

# Luke 7:18-23 "Having Church"

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Preacher: Thurman

[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

It's our privilege to have with us this morning Dr. Thurman Williams. Thurman has been a PCA pastor for many years in Baltimore, in St. Louis.

Now he's planting a church there in St. Louis in the neighborhood that they live in and is excited about that. It's New City Fellowship West End. We're excited to have him here this morning.

He wasn't able to bring his wife and four kids with him, but loves them. And he had a particular request of us this week. He wanted to know where the location of the Amen section was.

I informed him the whole place would do a great job with that, so don't let me down. Thurman, welcome. We're glad you're here to preach God's word to us. Thank you, Ben.

[ 1 : 06 ] Well, good morning, Southwood. Thank you all so much for your welcome, for your hospitality.

Thank you, Pastor Will, for sharing the pulpit. Thank you, Community Development Committee, for inviting me. I am proud to say I am a friend of Robert and Deneen Blevins.

They are a precious treasure that God has brought to this church. And I'm thankful for their inviting me here. If you have a Bible, please open with me to Luke chapter 7.

Luke chapter 7, and we'll be in verses 18 to 23. And we want to talk around the theme for just a few moments of what I call having church.

Having church, and I'll explain that in a few moments. Just to set the context before I read the passage, if you go all the way back to Luke chapter 4, which at least in the Gospel of Luke is where we find Jesus' first sermon.

[ 2 : 10 ] And he quotes from Isaiah 61, where he says, The Spirit of the Lord is on me to preach good news to the poor, and recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the prisoner, and release for the oppressed, and to declare the year of the Lord's favor.

And then he sits down, and before he does, he says, This scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing, because I'm here. And then what he sets out to do, if you read in the chapters between that one and the one we're going to look at today, is he starts to do those very things.

He preaches good news to the poor. He gives sight to the blind. He heals the lame. He preaches the word of God. And then we come here to verse 18.

Hear now the reading of God's word. In that hour.

He healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits. And on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, Go and tell John what you have seen and heard.

[ 3 : 42 ] The blind receive their sight. The lame walk. Lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. The dead are raised up. The poor have good news preached to them.

And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. This is God's word. Let's open together with the word of prayer. Father, we are so grateful for the time you've given us already this morning.

And Lord, now we thank you for your word. Lord, your word testifies about itself. That is God-breathed. And it's useful for teaching and rebuking and correcting and training in righteousness.

So Lord, we pray that you would work in us towards those ends in the time that we have together this morning. Holy Spirit, we pray that you would fill this place. Fill us with your power.

Fill us with your presence. Because Lord, we confess that we cannot understand these words unless your spirit illumine our understanding. And Lord, we certainly don't have power to live them out.

[ 4 : 46 ] Unless you fill us with your spirit so that we might do so. And that's what we're asking. We don't just want to be hearers of the word, but we also want to be doers of the word. So Holy Spirit, we pray that you'd fill us and empower us to do so.

And we ask you to do all this for your glory. And all this we ask in Jesus' name. And all God's people said, Amen. Having church is a phrase that I would hear oftentimes when I was growing up. I grew up in the church. My dad was a minister, actually. And so we grew up in primarily the African-American church. And actually when people would say it there, they would take the R out. It wasn't just having church.

It was having church is how they would say it. And what did that mean? And usually what it meant in that context is it meant that the music was really incredible and lively.

And the choir was singing well. And people were jumping up and dancing. And my father was preaching very powerfully. And people would leave. And they would say, Oh, we had church today. But I had my own definition.

[ 5 : 48 ] I was a big football fan of the Sunday football. I know we're Saturday football fans primarily here. But for me, if we got out of church before 1 o'clock and got home, oh, we had church that day.

But if we got out after, oh, no. Oh, it was just terrible. And I could tell when we were heading that direction because I could tell when my father would get excited as he's preaching because he would start to quote songs in the sermon.

And then I'm like, Oh, Lord, here we go. He would say, Bread of heaven, bread of heaven. Feed me till I want no more. And I'd say, I'm full. I just want to go home and see the game. Or he'd say, Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

And I would say to myself, We're going to be here till 1.30 today. This is not having church. But what does it look like for us? What does it look like for us to have church?

Now, obviously, I know that church is not something that we have. The church is something and someone who we are. But what does it mean to be who we are in this time and place as the church?

[ 6 : 56 ] What does it look like in real life to have church? How do we live out what it means to be who we are? That's what we want to look at. And so how does this passage in Luke 7 help us today?

It does so by showing us three things really important. It shows us the perspective of Jesus. It shows us the presence of Jesus. And then lastly, it will show us the power of Jesus.

All right? So let's look at those in turn. First, the perspective of Jesus. We find right at the beginning of this passage. And John needed Jesus' perspective on a couple things.

The first is on his expectations. He needed Jesus' perspective on his expectations. What do I mean? If we come and look at verse 19, we find here in the passage, it says that he called two of his disciples to him.

And John sent them to the Lord with the question, are you the one who is to come? Or shall we look for another? And then verse 20, and when the men had come to him, they said, and they repeat the question.

[ 8 : 00 ] And so the author, Luke, is telling you this is something that's very important that you've got to pay attention to. This is something he wants his readers to know because he's telling them who Jesus is.

And so they repeat the question, are you the one who is to come? Or shall we look for another? Now what does that mean, the one who is to come? It means the Messiah, the anointed one, the one who is to come and set things right.

The one who is to come and bring the salvation that everybody has looked forward to and longed for. Are you the one who is to come? Now, what's unusual about that question?

What's unusual is that John is asking this. Because if you go back just a few chapters earlier in chapter 3, in verse 15, John is telling everybody that Jesus is the one who is to come.

As the people were in expectation, this is verse 15 of Luke 3, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all saying, I baptize with water.

[ 9 : 08 ] But he who is mightier than I is coming. The strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

And so, what happened? What's changed? Why now is John questioning the fact that Jesus is the one or not?

Well, if you go back to Luke 7 in verse 18, the very beginning, it says, the disciples of John reported, and then the phrase, all these things to him.

What are all those things? Well, again, think about what's happened since Jesus' sermon back in Luke 4. What has Jesus been up to? He's been preaching about the kingdom of God and the upside down values of the kingdom.

But not only that, he's been raising the dead. That happens in chapter 7. He's been healing servants. He's been casting out demons. He heals Peter's mother-in-law. He's doing all these amazing things.

[10:07] And so you say, well, what's the problem, John? Well, that's not what John expected Jesus to be doing. He had different expectations. If we go back to Luke 3 very quickly, verse 17.

It says, his winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn. But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

What John was saying and what he was expecting is that when Jesus showed up, he would bring not only the grace and the salvation, but his judgment to at the very same time.

And so he's looking around at all the things that Jesus is doing. And he said, Jesus, where's the fire? Where's the rain? You're supposed to come and make things right now.

That was his expectation. And he looks at all the things that Jesus is doing and he says, you're not doing what you're supposed to do. So are you the one who was to come or not?

[11:10] So he needed Jesus' perspective on his expectations. But not only that, he needed Jesus' perspective on his own suffering. He needed Jesus' perspective on his own suffering.

What do I mean? Well, why was it that John had to send his disciples to go ask Jesus? How come he didn't go ask him himself? Again, if you go back to Luke 3 and verse 19.

It says, but Herod the Tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, for all the evil things that Herod had done, he added this to them all, that he locked John up in prison.

And so John is there in prison and he's wondering, are you the one to come or not? Where is the justice? Where is the judgment?

I did what you've called me to do and it ends up getting me locked away in prison. Do you know what John felt like? Have you ever been in that place where you've been doing all the things that you believe God has called you to do and your life still falls apart?

[12:22] You're going, God, I'm doing what you wanted me to do. Where's the judgment? Where's the fire? Where's the rain? It seems that evil is continuing to succeed. Why are we suffering the way that we are?

I know that you as a congregation are suffering this week. The loss of people that you love dearly that are part of this body. And maybe you're excited for them. You're like, great, they get to be in the presence of the Lord.

But Lord, I wasn't ready. I'm hurting. I'm in pain. Why do we live in this world with so much pain? Are you the one who is to come or are you not?

Should we expect somebody else? Well, what difference does it make that Jesus is the one who was to come? He's the Lord of life. And he's the Lord of our lives.

And so you know what that means. It means that we can trust him. Even in the midst of our suffering. It means that we can trust him. Even if he's not fulfilling the expectations we have for him.

[13:27] And when he's supposed to work. And how he's supposed to work. Now, I don't know if you're like this. But sometimes when we think that we need to act as mature Christians.

We're afraid to bring our questions to Jesus. Because we don't want to think, oh, I don't want to appear like I'm a person who doubts. I have great faith. But inside we really, we have some questions like, what's going on?

Well, look at John. John doesn't even let being in prison stop him. From taking those questions to Jesus. And look at what results.

We get this incredible teaching about who Jesus is. And so I say that to you to encourage you. Maybe there's some things that are going on in your life where God's not meeting your expectations.

And you have some questions. Like, God, what are you doing? Maybe there's some suffering on your heart. You're saying, Pastor, you're lucky that I made it here even this morning with all that I'm

going through.

[14:26] Maybe you have some questions. Why is it this way? Well, John shows us we can take those to Jesus. He's big enough and powerful enough and loving enough that he can handle them.

And so bring those questions to him so that we can get his perspective on our expectations and our suffering. So that's the perspective of Jesus. Secondly, we want to look at the presence of Jesus.

Secondly, we want to look together at the presence of Jesus that comes out here in this passage.

Now, where is it that Jesus was present? Where was he present?

Where was he spending his time? What did he point to to assure John that he was the one, that he is the one who was to come? Verse 21, it says, In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits.

And on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And so what we see here is Jesus was present in the places and with the people of deepest need.

[15:34] He was present among the people that society, their society at the time put on the very bottom. Use this analogy. Kids, think about what it's like when you go to school and you have to decide where to sit in the lunchroom.

Is it still this way when you go? Oh, they have all the different tables. Maybe you have the jocks table and the popular kids table and these kids table. But what about the kids who don't have any place to sit?

Maybe some of you have been in that place. Well, you know the powerful thing about Jesus is that's the very place where he would have sat. He would have sat in the place at the table with those that everybody else put to the side.

That nobody else wanted to be around. That's who he is. And likewise, we are the body of Christ. We are the church. We are the Lord's anointed.

And so what does that say to us about where we should be present? I love that song that we just did. Give me your eyes to see. Is that the name of the song?

[16:42] Powerful. But that's expressing just how our presence is to be. Who are the outcasts? Who are those in Huntsville?

Who are those here? Who are those within this church even? Who are those in this community that are on the bottom? That people tend to pass by. That people treat as if they're invisible or that they don't matter.

Those are the very people that the church must be a presence among. Now, what kind of presence should we be? Well, what kind of presence was Jesus?

Look at verse 22. It says, And he answered them, Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. And then he lists some things.

The blind receive their sight. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed. The deaf hear. The dead are raised up. The poor have good news preached to them.

[17:43] And so what is that saying? What kind of presence was Jesus? He was a comprehensive presence. What do I mean by that? Well, in the passage it says, Go back and tell John what you've seen and heard.

Not just seen. And not just heard. But both. He deals with their spiritual need. But not only that. He deals with their physical, their psychological, their emotional.

Whatever need they have, he deals with it. And not just because he's a nice guy. But because he's the Lord of every realm. And so he comes and he speaks to every realm.

Imagine what it was like to have a leper, to have Jesus touch a leper. Imagine what it was like for the leper. Remember the one he healed and he has compassion on him.

And he doesn't just say you're healed. But he touches him. And says, Be healed. What do you think that meant to him? Not only was he healed physically. But think of all the psychological shame.

[18:51] That comes from being an outcast. And Jesus comes and brings his healing touch to that as well. That's the kind of savior that we have.

He's a comp... I heard an amen. I heard an amen. And he's a comprehensive witness. A comprehensive presence.

So are we to be. We also are to do works that are both seen and heard. So that those places are different than they were. Now we're coming up to Christmas now.

I heard it mentioned already. So it must be okay to mention a Christmas movie. Some of you have seen that movie they play every year. Not Santa Claus is Coming to Town. But It's a Wonderful Life.

And you know the main character of that story, George Bailey. He gets an amazing gift. He gets to see what life would be like as if he would never been born.

[ 19 : 50 ] Because he thinks, man, I'm just a burden on everybody that's around me. What difference does my life make? And he got a chance to see that lives were changed.

Literally lives were saved. Because of his life-giving, comprehensive presence in that place. Instead of it becoming Pottersville, it remained Bedford Falls.

Because he was a presence there. And that is a picture of what the people of God are to be like as well.

It means we don't need to have an argument between the just-get-safe people and the social gospel people. Jesus is the Lord of all of it. Jesus is the Lord of the gospel of the kingdom of God. And so he cares about everything. How does that get worked out practically? Some of the ministries you already talked about in your announcements, which are incredible, practical expressions of that.

[ 20 : 51 ] In our own community, we have our churches there, the New City churches. There's three of them in the St. Louis city area. And then there's a nonprofit that's called Restore St. Louis, which has different programs.

Some of them, one of them is a school. One of them is a health ministry. One of them works with people that are in prison. And what are they doing? They're a part of the comprehensive presence of Jesus Christ in that place.

Because those are the places where Jesus' presence needs to be felt. Now, some of you, speaking of Christmas, you've heard of that song, Joy to the World.

There's a verse, it says there, No more let sins or sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow.

Where? Far as the curse is found. Now, think back to Genesis 3. What impact did sin have on the world? What impact did the curse have?

[ 21 : 56 ] Not only did it affect people's relationship with God, that was broken. There's alienation between people and God. But not only that, there's alienation between people and people.

And the way that people looked at themselves. And even with people's relationship with creation itself. And the great news of the gospel is that the redemption that Christ brings applies to all of those places that experience alienation.

Here's a verse from Colossians 1. Colossians 1.9 and 20. It says that for in him, in Jesus, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

And through him, listen to this, to reconcile to himself all things. Now, what's included in all? Everything. Everything. To reconcile to himself all things.

Whether on earth or in heaven. How? Making peace by the blood of his cross. And so the reconciliation that Jesus brings. The redemption that Christ brings is also comprehensive.

[ 23 : 05 ] It bridges the gap between us and God. But not only that, it tears down the dividing wall of hostility between us and one another. Not only that, it changes the way that we look at ourselves so that we're reminded that we're great creations made in the image and likeness of God.

And even it gives us hope in the way that we work with creation itself. That is being renewed in the power of God. This is what it means to be the presence of Jesus.

Lastly, we've seen the perspective of Jesus. And the presence of Jesus. Lastly and thirdly, what about the power of Jesus?

Because maybe you're sitting and you're going, how in the world am I going to get the power to do this? Well, you don't have it in and of yourself. But thankfully, you don't have to rely on the power you have yourself. We look unto Jesus.

Now, how does he point us to himself here? The last verse, verse 23. And this is the strangest beatitude that you find in the Bible. This is just strange.

[ 24 : 13 ] He says, blessed is the one who is not offended by me. Who's not offended. It means literally not scandalized by me.

They don't take offense. They're not repelled by me. Blessed is the one who's not scandalized by me. Now, why would we be offended by Jesus?

Jesus is great, right? Why would he offend us? Well, there's at least a couple reasons here in the passage and throughout the Gospels that we see.

And it could be by what I call the only wayness of Jesus. Or it could be by the everybodyness of Jesus. I don't know if those are real words. I just kind of made them up.

But the only wayness of Jesus and the everybodyness of Jesus. First, what do I mean? The only wayness of Jesus. You know those words in the Bible.

[ 25 : 07 ] That Jesus is the only way. John 14, verse 6. Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by me.

That can be offensive. Because people say, well, wait a minute. How can you say you're the only way to God? That's offensive. How can you say that? That's arrogant. That's what he says.

I am the way. And so people can be offended by that. People can be offended. You can put up Ephesians 2. By the fact that we are saved not by what we've done.

Not by our record. Not by our heritage. We're saved by the grace and mercy of God. And that's all. For it is by grace you've been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not the results of work so that no one can boast. And finally, let's put up 1 Corinthians 1.

[ 26 : 06 ] It says, what about the message of the cross? It's a dividing line. On the one hand, the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing. They say, that's ridiculous.

How can you have a crucified Messiah? How can you have a conquered hero that you follow? That doesn't make any sense at all. It's folly to those who are perishing.

But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. And so maybe people are offended by the only wayness of Jesus Christ.

It's kind of like this. Again, thinking about Christmas coming up. How would you feel if your loved one gave you this present and you open it up and it reveals it's a makeover book? You're like, what?

What are you trying to say? Well, you know, you're saying that. What are you saying about me that you think I need this? Yes. That's what the cross says.

[ 27 : 04 ] It says you can't save yourself. In fact, the only thing that can save you is the Son of God himself living the life that you should have lived. And dying the death that you should have died in your place.

And being raised from the dead so that you can have life. That's the only thing that can save you. Maybe there's somebody that's come today and you didn't know him for yourself.

Maybe you've been trying to work your way back. You're saying, I'm in church. I'm here. I'm doing the things that I'm supposed to do. Maybe God will look on that and say, well, that's enough to save me as I compare my life to everybody else's.

And maybe I'm doing a little bit better. There's not that much cleaning in all the world. Come to him now. You can't work your way to him.

That's why he has died for you to bring you not just into his religion, but to bring you into his family. To bring you into his arms. He's given his son for you.

[ 28 : 16 ] Come to him. Cry out to him. Maybe some of you, you hear his voice. He is a good shepherd. And the sheep hear his voice. And they follow him.

So that they can have eternal life. My prayer is that would be for you today. So maybe the only wayness of Jesus offends us. But not only that, maybe it's not the only wayness, but the everybodyness of Jesus.

If you keep reading in chapter 7, there's a passage at the end of the chapter. It's an encounter where Jesus goes to eat with one of the Pharisees. And there's a woman who's described as living a sinful life in that town.

Who hears that Jesus is there. And she comes. And she comes to him as they're reclining at the table. And she makes her way into the house. And she doesn't care what everybody else does.

What everybody else says. What everybody else thinks about her. What she does with her actions is she's saying, Oh, how I love Jesus.

[ 29 : 15 ] Because of what he's done for me. And so she cries and she wipes his feet with her tears. And the people around him are saying, If Jesus knew who this was, what kind of woman she was, and that she was touching him, then he wouldn't let her do that.

And he uses her. He knows what they're thinking. Showing his divinity again. And he says, The problem with you guys is that you love little. Because you think you only need a little bit of forgiveness.

But she realizes she's been forgiven much. And so she loves much. And that is a picture of us. One of the reasons that people get offended by Jesus oftentimes is who he's hanging out with.

Who he decides to associate with. The people he gathered himself with. If you go back to that passage in Luke 4, it's very funny. Jesus has this great sermon.

And he sits down and he has a drop the mic moment. He says, This scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. And he actually should have dropped the mic, but he didn't. He keeps on going.

[ 30 : 29 ] Everybody thought well of him until he kept going. And he said, Y'all know what? You know, a prophet doesn't have honor in his hometown. Let me point out a couple examples from the Old Testament.

Of how God came and showed his favor to Gentiles instead. And after Jesus gives those examples, it says they drive him to the edge of town.

They want to kill him. His approval rating has skyrocketed. Downward. In just a matter of moments. Why? Because he chooses to identify himself with the outcasts.

There's only one way to come to Jesus. But anybody can come. No matter who you are. No matter where you're from. No matter what you have done.

You can come. You are not too far gone. Your sin is not too far great that he can't redeem you of it. And not only is that true for you, it's also true for your neighbors.

[ 31 : 31 ] And so as we think about being the last point, one of the things that I find in myself still is there's things, there's issues of my own heart that come.

And the way that I look at people. And the way that I treat people. And the way that I exalt myself over people in my own mind. What about you?

Here's a question to ponder. Who are your Samaritans? What do I mean? Well, if you keep reading just a few chapters, there's that famous story where the expert in the law comes up really to trap Jesus, to try and get him to show he doesn't really love God and follow God.

And he says, what must I do to inherit eternal life? You might remember that story. And he says, what does the scripture say? Points him back to the Old Testament. And he lists those two greatest commandments.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength and all your mind. And, do you remember the other? Love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus said, man, that's right.

[ 32 : 46 ] That's great. Do this and you will live. But the guy's not satisfied. And he asked a question. He says, who is my neighbor? What is he asking when he says that?

Who do I have to love? And who do I not have to love? Have you ever kind of looked for a loophole in the law of God? He's saying, I want to be able to say I'm following the law of God, but I don't want to love those people.

And so if there's people that I can classify as not neighbors, then I'm not breaking the law if I don't love them. That's what the guy is saying. And rather than get into a theological and philosophical debate, what did Jesus do?

He just told him a story about a man who was traveling on one of those roads that you don't want to be caught in at night. And on that road, a man is beaten and bloodied and left for dead.

And then in the story, Jesus says a priest comes along and he sees the man and he passes by on the other side. And then Jesus says, also a Levite, the people who would assist the priests in the temple, they come and he sees the man lying there in the middle of the road and when he saw him, he passes by on the other side.

[ 34 : 03 ] And then there's a third person. And what the expert in the law is expecting Jesus to say is somebody like you comes along and is really the hero of the story.

But instead, Jesus doesn't say somebody like you. Jesus says, a Samaritan came. came. And when he saw him, his heart broke for him.

And that heartbreak moved him to action. He got down and tended to the man's wounds and he bandaged him. He poured on oil and wine to bring healing to the wounds.

But then he doesn't stop there. He picks the man up and puts him on his own donkey, which means now he's got to do what? He's walking. But he doesn't stop there.

Then he takes him to an end and takes care of him. But then he continues. He goes to the guy. He says, look, here's some money. Take care of him there and I'll be back. If you need more later, I'll bring back more later.

[ 35 : 04 ] Amazing. Amazing picture of sacrificial love. And then Jesus goes back to the expert in the law and Jesus changes the question around him.

Do you remember the question the guy asked him? He said, who is my neighbor? But instead, Jesus says, which one was a neighbor? Which one proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among robbers?

And the man, he doesn't even say the Samaritan. Do you ever notice that? In the story, he says, the one who had mercy on him. He's like, I got the point, man. And Jesus says, go and do likewise. What was Jesus doing? He wasn't just showing what radical love looks like. Certainly the Samaritan shows us that. But what he was doing when he told that story and he chose to make the hated one the hero of the story.

He's showing the expert in the law what's in his own heart. He does that by making the hated one the hero. So back to my question I asked a few minutes ago.

[ 36 : 18 ] Who are our Samaritans? Who are the people for us? That if Jesus was telling that story and he says, the priest came along, the Levite came along, and then who would it be for you that you would never expect?

That you would say, no, Jesus, not them. They can't be the hero of the story. Maybe it's a person of another race. Maybe it's a person from a different place.

From a different part of the country or a different part of the world. Maybe it's a person who looks differently or of a different gender or a different generation. Maybe a person of a different orientation.

Maybe a person of a different political party. Who is it for you that if he's telling that story you say, no, not them.

Well, that's a clue to what's in our own hearts towards other people who are made in the image and likeness of God. And so what do you do with that?

[ 37 : 30 ] Well, I love the prayer of David at the end of Psalm 139 where he says after he's rehearsed all the ways that God knows him intimately when he was in his mother's womb as a little baby, he says, search me, O God, and know my heart.

Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there's any offensive way in me and then lead me in the way everlasting.

He's saying, God, just show me. Do inventory of my heart and my soul and show me what's wrong because there's no greater, there's no safer place to be than in the hands of the great physician.

And so I can bring those things to you so that you can change me. We desperately need the power of Jesus so that we can feel the offense of Jesus but not reject him but embrace him instead.

Isn't it good to know that we follow a savior who identifies himself with the very least of these and you say, well, I'm not like that or I try to be like that and I'm tired.

[ 38 : 50 ] Well, that points us to where we look where we find the power and the strength to be able to do it. Do you remember that passage that I just referred to in Matthew 25 where Jesus says, as you've done to the least of these so also you've done to me.

And then you remember that people say, Jesus, when did we see you hungry and thirsty and sick and in prison and then not tend to you or attend to you? Well, when do we most see Jesus naked? When do we most see Jesus a prisoner? When do we most see him thirsty and in need of water? When do we most see him in need of care? When he's hanging on a cross for us identifying with the very least of these.

That is where we look. That is where we go. To be able to find the power to do the very things that he's called us to do.

We look to the one who was despised and rejected. Who was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. You say, but pastor, I've been bruised.

[ 40 : 05 ] Well, he was bruised. You say, pastor, I've been crushed. Well, he was crushed. You say, but pastor, I've been wounded. Well, he was wounded. And it's by his stripes that we are healed.

By the power of God's spirit living in us and moving in us, let us be a people that live out what it means to have church here in Huntsville and around the world.

let's pray. Father, we pray today that you would give us the perspective of Jesus.

Lord, you know what each person comes in need of. You know the places where our expectations haven't been met. You know the places where we're suffering today.

And I pray that you might give us your perspective. Father, and Father, I pray that you would help us to be a presence in the places that are hurting the most in our cities and around this world. [ 41 : 15 ] Help us to be a tangible, comprehensive presence. And Lord, we pray that you would fill us with your power where we would feel the offense of the gospel, where we would embrace that offense.

We would embrace the only wayness of Jesus and also the everybodiness of Jesus. And we pray you'd be glorified as you do all these things. We ask that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen, amen. Stay with us to sing together near the cross. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org).