

Our Trustworthy Priest-King

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[0:00] Beloved church family, please turn in your Bible to Hebrews chapter 7 today. I want to share with you about our trustworthy priest, King.

And first, let's pray. Oh, mighty Savior, you've plunged us into your blood. Lord, you've freed us from sin, and we long for the day when all your promises will be delivered and made real by your kindness.

Teach us to trust in you once again today. As the church has prayed for centuries, we ask, Father, as your children, trusting that you are good. What we have not, give us.

What we know not, teach us. And what we are not, make us. Amen. Well, the young soldier knew what he had to do.

[1:06] And that was to march through this valley. What he didn't know is that this was full of landmines. And he heard the voice over the radio one more time.

And he had to make the decision, will I trust? And listen to my commanding officer who's walked that way before. Trust is the lifeblood of every relationship.

Mark Twain said, trust someone completely, and you'll get either a friend for life or learn a lesson for life. Well, the Christian pilgrim walks through the wilderness of life in this present age.

And it feels sometimes like there are new explosions every week. Pride. Mocking. False teaching. Turns into scandal.

Abuse. Cover up. These gut-wrenching words describe the nightmares of the first century church as much as the experience of many Christians, sadly, in church today.

[2:21] You can understand how Christians in this congregation, the letter of Hebrews is addressed to, They might be feeling, how can I trust God when pastors and priests trample upon Scripture, His Word, and lord their power over God's people for their personal pleasure.

How do we march on? Who can you really trust? You feel the shadows deepen, but where do you take that?

I believe the pointed purpose of the apostle to the Hebrews is to let you, church, know that you can and must trust Jesus.

Last week, we heard the glorious truth at the end of chapter 6, that we have a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Mysterious Melchizedek. Well, I believe in the first 10 verses of chapter 7, the preacher is going to try to prove this to you. He's going to prove that glorious truth.

[3:36] Let's read God's Word together, and this time I'll remember to ask you to please stand. Amen. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham, returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him.

And to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness. And then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he continues a priest forever. See how great this man was, to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils.

And those descendants of Levi, who received the priestly office, have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from

Abraham.

But this man, who does not have his descent from them, received tithes from Abraham and blessed him, who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.

[4:48] In the one case, tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham.

For he was still in the loins of his ancestor, when Melchizedek met him. This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, my proposition for you this morning, from this text, is this.

You can and must trust Jesus, because all of Scripture testifies of him. Look at verse 8. The apostle's whole argument is based on the credibility of Scriptures.

He says, It is testified. So he wants you to search the Scriptures and verify what he's saying. I believe he's going to show us two things. Number one, you can trust Jesus as priest.

Look, for example, verse 1. He's priest of the God Most High, resembling the Son of God. Number two, you must trust Jesus as Lord. And this was a surprising finding for me.

[6:00] Look at verse 7, for instance, just to get us started. See how he says in verse 7, The inferior is blessed by the superior. Well, you take that and you trace it all the way through the text of Genesis 14.

We'll do this in a moment. And you'll see that it's marbled with rich covenantal language. All right. But first, I just want to point out, I think that the apostle, and I'm convinced, Ryan, you persuaded me, this was a sermon preached by Paul, most likely, and then recorded with Luke's eloquent Greek.

And I think some of what we see here today will certainly not contradict that. I think it'll reinforce it. So if that's true, and even if it's not, I believe that in Scripture we're taught how to read Scripture. And that's called hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the art and science of how to interpret the Bible the way God, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wanted it to be interpreted. So notice a few things that the apostle does.

First of all, in verse 1, he reads the Old Testament, the book of Genesis, as history. Look at verse 1. There's a man, normal man, not a Christophany, a historical character, Melchizedek.

[7:08] And he was the king of a real city. The city's name was Salem. And there he also served as priest of the Most High God. And he met another man, Abraham, who returned from the slaughter, historical account.

This really happened. He slaughtered these wicked kings. And then this priest, Melchizedek, blessed Abraham. And then Abraham gave him a tenth of everything from the spoils. See how he reads Genesis as history.

That's called historical interpretation. Now look next at how he uses the language, the grammar. So look at the second part of verse 2.

He starts to do an etymology, like dissecting the name. The name Melchizedek means king of righteousness. But then he's also seeing some other significance. The city that he ruled over was named Salem.

And you can hear it in the English translation. It's a form of the Hebrew word shalom, which means peace. So therefore he's saying because of his name and where he ruled, he was king of peace as well as king of righteousness.

[8:06] So those first two steps are called grammatical historical interpretation. But he doesn't stop there. Notice next the beginning of verse 3. He's going to do a literary analysis.

Look at verse 3. He is without father or mother or genealogy. Now he's not saying that this man showed up, you know, breaking all the rules of biology and reproduction. He's saying that in this literary account, we're not given his genealogy.

And knowing what we could know about the book of Genesis, that's noteworthy. That's significant. So he's really observing what Mozart said of a great composition. The music, beautiful music, is not even in the notes as much as in the silence between them.

So the fact that there's no genealogy is significant. That's a literary analysis. And then there's more. Look at the second half of verse 3. He says this wonderful phrase in the ESV.

It's resembling the Son of God. Other translations say he was made in the likeness of the Son of God. And there, it gives us a hint to go search this out now. It's what theologians have called typology.

[9:14] Typology. Real quickly, I just want you to keep in mind a typewriter. That probably comes to mind when you hear that word. With a typewriter, you push the key M for Melchizedek, and it slaps the ink on the paper, and it left a type.

It left an impression that has a symbol of something bigger. That's typology. We're going to get more into that here in one moment. There's one last thing he does. It really accounts for the rest of the passage.

I believe in verses 4 through 10, he's trying to use classical logic. So, you know, remember that Greco-Roman training. Look at verse 7. He says, it is beyond dispute.

He's wanting you to draw a logical conclusion. And it's set up in the form of a syllogism, which is major premise. Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.

Minor premise. Abraham is greater than Levi. Conclusion. You can go there in your mind.

Melchizedek is greater than Levi. That's his argument. Now, I know this can sound abstract and maybe super boring.

[10:15] But what I want you to picture is a FIFA World Cup. So, Abraham, everyone knows Abraham is the patriarch. He's number one. Well, right now, Brazil is ranked number one in the world.

Their first game will be Thanksgiving Day. Very excited. There's also the lifelong rival of Brazil. That's Argentina. They are rightly ranked below Brazil.

They're ranked as number four right now. So, we could say the Levites are Argentina, number four. But Abraham's number one. Brazil. Well, here comes the, you know, the group stage and then the knockout round.

And one semifinal on one side is Brazil versus Argentina. Yellow cards, red cards flying everywhere. That guy's tooth gets punched out. And Brazil, of course, wins.

Goes on to the final. And Argentina does not have a shot for another four years. But who's on the other side of the bracket? Look at who's going to come up. You would have never seen this coming. Ranked 25th in the world right now.

[11:13] But fun to watch. South Korea. And they make it all the way, advance to the final. So, now we have South Korea, the dark horse versus Brazil. South Korea is Melchizedek.

Brazil is Abraham. South Korea wins. So, South Korea is definitely better than Argentina. That's our conclusion. So, you see, why this is important is because you need to be able to know from the Bible that Jesus has God-given authority to forgive sin.

That's why it matters so much. Can you trust Jesus as your priest? Verse 8, scriptures testify. Now, look at verse 5, too. He says, The descendants of Levi received the priestly office as commanded by God's law.

So, we can't skirt around that issue. The work of the Levites is very important. Well, what was the work of the Levites in Israel's ceremonial law as given by God?

Numbers 18 says, In God's words, To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance in return for their service that they do.

[12:28] Their service in the tent of meeting. So, what was the service of the Levites in the tent of meeting? What was it? So that the people of Israel do not come near the tent of meeting lest they bear sin and die.

You could say Levites were put there to be guardians of God's holiness. And they also did something else. The Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting.

And he opens up what that meant. The service of the tent of meeting so that they should not bear iniquity and they should be forgiven. So, you see, the Levites had to guard God's holy presence and minister the sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins.

So, think of the day of atonement as like the best, biggest picture of the work of the Levites. And it's the high priest. He's going to offer the sacrifice, the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice, providing for the atonement of God's wrath against sin poured out on a substitute.

So that sinners now, if their hearts are contrite and they're before the Lord receiving this, they can receive that forgiveness of God applied to them to cover up their sin. And after that, he will pronounce the priestly blessing on the people.

[13:40] That was the pattern. First blood, then blessing. Without blood, no blessing. So don't picture the Levites as these, you know, nerdy, like scrawny priests.

Picture them more like avengers of abuse. That's what Levi was. He avenged the abuse of his sister. Later on at the base of Mount Sinai, animals are getting close to the foothills above Mount Sinai and fallen over dead.

And the Levites had to be the ones to pick up the sword and run it through the idolaters. Van Pelt says they were assassins of idolaters. Later, generations later, Phinehas, he was the one who took up the spear and carried out God's justice on the worshipers of Baal.

So picture Levites more like, you know, those guys who work the barbecue pits. They smell like smoke and blood and barbecue sauce all over them. And this, you know, that's more like a Levite. That's who they were. But it wasn't for anyone who could be a priest. Ezra chapter 2 said, There were some coming back from the exile, and they sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies.

[14:56] There's that word again. But they were not found there. They could not prove that from their dad's side and their mom's side, they belonged to this tribe of Levite. Because they could not prove it, they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean, never to be brought back in again.

Well, the author here goes right to that. See, in Hebrews chapter 7, verse 14, look there in your eyes. He says, It is evident that our Lord Jesus was descended from Judah.

And in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests. So you see the problem? God has a very high view of his holiness and a very high view of how offensive our sin is before him. Therefore, forgiveness of sins was very carefully guarded. And the calling of a man to be a Levite under that administration of grace, that calling was extremely exclusive.

Who could do that? To stand as God's mediator for sin. So this is a tough objection for the church to wrestle through, and even for us today. Hear it. On what biblical grounds can I trust, can you trust that Jesus is able to forgive my sins?

[16:09] Can you prove anywhere in God's word that Christ's priesthood is grounded in scripture? Can you prove that? You have to. You have to be able to.

And the way the apostle proves this is using typology. So, let's turn now to this text and see how he's preaching this text to them. Turn to Genesis chapter 14.

Genesis chapter 14, the second part. We'll start at verse 17. How did God ordain the heavenly spiritual reality to be stamped down in human history?

Well, he does it with this broad stroke brush. Okay, Moses, raised up as a prince in Egypt, highly trained, highly skilled as a writer, and the literary quality here is incredible.

It's not our sermon text, so I try to restrain ourselves here, but it's wonderful, even though it's in broad strokes. So let's listen carefully. After this, after his return from the defeat of Chedorlomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Sheva, that is, the king's valley.

[17:27] And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything, and the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I should not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.

So let's summarize what's happened here. There are these kings coming from the east, and there are major international trade routes, crisscrossing the promised land.

Well, they take over these big cities, most likely so they can take a tax off of everything that's coming through, all the goods from one continent to another, as well as some of the services, including the most vile services you could imagine in that ancient world.

God raises Abram up, sends him in to do battle, and gives him victory. And then he comes back, and that's what we just read. God's priest celebrates with a covenant feast after this bloodshed of God's judgment on those wicked kings, and the priest blesses Abraham and confirms who this God is.

[18:53] He's the creator, possessor of heaven and earth. And Abram says he raised his hand in loyal allegiance. Do you hear some covenantal language in here? Well, we're going to unpack that in a moment, but first I want to make sure we are tracking with the apostle on how typology points to Christ.

And there's a theologian from South Africa, Goldsworthy, he said, typology rests on the recognition that the way God spoke and acted in the Old Testament was preparatory and anticipatory to the definitive word and act of God in Christ.

So he's saying everything you read about in the Old Testament was setting the stage. It was preparing and anticipating Christ, especially in his work and his word. And the rest of the quote, he says, the type, Melchizedek, and the antitype, Christ, express this organic relationship between the events of the old that pattern and foreshadow their fulfillment in the new, especially in the work of Jesus Christ.

Another way to explain typology, a friend of mine said, it's the difference between a penny and the president. So you pick up a penny, you see the face side, Abraham Lincoln. Well, that's like the type, but the fulfillment, the antitype is like if those doors burst open, you hear a bugle and a Victorian tuba and in strides are a lanky, six foot three, 13th president.

That would be Christ, the substance, where the penny is the type, is the shadow and the fulfillment. So Melchizedek in this account is a type of the priestly work of Jesus.

[20:27] And you can trust Jesus as your priest with these connections. I'm going to show four things here. Number one, Jesus is not just a representative of God Most High.

See, Melchizedek was that. He was representing God Most High. But we're told in verse one, he is priest of God Most High, but Jesus is very God of very God. Hebrews one verse three, we saw this. Jesus is the exact imprint of his nature and he upholds the universe by the power of his word. You know how Melchizedek blessed Abram and said, God is possessor of heaven and earth?

Well, the author of Hebrews says, Jesus is Lord. He's the one who upholds the universe by the power of his word. He is very God. Number two, Jesus' priesthood was not based on his pedigree, the lines and the genealogy where he came from, but it was based on his person.

Just like God appointed Melchizedek in this patriarchal age before the law, God appointed his son to serve as priest. Like Melchizedek, Jesus does not have his descent from man.

[21:35] In Hebrews seven verse six, Hebrews two nine says, Jesus was crowned with glory and honor and he was made low from that, from heaven. He was made low so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone who trusts in him.

Number three, Jesus made himself under the law. He didn't abolish it. He said, yeah, everything that's there about the Levites, that's good. That's wonderful. That's another type. It also points to me, but he did that.

He came under the law to fulfill it out of love for you, his spiritual family. Hebrews 10 says, the law can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Verse five, we're told that the Levites received their priestly office by commandment in the law. And then Hebrews 10 says, but the law itself was but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities.

And the fourth reason is that Jesus's priesthood is not temporary, but it is perpetual. It's eternal. In verse eight, we're told he is the one who lives.

[22:44] And scripture testifies that this priest, Jesus, is of the highest order and that he lives and rules eternally. Hebrews 1, 2, confess this of Christ.

You are the same and your years have no end. But there's even more truth for us is that Jesus says, you are now a nation of priests.

You are to be my Levites. Levites, you know what else they were? They were reformers. I don't think Levites would have put up with what my friend calls Cotton Candy Church.

Matthew Henry described the role of the Levites as they were ministering this time of revival and bringing offerings to the Lord and there was repentance in the land. Here's how he describes it. Quote, the Levites offered many prayers to God with the peace offerings. In these, Israel looked to God as the God of their fathers in covenant with them.

[23:41] The Levites also read and explained the scriptures to God's people because faith comes by hearing God's word and God has always brought about reformation where biblical preaching has abounded.

Praise God if you're part of a church like this that is devoted to prayer, to offering their hearts with the sacrifice of praise and to preaching God's word, proclaiming scripture.

Well, we're still dealing with shadows but I want you to picture this. A little boy, age eight, he still remembers the day when he and his mom heard the door, a general comes in, very serious face and he tells him that your dad who was deployed in the military is MIA.

You know what that means, kids? Missing in action. That means he had been lost, maybe even taken captive, a prisoner of war. So birthdays pass, sports events, school events pass and every single night the boy will look at every picture he can find of his dad and he'll ask his family and his dad's friends to tell him stories about his dad.

He loves his dad, he longs for him but all he's got are the stories and the pictures. Well, the great news, a phone call, they rush to the airport and they see down the hallway the dad running to give his wife and son a hug.

[25:09] He was alive all along, was able to escape and is now right here with them, squeezing them into his arms. See, for us as a church, the pictures we have, it's like a picture of Melchizedek.

It's wonderful, we want to study every detail and the stories, that's the testimony of the church.

What a joy to hear the testimony from one another of how good our Savior is and how much he's shown you grace in your life.

We read great books, we hear these testimonies, we look at the scriptures, we try to study and understand the pictures but you know, Jesus said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Lo, I am with you always even to the very end of the age and even though he's with us spiritually, he will one day come physically in his resurrected body and he will draw you.

He's the one who said, let the children come to me and no matter how small your faith is, if you have faith like a child, you run to Jesus, run to him now spiritually and when he returns, he will want to embrace you and hug you and hold you in his strong arms.

[26:17] you can trust that Jesus is your priest if you run to him by faith. Not only can you trust Jesus as your priest but you also must trust him as your Lord.

Hebrews 7, 2 says, he was the priest of God most high and king of righteousness. See, Jesus is the king, the ruler, the Lord representing God's dominion and he calls for righteousness from his subjects.

What does the Bible mean by this term Lord if he's king of righteousness? Well, look at verse 7. If you go between Hebrews 7 and Genesis 14, we'll be in both of those a bit here.

So, Hebrews 7, verse 7. Let's unpack that expression from earlier. Remember, the greater blesses the lesser. So, he's describing a relationship of superiors and inferiors and so, we've got this apostle in the first century but he's also drawing upon ancient Hebrew covenantal language and scholars have uncovered, you know, the Hittite treaties to see this rich covenantal language and I think maybe that's why we have the new Star Wars series coming back because it helps to put us in this ancient world with totally different culture but we can still get it and see what's going on.

So, picture on the planet Tatooine an elite mercenary. This is from Star Wars and you don't need to go watch it if you haven't. Her name is Fennec Shaint and she's a mighty warrior.

[27:51] Well, she is left for dead, nearly killed but the greatest of all the bounty owners, Boba Fett, found her, saved her, got her back up to life. She's strong again now and from now on she will be his right hand.

He will be her lord and she will be his vassal servant. She feels grateful and she feels like whatever he wants to carry out in his domain, his dominion here, I want to carry it out for him.

That's the relationship between a covenant vassal servant and the covenant lord. Well, where do you see covenant in Genesis 14? Now, you are going to want to look at Genesis 14 as we walk through this.

So, just to tie that light-hearted analogy, Melchizedek would be like Boba Fett here and Abraham would be like Finnick. He would be the one that recognizes the superior.

All right. We'll look at Genesis 14 verses 17 and 18. Notice how in this passage, starting at verse 17, Abraham comes back from this war and he's greeted by two characters.

[28:52] So, it's really setting up these two men in competition with one another. And what they're competing for, one representing sin, Satan, depravity. Remember, Sodom and Gomorrah is who this guy represents.

The other representing the holy God, the king of righteousness. And they're both competing for Abraham's heart. So, in this example, you are to look to Abraham, the man of faith.

Will you choose the world or will you choose Christ? You know, the king of Sodom or the king of righteousness and peace with God. Well, the king of Sodom is only mentioned at the very beginning of this passage and at the very end.

So, he's pushed to the outskirts. But notice that at the very center, so many covenantal elements. The bread and the wine, I hope you already picked up on that, that you heard that. That's a covenantal meal.

Abraham communes with the holy God through a ministration of God's grace. Do you see that in verse 18? That's what Melchizedek brought him, a covenant feast. Well, God's priest then, the covenant Lord, the superior, Melchizedek, blesses the inferior, Abraham.

[29:56] And Abraham submits to him as covenant Lord. Look at verse 19. He blessed him and said, blessed be Abram by God most high, possessor of heaven and earth.

So, the priest of God is teaching the servant in this covenant relationship of God's true identity. He's giving him a doxology. Learn this. Learn your theology proper.

This is who God is. And then, he teaches as well in verse 21, the principle in God's salvation of sinners is *solus deo gloria*.

When God saves sinners, it's for the glory of God alone. Look at verse 21. When the king of Sodom came to tempt him, the reason Abraham would not do it, verse 22, is because he said, you would take credit for it.

You would say, I am the one who made Abraham rich. So, the king of Sodom, you can picture him like a greedy, slimy, Jabba the Hutt. And he wants to be able to say, see, the reason Abraham is successful is because I let him keep my stuff.

[31:00] But Abraham recognized, if I give that to this wicked king, then I'm stealing glory from God. And because I swore my right hand, I swore to this covenant God, I will be breaking the terms of my covenant with him.

And my covenant is a legally bound oath with sanctions that will apply. So, Abraham's showing a fear of God and protecting the glory of God. God. We know that Abraham learned the lesson he was to learn because of how he responds to the temptation.

So, notice back in the blessing, verse 21, at the very end, he is possessor of heaven and earth.

That's an unusual phrase. But notice how Abraham learned this.

If you look at verse 22, he refers to his loyalty to the Lord Most High. The word Lord is Yahweh. And Jehovah is God's covenantal name.

God Most High is Elohim. It's God's name as creator and the greatest of all in an age of polytheism. And then, what's the next phrase? You see it there, verse 22?

[32:06] He learned the doxology. This God who I'm in covenant with is possessor of heaven and earth. He listened to the priest, to Melchizedek, and learned what God wanted him to learn.

Well, let's apply some of these principles. What does this covenant relationship mean and dictate for us? Number one, you can only have one Lord in your life.

And sharing the glory for God's work in your life, His grace, His goodness, violates the terms of His covenant. He is Lord alone and He will receive all the glory.

Number two, the blessing and the feast at the hand of Christ, the priest of God, are only for those in covenant with the Lord. Notice how the king of Sodom is not invited to the table.

His heart is not in relationship to God, His creator. And Psalm 13 picks up on this contrast. Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but the steadfast love of God surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord, Jehovah, the covenant God.

[33:12] God. All right, well, you can turn back to Hebrews 7 because there are a few other words we need to make sure we address. What about Abraham's spoils, his tithe, and his loins?

Well, his spoils in verse 4 and the tithe, those two go together. Now, tithing, the author of Hebrews explains it was a tenth, and tithing was a sign of submission to the one greater, to the one that you depend upon.

Robert Paul Martin explained, Abraham acted not just as the natural but also as the covenantal head of all his posterity so that legally Abraham's actions in paying this tithe to Melchizedek imputed that covenant relationship to all his posterity.

It became legally binding, the submission of everyone under Abraham became legally binding, including the Levites, now subservient to a higher order priesthood. So this would be like if the president of the United States decided we're going to pay 10% of all of our tax money to a greater nation, and the greatness of a nation will be measured by humility and civility.

So from now on, the USA will be paying 10% of all of our taxes to Canada. So by implication, Coloradans are paying 10% taxes to Canada. That's what's going on because the Levites were under Abraham, and a higher power now is making this commitment.

[34:40] They're legally bound. They are under him as well. Now what about those spoils? That's an important word. Robert Paul Martin again explains. He said, the word spoils literally denoted the top part of a heap of grain, and then by analogy, the chief or finest portion of the spoils of war which were dedicated to the deity.

Abraham gave the tithe from the whole by selecting such articles to compose it as seemed most worthy of the venerable priest of God.

He gave him the best. He gave him the choicest goods that he brought back from the war. Well, a lot of Christians have noticed now. We're not under this civil law anymore.

However, Abraham wasn't either. And if Abraham, our example of a man who had faith and was saved by grace, if he gave a tenth of the choicest part to a mere representative of God, how much more should we now give to the Lord himself through the church?

And I'm encouraged by this church. I think in so many ways, I see you giving of your time, your energy, your creativity, those scraps of time after work and on the weekends to practice hospitality, to love one another, and to give to the ministry of this church and to global missions.

[35:56] And I also want to challenge you, what else might God be calling you to give? How can you proclaim through your life, every part of your life, that Christ is your Lord and you give to him joyfully out of the abundance of all that he's given to you?

A friend of mine set a wonderful example. Again, it's not law, but it's, I believe, a response of gratitude. He learned from another missionary. He, after college, very bright and got trained to be a linguist, to go be a Bible translator, and he dedicated the decade of his 20s to the service of the Lord.

And he did not get married during that time. Now, he did meet another missionary, and she became his girlfriend, later his fiance, and just weeks after he turned 30, they were married. Now they have a house full of kids, and they're still on the mission field, translating for an unreached people group, and they're just, to me, an example of, look how God takes his servants and blesses through their life when it's given back in joy.

Well, if you are here today and you maybe have wounds, you've been broken in church, by man, through human institutions, will you look to Christ today?

Ask him to show you the Father in heaven as he truly is. That's what Christ desires to do. And that's what faith is. It's when the Holy Spirit of God, through his word, opens your mind, your eyes, and your heart to believe in God's goodness toward you from the hand of Jesus, your kind Lord.

[37:25] That's how John Calvin defined faith. He said, faith is a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

And how do you know if you are in this covenant of grace through Christ? Well, Hebrews 10, 16 says, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord, quoting Jeremiah.

Here it is. I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds. Do you have God's law pressed upon your heart, revealed to your mind?

God says, I will judge those in the church. Leave the judgment to him. You know what was the one defining trait of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, the one who already marched through the valley of the shadow of death as our forerunner?

Matthew 17 says, those closest to him captured his lasting reputation. From the lips of mockers quoting Psalm 22 and this was it. He trusts in God.

[38:36] Let God deliver him now if he desires him. And our Lord delivered his son. He accepted his sacrifice. Jesus trusted God to the very end.

And now, Hebrews 8 says, he is a minister in the holy places in the true dwelling of God. So if Jesus is your Lord and you know this today, then you know that he intercedes for you in the battle.

He is your priest on high praying for you. And he's with you. He lays a table before you in the presence of your enemies. He blesses you because he bled for you.

And he is drawing the church to himself. See, he is the one who's the anchor in heaven. And this chain will never break. And the ship is, that's a church.

It's his ironclad ship and he's drawing us to himself. So you need to be in this church and you need to see where God is bringing you together. And we're not passive, you know, wading our hand in the water, dragging, dragging.

[39:37] No, get in line with where Christ is pulling you. Pick up an oar and join him in this labor. That's what discipleship in the church is. It's training you to become prepared for heaven.

Take your sanctification seriously. Get equipped for mission and for ministry. That's what we're doing. Pick up the oar. This is how we row in the church, the kingdom of God. He rules over his people.

So be sure you are in Christ because the flood of sin and death will bury you alive if you're not. You can trust in Jesus as your priest and you must trust in him as your Lord.

Do you see that all of Scripture testifies of Christ? even the shadowy parts? Then put your trust in him today. Don't put it off any longer. Trust in Christ.

Let's pray. From Psalm 32. The Lord is my strength and my shield. In him my heart trusts and I am helped.

[40:40] My heart exults and with my song I give thanks to him. By faith alone, with the help of the Holy Spirit, God's people can once again today say, Amen.