

God's Wrath Part 1

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Preacher: BK Smith

[0 : 00] All right. So we're going to be in Romans chapter 1. I want to begin by reading starting in verse 16 of chapter 1 of Romans 1 here. Paul writes, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. But they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

[1 : 14] Claiming to be wise, they became fools. And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal men and birds and animals and creeping things.

The greatest temptation we have when we read this text is to skip over that section in verse 18. For the wrath of God.

Take a look at this morning. I want to simply preach on one word, and that word is wrath.

What does wrath of God mean? What is the importance of this world? This word. Let's take a look at verse 16 for a second here. Notice he says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel.

And if you've been with us for a while, you know that's, he's using a, it's called a litot. It's a statement of, it's an understatement. But what he's simply stating is, I glory in the gospel.

[2 : 19] The gospel is awesome. It is great. It's amazing. Why? Why does Paul glory in the gospel? For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

In case everyone doesn't catch everyone. To the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed.

From faith for faith as is written, the righteous shall live by faith. But what else does Paul glory in?

Note the construction of verse 18 is the exact same construction as verse 17.

Verse 17 says, for he, glory, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the righteousness of God revealed. 18, for the wrath of God is revealed. Exact same construction.

It's part of that same, not ashamed of the gospel. I'm not ashamed that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men.

[3 : 29] Who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. Now before I dig into the text with you more, I want to give you a little bit of a context of this letter.

And I've shared different aspects of this context with you. But the more I look at it and the more I consider it, it just seems to drive the point better and better.

Remember, this is a letter written to Rome. Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. It is the capital of the world. In and around 33 AD, Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead.

The day that we celebrate as Easter. And on the 40th day after, Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, leaving his apostles with a mandate.

With a mandate that is spirit empowered. That they are to go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 34] Acts 2, Peter follows through on that and he preaches mightily. In what is known as the day of Pentecost. People in downtown Jerusalem are saved by thousands.

And we see the birthing of the church as the Holy Spirit comes down. And like fire descended upon all those who believed.

Acts records for us that there were people from Rome there. These Romans heard this news and they took this message back to Rome with them.

And many of them obviously on Pentecost or just even at that time of the Passover. Would have been Jewish people doing Jewish things in the temple. Returned back to their synagogues.

And they share this message with other Romans as they are being faithful to that call that they have newly been given them. And then we see the birth of the church in Rome.

[5 : 41] So at the birth of this church is it essentially a Jewish ancestry church. But through time Gentiles are invited in as people share with the gospel with those that are around.

And then something funny happens. Questions get asked. There becomes a dust up between Jews and Christians if you can believe it.

And it becomes so disruptive in the Jewish community that the Emperor Claudius decides I don't want to deal with this. And remember at that same time Christians and Jews were seen by the Roman Empire as being one group.

But we know history tells us that somewhere between 8041 and 8053 a Roman historian named Suetonius writes that the ones who were expelled that were the Jews.

He says were involved in civic disorders instigated by Crestus. Alright that's the statement. Now scholars believe that he's making reference to as Jews were becoming saved as Christians.

[6 : 58] They're breaking away. No longer supporting the money that's going to the temples. Some disruption starts to happen in the community. The Romans don't know how to make a distinction between Christians and Romans.

They're like you know what you're involved you're a Jew get out. And we see that throughout Acts right. Paul preached in many different cities. And there's a disruption.

He's stoned on multiple occasions. He's literally thrown out of cities. So we do believe that at that point in Acts 18 verifies for us.

Because that's when Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla. Why they were in Rome and they were booted out. Right. So Paul in Acts 18 meets them.

And then we find ourselves around 57-58 AD. Paul has just finished three missionary journeys throughout Greece and Asia Minor.

[7 : 59] And he's writing this letter to the Romans. And he's telling them I'm coming. I can't wait to see you. I can't wait to preach to you. But what's interesting is before he can come to Rome.

He's got this gift. The gift is made up of money and food. And he's bringing it to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem because the Jerusalem Christians are being hard done by.

And you've got to see what's going on here. Jerusalem 20 years earlier. The birth of the church. And essentially Jewish religion.

Right. All the early Christians would have been Jewish. Now goes out. Paul preaches to the Gentiles. And guess who's supporting the Jews now? These Gentiles.

These Greeks. So we're starting to see these divisions. We got these divisions in Rome. So there's this percolation of what's been going on.

[9 : 01] So much so that in Acts 15 a council is called. And this council is made up of many of the apostles. And it's to decide what do we do with these Greeks, Gentiles.

That means non-Jews who are getting saved. Do they have to undergo the Jewish rights and customs to be Christians? Because this is what they're struggling with.

And if you know your scripture, Galatians 2 talks about this council. And what Paul was talking about. But they were struggling to understand.

So just think about this. For 20 years of that early church. When people get saved. Say you're a Jewish. You're still practicing many of the same Jewish customs.

And you invite a Greek in. And you're like. Do I take them to the temple with me? Should they be coming to the synagogues? Right. They're asking. These are legitimate questions.

[10 : 05] Do they need to be circumcised? Right. Now the Greeks at the time. Some of the way the Jews lived their life.

Especially circumcision. Right. They didn't want any part of that. For good reason. But they were simply asking. They were asking. How much of the law.

The Mosaic law. Do we need to follow. For these Greek Christians. You with me on this? It's like. How much of this.

Moses's words. Do these new Greek people need to follow. And what's interesting. Galatians 2.15. It tells us of the rebuke that Paul writes.

This rebuke is going to sound very familiar to you. It's written in Galatians 2.15. Let me read it for you. He says.

[11:04] We ourselves. We ourselves are Jews by birth. And not Gentile sinners. Yet we know. We know. That a person.

Is not justified. By works of the law. But through faith in Christ Jesus. Or Jesus Christ. For we also believed in Christ Jesus.

In order to be justified. By faith in Christ. And not by works of the law. Because by works of the law. No one will be justified.

Amen. So by the time we get to the letter of Romans. It's 20 years since Paul wrote that to that church of Galatia. Guess who's struggling with this.

They're still struggling with the works of the law. And this faith. So that's why we look at Romans 1.16.17.

[12:00] That's why Luther. It freed him. Because he recognized the righteousness of God. God comes by faith. Amen. Amen. It comes by faith.

So 10 years after writing the letter to the church of Galatia. We have Paul dealing with this issue all over again. And he's also dealing with the issue of salvation. And the relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

So I say this all to give us an understanding of what's about to happen right here. So we've been here before. We understand that Paul write this book.

He is a servant of Christ Jesus. He's called by Jesus Christ to be an apostle. And he's set apart for this gospel. And this letter is an inclusive letter.

Verse 7. To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints. Verse 14. I am under obligation both to Greek and to barbarians.

[13:04] To wise and to fools. And now I say anything more about the wrath of God. I need you to see how this text fits into the flow of the book. Verse 18.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

What we have in verse 18 is a general overarching statement of all mankind. Okay. It's all mankind.

What happens in verse 19 is Paul is answering an objection. And that objection is it's not fair.

It's not fair. And I'll, if you weren't here last week, let me explain. Last week I shared a story. I was at that conference. John Piper was speaking.

[14:08] Group of college students at Wheaton College. And a woman was very offended by the fact that someone could go to hell without knowing Jesus.

And she said she did not think it was fair. That how could a loving God send people like her childhood friend to hell just because she did not believe in God?

You see, the same question that this young girl asked is the same question they asked at the time of the writing of this book. And this question is, shouldn't the Jews be held to a higher standard than the Gentiles?

You with me on this one? It's important you understand that, right? After all, who were the people of God? The Jews, right? Who called God Yahweh, their personal God?

The Jews, right? Who's the people who only had one God? The Jews, right? Did God not give them the law? Did God not give them Moses?

[15:17] Did God not give them Isaiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Hosea, Jeremiah, right? He gave them all these prophets.

Did he not give them the covenants? The Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant. And did he also not give them revelation through the prophets such as Daniel?

So they had all the information. So the question is, they're asking in Rome, how on earth could God hold Gentiles to the same standard as the Jew?

How can God's wrath be revealed from heaven against all Gentile ungodliness and Gentile unrighteousness when we did not have the prophets, we did not have the law, we did not have the covenants?

That is what we are going to be answering over the course of the next several weeks. The issue or the thing that I want to talk about today is the wrath of God.

[16:42] I kind of, and there's many, I couldn't count, but I decided I'm just going to title it facts about the wrath of God for you. That's the best I could come up with.

It didn't really sound good. You know, I've come up with five facts of the wrath of God. That didn't really work. How to understand it better, I hope you will have as we go through.

Now, I want you to be patient with me, because some of these ideas I believe are so important, and you're going to have questions, but they're going to be answered later on as we go through.

But I do want to preach first on the wrath of God. So notice in verse 18, Paul speaks the wrath of God.

The first fact of the wrath of God is the wrath of God is to be our primary motivation for evangelism. The wrath of God is to be our primary motivation for evangelism.

[17:41] Listen, there's plenty of reasons to rejoice in our salvation. Amen? We can rejoice in our salvation because we have been forgiven.

We can rejoice in our salvation because we have eternal life. We can rejoice in our salvation because we get to spend eternity with our loved ones, and those who are dog owners with their dogs too.

We can rejoice in our salvation because it saved some of our marriages. We can rejoice in our salvation because it saved some of our relationships, whether it be with our kids or our parents.

We can rejoice in our salvation because it saved us from a life of substance abuse. And some can rejoice in our salvation because it saved them from a life of crime.

Now, what I want you to understand when I say the wrath of God is our primary motivation for evangelism, I'm not saying that we begin with, hey, did you know you're headed to hell in eternal torment?

[18:48] That is not what I'm talking about. So when someone goes to draw, you know, there's a lot of depictions you can use to draw the gospel, right? You've seen the bridge. I'm not advocating drawing the big reddest flames and, you know, fire and brimstone and what that would look like.

But I do believe we need to preach a gospel to someone with the sole motivation to have them escape the torments of hell. Our goal, when we share the gospel, is for them to have a right relationship with the creator of the universe.

This means we need to introduce them to God. And that conversation has to have a beginning. And that beginning begins in Genesis. It's an understanding that God created the world and that this world was made for us to have dominion over.

That we were meant to be its caretakers. We were meant to tenderly love those that God had put in our charge. We were to rule his work here and to give thanks and honor to him.

The question is, is God's wrath coming against mankind? The answer is simply yes, but why me? I've never done anything against God, some might say.

[20:16] The question is, do you live life as God is the enemy? Is a question to ask. And most people say, well, of course not.

If you ask most people today, they're not going to say they regard God as their enemy. Some think quite positive about God. If you said to most people here, do you believe in God in Squamish today?

I'm going to tell you, the majority are going to say yes. Right? How can they not? But the question is, do you give the glory and honor of this creation to God or to someone else?

Do you rightfully serve and honor the true God of the universe? Notice verse 23. And we exchange the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Do you understand how scandalous that is? How absurdly rebellious this is?

[21:33] I know a man who has traveled the world studying plants and he literally believes plants are God's. Why? Because they're cool. And they're intricate.

And they are. They are. We get medicines from them. They do a lot of amazing things. And sometimes I want to go back. You ever have those conversations? I want to go back.

I actually want to get irate when that person says that. Wait a second. Do you understand how absurd that statement is? Plants are God's. Like it's ludicrously, insanely stupid.

Stupid. How stupid. Well, who had snow here today? No one?

Really? Was I the only one? All right. A few of you guys had some snow. Let's, well, in case you didn't know, there was a lot of snow. And let's just say Chris Mitchell comes home and he recognizes that his whole driveway is fully shoveled out.

[22 : 42] So he goes in and he says, Bronson, man, you did a great job. I am getting you that \$200 little mini scooter that you wanted. You know, you're excited. But it turns out it wasn't Bronson who actually shoveled the snow.

It was Presley. Right? Do you think Presley's going to say anything? How do you think Presley's going to feel, right? Because the gift, the award, the applause, or the thanks is rightfully hers. She did that work. Now, extrapolate that a million times. And it's hard to put ourselves in God's shoes.

But when any form of worship is given to anything else other than the Creator, to be thankful and to give honor, do you know how offensive that could be?

To our God? In fact, it was so offensive. It was so wretched that he sent his son to die in our places because our false worship deserved death.

[24 : 10] That's how offensive that is to God. That's why the Ten Commandments begin with, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me. You see, the wrath of God is living outside of God.

It's living outside a relationship of the one true God of the universe. That's why Isaiah 53, 6 simply says, we all, like sheep, have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to our own way. That our own way is us declaring that we are God.

I am the one who rules. Well, you might be saying, I don't have anything against God. I'm still trying to figure God out.

[25 : 16] You know, I can respond by simply saying, I'm glad you're working that out on your own timeline. But notice even in that, even though you have been exposed to truth, you are still wanting to control the show.

You're still trying to control when you will bow the knee to God. The reality is there is no neutrality with God.

There's no middle space. There is either you are a child of God or an enemy of God. The fact of the matter is, we all reject God as our ruler by running our lives our own way.

You see, to be saved means to be able to stand before God with God's righteousness that you have received by faith. And it is then and only then that we can stand before this creator and not feel shame.

We don't need to fear punishment. We don't need to fear that something's going to be found out about us. We're clean. There's not a speck on us.

[26 : 32] That's what's so beautiful about the vision that Isaiah had. Just think, Isaiah was a prophet who was doing the will of God. This guy spoke God's will.

Yet in the presence of God, he wanted to hide. There was no boldness there. Well, hey God, this is really cool. Man, those angels are great.

They're loud too, right? There's none of that. It's just absolute respect and honor and an understanding that I should be dead.

I don't deserve to be here. We don't belong. But more than anything else, sharing the gospel does mean sharing the wrath of God, my friends.

If we want our friends and family to have peace with God, we need to explain that they are indeed at war with God. Why does Paul start the gospel with this?

[27 : 43] Because it's God-centered. It's not man-centered. Any other gospel that starts or approaches with man is a man-centered gospel, which means, and let's be honest, praise the Lord for his patience, his love.

How many times have we shared the gospel incorrectly and it's led someone to the love of Jesus Christ, right? We don't have to be perfect. God's not calling for perfection, but he's giving us an understanding that the gospel is truly to be God-centered, not man-centered.

See, the wrath of God is to be our primary truth for evangelism. We all need to know our standing before God so that we will appreciate the gift that God has given us.

Last week, I preached on this idea of medicine being given to us. Your doctor shows up to your house and he's got this pill for you and this pill will clear you, will clean you of anything.

And you know, you're going to argue, do I really need to take it? And the doctor simply says, I wouldn't be at your door if I didn't believe you really needed to take this pill.

[29 : 11] The wrath of God is your doctor explaining to you why you need this medicine. So that's the first fact of the wrath of God.

When it comes to evangelism, it's to understand that we begin with the wrath of God. We begin with a God-centered view of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Christ. The second fact about the wrath of God is the wrath of God is not new. The wrath of God is not new. When we read the Old Testament, guess what God's prophets are calling the people to do?

Get right with God. Get right with God, right? You just have to read all the prophets that go before the kings. He's begging them to make right with God.

And notice what he's not saying. He's not saying, I need you to go to the temple three times more this week. He's not saying, I need you to burn more bulls.

[30 : 12] Right? What's interesting is he wasn't calling them to have a religious relationship with God.

He was calling them to have a personal relationship with God. If you know anything about cults, perhaps the Lord has saved you from a cult. Maybe you're in a cult today and you want to hear what Christianity is all about.

One of the few things that cults always offer is they offer happiness. They want to offer you happiness. They want to offer you a purpose. They want to offer you a purpose.

And they also want to offer you deliverance. But they want you to have happiness, purpose, and deliverance, which is found in yourself rather than in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ to them is the model who you follow so you can have that happiness, purpose, and deliverance. Christianity is God does that work so that we can be delivered.

[31 : 17] Amen? That happiness is the joy of knowing that we are in a right relationship with God. And when we're in that right relationship, God, guess what we have? Purpose.

We know how to live this life. There's no guessing. It's interesting. I lived in L.A., as you know, for many years. And the Church of Scientology is everywhere.

Do you know that? They're all over the place. And they are always in tourist traps. They always meet you and they got this little clipboard. And they want you to know if you want to take a stress test.

All right. Who here is stressed? Come on. I just told you a couple of days ago or a couple of weeks ago. Like the most sanctified place on earth is going to Disneyland, right?

You got to manage your sugar-filled kids. You got to get them where you want to go. Make sure they don't get ridden over by the Mickey Mouse tram. You know, like it's chaos there. Well, that's what they do.

[32 : 17] They want to get you in. Are you stressed? Yes. And there's people who get off the bus every day hoping that their dreams are going to be fulfilled of some big director or actor or any of those things.

And I met them. I met them. But what's interesting is God's people continue to offer sacrifices right up until the day that Nebuchadnezzar came in and burnt the temple down.

Do you know that? It's not like God's people weren't going to the temple anymore. So he says, you know what? You're not going to use that temple anymore. I'm going to destroy it. I'm going to bring in the Babylonian king and he's going to wipe it off.

No, that's not what he did. They were still doing all the religious things, but there was no relationship. The fact of the matter is God is not interested in religious sentimentality.

He's not interested in the fact that we have bumper stickers that say God is the way or the little fish. God's not interested in the fact that we have memory verses posted all over our fridge.

[33 : 30] God is interested in whether or not you have a personal relationship with him that he knows you and he calls you either a son or daughter of God.

But in the Old Testament, they weren't right with God. They neither honored or worshiped him even in the midst of offering sacrifices in the temple.

The truth of life is you can feel happy and feel like you live a life that is fulfilled, but you can still be under the wrath of God. You can do all the right religious things, but you can still experience a false joy, a false peace.

In fact, the matter is you can adopt a few biblical principles and they will help your marriage. You can adopt a few biblical principles and they will help you in your child rearing. You can adopt a few biblical principles and I believe you will prosper financially. But those things will not bring you any closer to God.

[34 : 44] In fact, they are meaningless to God. Like I said, all too often we think of the wrath of God as being all fire and brimstone and you're going to hell.

Let's look at verse 18. For the wrath of God is revealed. You know what that is? Present tense. That means the wrath of God is being revealed today in this age.

Fire and brimstone may not be visible to us in this day, but God's wrath is. That's why on that moment right before the cross when Jesus Christ asked his Father, may this cup be taken from me. Theologians call that the cup of wrath. That's why in Mark 15, 34, as he hung on the cross, he cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The greatest pain that the son could ever experience was to be separated from his father. Are you separated from your father?

[36 : 22] My friends, the gospel call begins with wrath. We want to shy away from wrath, but the wrath of God is not some future event.

For some of us, we live in the wrath of God right now. We see war. We see financial ruin. We see relational ruin.

Some of us live in the after effects of financial relational ruin. You see, my friends, we live in a world that doesn't want to tell you that we live right now in the wrath of God.

A few months ago, I was in the hospital in the waiting room, and I noticed that they were encouraging everyone to take an AIDS test. Everyone.

Think about that for a second. They want everyone. Rather than saying that there are dangers with promiscuity, instead of hurting someone's feelings, let's just put it out for everyone.

[37 : 31] A funny story on that. So when my mom got cancer, she had uterine cancer, and my friend who was a doctor, I'm not laughing, my mom's cancer obviously, but my friend who's a doctor is trying to ask me what type of cancer it is.

Listen, I'm a doctor, but I'm not that kind of doctor, right? So I said, she's got cervical cancer. And the doctor said, you know, it's the same area for me, I don't know.

And the doctor says to me, she doesn't have cervical cancer. And I'm like, what are you telling me she doesn't have? She's got cervical cancer. And she goes, listen, you dummy, cervical cancer is an STD.

I can assure you, your mom doesn't have cervical cancer. Right? And that goes along with my other philosophy of life. Only a doctor can insult you and still be friends, right?

But the reality is, they've made cervical cancer. And this doctor has come under pressure in her medical society because they want her to undergo every woman to undergo that test.

[38 : 44] And she says, why would I shame those women who are living right before God? I'm not going to do that. What I'm doing is going to ask them their sexual history and if they are indeed at risk for that.

I still remember meeting the first guy that I'd met that had AIDS. I was on a Christian retreat and this was the late 80s. And if you remember, everyone thought, you get AIDS, you're dying, and you didn't know if you touched the doorknob or you came in.

I remember we're all sitting in the same room. No one wanted to share a bed with the guy and we were all sleeping out in the balcony because we were scared. We were a bunch of first year stupid students, right?

But anyway. But when I asked him, finally get to know him over the week, he was a rock and roll star. Guess what he lived? He lived an exceptionally promiscuous life.

And he simply said, I said, you know, are you mad? Are you angry? He said, I'm reaping what I sow. But the most important thing it was for him is that led him to Jesus Christ.

[39 : 49] And that he knew that in this world he is under the wrath of God. But eternally he's not. You see, we do live in a world that doesn't want to, us to see the wrath of God.

They hide it. They create illusions. They don't want to be judgmental. They want to be tolerant. But more and more, I believe we as Christians, as we live in this insane world, is we need to call out the insanity for what it is.

We do indeed live under the wrath of God today. But you can be free of the eternal wrath of God if you turn and trust Jesus today.

Let me pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, just as we contemplate this wrath of God, I just pray that through this mini-sermon series that not only gives us truly as we gain this understanding of a horrible word that we want to skip over actually reveals so much beauty about you.

how can we ever appreciate the love that you have for us if we don't understand the wrath that put your son on the cross for us?

[41 : 24] Father, I pray that people would not judge that word wrath too harshly. Seek over the the next several weeks that they would be praying as they examine this text.

In some ways, what a wonderful word it is because it reflects who you are. It also gives me insight into my own sin and how vile and wretched it is.

Father, it is so easy for us as Christians to be mad and angry at society's sins. But the question that we need to ask ourselves is do we hate our sins as much as we hate the world's sins?

Father, we have control over our lives and the sins that we commit. And that, yes, by continuing in certain sins does lead to your wrath.

It can be sexual or moral sins. It could be financial sins. It could be relational sins. could be just sins of our temper, our anger.

[42 : 59] It could be the sin of unforgiving. It could be the sin of always wanting to control everything. Which would be the sin of lack of trust.

It could be the sin of gossip, the sin of anxiety. Father, as we preach on this, I pray that we don't look to others, but we do indeed look to you.

And as we look to you, may we be thankful for all that you have given us. May we truly be thankful for the cross and the good news that someone did share with us the wrath of God was meant for us.

And that we trusted and believed and we received the gift of righteousness through faith. Father, may we pray for mercy for our loved ones that do not know you.

May we begin by preaching the wrath of God by simply telling them about God. how he created this world and his purpose for this world.

[44 : 25] God gave it to us to rule in his name, to steward our children in his name, to steward our families in his name.

Father, many people are looking for avenues or pretext to talk about the gospel. I can't think of anything greater than these areas. Everyone faces them.

Father, may we pray for the souls that do indeed need you. May you bring them to mind and may we as a church start setting aside names that we can begin to pray for together.

so that they may see the wrath of God which reveals our stupid foolishness and instead of worshipping dumb plants would worship you.

And in your name we pray. Amen.