

Saved to Serve

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

John 13, we're going to focus on verses 12 through 17 this morning, but I'm going to read verses 1 through 6 for context. So John 13, verse 1, Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and, taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Look at verse 12. When he had washed their feet and put on their outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, Do you understand what I have done to you?

[1 : 36] You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example. That you also should do, just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. This is the word of our Lord. Thank you.

[2 : 36] Thank you. Several years ago, the former president, George H.W. Bush, died at 94 years old. After his death, the nation came together to remember what a remarkable life he lived and what a remarkable man he was.

He was, as they say, one of the greatest generation. Fighter pilot in World War II narrowly escaped death after being shot down by the Japanese, a fate he never quite got over.

He returned home. He married Barbara Bush. He overcame a number of obstacles to become a successful oil man, and he went on to become the 41st president of the United States.

He was a loyal friend to many. After he died, his body was laid in state, is what they say, in the Capitol building. And many responded to his loyalty with deep respect, none more impressive than former senator and friend Bob Dole.

Dole, at 95 years old, Dole was helped to his feet from a wheelchair to salute his president one final time. He was a generous-hearted man, an old word that we used to use for that.

[3 : 57] He was a magnanimous man. After losing his race for re-election to Bill Clinton, he left a note in the Oval Office that famously read, You will be our president when you read this.

Mind you, a political enemy in some ways. I wish you well. Your success is our country's success. I am rooting for you.

Doubt there was any notes left in the Oval Office. Last election, he was humble. He was not about his own interest. He was about the interest of the United States.

He played a major role in ending the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union. Aides rushed into his office after the Cold War ended and said, Mr. President, you have to go to Berlin for Truman, for Kennedy, for Reagan.

He said, what would I do there? Dance on the wall? This is a German moment, not an American moment. Most provokingly, commenting on his humility, a dear friend said at his funeral, Those who travel the high road of humility in D.C.

[5 : 18] are not bothered by heavy traffic. Sadly, humility in D.C. and in politics is all but gone.

But I wonder if the same thing could be said of the church. Is the road of humility bothered by heavy traffic among us? Michael Green said, And we have for you, When we reflect on the history of the church, Are we not bound to confess that she has failed to follow the example of her founder?

All too often, she has worn the robes of the ruler, not the apron of the servant. Even in our own day, It can hardly be said that the brand image of the church is of a society united in love for Jesus and devoted to selfless service of others.

Surely, Mr. Green is right. The brand image of the church at large is not a community united in love, but one biting and devouring one another, slandering and dividing one another.

Not a community devoted to selfless service, but self-regard and self-interest. Is it the same among us? Now, from my perspective, this church is a church that serves selflessly.

[6 : 46] All that you see takes hours to set up every Sunday morning and hours to tear down afterwards. All that you see is done by someone for you.

The coffee, the stage, the speakers, the chairs, your chair that's holding you up. was set there by someone. So surely this church is one that serves selflessly, but how is it going in our hearts?

Beneath all that we are doing as a church, is there still a decidedly others-centeredness to our way of life? Still a desire to do whatever serves?

Still serving with the same passion, same consistency, same selflessness? Or have we pulled back Puritan Stephen Charnock said that the great letter in the alphabet of religion or of Christianity is self-denial.

So when you're learning the ABCs of Christianity, the great letter that you must learn is self-denial. Surely that's true. Anyone who would come after me must deny himself and take up his cross.

[7 : 56] Is it the great letter in ours? Is the road of humility bothered by heavy traffic here? I sure hope so.

And where we're going is, all who follow the Savior must deny themselves and selflessly serve others. I'm going to break this out in three points.

The first is the Savior's example. Savior's example. No doubt that word stood out to you. Two weeks ago, we began this series called The Last Words of Jesus to His Disciples. In the final meal with His disciples, Jesus rose from the table and took off His outer garment and began to wash their feet.

to show them how He would cleanse them of sin and set them apart for themselves. The disciples did not understand what was going on.

We remember that scene vividly. Do you wash my feet? No way! You're the Lord. Jesus says, what I'm doing you'll understand later.

[9 : 10] But Jesus does not just wash their feet to show them how He would cleanse them of sin. He washes their feet to show them how they must live. Look in verse 12.

When He washed their feet, put on His outer garments, resumed His place, He said, do you understand what I have done for you? Surely they would say, yes, we do. You just washed our feet.

But He gives them no time to answer. He begins to unpack theologically what He has done. Look in verse 13. He said, you call me teacher and Lord and you're right, for so I am.

If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. Now these words are straightforward enough, but we must slow them down and take them in.

Jesus begins by affirming His greatness. You call me teacher and Lord and you are right. You're speaking well, for so I am.

[10 : 18] Soon after He calls His disciples, He went through the Gospel of John, the disciples began to call Him teacher, rabbi. Shortly thereafter, they began to call Him Lord, perhaps out of respect of a master, calling Him Lord out of respect.

But very early on, after following Him, they began to see Him as more than a carpenter, as Josh McDowell famously said, more than a teacher, more than a prophet. They began to refer to Him as a Lord.

One of the most vivid scenes of this in the Gospel of John is when many disciples began to turn back from following Him because of the outlandish things He was saying.

And Jesus turned to the twelve and said, do you go too? We just sang Peter's response. Lord, Lord, where can we go?

You have the words of eternal life. They see Him as the Lord. In fact, this word, L-O-R-D, in the New Testament, most often refers not to God the Father or God generally, but to our Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 36] But notice what is going on here. Notice what Jesus says. He says, you call me teacher and Lord and you are right. He has no trouble applying those titles to Himself.

He has no trouble calling Himself the Lord, equating Himself with the Lord Himself. Now, many people say after Christianity that Jesus did not believe Himself to be what His disciples believed Him to be.

So that's what they say, but they cannot fit with a text like this where Jesus clearly says, you call me teacher and Lord and you are right for so I am. I am the Lord.

And so as C.S. Lewis famously said, He's either a lunatic or a liar or He's the Lord. He begins by affirming His greatness.

You are right, I'm the teacher. You are right, my disciples, I am the Lord. Then He underlines the position of humility He has taken. Look back in verse 14.

[12 : 45] You call me teacher and Lord, you're right, for so I am. If I then, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash others. Jesus reminds them, I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet.

As we pointed out two weeks ago, they were appalled as Jesus began to wash their feet. In an arid climate in which transportation was mostly by foot, foot washing was as necessary and as regular a chore as brushing your teeth.

Although some middle schoolers don't do it. Yet it was so low a task that it was reserved for the most lowly servants and yet the Lord bows down to wash their feet.

It was so low that it's unthinkable for someone to wash the feet of a friend, let alone someone inferior to them. But Jesus washed their feet though He was the teacher.

Most importantly though, what He's saying here, He washed their feet though He was the Lord. Look back here in verse 13. He reverses the order. You call me teacher and Lord.

[13 : 57] Right? So maybe they were going along and they viewed Him as a teacher. Then they began to view Him as a Lord out of respect. Well, He reverses the Lord. If I then, your Lord and teacher, wash your feet. What's He saying?

Well, I was the Lord way before I was your teacher. I am the eternal Son of God. And if I, your Lord and teacher, wash your feet, so you must wash the feet of others.

Jesus continues and makes that point. It's an argument from the greater to the lesser. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, how much more are you, my servant, and my disciple, to wash the feet of another?

Father, He says, verse 15, unpacking this, for I, for I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.

I've given you a model, a pattern. You should imitate me.

[15 : 12] Now, there's nothing more natural to human beings than imitation. Little boys follow in dad's footsteps mowing the lawn with their plastic lawnmower. Teenage kids have to have to have the same shoes that everyone else is wearing.

Middle-aged folks fall prey to the same fads, essential oils, Norwex, new diets, cold showers, salty water. You know, we're just out here sitting ducks for the next fad.

Well, Jesus says, I'm your model. You want to know how to live? I'm your model. Just as we read earlier, follow in Christ's footsteps.

Now, is Jesus really asking his disciples to wash feet? I mean, really? There's no indication that this command is not to be taken literally.

Jesus is telling his disciples to wash one another's feet. In that arid climate, as I said, in which they live, foot washing was a necessary and regular way to love one another, to show hospitality to one another.

[16 : 27] That's what Jesus is saying. In fact, there's evidence that the early church washed one another's feet. Godly widows are mentioned in 1 Timothy 5 as washing feet.

The church, outside the New Testament, early church writing, is said that they washed the feet of strangers when they come into the meeting or show in hospitality. They'd also go and wash the feet of the sick because they were infirm and perhaps could not wash their own feet.

Washing one another's feet was one way to show hospitality and care. Listen to how Tertullian spoke of a non-Christian husband.

He's talking about a non-Christian husband, how this non-Christian husband might view the laboring and the service of his Christian wife. He says, for who would suffer, kind of who would endure his wife for the sake of visiting the brethren, the brothers, to go round from street to street to other men's and indeed all the poorer cottages?

Who will, without the same suspicion of his own, dismiss her to attend the Lord's supper which they defame? Who would suffer her to creep into prison to kill, kiss a martyr's bonds, to offer water for the saints' feet, to snatch somewhat for them from her food so to share her food and from her cup to share her drink, to yearn after them, to pray for them, to have them in her mind.

[17 : 58] If a pilgrim brother arrived, what hospitality for them is in an alien world? So the idea is that foot washing became in the early church in this arid climate a way of expressing open-hearted generosity.

This non-Christian husband sees something strange in the way this woman interacts. While Jesus is telling his disciples to wash one another's feet, I don't believe he's introducing another sacrament or another ordinance.

Some in the history of the church have said this. Catholic churches often wash the feet of bishops and clergy and sometimes the poor on Maundy Thursday which is the day before Good Friday.

Primitive Baptists have washed one another's feet so much that they're known as foot washing Baptists. But Jesus is not giving the church another sacrament, another ordinance.

There are at least two factors that I would say argue this. First, nowhere else is foot washing treated like a sacrament. As I said, there's only one other reference in all of Scripture to foot washing or only one other reference in the New Testament to foot washing and that's 1 Timothy 5.

[19 : 11] It's not used in ordinance there. While there's evidence that the early church washed one another's feet, this is important, there's little evidence that the early church washed one another's feet when it didn't need to be done.

Foot washing was one of the list of good deeds in that arid culture that they did to show hospitality to one another. It was a form of hospitality in that culture but not transcultural, I believe.

Now, I realize I'm in the weeds a little bit but we'll get out of here soon. In addition, treating foot washing as a sacrament or an ordinance misses the radical call of humility that's here.

It would be easy to wash the feet and yet miss the point. The deeper lesson here is that we're called to a life of shocking self-denial, unthinkable self-giving out of love for one another.

Now, several years ago, after George Floyd died, after all the protests and riots on racial injustice, white people in different contexts began to wash the feet of black people.

[20 : 22] Former CEO of Chick-fil-A, Dan Cathy, famously shined the shoes of black hip-hop artist Lecrae in a church worship service.

White community members washed the feet of black people on the streets throughout our nation. White pastors washed the feet of black churchgoers.

One pastor saying, we are in need of freedom from prejudice and it begins with us. Was that good? Was that what Jesus had in mind?

Now, surely, it is fine to wash someone's feet of a different race. in fact, service should be way more radical than that.

But, in that cultural moment, it was saying something very different. It was saying, all white people are racist.

[21 : 24] All white people are guilty of prejudice and injustice so they should wash black people's feet indiscriminately to pay back for their crimes. that, I believe, I submit, is not what Jesus had in mind.

So, should we wash one another's feet? There's nothing wrong with it. But, the far more important question is, are you living a life of shocking self-denial?

a life of unthinkable self-giving out of love for others. The Apostle John, later in 1 John, says, by this we know love, that he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

brothers. So, the Savior's example, point to the Savior's command. Jesus continues his explanation with a command.

A sober statement. Look at verse 16. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

[22 : 46] This is the 18th, truly, truly, amen, amen, statement in John's gospel. Jesus is strengthening his point, his explanation, by deepening the contrast between him and his disciples.

Here he's not merely the Lord and teacher, he is their master. They are his servants. He is their sender. They are his messengers.

A servant is not greater than his master nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If the master serves, so should you. If the one who sent serves, so should you.

Here's the takeaway. If the Lord Jesus washes their feet, then there's no task we should be unwilling to do. We must remember, foot washing is the lowliest of tasks, reserved for the lowliest of servants.

But Jesus washes their feet to make a most provoking point. If foot washing is not beneath him, then nothing is beneath you or me. Richard Baucom, New Testament scholar, says, if he, their Lord and master, serves them as a slave, so they should serve each other.

[24 : 07] What is not beneath his dignity can certainly no longer be considered beneath theirs. those who follow the Savior should find nothing they're unwilling to do.

It is incredibly radical what Jesus is saying. You want truly radical Christianity. This is it. Now, there are few things more unnerving than hearing of a lice outbreak in your kid's classroom.

If he gets it in his hair, just buzz it off, if he brings it into the house, burn the place down. There's no other alternative.

But what do we do when we hear of it? We start searching for nits. You never knew you hated these things so much, but you really do hate them.

And if your child has long hair, perhaps really long, thick hair, then we spend hours and hours days, months, years, searching for nits.

[25 : 17] It feels scraping them out of the hair. I mean, that knit brush thing is intense. Is there a more uncomfortable job than searching for nits, for lice?

Why do we do it? We hate lice, and we love our kids. Out of love for one another. There should be nothing we're unwilling to do.

There's some knit searching jobs in the life of our community. Perhaps that's taken too far. That we need to do.

Sometimes in the church, when it comes to serving, we look for the places that feature our gifts, the things we're excited about, the areas where we feel called, where we have a passion. Sometimes we take a spiritual gift survey to discover our gifts and limit our serving to those areas.

But is that really what the Lord had in mind here? When he washed their feet, was he saying, find your passion? It's fine to consider where you're gifted, but be carefully how tightly you hold your preferences.

[26 : 28] Disciples don't have preferences. Disciples have died to preferences. This church is filled with people who have died. I count it a privilege to be among you.

I'm not kidding. Several weeks ago, I was talking to my youngest son about how TG kids went that day. I said, how'd it go, buddy? What was going on in there? He said, Dad, do you remember that family we invited over that got sick and couldn't come?

I said, yeah, you mean the walkers? He said, yeah, with a smile. He was there. I said, who was there? He said, Mr. Boone was in my class.

I was like, heck yeah, man. He was in your class. He almost thought it was funny to have a dad in there. Now, I doubt Boone took a test and found out he was called to be a helper in elementary class.

I doubt he feels very super qualified. I'm terrified of an elementary class. How'd he get there? He heard of a need and filled it. This church is filled with people that are doing it, that are finding a need and filling it.

[27 : 38] I love it. I want to go to church with people like that and by God's grace. I do. I want us to be a church that has died to our preferences. I want us to be a church of men and women who are dead men and women walking around.

Oh, you got something to do? Yeah, sure. You know, I don't have any passions. Passion for Christ. I'm not a passion for anything else. It eliminates me from doing other things. Is that you? Foot washing wasn't beneath Jesus.

Is there any job beneath you? What is beneath you? What are you unwilling to do?

John Calvin says, we are not our own. Therefore, neither our reason nor our will should dominate our plans and actions. We are not our own.

Therefore, let us not make the gratification of our flesh our end. We are not our own. Therefore, as much as possible, let us forget ourselves and our own interests.

[28 : 48] Hey, Reb, will you hand me that water right there? Sorry. Need this. I apologize. we're not our own. That was from the institutes.

Fabulous. We're not our own. Let us forget ourselves. Remember, the great letter in the alphabet of Christianity is self-denial. So, if the Lord washes their feet, then there's no job they should be unwilling to do, but there's also no person they should be unwilling to serve.

In washing their feet, listen, and doing the unthinkable and disregarding the customs of the day to stoop low as a master to serve, Jesus is making a most provoking point.

If foot washing is not beneath him, then no one should be beneath us. No job should be beneath us, but no one should be beneath us either.

It may appear like Jesus is just saying that they should wash one another's feet, they should wash the disciples' feet, but here he calls them servants and messengers.

[29 : 52] He's sending them out with a gospel that is for everyone, and so he's saying to them, no one should be beneath you, no one should be, you should be unwilling to serve no one, you should serve anyone and everyone, and so helpful what Jesus is doing, he's turning over the way we relate to people.

We often relate on the basis of status. God has created a beautiful world with endless diversity and differences, different races, different social and wealth status, different talents, gifts, body types, opportunities, all of these differences make the world a better place.

It's not the matrix. The world is filled with diversity and beauty. Clearly no one's watched the matrix, you know, it's hundreds years old, you know, but far too often we elevate differences and begin to view people as more important or less important based on them.

So we begin to elevate these things. We view the successful as more insightful. We view the rich as more honorable. We view beauty as more important.

the young is more knowledgeable. We relate on the basis of status. You've got to understand this culture, it's a false value system.

[31 : 21] It's elevating the wrong things and telling you to relate to people in the wrong way. So in washing their feet, in the superior washing the feet of the inferior, in the teacher washing the feet of the disciple, in the master washing the feet of the servant, and the Lord washing the feet of the creature, Jesus is overturning this value system altogether.

Jesus is revolutionizing the way we should relate to one another. You must, it's what he's saying, you must abandon those values in relating to one another.

Must abandon relating to people on the basis of this worldly value system. Why? The Lord Jesus has washed their feet to show that there is only one thing of value when it comes to measuring one another.

Are they in Christ or are they not? That's the only value that matters. That's what he says to Peter, if I don't wash you, you'll have no part of me.

So there's only one dividing line and a dividing line for the leveraging of the gospel. Are you in Christ or are you not? So what it means is God does not have a special love for the religious, successful, powerful, popular.

[32 : 35] God does not have a special regard for a certain race or ethnicity. God regards no one according to the flesh. The flesh and the diversity was his design. He regards no one according to the worldly value system.

He calls us to do the same. I love the way the apostle Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 5. From now on. What's that mean? From now on. Well, after Jesus has come, after the new creation has broken in, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh.

Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh. We once viewed him as just a man. We regard him thus no longer for if anyone is Christ, in Christ he's a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come.

The idea is this reality that Jesus Christ has broken into the world, has overturned all the other realities. The Jew and the Gentile are now, the dividing wall has been broken down.

There's now one people. And so what he's saying, regard no one according to the flesh, throw out all the fleshly measures. They're worthless. They don't help you. There's one name under heaven by which you must be saved.

[33 : 36] And it's the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you must regard no one according to the flesh so that you might get the gospel to as many people as possible. The church, therefore, must be a place where the ground is level.

Where the doctor and the day laborer break bread together. Where the religious and the tattooed stand and sing side by side. Where the barren woman prays for the mom with her hands full.

Where the rich and those scraping by sacrifice together, putting their money into the plate. Where the man who's wrecked his life and addiction is helped by the one who seems to have done nothing wrong.

Where retirees choose not to go but come week after week looking for someone to serve. The church must be a place where we regard no one according to the flesh. If we're a church built around some fleshly measure, we will not have a message to save the world.

I believe that with all my heart. The Savior's command. Most sobering. Most sobering.

[34 : 42] Point three, the Savior's promise. The Savior's promise. Jesus concludes with a promise to those who deny themselves and selflessly serve others.

Look in verse 17. He says, if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. There's a blessing that comes to those who deny themselves and selflessly serve others.

There's a wonderful blessing, but there's a warning here. Denying yourself and serving, selflessly serving others is easy to talk about but hard to do.

Living selflessly is easy to talk about but hard to do. It's easy to be deceived to think you're a living sacrifice and really be organizing your life according to your preferences.

I would encourage you to draw people in in your life and have a meaningful voice in your life and ask them, am I still leveraging it all? Look at my checkbook.

[35 : 44] Now, no one keeps a checkbook anymore, but look at my bank statement. Is my bank statement saying I'm selflessly living for Christ? I'm radical self-giving.

Is my bank statement saying that? What about my calendar? What about my lifestyle? What about my serving up? Is it still saying that? Don't isolate your evaluation of yourself to yourself.

I would encourage you to ask that. So it does include a warning here, but it includes a promise of blessing. blessing. Blessed are you if you do them. Blessed are you. Blessed are you.

What a wonderful statement. What is this blessing? The blessing is fruit. It's a promise of fruit. Jesus has just said in John 12, unless a grain of wheat goes into the ground and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. How do we bear much fruit? By laying our life down so much so that it looks like a death. It looks like something is going to die.

[36 : 46] Well, that's actually how things come to live. So the blessing is fruit. The blessing is provision. Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you. You worry about the kingdom of God and God will worry about you.

That's what it's saying. That's what it's saying. We've got to take God at his word. So the blessing is provision. The blessing is life. It's an upside down kingdom. If you save your life, you'll lose it.

But if you lose your life, you will be fine. I've been searched by those words for 21 years trying to find this life. The blessing, though, is far more than all that we lose, all that we give away.

I love the way Mark says it in Mark 10. For truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive hundred fold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecution and in the age to come eternal life.

So the blessing is far more than we lose, far more than we give away. The blessing is, in the end, fullness of joy in the presence of God. In the end, the idea is you will not out-give God.

[37 : 54] You won't out-sacrifice him. He who gave his own son will not give punily and cheaply to you. He'll out-do. If you pay regard to your life, if you throw, or you pay no regard to your life, and you throw away your preferences, if you throw your life into the cause of Christ, you will not be found wanting in the end.

That's the truth of the word of God. Rich and gold I cannot give, but this I offer to you. You want to live? Come to Jesus Christ.

He, I came to give life, is what he said. I came to give life and life abundantly. What is this life? Abundant life is a life of following, a life being saved by him. Just as Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, right before what we quoted, for one has died for all, therefore all who die.

Why did he die for all? So that we who live might no longer, those who die might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised. It's a wonderful life setting you free from self for Jesus Christ forever and ever.

Look with me in John 12, verse 24. I think he's talking about the blessing here when he says, truly, and I quoted a moment ago, truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

[39 : 18] Verse 25, whoever loses his life, loves his life, loses it. Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me.

What's that mean? He must die. And where I am, there, there will my servant be.

Also, if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. What is the blessing? The honoring of God in the end.

Years ago, I read a story about President George W. Bush. One of his visits to Walter Reed Memorial Hospital would give a soldier from Iraq the Purple Heart.

One of his aides wrote, the hardest days of the presidency were when President Bush went to visit the wounded and families of the fallen. One morning in 2005, I accompanied the president.

[40 : 19] The president was scheduled to see 25 patients that day. He writes, and I quote, We started in the intensive care unit. The president was briefed on the first patient we'd see.

He was a young Marine who had injured, who had been injured when his Humvee was hit by a roadside bomb. At his bedside were his parents, wife, and five-year-old son. What's his prognosis?

The president asked. Well, we don't know, sir, because he's not opened his eyes yet. But no matter what, he has a long road ahead of him. We had to wear masks because of the risk of infection to the patient.

When we entered the room, the Marine was on a ventilator. After the president visited with the family for a bit, the president turned to the military aide and said, Okay, let's do the presentation.

The wounded warrior was being awarded the Purple Heart, given to service members who suffer wounds in combat. Everyone stood silently while the military aide in a low and steady voice presented the award.

[41 : 28] At the end of it, the Marines' little boy tugged on the president's jacket and said, What's a Purple Heart? President Bush got down on one knee and pulled the boy closer.

He said, It's an award for your dad because he was very brave and courageous because he loves this country so much, and I hope you know how much he loves you and your mother. And he hugged the boy.

Suddenly, there was a commotion from the medical staff as they moved toward the bed. The Marine had just opened his eyes. The medical team said, Hold on, guys.

I think he wants the president. The president jumped up and rushed over to the side of the bed. He cupped the Marines' face in his hands.

They locked eyes, and after a couple moments, the president, without breaking eye contact, said to the military aide, Read it again. And so we stood silently as the military aide presented the Marine with the medal for the second time.

[42 : 35] The president had tears dripping from his eyes onto the Marines' face. As the presentation ended, the president rested his forehead on the Marines. Now everyone was crying.

I'm crying. We're all crying. And for so many reasons. Why were they crying? Again, the sacrifice, the pain and suffering, the love of country, the belief in the mission, and she quotes, or she says, and I quote, the witnessing of a relationship between a soldier and his commander-in-chief that the rest of us could never fully grasp.

Here's the truth of the matter. The commander-in-chief has sent his troops all throughout the world. The great commander-in-chief, the Lord himself, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sent him into the harvest. And it's that commander-in-chief that will be waiting at the end. He will not miss anything you've lost to serve him.

He will not miss a single sacrifice, a single act, a single cup of water, a single prayer. And he will honor you in the end. That's the truth. That's what scripture tells us.

[43 : 49] Scripture tells us to look forward to the Lord. If anyone would have faith, he must, if anyone would believe God, he must have faith and believe that God rewards those who seek him. And so he calls us to look forward to the reward.

He will honor us. He'll bless us. He'll say, well done. Enter into my joy all those who have lived for Christ. It's unthinkable. How could we who deserve his wrath be the recipients of his honor and his glory?

Glory. Well, it's all to the praise of Christ. And that's who's waiting at the end. So press on. Live a life that looks like dying.

Live a life that looks like losing. Live a life that makes no sense. Be a head-scratcher. Be shocking. Not because of what you're tweeting out in the world or yelling on the street corner.

Because of the undeniable selflessness with which you live. Oh, how our world needs it. And needs the message that it points to.

[45 : 10] May God help us. Father in heaven, we cast ourselves onto you. We offer ourselves yet again to you completely and sincerely.

We don't want to gain our life. We want to lose it. We don't want to save it.

We want to lose it. In order to the end that we might gain. We might follow you.

Help us, we pray. For your glory and for your praise. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Amen. Thank you.