

Paul Before Agrippa

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 April 2010

Preacher: Rev. David Jackman

[0 : 00] Well let me begin by thanking you very much for your welcome and bringing you greetings from our home church which is St Helens Bishopsgate in the City of London.

Many of you will know the links that have been between our churches over the years through the ministry of Dick Lucas and now William Taylor and I know that the church would want to bring me greetings from St Helens and to assure you of our love and our prayers.

We thank God for you and we pray for you very regularly. And it's a great privilege for me to stand here this morning and to open such a magnificent chapter of the Bible if you would like to turn in your New Testament section back to page 139 where in Acts chapter 26.

I wonder if you saw the latest Facebook possibility recorded in the Globe and Mail on Friday. Your friends, inverted commas, can post what they really think of you on that website but anonymously. And you can have the fun, also in inverted commas, of working out who has said what. It raises an interesting question, doesn't it?

[1 : 18] How do you want people to think of you? How would you like to be remembered? And that will be a window into what we value most in our lives.

What is it that defines life for us? What is that personal heartbeat? What is it that we could not imagine ourselves living without? Whether or not others recognize it, that's how we would love to be remembered.

That is, in reality, our bottom line. And this morning's passage presents the key values of the Apostle Paul in those terms.

He's representative of original, authentic Christianity. Bottom line Christianity, we might call it. And here we have one of the most stirring passages in the New Testament, in which this great missionary and preacher of the Christian faith, to the whole Greco-Roman world, stands before a Roman judge, Festus, and a Jewish king, Agrippa.

And as he says in verse 2, makes his defense. That is, his apologia. This is his bottom line. This is what his life is really all about. And it's one of the most magnificent summaries of the Christian faith that you could read in the New Testament.

[2 : 36] Now, there are many good reasons for seeing chapter 26 as the climax of the book of Acts. The long central section of Acts, which I know you've been studying, begins with the first account of Paul's conversion back in chapter 9, which is repeated here in detail, so that the two chapters function as bookends for the major unit, which is concerned with Paul's ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles.

And so the book develops the agenda, which I'm sure you looked at way back when you started the series in chapter 1, that the gospel was spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

That's spreading gospel. And Rome, of course, is always the focus of that. Not as the destination where the gospel will end, not where Paul can say mission accomplished, but as the springboard for the gospel to the ends of the earth, even to our remote and benighted island that we call the United Kingdom, and even here to the west coast of North America.

Chapter 26 is also the climax of the sequence, which begins back in chapter 21, when Paul is first taken into Roman custody. And now for two years he's been a prisoner in Caesarea.

He's appeared before the Jews, he's appeared before the previous governor Felix, and now he has the opportunity to make a final determinative defense of his position, my apologia, delivered directly to the man who calls himself the king of the Jews, King Agrippa II.

[4 : 19] And what Paul says is not so much a refutation of the specific charges that are laid against him. Rather, he presents his personal testimony as he reviews his life and explains the rationale

that lies behind it.

This is what made Paul the man he was. Now I want to focus on what is really a 15 second soundbite in this long passage, which you will find if you've got your Bible open at verse 18. I'm going to use this as the key to open up the passage and for us just to get a bird's eye view of some of these important ingredients. Paul comes to the climax of his account of his conversion and he quotes the words of the Lord Jesus to him, where Jesus says, verse 17, he will deliver him from the Jews and from the Gentiles, but send him to the Gentiles.

Now here's the soundbite, verse 18. To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

That is bottom line Christianity. And our agenda this morning in these few minutes is to try and understand it better and to apply it to our lives. There's a double thrust to the verse.

[5 : 44] It is both Paul's commission and it is also Paul's personal testimony. Because what happened to him on that road to Damascus, as we read, revolutionized his whole life.

And now he stands on trial for that life to explain and justify it, but also to defend and preserve it. He is a man who has undergone the most profound, dramatic, life-changing experience.

And convinced that what has happened to him needs to happen to each one of his hearers, as the story goes on, the man in the dock becomes the challenger. And I thought it was great that we divided the reading into two so that we got the thrust of the end part really clearly as he turns to King Agrippa and says, Do you believe the prophets, King Agrippa?

I know that you believe. Verse 28, And Agrippa said to Paul, In a short time you think to make me a Christian? See, the persecutor has become a preacher, has become a persuader.

And I love that verse where Paul says in 29, Whether it's a short time or a long time, I would to God that not only you, but everybody else in this room today, might become such as I am.

[6 : 57] Not with these chains, but such as I am, a renewed, revolutionized man because of the gospel of Christ. So bottom line Christianity calls for radical change in all our hearts and minds and lives.

Now let me observe with you three stages. That process which we need to explore together. And I'd like you to ask yourself this morning, How do I stand in relation to these realities? Is this what I would want to be remembered for?

Is this really the heartbeat, the bottom line of my life? Well, Paul is sent, firstly, verse 18 tells us, to open eyes. That is, a ministry of revelation.

And of course, for Paul, the phrase had a literal meaning. There are three accounts of his conversion in this book. And together they provide a very detailed picture. If you come back to verse 13, you'll see that he says there, At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining round me and those who journeyed with me.

That light actually blinded Paul for three days, as we learn elsewhere. And it was as though he experienced physically what was his true state spiritually.

[8 : 12] He was blind. He was in the most appalling darkness. What he thought was right was shown to be totally wrong. And everything that he built his life on up to that point suddenly crumbled around him.

Look at verse 9. I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. And not only in Jerusalem, but by authority from the chief priests.

When they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And the end of verse 11, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. That's why he was on his way to Damascus. And so, religious zealot though he was, Saul of Tarsus was totally in the dark.

He was totally wrong about Jesus of Nazareth. He was sincere. No doubt in what he did. But he was sincerely wrong. Wrong in his estimate of Jesus.

And if you are wrong in your estimate of Jesus, you will be wrong in the values that you give to your life. If you are wrong about Christ, everything else is going to be distorted by that.

[9 : 19] When I was a child in primary school, I can remember an early geography lesson where we were given an atlas of the world and we opened it to the map of the world. In those days, in the last millennium, quite a long time ago, lots of the world was coloured red.

Because those were the parts of the so-called British Empire. And as we looked at the map of the world and saw all the red parts, our little hearts swelled with pride. And the teacher said to us, now, which two countries in the world are the farthest apart from one another?

So being bright young sparks, we looked on the left-hand side and the right-hand side. Oh, it's Alaska and that bit of Russia. Sincere, but wrong.

Try and organise your travel agency on that basis and you'll soon be bankrupt. Because there's just one fact that the world is round. Now, it's a bit like that, you know, with the Christian faith.

A total change because one fact has been wrong. And the change in Paul, verse 22, is that I stand here, he says, testifying to both small and great, nothing but what the prophets and Moses said will come to pass.

[10:32] I haven't turned my back on the Old Testament or my Jewish heritage. I've seen its fulfilment. That the Christ must suffer. And that by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light, both to the people and to the Gentiles.

So here's the revelation. Jesus of Nazareth is the long-promised Messiah. He is the fulfilment of all that God's word foretold down the centuries of the Old Testament. And through his death and resurrection, there is now light for everybody, everywhere.

He is the light of the world. And Paul had to have his eyes open. And he had to have them opened on God's term, not ours, not his.

See, we all need that revelation. I don't know if you've ever thought to yourself how you might go about making a friend of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. I live in London, and so her presence is a little bit more, perhaps, felt than sometimes in the farther reaches of the Commonwealth.

But if we wanted to make a friend of a queen, it would be a very difficult thing to do. I mean, I could write her letters. I could try to phone the Buckingham Palace and I'd get the fourth footman on the left or something. I could send her flowers and presents.

[11:55] I could stand at the gate with a little banner so that when she drove in and out of the palace, it said, Hello, Your Majesty, I'm David. I would like to meet you. And the special branch would soon have me in their book and they would make sure that I could get nowhere near her.

Because if I want to know the queen, the queen has to want to know me. Now, for some unaccountable reason, that hasn't happened yet. But if the queen were to stoop to ask me into her presence, I might begin to get to know her.

And if that is true of an earthly head of state, would it not be much more true of the God who made the whole world? Why do we think that we should be able to saunter into God's presence and say, Okay, God, if you are there, reveal yourself to me on my terms.

That's what so many people in our world say. It shows that we don't even begin to understand the meaning of the word God. We are totally dependent on revelation.

And the circumstances of Paul's conversion, which were, of course, quite unique to him, are nevertheless true in different ways for all of us. That if we're going to be Christian, there has to be an eye-opening awareness of who Jesus is, that he is the very revelation of the unseen God.

[13:11] And that he is not a Jesus of Nazareth to be opposed. We are not to kick against the goads as Paul did. But rather, as he says in verse 15, Who are you, Lord?

And the Lord Jesus said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. And then everything changes. That's why, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

Now, let me ask you, have you got that far in your Christian life? Oh, you say, I haven't had my Damascus Road experience yet. Well, there's no private, inner psychological experience that you need to seek.

Paul was stopped by the vision of Christ on the Damascus Road, but he wasn't converted by it. Because he tells us in verse 13, I saw a light from heaven.

But look at verse 14, I heard a voice speaking to me. And it's that voice, which now takes the emphasis of the whole story.

[14:15] It is that voice, which says, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. And then begins to take control, because he is Lord. Verse 16, I've appeared to you for a purpose.

Verse 17, I'm going to deliver you from Jews and Gentiles, and send you to open their eyes, so that they too may enter into this experience.

Now, get up. I've appeared to you to appoint you. I will show you. I will rescue you. I am sending you. And you know your eyes are open when you respond, wherefore, I was not disobedient to the

heavenly vision.

You only really know who Jesus is, when you confess him, not just as the saviour of the world, but the Lord of your life. When you put that life into his hands, that is bottom line Christianity.

And then the light begins to shine. Well, there's the first stage then, to open the eyes. And how are they opened? By the revelation of the word of God.

[15 : 23] So if I want to know God, what do I need to do? I need to take my Bible. I need to turn to one of the Gospels. I need to read it day by day. I need to say, Lord, open my eyes to see who you are.

And if your faith has grown cold, and your Christian devotion is flagging a bit, come back to the Bible. It is by the word of God, that the people of God have their eyes open.

Not by some dramatic experience necessarily. Sometimes God does that, to make us stop and listen. But it is always his word that does his work. I heard a voice, speaking directly to me, in my language.

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Revelation. Now the revelation creates the revolution.

And the second thing that Paul talks about, in verse 18, is that they may turn.

Turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, to God. Again, this is his experience, it's his testimony, as well as his commission.

[16 : 27] Now I want to stress that second phrase, from the power of Satan, to God. Because it's very important for us to see, that there is a real power, an alternative authority, that is at work, in people's lives, in our world.

And becoming a Christian, is moving from one sphere of authority, to another sphere. From the authority of Satan, in our lives, to the authority, of the living God.

We're familiar with that, as we travel from country to country, or region to region, we come under different codes of law, around the world. And while you are in that part, of the world's territory, you are subject to the laws, of that country.

It's as though, Paul is saying, I have now been transferred, I have a new citizenship, I belong in a new kingdom. And the authority in my life now, is not the accuser and deceiver, whom he calls Satan, the devil himself.

But is God, the living God, revealed in Jesus Christ. Now, no one talks more about this, than the Lord Jesus.

[17 : 38] He is the one, who reveals Satan's activity, because he was so aware of it. And the apostles, of course, follow his teaching. And in a day, where the existence of the devil, is often denied, the Bible, continually brings us back, to this, real and, cruel antagonist, who is, in opposition to God, and his work, and who seeks to enslave, the whole human race, to him.

But we need to remember, that Satan, is a creature of God, not his equal. The Bible, does not present, a dualism, in which God, and the devil, are equal powers, struggling for ascendancy. The devil, only exercises, authority in this world, in so far, as God, in his infinite wisdom, permits him. But that is, of course, a devastating authority.

He entangles, our thinking, in all sorts of errors. He stirs up, hatred, and jealousies, and conflicts, anything to overthrow, God's authority, and anything, to plunge human beings, into God's judgment, and ruin.

And that, of course, is not just happening, out there. This is the big revolution, of course. It's not just out there. It's happening in my heart, and in your heart, too.

[18 : 55] Do you remember, that famous correspondence, in the Times newspaper, during the, Second World War, when the question was, what has gone wrong, with the world? And the correspondence, was ended, by one letter, which I think, was from G.K. Chesterton, who wrote, sir, what has gone wrong, with the world?

What is wrong, with the world? I am. Yours sincerely, G.K. Chesterton. That's what Christianity, shows you. That's what the ministry, of Jesus, reveals.

That it's not just, evil out there, it's, what is wrong, in my heart? You see, Paul was a very, religious man, but his heart, was turned against, God's revelation, of Christ. And therefore, he punished, the Christians, and he tried, to make them blasphemous.

And in his raging fury, he persecuted them. And there is only, one power, that can overcome, that sort of authority. There is only, one victory, that can, vanquish Satan.

And that is seen, in the resurrection. Here we are, the third Sunday, after Easter, we've been singing, Christ is risen, from the dead. Death is dead.

[20 : 04] Christ is king. And the resurrection, shows us, that the final blow, to Satan's power, is in the risen Christ. That's why, verse 8, right at the start, of his defense, he raises that, as the big issue.

Why is it thought, incredible by any of you, that God, raises the dead? See, that's bottom line, Christianity. That on the cross, the price, for sin was paid, and a full atonement, was made. But it was, at the empty tomb, and meeting, the risen Lord, that the totality, of Satan's conquest, became clear, that death, was swallowed up, in victory.

And through that, completed work, of the cross, and through the triumph, of Easter morning, as the New Testament, tells us, Christ has destroyed, the one who has, the power of death, that is the devil.

To deliver, all those, who through fear, of death, were subject, to lifelong slavery. I'm sending you, to turn them, from the power of Satan, to the power of God, revealed, in a resurrected, Christ, never to die again.

[21 : 13] That is what, Jesus commissions, Paul to do. And alongside that, religion is powerless, to change us, moral reform, is powerless, to change us. Only the power of God, can turn our lives around.

Only an authority, greater than Satan's, can rescue us, and empower us, to live differently. So when you become, a Christian, you find that your thinking, starts to change, because, Satan's lies, are being broken, by the light, of God's truth.

And we begin to see, that God loves us, he is not against us, he has come, in mercy and grace, in his son Jesus, to die for us. And we see, that we will only, find our fulfillment, in a living relationship, with this God, who is, the one who died, and rose again.

He made us for himself, so that the more, we fight against, Christ's authority, the more we're, kicking against the goads, because we're, resisting the inevitable. It is God's world, and Christ reigns, he is exalted, and every knee, will bow, and every tongue, confess, that Jesus Christ, is Lord.

You see, when that truth, really begins, to dawn on us, then, Satan's authority, is broken. And the power, of the risen Christ, enables us to turn, to be converted, to live differently, under Christ's Lordship, to recognize, that far from it, being a tyranny, his service, is perfect freedom.

[22 : 49] So, the persecutor, became the proclaimer. Have you got that far yet? How is the revolution, going on in your life? Are you daily, turning from that, which you know, is wrong, to the power, of the risen Lord Jesus?

When Satan comes, knocking at the door, with his temptations, is it the risen Christ, through his Holy Spirit, living within you, who meets those temptations, and gives you the strength, to fight the good fight, of the faith?

Oh, I know that all around us, the culture is saying, it doesn't matter, all these things, are insignificant. But you cannot read, the New Testament, without realizing, that there will be, a day of judgment, that this Lord Jesus, raised from the dead, is the judge, of the living and the dead.

He will come again, in power. And our privilege, is to turn, to make that, 180 degree turn, where I was going, my way, serving me, and now, by God's grace, I've turned to Christ, and I'm going his way, serving him.

That's conversion. That's the revolution. That he is the Lord, of my life, as well as the rescuer.

Lastly, let's complete the verse, by seeing the third ingredient.

[24 : 05] Revelation, revolution. Here is restoration, that they may receive, forgiveness of sins, and a place, among those, who are sanctified, by faith, in me.

Isn't that, the most wonderful, conclusion of the verse? Once our hands, were full of our own agendas, what we were going to do. Once we were walking, away from Christ. Now, says Paul, I'm turned towards him.

I found my focus, of reference, in him. And my hands, now, are empty, to receive, what God, wants to give me. And to make me, what he, originally designed, me to be.

So having my, eyes opened, and my life, turned, is essential, for this last part, of the verse, to be realized, so that into my, empty hands, as it were, I may receive, notice that verb, not achieve, receive, forgiveness of sins, and a place, among those, who are set apart, sanctified, made holy,

acceptable to God.

How? By, faith, in, Jesus. Just need to take that in. This is what God is offering us. This is the bottom line.

[25 : 20] A life that experiences, his forgiveness, and a life that is assured, of a place, in the new creation, of being sanctified, and set apart, for God.

And how does it come? Very simple, isn't it? By putting your faith, in, Jesus Christ. You must put it, all together, to have real Christianity.

Christianity. Now, there's a lot of, wishy-washy talk around today, in some Christian circles, that masquerades, as the gospel, but actually isn't, the gospel at all. It's very easy, for it to be distorted, for people to say, God loves you so much, that, whatever you do, and however far you stray, he'll always welcome you back, no questions asked, he'll receive you, just as you are.

And I want to say, yes, and also no. Because what that leaves out, is the turning, the repentance, the confession of Christ as Lord.

Yes, it is gloriously true, that wherever you have wandered, and whatever you have been, and whatever shame you may feel, this morning in your life, God is willing to receive you, and he will cleanse you.

[26 : 28] He will open your eyes, and turn you from the power of Satan. He will grant you, the forgiveness of your sins. But there has to be a turning. All that is true of God, provided, there is this, sense of, coming back to him as Lord, acknowledging him, as king, and master, in my life, which is the essence of repentance, saying, I was wrong, and God is right.

And as I do that, I exercise my faith, in Jesus. If you think of that, 180 degree turn, the first 90 degrees, are repentance, turning from my way, and the second 90 degrees, are faith in Christ. Of course, they belong together. You don't repent, unless you believe. And if you believe, you will repent. But it may be helpful, to think of it that way. Repentance brings me, to the point, where I put my faith, in Christ.

And we all need, to be doing that every day. So whenever I, speak at a funeral, I try to say, heaven is not, for good people. If heaven, were for good people, it would be unpopulated.

Because no one, is good enough for God. God's standard, is perfection. No, heaven is for, forgiven people.

[27 : 47] Which is why, the Christ, had to suffer, and rise from the dead. And as he carried, the just punishment, of all our sins, on the cross. And as he rose again, in the power, of an endless life, to prove his victory, over evil.

He transformed, the apostle Paul. that, Saul the persecutor, into Paul, the persuader. And as he, sounded that message, around the whole world, these are the great benefits, that we have come to know.

Free forgiveness, and heaven, assured. And they come, as the gift of God, to be received. So, where do you stand, with the revelation, and the revolution, and the restoration, of all that we lost, in the fall, brought to us, through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Wasn't it C.S. Lewis, who said, that the one thing, the Christian gospel, cannot be, is moderately interesting. And Paul's apologia, is not a cold, detached, statement.

It's a vibrant, passionate, plea. So that Festus, accuses him of mania, you've lost it Paul, you're over the top. And again, it seems, it's the resurrection, that triggers that response.

[29 : 09] But Paul's focus, interestingly, as the chapter ends, is not on Festus, but on his fellow Jew, Agrippa, who knows the story, so well. There's been nothing, secret, or underhanded, about the Christian mission, has there, Agrippa?

And now look at that bold, passionate persuader, in verse 27. Agrippa, do you believe? What's your verdict, your majesty? You believe the Old Testament prophets, so why do you not believe their fulfillment?

And Agrippa's response, assumes hesitance, perhaps irony, but not outright rejection. In a short time, you think to make me a Christian. King's put on the spot.

He responds, without commitment. But Paul's response, is both dignified, and full of pathos, full of feeling. I would to God, that you were as I am, this day.

That your eyes were opened, and that your, revolution, had happened, in your life. What the gospel did for Paul, it could do, for Festus.

[30 : 14] It could do, for Agrippa. And that gospel, still transforms, self-centered, insecure people, into outgoing, courageous, and sacrificial, servants of Christ.

That's what he wants, to do with us. That's what he wants, our bottom line to be. So, where do you stand? Have you become, as Paul is, confessing, Jesus Christ, is Lord?

Lord. Let's pray together. To open their eyes, that they may turn, from darkness to light, and from the power, of Satan to God.

That they may receive, forgiveness of sins, and a place among, all those who are sanctified, through faith, in Jesus. Father, we pray, that each of us here, all of us here, may be as Paul was, that day, justified, freely by your grace, through faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For those of us, who've known, and loved this message long, we pray, that you will, rekindle it in us, and send us out, to live it, and proclaim it, day by day. And for some of us, who perhaps, for the first time, need to turn, and trust you, grant us that grace, today, to say, Lord Jesus, I believe, I turn, I trust.

[31 : 45] We ask it, for the honor of your name. Amen. As we continue to pray, please bow your heads, or kneel.

I will end each petition, with Lord, in your mercy, and you're welcome, to respond, with hear our prayer. Father, thank you for enabling us, to worship this morning, and that in worshiping you, it clarifies, who we are.

Thank you for time, and space, to hear your word, confess our sin, sing with joy, and be amongst a community, who has their foundation, in you.

Thank you for Luke, and for Paul, and for their commitment, to speak the truth, in love. May you give each of us, such commitment, to be available, for your purposes, and may we truly turn, from darkness, to light, and from the power, of Satan, to you.

Lord, in your mercy. In this third Sunday, after Easter, may we know, what it means, to practice resurrection, to live, and to be, in the truth, of the risen Christ, within ourselves, with each other, and as a church body.

[33 : 16] May we be people, of forbearance, of immense mercy, and hope. Lord, in your mercy. God, we pray for our world, in pain, and turmoil, in so many places.

We pray for the people, of Afghanistan, that you would give them, safety, and intelligent ways, to find lasting peace. We pray for the safety, of our troops there, and for their families, here in Canada. We pray for the difficult, relationships, within the Middle East, and we ask for a, miraculous humility, and a spirit of cooperation, in their leaders.

Protect the innocent, as only you can. We pray for the unrest, and immense difficulties, in Thailand. We pray for the Nigerian, Christians, so brutally persecuted.

Protect them, give them safety. Comfort the families, of those who've been killed. May they know, of our ache for them, and for our prayers. Lord, in your mercy.

[34 : 32] Father, we pray, and we give thanks, for our city of Vancouver. Thank you for the beauty, that reminds us, of your love. We pray for the homeless, in particular.

May we give them shelter, food, and love. Show us how to love them, in ways we haven't even imagined. May we be generous, in all things, and at all times.

Lord, in your mercy. We give you enormous, thanks for the ordination, service today, of Aaron Roberts, and Keith Ganser.

We are thrilled, to give them to you, and we thank you, for drawing, these two thoughtful, godly men, to serve you, to love your people, and to love your church.

We ask that you bless, their desires. May both Keith, and Aaron, see each day, of their ministry, how badly they need you, and how much, you love them.

[35 : 30] Watch over, their wonderful wives, Amy and Emily, as they take, this step with them. May all four of them, know, how much, we love them, and we care about them.

Show all the congregations, of their lives, how to love them wisely, as they carry out, your call. Lord, in your ministry, in your mercy. We pray for the missionaries, who go out, from St. John's.

May your spirit, flavor, and uphold, all their work. We pray for your mercy, on Susan Norman, serving in Ottawa, and in South Carolina. For Heather Bellamy, in Afghanistan, and Yoss Stringhold, in Cairo.

Protect them, uphold them, as only you can. Lord, in your mercy. We pray for our own congregation. Give us honest hearts, and minds, to reach out, and to love one another.

Protect our unity together. Protect our staff, who care so well for us. Watch over the youth, of this parish. Draw them to you, and hold them deep, in your love.

[36 : 44] We pray for the safety, of the many women, returning from the retreat, this afternoon. Lord, in your mercy. Lord God, we pray for pain, and sorrow, in each of our own lives.

We desperately need, your comfort, wisdom, and healing, every day. We pray for those, in pain, known amongst us. For David, for Ken, Gail, Rosemary, Rowena.

and in a moment of silence, we pray for those, known specifically, to each of us. Be with them.

Bring them to mind, that we might pray for them, and love them well, throughout the week. Lord, in your mercy. Father, we're waiting for you, and as we do so, may we submit, evermore of ourselves, our work, our families, our friendships, to you, and may we uphold, the hope, and the immeasurable joy, of the resurrection, to one another.

Amen.