

Seeking God

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Preacher: Nick Lauer

[0 : 00] Good morning, church. Before Pastor Nick comes up to deliver the word to us, I just wanted to take a few moments! to provide an update on the ongoing staff search that's been happening. As you may or may not know, we've been in the midst of a search for a director of women's discipleship and small group ministries.

But just by way of background, this search was born out of a few things. First, we've had some staff departures over the last few years that have created a need for additional hands. And second, as we considered how to fill those roles, it became clear in the discernment process that the Lord was leading us to invest in women's ministry and small groups as ministries that are vital for the flourishing of our entire community. This search process began last June when our church approved a job description and funding to hire a director of women's discipleship and small group ministries.

This is a role that we hope would bring vision and energy to these critical ministries in the life of the church. And after approving the job, we assembled a search committee consisting of myself, Pastor Matt, Kunle, Arelle, Jess Serbo, Laura Denny, and Naomi Batty. And since October, we've reviewed a number of resumes and conducted virtual and on-site interviews, which have led us to this moment today. We're excited to share that the Lord has brought forward a candidate that fills the approved job description in many ways. And to that end, the elders and search committee are officially nominating Pamela Hall for the position of director of women's discipleship and small group ministries.

The search committee and elders and many of you had the opportunity to meet with Pamela at various points during her interview process. In the course of getting to know her, we've been greatly encouraged by her personal testimony, her walk with Jesus, and the skills and experience that she brings in the area of women's ministry and small groups.

So with Pamela's official nomination, the final step in the search process is for her to meet the congregation and for us to vote collectively on her candidacy.

[2 : 27] So Pamela will be visiting us on Sunday, May 18th, during which time our members will have an opportunity to meet her and get to know her as a candidate. To make that meeting more impactful for everyone, the elders and search committee are hosting a meeting after the service next Sunday, May 4th. We're really eager to share the ways in which God has led us through this search process.

And this will be a time for you all to come and hear more of the details about how we arrived at Pamela's nomination. It'll be an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have so that you'll feel fully prepared for the vote that will occur after Pamela's visit.

So we'd like to ask you please, please, please, please make time to come to this meeting next Sunday, if at all possible. And please also mark your calendars for May 18th after the service, when you'll have an opportunity to meet Pamela.

This is a really big decision for our church as we consider bringing a new staff member on and we want to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts.

So we'll be sending out an email to our members this week with additional information. So please be on the lookout for that. And please do continue praying for discernment and for unity in this process as we seek the Lord's will together in this final stage of the process.

[3 : 54] We've been really, really encouraged to see the Lord's provision and faithfulness in this process and we've been equally encouraged by the prayerful participation from each of you in various ways.

So thank you to each of you for your prayer and participation and I also want to extend a huge thanks to the members of the search committee for their really excellent and faithful work through this process.

So again, please plan to join the pre-meeting next week and if you have any questions prior to that, please don't hesitate. to reach out to me or any other members of the search committee. Thanks. Thanks. All right. Thanks, Alex. Let's go ahead and pray as we come to God's Word together.

Father, we are grateful for your good and sovereign hand that guides your church all around the world and guides us here at Trinity, this local church that you love.

God, thank you for the search process, for those who have served on the search committee. God, we do pray for us as a church as we move into this new season of considering Pamela for this position.

[5 : 07] And God, we are eager to see how you will continue to advance your gospel through us as a local church. God, as we come now to your Word, Lord, would you come by your Spirit, open our minds and our hearts to hear what it is you have for us today in your life-giving Word.

Lord, we remember the writer to Hebrews who says that your Word is living and active and it pushes down, it cuts down into the deep parts of who we are, that it might bring life and renewal. So we pray that. We pray that would be true this morning for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. All right. So, would you turn with me to the Old Testament books of 1 and 2 Chronicles?

1 and 2 Chronicles. We're starting a new sermon series today that will continue throughout the spring and summer months. And primarily, we're going to be looking at 2 Chronicles chapters 10 through 36, the last part of this two-part book.

We're going to be tracing the stories of the rise and the fall of Judas Kings after Solomon leading up to the exile. And the hope in this series is that we'll consider all the heart dynamics that each of those stories expose in us and how they point us to the ultimate hope of Jesus in the gospel.

[6 : 33] But today, what we want to do is we want to set the stage. We want to get an overview of this two-part book that we call 1 and 2 Chronicles. Now, I say two-part book because 1 and 2 Chronicles are really one book.

And they've just been divided up into two because of their size. So rather, in our series, just kind of diving into the particular narratives in the second half of part two, we're going to try to give an overview of the whole book today to set up where we'll be headed for the rest of the spring and the summer.

Now, typically, when we jump into a sermon, we like to read the text and then pray and then explain what the text means. But if I were to read all of 1 and 2 Chronicles, we'd be here for a while.

And half of you would probably leave before I got to the end of chapter 4, and you'll see why in a second. So obviously, I'm not going to read the whole book. Instead, I want to start our overview at the end.

So turn with me all the way to 2 Chronicles chapter 36. That's page 420 in the Pew Bible. I encourage you to turn to page 420.

[7 : 34] 2 Chronicles chapter 36. We'll start at the end because the end gives us the context for the message of the whole book and what the author, the chronicler, as we call him, wanted to communicate to his audience.

So 2 Chronicles chapter 36, starting at the end with verse 22. We'll read the last paragraph of the book. Now, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing.

Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he's charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up. So stories matter.

Stories are powerful, aren't they? Jesus himself used stories that communicate the most important spiritual truths that humanity has ever heard. But if stories are powerful, histories are often even more so.

[8 : 53] Histories matter. And what 1 and 2 Chronicles is, as a book, is a retelling of the history of God's people from creation all the way to the exile in the sixth century, what we just read.

Now, why would someone take the time to write such a thing? Why retell the history of God's people? If you're familiar with the Old Testament, you know that if you start reading in Genesis and continue pretty much straight through the book of 2 Kings, you get the story of God and God's people from creation all the way to the exile.

So why would God put a second retelling of mostly the same history into the Bible? Well, the answer is because God's people were in a new situation.

It was a new day. They had returned from exile. They had come back to the land. And in that new situation, they needed to be reminded and realigned with their story, with their history.

They needed these old stories for a new day. It's been said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

[10:17] Now, that is true, but you see, the chronicler had much more in mind than just that. He didn't just want the people of his day to avoid the mistakes of the past.

His vision was actually much more bold and more meaningful than that. He understood that the people of God, having been brought back to the land of Judah after exile, well, that reality that they had come back was nothing less than evidence that God truly was sovereign and that God had a mission for His people.

He had not abandoned His people or His kingdom purpose. Look again at the paragraph we just read. Cyrus, the Persian king, in 539 B.C. issues an edict that the people who were dispersed and exiled by the Babylonians earlier that century, now that Persia had come into the rule, Cyrus makes an edict that they could all return to their homes and rebuild their temples and worship their gods. And the chronicler doesn't just see that as some accident of history. Oh, yes, the Babylonian empire has fallen to the Persians, and now the Persian king has sort of a new imperial agenda.

That's true, but ultimately, the chronicler sees this as an outworking of the sovereign grace and faithfulness of God. It's the Lord who stirs up Cyrus to do this, so that the word of Jeremiah the prophet might be fulfilled.

[11:49] This was God's plan. God is acting in human history to bring about His promises, and the book ends with these rousing words, let them go up.

So the chronicler is writing to his generation, the generation that has returned miraculously from exile, and he wants them to be reminded and realigned around the great mission that God has for them.

And we see that mission unfold as the chronicler retells the story of their history. He writes this carefully constructive narrative that highlights the important themes and the vital realities that they have to keep in mind as they live into God's mission in their day.

And friends, the church today, our church today, the church today can learn a lot from this retelling of history, because the church today shares a lot in common with the post-exilic people of God in that day.

Think about it. By God's sovereign grace in the church, He has called His people out from among the nations and has given us a great mission.

[13:07] Just like Israel in the sixth century was brought out of the death of exile into the new life of reestablishing their home in Judah, so now in a much greater way, God is calling men and women out of every nation, out of the spiritual exile from God, to live life, new life in God's kingdom, not just in Judah, not just in Palestine, but in every corner of the globe.

So let's look then at what 1 and 2 Chronicles highlights for the mission of God's people in that day and how we might learn from them for our own day.

Let's listen to these old stories for a new day and be realigned around God's purposes for us. Now, as we open the pages of 1 and 2 Chronicles, the first lesson we see is this.

1 and 2 Chronicles says, Remember that you are God's people. Remember that you are God's people.

This is the first reason that these genealogies are here.

[14:26] There's a reason. You know, by the way, did you know there's actually a place today where a list of names draws literally millions of people every year so they can go see it?

There's a couple places like that in the world, but there's one I have in mind. Do you know where? Ellis Island. Why is it so exciting to go to Ellis Island and see the register of names on display there? Why do three million people, that's what they approximate, three million people every year go there? Because in that place, in that list of names, there's a picture, there's a reminder of the

courage and the hope that inspired those people to make a costly journey to start a new life. And now that's inspiring for anybody, right? But if you actually have a relative that came through Ellis Island, well, then it's even more meaningful.

And what we have here in the opening of 1 Chronicles isn't just a list of names, but it's a family tree of the people of God, the people that God preserved and kept through generations and preserved even through exile and brought them back.

[15 : 47] And for Christians, well, this is your family story too. This is your family tree.

Paul says in Galatians that it's not just the physical descendants of Abraham who are Abraham's family. No, it's everyone who has faith in Jesus the Messiah.

You are spiritual descendants of Abraham. Abraham, Abraham who through faith was made righteous in God's sight long before he was circumcised. Those who are of faith are grafted into this story, into this family.

So the Old Testament story is your story, Christian, and these genealogies are your family tree.

These are your people. Now, again, why do people get excited about their genealogy or seeing the name of an ancestor on a register of names like at Ellis Island?

Well, because it reminds you of who you are. It gives you a sense of identity, of belonging, of rootedness.

[16 : 58] It gives you a story. And for the chronicler's audience back then and for us today, it's easy, isn't it?

It's very easy to forget who we are. It's so easy to forget who we are and what we're rooted in, this long, rich history.

It's so easy to start defining ourselves by the neighborhood that we live in or the schools that we attend or the jobs that we have or the clothes that we wear or the people we think we can impress. Our identity gets pulled into a million directions and we get fragmented and we lose ourselves and we just blur into the passing fads of the moment.

So we have to come back again and again to the reality that our most important identity is this.

[17 : 56] We are God's people. And what does remembering that reality mean? What effect does that have or should that have on us?

Well, I think the chronicler wanted that message to strike gratitude and wonder into the people of his day. Why?

Why gratitude and wonder? Well, because it was only through God's grace that they were still a people at all. You know, in the ancient world, when an empire came and defeated you and carried you off into exile, when you were kind of conquered and dispersed like that, that was usually the end.

Like, that was it. You know, you can read through the Old Testament. There are a lot of old nations there. You read them and you think, what happened to these people? That happened to those people. You were finished. You would just assimilate into the dominant culture.

Maybe you would survive in little pockets for a while, but eventually you would just fade into history. But for this people, something radically different happened.

[19 : 05] God's grace had rescued them. Do you remember the prophet Ezekiel? Do you remember the vision, that famous vision that God gave the prophet Ezekiel of what the return from exile was going to be like?

God took Ezekiel one day out and showed him a valley full of dry bones, right? That was the people in exile. Just a valley of dry bones bleached in the sun, lifeless, hopeless.

But then Ezekiel hears and sees God's spirit come. And those bones begin to rise up and reconnect.

And flesh comes back upon them. And breath fills their lungs. And the whole valley becomes a mighty people again. And the point is that the return from exile was like being brought from death to life.

God was faithful to His people and rescued them. And brothers and sisters, if that's true for the Old Testament people of God in that day, how much more true is it of us?

[20 : 15] The apostle Peter, in his first letter, writing to the church, the church made up of Jews and Gentiles now, says, You, you, you're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

And then Peter makes this point. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

That's what it means to remember that you are God's people. To realign yourselves with the unbelievable reality that God's mercy and grace has rescued us from darkness and brought us into light.

How? How? How is that true? How has that come about? Well, the passage we read earlier from Ephesians tells us.

But now, Paul says, In Christ Jesus, you, who were once far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[21 : 31] This is how God brought Jews and Gentiles into the one people of God from the spiritual exile of sin and death. He sent His Son to die, not just for the sins of Abraham's physical descendants, but for everyone who turns from sin and takes hold of Christ through faith.

He reconciles us both to God in one body through the cross, Paul says. So, brothers and sisters, the world will want to tell you many things about yourself and about who you are.

It will want to tell you that you are only as valuable as your productivity, only as valuable as your good looks, or your athletic prowess, or your artistic ability, or the size of your bank account, or your academic pedigree.

But those things don't define who you are. Once, you were not a people, but now, you are God's people, beloved, chosen, precious in His sight.

The world might see a valley of dry bones. You might feel a little creaky sometimes. But God is raising up a mighty host. We are part of a lineage, a great lineage of saints, saints that stretch back through the history of the church, through missionary endeavors, through powerful revivals, through reforms and renewals, through the building of great cathedrals, through the writing of theological masterpieces, through the courage of the monasteries when empires crumbled, through the bravery of martyrs who stood firm in the face of death, through the apostles who took this message throughout the known world, and back even further, through the Old Testament saints who put their hope in God's kingdom through exile and trials, all the way back to David, to Moses and Miriam, to Abraham and Sarah, to Adam and Eve, a mighty host preserved by the power of God.

[23 : 49] That's who you are. Let it fill your heart with wonder, with gratitude, with praise for God and His sovereign grace. Remember that you are God's people.

But the chronicler has more to say than just that. After nine chapters of genealogies, where does the story pick up?

Well, it picks up with King David. When David's reign is established, the chronicler focuses an immense amount of attention.

Once David's in place, where does his attention go? The temple. The temple is one of the major themes throughout this two-part book. David prepares for the temple in the second half of 1 Chronicles.

Solomon builds and dedicates the temple in the first half of 2 Chronicles. And the kings who follow Solomon in the rest of 2 Chronicles, nearly all of them, in one way or another, are described as prioritizing or neglecting the temple.

[24 : 52] Obviously, the chronicler wants the audience of his day to make the temple their priority. When Cyrus' decree, we see that at the end of the book. When Cyrus' decree allowed the Jewish exiles to return home in 539 B.C., they went with the mission to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed.

And you can read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to see how all that took place. But now, when the chronicler was writing, now the temple had been rebuilt. And the chronicler was adamant that the people not neglect it, but make it their central priority and purpose as a people. You see, what he was telling his generation was this.

Not just remember that you're the people of God, but also he was telling them, prioritize the worship of God. Make the worship of God your uppermost aim.

Put the worship of God above all other priorities. Prioritize the worship of God. Seek Him above all else. After all, what was the temple?

[26 : 05] In the Old Testament, under the Mosaic Covenant, the temple was the place where God promised to be present with His people. It was the focal point of God's presence on earth.

It was the throne room of the Old Covenant kingdom where God, the Creator and King, dwelled among His people in holiness. That's what the temple was. But we know, we know from the book of Ezra that when the temple was rebuilt after the exile, there were some people who were still alive who remembered the old temple.

And the new temple, the rebuilt one, wasn't as glorious, wasn't as impressive as the old one. In fact, when they laid the foundation of the new temple, Ezra chapter 3 says this, it says, many of the priests and Levites and heads of the Father's houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this new house being laid.

Though many shouted aloud for joy so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping. Their joy was intermingled with their weeping.

Joy because they had just laid the foundation of a new temple, weeping because it wasn't like the old one that they remembered. But, you know, it wasn't just that comparison to the old that sort of drew people away from maybe prioritizing the temple and prioritizing the worship of God.

[27 : 39] There were all the other cares and concerns of being a fledgling people attempting to restart and maintain their new life back in Judea.

There were cultural pressures to conform to the world around them. There were political pressures as they continued to live under the Persian Empire. Of course, there were financial pressures. And in the midst of those very real pressures, very real concerns, the chronicler wants to remind the people that the most important thing is that they prioritize the worship of God.

God must remain at the center of their lives or else everything else will fall apart. You see, friends, the reality is is that something's going to take the place of God in our lives.

As human beings, we're going to worship something. We're going to put something uppermost in our life. We're going to chase after something as our hope, as our happiness, as our life. You know, another way of putting it is that there really is no such thing as an atheist.

[28 : 52] Of course, plenty of people don't believe or don't worship the God of the Bible, but everyone has a God. We take some good thing and make it an ultimate thing. For example, it's a good thing to work hard and enjoy your job, but if your career is what defines you, if that's what gives you your ultimate sense of identity and worth, then it's become your functional God.

You're putting your hope and your career to save you, to be your meaning and purpose and rest and hope. But you know, it can be anything.

We can do this with anything. It's a good thing to appreciate, even love. You're a country, for example, but if your national identity is what defines you, if your ultimate sense of purpose and belonging is as a citizen of this or that country, then patriotism has become your God.

Friend, are you self-aware enough? Are you honest enough to admit what your God really is?

There's really no such thing as an atheist. Now, you might say, I don't worship anything. Nothing controls or defines me. I don't need money or career or country to define me.

[30 : 09] I choose my own path. I define me. Well, a lot of people say that today. But don't you see, if that's what you really believe, then you've made independence.

You've made freedom your God. And that's one of the most common gods of our age. Here's the irony. By making freedom and autonomy our God, we're going along with the crowd more than anyone else.

Making autonomy our God is the easiest way to slip into herd mentality. But what happens? What happens when you make some created thing your God?

What happens when you worship something other than the one you were created to worship? You know, it's not for nothing. It's not for nothing that Chronicles starts by going all the way back to Adam.

Adam takes us all the way back to the creation narratives of Genesis. Why did God create humanity? Well, He created us to bear His image and to find our deepest delight, our deepest satisfaction in Him.

[31 : 24] And that, perhaps, is the greatest gift God could have given us as humans. He gave us the capacity to worship Him.

Don't you see how wonderful that is? I mean, imagine how silly it would be to enter one of the great art museums of the world and spend your time gazing and admiring the typography on the bathroom sign.

It might be slick, but what a foolish thing to do. Imagine how silly it would be to stand 10 or 20 feet from the Grand Canyon and admire and stare at a little ditch beside the road.

Friends, you were created with the capacity to worship the greatest and most satisfying thing in existence. You were made to be satisfied by more than the greatest human work of art, more than the most stunning natural wonder.

God made you to delight in Himself, a God of infinite beauty, infinite wonder and power and freedom. You know, you can listen to any great composer.

[32 : 38] You can listen to any great symphony long enough. Listen to it long enough. And you know what? Eventually, it will get old.

I know that might seem like blasphemy to some of our musicians in the room, that even Bach, even Beethoven, even Mozart, oh, they can hold our attention for days, for weeks, for years even, but eventually, they too will get old.

But God is infinite. He never gets old. God is an ocean of wonder with no bottom. And He made you, little old you and me, with the capacity to worship Him.

Do you see what a privilege that is? To know Him, to love Him, to find our deepest delight in Him. Worship anything else.

Worship anything else. Put anything else in the center of your life, and the center won't hold. Make career ultimate, and it will disappoint you. Put your friends in the center of your life, and they will let you down.

[33 : 53] Live your life for patriotism, and it will leave you jaded and cynical. Those things can't save you or satisfy you. Only God can. But even worse, if you worship anything other than God, you're actually putting yourself at odds with the very God who made you.

You see, by setting up a rival God in the world that God made, by worshiping a created thing, you and I are staging a cosmic rebellion, defying His goodness, dishonoring His name, incurring guilt against a holy God.

And that's true of all of us, friends. We've all worshiped created things rather than God. And if God were to call us to account, if He brought us before His tribunal, we'd all be charged with cosmic treason, and the penalty would be death.

But this is the good news. God doesn't give us what our rebellion deserves. In the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, He actually came and stood in the place of the rebels, taking the penalty that they deserve for their sins, that we deserve for our sins.

And in exchange, offers us full acceptance, full pardon, full amnesty, not on the basis of what we've done, not on the basis of our good record or our proper worship.

[35 : 23] We don't have that. But He offers us that amnesty on the basis of what Jesus has done because Jesus was the perfect worshiper. He lived every moment for the glory of His heavenly Father.

He was completely righteous in every way. And when we place our faith in Him, when we stand with Him, His record of perfect righteousness and perfect worship becomes ours.

So that even though we are rebels, even though we do deserve death for treason, God forgives us. And He treats us not as rebels, but as friends and even more than friends.

Because of Jesus, He adopts us as sons and daughters. And He gives us renewed hearts by His Spirit that are able to begin worshiping Him as He deserves.

The Spirit comes in and begins to lift our gaze to Him. What we were originally created to do. Do you want to be free from the little gods in your life?

[36 : 29] And dive into the infinite wonder of the God who made you? Jesus Christ is the door to step through. Take hold of Him and your heart will open up to new vistas that the old one could never provide.

And that invitation is open to you now to take hold of Him by faith and to begin worshiping the infinite God. Now, in the Old Testament, the physical temple in Jerusalem was the focal point of the worship of God.

But the story of the Bible, as you follow it out, you see that the physical temple was never meant to be permanent. The temple was where God dwelled under the old covenant, but when Jesus Christ came, He fulfilled everything the temple was about.

He was God dwelling in our midst. He was the ultimate sacrifice for sin. And the New Testament goes on to say that the church, the people united to Jesus through faith and filled with His Spirit, the

church is now the place where God dwells.

Not a building, but a people. Little did you know when you got up this morning after hitting snooze eight times because it's your day off, that you were going to come meet with God in His temple.

[37 : 51] When the church gathers and the gospel is proclaimed, there I am in the midst, Jesus says. God is in our midst by His Spirit.

Listen again to how Paul puts it at the end of Ephesians 2. So then, you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In Him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. So now, under the new covenant, what does it mean corporately to prioritize the worship of God?

It doesn't mean traveling to a physical building somewhere in Jerusalem. That was just a shadow and the church is the temple of the living God. The reality is Christ and the assembly of people gathered in His name proclaiming His word.

The local church is the temple of the living God and the church isn't confined to one location or to one country. The church is a worldwide movement in every country, in every place, in every language.

[39 : 10] The whole world is now the location of God's temple as the church continues to grow and gather in local assemblies worshiping Jesus as Lord. As we're going to see in the coming weeks, one of the main themes of Chronicles is seeking God.

When the people seek God, when they worship Him, they experience deeper flourishing, deeper renewal. When they turn away from worshiping false idols and false gods, that's when they begin to be renewed.

When they turn away from God and worship those things, they fall apart. But when they forsake those lesser gods and seek the Lord and return to Him, it's like fresh water springing up through the dry ground, bringing life and healing and sanctification.

So a central exhortation of Chronicles to the people corporately is to turn to God and seek Him. Now one classic verse that expresses that theme, maybe you're familiar with it, is 2 Chronicles 7.14.

Which says, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

[40 : 28] Solomon spoke those words at the dedication of a temple. And as we've said, under the old covenant, the people of God and the worship of God was localized in one place, what Solomon calls in that verse, the land.

But friends, get this. Now that Jesus has come, now that we live under the new covenant, now that the presence of God is no longer localized to one building or one place or one land, we have to interpret that verse with a bigger vision.

You know, too often people can recite that verse as if it's the recipe for national or political renewal. But the land in that verse is not the United States or the United Kingdom or any contemporary political reality.

God's people are now salt and light in the whole world. It's the renewal of the church that this verse points to. And yes, wherever the church is renewed through the worship of God and the proclamation of the gospel, we will be salt and light.

We will impact our culture. But changing the nation or changing the culture isn't the goal of that verse, you see. It's the revival of the church.

[41 : 45] It's the global advance of the gospel to the ends of the earth. It's the spread of God's glory and worship to every language and every people. And what a gift.

What a gift that here at Trinity we get to be a picture of this global movement that is the church. God has made us a people from so many countries and cultures and backgrounds.

What a gift to be a sign of God's global church right here. But what should our priority be? Do we celebrate our diversity for diversity's sake?

Not at all. We prioritize the worship of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are the living stones of the new covenant temple.

God's spirit dwells in our midst and our uppermost priority is to worship God and give Him glory. To declare that the God who has made Himself known in Jesus Christ is the one true God who deserves our complete allegiance and our deepest trust and our most joyful praise.

[42 : 56] That's our priority. That's our purpose. God's grace. So we've seen then two great themes. Two great themes in 1 and 2 Chronicles. First, remember that you are the people of God and second, prioritize the worship of God.

Now there's one more great theme in this book and I'll have to be brief because of time. There's a book table downstairs we have to go rummage through and there's an art gallery upstairs we have to get to so I'm going to be brief. After God's people and God's worship we come to God's King. The third theme of Chronicles is this. Put your hope in God's promised King. We've already seen how after the genealogies of chapters 1 through 9 the Chronicler kind of jumps right into the story of David and the monarchy and he will trace throughout this two-part book the line of kings descended from David.

Unlike the book of 1 and 2 Kings if you're familiar with that Chronicles does not go into great detail about what we call the northern kingdom that splits off after Solomon's reign.

Rather the focus of Chronicles sort of stays laser-like on the southern kingdom on the line of David. Why? Because of the promise that God made. In 1 Chronicles 17 God makes a binding promise.

[44 : 13] He makes a covenant with David. In verses 11 through 14 of that chapter God says this. He says, when your days are fulfilled to walk with your father I will raise up your offspring after you one of your own sons and I will establish his kingdom he shall build a house for me and I will establish his throne forever.

I'll be to him a father and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him as I took it from him who was before you but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever and his throne shall be established forever.

David's throne will be established forever. And that promise will continue through the rest of the book through the ups and downs of 2 Chronicles we're going to see king after king some are good some are not some seek God and some don't but through it all God remains faithful.

He doesn't let the light go out on his promise even in the darkest days we see that promise reaffirmed again and again like in chapter 20 verse 7 of 2 Chronicles when a king named Jehoram and his son Ahaziah reject God and worship idols it's terrible.

Even in that darkest day the chronicler says yet the Lord was not willing to destroy the house of David because of the covenant that he had made with David since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

[45 : 41] You see even though the people are faithless even though the kings are faithless God remains faithful God keeps his promise and you see in the chronicler's day in the days and years after the exile ended the people were still waiting they had returned to the land they had rebuilt the temple but there wasn't a king did God give up on his promise?

Had he abandoned his word to David? Had the failure of the previous kings and the previous people been just too great? But the message of Chronicles is this put your hope in God's promised king God will remain faithful to his word and we know that God was faithful when the time was fulfilled God sent his son the king came Jesus was the true and greater son of David he was the one of whom God the father could really say I will be to him a father and he will be to me a son because Jesus was the son from all eternity you see friends we put our hope not in human leaders but in God's promised king and just as the chronicler looked forward to the coming of this king so we look forward to this king's coming again when he will judge and he will save and he will make all things new so Chronicles is a retelling of history for a new day it reminds us to remember that we're God's people to prioritize

God's worship and to hope in God's king but it ends with a bit of a cliffhanger let them go up are the last words of the book why?

because the chronicler knew that the history wasn't over God had more of the story to tell and he knew that his generation was going to be part of it this retelling of history was meant to give them a trajectory but there were chapters yet to be written brothers and sisters so too with us God's history continues to be written God's mission continues to advance God's kingdom continues to bring healing and life so Chronicles stands here and says let's join the story let's put our chapter into the pages of this great history that will resound for eternity you have a part to play it may seem small you may think it's so insignificant but friend in the light of eternity who can say what is small and

what is great the kingdom of God Jesus said is like a mustard seed it starts small but when it's fully grown it becomes a great tree and the birds can rest in its shade brothers and sisters write your chapter in this great history plant your seed into the soil of God's kingdom and let's see what God might do in our generation that will resound for eternity let's pray
Father we ask that you would align us with your great kingdom purposes help us to remember these things help us to live for you in the coming week Amen