

After Rejection

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 February 2022

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

- [0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would gently but powerfully continue to pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. We thank you, Father, that we can meet together, whether it's in person or online, that we can be in your presence.
- Father, we acknowledge that you, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, that you are the true and living God, the creator and sustainer of all things. And we give you thanks and praise that we can be in your presence through what Jesus has done for us on the cross.
- And we ask now, Lord, that you would minister to us, that you would give to us, that we would receive grace from your hands in a worthy manner, and that we would respond in a worthy manner.
- And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. I just realized I forgot my Mikey thing. That's fine. People considering the Christian faith today have a lot of extra type of issues which we have to face.
- I mean, obviously, people who might first hear about some of the, actually hear what Christianity really is, and have that shared with them, they're going to have intellectual objections as to why the Christian faith isn't true, and why they couldn't possibly believe it.
- [1 : 3 3] But whether it's acknowledged or not, there's a profound emotional and personal reason that might make becoming a Christian very difficult. And that is that we feel that to become a Christian would mean, well, we'd have less friends rather than more, that we will actually face rejection if we were to become a Christian.
- Many people in our culture think that Christianity is toxic, that rather than being part of a solution or just maybe one neutral option amongst many, that in fact the Christian faith is part of the problem, that it has to be rejected, that it's actually literally toxic.
- In our country, churches could be burned. It was just about a year ago that almost 50 churches were either burned or seriously defaced, and many of the leading lights in our culture just thought that that was fine.
- It hardly got any outrage whatsoever. And so we're sort of familiar with that as part of the issue in our culture, that if they were to rewrite the book today, How to Win Friends and Influence People, the first chapter wouldn't say become a Christian.
- That in fact would be the opposite of being able to influence people and win friends. And those of us who are Christians, we feel this in our bones as well. And so we wrestle with whether or not it's required to, maybe we should just leave the Christian faith or we should rewrite it in a way that doesn't get us rejected or put down.
- [3 : 0 1] The text that we're going to look at today speaks directly into this issue. Whether you're a Christian or you're on the outside of the Christian faith looking in, trying to figure it out, the text that we're looking at today speaks directly to this issue.
- So it would be a great help if you were to look with me at the Bible for yourselves as we go sort of through it. And it's Mark chapter 6, verses 1 to 13. And we're preaching through the gospel of Mark.

And so what, just to remind us, Mark is one of the ancient eyewitness biographies of Jesus. Mark would have been an eyewitness of some of the things here, but he would have drawn upon the actual eyewitnesses.

And this biography was written when the eyewitnesses were all still alive and kicking, so to speak. And so this is an ancient eyewitness biography.

And what's just happened before this, two Sundays ago we looked at Jesus going to the pagan side of the Sea of Galilee, and he met a man who was possessed by a legion of demons, and he cast the demons out.

[4 : 05] But one of the results of that is that the people of that region wanted Jesus to leave. They didn't want him to stay there anymore, so he left. And then he comes to the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee, and what we just looked at last week, he's met by a man whose daughter was dying.

And so Jesus agrees to go with the man to heal his daughter. But on the way, he gets sort of interrupted by a woman who's had a very profound, and I guess in that cultural time, embarrassing and weakening medical condition that's impoverished her.

She's had it for 12 years, and he heals her. But while he pauses, the daughter dies of the synagogue ruler, Jairus. But Jesus still goes anyway, and he's raised the daughter from the dead.

That's what's just happened before this. And now the story continues, and here's how it goes. Jesus went away from there and came to his hometown, which is Nazareth.

We know that Nazareth, archaeologists guess that, or estimate, I guess. I guess if I did it, it would be a guess, if an archaeologist does it, it's an estimate.

[5 : 15] And he estimate that probably at its most it had about 500 people living there. And anyway, he goes to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, Where did this man get these things?

Now, just to pause here before we go any further. Sometimes it's impossible in one language to capture all the significant nuances in another language.

And there's a very significant nuance that's going to happen right here, which isn't really captured with this man. If you were to see me at a public gathering, and we had somebody there maybe who was a professor at the University of Ottawa or Carleton or University of Toronto, and they had a couple of PhDs, and they had a very prestigious position, and if I came up and talked about this guy, you'd all know that I was putting him down.

If I didn't introduce him as Professor, you know, Bob or Professor Sue, and, you know, PhD from Oxford, another PhD from Harvard, if I didn't introduce them like that but just referred to them as this guy, every single one of you would know that I've just put them down.

And that's what's happening here with this word, this man. In the original language, it's a dismissive term. And literally, given that Jesus is right there, it is like a public dismissiveness, which not only is it a public dismissiveness, it's a public dismissiveness, as we'll see later on in the story, that's accepted.

[7 : 03] In other words, it would be as if we had somebody here, a professor, and I was to say we're going to hear this guy say a few words, and all of you folks out there are going like this. Way to go, George.

This is a good thing to dismiss. This is a good way to dismiss this guy. Way to go. Two thumbs up. And so just, I'll read it again from verse 2.

That's the context here, right off the bat. So, and on the Sabbath, Jesus began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, where did this guy get these things?

What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and I don't know how to pronounce that word, Joseph, and Judas, and Simon?

And are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him. So, just a couple of other things that the put-downs continue.

[8 : 10] One of them is by referring to Jesus as son of Mary. The normal Jewish way of referring to a man would be to refer to him as Jesus, son of Joseph. In fact, there's a bit of debate among scholars, but most of them would agree that, in fact, it's also a bit of a dig that he was born illegitimately.

And that, in our culture right now, isn't a bad thing. But for old people like me, there would be girls in high school who would miss a term, a year.

And everybody would know they missed a year because they got pregnant and had a baby. They sent the family, sent the girl away completely to another place to have the baby. And then the baby would be put up for adoption because it was a shameful thing to have a child out of wedlock.

Some families far more than others, but it was a shameful thing. It's not a shameful thing in our culture right now, but in many, many cultures in the world, it's a shameful thing to have a child out of wedlock. And once again, if I had a person here and I was introducing them and there was something shameful in our culture, and I pointed it out in public to everybody, and you all went like this, you can get a sense of what's going on here with Jesus.

There is, in a sense, a very public dismissing of him, put down, and rejection of him. And just one other thing about this put down of him is that in the Jewish culture, it's not a shameful thing to be a carpenter.

[9 : 51] In fact, it would have been considered an honorable thing. It wouldn't have made him eligible to really be a rabbi. It didn't mean he had high-level qualifications, but it wouldn't be a put down necessarily.

But in the other world, and Mark, the original writer of this ancient biography, is writing it not in Hebrew or Aramaic, but is writing it in Greek, so it's designed for the wider culture.

And Nazareth itself is actually only four, I can't remember now if it's four kilometers or four miles, but just from a very, very significant Gentile city.

And in the Gentile or the pagan world, a carpenter would be like a real put down. You know, it would be like in our day at the University of Ottawa, if they were introducing somebody and they said a janitor.

And everybody in the University of Ottawa, well, just a janitor. Like, just a janitor. Not somebody with even a BA or an MA or a PhD. So there's multiple putting down of Jesus here in this particular story.

[11 : 00] So the interesting thing then is he's been publicly put down, publicly dismissed, publicly rejected. And he's been, this is done in a context where people know him.

And they feel they have the sufficient social power to get away with it, and they do. So how does Jesus react? Like, how does he react? Like, let's just be honest here for a second.

Like, you'll notice that over the last few weeks, I often say that the Gospels act as both a mirror and a window. It's a mirror in the sense that it helps you, if you think about it, to see yourself.

It's a window in the sense that it actually helps you to understand a little bit about what the true and living God is actually like, what the universe is actually like. It's a window into understanding the real world.

But, you know, you guys are probably all vastly more holy than me. But I would, I probably would sulk. And inwardly, I would storm and rage.

[12 : 10] And I would pout. And I would alternate internally between self-pity and murderous revenge fantasies.

But as I said, that's probably just me. None of you would feel the same way to be publicly rejected, dismissed, and humiliated. And I also might, of course, feel severe self-doubt as well after actually being put down in such a way.

Because we are social creatures, and to be treated in such a way often creates within us these, if you're at all like me, you can go back and forward between self-pity, anger, and doubt, all going back and forward in the face of this type of thing.

So what does Jesus do? What does Jesus do? Well, let's look. Verse 4. We see the first bit of his response. In some ways, what we see from verses 4 right through to 13 is how Jesus responds to this particular situation and how his disciples react to Jesus' response.

And so in verse 4, you see the first part of it. You see he makes a comment. And Jesus said to them, to them, not only to his disciples, but to the people of Nazareth, a prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.

[13 : 32] So the first bit he does is he actually names it. He names it in public. He uses a common type of a parable or saying that was both common in the pagan world and common in the Jewish world.

And he says that this is just, this is what you've actually, this is what's happening. I'm not being honored. And it's actually very, very interesting that this helps to show that the people who are saying these things about Jesus, obviously not all of it, but in some ways, his family, his own family is involved in this put down of Jesus.

It would be as if his brother or his half-brother James says, like, this guy's just a carpenter. Like, come on, I'm his brother.

Like, we're his brothers and sisters. Like, who does, like, who does he think he is to do all this stuff? And so he, he names it.

Now, the next thing that he does is actually very, very interesting, although often what we, when we read the next bit, we miss what he's done because we get confused by what happens.

[14 : 45] And so we ask ourselves, in a sense, a different type of question than really noticing what happens with the flow of it. So just look what happens in verse five in the first bit of six. And he could do no mighty work there.

That means he couldn't do a miracle. He could do no mighty work there except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. He marveled.

He was gobsmacked, to use an Irish expression, at their unbelief. Now, what often happens with us is we start to go off in a bit of a different direction as to why Jesus couldn't heal.

But the fundamental thing to notice first, I'll talk a little bit about why he couldn't heal in quotation marks, couldn't. But the really interesting thing is that even though he's been publicly rejected, publicly dismissed, publicly put down, publicly shamed, he's still willing to heal.

You'll notice that. That's actually the really important thing to notice. He's still willing to heal. Like, in a sense, what this is just saying to us is that if Jesus is put down, dismissed, rejected, and shamed, so will you, if you have him as your Savior and Lord.

[16:02] But love and speak the truth anyway. I mean, in some ways, that's actually the big message of this text. Jesus was rejected. Jesus was dismissed. Jesus was shamed.

But his response was to continue to bear witness to the truth and to seek to be a, and to heal and deliver. And the lesson is, we're going to have the same thing happen to us.

And our response shouldn't be proud, anger, attacking, but our response should be to continue to witness to the truth and to continue to seek to be an agent or to be healing and act towards deliverance.

So Jesus is willing to heal. The problem here, and here's where people get confused, it's not that Jesus, let's say, let's say Matt here is Jesus and he comes up to me because he wants to heal me because I'm sick.

And so he comes up on the stage and says, okay, I'm going to heal you. And, you know, he, I don't know, closes his eyes. If this was Hollywood, he'd close his eyes, maybe put his hands up, you know, do a little bit of this or a quivering.

[17:10] And then he all of a sudden stops and says, okay, George, you got to work with me here a bit. Okay, you got to work with me. Don't just sort of stand there like you're, you're the, a horizontal, a vertical version of a couch potato just saying whatever.

You got to work with me. Okay, try to, try to get a little bit pumped. I need you to get a bit pumped and a little bit of energy and then I, then, and then I, and goes back and, oh no, George, you got to work with, no, that's not what's happening at all.

What's happening is they don't come. I mean, you read the gospel, Jesus doesn't need people to believe him to heal them, but they don't come.

It would be as if I have a couple of sick people or in my household, but I don't want to bring them out to Jesus and I don't want to ask Jesus to come to me. Why? Because I, you know, who is this guy?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, he does miracles. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, he has lots of wisdom, but good grief, he's just a carpenter. Like, we know him, like, he's nothing special, his mom is nothing special, his dad was nothing special, oh, if we even know who his dad was, and, you know, and his family's nothing special.

[18:16] Like, why do we want to have him come to our house? Like, you know, just, you know, forget about it. Like, they don't actually even want to have him come. So, it's not as if their faith is in any type of way, or their lack of faith is a barrier to Jesus' healing, because all of the healing comes from him, none of it comes from them.

But they're uninterested. They have no belief, and they just want to reject him. Well, how does Jesus continue to react to it?

Once again, does he pout, sulk, rage, revenge, or attack? We already see that he was willing to continue to heal, but they didn't want him to heal.

And this next bit of how he responds to it is actually a very, very profound meditation upon the difference between Christianity and Islam, and the difference between Christianity and Buddhism and Hinduism as well.

The difference between Buddhism and Hinduism and Christianity is a little bit hard. In fact, a lot of people, when they read this text, don't actually read the text or understand it in a Christian way.

[19:25] They actually bring in Buddhist and Hindu categories and think that the text is justifying their categories, but actually, it's a rejection.

rejection of the errors in Buddhism and Hinduism, but a deep fulfillment of the deep desires of Buddhism and Hinduism.

And it is a clear rejection of Islam, but it is, in fact, a fulfillment of the deeper desire of those who follow Islam.

So what do I mean? Well, let's look. Look at 6B. And he went out about, he went about among the villages teaching, and he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.

[20 : 34] A tunic is a, there's just a long, it would be like a t-shirt, but it would be like that you wear right next to your skin, but it would go down past the knees.

Now, here's the first thing. So, Jesus has been rejected. His disciples have been, seen him rejected and shamed and put down, but his response is he's still willing to heal.

And his response is that he's going to go out and continue to teach and he's going to continue to deliver people from demons. He's going to continue to offer to heal.

And not only does he do this, he now authorizes and calls the twelve to do the exact same thing. So, how is this, if you think about it for a second, Muhammad was a warrior.

Muhammad was a warrior. warrior. And, and in the Quran and in the Hadiths, I mean, there's a, the consistent message of, of Muhammad from Allah is that if you're in a minority and you don't have any power, then, then you can sort of just, you know, be like this.

[21 : 44] But once you begin to get some power, then you, you need to be a warrior. You need to, to arm yourself. You need to, you need to attack. You need to take control of the situation. Muhammad was a warrior.

and we see here the exact opposite message. In fact, what we see here is rather than when the time is right, grab your sword, is don't even have a staff.

Don't have any money. Be completely and utterly powerless as you go out to bear witness to the truth. And the, the message about the, and the contrast with Buddhism and Hinduism is, you see, on one hand, often when people read this thing, they think, okay, now we're getting to something very familiar because this is a familiar category to us.

This is the category of religion. In fact, you know, what we know about religious people is that they like to dress funny if they dress at all and, and that real religious people, they often don't like to eat very much and they often don't want to have any possessions and, and they want to, you know, do these odd types of rituals and they, they want to, you know, they're just very, very odd and that's sort of how you know that they're very religious and, in fact, one of the problems I have when I talk to friends who are, you know, enamored with, or would be Buddhists or would be Muslim or come from a Jewish background is that when I try to talk to them and I try to, to communicate that I'm actually like a very serious Christian or a devout Christian, I mean, that doesn't mean I'm always a good Christian but I try to be devout, is that I know that in their mind they don't really have a category for it because if they're Jewish, well then, I should be having like something that's very distinctive in my dress or, you know, I should be more emaciated or I, you know, I should have a, like, and often when people say that they want to be spiritual but not religious is they want to say we don't want to have anything to do with all that like really, really weird behavior but we want to, we still understand that there should still be something like religious and spiritual longings and yearnings and so on one hand you see this text looks like it's putting Jesus and the Christians in a familiar type of thing and people can say okay,

I understand that although the next thing that will go on in their mind is Jesus, George, if you say you're a serious Christian how come you're not like that? Like, how come you're sitting here having a coffee in the coffee shop and how come you don't look like you've starved yourself to death or, you know, you're not dressed like that and there's probably a little bit of a, they're trying to get their mind around it but what's going on in this text here isn't that Jesus is telling them that they have to learn detachment from the world and non-attachment for the world.

[24 : 22] In fact, it's the complete opposite of that because he's sending them in to the world and he's sending them into the world to heal people and he's sending them into the world not only to heal people but to deliver and he's sending them into the world to heal people, to deliver people and to teach the truth so he's not at all telling them to practice detachment or non-attachment or to be some type of an ascetic and to be a beggar.

The heart of what he's telling them is I'm going to give you this mission, I'm calling you to bear witness to the truth, to tell people about me, to tell people about the fact that I have come, I am the Messiah, I am the one who will reconcile not only the Jewish people but eventually they'll hear that I've come to reconcile all who put their faith and trust in me to reconcile them to the true and living triune God and that I want you to heal people and I want you to deliver people and I want you to do that not because it's going to be popular, not because everybody wants to be your friend, not because it's accepted but because that's just who, that's just the way to be properly human and I am trying to form you to be properly human and to be properly human you are a person of the truth not a person of the lie and you are a person who values healing and you are a person who wants to deliver people and you do that whether or not people accept you or not.

That's just what you do if you follow me. And so the message of, you know, not the money and not that and even this next little bit which we're going to go you, what they're actually saying is just trust me.

Like, trust me. Like, George, if you trust me that I can fit you for heaven, if you trust me that when you die death is not the end, neither is hell, but if you trust me you will awake in a new heaven and new earth.

You will be reconciled to God and spend eternity with the triune. If you can trust me on that, if you trust me on that, can you trust me to care for some of your needs?

[26 : 38] It's a whole other thing that even if it means that you end up being martyred, it's still because you're bearing witness to the truth, but for now, can you just trust me that I can provide financially for you?

You see, in a sense, for the average Christian today, that's part of the whole thing about financial generosity and tithing. Nobody, I can't ever tell you that if you give 10% of your money to the furtherance of the gospel and the glorification of God that you'll get more money back and anybody who says that to you is lying, they're speaking out of their butt, not out of the Bible.

But the fact of the matter is, is that by doing something like that, you're trusting that God can continue to meet your needs, that you won't go hungry, you won't be homeless, but God will care for you.

And so what this is actually teaching is, in a sense, the deepest longing of Hinduism and Buddhism, that there's a God who loves you, who cares for you, like he cares for you.

And not that you have to learn non-attachment, but you have to learn not to make idols of things and think that all of the things have to be under your control.

[28 : 10] It's not an issue of attachment, but control. And so will you trust me to have me send you out into the world, even if you're rejected, even if you're shamed, even if people embarrass you, even if people unfriend you, stop following you on Instagram.

And when they stop following you, they also say a whole pile of nasty things to all of their followers. And when those things happen to you because you love me, continue to trust me.

Pray for your persecutors. Pray for their healing. Pray for their deliverance. Bear witness to the truth. Bear witness to the truth.

I am calling you to join me as people of the truth, not people of the lie, and people of life, not people of death.

That is who I am calling you to be because I am the God of truth. I am true. I am the God of life. I am life. I am the God of light. I am light.

[29 : 21] I am the God of love. I am love. I am the God of goodness. I am good. I am the God of mercy. I am mercy. I am the God of justice.

I am just. Bear witness to it. And that is partly what is going on here in verses 10 and following.

Verse 10, and he said to them, whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. What that means is, don't sort of, I am going to stay at this person's house and I am going to milk them for money and then I am going to stay at another person's house, I am going to milk them for money and I am going to stay at another person's house, I am going to milk them for money.

That's what the talk is. Just be content that your needs are met. And verse 11, and if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

This is a type of prophetic act where they go into a Jewish, in the culture of the day, many Jewish people, if they left the pagan town, they would shake the dust off of their feet.

[30 : 23] And Jesus is saying here, you go into a Jewish town and they reject you, shake the dust off your feet. But the point of that is not, the point of it is actually to be noticed and people say, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, what are you doing? Right?

Because you see, any time in the Bible that sin is mentioned, it's never mentioned to push you away, it's mentioned to connect with you. It's mentioned so that you want, you go, what?

What's happening? Like, what? Like, Jesus confronts to connect. He confronts in the hope that you will repent. That's why he confronts.

Never to shame, never to belittle, never to put you down, never to humiliate you. He confronts to connect. Verse 12, so they went out and proclaimed that people should repent and they cast out many demons and anointed with oil, many who were sick.

And he healed them. So, this little picture of how Jesus reacts is only going to go deeper as you continue to read the rest of the gospel.

[31 : 34] And the fact that this is actually what the gospel is all about is made more and more and more clear. It's not as if, you know, sometimes you watch a movie. I was just watching, you know, something and it was actually sort of a very, very good thing, a British production and about a man whose son is kidnapped and he comes back from abroad and these things that he does to help him.

But part of the problem with it is there's all these little plot ends that never get, it's sort of brought up to create some tension, but it never gets tied into other types of things. There's all these things that happen that don't get tied up.

And so the movie's all right, but it's not as good a movie or as good a story as it could be if things were tied up. Important sort of avenues of tension or sort of somehow rather than just being ignored or it's almost as if occasionally the writer, it looked as if he, I'll throw this little bit in because it will create lots of tension in the viewer and then I'll just hope that the viewer is so stupid they don't notice that we never deal with it for the rest of the movie.

But that's not what happens in the gospel. In the gospel, what we see is that this insight about Jesus loving people and speaking the truth even after they reject him, that rather than it just being something that's a bit of a plot device to make you tense and then forgotten, it actually gets deeper as the whole story goes.

As the story goes, Jesus will begin to predict that people are going to reject him. And yet after he predicts that people are going to reject him, that they're actually going to crucify him, you don't see him then raging, sulking, pouting, you see him continuing to speak the truth and you see him continuing to heal.

[33 : 16] And by the end of the story, the end of the story, in a sense, the whole climax of the story is that Jesus dies on the cross. He's predicted he's going to die on the cross and he dies on the cross. And the message is, with the bit that goes around it, who is he dying on the cross for?

Is he dying on the cross for the 11 disciples that haven't, that loved him and trusted him and maybe his mother at the end and that's it because I don't like anybody else?

No, he dies for the people in Nazareth. He dies for the people who reject him. He dies for the Roman soldiers who crucify him. He dies for Pilate. He dies for Herod.

He dies for the people who mock him. He dies for every single human being. His response to being rejected isn't hatred, violent revenge.

It isn't that as he sees our gobsmacking disbelief that he rejects us. But the story ends with him dying upon the cross for the unworthy, for his enemies, for the people who shame him.

[34 : 27] He dies on the cross for them. He dies on the cross for me. That's what he does because he is love.

And the truth of the matter is is that we can't make ourselves right with God on our own effort. The fact of the matter is that we need a savior, that we get things wrong and we can't fix ourselves.

And so this little window into the love of Jesus, even in the face of rejection, that little window that we might not even notice that a window is as the story progresses becomes bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger.

He dies for the unlovely that we might lovely be. He dies for the unworthy that we might worthy be. He dies for the people of the lie. We might become people of the truth.

He dies for the dead that we might be alive. He dies for the unjust. He pays the price of our injustice.

[35 : 42] Injustice that we might be reconciled to God. That's what he does. That's who Jesus is. So all I can say to you, friends, it is always a good time to be a follower of Jesus.

It is just as good a time to be a follower of Jesus if we face persecution than if we are sort of well-liked or accepted. It is always a good time to be a follower of Jesus. It is the end of our longings and our yearnings and the deep need of our soul.

And all I can say to any of you who are watching or any of you who are here, yes, people might not like you if you are a Christian, but Jesus is calling and inviting you to know him as your Savior and your Lord.

He was rejected so you could be accepted. And his acceptance is worth it. His acceptance is worth it.

Please stand. Father, we give you thanks and praise that we can come together to be recharged, to recommit.

[37 : 08] Father, to hear your word, to come before you and say, Father, so much, we thank you for Jesus. I confess before you, Father, I've had a crappy week.

I haven't been a very good Christian and I've maybe denied you or I'm having this big trouble or this big doubt and that we can come and know that it's not because of our worthiness that you don't weigh our merits, that you pardon our offenses.

It's not because of our great accomplishments that you always see our deep need and you are God's great provision for our deep need. You are God's true provision for our great need.

and we give you thanks and praise so we can meet with brothers and sisters, so we can be in your presence, so we can meet with those who are curious or mocking and were skeptical and yet have come to hear more and that we can be and we can be fed by your word and we can pray to you and pour out our heart, Father, for the world, for healing, and that we can gather around the table of the Lord to receive grace, Father, as we remember Jesus and his death upon the cross and his mighty resurrection and his coming again.

Father, we thank you that we can gather again to be fed and to be nurtured and to recharge and once again to say we commit to you, we follow you.

[38 : 28] Lord, work in us that we might be people of love, not people of hate, people of justice, not people of injustice, people of good, not of evil, people of the truth, not of the lie.

Form us more and more and more in this as we keep our eyes and our hearts fixed on you, Jesus. We ask all these things in the name of Jesus, God's Son and our Savior.

Amen.