

The God who promises

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[0 : 00] Today's reading is taken from Zachariah, and it starts on page 961 of the Church Bibles in front of you.

So Zachariah, chapters 7 and 8, that's 961 of the Church Bibles. Chapter 7, starting at verse 1. Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me.

Say to all the people of the land and the priests, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?

And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? Were not these the words that the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, with her cities around her, and the south and the lowland were inhabited?

[1 : 30] And the word of the Lord came to Zachariah, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another.

Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart. But they refused to pay attention, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears that they might not hear.

They made their hearts diamond hard, lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the Lord of hosts.

As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear, says the Lord of hosts. And I scattered them with a whirlwind among the nations that they had not known.

Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate. And the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.

[2 : 44] Thus says the Lord, I have returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with a staff in hand because of great age, and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, If it is marvellous in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, should it also be marvellous in my sight, declares the Lord of hosts.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in faithfulness and in righteousness.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, Let your hands be strong, You who in these days have been hearing these words from the mouth of the prophets, who were present on the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

[3 : 59] For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for beast, neither was there any safety from foe for him who went out or came in.

For I set every man against his neighbour, but now I will not deal with the remnant of this people, as in the former days, declares the Lord of hosts. For there shall be a sowing of peace.

The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew, and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing.

Fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus, says the Lord of hosts, as I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the Lord of hosts,

So again, I have purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Fear not. These are the things that you shall do. Speak the truth to one another. Render in your gates judgments that are true, and make for peace.

[5 : 14] Do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath. For all these things I hate, declares the Lord. And the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth month, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah, seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.

Therefore love, truth, and peace. Thus says the Lord of hosts, Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go at once to entreat the favour of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts.

I myself am going. Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts, In those days, ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

And if you've closed your Bible, then please open it on page 961, Zechariah, chapters 7 and 8. It's a good discipline for us to have our Bibles open, so we can follow what the preacher is saying, and make sure that they are being faithful to what God is saying.

And then why don't I pray for us? Heavenly Father, we praise you very much, that you are indeed the God of gods, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. And thank you that you graciously speak to us through the Bible.

[7 : 01] So we pray this morning, please grant us understanding. We pray for humble hearts and minds. We pray that you would teach us, rebuke us, correct us, and equip us to live for you.

And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, my aim this morning is for each of us to return to God. To do so not in outward obedience, not in conformity to others, but in our hearts, committed to God, and committed to what God is doing in his world.

Because those of us who have been following Zechariah for the last three weeks will know now that Zechariah is a book about returning to God. Zechariah chapter 1 verse 3.

Remember, God says, return to me, and I will return to you. Wonderfully, God will have us. It's why he says, I will return to you.

We saw, didn't we, a couple of weeks ago, that in chapter 3, that through the death of Jesus, God will forgive those who trust in him. He will remove our sin and iniquity.

[8 : 12] He will do so in a single day. God will have us back. But we need to come back to him. Which is why God says, return to me.

It is, if you like, the language of the U-turn. A sort of friend of ours had to do a few weeks ago. She drove to Wales for her holiday. She had driven along the M4 out of London, over the River Severn, and after about half an hour, 45 minutes or so, she stopped for coffee.

Having refueled and recharged, she got back on the motorway, and it was only after she had crossed the River Severn again that she realised she was heading in the wrong direction. At that point, a U-turn was required.

So then, that is my aim this morning, for each of us to return to God, not in outward obedience, not in conformity to others, but in our hearts, committed to God, and committed to what God is doing in his world.

Now, these two chapters of Zechariah, chapters 7 and 8, they're very much the heart of the book. We've seen the first six chapters, eight visions, all about what God is doing in his world.

[9 : 25] Chapters 9 to the end of the book, are two speeches from God, again, what God is doing in his world. And these two chapters in the middle, chapters 7 and 8, are all about how we should respond, to what God is doing, in his world, to respond from our hearts.

So then, you'll see an outline, on the back of the service sheet, for those who are terrified of diagrams, don't worry about the diagrams, we'll come to those later on. First of all, return to God inwardly, not outwardly.

Return to God inwardly, not outwardly. Chapter 7. Now, in verses 1 to 3, a delegation comes, and asks whether it's still appropriate to fast.

Have a look at verse 2. Now, the people of Bethel had sent, Cheriza and Regimelech, and their men, to entreat the favour of the Lord, saying to the priests of the house of the Lord of hosts, and

the prophets, should I weep, and abstain in the fifth month, as I have done, for so many years? Now, we're told in verse 1, it's now the fourth year, of King Darius. In other words, it's 518 BC, we're two years further on, than we have been, in the first six chapters, of the book.

[10:46] The temple building, won't be complete, for another two years, but nonetheless, it is well on, to being completed. And it raises this question, is it still appropriate, for God's people to be fasting, as they did, during the exile?

Verse 5, if you look at it, shows they've been fasting twice a year, a sign of mourning for their sin, as they've experienced, God's judgment. And the question now is, of course, now the exile has finished, now that the temple, is well on its way, to being rebuilt, now that God, is clearly blessing his people, is fasting, an appropriate thing, to do?

Well, God's answer, it's not what they do, that matters, but their heart, attitude, towards him. Now, I take it, that is something, which we find it, very difficult, to get our heads around, that God, is much more interested, in the sort of person, I am towards him, than in what we do, for him.

God is much more interested, in the sort of person, I am before him, than in what I do, for him. You see, just look at the questions, God asks, in verse, verses four to six, then the word, of the Lord of hosts, came to me, say to all the people, of the land, and the priests, when you fasted, and mourned, in the fifth month, and in the seventh, for these 70 years, was it for me, that you fasted? And when you eat, and when you drink, do you not eat, for yourselves, and drink, for yourselves? Can you see, what God is saying? Their fasting, is just as self-centered, as they're feasting.

[12:34] Far from expressing, sorrow for their sin, they're simply fasting, to feel good about themselves. You see, it looks on the outside, as if they've returned to God, but the God, who sees their hearts, knows they haven't really, returned to him, at all.

It's very easy, isn't it, to confuse the external, with the internal. To look on the outside, perhaps to look to others, as if we've returned to God, but actually, we haven't at all, on the inside.

Perhaps to look very busy, serving God, doing things at church, but actually, we're just doing it, to feel good about ourselves. It doesn't flow from a heart, that's returned, to God.

Or perhaps to go to a Bible study, and it's all about, serving ourselves, having our questions answered, raising again, and again, and again, the same thorny issues, or just going to increase, our understanding, and intellectual exercise.

But our hearts, are far from God. Or perhaps, on a Sunday morning, at church, again, it can be very easy, it can very easily, be all about ourselves, asking, what did I get out of it?

[13:58] How did I feel? Did it make me feel good? Did it satisfy me? Just like the fasting, in Zachariah's day, wanting to feel good, about ourselves, rather than actually, returning to God, in our hearts.

It explains, of course, doesn't it, why Christians, who perhaps, appear to be going well, can then make, what we feel, are very foolish decisions.

Like, moving out of London, for example, and not giving any serious thought, to whether there is a good, faithful church, which they can go to. And then, five years down the track, they're no longer really, living for Christ.

Now, why does that happen? And having lived in London, for 13 years, it happens again, and again, and again. Why does it happen? Well, I presume, because although, outwardly, they had returned to God, it looked as if, they had returned to God, they hadn't done inwardly.

And all along, what they are really living for, was the lifestyle. God wants us to return to him, on the inside. The story is told of a child, sitting in the back of a car, on a long journey.

[15:14] The child is bored, and so decides to create, his own entertainment, by standing up, on the back seat. The mother tells the child, to sit down.

The child doesn't. So again, the mother says, sit down. The child doesn't. Eventually, the father shouts, will you sit down? Will you behave, and do what your mother, tells you to do? Well, there's a long pause.

The child sits down. A few minutes later, a little voice is heard, from the back of the car. I may be sitting, on the outside. But I'm not sitting, on the inside.

Perhaps some of us, can relate, to that kind of journey. But God wants us, to return to him, on the inside. In Zechariah chapter 7, we see two marks, of what, that looks like.

Of a heart, that is returned to God, on the inside. The first, is in verses 8 to 10, and it's our godly attitude, towards others.

[16:17] Have a look at verse 8. And the word of the Lord, came to Zechariah, saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, render true judgments, show kindness, and mercy to one another.

Do not oppress, the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor. And let none of you, devise evil, against another, in your heart. The mark, of having returned, to God, says God, is not your outward, religious observance, but the quality, of our relationships, with others.

In a Bible study situation, not asking clever questions, but loving others, and serving the group. On a Sunday, coming to church, not to feel good about ourselves, or to increase our Bible knowledge, but to love, to serve, to welcome, to encourage, those, who are here.

the other mark, of returning to God, is that we listen to God. Verse 11, But they refused to pay attention, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they might not hear.

They made their hearts, diamond hard, lest they should hear the law, and the words, that the Lord of hosts, has sent by his spirit, through the former prophets. Therefore, great anger, came from the Lord of hosts, as I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear, says the Lord of hosts.

[17:57] Now, Zechariah here, is talking about, the previous generation, who experienced God's judgment, in exile. They turned their backs on God, they put their fingers, in their ears, their hearts, with diamond hard.

It's a pretty good way, isn't it, to ensure, we won't listen to someone. It's a good way, of ensuring, we won't listen to God. I take it, it's an issue, for each one of us, this morning, all of us, look as if, we are listening, this morning.

Only one or two of us, I think, would actually nod off, during a sermon. But of course, the real issue, is not do we look, as if we are listening, but are we really listening, in our hearts?

And verse 12, is an important reminder, of how God speaks, to us today. I wonder if you spotted it, verse 12. Lest they hear the law, and the words, that the Lord of hosts, has sent by his spirit, through the former prophets.

How does God speak? God speaks his words, to us, by his spirit, through the prophets, those who wrote the Old Testament, and the same is true, of the New Testament.

[19:04] It's what is technically, known as the inspiration, of scripture. The apostle Peter, says the same thing, I put 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 21, there on the outline. For no prophecy, was ever produced, by the will of man, but men spoke from God, as they were carried along, by the Holy Spirit.

There was an interview, with Boris Johnson, the mayor of London, in one of the papers recently. Now, not aware that he's a Christian, certainly, not in the sense, of someone who has really, returned to God, but he was talking about, faith, and in his faith, in the rather kind of, general, abstract way, in which public figures, like to do so.

And this is what he said. I suppose my own faith, is a bit like, trying to get virgin radio, when you're driving through, the Chiltern Hills, which I guess you do, if you have a constituency, which used to be in Henley.

It sort of comes and goes. Sometimes the signal, is very strong, and then sometimes, I'm afraid it just vanishes, and then it comes back again. Well, perhaps some of us can relate, to what Boris Johnson, is saying.

It may be that you feel, that God is far away from you, this morning. Maybe that some of us feel, God isn't listening to us, this morning. Well, what does God say to us, when we feel like that, about God?

[20:31] Isn't it very striking? Verses 11 to 13, what does God say? Well, will you listen to him? You see, it's not that the signal, come and goes.

Now, this book, the Bible, is God speaking to us, God addressing to us, God addressing us, God addressing us, as our lives are now, in the situations, we face. The issue is, will we listen, to God, and return to him, not outwardly, but inwardly?

Now, I think all of us, need to grasp this, God is not interested, in shiny people, who look respectable, on the outside. And of course, a place, like this particular corner, of London, is full of people, isn't it, who are shiny, on the outside.

And the church, often gives that impression, that we need to kind of, brush ourselves up, and polish our shoes, before God will have anything, to do with us. Perhaps you'll hear this morning, and actually, you'll think to yourself, well, my life is not at all together, I'm not remotely shiny, will God

ever, have me?

I could never be a Christian. Well, that rather misses the point, because God sees our hearts, he knows that however shiny, we are on the outside, inwardly, all of us, need to return, to him.

[21 : 58] And wonderfully, he will have us. Or perhaps we're here, and we've been, a Christian for some time, as many of us have. God is warning us, can we see the warning, against going through the motions, coming to church, we know the songs, we may even be involved, in teaching the Bible, to others.

But outside of church, actually, it may be that our lives, are not pleasing, to God. And we're more interested, in picking holes in the sermon, rather than listening to God, and serving ourselves, rather than loving, and serving others.

Return to God, inwardly, not outwardly. Secondly, return to God, committed to his purposes, for his world.

Zechariah chapter 8. Now, Zechariah chapter 8, the issue is still fasting, but there's a far bigger thing going on, looking at these chapters together, that I just want us to grasp.

So, have a look at the last verse, of chapter 7, for a moment. As God says, of that generation, who went into exile, and I scattered them with a whirlwind, among all the nations, that they had not known.

[23 : 11] Thus, the land they left, was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land, was made desolate. God's scattering. And now, look over the page, chapter 8, verse 8.

And I will bring them, to dwell in the midst, of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I, will be, their God. What is God saying?

I scattered them, to exile, to the nations, and now, I'm bringing, them back. And that, if you like, is the movement, of these two chapters. God scattering, and God bringing, back.

And chapter 8, contains a series, of nine promises, about what God will do, for Jerusalem, and for his people, as he gathers them. Each one, is introduced, with the phrase, thus says, the Lord, of hosts.

The first one, is there in verse 2. Thus says, the Lord of hosts, I am jealous, for Zion, with a great jealousy, and I am jealous, for her, with great wrath.

[24 : 16] What is God saying? He hasn't become, tolerant, of the nations, that sent Israel, into exile. He hasn't rejected, his people. No, he is fiercely, loyal, to them.

What's more, verse 3, God has returned, to Jerusalem. We saw last week, that's the significance, of the temple, being rebuilt. So now, verses 4 and 5, God promises, that once again, Jerusalem, will be prosperous.

These are great, pictures of, prosperity, verse 4. Old men, and old women, shall again, sit in the streets, of Jerusalem, each one, with staff in hand, because of great age.

And the streets, of the city, shall be full, of boys and girls, playing, in the streets. No longer, will there be war. Jerusalem, will be peaceful, as one generation, follows the next.

There will be old people, who live. And therefore, what is God doing now? Verse 7, I will save my people, from the east, and from the west.

[25 : 19] I'll bring them to dwell, in the midst of Jerusalem. He's going to gather his people. Indeed, verse 13, as you've been a byword, of cursing, among the nations, so house of Judah, and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing.

Fear not, let your hands be strong. And verse 19, their mourning in fasting, will turn to rejoicing.

The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah, seasons of joy, and gladness, and cheerful feasts.

And then look on to verse 20, which is very much the climax, this last paragraph, the climax of the chapter. Verse 20, Thus says the Lord of hosts, peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities.

The inhabitants of one city, shall go to another, saying, Let us go at once, to entreat the favour of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts. I myself am going. People from all nations, coming in to Jerusalem, on an unprecedented scale.

[26 : 35] Verse 23, Thus says the Lord of hosts, In those days, ten men from the nations, of every tongue, shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard, that God is with you.

It's a wonderful picture. I wonder if you can feel the force of it. God gathering people from the nations, to come into his city, Jerusalem.

In fact, this idea of gathering people from the nations, is one of the great themes of the Bible. That's why I put Ezekiel 34 there on the outline. Don't look it up now, but you can look it up later on, where again, we see God is committed to gathering people, to himself, from the nations.

However, there is a difference between the gathering God did in the Old Testament, and the gathering God does now, which I've tried to represent in that diagram.

If you don't like diagrams, don't look at the page, just listen to me. If you do like diagrams, then look at the page. Because in the Old Testament, God's concern for the nations, was expressed in his choosing a people, Israel, and in the heart of the nation, lay Jerusalem, and in the heart of Jerusalem, lay the temple.

[27 : 53] And so when Zechariah anticipates, God gathering the nations, it is that they'll come in, to Jerusalem. Which is why the arrow there, is pointing inwards.

To Jerusalem. Now in the New Testament, that pattern is reversed. God's concern for the nations, is seen in the apostles, go out to the nations, with the message of Jesus.

As Jesus says at the end of Matthew's Gospel, go therefore, and make disciples, of all nations.

Which is why in the second diagram, the arrow is pointing, outwards.

It's just what we see, isn't it, in the book of Acts. As the message of Jesus, goes from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to Rome, and to the ends of the earth.

And we're given a wonderful picture, of what that gathering looks like, in Revelation chapter 7.

[28 : 57] Why don't you just keep a finger, in Zechariah, it's our one cross-section, cross-reference for, this morning, Revelation chapter 7, on page 1240.

Which just helps us to see, that this promise of God gathering, in Zechariah chapter 8, is not God gathering, to the literal city of Jerusalem, as it is now, but is anticipating heaven, and the new creation.

So Revelation chapter 7, have a look at verse 9. After this I looked, and behold a great multitude, that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples, and languages, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.

Now, here are God's people gathered, from every nation, not in the temple in Jerusalem, but in the new creation, before the Lord Jesus, in heaven.

You and I live in an age, when God is gathering the nations, to himself. Indeed, the fact that we are gathered here this morning, demonstrates that, doesn't it?

[30 : 30] Who would have thought, if you were Zachariah, that people way up in England, would be gathered together, as God's people?

Not to mention the many others, from the nations, who are also gathered here, this morning. God's purposes, are being accomplished. And of course, our little gathering here this morning, is simply, it's simply, a little foretaste, of that gathering, around the throne in heaven.

When all the people, who have put their trust in Jesus, from every nation, will be gathered there. So then, how should we respond? We'll turn back, to Zachariah chapter 8, and let's see, how God wanted people, to respond, in Zachariah's day.

Zachariah 8, verse 9. Thus says the Lord of hosts, let your hands be strong, you who in these days, have been hearing these words, from the mouth of the prophets, who are present, on the day, that the foundation, of the house, of the Lord of hosts, was laid.

End of verse 13. Fear not, let your hands be strong. They're to get on, with building the temple.

They're to be committed, to God's purposes, for his world, because God is committed, to his purposes, for his world.

[32 : 03] In New Testament terms, we're to be committed, to building God's church, not a literal, physical building, but building his people, promoting the gospel, here, overseas, proclaiming Christ, and living for Christ.

And committed to that, above everything else. As Bruce said, at the beginning, today is Grace Church's, fifth birthday. Well this is a great message, from God isn't it?

For a church, on its fifth birthday. So I want to finish, by addressing, four types of people, here this morning. First of all, to those who are committed, to building God's church, to promoting the gospel,

in whatever way, we can.

Keep at it. Yes, it's costly, it's sacrificial, in time, in energy, resources, promises, but it's what God, is committed to.

In other words, you're not going to look back, on your life, and think to yourself, well, frankly, why on earth, did I give myself to that? I wish I'd bought, a luxury yacht instead, and spent my, retirements, or my, you know, forties and fifties, whatever it is, on that.

[33 : 22] Secondly, to those who are perhaps, rather anxious, or fearful, about giving ourselves, to being wholeheartedly, committed, to building the church, promoting the gospel, in whatever way we can.

Perhaps we're worried, about inviting someone, to that guest event, next week, a bit uncertain, about what they might feel. Perhaps we're anxious, about doing something, like leading a Bible study, or in Sunday club, that we've been asked to do.

Perhaps some of us, have been asked to consider, full time Christian ministry, but actually we're worried, about that. We're worried, about what it might involve. But be encouraged, we're not on our own, this is the very thing, God is committed to doing.

Which means, of course, we can be committed, to it, as well. You see, God's great project, of gathering people, to himself, is not like, the Commonwealth Games, where the project, is unfinished, nor rather embarrassing.

Perhaps you can imagine, some poor, Indian construction worker, he's been laboring, away, for months, trying to build, the venue, and the accommodation, all the rest of it. And frankly, it's all pretty disappointing, and he's thinking to himself, why on earth, have I wasted my time, on this?

[34 : 36] But no, God is committed, to building, his church, to bringing in, multitudes, from all nations, to his new creation. Which means, we can be committed, to it as well, and to be committed, to it with real confidence.

Now, God doesn't, promise that a particular person, we invite to a guest event, will become a Christian. But we do know, that God is committed, to having great numbers, from all nations, in the new creation.

Thirdly, to those who, well frankly, our main thing in life, is elsewhere. And we know, we've wandered away, from God. What is God's message, to you this morning?

It is come back. God is calling you, back, to return to him, and to be committed, to what he is committed to. We live, most of us, don't we, in a part of London, where people come, to live, to settle down, to have a comfortable life.

Now that is a very dangerous place, isn't it? For someone who's following Jesus, to live in. Because of course, the great danger, is that we'll do the same.

[35 : 54] Settle down, just live a comfortable life. But you see, look on a few years, what do you want to be said, at your funeral? That you just lived, a comfortable life?

Or you're just part of the rat race, like everyone else? Or do you want it to be said, that you gave yourself, wholeheartedly, to the thing, that God is committed, to doing.

Building his church, promoting, the gospel. Finally, the fourth type of person. You're not a Christian, you're not yet, trusting in Jesus.

We are delighted, you're here this morning. But if that is you, can you see, that God wants you, to return, to him? And wonderfully, he will have you.

So will you listen, and will you return? Let's pray together. And I'll bring them to dwell, in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

[37 : 14] Heavenly Father, we praise you, for your great plan, for your world, for people gathered, from every nation, those who have put, their trust in Christ, gathered, around the throne, of heaven.

We thank you, that as we, look at, our world, that this is the great thing, that you are doing, building your church, and we pray, Heavenly Father, that we ourselves, would be committed, to that.

We're sorry, when we're not. We confess, when we're easily distracted, and give ourselves, to other things. And we pray, that the promotion, of the gospel, of the message, of Jesus, would be the one thing, we are committed to, above all else.

We pray, that would be true, for us individually. We pray, that it would be true, for us, as a church family. And we ask it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.