

# Acts 8:1-25

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[ 0 : 00 ] Acts chapter 8, that is page 916, as it says there in the bulletin in the Pew Bible, if you want to turn along there.

Let me encourage you to do that as we look into God's Word together this morning. And as you're turning there, I wonder if you've ever sort of paused to reflect on the question of just what it is that gets you up in the morning.

What is it that motivates you or drives you, or maybe another way of putting it, what is it that sort of puts wind into your sails? This morning we're starting a new series in the book of Acts.

And Acts, I don't know about you, but Acts is probably one of the most exciting books in the whole Bible.

It's this explosive history of the first three decades of the church, taking us from the ascension of Jesus and the ascending of the Spirit in the 30s all the way up to Paul's arrival in Rome, sort of the center city of the world at that time in the 60s.

[ 1 : 19 ] One author wrote a book on Acts and titled it, 30 Years That Changed the World. That's a pretty bombastic title.

I mean, 30 years that changed the world. And yet, you know, unlike so many book titles, I think that one actually is not an exaggeration. So why study the book of Acts now?

Well, you know, one of the interesting things as we're going to study this book of Acts is you see that, you know, the early church, it was not just a sort of smooth highway to the finish line.

That there were challenges, there were struggles, there were heartaches. We'll see this morning in our text there were persecutions. And yet, and yet, we see again and again and again that the power of God's Word produces such a joy in His people that they are able not merely to endure these things, but to even flourish in the face of them.

And that God's kingdom goes forth in unbelievable ways, even in the face of those things. You know, as a church, we're seeking to be a community that's gathered, transformed, sent forth by the gospel.

[ 2 : 38 ] And Acts is a book that's going to give us the right kind of motivation for doing so. You know, Acts doesn't just teach us how to do church or how to do mission together, how to sort of do these things.

But it actually, when we listen to it, when we enter into it, it actually stirs our hearts for doing so. Because as we've said, it points us again and again to the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the joy that erupts when the gospel does its work.

Now, a few years ago, you'll remember, some of you will remember anyway, that we studied chapters 1 through 7 in Acts. Who was actually here when we studied Acts 1 through 7?

Like three of you, right? Because it was three years ago, and that means Trinity is a totally different place. That was the sheepest hand raised I've ever seen. It's like, I don't want to admit that I was here that long ago.

So, if you want to listen to Acts 1 through 7, you can jump on the website and you can listen to those old sermons. But we're going to pick up this winter and into the spring, we're going to pick up with chapter 8.

[ 3 : 46 ] And chapter 8's a good place to begin because it begins really a new section of the book. It's one of really the major turning points in the story. And quite frankly, it's one of the major turning points in the history of redemption.

The gospel in chapter 8 begins to break new ground. And in that sort of newness is where we're going to pick up. So, if you've turned to Acts chapter 8, let me read starting from the second half of verse 1.

Let me read this for us. Luke writes, Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them Christ. And the crowds, with one accord, paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.

For unclean spirits crying out with a loud voice came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.

[ 5 : 05 ] But there was a man named Simon who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him from the least to the greatest saying, This man is the power of God that is called great.

And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Even Simon himself believed. And after being baptized, he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Now when the apostles of Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

For he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

[ 6 : 22 ] But Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

And Simon answered, Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me. Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

You know, sometimes God does things in ways that we don't expect. In chapter 1 of Acts, before ascending to heaven, Jesus told his disciples that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

So, you have to expect that at some point, as Acts unfolds, the gospel is going to advance to those regions. And yet here in chapter 8, as we see the gospel going forth to Samaria, and the church being established there, in fulfillment of Jesus' very promise, it all seems to be happening in ways that no one would have expected.

[ 7 : 47 ] It's not the neat and tidy, or predictable, or safe, or comfortable way that we think it all would happen. And in each of these unexpected twists and turns of the story, there lies a valuable lesson for us today.

And there are four I want to point out as we walk through this text this morning. And the first is this. We see here that the gospel advances by an unexpected circumstance.

This is verses 1 through 4. Scan down over those verses again. And as you do so, I wonder if you've ever felt defeated, or discouraged, or ready to give up.

Our passage opens with this massively disheartening scene. The church seems headed for defeat. Stephen has just been martyred.

A great persecution breaks out. Believers are scattered. Churches are ravaged. Men and women in prison. These first three verses are a discouraging picture indeed.

[ 8 : 53 ] Some in the church may have even been thinking whether or not God was really caring for them at all. How could he allow this to happen? But in verse 4, Luke points us to this great lesson.

You see, God is turning this seeming defeat into a triumph. Persecution ends up scattering the believers, but the scattered believers end up sharing the gospel wherever they go.

It's as if this attempt to stamp out the fire of Christ. Have you ever done that when you're camping? It's not a very wise thing to do. You sort of stamp out the fire.

What happens? The sparks start flying everywhere. And that's exactly what's happening to the church. The sparks start flying in all new directions and they start lighting fires of their own.

And one of those new fires was in Samaria. that God uses this instance to initiate a great new phase of gospel growth. The time for the gospel to advance beyond the walls of Jerusalem.

[10:02] You see, God took the seeming defeat of Stephen's death and the ensuing persecution on an attempt really to bring an end to the movement of Christ. But God takes that attempt to bring the church to an end and does the exact opposite.

that instead of ending the church, the church begins a whole new phase of growth. And of course, as we study church history, we see that God has done this again and again and again.

John Stott in his commentary on Acts mentions the example of China as one of these. In 1949, after the Communist Party took power, all the Christian missionaries in China were forced to leave the country.

And it seemed like a disaster for the cause of Christ. But the reality of what happened as a result was that many of the expelled missionaries went to other parts of Asia and so spread the faith in unreached places.

And in China itself, Chinese lay leaders ended up taking the lead of the church and the church exploded in size and in vitality. It's been estimated that the church is some 30 to 40, probably more times larger than it was today than when the missionaries left.

[11:16] You see, the flame just simply grew. But it's not just church history that teaches us this lesson, right? Don't we see it in our own personal stories?

That times of challenge, times of persecution, times of suffering, these are often the times when the gospel takes its deepest root.

That those are often the times when the gospel ends up bearing the sweetest fruit in our lives. So friends, we need not despair when hard times come.

We need not lose hope. Even as we grieve this season of the church that we're entering into with news that we've just received today, friends, even this is not cause for despair to lose hope.

It's a time to grieve. It's a time to continue to bear each other's burdens. It's a time to continue to pray fervently. Ah, but friends, it's not a time to despair to lose hope. You know, many students of Acts have speculated that perhaps the early church needed something that was sort of as massive as a great persecution that would dislodge them from their comfort zone in Jerusalem and send them out into the world.

[12:32] And you know, we can't really say for sure. That's kind of speculating. But you know, we can know that no matter what comes, even if it be great persecution like here in Acts 8, God will always have a way in the end of using it for the advance of his kingdom and for our ultimate joy.

Which isn't that a great comfort that Stephen's death wasn't in vain, that the great persecution wasn't lost in God's plan. That should give us great confidence and comfort as we look ahead as a church. That this is the great God that we serve.

What happens in Acts 8 is that this scattering leads to a great advance of God's redemptive plan to call all peoples to himself. And that brings us to our second point. We see that the gospel advances, not just through an unexpected circumstance, but through unexpected people.

In verse 4, we see that the apostles who are sort of leading the church up to this point in the book of Acts aren't the ones now who are on the forefront of gospel mission.

Who is it? The apostles stay behind in Jerusalem, probably to continue their sort of pastoral care and presence in the city. But it's not the apostles who are on the forefront. It's those who are scattered abroad.

[13:42] It's these everyday Christians who had jobs to do, who had families to take care of, who had clothes to wash, who had meals to cook. These so-called ordinary Christians are the pioneers of this great redemptive movement of God.

Isn't that a wonderful surprise? That in God's economy, each one of us has a part to play. That each one of us has a role to take up in the cause of God.

The early church is this great example that for the first 300 years of the church's growth, the gospel spread to all corners of the world through people just like you and me who had tasted the joy of the gospel and couldn't help but share it.

And then Luke focuses in in verses 5 through 13 on a ministry of Philip. And again, you know, he's maybe not the one we'd expect to be doing this groundbreaking, bold mission to Samaria.

He's not an apostle. He's one of the seven that was named in Acts 6 to sort of help with food distribution in the Jerusalem church. He's a mature believer, companion of Stephen, but you know, not sort of, not an apostle.

[ 14 : 59 ] But he's the one that God uses. And we'll later learn in Acts chapter 21 that Philip comes to be called the evangelist.

Isn't that great? That this unlikely guy ends up being known as the one who really broke ground for the gospel. And Luke's actually going to spend time with him, the author of Acts, actually, as a companion of Paul.

He's actually going to spend time with Philip in Acts 21, we learn. And that's probably when Luke learned or at least verified these accounts that we have written for us in chapter 8. Luke's writing for us firsthand accounts from Philip himself of what happened when God did this great work.

Now, as we focus in on Philip's work here, consider how radical Philip's mission to Samaria is, after all. I mean, verse 5 just sort of almost feels like a throwaway verse to us, but it's wild.

Think of it this way. Many days, when I get home from work, my three-and-a-half-year-old son, Jack, often has one thing on his mind as I step in the door.

[ 16 : 14 ] He comes running down the hall, meets me at the door, and says, Dad, let's wrestle. And of course, if you're wrestling, you have to come up with awesome wrestling names, right?

So, you know, sometimes we go for our traditional superheroes, Spider-Man, Superman, Batman, whatever man. Sometimes we'll sort of make up wrestling names of our own creation.

Some of my favorite that Jack has come up with are Thunder Cruncher. It's a good one. Lightning Jammer. But sometimes, Jack will look at me and say, Dad, let's be bad guys.

Now, I'm not sure where he sort of learned the concept of bad guy. It was probably one of those corruptions induced by an older cousin during a family visit. One of those sort of things.

But you know, once Jack got the idea of bad guy in his head, he's never forgotten it. And he's kind of fascinated by it. And of course, it seems like every good story has a bad guy, right?

[ 17 : 25 ] An arch nemesis that never seems to go away. Always the sort of thorn in the hero's side. And the best bad guys, when you look at all the stories, always have some sort of connection or similarity to the good guys, right?

You know, Darth Vader is actually Luke Skywalker's father. Or Gollum actually used to be a hobbit. So there's this weird sort of connection that the good guy and the bad guy has that makes it all the more poignant.

Well, you know, if you would have asked most Jews in the first century who their arch nemesis was, who was the thorn in their side, they probably would have said the Samaritans.

What existed between Jews and Samaritans was bitter ethnic rivalry. Sort of like we see in many parts of the world still today.

Because the Samaritans were actually sort of distant relatives of the Jews. When the ancient northern kingdom of Israel was sort of conquered by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC, what happened was the Assyrians deported large numbers of people and then imported a bunch of foreigners and the Jews who were left in the northern kingdom sort of intermarried with the Jews who were left.

[ 18 : 38 ] So what happened was is that, you know, the Samaritans, the people who still live in that old northern kingdom, ended up being seen by most Jews in the south as sort of half-breeds. And to make matters worse, most Samaritans claimed, and they all did really, to serve the same God as the Jews, but they rejected large portions of the sort of Hebrew scriptures.

They even built their own temple, you know. So they weren't just sort of, you know, weird ethnically. But they were also heretics. You know, this sort of age-old dispute between Jews and Samaritans just went for hundreds of years.

And they basically treated each other with ongoing suspicion and hostility and sometimes even violence. Now, consider, if that's the case, how radical it was for Philip, having been driven from Jerusalem because of persecution, where does he go?

He makes a beeline for Samaria. That is strange. I mean, as a Jew, these were people he had been brought up to despise.

And as soon as he sort of steps out, that's the first place he's headed. he goes to one of their most prominent cities.

[ 19 : 58 ] Luke actually doesn't mention which one. He says, the city of Samaria. He goes to one of their prominent cities and starts loving them and sharing the good news about Jesus, the kingdom of God and the name of Christ.

I mean, think of what that would look like today. Think of a place in the world where there's been long-standing religious and ethnic strife. Belfast in the 70s and 80s, the Balkans in the 90s, Rwanda in the 90s, Israel and Palestine today where people hate each other.

what power could so transform a young person's heart who's been born into that kind of intense strife and hastery such that he or she no longer views the other as an enemy to be hated but a neighbor to be loved.

What must have done a thing like that? Friends, you see, Philip had learned the deep and essential truth of the good news of grace which is this, that on the one hand what the gospel tells us that regardless of your background or culture, regardless of your religion or your moral performance, even everyone is hopelessly sinful and selfish and in need of rescue.

But on the other hand, no one is beyond the reach of God's free mercy and grace in Christ. That what God did through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension is for all who believe.

[ 21 : 51 ] The whole concept, in other words, of bad guy, had been utterly deconstructed and demolished for Philip. There no longer were good guys and bad guys in his moral world.

He began to see the truth that everyone is a sinner in need of grace. That he couldn't look at other people anymore and say, you're out.

That he couldn't look at people anymore and say, there's no way you could be in. Friends, and if you let the gospel sink in like that, it will revolutionize your life.

When Philip takes the risk and goes to Samaria and starts telling them about the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, what happens? Lo and behold, the fact that they're Samaritans doesn't stop God from working.

In verses 6 through 8, the message rings out and God confirms Philip's preaching with powerful signs as a demonstration that this is his truth. Come to redeem. And even in verses 9 through 13, we see that even though this particular city had been bound in sort of deception and lies by a local sort of charlatan magic worker, that even though they had been sort of clouded in spiritual deception, not even that stopped God from breaking through and opening up life and joy in Christ for them.

[ 23 : 18 ] right before Philip's eyes, he gets to see that God is making the Samaritans full members of his family on the basis of faith alone and nothing's stopping it.

Something totally new is underway. You know, one way of looking at this whole sort of portion of the book of Acts from chapter 8 to chapter 12 where the gospel goes to all Judea and Samaria, it's almost as if it's this great transitional period it's as if a great door is sort of turning on its hinge, opening up more and more and more until by the time we reach chapter 13 the Gentile mission is exploding out in full force.

And you see what's happening here friends is that God is fulfilling all of his ancient promises. God is fulfilling his promises to gather the lost sheep of Israel and not just those but to gather all nations to himself that God's keeping his long promises in his son.

So we see that the gospel advances through unexpected circumstances and through unexpected people and then third the gospel advances through this unexpected initiation.

What happens in verses 14 through 17 of our text this morning is something of an exegetical sort of quandary. A lot of ink has been spilled over it. But as we take a step back what God's doing in these verses is making it unmistakably clear both to the Samaritans and to the apostles and through them to the church in Jerusalem that they are members of one and the same family.

[ 25 : 04 ] One and the same body. One and the same church. That's what God's doing here. And God demonstrates this fact by doing something very very odd.

What's odd? Well when the apostles come down from Jerusalem it becomes evident to them that the Samaritan converts they had certainly believed they had definitely been baptized that they hadn't received the full indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Now that would have struck them all as unexpected and even strange. And even the language of verse 16 which is sort of oddly kind of constructed in our English translations it sort of suggests that something weird is happening.

Do you remember back in Acts 2 how Peter made very clear in his first sermon after Pentecost that believing in Jesus getting baptized receiving the Spirit all go together.

And the rest of Acts and the rest of the New Testament bears this out. What's belief? Belief is personally trusting the good news of what Jesus has done and relying on him. And the Holy Spirit is the gift of the Father for all who believe.

[ 26 : 15 ] Filling believers with joy and power for ministry. And baptism is the outward expression of all of this symbolizing cleansing from sin and the beginning of one's new life in the family of God.

And they all go together as one thing. But it was evident to Philip and to Peter and John when they showed up strangely that the Samaritans hadn't received this promised new covenant and dwelling of the Holy Spirit even though they believed and been baptized.

In some sense they were sort of like the original disciples in Acts 1 before Pentecost. They believed in Jesus they'd been baptized but the full-on New Testament ministry of the Spirit hadn't yet begun in their lives.

It hadn't yet started for them. And the million dollar question is why the delay? Why hadn't they received the Spirit? Well as I mentioned this passage has been read and interpreted in a number of ways.

Some will point to this text and say that it teaches a sort of pattern to be imitated today. That every Christian sort of needs some sort of post conversion, post baptism kind of experience or imparting of the Holy Spirit.

[ 27 : 29 ] For Roman Catholics and for some high church Anglicans that's really what the rite of confirmation is all about. That after your baptism that's when you sort of get the fullness of the Holy Spirit. For various sort of other Pentecostal or maybe even charismatic streams of the church that's what being baptized in the Spirit is all about.

You're converted and then at a later point you get sort of the full sort of experience and presence of the Spirit. Both traditions as different as they are want to sort of read Acts 8 this sort of moment as a sort of normative and normal Christian experience that after conversion you need this sort of second stage or this second experience.

But friends I think it's pretty clear that that's not what this passage in Acts 8 means. On the one hand you have to think that every narrative in the Bible isn't necessarily there to give us a pattern for how to act now.

Everything in the Bible is there for our edification and for our instruction and for our learning and for our growth but sometimes narratives in the Bible describe unique events from which we have something to learn yes but not necessarily something to imitate.

And I think that's what's going on in Samaria. God is doing something historically unique in this moment. He's doing something historically unique to make an incredibly clear once for all point to the church.

[ 28 : 57 ] that God delays the pouring out of the spirit and fullness until the apostles show up in order to demonstrate loud and clear that there's one gospel, one spirit, and one church.

Think of how easy it would have been for the all-Jewish church in Jerusalem to remain skeptical and suspicious of Samaritan converts. It would have been very easy, wouldn't it have been?

On the flip side, think of how easy it would have been for the Samaritan converts to sort of drift away from their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, maybe always thinking of themselves as second-class citizens, perhaps drifting away theologically because they had no connection and mooring to the teaching of the apostles.

But instead of that, instead of these divisions sort of dividing up the church right from the start, God has the apostles show up and see with their own eyes the spirit fall on them.

That they get to be the authoritative witnesses of what Jesus Christ does in Samaria. And he does it through means of their own prayers, which is very interesting, as if to say, you're one family, you're together in this.

[ 30 : 19 ] Now, of course, Luke doesn't say how they knew the spirit came upon them at last. Maybe it was speaking in tongues, miraculous signs. Maybe, honestly, maybe it was just a deep and pervasive sense of joy, of joy and gladness that just filled them when the spirit came.

But whatever it was, you have to see that God is forging a single body that spans our ancient divisions of ethnicity and ethnicity and nationality and language and culture.

God is saying that the church is going to be the one place where the animosities that divide us are at last healed through the balm of the gospel.

That's the lesson from this unexpected initiation. That's the point that's being driven home. one last episode that Luke includes as he wraps up his account of how the gospel came to Samaria.

Fourth, we see that the gospel advances through an unexpected rebuke. You know, if the lesson of verses 14 through 17 and the laying of the hands is sort of an outward corporate lesson about the unity of the body, then what happens in verses 18 through 24 is more of an inward and individual lesson about the state of our hearts.

[ 31 : 41 ] Peter rebukes Simon and even exposes him as a counterfeit who's in grave spiritual danger.

Now, of course, the surface lesson here is that trying to buy spiritual power and position is wrong. In fact, that practice came to be known as Simon-y, named after you got it, Simon.

How's about that for a namesake? But there's a deeper lesson. Twice in his rebuke, what does Peter mention?

The heart. Simon, he says, your heart's not right. Pray that God will mend the intentions of your heart. Peter could see that Simon's heart was still riddled with all the same motivations that he had before his supposed conversion.

Peter sort of, with spiritual insight, sees that there's been no sort of fundamental change. No real new birth. Even though Simon had professed.

[ 32 : 53 ] Even though Simon had believed. Even though it seemed like he was making a good start. This instance exposes that maybe it wasn't a real start after all.

You see, Simon, what did he want? He still wanted to have power over people. He still wanted to control them. He still wanted people to look at him and think that he was someone great. Wasn't that the difference between Simon and Philip when the gospel came to Samaria?

Simon had been there preaching himself. I'm somebody great. Philip came preaching Jesus, the one who's truly great. And people saw finally the one who was their redeemer and their savior.

Christianity, it seems for Simon, was just merely a means to sort of getting his old desires for pleasing and serving himself. He saw Christianity in his heart just as a new method to make himself great.

And Peter calls him to repent. Which is pretty impressive, that rebuke in itself, when you think about it. I mean, Simon, after all, was sort of the celebrity convert in the church, right?

[ 34 : 05 ] He was the magician-turned Christian that everybody was talking about. It would be sort of like the notorious atheist professor suddenly getting baptized and calling himself a Christian. He'd end up on all the Christian magazines.

He'd probably write a book. He'd start a speaking tour. Veritas Forum would be calling him up. But Peter doesn't get caught up in all that.

He sees Simon's heart and does the most gracious thing imaginable and says, repent, Simon. And Luke leaves it open-ended.

He doesn't tell us whether Simon actually repents or not. Later church tradition will suggest that Simon didn't. And that he became sort of a grand heretic in the early church.

Perhaps that's the case. We don't know for sure. You know, Simon, after all, interestingly, in verse 23, 24, he doesn't pray for forgiveness, does he?

[ 35 : 12 ] He just prays that the consequences won't come upon him. But you know, the real point for us isn't to speculate about Simon. But the point for us is to examine our own hearts.

And friends, that's why we come to the Lord's Supper. On the one hand, this is the table where all who trust in Christ are welcome. And we've seen in our passage that God does something out of the ordinary to drive home the unity that we have in Christ.

Jew, Samaritan, Gentile, rich, poor, male, female. We're one in him. And that's part of what's being said here at the table. That through faith alone in Christ, our sins are forgiven. And we take this bread and cup together as a sign of what he's done for us and as a sign of our unity.

But this table is also a time where we need to examine our hearts. And seek God's freely offered forgiveness. And to receive his freely extended fellowship.

To look down in. And to be turning away from those ways in which God shows us we're still being selfish and still being self-motivated. The table is a place where we lay our old motivations before God in prayer.

[ 36 : 26 ] And ask him again to forgive us for Christ's sake. And to change us by his spirit. And to be confident that he's promised to do so for all who believe.

So friends, as we wrap up and come to the table. Span this whole sort of section. We see that God will often advance the gospel in unexpected ways.

But in the end, as we sort of take stock of this passage and read the summary in verse 25. Don't we see that one thing has been constant? Amidst all the unexpected events, there's been one utterly expected.

But utterly wonderful thing running through the whole passage. And it's the word, as verse 25 puts it. The gospel of Jesus Christ, the word of the Lord, creates the church.

Amidst all the changes, all the circumstances, that will remain the same exciting, powerful, thrilling reality. So friends, as we launch out on this new study of Acts, let's expect God to do things perhaps we didn't anticipate.

[ 37 : 38 ] Let's expect God to move in ways that are maybe a bit unexpected. But let's also look forward to the ways in which his powerful word will do what it's always done.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Bring joy to all people and bring life to his church. Let's pray. Lord, as we come to your table now, we pray that through faith you would feed our hearts.

Jesus, as we remember your cross and what you've done for us, Lord, would we be strengthened once more as we partake in this act, proclaiming your death until you come.

Amen. Well, friends, I wonder if those who are serving this morning would come up. If you're here this morning and you're a Christian, if you've turned from sin and placed your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and as your Lord, then you're welcome, friends, to partake in these elements with us.

The way we sort of practice this here at Trinity is that we'll pass around the bread first, pray, and then we'll eat it together as a sign of that unity, and then we'll do the same thing with the cup. If you're here this morning and you're just spiritually searching, if you're not sure where you are with Christianity, we're glad you're here.

[ 39 : 02 ] You're always welcome to join us. But as the elements sort of come around, just pass them by. This is the sort of thing that Christians do to express outwardly their inward faith.

So simply pass it by and instead use this time for spiritual reflection. Instead of taking the elements of the bread and the cup, instead consider taking Christ himself. He's the one that these elements point to.

Well, with those thoughts, friends, let me read some of Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 11. He says, I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Craig, would you pray for the bread for us? Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Amen.

Thank you.