

Isaiah 41:21-42:17

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church.

The sermon text for today is Isaiah 41, 21 through 42, 17.! At the conclusion of the reading, I will declare, This is the word of the Lord.

And the church, in joyful response to his revelation given to us, shall respond, Thanks be to God. Set forth your case, says the Lord.

Bring your proofs, says the king of Jacob. Let them bring them and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that they may consider them, that they may know their outcome, or declare us the things to come.

Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are the gods, do good or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified. Behold, you are nothing, and your work is less than nothing.

[1 : 08] An abomination is he who chooses you. I stirred up one from the north, and he has come, from the rising of the sun, and he shall call upon my name.

He shall trample on rulers on mortar, as the potter treads clay. Who declared it from the beginning, that we might know, and beforehand that we might say, he is right?

There was none who declared it, none who proclaimed, none who heard your words. I was the first to say to Zion, Behold, here they are, and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good news.

But when I look, there is no one. Among these, there is no counselor, who, when I ask, gives an answer. Behold, they are all a delusion.

Their works are nothing. Their metal images are empty wind. Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him.

[2 : 08] He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out aloud, or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.

He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged, till he has established justice in the earth, and the coastlands wait for his law.

Thus says God, the Lord who created the heavens, and stretched them out, who spreads out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk in it. I am the Lord. I have called you in righteousness. I will take you by the hand and keep you. I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon.

From the prison, those who sit in darkness, I am the Lord, that is my name. My glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

[3 : 11] Behold, the former things have come to pass, and the new things I now declare. Before they spring forth, I tell you of them. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth.

You who go down to the sea and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants, let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kadar inhabits.

Let the inhabitants of Salah sing for joy. Let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the Lord and declare his praise in the coastlands.

The Lord goes out like a mighty man. Like a man of war, he stirs up his zeal. He cries out. He shouts aloud. He shows himself mighty against his foes.

For a long time I have held my peace. I have kept still and restrained myself. Now I will cry out like a woman in labor. I will gasp and pant. I will lay waste to mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation.

[4 : 14] I will turn the rivers into islands and dry up the pools. I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know. In paths that they have not known, I will guide them.

I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, you are our gods.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you. Thank you, Caleb. Let's look to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I thank you so very much for who you are and all that you've done for us. We thank you for your word and how it reveals to us the clarity of what is real and what is false, and just your love for us as you pursue us to bring us away from faulty idols and to draw us to you, the only one that can give true happiness, true joy, and fulfillment.

Lord, I ask and pray, O God, that you might just be with me today, fill me, control me with your spirit, and I ask, Lord, that as the word goes forth today, that it would not be so much my words, but your word that would go forth.

[5 : 30] I pray, Father, that there might be ears that would be open to hear and hearts that would be open to receive those truths that you want us to take home today. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Let me ask you a simple question. Are you happy here today? In other words, would you say that you're satisfied, you're fulfilled, you're content?

And if so, what is it that's bringing that about in your life? And if not, what is it that's standing in the way, keeping you from being happy?

I begin with these questions because the prophet Isaiah wants to talk to us today from this passage about idols. false or substitute gods. And the challenge that we have here today is that we in the modern world have a hard time thinking about idols oftentimes.

We read a passage like this in Isaiah and we say, oh yeah, for sure they had idols back then. In fact, archaeologists have revealed to us that there were some 3,000 deities there in ancient Mesopotamia.

[6 : 43] And so clearly, there was a problem there in Isaiah's day. But in our day, there's more of a tendency to jettison all gods, at least by name anyways.

And so the question is, how does this passage from Isaiah have any relevance to us today? What's the connection between Isaiah's day and our day?

And I want to suggest to you that I believe the connection is the universal pursuit of happiness. We are all chasing after happiness, just like every single person who ever has lived on the face of this earth.

We all seek after, pursue, long for happiness, and whatever we consider essential for that happiness can become an idol for us, a God substitute.

I think most people intuitively know that happiness is something out there for us to pursue, for us to get. And that's not really all that surprising because I believe God has created us to have a sense within us that our ultimate happiness is going to be found only in him.

[8 : 06] And we seek after that, oftentimes in the wrong areas. And so this morning, this passage that Isaiah gives us, God wants to show us how much better he is at providing our ultimate happiness than what we oftentimes pursue.

So I think what I want to do is just begin by admitting for ourselves that idolatry is a modern-day problem. It wasn't just for the days of Isaiah.

What we give our attention to other than God can become an idol. It's something that we stake our happiness in.

what is it that frustrates you and gets you angry if you're not able to achieve it as you're thinking through that.

To help identify a possible idol in your life, you might ask yourself, what do you think about most? What do you obsess over? What do you fret over if it seems like it's slipping away?

[9 : 21] What gets you angry if something or someone is blocking you from getting that? Let me give you an example of an idol that I sometimes have found myself chasing in my life.

I'll call it respect. I guess everyone likes to be liked. But for myself, the way I'm put together, my being liked by people is not as important as being respected.

respected. And that's fine. That's a fine preference or desire until I begin to demand it.

And then I've stepped over into the realm of that being an idol, that which I pursue to make me happy. And if I don't get that respect, I'm not happy. And I might see red. Thankfully, by God's grace, as he's continued to work on me many, many years now, he's delivering me from the grip of that idol and a lot of other idols, though he certainly still has his work cut out for him.

[10:33] But what about you? As you think in your own life, what are those things, those idols, those God substitutes that you have? What are the good things that you have turned into ultimate things?

What are the personal preferences or desires that have morphed into demands that it's got to happen or else? The good news from this passage and many other passages that we read in Scripture is that while we're faced, we're oftentimes chasing after these false gods, we have a God that loves us anyways and is chasing after us because he wants us to experience the abundant life and joy that he created us for.

and he'll do anything to bring that about. And so as we look at this passage here, we find God is going to challenge the people of Isaiah's day to show them, one, the stupidity of our idols, two, the supremacy of God and his servant, and three, the satisfaction that can be ours in him.

Let's begin by looking at the stupidity of our idols. And we're looking at Isaiah 41, 21 to 29.

Now here we find God is unmasking the stupidity of our idols that we chase after. Take a look at verse 21. It says, Set forth your case, says the Lord.

[12:17] Bring your proofs, says the king of Jacob. And we find ourselves we're back in the courtroom that we were in last week with Pastor Mike in Isaiah 40, 18 to 20.

And he's, at that time, is challenging the people to talk about their idols and to identify. Here he's saying, you who are idol worshipers, bring them in.

Put them on the evidence table right now that we can take a look at. We want to be able to see them. And he goes on to say, let us see what is going to happen.

Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome, or declare to us the things to come. Tell us what's going to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.

Do good, do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified. Here, Isaiah is putting our idols and the idols of Isaiah's day there on trial.

[13:26] He says, bring them in. Let's look at them right now. Let's see if these gods whom you are devoted to can do anything.

And he says, okay, idols, tell us what's going to happen in the future. No? You can't tell us that, huh? Well, do something. Do good. Do harm. Do something that's going to inspire us either to fear or to be awed by you.

Do something. Do something to demonstrate that you have any power at all. In verse 24, there, in verse 24, he says, behold, you are nothing and your work is less than nothing.

An abomination is he who chooses you. Harsh words and yet I believe that God is being very reasonable here. He could have said, look, I am God and they are not and just destroyed them. Period. But what he's doing, he's calling these people who are devoted to these false gods, he says, bring them in, bring in the fake gods and let's consider the bogus source of happiness that you're chasing after and the reason and then let's reason together.

[14:51] Let's reason together as to how these gods are working for you. Hopefully, by this point, you maybe have thought about some things that you chase after that you really get fretting over if it's not going to be sure and you get very angry if someone's blocking it.

what are those in your life? What are you putting your hope in for happiness? Are you putting your hope in happiness for some relationship?

How's that working for you? Are you putting your hope for happiness in some career advancement? How's that working for you? Are you putting your hope for happiness in your ability to control your world?

God invites us to ask a very practical question. Do these gods that have our devotion, do they have any power to deliver what they promise beyond the immediate?

Because, let's face it, some of our gods that we chase after give us immediate gratification and happiness. But in the long haul, as you see, that's how idolatry works.

[16:02] It promises to, as God, it promises to give us happiness, to give us joy, to give us pleasure, satisfaction along the way. And that's why we chase after them. But God says, okay, so how is that working for you?

Again, over the long haul and not just for the moment. God invites us to compare idols with himself. In contrast to these impotent gods, God says in verse 25 that he says, I stirred up one from the north and he has come from the rising of the sun.

He shall call upon my name. Now he's speaking about Cyrus right now, the Persian king, who's going to rise up around 550 B.C. to conquer the very powerful nation of Babylon.

He goes on and says, he will trample on rulers as on mortar, as the potter treads out clay, who declared it from the beginning that we might know and beforehand that we might say, oh, he's right. Now it's important to note that Isaiah is writing over a hundred years before Cyrus was even on the scene, so to speak.

[17:22] Isaiah's goal here is that when the people of Israel some hundred years later who are in captivity read the passage, the prophecy that he had given, that they would understand that, wow, Yahweh, our God, predicted this over a hundred years ago even before Cyrus was born.

and here he is, he's rising up and he's going to conquer the almighty Babylon and he's going to bring deliverance.

Back in the courtroom, verse 29, he says, there was none talking to the idols. He says, none of them that declared it, none of those who had proclaimed it, none who heard your words.

I was the first to say to Zion, behold, here they are and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good news. But when I look, there is no one among these.

There is no counselor who when I give, or I should say when I ask, gives an answer. Behold, these idols, they're all a delusion. Their works are nothing, their metal images are empty wind.

[18:42] In other words, there is only one God that declares before something happens. There's only one God out there that has gone on record proclaiming what will happen in the future and then brings it to pass.

And that's our God, the one true creator God, the God of the Bible. In contrast to these impotent gods, these foolish gods, God says, I'm the one who raises up Cyrus.

I've declared beforehand what's going to happen. I'm reliable and faithful because I'm capable of predicting as well as bringing about the future.

Jump down if you would to, if you're following in your Bible there to Isaiah 42 for the moment looking at verses 18, 8 and 9. He says, I am the Lord, that is my name, my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carve idols.

Behold, the former things have come to pass, excuse me, and new things I declare. Behold, they spring forth, I tell you of them. That is why idolatry is such a big deal.

[20:07] love, it's not just because it threatens our happiness, but it's because it detracts from our God's glory, the glory that's due his person and his name.

When we give our attention, we give our devotion to created things, instead of having that go to the God of the universe, that again is not just short-circuiting our quote-unquote happiness, happiness, but that's an affront to the king of the universe.

It's not just ridiculous, it's rebellious. It's not just stupid, it's subversive and selfish.

But you know what makes all of this really even more amazing is that he cares about us in the midst of our chasing after other things.

in fact, he chases after us so as to deliver us from this foolish task that we're in.

[21:19] And so we find in 42 verse 1 Isaiah switches gear from despite our idolatry, he begins to show how God loves us and is jealous to save us.

and wants to change the subject from the stupidity of our idols to the supremacy of God and his beloved servant.

Let's read that again from what we read earlier today. Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights.

I have put my spirit upon him and he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry out aloud or lift up his voice or make it heard in the streets.

A bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not quench. He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth and the coastlands wait for his law.

[22 : 24] in contrast to these foolish idols that you've been running after. He's saying behold my servant. Well who's this servant?

You notice that his identity isn't more specified and we're wondering who it might be. Well I suggest that when you come across something like that in the Bible that you don't just keep reading but you maybe put a mark there and you begin to maybe do some study and find out where else in the Bible does that title my servant used.

And if you were to do that you find that my servant is used in the Bible to describe the people of Israel some 14 times. In fact it was just last week in Isaiah 41 8 and 9 that he described the people of Israel as my servant.

But along with that you find that Moses is called my servant some six times. Caleb one time. David 21 times. Isaiah and the other prophets nine times.

Job seven times. Nebuchadnezzar is called my servant three times. Abraham one time. And Jesus four times. The first of which is here in this passage that we're looking at right now.

[23 : 52] in other words there's not just one servant of the Lord. There are many. And this is a motif that works its way through the Old Testament. And all these other servants these I'll call them little s servants are the servant of the capital s servant that he's saying behold my servant my anointed one the one whom I love.

now Isaiah 42 1-4 that we have before us right now is a messianic prophecy. It's a prophecy to predict the coming of God's anointed God's Messiah in the future.

It points us forward to Jesus Christ. Now how do we know that this messianic prophecy is talking about Jesus? Do we need to go to seminary for that?

No. I just need to read my Bible. And if I were to read my Bible and especially if I were in the gospel of Matthew we know all the gospels describe the life of Jesus and what he was like and what he did and what he said and all that.

Well in Matthew chapter 12 you find that he is actually quoting Isaiah 42 1-4.

[25 : 16] Now living at this stage in redemptive history it's easy to see how prophecy and fulfillment come together. But that wasn't the case for the people that Isaiah himself was writing to at the time.

And yet at the same time Isaiah in writing to them was giving to them important information that would help them in the days ahead.

They didn't have the book of Matthew so that they could see that oh he's talking about Jesus in the future. But instead this is what he's done. He said in contrast to the idols who can't predict anything I'm telling you that I'm going to raise this one up from the north and he's going to come along and he's going to ultimately deliver you.

He's going to be like a small M Messiah. In fact he refers to him in Isaiah 45 1 as a Messiah namely Cyrus.

And he says I'm going to do this I'm going to raise him up and so that when you see this happen you'll know that the true ultimate Messiah will one day come and he'll bring justice to the nations.

[26 : 43] This is a call by Isaiah to trust the one true God who will be faithful to raise that ultimate Messiah up that true deliverer that we all need.

Now let's look at some of the features of this servant. There's three of them that I see. the first is the nature of the servant.

He is gentle. Take a look at verse three the first part of verse three it says a bruised reed he will not break and a faintly burning wick he will not quench.

How different is this servant from Cyrus who according to Isaiah 41 25 it said he's going to trample on rulers as mortar.

Cyrus is going to come with power. He's going to come with aggression to deliver while Jesus is going to come with gentleness and humility. Jesus doesn't just plow his way into your life in an aggressive sort of way.

[27 : 56] He comes gently and with a settled confidence confidence that all of your longings for happiness and fulfillment will be met in him.

He doesn't have to push his way into your life. The next thing that we find there is that not only is he a gentle servant but the cause of this servant is to bring justice into the world.

We see that in verse 1 as well as 3 and 4. He says he will proclaim justice to the nations.

He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth. And when I read that I say oh how we need justice in this world.

as we seen various crimes escalating in our cities and our government. As we followed various wars whether it be in Europe or in the Middle East or potentially in the Asia Pacific.

[29 : 12] We realize that we need justice. There are all kinds of things that prompt us to say please God we need justice in this world.

but you know as much as we would long for it we find that justice is just out there elusive.

We can't seem to get our handle on it. I'd like to listen to a thoughtful reflection from Ray Ortlund about the word justice in this particular text.

text. He says this, the word justice includes within its scope all the longings for a better life and a better world.

But by now the mess we've made is so far advanced, so systemic, so overwhelming, it's beyond the powers of correction. Should we work for a better society?

[30 : 11] Yes. God himself tells us to, but at the same time, let us have the humility to face the facts. In the whole sorry length of human history, we have failed to assemble even one human society as we ourselves would like to be.

There are flashes of brilliance here and there, but they never last. Our salvation will never come from our own self-assertion. It will only come from the gentle servant of the Lord, who we will reorder human civilization, not by bullying, but by absorbing our sins and misery into himself. The cause of this servant is to faithfully bring justice, and it's in him that our sure hope for justice, for a better world will happen.

Well, Isaiah shows us the nature of the servant. He shows us the cause of the servant, and finally he talks about the work of the servant as well in verses 5 to 7.

He says this, Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens, has stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and the spirit to those who walk in it.

[31 : 37] I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will take you by the hand and keep you, I will give you a covenant, give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, and to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prisons of those who sit in darkness.

the work of this servant is to open the eyes of the blind and deliver them for whatever prison they find themselves in.

Prisons from their own self-imposed prison because of their idolatry. You know, idols promise to make us happy, they promise to make us fulfilled, they promise to give us pleasure, but when we give ourselves to them, what we end up finding is they end up owning us rather than we owning them say.

Ever been in a relationship dungeon? You know, you were chasing after some relationship that you thought would make you happy.

happy, and then you ended up trapped in an unhealthy, possibly toxic relationship that made you anything but happy or satisfied.

[33 : 14] Perhaps you have been in a career dungeon where you chased after the fulfillment of a career advancement. you did whatever was needful to do to climb that ladder of success, only get to the top and find that your ladder is leaning against the wrong wall and to find that rather than freedom, you're experiencing bondage.

some of you might be living in an addiction dungeon where you've chased after some pleasure that was connected to a substance such as drugs, alcohol, or even food, or that was connected with some quote-unquote harmless activity such as dieting, exercise, video gaming, gambling, viewing porn, and you became controlled, you became addicted, enslaved.

And what God is saying here is no matter what dungeon you find yourself in, his servant Jesus is willing and able to set you free, to give you freedom and hope and joy and life in him.

He comes to bring the prisoners out of their dungeons. My friends, God is inviting us today to step over the line and to receive what he offers to us in his servant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus. You see, it's possible to appreciate Jesus. He was really a wonderful person, a wonderful prophet, even whatever, but still deal with him kind of on our own terms.

[35 : 16] We may even have accepted him as our savior in our head. It's possible to respect him, but not embrace him as our savior or submit to him as our Lord or delight in him as our only hope.

Perhaps it may be true of some of you here today, and God, if that's the case, is inviting you to step off the line and stop doing this two step with him and say, God, I'm sold out for you.

I want to do what you want to do. I want to move from a vantage point of pride to humility and submission to you. I want to come and entrust myself to you today.

I admit my contribution to the sin and injustice in this world today. I admit, God, that I'm part of the problem, whether it's in the world overall or right within my own home.

God, you are my only hope. And so, God, I'm asking you to reveal my idols to me, that I have blind spots on, and then destroy them.

[36 : 40] I'm asking that you take me as your own today, Lord. I want to embrace you for the salvation that you offer me, and I want to give myself fully to you today.

my friends, God's inviting you to step over that line, and wherever you are today, you need to answer that question, am I willing to do that, or do I want to just kind of go along with going to church on Sunday?

Now, here's what will happen if, in fact, you will step over that line, and that is, he'll give us a satisfaction in him, and that satisfaction will be ours.

Take a look there at verse 10 and following. He says, Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants.

Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages of Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Silah sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains, let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coastlands.

[37 : 56] This is a call or an invitation to all folks who will find their ultimate joy in happiness in God through his servant.

Isaiah is telling us that when we find that true happiness in Christ, that the natural response will be to shout it aloud, to sing aloud, to give glory and praise to this God and his servant.

That's why when we gather together on Sunday morning, we oftentimes have as a portion of it a fair amount of singing. And that's because singing in many ways is kind of like a artistic communal way of lifting up our voices and giving praise to our God.

God, if you've never fully done that, or for whatever reason you did at one point and you've kind of veered away for a while, you may come into a service like this and you might acknowledge that the words that we're singing are true, but they're not true from your heart.

They're not representing the overflow of your joy in him. On the other hand, if you have done that, you've given yourself fully and completely to him, you'll find that you'll want to get together.

[39 : 26] You can't wait to get together with God's people so as to be able to sing his praises out of a heart that's overflowing with his love and has been changed by his grace.

Now I want you to notice who's invited to sing this song, again looking at verses 10 to 12. It says, you who go down to the sea, the coastlands, the deserts, the cities, the villages, the inhabitants of Qadar and Silah, everyone, everywhere joined in the celebration and the singing.

Isaiah wants everyone to express their satisfaction and overflowing worship to this God. This is why we have public worship services that we invite everyone in the community, anyone who wants to come.

Come, taste and see that the Lord is good. Come and hear the good news of who he is and what he's done for us. Come, participate and find the happiness and joy and satisfaction that you're looking for, not in things out there that can just melt away, but in the one who is eternal, one who will never change.

Now you look at verses 13 to 14 as we work our way down the passage and there's kind of two odd and disparate images that seem to come out of nowhere.

[40 : 58] there. Let's look at that there. It says, the Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war, he stirs up his zeal. He cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.

For a long time I've held my peace. I have kept still and restrained myself. Now I will cry out like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant. That just seems like those images have come out of nowhere. I have to get some thought to it and because we have like an image of a warrior psyching himself up for battle and we have another image of a woman giving birth.

And you have to ask yourself, what's God trying to convey through his prophet here with these pictures? And I don't know for certain but I got the sense that God's saying that God is so

committed to our salvation that he is willing to fight for it and is willing to suffer for it as well. He's committed to conquer our idols like a warrior. And he's committed to give new life to our souls like a woman gives new life to the world.

[42 : 18] Now look at the rest of the text, 15 through 17. He says, I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation.

I will turn the rivers into islands and dry up the pools. And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known. I will guide them.

I will turn the darkness before them into light and the rough places into level ground. These are the things that I do I do not forsake them. I'm going to lay waste mountains and hills and dry up vegetation.

We all know, I think we know, that God is not anti-beauty. He created this world, a beautiful place and he said it was good. Even in his sin-cursed state right now, it is one beautiful place to live.

So I don't believe that he's anti-beauty. But what I suspect is he's using picturesque language that no matter what's in the way, whether it be hills or mountains or rivers or trees or blindness or whatever it is, God will make a way for his salvation to come to each and every one of us.

[43 : 30] And he finishes in verse 17 by saying, They are turned back and utterly put to shame who trust in carved images or carved idols, who say to metal images, you are our gods.

So we think through what we've just read today and we've talked about a little bit. Considering the freedom and the salvation, the joy that God offers us, why would we ever turn back to those substitute gods that we pursue for happiness, satisfaction, pleasure?

Isaiah ends where he began. By returning to the theme of the uselessness, the worthlessness, and the impotence of idols. And he ends essentially with the same question as he had started with is,

You who continue to pursue those God substitutes, how is that working for you?

Are your idols delivering all that they've promised you? Are you truly happy, fulfilled, content, and satisfied in them?

My friends, as we let some of this just sink in today, I would hope and pray that we would purpose to leave those things behind us. Those stupid, worthless God substitutes that can't really do anything in the big picture in the long run.

[45 : 15] And may we give our devotion over to the one who deserves it, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's leave behind our prisons and our dungeons of our idolatry.

And let's, in fact, follow the Lord Jesus Christ unto light and freedom. Let's pray.

Let's pray.