

1 Samuel

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[0 : 0 0] As Tashi said, we're in the middle of a series at the moment, preaching through the book of 1 Samuel. So, so far, just to fill you in if you haven't been around, Israel has made it to the promised land that God was giving to them.

But basically, once it got into this land, things started going badly. It struggled. They'd have little flashes of goodness where they'd be powerful or prosperous, but it keeps going wrong.

And they are asking the question when we get to the book of 1 Samuel, does God still care for us? And is he still with us? Are we still his people? So chapter 1, we had a bit of encouragement when God affirms his presence and care by blessing Hannah, a barren woman, with a child that she desperately wants.

And we do begin to get a sense from Hannah's prayer in the beginning of chapter 2 that God's working in a new way through Hannah and through Israel. But tonight it feels like we hit a brick wall.

The problems that were obviously there before, for them to be asking if God was even still around, are even deeper than we might have thought. And so that's what we're going to walk into tonight.

[1 : 0 7] And I want to pray for us that God will give us ears to hear, because some of the stuff we're going to talk about tonight is not the funnest stuff to talk about. But I'm going to ask that God lets us hear it anyway, because it's important.

Father God, we want to thank you for your word. And we want to thank you for the chance to gather tonight. And Lord, we ask that as we reflect on what it is you have to say here, that you give us soft hearts, that we would be teachable, that we would be willing to recognize things that are in our lives that are wrong, and that we would be thankful for the opportunity to confess those and have you deal with that part of our life.

Amen. We have a natural cynicism towards leaders in our culture. We are just a week past an election, and I'm sure you can reflect on conversations that you've had in the past fortnight, or maybe even a bit further, on the hopelessness of the various candidates that they were to vote for.

Clive Palmer is probably an indictment on what we think a leader is. We basically get frustrated because these people get thrown up as taking responsibility for our state, our nation, whatever it is, our local government area.

And almost always we run into stories in the media of how they've fallen, whether it's morally fallen, whether it's they've just failed to keep their promises. There is this kind of constant cycle of dodginess in the leadership that we have in our society today.

[2 : 3 1] And sadly, church is not immune to that. There is also a cycle of dodgy church leaders that we hear about. And so there is this cycle of leadership. Good leadership would tend to hang around, but there is this constant change.

Even in our fantastic political structure, you tend to go one party for a little bit with all this hope, and then they fail. So we go back to the other side for a little while, then they fail, and then we go back. And there is almost a constant pattern, if you look back through Australian government history, of one major party, then the next.

Because we're not happy, they're not delivering. Now the problem with that for us is, when we open a passage like this, we think, yep, fair enough, the leaders of Israel are dodgy.

No big deal. But, we need to stop for a second and understand who it is we're looking at in this passage of Scripture. You've got to remember that this is Israel.

God picked this one nation out of all of the peoples on earth. At this point, they are in the promised land that He led them to. Spectacularly, when He rescued them out of Egypt.

[3 : 33] This story is at Shiloh, which is like the capital city when it comes to worshipping God for the people of God in the country, the land that God had given them. And these people that we're talking about are the priests.

From within this chosen people, God chose a specific tribe and separated them out and said, you will be the priests, you will be my representatives, you will be the leaders to serve the people and we find them completely and utterly corrupt.

And that's even more significant if you look back just a couple of verses to verse 10 of chapter 2, which we looked at last week, where Hannah tells us in her prayer that those who oppose the Lord will be broken.

This situation should shock us. Last week, we celebrated that God is sovereign and that God will bring low those who are full of pride and He will raise up the humble and then we come here and His leadership in His people is corrupt and seems to be flourishing as they're doing it.

This should shock us. God doesn't tolerate it. God will not tolerate it. If we stopped even just at verse 12, if we didn't read anywhere beyond that, we would have a major problem.

[4 : 48] Have a look at it. Verse 12, Eli's sons were scoundrels. They had no regard for the Lord. They don't know God. They're priests.

That means they're God's representatives. They kind of stand in between God and His people to make sure that this relationship can work because you've got a holy God and unholy people and so God appoints priests as the go-between and the people in the middle don't even know God.

They have no regard for Him. He's not important to them. Now, it's not that they don't know about Him. Obviously, they're priests. They spend all day, every day, doing things that God told the people to do. They've heard the stories about the parting of the sea, the wandering around the desert.

They've heard about it, but they don't know Him. They don't have the relationship with Him, at least not in the way that Hannah did last week or two weeks ago. However, their knowing about Him has no impact on their life.

It doesn't make any difference to the way they make decisions, to the things that are important to them, to the things that are precious. And so their ignorance, or maybe more accurately, their rejection of God, starts to flow out in their actions.

[5 : 57] Have a look with me at verse 13. It says, Now, let's be really clear.

It says it's the practice, but it doesn't say it's a good practice. This isn't the instruction that God gave them when He set this up. These guys were just feeling hungry. And the hopelessness of this is God had actually designed this sacrificial system so that people sacrificing would actually keep a portion to go to the priests as like payment for their job.

So God had already designed it to make sure these guys would get looked after. They would have food. They would be well fed. They would have strength. But they just decide, you know what, I'm a little bit hungrier. And so they would strut up to you while you're making your sacrifice, meats they're cooking, you're getting ready, following the specific instructions that God has given.

And they bring in this novelty fork that's going to collect everything that's in your pot and wander off and go, look, I've got it. And in fact, these priests are so lazy that they send their servants to do it. Not only are they being greedy, they're being lazy and sitting on their butts and sending someone else to do the dirty work.

But it gets even worse. It says, verse 15, And even before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the person who was sacrificing, give the priest some meat to roast.

[7 : 27] He won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw. And if the person said to him, let the fat be burned first, which is what God instructed them to do, this is how they would respond.

The servant would answer, no, hand it over now. If you don't, I'll take it by force. So not only would they steal the meat from the boiling pot, they would come and remove and steal the portion that was reserved for God himself.

They would presume to take the place of the God who had rescued them out of Egypt. And then there is a significant verse there in verse 17, The sin of the young men was very great in the Lord's sight, for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt.

Now, the funny thing is that these priests are technically going through the motions. They're living at the tent where God has told them to live.

There is sacrifices happening like there was supposed to be. And so they're kind of presenting like priests. I'm sure that Israel didn't particularly like them, but there was probably some sense of they're the priests, what can we do?

[8 : 38] That's where we have to do our sacrifices. But even though they're kind of going through the motions, the motions actually don't hold any weight. Because the whole system, the sacrifices, the tent, this place was all about relating to God.

That was the whole point. And these guys don't know him. So it doesn't matter if they were even doing the correct sacrifices at this point, because verse 12 tells us they had no regard for the Lord.

There's a little warning for you there that you can actually look a lot like somebody who is following Jesus, but just be spinning the wheels. Following Jesus is about having a relationship with him.

And it's possible to look exactly like a Christian, but not know the God who Christians follow. I remember when I was younger, a fair bit younger, I'm a child of the 80s.

And in the 80s, it was okay for white guys to dance. Thank you, Vanilla Rice, and I guess MC Hammer's kind of somewhere in the middle of white and black. And I remember that when I say it was okay, not everyone could do it, but it was just, there was a permission.

[9 : 47] And I remember my older brother and my cousin, who was also older, took street funk dancing classes, and I was so jealous. There's some really embarrassing photos of them with no shirts on and happy pants, and it's fantastic.

But in my absence at the actual classes, I still had aspirations to be a dancer. And so I convinced my parents to get me the fluoro puffy happy pants, and I think I got some imitation Nike high tops as well and everything.

And I had the muscle tee, which was fairly unnecessary for the eight-year-old version of me. But the problem was, I couldn't, and I still cannot, dance at all. If music comes on, I can do the awkward shuffle thing, but that's about it.

It's not exactly street funk. I was all show and no go. And look, entertaining story, but there is the scary possibility that we could be that as Christians.

I've got a Bible. I don't get drunk. I don't swear. I make sure that I get to church at least two out of four Sundays. But if there's not actually a relationship with God, if there's not a joy in God, if there's not a knowledge of the God who made you and loves you, could it be that you're just going through the motions?

[11 : 07] The sin that is great for God here is the issue that they don't know Him. That's what makes them so stupid when it comes to the sacrifices.

That's what makes them so willing to put themselves in the place of God. It's that their heart doesn't know God.

Even though they're in the right place, they're wearing the right clothes, they're at the right ceremony, but the issue in verse 12 is they have no regard for the Lord.

He's just some guy they've heard stories about. He's not their God. He's not their Lord. He doesn't matter to them. But it gets worse again.

Come down with me to verse 22. Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

[12 : 06] So he said to them, why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. Know my sons. The report I hear spreading among the Lord's people is not good.

If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender. But if anyone sins against the Lord, who will intercede for them? See, Eli gets a little glimpse of just how serious what they're doing is.

This isn't just them stealing food from other people. This isn't just them sleeping with women. As bad as both of those things are, this is a sin against God.

But the scary part comes there at the end of verse 25. His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the Lord's will to put them to death.

Their sin goes beyond the point of no return. They cross a line. And so, it is God's will to put them to death.

[13 : 13] That's a scary phrase. We don't like phrases like that. But let's just be careful how we read it.

It's not saying that these guys didn't deserve to be put to death. Remember what we've just read. They were sleeping with women at the tent of meeting. They didn't know God.

They were abusing their position as priests and threatening the people who were coming to try and sacrifice to God. They're still responsible for their actions. They're still responsible for the way that they're treating God.

They're making a mockery of the means by which God has given his people to relate to him. God has given them sacrifices so that they might know the need for forgiveness and they are using those sacrifices as an opportunity to reject him again.

They are responsible for their sin. Death is what they deserve. But what God does is confirm them in their rejection.

[14 : 18] I mean, we've got to understand that these guys had front row seats for God revealing himself. the sacrifices were God's way of showing just how holy he was.

The tent being in one place at one time and the need for priests in the middle was all part of communicating who God was and his desire to know his people. And these guys are front row center.

They're in the middle of every sacrifice. They don't go once a year like Hannah and Elkanah and their family. These guys were there every day seeing what God was doing to reveal himself and they just refuse to acknowledge him as God.

They refuse to recognize him as holy and so God confirms that in their heart. It's their choice but God confirms it. It's not dissimilar to Pharaoh in Egypt.

If you remember the story of the ten plagues in the book of Exodus we hear over and over how Pharaoh hardens his own heart. He makes a decision. He says, I don't know your God.

[15 : 22] Your God's nothing to me. But then we also hear that God hardens Pharaoh's heart. It's not one or the other. It's that Pharaoh has rejected God and so God confirms him in his hard rejecting heart and the possibility of turning back is gone.

Not because God can't save him but because he is committed to his choice. He is unrepentant. He sees the choice and he chooses again and again not to honour God as God.

The same is going on for these two guys. They are absolutely committed to rejecting God that even when Eli turns up and says this isn't good you shouldn't be doing this they will not hear it.

You've got to imagine if I was secretly having an affair if I was secretly committing adultery the longer that I do that the more regularly I have to tell myself that God doesn't matter.

If I know it's wrong each time that I go and meet with this woman I tell myself God doesn't matter and I become more and more calloused more and more hardened to hearing what God has to say about that situation.

[16 : 40] The first time there might be a bit of you know to and fro in my heart there might be a moral should I or shouldn't I but the tenth time or the hundredth time progressively I will get harder and harder in my heart to the point where I could see a flashing vision of angels telling me to repent and go the other way and I would nod, smile and continue on in my sin.

These guys are so established in their pattern of ignoring God they are so committed to their rebellion that God confirms them in it they have crossed the line.

Now we don't know where this line is but the passage warns us God will confirm people who harden their hearts like this. Now this isn't a license for us to look around at people in our lives and go they're too far gone.

That's not what it's saying. You don't know where the line is. I don't know where the line is. God does. But at very least this is a call to us and a warning for us that we need to take sin in our lives seriously.

It's really dangerous for us to just kind of settle in to sin. Accept sin. We need to confess quickly and trust that our God can forgive us and transform us because there is a warning there that if we continue we are hardening our hearts to the majesty of Jesus.

[18 : 08] We are switching ourselves off to the offer of forgiveness and we are flirting with the righteous judgment that God will and should bring on his enemies. But it's not just Hophni and Phinehas who God judges in this passage.

Eli cops it as well. Now for Hophni and Phinehas their sin is obvious. It's catalogued for us there. It's really easy. No issues. They were jerks. They probably deserve what they got.

But what about Eli? I find Eli a strange character in these first few chapters of 1 Samuel. You kind of like him at points and then at other points you're not sure and you're kind of thinking should I be on his team or shouldn't I?

I mean the first episode was him calling Hannah a drunk and telling her to go home and you're thinking dodgy. But then he kind of backpedals a little bit prays for her gets the answer.

There's even this little glimpse in here in verse 18 through to 21 which we'll look at in a little while where he prays again for Hannah when she comes back and he gets answers to his prayer. Hannah gets more kids and so you're kind of thinking is he good or is he bad?

[19 : 14] But God is equally angry with him. Potentially even angrier with him and he sends a messenger to let him know in verse 27. It says a man of God came to Eli and said to him this is what the Lord says did I not clearly reveal myself to your ancestors family when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh?

I chose your ancestor out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest to go up to my altar to burn incense and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your ancestors family all the food offerings presented by the Israelites.

Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?

Therefore the Lord the God of Israel declares I promised that members of your family would minister before me forever but now the Lord declares far be it from me.

Those who honour me I will honour but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house so that no one in it will reach old age and you will see distress in my dwelling.

[20 : 29] Although good will be done to Israel no one in your family line will ever reach old age. Every one of you that I do not cut off from serving at my altar I will spare only to destroy your sight and sap your strength and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.

Those are some fairly serious punishments that God is about to pour out on Eli. Hophni and Phinehas they are going to die. Eli's entire family line will be cut off.

Those who aren't will be just kept around so that they can be made a mockery of so that they can be distressed at the situation that has come upon them. God chose Eli's family by grace but Eli has taken it for granted.

Now you might look at this story and think what more is Eli supposed to do? I mean he rebukes his sons he sits them down and he has a chat with them but it's half-hearted at best and you can tell.

Have a look at verse 29 why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering? I don't know about your Bible but some of your Bibles might have on that you the third word of verse 29 a little letter or a little mark and down the bottom of your page it will tell you that you is plural.

[21 : 54] Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering? Eli has been sharing in the stealing that Hophni and Phinehas has been doing.

Not that he's been sending his servant along not that he's been doing it himself but halfway through the verse why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?

Yeah he said to his sons you guys need to stop this it's giving us a bad reputation but at the same time he had a mouthful of the meat that had been stolen from a sacrifice. It's almost as if Chris Jones had discovered that Tim was stealing from the offertory as the bags were going around and he said Tim I really want you to stop it it's not okay as he took the 50 from Tim that was his take for the week.

It's that blatant. He seems like he's doing the right thing when he says sons you have to stop this. He seems somewhat aware that they will be accountable to God but at the same time he doesn't really do anything about it.

He eats the meat that he shouldn't be eating and on one level he just endorses what they're doing. He keeps them as priests he continues to supervise them and ultimately he is responsible for their sin not because he doesn't stop them but because he shares in it as well.

- [23 : 25] But maybe the more scary one there in verse 29 why do you honour your sons more than me? Eli is the priest of God's nation and it says he cares for his sons more than he cares for his God.

He was chosen his primary role was to be representative of the people towards God and God towards the people and he is distracted by his relationship with his sons.

His dodgy sons. It's not like even they were amazing kids and yet he loves them more than he loves his God. This is even more dramatic when you think about Hannah just a couple of chapters earlier.

Hannah is given her first and only son after years of being distressed at her barrenness and what does she do? She hands him back to God because she loves her God more.

It's not that she doesn't love her son and we'll see in a second that she's still visiting him and dropping off clothes for him. She still cares for him but she loves her God the most and she recognises that her son is a gift for God.

- [24 : 44] Whereas Eli the priest cares more about whether or not he's getting on with his sons. He doesn't want to have a fight at home every day about the things they're doing so he kind of shrugs his shoulders and goes along.

God is worthy of undivided devotion. God cannot and must not share his honour with something or someone else.

Hannah said it blatantly in chapter 2 look at it again verse 2 there is no one holy like the Lord. There is no one besides you. There is no rock like our God. God is far greater and more significant and more worthy than anything or person or experience or anything else that we have in our lives.

For Eli his sin is more subtle. You might not have looked at him and thought that he was somebody who scorned his God. But just because his sin is subtle doesn't mean it's not serious.

sin is idolatry. He's worshipping the relationship he has with his sons instead of worshipping his God.

- [26 : 02] This is almost a summary of what Israel is like at this point in history. This priest is supposed to lead the people in their devotion to God. He's supposed to be at the front of the pack the example to be followed but instead he loves his sons more.

Or at least he likes the idea of keeping the peace at home more than he likes the idea of loving God and obeying him. Now again Eli couldn't necessarily have stopped them from being dodgy sons.

That might have just been who they were but he did have the power to take them out of the priesthood. He did have the power to remove them from their place of privilege in God's temple but instead he tolerates it.

Instead he honours them. Now this is a hard thing for us to wrestle with because in our culture being tolerant is the ultimate compliment.

Intolerance is the worst thing you could say about anyone. Tolerance is the highest virtue and Christians are renowned because we're supposed to be intolerant and that makes us ignorant and foolish and bigoted.

- [27 : 11] But is it possible that tolerance is not always a virtue? Is it good to tolerate starvation of innocent people? Is it good to tolerate abuse?

Tolerance is not always a good thing and tolerance of sin in other people is often just evidence of idolatry in our own lives. It often just points to the fact that what we care about most is that that person likes me rather than they honour God and I honour God.

God. What we care about most is that everybody gets along rather than the God of heaven and earth is treated as the God of heaven and earth. The one who is to be obeyed above all else. Think about the last time that someone you know was in an obvious sin.

It won't take much thinking. But think about the conversation you had with yourself. Do I challenge them on this? Do I bring it up? The number of times that I know that I have talked myself out of confronting a brother or sister who is in sin because I'm more concerned about what they'll do to me afterwards.

How they'll relate to me. How they'll respond to me. What about sin in your own life? Do you confess it to other people because you care most that God is honoured?

[28 : 40] or do you keep it a secret and hope that no one finds out because you care more that people respect you? That people think you're a good respectable person?

We pretend that these conversations are avoided out of love. I don't want to hurt their feelings. I don't want to be judgmental. I'm not the right person to talk to them. But really, often, it's out of love for us that we don't have those conversations.

It's because I want to protect myself. When you love something more than God, that's idolatry. When you love something the same amount as God, that's idolatry.

Our God stands alone above all else and is to be worshipped and honoured above all else. It is a gift of grace that he even invites us to know him in the first place.

And we need to be careful not to reject that gift like Eli did. We need to be careful not to take it for granted. The demand for us as God's people is undivided commitment to and passion for God's name above all else.

[29 : 57] There is a heaviness in this passage. There is the right judgment on both Hophni and Phinehas and Eli as well. But there is a glimmer of hope. Look back with me to verse 11.

Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy, that's Samuel, ministered before the Lord under Eli the priest. It's the first time in this book that the word ministered has been used of anyone who is at the temple.

Jump down to verse 18. Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod, that's a priest's clothes. Each year his mother made him a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.

Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife saying, May the Lord give you children by this woman to take the place of the one she prayed for and gave to the Lord. Then they would go home and the Lord was gracious to Hannah.

She gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord. And then down to verse 26. There is this incredible contrast.

[31 : 11] You could almost miss it just for the weight of judgment in this passage. But as we hear about the hopelessness of the current priesthood, there's this young boy that we met in chapter one who is beginning his life of service to God.

With this constant tide of faithlessness and disobedience, there is just the verses that remind us that there was one ministering before the Lord. One that we know God provided in spectacular circumstances.

God's faithfulness to his people is not dependent on what his people do or don't do. God is not dependent on a faithless priesthood. He can make a barren woman give birth to a replacement priest.

God can provide a better priest to replace Eli, to lead his people. God can do it. There's an incredible promise down in the end of this chapter.

If you go down to verse 35. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house and they will minister before my anointed one always.

- [32 : 23] One of the great things about promises in the Old Testament is that often you get more than one fulfillment. You get little glimmers of fulfillment in the short term but often we're looking forward.

This is partially talking about Samuel. That's what all those little verses littered through this chapter are trying to tell us that Samuel is going to be better. But if we sneak a bit further down through this book we're going to find out that Samuel's sons are scarily similar to Eli's sons.

They fall short and they fail in spite of what a great priest and leader Samuel is. But this promise points forward. Samuel 2.26 is echoed in the Gospel of Luke describing someone else.

It says, Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. It's not an accident. This promise was looking forward to the priest that would actually fulfill God's desire.

desire. There's this amazing clue in this passage that for me just kept distracting me as I read through it each time. When Eli's rebuking his sons, listen to what he says.

- [33 : 35] If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender. But if anyone sins against the Lord, who will intercede for them? I mean if it's two people fighting, God can step in.

God has the power. But what about when you offend God? Who has the right to stand there and represent you before God? Eli knows that he doesn't. He knows that his sons don't.

He probably even knows that Samuel don't. But I don't think he understands just how significant his words were. He desired somebody who could go between imperfect people and God forever.

And in Hebrews 7, we read this amazing thing. Hebrews 7 verse 23. Now there have been many of those priests since death prevented them from continuing in office.

But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them.

- [34 : 44] Such a high priest truly meets our need. One who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day.

First for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. Who will intercede for sinful people like us?

For sinful people like Eli and all Israel when we sin against God? Jesus will. Who will represent us before God when we don't deserve it?

Jesus will. Who has the right to stand before a holy God? Only God's Son, Jesus.

If we acknowledge our sin and repent, Jesus is our great high priest. He has offered the sufficient once for all time sacrifice.

- [35 : 56] He has offered his own body and his own blood in our place and he lives forever to intercede for us. He sits in the presence of the heavenly father right now speaking on my behalf as I fail time and time again.

Jesus is God's grace to us. Not to be used as a license to do whatever we want because we've got this free pass but to be trusted and rejoiced in and depended on.

I want to finish tonight by inviting you to confess sin. But I want to invite you to do it joyfully. Sin is serious and there is a weight of sin that we have seen in the judgment that God pours out on his people in this passage.

But because of Jesus we get to confess joyfully and confidently. We've been warned not to hold on to sin, not to live in a pattern of sin.

And so tonight I want to invite you to confess the times that you have loved things more than you have loved God. The times that you have treated him like he doesn't matter.

[37 : 10] I don't know what your sin looks like and I don't need to know. God does and he wants you to confess it knowing that his great high priest, his son Jesus has paid for it and is sufficient and mighty to save.

I want you to just take a moment right now. We're just going to sit in quiet for a second. I want you to reflect on your own life and the things you need to give to God and I want you to give them joyfully to a God who loves you and can forgive you through his son.

Amen. Let me pray for us.

Father God, we do acknowledge that we are far too comfortable with sin in our own lives. We want to apologize for the things that we elevate and exalt to be level with you or even above you in our affections.

And God, we want to ask that you would reveal yourself in such a way that you make those things fade. That love for you would be an inevitable result of seeing you in your majesty and glory.

[39 : 07] We want to thank you tonight for reminding us that in spite of our failure, in spite of all of humanity's inability to fulfill what it is to know you, you have provided for us the perfect substitute in Jesus.

You have provided for us the forever high priest who forever intercedes for us, whoever represents us in your presence. Father, please give us hearts that are joyful to confess our failures.

Please give us confidence that as we confess even now tonight that you forgive and that you restore and that you work in us to change our hearts and our minds to be more and more like your son Jesus.

Father, please consume our consciousness in such a way that our whole lives are driven out of devotion for you, out of love for you.

Please daily remind us of the sacrifice of your son, that we might rejoice in the opportunity to know you and might live lives that honor you.

[40 : 18] Father, we thank you so much for Jesus. Amen.