : 03] And this is remarkable. The God who has been offended. The God who has been estranged by his people because of their action.

This is the God who provides reconciliation. This is the God who provides one to bring the two parties together. You see, the image here is of a mediator, of a go-between.

Later in the book of Isaiah, if you wish, you could read in chapter 59, I think it is, where God is looking for a mediator. He's looking for a go-between. He's looking for someone who is righteous and good.

And he looks at the human race and he finds none that meet the criteria. So, he concludes that he himself must work salvation.

He himself must take righteousness as a breastplate. And the offended party becomes the reconciler. There is no earthly equivalent because that's not how reconciliation happens.

[30 : 05] Reconciliation here happens when the guilty party puts up their hand and says, I was wrong. I shouldn't have said that. I was wrong. I shouldn't have done that. You don't expect the injured or the offended party to take the initiative.

But God takes the initiative and he's the offended party. He's the injured party. So, we have this multifaceted problem. And we have a multifaceted solution.

God is my salvation. This is not just abstract. This is personal. This is personal possessive pronouns. So, the problem, anger, sin, estrangement, guilt, separation.

The solution is salvation, is reconciliation, is freedom, is forgiveness. We are wrong in terms of sin. And God says, through Jesus Christ, we can now be right. The one who was without sin takes the sin of the people upon himself in order that the sinful people can have his righteousness.

[31 : 14] One of the medieval, or not medieval, or early modern theologians, Francis Turretin, put it this way. He said, Yet, no satisfaction is to be made by them either in this or in a future state of existence.

God has done everything that is needed for your salvation, for my salvation. And we are therefore to respond accordingly. So, we're not only told the problem.

We're not only told the solution. But we're told how we are to take that solution and apply it. We see here in verse 2. God is my salvation.

How is that possible? I will trust and not be afraid. When our Lord Jesus began his preaching and teaching ministry, his first sermon in Mark chapter 1, verses 14 to 15.

It's great with Christianity Explored to go through Mark's gospel again. Because you see so clearly the presentation of Jesus. Who he is. What he has come to do.

[32 : 45] And how we are to respond to him. He said, Now, you'll notice here that we don't have the repent element deliberately stated.

But wherever you see one of these two, the other is there. So, if you're commanded to repent, Paul in Athens, what did he say?

God commands all people everywhere to repent. Well, that means that they are to repent and believe. You can't do one without the other. You can't turn away from sin without turning to Jesus. And you can't turn to Jesus without turning away from sin. So, sometimes there are couplets in the Bible where they are so closely linked that if one is missing, you can fill in the other.

So, we are to respond with faith and with repentance. Not with action. Not with resolution. Not with good intentions. Not with a sincere desire to do better.

[33 : 54] All of which are fine. But those aren't the terms and those aren't the conditions. We are to respond as he commands. And Isaiah is giving us an example.

I will trust. Let's make it personal. I will trust and not be afraid. I will repent. I will believe. There's a problem. I recognize the problem like Daniel.

I'm going to be honest. There's a problem and the problem is mine. But the solution is his. I need him to solve my problems. And this is where human pride comes in.

I don't like that. If I've got a problem, I want to work it out. If I've got a situation, I want to solve it. If I've broken something, I want to fix it.

But the Bible says you can't. But he can. I can't. But Jesus can. I can't. But God has made a way where salvation is now possible.

[34 : 57] So notice the transition here. Because by faith, by trusting, the God who was angry, his anger has turned away.

The Lord, the Lord himself is my strength and my defense. He has become my salvation. What a transformation that's taken place here. Because of this perfect and complete salvation provided by God for us.

This story ends well. There's a complicated problem. There's a multifaceted problem that we can't solve. This has all the makings of a tragedy.

You read those great plays of Shakespeare. And you start with a conflict. And you continue with a conflict. And you conclude with the conflict getting worse. And many people's lives are just like that. The problems are many. And they get more. The problems are deep-seated. And they become deeper-seated still. So by human effort and by human understanding and undertaking, all we can do is make a bad situation worse.

[36 : 09] Several of my colleagues at prison have come, you know, they've come back to work or they're off work just now. You know, they have bad infections.

They have chest infections. And then very, very quickly, chest infection becomes pneumonia. And before long, you know, they're in hospital because, you know, they're just very, very unwell.

You know, and that's the human condition. A minor situation gets worse and gets worse and gets worse. So that an extreme measure is required here.

You don't just get better. There are times where you realize, I am very unwell here. And I need help. I need the help of a doctor. Or if you're in trouble legally, I need the help of a lawyer.

But we are in trouble with God. And we need God to be our help. We need Him. That's why we trust. That's why we turn to Him. So there's a problem and there's a solution.

[37 : 08] The problem is ours and the solution is His. There's a theologian in my systematic theology class. We encourage students to buy a set text so that they have a resource for future years.

And one of the texts that we use is written by an American called Michael Horton. And Michael Horton helpfully unpacks the study of theology and he summarizes that summary under four headings, each of which begins with a D.

He says, as you read the Bible, the first D is drama. It's a story. It has a beginning. It has a middle. It has an end. And the Bible is a story.

It's a story about God. It's a story about people. It's a story about Jesus. It's a story about life. And that's why the Bible is so interesting. And that's why when you actually read the Bible, I remember when I hadn't read the Bible, I thought the Bible was a rule book, a guidebook for living.

And therefore, I had a good insight as to what living was about, I thought. So I didn't need to read the Bible. But what I didn't realize was what the Bible actually was. You read the Gospels and you think, I've never read this before.

[38 : 23] I've never encountered somebody like Jesus before. I've never encountered somebody that speaks like Jesus, spoke, acts like Jesus, acted, helps like Jesus, helped, met people exactly where they were.

And there was never a situation too helpless or too hopeless for Jesus to work in. So Horton says the first is a story. And from that story, we can extract the doctrines, the truths.

We can extract the fact that God is righteous, pure, and holy. And that men and women are sinful, guilty, filled with shame because of their actions, their words, and their thoughts.

So you take the story and you begin to extract the truths, the problem, the solution, etc. He went on to say that the third of these elements was doxology, praise.

And that's exactly what we have here. Because when we understand the story and when we understand the doctrines, when we understand where we were by nature and where we are by grace, what's the answer?

[39 : 29] I will praise you. Verse 4, with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say, give praise to the Lord.

So we've been singing, have we not? We've been singing Christ our hope in life and death. We've been singing how firm a foundation. This is not just a filler. This is not just something you do in between prayers or readings.

But this is an expression of joy. This is an expression of celebration. This is an expression of praise. Because the God who is pure, righteous, and holy, and a people who are estranged, sinful, and guilty, have been reconciled through Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah! Amen! This is great news. And therefore, I want to say, God, thank you. I want to say, God, praise you. I want to say to God, what a great God you are.

I want to say what a great Savior Jesus is. And what a great gospel we have. The drama, the story, the doctrines, the truth, the doxology, the praise, and the fourth element.

[40 : 39] And with this, we draw the chapter to a close. Is discipleship. What do we do with what we now have? What do we do? Well, we praise God.

We've just heard that. We draw water from the wells of salvation, meaning that we are constantly being refreshed, constantly being renewed. It's not a one step or a one, it's not a one moment thing, but it's a new life.

It's a new source. It's a new joy. It's a new peace. And not only do we have hope and comfort and salvation for ourselves, Isaiah makes this personal, but we've got good news to share.

So we praise God and we tell people. Give praise to the Lord, verse 4. Proclaim his name. Make known among the nations what he has done and proclaim that his name is exalted.

Evangelism, sharing the gospel. Should not be seen as a burden, but as a joy. Friday night, three friends and I went out to dinner.

[41 : 49] And the talk of the town, if you like steak, the talk of the town is Spanish Butcher, North Castle Street. I heard about it.

Three friends and I had all heard about this place. We tried to book it two months ago, fully booked. So you have this talk and you hear, if you like steak, this is a place to go.

I have no, I don't get a commission. But the idea is, somebody tells, you like steak, don't you, Bob? Yes, I do. Have you been to the Spanish Butcher? No, I haven't. You should go.

I want to go. That's evangelism. Have you heard about Jesus? Do you realize that there's a solution to life's problems? Do you realize that there's meaning, that there's purpose, that there's a good ending to the story?

Just as somebody who says, look at this restaurant. The food is so good, you should really go. And before long, you're there. It's not a burden, it's a joy. And now I'm telling you, if you like steak, if you're in the new town, go to the Spanish Butcher.

[42 : 52] Book ahead, it's worth it. Get the sharing platter. But you see, but that's what the joy of our salvation brings.

That, I just can't, I just want to tell you about Jesus. I want to tell you about what he said. I want to tell you about what he did. I want to tell you about his life. I want to tell you about his death. I want to tell you that he's my best friend.

I want to tell you that he knows everything about me and he loves me personally and powerfully.

And that he's given me this joy. He's given me this peace. He's given me this comfort. Make known among the nations what he has done.

Proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord. He has done glorious things. We haven't, he has.

You see, the Christian life is not what we do for God. The Christian life is responding to what he has done for us. We say thanks.

[43 : 51] We praise him. We let other people know. And we simply want to do what he tells us to do. Not out of burden. Not out of onerous weight on our shoulders.

But because of, we know how good he is. And we simply want other people. Like the language of Psalm 34. Come taste and see. Taste and see. The Lord is good.

I've tasted. I've seen. And I'm convinced that if you taste, you'll see. Let this be known to all the world. Isaiah is known as the fifth gospel.

Because it's full of Jesus. It's full of Christ. And it's the second most quoted book in the New

Testament. Because it's constantly pointing us forward. And it's constantly pointing us upward.

And it's saying to the whole world, there is a savior. There is salvation. There is hope. And where we come in is we share this good news.

[44 : 51] Let me tell you what I've heard. Let me tell you what I've found. Let me tell you what I've received. Let me share something of what God has done for us.

This is the power or the motivation. This is what changes people's lives. This is what gives hope instead of despair. Joy instead of anger.

Light instead of darkness. This is what gives our lives meaning and purpose. And this is why I really, if I've got free time, I don't want to read tragedies.

I want to read stories that end well. This story ends well. And I want your story to end well. And I want their story to end well.

And I want our story to end well. And it's guaranteed to end well. When Jesus is writing our stories. He's writing our lives.

[45 : 46] He's guiding us. He's guarding us. And he's leading us. And each of his stories ends well. And they all live happily ever after.

Amen. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for these glimmers, these glimpses of joy and hope and light and life.

Even in these solemn sections of your word, we are given that great picture of salvation. The before and the after.

The joy and the sharing. The praise and the thanksgiving. Father, we have made a mess. We've made a mess of life. We've made a mess of this world.

We are guilty and we stand in your presence as those without excuse. And yet, by trusting in you, we now have hope.

[46 : 43] And we now have joy. And instead of being angry with us, you are now at peace with us, comforting us, forgiving us, renewing us, restoring us.

You have placed us on a new path. And you are leading us forward. And you are leading us upward. So give us that reminder tonight that in Jesus Christ, each of our stories ends well.

That we can live happily ever after with you in your house. Goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. And we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

May it be so. Amen and amen. Amen. We're now going to sing that psalm that we read together. That's Psalm 124.

And remind yourself at the end of that psalm where we sing, our help is in the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Your problems may be great, but the God who made heaven and earth out of nothing is more than able to fix, to restore, and to renew.

[47 : 54] Let's sing together to God's praise. Amen.