

# God's promises to every living thing

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Please get your Bibles open. It would be a great help. We're going to look at Genesis, the story of Noah, or what happens after Noah gets out of the ark. But I don't know if you noticed it when Laurier was reading the text, and we're going to start a little bit before that, just to give the context.

But for a lot of people in our culture, especially for a lot of people for the last 50 years, what Laurier read was deeply offensive. It's deeply offensive to many people in our culture.

It basically goes against the grain of how progressive thought thinks. And many people think that a text like what Laurier just read about 10 minutes ago contributes to ecological catastrophes and raping of the earth.

And so it seems like a simple text at first, but it's actually been the source of a lot of controversy, especially over the last 50 years. So open your Bibles.

We're going to look at this text, and we're going to see if it's as bad as people think or what exactly it says. And we're going to begin reading it to Genesis 8, verse 20.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] Genesis 8, verse 20. And the context is that those of you who have been following along, we're going through the first 11 chapters of Genesis, God has brought the pre-flood world to an end.

He has reset and recreated the earth through the flood and his mighty miracle of the flood. He has kept Noah and seven other people safe. They've gotten out into this new, renewed earth.

And now the story takes place as to what happens when they get off the boat. What happens when they get off the boat? And it begins at verse 20 of chapter 8.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. Just pause there. It's not really part of the sermon, but it's really, really interesting that the first thing that Noah did when he got off the ark was to think of God.

And the sacrifice which he offers here is a sacrifice. If you go and look in Leviticus, Moses helps us to understand what Noah's intention was. And it was a sacrifice of homage.

[ 2 : 2 8 ] I don't know if I pronounced that word right. He's acknowledging that God is God and that he is not. He's acknowledging that God is the great deliverer. God is the one who has saved him. It's really, really interesting, you know, because just think for ourselves when something really good happens or when we've just, like a lot of times when things go really good in our lives, we think about ourselves.

Like, you know, it'd be very easy if I was Noah, I'd probably think, wow, did I ever nail sailing that ark. I'd be thinking of myself, you know. Or maybe I'd be thinking of what I could eat, you know, now that I'm off the boat and I could eat fresh fruit.

I don't know. I'd be thinking probably of myself or my family. I'd maybe be filled with pride. But it's very interesting that the very first thing that Noah does is think of God and not only think of God but do an act where he acknowledges that God is the great deliverer, that God is the only God, that he belongs, that Noah and his family ultimately are under God.

And then God reacts to this in verse 21. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, and that's like figurative language that God was pleased.

Noah had done what is right. It's right for us to be Godward in our thinking and not take the credit and the praise and the glory for ourselves or just to be self-centered.

[ 3 : 45 ] It's right to look up to God. And then the Lord said in his heart, I will never again, notice this powerful language, I will never again curse, that's dishonor or, yeah, dishonor the ground because of man, because of human beings.

For the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down, notice that, neither will I ever again strike down every living creatures I have done.

While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

If you could put up the first point, that would be really helpful. This is one of the really big ideas in this text. God has promised that he will never let human beings make the world uninhabitable for human beings.

That's what this text is saying. God has promised that he will never let human beings make the world uninhabitable for human beings and for other living beings as well.

[ 5 : 06 ] It's an actually astounding promise. It's unilateral. God does it by himself. It's unprovoked.

It isn't that Noah has asked for this or we human beings have asked for it. It is unconditional and it is completely and utterly unending. And the text emphasizes that.

It makes us understand how serious God is about this promise that God will never allow human beings to make the world uninhabitable for human beings and that he himself will not destroy the earth by a flood ever again.

If you just jump down a few verses to chapter 9 verse 8, it's made even clearer in the text. It's emphasized time and time and time again in the text. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with them, Behold, I establish.

I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you. That's us. And with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark, it is for every beast of the earth.

[ 6 : 21 ] In other words, it's not just for the animals that come out. It's for every single critter. Every critter that's ever lived and ever will live. Verse 11, I establish my covenant with you that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

And God said, This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations. I have set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

But just pause here for a second. The text isn't saying that there weren't rainbows before this. It's just saying that God is taking something which is very, very public and there's all this other symbolism that we could think about it, you know, in a sense that it's in the sky, that it covers a big distance, that it encircles, like it's pointing upwards, you know, that it's his war bow set down.

There's all this imagery and all that you can think of. And we have to be acknowledging that, you know, often now when we think of rainbows, we think of the LGBTQI community, but the Bible says that when we see a rainbow in the sky, that is a sign that God has given, a public sign, whether you're in Kenya, whether you're in China, whether you're in Australia, whether you're in Canada, he's given this sign.

And every time we see this sign, we are to remember that God is making this solemn promise. Verse 14, When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

[ 8 : 10 ] When the bow is in the clouds, I can't say that word, is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on earth. So it's emphasized time and time and time again.

God does this on his own initiative. There's no conditions that never again will the flood destroy the earth. And not only will never again will the flood destroy the earth, is that God is going to guarantee that the earth is inhabitable.

That's how this is all moved forward. We're going to be fruitful. We're going to multiply. God will guarantee it. Now, many, many, many, many people over the last 50 years, because there's been a justifiable concern about pollution, they, I mean, it's very, very common thought that human beings can destroy the planet.

That if we don't deal with climate change in a particular way, it endangers all life. That if we don't deal with nuclear war, it endangers all of life. If we don't deal with this, it endangers all of life.

[ 9 : 26 ] It's a very, very constant theme. If we don't deal with overpopulation, it's going to cause all these problems. It's going to endanger human life. It's a very, very, very common belief that the ability to destroy all things is in human hands, and therefore we need to take very, very drastic measures to change it.

And when people see texts like this, they say, good grief, George. Like, if people actually believe this, it's going to mean that they don't take pollution seriously.

It means they're not going to take this seriously, an overpopulation. It's going to permit the raping of the earth. It's going to, it's, it's, George, this is the most unbelievably dangerous text.

people might say, George, does, does God not know how evil human beings are? And how they can take promises like that and just do all sorts of unspeakable things?

Well, you know, it's very interesting that when God makes this outrageous promise, he makes it fully aware of what human beings are like.

[ 10 : 48 ] I don't know if you noticed, look again at, at chapter 8, verse 20, and to 22, how I began. I don't know if you noticed, it's, oh, it's a bit jarring if you read it slowly and carefully.

Notice how jarring it is. Okay, look again, verse 20, then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing Roman, in other words, he's pleased with it, the Lord said in his heart, and here's the thing, I will never again dishonor the ground because of man.

And then does he say, because I think human beings have a great future. I think human beings will be responsible. I think human beings are perfectible. I think human beings are good.

I think human beings are wise. I think human beings are smart. I think human beings aren't selfish. No, he says, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

He knows humans. And yet, right after that, he says, neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done while the earth remains, sea time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

[ 11 : 57 ] And not only is the beginning of this, before this promise, but immediately after the promise, in fact, God shows, God shows, the Bible shows the depth, like a really, really, really, really terrible example of sin.

Look at verse 18 of chapter 9. This is a bit of an X-rated sermon, actually. One of the problems we have with reading the Bible is if they were to really make the Bible and put it in a movie, it would be X-rated.

Lots of the Bible would be X-rated. Look at verse 18 of chapter 9. So here, you know, the question is how on earth can God make this unbelievable, unconditional promise that he is going to, you know, it almost sounds as if no matter what human beings do, they will not be able to destroy the planet and we can say to ourselves, gosh, with nuclear bombs, with this, with this, with this, with this, does God, is he off his, like, is he nuts?

Does he not know what human beings are capable of? Look at 9:18. The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan.

These three were the sons of Noah and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. Noah began to be a man of the soil and he planted a vineyard and he figured out how to make wine and he drank the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.

[ 13 : 31 ] And actually, that's a bit mild. It's sort of a funny type of idea but he somehow exposed himself. In other words, not only is there the sin of being drunk but that somehow even though he was in the privacy of his tent, there was a type of a drunken, wanton exposing of himself.

He's lost any sense of type of modesty even though he's in his own tent. And then verse 22, And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

Now, the problem with this translation and if you read commentaries on it, it's fairly literal but it doesn't capture the nuance.

And in the nuance, saw the nakedness of his father is clearly homoerotic and incestuous. And the text doesn't go into detail about it and so it leads to a lot of other speculation but in the original language, it's clearly something evil, something sexual, something incestual.

Whether it's just merely as a great lust and desire after his heart, whether it's connected to something like masturbation, whether it's connected to actual sexual penetration, the text puts a veil over that.

[ 15 : 06 ] But remember the point is does God know what human beings are capable of? Actually, the Bible shows that he knows what human beings are capable of. Like in a very shocking manner.

And then we're not going to read it but after that then Noah's response and actually we'll just continue on with it actually and then in verse 22, verse 23, verse 22, and Ham the father of Canaan, say that again, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

In other words, not only does Ham do something which is of an incestual, sexual nature and homoerotic but he's proud and evangelistic about it.

He's not repentant. Doesn't think he's done anything wrong. What happens after this is Noah gives a prophetic prayer where amongst other things he in his prophetic prayer sees the future of slavery and he uses Canaan as a bit of a symbol of that there's going to be whole parts of the earth which are given over to evil.

So, remember, here's the point God has promised that he will never let human beings make the world uninhabitable for human beings. It really is quite an astounding thing, actually, isn't it?

[ 16 : 42 ] That God would make such a promise we, you see, here's how we naturally think because in our heart of hearts we want to be God.

So, in our heart of hearts we want to be God and so we really think that God, I mean, it's funny, on one hand we don't want God to frighten us, but on the other hand we'd much rather that God said something frightening that this is going to go really bad for you if you do certain things or we'd want to make it a bit of a quid pro quo, I won't damage things if you do things the right way or whatever it is.

We have a hard time with this just pure gift of grace and life that God is going to give to the human race. evil. But he does it in the context of knowing human evil and he does it in a very, very, very interesting way, letting human beings know that he's still going to judge and that there's a very, very profound humbling limit.

And this is going to get even more politically incorrect. It's going to get even more politically incorrect. Just before I get to that, you know, one of the things that often get snuck into discussions around the future of the earth and the danger of human beings destroying the earth is that we human beings, it's not that we sort of remember what God's word says, but we start to believe that we can create by our own efforts some type of utopia.

And it's very, very interesting what often happens in the conversation is that on one hand, we say, how on earth can you trust private individuals to not cause damage, or certain rogue nations to cause damage?

[ 18 : 24 ] But in the very, very next breath with the other hand, they say what's really needed is people like us to be in control to make sure the damage doesn't happen. And nobody notices that somehow or another we can't trust all those other people, but we can trust me, give me the power.

But this text, in fact, the Bible is very, very wise. It's going to say something very, very, very, very politically incorrect, but it's very wise. And it's the bit in between what I first read and what I just read.

Look at verse 1 of chapter 9. And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens and upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the flesh of the sea.

Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. As I have given you the green plants, I give you everything. Now just pause for a second here.

This is just a bit of a time out about the text. This is really very, very, very interesting. Those of you who were here last week, I tried to show how just before the flood in a very, very simple way, God describes, God's word describes it as almost as if the earth before the flood had become something like Mordor.

[ 19 : 55 ] One of the things which is really interesting is that God uses the flood, he judges the earth, he kills, it brings to an end the whole pre-flood world, and now we're in the post-flood world, and there's just these little tiny bits of suggestions, a little bit about what the life and life was like before the flood.

It's sort of implied here that there used to be a different relationship before the flood between human beings and animals. It's implied that before the flood, all human beings were vegetarians.

It implies in chapter 6 that there was a different relationship between spiritual beings and human beings, and the whole age thing shows that somehow or another human beings lived for a far longer time.

time. And as the Bible text continues, it's all just hinted at here. You know, if you were a Christian poet or a fantasy writer, I guess there's no reason why you couldn't write a fantasy novel about life before the flood and what it would be like to be in a world where there's a different relationship with animals, and who knows, maybe in some way fantasy writers and even mythology is somehow or another tight, getting in touch with the real history of what life was like before the flood.

You know, because it's not, it's probably not the case. Like a lot of people say that what the Bible has done is it's making myth, it's taking myth and pretending it's history.

[ 21 : 29 ] But probably what's really going on with the Bible is that mythology was originally history. And what the Bible is telling us is what really happened.

And so here we see in this particular text, we're not getting into the politically incorrect part, it's going to get to it in a moment, but the Bible is saying to human, to no one as sons, remember he's guaranteed, God is guaranteed that I will never let human beings make the world uninhabitable for human beings.

And he's saying go out there, be fruitful and multiply. Grow and fill the earth. And you human beings still have dominion over the earth, but now there's going to be a different relationship with animals. Now animals are going to fear you.

But you still have responsibility for them, you still are to have dominion over them. And then he puts this profound check on human power and this profound warning to the abuse of human power.

Look at verses 4, 5, and 6 of chapter 9. But you shall not eat flesh with its life. But you shall not eat flesh with its life.

[ 22 : 44 ] That is, its blood. And for your life blood, I will require a reckoning. Some of your Bibles have another word, which is a good translation as well, an accounting.

From every beast I will require it, and from man. From his fellow man, I will require a reckoning or an accounting for the life of man.

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image. Could you put up the next point?

This whole funny type of thing about blood and life, you know how the rainbow is a symbol or a sign of God's promise. God is now saying that when we see blood, it's a sign of life.

He's not making a biological claim here. He's not making something so that those of you who do research in chemistry or biochemistry now have a clue about figuring things out. He's saying, I want you to understand that there's life, and when you see blood, you're seeing life.

[ 23 : 55 ] And when he says you're not allowed to do certain things to life, you're not allowed to eat life, you're not allowed to eat blood, it's a way of him making this very, very, very powerful, far-reaching claim.

The living God is the source of life, the sustainer of life, and sovereign over life. Now, you know, I just want to be honest with you.

I don't wake up every Sunday morning and say, you know what? Dang it. I'm just going to be really politically incorrect and offend most Canadians today. So let's just talk about this.

Yeah, let's talk about incest and homoerotic desire and a text which basically says that the whole Canadian legal system allowing abortion on demand and doctor-assisted suicide is deeply wrong.

I'm just going to wake up. You know, one of the things we do is we preach through books of the Bible, and it's just so important for us to become familiar with what God's Word says. And you might hear people talking about the sanctity of life, and it's unclear exactly what sanctity of life means for many people, but really what it is to mean, if it means something biblically, is what this text is saying and what all the rest of the Bible is going to make more and more clear.

[ 25 : 15 ] The creed, when we say the Nicene Creed, we say the Holy Spirit is the Lord and giver of life. And what this text is saying is that, okay, human beings, you're to be fruitful and you're to multiply, and you're to have dominion over the earth.

But just remember two really, really important things. You are not the source of life. You are not the owner of life.

You cannot do with life whatever you want. All life is ultimately a gift from me. I am the only source of life. life.

And I give life, I sustain life, and all life is under ultimately my account. You have to account to me for how you deal with life, and you have to account for me with what you do.

And I am the source of life, the sustainer of life, and I am sovereign over life. If you could put up the next point, and this is even more shocking. If we take this seriously, I am the steward of my life.

[ 26 : 27 ] I am not the source or owner of my life. I'm going to talk about this a little bit more in a moment, but one of the things is that a woman who is pregnant does not own the baby in her womb.

Neither does the state, neither does the tribe, neither does the patriarchy, neither does the matriarchy. You see, this text, on one hand, it undermines the claim of every king, the claim of every tyrant, the claim of every ideology, the claim of every state.

On one hand, it undermines all of those things, but at the same time, it actually provides an unbelievable dignity to human beings. When the Bible is telling us that I don't own my life, I'm the steward of my life, that doesn't mean that the state can come in therefore and say, ah, therefore I own you.

No, no, no, no, no. No, no, no, no. God is the source of life. He is sovereign over it. And it's mine, in quotation marks, but it's mine as a steward, as a manager.

It means that it's been given to me by God. Life has been given to me by God. And since he's still sovereign over it, it means he has his purpose for life. And as a steward, not an owner, I am to seek his purposes.

[ 28 : 06 ] And to manage in a well, in a way, my own life, in a way that when I have to give an accounting and a reckoning for it, I will hear well done.

It means when the Bible is telling us that God is the source and sustainer and sovereign over life, it means that we are to seek to call out to God to understand the structure of life and what will lead to my flourishing and what will lead to my being able to ultimately have dominion over other beings, other critters and creatures that have the breath of life.

And how, as a dad, I am to understand how to not only manage my life but have, in a sense, a dominion with my wife over the family in a way that causes their flourishing and their growth and their development because I am not my own.

Now, here I just want to make a bit of a pause. This is a very, very difficult text for several people in the room. I'm just presuming that there's several people in the room like this.

For the single who wanted to get married but were never able to get married and have no children, it's a very difficult text. For the married who long to have children but cannot seem to have children, it's a very difficult text.

[ 29 : 34 ] For those amongst us who've had abortions or participated in abortions, it's a very difficult text. For those who might be present who came to church today and they are considering an abortion because they've gotten pregnant and they're maybe even part of the church and they can't imagine revealing to everybody that they've gotten pregnant.

How can they, if they're such a good Christian, all those things going through your minds, these are very, very difficult texts. And I know that I'm a guy and I'm married and God has blessed me with children and so I know that I don't know really what's going on in your hearts when you struggle with this.

But, you know, when we read this text as Christians, we read this knowing that God is going to send a Savior.

And what I know about Jesus is that he is a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. And any time the Bible says an apparently hard word to us, it is never to drive us away but to drive us to him.

It is never to drive us away. It is to drive us to him. There is forgiveness and healing for those who have done evil.

[ 31 : 07 ] And for those of us who have longings and yearnings that have never been fulfilled, there are even deeper longings and yearnings that can be fulfilled in him.

And there is one who has known all of our temptations only without sin and all of our sorrow and all of our grief. And we can pour our hearts out to him.

And one of the wonderful things in this text is that just while on one hand it is telling us something very politically incorrect in Canada, a baby is not a problem to be solved.

A baby is not a problem to be solved. A baby is something to celebrate. And that is very, very, very countercultural today.

But at the same time, this text, by reminding us that my life is a gift from God, it has come from God, and he sustains my life, and he is sovereign over my life, this text is a profound assurance of the integrity and of the value of a person who never marries or who never has children and all of our sorrows.

[ 32 : 27 ] It is a profound text of comfort about the value we have in God's eyes who has given us life. Who has given us life.

You know, it's one of the things, if you could put up the next point, Andrew. Over the last couple of months, I've had several conversations in coffee shops around this.

In fact, just a little while ago, I had a conversation with some Jehovah Witnesses. And one of the things I like to do with Jehovah Witnesses is knock them off their spiel. And one of the things I tell them is that one of the many weaknesses of their thought is they have no ability to believe that God is love.

This is Trinity Sunday. Next Sunday, we'll do the Athanasian Creed. Those of you who are hoping for the Creed for Dummies, we'll do it next week. I love the Athanasian Creed because I'm a dummy.

So it's so clear. And, you know, one of the things about the thing, only the Christian revelation makes clear that God is love in a very, very powerful way.

[ 33 : 39 ] Because from all eternity, the Father has loved the Son. And from all eternity, the Son has loved the Father. And the Bible even describes in some cases as if the Holy Spirit is almost, one way to almost understand the Holy Spirit is this constant motion of love from the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father.

And so, God's love is never need love or compelled love. And this is very frightening to us.

You know, we get into a marriage and we hope that in a marriage that on one hand, the reason we have this marriage is that we're compelled by the beauty of the other person. Or, you know, we have a friend and we almost like it.

We don't want them to need us too much, but we want them to need us a little bit because it's something that we can control. And the Bible says that God doesn't need, he didn't need to create human beings because he needed somebody to love.

I said that to my Jehovah Witnesses. I said, you know, you don't have a God when you say that God is love, but that doesn't mean anything for you because there's just one God. There's no Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, loving each other forever and ever and ever.

[ 34 : 48 ] And so, don't you worry that God made human beings because he needed to have somebody to love? That somehow or another then we have this hold on God? But the Bible says that God never has need love.

He is, could you put up the next point? God is love without need. He loves us because he is love. He loves us because he is love.

And on one hand, this is unbelievably frightening because we like love that involves some need or some compelling. But when we come to God, there is no need, there is no compelling, there is just pure, unending, self-giving, holy, merciful, just, true, giving, love that we can never repay, that we can never compel, that we can never put him in our debt, that we can never out love him, or out give him.

There is on one hand, this unbelievable challenge for us to stand completely and utterly naked before God, understanding his unbelievable generosity and goodness to us, that we can do nothing to compel it.

He loves us because he loves us, because he is love. And because God is unchanging, this, while on one hand, frightening us because we want to put God in our debt, is ultimately the only ground for any hope, that God is love, that he is unchanging.

[ 36 : 35 ] And for us as Christians, in a powerful level, this whole idea that God is the source of life, that he is the sovereign over life, that he is the giver of life, that ultimately all life comes from God, that we, in a sense, are just stewards over it.

The Bible tells us, remember that text in John, when Jesus is saying, before, to God, in front of his disciples, as he's going to be going to the cross, he says that he's about to be glorified.

He's about to have his glory shown. And what the Bible is saying is if you want a snapshot of God, if you want a snapshot of God, if you want a snapshot of God is love, if you want just one picture or one image of who the real, true, living God actually is, you see that best when you see God, the Son of God, dying upon the cross.

Because you see, you know, even in this sacrifice that begins the book of Genesis, you know, where Noah gives a sacrifice, when you understand that all life ultimately comes from God, that he is the source of life, that life is his, that really, it's God's life that dies in that sacrifice.

It's not something Noah does. It's not even ultimately something really that the animal does. that even in, with every single animal sacrifice, when you understand that all life comes from God, it's pointing that ultimately his life makes us right with him.

[ 38 : 11 ] And then, we see that most perfectly and completely in God, the Son of God, the source of life, the giver of life, sovereign over life, for all life, dying upon the cross with pure, unmerited, unasked for, unsought, undeserving love.

Final point. in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.

that's how we're to understand this text in Genesis. It's how we're to understand our life. You see, this is the wonderful news of the gospel to the broken.

It's the wonderful news of the gospel for those of us going through a dark night of the soul. It's the wonderful news of the gospel for those of us who seem broken and alone. It is the wonderful news of the gospel who worry about being unsuccessful, whether it's in some spiritual things or other things.

It's not that God is looking down at us and counting up our love. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, the sacrifice that makes us right with him.

[ 39 : 50 ] See, that's why we describe our mission statement here as making disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel. And as the gospel grips us and as it comes home to us more and more deeply who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross, that is the means by which we start to get an understanding of where our true identity is and where the true meaning of our life is found and how we can overcome anxiety and all of the other types of doubts and uncertainties that our sins and our idols cause us.

Please stand. Just bow our heads in prayer.

Father, you know that there's some of us here right now that we're suffering for some of those things.

Some of us are laboring under, well, Father, memories of maybe connected to abortion or infertility or miscarriages or just other types of failures in life, Father, which are weighing us down.

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Grip us with the truth of this scripture that this is love, not that we have loved you, but that you loved us and sent your Son to be a propitiation for us.

[ 41 : 14 ] Father, grip us with the gospel. Father, if there are any here who have not yet turned to Jesus to trust him as their Savior and their Lord, Father, may you turn their hearts even now in a saving way.

They would understand that he is the source of their life and their hope for eternal life and a hope for a life that is of you even now.

So, Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel. We're coming to you as the man of sorrows, familiar with our grief, so that we might be freed up and live for your glory.

And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.