

# Fifth Sunday after Easter

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[ 0 : 01 ]     How have you handled crises in the past? How do you deal with it? How do you approach difficulties, especially when change happens and the status quo is disrupted?

And it's maybe not disrupted in the kind of way that you want it to be disrupted. It's not like things are getting better, they might have gotten worse.

How do you deal with crises? What do you do with the jarring news that disrupts your day-to-day? A loss, a betrayal, a breakup, an accident, an injustice, a tragedy, a misguided moment, a lapse judgment, something like that.

Any situation that has the effect of paralyzing us with fear, sadness, anger, a crisis. What do you do? How do you deal with it? I think it's an important question to ask.

In a regular, often that we ask this question, often because here in Canada and in the West, by and large, we have, we're under an illusion that tragedy doesn't really befall us, that we live a really good life.

[ 1 : 20 ]     And so we do. Never, never in human history have we had such a good stretch. I'll speak for the West, not the world over, but in the West. Such a good stretch of bounty and affluence.

This idea that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, it's actually, generally speaking, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting richer as well. We have, again, in the West, the least amount of food insecurity.

People live longer, healthier lives. It's a remarkable time that we live in. And I'm not saying that those are the only or the best metrics of what it means to live the good life.

But what it ends up doing for us is, again, generally speaking, it causes us to have a delusion that we are invincible, or that tragedy might skip over us, or that we won't experience a type of crises.

We know that, theoretically, that's not true, but just on a gut reaction, a day-to-day experience, we have, in a sense, blinders to the reality of life's frailty and fragility.

[ 2 : 37 ]     So, I'll ask the question again, how do we deal with crises? How do we deal with tragedy? How do we deal with difficulties? Life is full of them, is it not?

One sickness, one death, one lost job, one compromise is all it takes for us to see the reality of this life.

And that's not to be like a Debbie Downer, life is beautiful, there's wonderful aspects to life, but it's fragile, it truly is. So, as we continue our series in Ezra and Nehemiah, remember, Old Testament, it's two separate books, but traditionally, it is one book, really three movements within that one book, the first with Zerubbabel, and then with Ezra, and now we're on to the third movement with Nehemiah.

We enter into Nehemiah chapter one, and we see Nehemiah, he's an Israelite, but he's in exile, but born in Persia. Israel was exiled about a hundred years before Nehemiah comes onto the scene, and he is serving King Artaxerxes, that same king that we read in the book of Esther.

And he's the cupbearer. And the cupbearer is no small duty, no small position. Yes, he makes sure the wine isn't poisoned, very important, but he is a confidant of the king.

[ 4 : 06 ] And in some, in the ancient world, some cupbearers were even so highly elevated that they were, really, it's like the king, the prince is the cupbearer, like really high authority.

We find Nehemiah, he's the cupbearer to the king, he's high ranking, he enjoys great influence, he enjoys a premium life of wealth, he serves the greatest king that is existing in the world at the time, his life is set, and yet, he hears news of a crisis in Jerusalem.

Something is not right. The rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem has grinded to a halt, and so too has the life of Nehemiah.

It's grinded to a halt. This news has taken him completely off his feet. The promised land that God gave to Israel is in great trouble.

The inhabitants are in peril. There's suffering, there's shame, there's enemies, and Nehemiah is heartbroken with this news. For Nehemiah, the remnant of God's people, those that remained in Jerusalem, in Judea, for the remnant, for Nehemiah, there couldn't have been a worse situation that could have happened.

[ 5 : 33 ] It is a massive problem. So Nehemiah is going to deal with a serious crisis here. And it's very instructive for us this morning to see how he deals with it.

Because he deals with it actually in a very, very incredible way. Something that we can learn from. But also it points us to who God is, once again, and what he has done.

So I've broken the text into really two parts. Nehemiah's proper response, and that's going to be the whole of chapter one. Jeff read just chapter one, but really we're going to be in chapter one and two this morning.

So the first part, chapter one, Nehemiah's proper response to the crisis at hand. The second is Nehemiah's courage to act. So if you have a Bible, it would help me a great deal if you would follow along.

Don't take my word for it. Read along with me. At any point, you can get up and get a Bible. Don't worry about interrupting me or others. But follow along if you can.

[ 6 : 38 ] So Nehemiah gets us really terrible news. Verses one to three. He is, it's like the worst case scenario. If you would remember earlier in Ezra, there was a contingent that went back to the land to rebuild the altar.

With Zerubbabel, Ezra went there to rebuild the temple. And in Ezra chapter four, the chronology isn't exactly the same.

It's like a, in Ezra, it's like a look, like a look ahead in Ezra chapter four. But we see that the temple rebuild gets halted for 20 years.

And then it goes, it gets resumed and they build the temple. But we're kind of in that Ezra chapter four timeline right now. Okay. So there's a halting of the rebuild of the temple.

It's devastating news. And look with me in verse four, just the first part of verse four. As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days.

[ 7 : 41 ] I'll pause there. You could easily skip this. How, how is it that Nehemiah properly responds to the crisis? We could easily skip over this, but I think it's very important.

He grieves. He's sad. He is, he is devastated and he doesn't move on very quickly. He sits in it.

He sits in his pain and his suffering. He weeps and he mourns. And it's not for a couple minutes or an hour. It says it's for days. It's a very important thing to grieve well and to embrace sadness, not forever, but for a season.

It's, it's a sobering thing to do. It helps us apart from it being cathartic. It helps us to have a real perspective that life isn't as it ought to be.

The pain is real and it hurts. It just, it really does. Our temptation, by and large, isn't to avoid grieving by keeping a stiff upper lip, but rather to avoid grieving and sadness through distraction.

[ 8 : 54 ] We drown out unwanted feelings with substances or entertainment or pleasure or a combination of all three. Maybe I left something off the list, but we distract ourselves with things so that we don't feel as bad.

There's a time to be happy and to move on or to get a break or reprieve from our grief and sadness. But when it's the initial instinct to push it away as quickly as possible, it's a bit problematic.

The truth is, God has made us with emotions. I'll say this and I, believe me, I don't like using, especially my children as sermon illustrations.

So, they're their own people. They're not props for the church. So, that's why I say this. But I'll just say this. An unknown child to you, we have three of them, so maybe you can figure it out. But the child will remain unknown, has very big emotions, like gargantuan emotions.

That are, she's, he or she are still learning how to figure out. And our challenge as parents, and especially for me, is to encourage these God, these beautiful God-given emotions, but to help her to be in control of the emotions and not the emotions in control of her.

[ 10 : 26 ] And often I, you know, I come in and I go, why do you have big emotions? And she goes, because you have big emotions. And I say, yeah, that's right. Let's learn together. I bring that up just to say that emotions are not bad.

They are actually very good. And we like to hide the maybe embarrassing emotions. Big fat tears are, I don't know, make people feel uncomfortable.

And that's okay if you feel uncomfortable with it. But we hide emotions as if they are bad, as if they are a chink in our armor. When the reality is, is that God has given us emotions.

So much so that throughout the scriptures, it says that God, he actually grieves himself. He is saddened himself when his people transgress the covenant.

That relationship with him grieves him. Now, there's a whole topic of discussion to get into. How does God feel? Does he feel?

[ 11 : 27 ] Is this just a way that he is communicating to us? It's an important conversation. It's not the conversation we're going to have this morning. But our emotions are God-given. In a very real way, they reflect us as image bearers of God.

So Nehemiah is sad. And it's a very appropriate way to hear this news and how to respond to this news. He is a broken man.

Sadness helps him to cope. It helps him also to be empathetic. It helps him and us to be vulnerable. But more than anything else, it helps us to see reality for what it is.

That it's tough. And there's a tough situation. And that we ought not to move so quickly away from it. It's okay to mourn. It's okay to be sad. Nehemiah's situations, it's difficult for him to comprehend.

Jerusalem is this, it's a promised city. Jerusalem is this incredible place in the Israelite psyche. And now it's under siege.

[ 12 : 35 ] It's not being rebuilt. Does this mean that God has abandoned his people forever? The promises that he made are null and void. How can this be? So Nehemiah grieves, but he doesn't simply stay grieving and mourning.

He begins to pray. And here is where we get to see another proper way Nehemiah responds. So look with me, verse 4, but the second part of verse 4.

This is how he begins his prayer. A few months back we were in a series on our midweek Bible study on the Lord's Prayer.

And we see something very similar with the Lord's Prayer here. Nehemiah doesn't simply jump to, God, this is a bad situation. You need to help me out.

We need to strategize, open up doors. I'm going to talk to the king. Let's get this done. Right away he acknowledges who God is. The God of heaven. And to say that he prayed to the God of heaven isn't saying that God physically exists up there.

[ 13 : 49 ] It's saying that God is above and beyond everything that we see. He's the creator God. He is all-powerful. He has this recognition of who he is. Completely other than, completely sovereign over, completely strong and perfect and all-knowing in every possible way.

The God of heaven. That's how he opens it up. Verse 5, he continues on. He says this, Here's the prayer. Here's the prayer. The great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

Let your ear be attentive, your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel, your servants. God, you are lifted high.

There is none like you. You are the one who has made covenant with our people. Remember our covenant. Do not abandon us. You are greater. You are bigger. Please hear my prayer.

Say, you know, oh, you're buttering God up. Yeah, I mean, if you look at it that way, sure. But really, it's giving him the honor and praise he deserves. It's very important that there is a sequence to how we come before the Lord.

[ 15 : 08 ] We lift his name up because he truly is, on one hand, our Father. There's an intimacy. But he is also our King. We don't come into the presence of a King in kind of a haphazard, you know, a non-humble, non-respectful way.

I mean, the coronation happened a week ago last Saturday, eight days ago. The King's a servant, but he's also the King. Like, there's a level of respect that he has afforded.

How much more the King of Kings, the King of the Universe, the Creator of all things. This is what Nehemiah is doing. Recalling who God is and what he has done will always help us to have perspective in terms of life being frail and fragile because it reminds us of our current state and how we have no true ability to fix things.

But it also reminds us that God is unchanging and nothing can cause him any sort of harm or pressure. He cannot be at all messed with.

He is strong. He is always constant. God alone is unchanging. God alone is all-powerful. He is all-knowing, surprised, and never surprised at the infidelity of his people.

[ 16 : 28 ] And yet, he still makes a covenant with them. He, it's not like God somehow was surprised when Israel went off the rails, found themselves in exile. That didn't surprise God or take him, you know, unawares when hundreds of years before he made a covenant with them.

He knew the frailty and the brokenness and the propensity of sin that people would experience. The infidelity that they would have towards him. So, recalling God's character and covenant, it's an important aspect for perspective, but it also results in soul searching.

And this is precisely what we see in this next portion of the prayer. In verse 6, and in verse 6 to 8, Let your ear be attentive, your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant, that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you.

Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. I'll just pause really quickly there. If we think of sin as merely missing the mark, which it is a definition of sin.

[ 17 : 59 ] You know, you miss the mark, you aim for the target, you miss. It's sin. Then we're not going to feel the gravity of what sin truly is.

Sin is, it's an infidelity to God. It's going after other faiths or philosophies or promises or desires. Like a husband goes after mistresses.

There's something deeply grievous about that. God has been this God that has initiated time and time and time again with Israel.

It's not like there's this cosmic dating app that Israel hooked up with God and then they got married and all of that. It's God. He fashions Israel.

He brings them into the land. He brings them out of famine into Egypt. He brings them out of slavery from Egypt. He gives them a land. He gives them a constitution.

[ 19 : 02 ] He makes promises. It's God, God, God, God, God, God, God. And the relationship that he develops and he makes with his people, it is like a husband and a bride.

And yet, in this case, the bride is constantly unfaithful. God forbid this touches anyone in our congregation directly or indirectly, but I'm sure we can know or we have known people, I mean, this is a deeply personal thing to talk about, that have suffered infidelity.

And it is devastating to the core. This is what sin is described like in the scriptures. And I think this is the way we ought to look at it.

Here it says, down in verse 7, we have acted very corruptly against you. There's also an injustice done towards God in sin.

It is a complete relational trust breakdown. And here, Nehemiah is doing some soul searching. So, I'm not suggesting that every crisis that we go through is a result of our own sin.

[ 20 : 20 ] It may be, I mean, if somebody dies suddenly, it's not your fault because you've sinned, like you've put a hex on them or something's, you know, bizarre in the spirit world.

But, we should ask the question, have I sinned towards this person? Is this loss that I'm experiencing, not just with a person, but any kind of loss, is a result of sin?

What part have I played? God, have I sinned against you? Have I acted corruptly? Have I trusted in other gods? Please, please show me. And it's an opportunity for us to get right with God once again and to come to him and look for mercy and forgiveness.

Our hearts drift, they do. And in times of crisis, when we come to God and we're praying, we are stripped down to nothing.

We trust nothing else but him. Nehemiah's fasting, and that's an aspect of fasting as well. The things that we look to as comfort are stripped bare. And all we have is us before God and we're raw towards him.

[ 21 : 37 ] It's an opportunity to ask God if our hearts have drifted, and if so, how far and how can we get back to him? God is not a vindictive God so that every time we do something against his laws, he's just there, ready to smite us.

But really, God is the creator of all good things and his good design is for our life. There's no substitute that will somehow be better. So after confession, Nehemiah finally brings the request to God.

Look with me in verse 8. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven.

It's another way of saying to the ends of the earth. From there, I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there. They are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.

O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

[ 23 : 00 ] He's talking about the king. Now I was cupbearer to the king. O Lord, will you please remember your people? His name is lifted high. There is soul searching done and now Nehemiah brings the request to the Lord.

O Lord, the crisis is too much. Please stop it. I'm the cupbearer to the king. Give me an opportunity to speak to the king. Maybe he can help us. Friends, I'm tempted to ask you if you pray, but the reality is even the most ardent skeptics pray.

Whether you pray to the universe or there's some kind of self-prayer, whatever it may be, the practice, the practice of prayer is an intrinsic thing for humanity and it matters how we come before the Lord and the things we ask him.

It matters that we come to the God of scriptures, to the God of scripture and we ask him to fulfill his word and his design.

And it's hard to pray in a consistent way, but we need to remember that if we're not praying to the Lord, we're praying to something else. Hopefully not someone else.

[ 24 : 21 ] Again, our hearts drift. Nehemiah here reminds us to pray to the Lord and to be fervent in that prayer and to bring our requests to him.

So the real question is, who are we praying to and how are we praying? Prayer is a practice. So eloquence isn't a prerequisite to prayer.

There's a way to pray, but it's hard sometimes. You know, one of the things that we do here is we try our best to pray the Bible because, I mean, our words are fine, the Bible's words are far better and they ground us in how God wants us to pray and approach him.

So let us pray in a very real, honest way, remembering that God alone heals, restores, and redeems.

So here it is. He prays, give me favor with the king. Verse 11. And then it says, and I was a cupbearer to the king.

[ 25 : 27 ] Okay? Roll credits, scene, episode one of the mini-series. You're thinking, Nehemiah's next scene, he's in front of the king. It's going down.

Like, God has heard the prayer. The problem is huge. He's going to, you know, the next scene, the next day, the next moment, he's going to be before the king. But look with me in chapter 2, verse 1.

And this moves us soon to our second part where Nehemiah, his courage to act is incredible. But look with me in verse 1 of chapter 2. In the month of Nisan, in the 12th year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

Now I had been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, Why is your face sad seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart. Okay.

Just pause really quickly there. This isn't the next day. This is four months later that this is happening. If you look here in chapter 1, if you go back to chapter 1, verses, chapter 1, verse 1, it says, Now it happened in the month of Kislev in the 20th year.

[ 26 : 35 ] chapter 2 starts in the month of Nisan. It's about 100 plus days between Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1 and what actually goes down in chapter 2.

Four months of living with the fear that your people may be destroyed. Four months of unanswered silence. Nehemiah's praying day and night, okay?

He is laboring in prayer. God is not answering him. At least it seems like he's not answering him. For four months. Now, okay, in a lifetime, four months, what's four months?

Pray for something now that is urgent. There is a calamity, a crisis upon you. Pray that the Lord would intervene and keep praying for four months. It's a long time.

It's a difficult series of prayers. Frustrations surely mounted. Four months. Will Jerusalem be a wasteland in four months?

[ 27 : 35 ] Four months of silence. You know, the wonderful thing about prayer is that God answers in his own timing and in his own way. Sometimes it's with a no.

Sometimes it's with a yes. But God hears and he answers his prayers. But again, in his timing. So, in this period of waiting, what happens to Nehemiah?

Well, we're not sure, but what happens with us when we have to wait? It helps us to relinquish our desire and ability to control the narrative. To fix things on our own. Nehemiah is powerless and he knows it.

For if he had the power to remedy the situation, he would have done so immediately. Because, how does it end? Chapter 1. At the very end of verse 15, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

Oh, a bit before that, sorry. Give success to your servant today. Nehemiah wants this solved ASAP and he has to wait four long months.

[ 28 : 41 ] The temptation of the Christian to accuse God of being absent is ever present. It is. It is present in our home. It is present, I'm sure, amongst us this morning.

We have prayed, we have looked to God and he has not come through. At least from our perspective. But again, God's timing is not our timing. God knew when it would be best for Nehemiah to be in front of the king.

And it wasn't right away. It was four months after. And I'll just say this before we get into the next section. If Nehemiah went haphazardly in front of the king as the cupbearer, very good possibility that he'd be hanging from the gallows.

You don't go into the king's presence with your own agenda showing sadness, especially as a cupbearer. You're bringing wine, you're bringing happiness, you're bringing the party. If Nehemiah went in in his own timing and his own strength with his own strategy, who knows what would have happened.

Jerusalem would have been potentially laid waste forever. But God in his timing knew. God in his timing knew. So look with me, chapter 2, verses 1 to 6. And let's see Nehemiah's courage to act.

[ 29 : 52 ] Number one, there's courage right away to wait for the Lord. It takes a lot of courage. It takes a lot of patience. And we see that here. Look with me now to verse 1 to 6.

In the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, Why is your face sad seeing you are not sick?

This is nothing but sadness of the heart. Then I was very much afraid. And that fear is a real fear. His life hangs in the balance, but also Jerusalem hangs in the balance.

And I said to the king, Let the king live forever. Why should not my face be sad when the city, the place of my father's graves, lies in ruins? Its gates have been destroyed by fire.

Then the king said to me, What are you requesting? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my father's graves, that I may rebuild it.

[ 30 : 58 ] And the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, How long will you be gone? And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. Nehemiah is risking life and limb here.

And in God's timing, he has favor. God answers his prayers. Four months later, God answers his prayers. I mean, if the king was having a bad day, if there were bad news, also Nehemiah is asking the king, in a sense, to undo the decree that he gave to put a moratorium on the building of Jerusalem.

It could have been very offensive to the king. What you did was wrong. Please reverse it. No. I mean, that's what gets you, you know, to the chopping block.

But instead, in God's timing, in God's ways, bathed in prayer, looking to God for salvation, he says, Long live the king. And he appeals, not to the rebuilding of Jerusalem so much as he does to the sense of honoring the dead that the Persians would have.

What does he say in verse 6? He says, Let the king live forever. Why should not my face be sad when the city, the place of my father's graves, lies in ruins?

[ 32 : 20 ] To honor the dead was big in Persia. And the Lord, in his wisdom and in his timing, helps Nehemiah to appeal to the king in the way that the king would understand.

In his timing. And what is the result? Favor. So, look with me, continue on in verses 7 to 8. And I said to the king, If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province beyond the river.

That's a trans-Euphrates, not like modern-day Iraq, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah. And a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates and fortress of the temple and for the wall of the city and for the house that I shall occupy.

And the king granted me what I asked for the good hand of my God was upon me. The king hears him favorably, grants him these even greater requests than just put an end to the destruction, help me to rebuild it.

But here's the big deciding factor in all of this. Verse 8, the second part of verse 8. And the king granted me what I asked. Why? For the good hand of God was upon me.

[ 33 : 36 ] That was it. We saw this a lot in Ezra chapter 7. The good hand of the Lord was upon me. God favored me. God was directing all of his steps.

It wasn't the king's decree ultimately, but the hand of the Lord upon him. There's more to say on this subject, but it's really important that we understand that the hand of the triune God is guiding history.

And it's hard to think about that, especially when there is mass killings in multiple parts of the world happening right now or genocides or the ongoing culture of death in Canada with euthanasia and abortion.

You think, how on earth is God guiding history? Like, is he guiding it towards evil? There's a lot to say about that. It's a tough question, but we can trust that God is working all things out for his glory and for the good of his people, directing all of history towards a triumphant end where Jesus will come and destroy all that is evil forever, that there will be no more tears of sadness, that light and life will be in abundance forever and ever.

And here is an example of God guiding the guiding history by his good hand directing the affairs of even the king of Persia.



[ 35 : 10 ] You might never be in the position of Nehemiah before a king standing in the gap for an entire nation, but we are faced with decisions on the daily that require courage and God's good hand upon us.

There are people that look to us, one person, a dozen people, whether it's the employees under us or the children that God has given us, influence, the neighbors that we influence, family members that rely upon us, whatever it may be, we need God's good hand upon us on the daily and Nehemiah teaches us that consistent, real, godly, raw prayer is at the core of that.

Doing right takes courage and responding well in times of crises may require courage. And here, Nehemiah's act of courage in the presence of a king is directly connected to his prayer life.

And it is hard to pray, but friends, this is why we gather together and we pray week after week and we ask the Lord to help us, to cleanse us from our sins, to help us to live for his glory, to build up our inner man.

This is why we pray. But remember that the courage to act in, in, what is it, the, in the month of Nisan, it really began at the, at the first of the month of Kislev.

[ 36 : 47 ] Don't despise the daily habits of praying. But, if this was just, just pray more sermon, I think we would be improperly served.

Because ultimately, we can't will ourselves to pray and to desire God. God gives us the gift that draws us to himself. and ultimately, we see that Nehemiah stood in the gap for his people, but really, Nehemiah was a picture, a shadow of Christ who was in an even greater position than Nehemiah.

The, the, the king of heaven. And what does he do? He empties himself, he puts his life on the line to stand in the gap for you and me because of sin.

Not just to rebuild walls of a city, but to rebuild the lives of people. And what does Jesus do? He, he, he doesn't just get favor before a king and travel to Jerusalem and fix things.

He travels to Jerusalem and dies. He, he dies completely in, in, in, in, in, in, in just way.

[ 38 : 00 ] I mean, the calamity of calamities is Christ on the cross and yet through that what happens? He rebuilds a church, rebuilds a people into a church so that you and I, the scriptures describe as living stones.

It's a remarkable thing. Jesus is the greater Nehemiah who is rebuilding the temple that is called the church where his spirit resides and he teaches us to pray.

And not just that, but when he dies and rises again and ascends to heaven, he continues to intercede on our behalf so that Jesus' prayers help us in our day to day.

His spirit aids us as we do the things that he has called us to do and helps us to come back when our hearts drift. Jesus is the true advisor to the king.

In fact, he's the king himself. He is at the right hand of the father and he is also to all of us who have put our faith and trust in him, has given his strong hand, his good hand.

[ 39 : 05 ] He's given us his favor. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this example of what prayer looks like in a time of crisis.

Lord, we thank you what action looks like in a time of crisis and how it takes courage, but really it takes consistency of consistency in prayer to be on our knees seeking your face and Lord, in the times where we do not hear from you, when you are silent, would you please reassure us by your word, by your church, by people that we call brothers and sisters to keep going and that you do hear us and that you do desire to answer our prayers and bless us and Lord, we just ask for your patience and wisdom and perspective to know that your timing is better than ours and your answer is always better than ours.

So Lord, we go our separate ways soon, Lord, trusting that you desire to bless and not to curse and to continue to build up your church as a temple of the Holy Spirit.

We thank you in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.