

Strangers and pilgrims (pre-communion service)

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[0 : 00] And let's come together to the Lord, to Hebrews chapter 11, and reading once again verse 13.

Hebrews 11, we can read some verses from verse 13, and we're going to look at verses 13 to 16 especially. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country, and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country that is unheavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

I don't know if it's true of any other people, I'm sure it is, but it's certainly true of Lewis people, and I remember it very well myself when I lived on the mainland.

[1 : 11] Even when we were coming on holiday to Lewis, we would speak about going home. And that's still the case, I'm sure you find many people who speak that way, even though their home, actually, practically, is on the mainland because they belong to the island, because that's their native place, they tend to speak about going home.

Even if it's just for a short time. Because that is their native land. And it's quite natural to speak of our native land as our homeland.

Even if we're actually living at a distance from it for some time. And whatever we might say of that in practical terms in a worldly sense, it is certainly the case in a spiritual sense.

Because that is really what the passage here, in common with many other passages in the Bible, is actually setting out for us. That the people of faith, the people of God, by faith, as they exercise faith, they look forward to a homeland.

They speak about themselves as a people who are going home, not a people who are at home.

They are going through this world and all its experiences on the way home.

[2 : 33] Because home for them is where God has prepared their everlasting dwelling place. Home for them is this city that's mentioned here that God has prepared for them.

A better country than they have in this world. It's faith, native land. And this wonderful chapter where faith is so much the prominent subject of it.

And the people of faith. And the way in which things were achieved by them by faith. Here we have this passage in between people who were specifically mentioned in the previous verses.

Such as Enoch, Noah, all these people down there. And then again he picks it up from verse 17 to speak about Abraham and the descendants of Abraham. And in between the list of these names you have this passage.

Which is a kind of summary really of all of these names. A summary whereby although it says these all died in faith. Nevertheless it goes on to speak about others there.

[3 : 45] Like Joseph who died in faith making mention of his bones. So that the passage really in many ways is a summary of the outlook and the consequent life that the people of faith actually lived.

And I think it's still important for us to remember at a communion time. That in the setting out of services.

Not only want to keep these things legalistically or just rigidly because they were done previously. But it is I think a good pattern to follow as has been handed on to us.

That from the beginning of the communion on a Thursday through to Monday. You have different but related emphases each of these days. You begin with confession of sin.

You move on Friday to examination. To looking for points that give us evidences of the grace of God in us. On Saturday you come to preparation.

[4 : 45] Thinking especially of preparing for the actual communion. Where on the Lord's day you come to commemoration. The actual remembrance in the sacrament of the Lord himself in his death.

And on Monday there's the thanksgiving. And these are themes which while we mustn't think of them legalistically or over rigidly. Nevertheless they give us such very important emphasis in the Christian life.

And this is a passage which sets out for us something in keeping with that theme of examination. As we see what's said here about these people.

So we can relate that to ourselves. And as we examine our own lives. Compare ourselves to what we find in these verses. Hopefully for our encouragement and for our further progress in the things of faith.

So four things that come from these verses. If we just take the verses pretty much in turn as they are. Verse 13 we can say sets out a confession.

[5 : 52] These all died in faith. Not having received the promises. But having seen them afar off. And were persuaded of them and embraced them. And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Now the first thing you see there is they died in faith. And there's an interesting and significant difference there in the word in compared to the word by faith.

Which you find in reference to each of the individuals. By faith. Enoch. By faith. Abel. By faith. Abraham. By faith. Noah. By faith. Abraham. All of these are spoken of by faith.

And then something that is true of their lives. But this is saying these all died in faith. That doesn't mean they didn't die by faith or by exercising faith then.

But the subtle difference that's there really sets out for us the fact that when it came to their dying. They did not lay down their faith. They died still believing the things they believed while they lived.

[7 : 03] They still died in the engagement of faith. In the activity of faith. They died in faith. It's not that faith took them up to the point of death.

And then that was really the end of faith. They had to leave faith as it were behind. Or the exercise of faith. When they came to die they died in faith. They took their faith with them into death.

Or you can say they approached death and they went into death. Still believing. Still as believers in God. And it's important that we see that because we think of death.

And the Bible teaches us about death being something which really negates. Something which really brings to nothing. The things that we associate with this world itself.

And even with our dearest possessions in this world. Death takes them from us. Death is the great level. Death brings the prince and the pauper into its grip and levels them together in the grave.

[8 : 12] But you see it's saying. That while death is all of that. These people died in faith. And it's really saying to us.

As much as you see faith by faith. These people living while they lived. You see it just as clearly. Indeed if not more clearly since it's death we're dealing with.

That they died in faith. In other words. What it's saying is when they came to die. They died victoriously. They died as still believing.

And holding the promises of God. They died in faith. What a great gift faith is.

What a great thing it is in its activity. Because as you come to deal with all the business of life. And all the things that are mentioned.

[9 : 11] About these people and what they did. And what their life was about. And how effective they were in their lives. So too when you come to speak of death. And think of death.

These died in faith. They died as victoriously as they lived. Because they died in faith.

And you can see then that it says. They didn't receive the promises. Not having received the promises. But having seen them afar off. And were persuaded of them. And embraced them.

They confessed that they were strangers. And pilgrims on the earth. Now that doesn't mean that. They had no idea what the promises were. When it says they didn't receive the promises. What it really means essentially.

Is they had not yet received. The substance of the promises. The things which were actually promised to them. By God. And that especially has to do with. The city that God prepares.

[10:08] The things of heaven. The inheritance. The glory that God has prepared for his people. These he says. Died in faith. Not having received the promise. Not having received the substance.

Of what these promises contained. So they're not worse. They were just like you and I. Are tonight as believers. If you're a believer. Tonight your faith is in God. You believe the promises of God.

You have not yet received the substance of them. As far as your eternity is concerned. But. But. It goes on to say. You've seen them afar off.

And were persuaded of them. And embraced them. Now there's evidence. That someone is a Christian. Because it's entirely different.

To the person. That really does not believe. Or accept the promises of God. And sadly. We find in our world. So much. Of the emphasis is.

[11:06] That unless I can actually. See the thing for myself. Unless I can put it to the test. Unless I can prove. By some scientific analysis. Or whatever.

That this is really the case. Then I cannot believe it. Well as the believer. The Christian. The person to whom God has given faith. Actually.

Thinks the other way around. And you can see that right. At the beginning of the chapter. Or near the beginning of the chapter. In verse 3. And it's something that we have to. Try and set out in our lives.

When we face people. Whose approach is. Entirely. Scientific. But especially if it's atheistic. Or humanistic. What is the writer here saying?

It's saying. Not only that. The worlds were framed. By the word of God. But it's. By faith. We understand.

[12:03] That that is the case. It doesn't say we understand. And then we believe. I'm not suggesting. That there isn't an element. Of knowledge. Of understanding.

Of understanding. In the operation. Of a person. That is believing. The promises of God. But what it's saying is. We believe God. We believe the word of God.

We believe the veracity. The truthfulness. Of that word. We believe the authority. Of that word. And from that. Believing. We understand. We don't begin.

By trying to understand. Everything. And only when we've packed our minds. And then come to understand things. To our own satisfaction. Do we then say. Now I believe it.

No. These people received. The promises of God. They didn't receive. The substance of it. They received them. In the form of a word. Of promise. Of God. As to what he had for his people.

[13:00] They believed. They saw them. From afar. And. That's interesting. That it says that. They saw them. Afar off.

But they still saw them. You see. We're told so often. By people. How can you believe God. When you can't see him. Well.

This. This passage. Actually. Tells us. But you can see him. Not physically. Not like you and I. See each other. Just now. But what does it say.

About Moses. He endured. In verse 27. He persevered. As. Seeing him. Who is invisible.

He saw him spiritually. He saw things. Which represented him. He saw him. In a way. That's probably. If I go into it. Than we did.

[13:56] Moses is spoken of. In the word of God. As. In many ways. Unique. Amongst the children. Of God. A man. To whom God spoke.

Face to face. He knew God. But he didn't know. Everything about him. And neither do we.

Of his promises. Yet we receive them. We see them afar off. Because they're God's promises. Because it's God's word. To us. We see it. And we see him in it.

And so we. Embrace them. It's put here. We were persuaded of them. We're persuaded. Of the truth of them. And of the value of them.

And. We. Embrace them. And that's. A word which. Literally means. To salute someone. You know what a soldier does.

[14:54] When. They meet a superior officer. They are. Supposed to salute them. They're superior to them. They're somebody that they look up to. And the promises of God.

Are our superiors. When we go through this life. We meet. The promises of God. We read our Bibles. We find the promises of God. We tell us what God. We. We're told what God has in store.

As a future for his people. In eternity. Beyond this life. And as we see that. As the word of God. As we embrace that. We salute it.

It's superior to us. It's a word of truth. Which cannot. Actually. Be overturned. You remember. There's a. A wicked man called Balaam. In the book of Numbers. Who was hired by. King Balak. To curse. Israel. And King Balak.

[15 : 49] Took this man. Up to the heights. Of some mountains. To look down. Upon the people of Israel. To curse them for him. And he had to come. To an acknowledgement.

Which really annoyed. And infuriated. Balaam. Because Balaam. Came to acknowledge. How can I curse. Whom God has not cursed.

How can I bless. Whom God has not blessed. You see. The word of God. Is absolutely certain. And sure. And it achieves. Its object. And no one can overturn it.

And there is no power. In existence. That can overturn. The promises of God. However unlikely. It may be. To the world.

And to your companions. In the world. However unlikely. Because you cannot yet. See the substance. Of them. And experience. The substance. Of them. That awaits. Glory. And please.

[16 : 46] Don't fall into. The trap. Of trying to. Have things. In the church. I know. This is not true. Of any of you here. Of course. But it's true. Of the church. In our age.

That things. Which the Bible. Really tells us. Really belong. To glory. Are actually. Attempted. As if they belong. To this world.

Here. This is. Something. That we're told. And they embraced. The promises. They. Actually. Saluted them.

And then. They confessed. That they were. Strangers. And. Pilgrims. On the earth. Well. That of course. Fits in. With everything else.

That's there. If you're going home. If your home. Is not yet reached. Then you're an alien. You're not a citizen. Of the place. You're traveling through. If your passport.

[17 : 43] Passport. Is marked. With your homeland. Whatever else. Whatever else. You actually find yourself. You're traveling through. You're not at home there.

You have to. Think of your homeland. As the place you belong to. And everywhere else. You're a stranger. And a pilgrim. You don't belong there.

And for God's people. That is what they say. But you notice it says. They confessed. They confessed. And some people. Have a problem.

With confessing. Their belief. And some people. Have a problem. When they think about witness. As if witness. Was just always. Speaking to people.

Or having the. Ability. And the capacity. To describe. In a way. That's persuasive. Or clear. And eloquent. The things of your faith. The things. That you believe.

[18 : 39] And why you believe them. And what is your home about. And what you're traveling about. But you know. It's not always like that. Indeed. It's maybe not often like that. For even those. Who have the ability.

To speak. They can't always do that. You're coming to. This church. Or whatever church. You come to.

Regularly. On the Lord's day. And at prayer meetings. That. Is a testimony. I'm not saying. That's the only testimony. Or the only testimony.

Which you think about. In terms of. Confessing. That we're strangers. And pilgrims. In the earth. But it is a testimony. And people see that. Let's not make the mistake.

That. That. Somehow or other people. Aren't bothering. To notice us. When we gather. To come to church. On Sunday morning. Or evening. Or twice a day. Or in our prayer meetings. Or whatever. That world.

[19 : 31] Out there. Is noticing. People see that. And maybe it evokes. Questions in their minds. It does with some. But it's a testimony.

That you're a pilgrim. That you're a traveler. That the God. You worship. Is the God. You want to prepare. You for hope. And through his word.

So he's preparing. His people for that. They confessed. And however. We think of. The confessing. There are many. Angles to it. There are many. Elements to it.

But the confession. Is something. That makes clear. Where our homeland is. And like I said. It's not. Just people.

Who are eloquent. In speech. I'm sure. There are many people. That. Can never say that. About themselves. But the fact.

[20 : 29] That they worship Christ. And live for Christ. And live. A holy life for him. And are seen with their Bibles. In their families. In their homes. As parents. As children. They are confessing.

That they're not at home. That they're strangers. Are pilgrims. In the earth. And that is what we do. In its own place too. When we go to the Lord's table. When we go to take communion.

We're confessing. That. We. Do this. In remembrance. In remembrance. Of Jesus. And in doing so. We show forth his death. Till.

He. Comes. It's only for. As long as this word. Continues. And then. The Lord's people.

Are at home. And people. Who see. The communion. And. It is good. To see the communion. For not actually.

[21 : 29] Sitting at the Lord's table. Please don't stay away. On a communion. Sabbath morning. It's important. Even if you have not. The intention. Of this time.

To go to the table. So important. That you see. What represents. The Lord's death. In the elements. And the Lord's people.

Being nourished. Spiritually. Through what these. Elements. Represent. To them. Christ. Is there. Whenever Christ is.

There is benefit. In us being there. And as there is benefit. In us being there. So we seek. That God will bless it. To us. So these. Are. The people of faith.

They. Died in faith. They had this. Confession. By the devil. That they were strangers. And pilgrims. On the earth. Secondly. Verse 14. Speaks about witnessing. For they.

[22 : 24] That say such things. Declaim. Plainly. That they seek. A country. And. Just briefly. You can see. How that. Really. Is pretty evident.

It says. They. Say. Those who say such things. Those who say. They're strangers. And pilgrims. On the earth. They're declaring. Plainly. That they seek. A country. And the words.

Used. Are quite strong. Seeking. Or making clear. First of all. It means. Declaring. Plainly. It means. Making clear. Life. Of a Christian.

Young. Or old. Whatever age. The life. Of a Christian. That lives. For Christ. Even if they say. About themselves. I really. Don't have much. Ability. To. To. Speak.

For things. Or to speak. Publicly. Or anything. Like that. The life. That they live. As a life. That is clearly. New. For Christ. Is declaring. Claim.

[23 : 21] That they seek. A country. It's a life. That has. That declaration. And. They are seeking. A country. And that again. Is a strong word.

They're seeking it. They're not just saying. They're. Sort of hoping. It will come about. They're seeking it. They're setting.

About. Something of the word. Really means. Reaching. Forward. To it. Leaning. Towards it. Seeking. In a way. That. Leans.

The life. In the direction. Of it. Living. For it. And you see. In. Chapter 13. The same. Words. Used. There. Where it's. In verse 14. Chapter 13. And. Verse 14. We can read. Verse 13. To. Let us. Go forth. Therefore. Unto him. Outside. The camp.

[24 : 14] Bearing. His. Reproach. That's. Jesus. Let's. Take. Our stand. Alongside. Where. His. Cross. Is. And. That's. Not. In. The world. It's. Outside.

Separate. For. Here. We have. No. Continuing. City. Now. We often. Hear. These. Words. Quoted. In.

Prayer. And. Very. Often. Quoted. In. Prayer. And. Rightly. So. When. At. Funeral. At. Awake. We. In. Prayer. Emphasize.

That. Our. Life. As. It. Comes. To. An. End. In. This. World. Does. Indeed. State. That. We. Have. No. Continuing. City. Here. We.

Do. Continuing. We. Are. In. Into. this. In. We.

[25 : 15] In. In. W. lasting city. Therefore, we are consequently, we are actively seeking one that is to come. That's what God has promised. That's what a Christian's heart and mind is set upon.

They declare plainly that they seek a country, it puts it here. And the words can be translated differently as well. It actually means something like a fatherland or a home land. But it certainly has the idea of your home in it.

It's the word from which we get a word that we often use in English, the word patriot. You know what a patriot is? A patriot is somebody that has shown allegiance to their homeland. We speak about people who have gone forward at a time of war, for example, to enlist in the forces so that they come to engage with an enemy.

You say, well, that's a patriot. That's somebody who has the interest of their homeland at heart and has volunteered their service to defend it or to protect against enemy attack or whatever.

[26 : 30] They're patriots. But the Christian is a patriot. The Christian is a patriot by way of showing where their homeland is.

They declare plainly, they show plainly and clearly that they are seeking, that they are stretching towards, that they are seeking a homeland.

They are patriots. They're showing that that is where their home really is. Thirdly, verses 15 to the beginning of 16 speak about victory over temptation.

You have confession, you have witness, you have victory over temptation. And it's specifically a temptation to go back to where they'd come from.

Truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly.

[27 : 31] Well, every Christian, I'm sure, at some point or other, knows that tug, that pulling of their mind back to the things that they left as they used to live without faith in Christ.

When God brought his people out of Egypt, and many of these references go back to the experiences and to the history of Israel through the wilderness and on into the promised land. When God brought his people out of Egypt, he said to them, you shall not pass this way again.

And at the same time, he was emphasizing for them that they needed leadership, that he needed himself to go before them effectively, for you have not passed this way before.

The way ahead of them was a way that they had not gone before. The way behind them was a way that they must not return to. Egypt was behind.

Canaan was ahead. The wilderness was in between. They were strangers and pilgrims on the way. But they had left Egypt behind. And in their hearts at many times, as the Bible shows us, they lusted after the things of Egypt.

[28 : 49] They were tempted many times to go, to return to the things they had enjoyed in Egypt. And indeed, you can find so soon after them coming to Mount Sinai itself, that when Moses was up on the mount with God, with their impatience, and what God himself described as their stiff-neckedness, they said to Aaron, get up, make us gods who will go before us.

And the graven image that Aaron fashioned was one of the images of Egypt. the golden calf. Now here it's saying, if they had been mindful, if the people of God, if the Christian had the mind or the mindset to return, to go back to the place they left, the place they came out of, they might have an opportunity to have returned.

And that really means they could have gone back if they had so desired, if they had so willed, if they had so wished. But, instead of that, they actually did the opposite.

Now they desire a better country. As it is, they desire a better country. And you see the way these two things are contrasted.

if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, there were opportunities to return. There were times when they were tempted to do so. They could have capitulated and given in to those temptations and said, I've had enough of this journey, I'm going back the way.

[30 : 37] I don't like this way to Canaan. Too fast, too difficult. Instead of that, they were instead expressing a desire to go forwards, to go onwards, to persevere, because they were going to a better country.

All of us, I'm sure, have been in situations where the world became very powerful in its influence since we became Christians, since we came to know the Lord.

But when we turn away from things which are thoroughly worldly in themselves, we can't, of course, come out of the world altogether. things that we have to use in our daily life, that are, you might say, worldly in themselves, but we have to use them.

What I'm talking about just now are the values of the world, the ways of the world, the things that characterize the world as the world in its antipathy and opposition to God.

That worldliness, when that comes near to us, when, through circumstances, that is brought close to us, and we're facing the temptation to go back to those things.

[31 : 54] To some extent, we've all been there, and our young people face that even today. There's a kind of mindset among some, in some places, that young people should still frequent the pubs and the club circuit, and that it's alright for the Christian to do that, just to witness to their friends that they don't take alcohol, and they don't get drunk, and whatever.

That is the way of the world. These are the values we've left behind. That's how we used to live. These are not the things that nourish our souls. Of course, we have to witness to people, and to our friends, and companions, if they're still in the world and of the world. But we don't become worldly in order to do that.

We don't meet with the temptation to go back to the country we've left, and say, well, in order to be an effective Christian, I can go back, I should go back. No, your effectiveness is otherwise. In showing the distinction between that, and the place you're going to, and the life you're now living. Because they declare plainly that they seek a country, and now they desire a better country, that is a heaven peace.

[33 : 23] I'm sure many times, many of yourselves, especially during low points in life, came before God and said to the Lord, thank you that there is a better country.

That there is a better world than this world. That there is something that far surpasses, even for the Christian, anything that they experience in this life.

They desire a better country. The country of home, the city that God has prepared for them. And tonight, if you have that desire in your heart, if you know something of that desire, I'm not saying if you have that desire to the extent that you're able to see it in someone else, someone that you know is a really deep-rooted Christian in the Christ, somebody that you wish you were yourself, forget about that for the moment, just look into your own heart and say, do I indeed desire a better world than this world?

Is my desire set on that? Am I indeed persuaded that the promises of God contain in their substance things which I would dearly love to fulfill in my own experience?

[34 : 56] And if you've said to God, Lord, I'm thankful that I believe your promise and I accept your promise, that I salute your promise that there is a better world for me than I have in this world, where temptation is gone, where tribulation is gone, where death is gone, where tears are gone, then you're a Christian.

Because only a Christian can say that. with a real desire after it. And if you're a Christian with that desire, then it's your duty and your privilege to show it by being obedient in coming to remember the Lord's death at his own table.

God's God's name. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Their confession and their witness, their victory over temptation, and he finishes this part of the passage by emphasizing their trustworthy God, God, that he is worthy of all our trust in all his promises.

He would have said, it was mentioned today at the question meeting, how in Hebrews chapter 2, Christ is not ashamed of calling us his brethren, which would be called his brethren.

[36 : 32] And that was the theme of the question. But this is actually saying, in fact, I think one of the brethren mentioned this as well, that God is not ashamed to be called our God.

Why is he not ashamed? Because he has prepared for them a city. Now, how do you bring that together? Well, think about being ashamed of something that you've promised to give someone or to prepare for someone.

You've made the promise, and then something happens in your life, and you're not able to fulfill that promise. And the person comes, let's say you had promised them something, that you would do something in your home, let's say you would lay on a nice meal for them or whatever, and you had promised them that that would be ready when they came, such and such a time and the date and everything else, but for some reason or other it just went out of your mind.

And then you hear the doorbell, and you open the door and there's the person, then you realize, oh, I forgot. You'd feel ashamed, deeply ashamed, because you had promised something very sincerely to that person, but you weren't able to fulfill it.

So you'd be ashamed in some way to say to that person, well, I am really a friend. God's friend. But there's nothing like that with God. He is not ashamed to be called our God.

[38 : 06] Why? Because he has prepared for his people a city. You're not going to get to the end of your course in this world and leave this world and then get to eternity and find that God has forgotten something.

Or that one of his promises or any of his promises or any aspect of his promises actually weren't true after all. It's prepared.

It's ready. It's laid up. When Jesus was teaching the disciples just before he himself died, in these wonderful chapters in John's Gospel, one of the things he said, to them and it's so well known to us in chapter 14.

In his father's house were many dwelling places. I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also.

And one of the reasons that we are absolutely sure, though we would just really need God's word, that itself is enough for us, but in that you find it described that God, that Christ has gone to our home, which is his home.

[39 : 34] It's ready because he's already there. God is not ashamed to be called our God, that we confess him as our God, that we save him his promises that they are absolutely sure for us, that we can build our eternity.

Why? Because he's already done it. He's already prepared this city. That's what Abraham and his family were looking forward to as well.

He's sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, by faith, dwelling in Tabernacles, things which you can pull up in a moment and move on, things which aren't permanent.

For he was looking for a city which has foundation, something which has, something which is permanent, something which will not move when the great dramatic, climactic event of the judgment comes.

that's the better country. That's why God is not ashamed to be called our God. He has already prepared for us a city.

[40 : 46] A city, a permanent homeland, established and secure. You know, you find very often when you come to building sites where new houses are going up, especially if it's an estate, that you have a show house that's built with all the furniture, everything already installed in it, so that people can go and visit it and see what kind of houses these are going to eventually be.

And when that show house, it used to be the case of this, when that show house was sold, it's sold as it is, ready to move in.

And that's where this city is. It's ready to move in. You don't need to take anything with you to try and improve it. You can't.

You don't need to be afraid that somehow God has forgotten something as far as you're concerned.

And your future, he hasn't. He has prepared a city for them.

That's why we can call him our God. The God of the promises. the God and Father for Lord Jesus Christ is made.

[42 : 09] O Lord, O God, we do bless you for your promises that are addressed to us in this life. We get with you thanks too for the faith and the hope that relates to your promises.

And that we also love you for them. We thank you for the certainty. We bless you for every way in which you prepare your people to finally come to enjoy the substance of what you have promised. Grant, we pray, that we may be encouraged to continue to place our confidence in you. And if there be any, Lord, even here tonight, who have not yet come to place their trust in you, O Lord, show them and persuade them, we pray, how trustworthy you are, and how all of these individuals described in this passage came by faith to know you as their God.

Receive all thanks, we pray, and continue with your people here in the days to come. Pardon our sin for Christ. Thank you.