

Help Along the Way

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- [0 : 0 0] Amen. Let's pray together. God, indeed, to you, our triune God, we raise our songs of praise. As we come before you in your word this morning, we ask that you would soften our hearts, open our ears, to receive what you are saying to us through your spirit. Amen.
- Well, it's been said that you can go for up to three to four weeks without food. And maybe you can go three to four days without water.
- But how long can you go without help from other people? When is the last time you thought you really needed help? I think we don't like to think that we really need help.
- Needing help is a sign of weakness, we think. Or on the other hand, we think that being independent is a sign of maturity. But is that really the case? We've been studying Exodus 16 and 17 these past two weeks, and we've seen that the God who saves is the God who sustains.
- At this point in Exodus, Israel has crossed the Red Sea. God's leading them to Sinai through the wilderness. And so far, he's sustained them with bread for their hunger. We looked at that two weeks ago, and he's sustained them with water for their thirst.
- [1 : 2 4] As Pastor Matt preached about that last week. But God has one more thing to teach his people. He is the God who sustains. But how will he sustain us?
- And most often we learn that it's through the help of other people. So here in Exodus 17 and 18, we see two episodes that show us our need for help and how God provides it.
- So would you turn with me to Exodus 17? And we're going to pick up in verse 8. That's page 59 in the Pew Bible. If you want to turn there, it'll be helpful to have it open in front of you. Exodus chapter 17, verse 8, page 59 in the Pew Bible.
- And diving right in, what we see here first is that we need help because in the Christian life, the external threats are real and the battles are long.
- Let's pick up the story in Exodus 17, verses 8 through 16. Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, choose for us men and go out and fight with Amalek.
- [2 : 3 3] Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with a staff of God in my hand. So Joshua did as Moses told him and fought with Amalek while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.
- Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. And whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary. So they took a stone and put it under him.
- And he sat on it while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.
- Then the Lord said to Moses, write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, the Lord is my banner, saying, a hand upon the throne of the Lord.

The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. Let's stop there. Well, one theme that the Bible stresses over and over again is that we are in a very real spiritual battle.

[3 : 47] In verse 8, Israel comes under attack from Amalek, which is one of the tribes that inhabited the Sinai Peninsula. Now, we're not told why the Amalekites attacked Israel, but later in the Pentateuch in Deuteronomy chapter 25, we're told a little more of how they did it.

This is what we read there in Deuteronomy 25, 17 through 18. Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary and cut off your tail those who were lagging behind you, and they did not fear God.

So the Amalekites here raided the weakest and most vulnerable parts of the camp as Israel was on the way, weary through the wilderness. Now, like Israel, the church has, as it were, come through the waters of the Red Sea.

We too have been liberated, but now from sin and death through our Lord Jesus. And we've been promised eternal life in God's new creation. But as we journey on the way, what we find is that God doesn't take all the dangers and threats away.

Yes, the ultimate victory has been won in Christ's death and resurrection, but we are still in a battle. But our battle today is not against flesh and blood.

[5 : 10] It's a spiritual battle, the New Testament tells us. Alexander Solzhenitsyn famously wrote, he said, gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart and through all human hearts.

In other words, we can't necessarily point to this or that political party, or this or that nation state, or this or that cultural movement, and pronounce definitively that it is the enemy.

No. The real enemy that we're up against runs so much deeper than that. We have a spiritual adversary, the Apostle Peter says, who roams about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

And this spiritual attack comes in the everyday moments, as much as in the big events of our lives or in the big events of history. For instance, when in fear, we're tempted to seek worldly power or status for our protection, rather than trust the way of the risen Jesus in service and sacrifice.

When we're tempted to hide our failures from one another in an effort to look good. When in pride, we think that we can handle this on our own, whatever this might be, rather than to be transparent and ask for help.

[6 : 39] Even in moments like these, there is a spiritual battle that's going on, a very real spiritual battle. Now, in verses 9 and 10, we learn of Moses' plan for the counterattack.

Joshua, you go choose some men, go down and fight. Right, I'm going to go up on the hill with Aaron and Hur. I wonder how Joshua felt about that plan when he first heard it. You get to go up on the hill.

But what was Moses going to do up there? Moses will raise up the staff of God on top of the nearby hill. Now, this staff, remember, was a symbol, has been a symbol throughout Exodus of God's redemptive power.

Throughout the ten plagues in Egypt, at the parting of the Red Sea, God told Moses to raise up the staff in his hand. And that would serve as a sign telling the people that it was the Lord's power at work to judge and to save.

Not Moses' power, not the people's power, but it was the Lord. So here again, in the wilderness, under attack, Moses would raise up this symbol of God's power and appeal to God to rescue and defend his people and get glory for his name.

- [7 : 59] Now, how do we make that appeal today? In Ephesians 6, when Paul is describing our spiritual battle there in some detail, he uses the metaphor of armor to talk about how we should be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.
- He talks about a belt of truth and a breastplate of righteousness and so on. But the culminating thing he mentions in that section is prayer. Praying at all times in the Spirit, in all prayer and supplication.
- To that end, Paul says, keep alert with all perseverance. Prayer. Prayer. And in a sense, isn't that what Moses is doing on top of the hill with the staff of God in his hand, appealing to God's power, not their own, to win the battle?
- Is that not what we do in prayer? In prayer, we're expressing our utter dependence on God, our need for him, our inability to do what really needs to be done.
- We're expressing our dependence on him and our confidence in him, our confidence that he does hear and that he does answer our prayer according to his good purposes for us. Prayer, in other words, exalts God as the real champion in the battle.
- [9 : 21] And notice how the story is told here in Exodus 17. Where does the narrator focus so much of his attention? It focuses not on the field with Joshua and his men.
- We don't know how many people Joshua takes out in the battle. We don't know, you know, much of the details of what happens. Rather, the narrator's focus is on the hill. As if to say that the hill is where the battle is truly won in prayer.
- But the battle here goes long and Moses' arms grow weary. And whenever his arms go down, Amalek prevails.
- Now, we're not told why that's the case. It's a bit of a strange detail, isn't it? Moses' arms are up, Joshua wins, but when his arms sink, Amalek begins to prevail. We're not told why that's the case. You know, why should the directionality of Moses' arms have any bearing on whether or not God protects his people, right?
- It seems a bit strange. And the text doesn't really say. So we need to be careful how we speculate. But I think the point of the passage seems to be what happens in response in verse 12.
- [10 : 32] There are Aaron and Hur watching Moses. His arms are up. They're winning. His arms are down. They're not winning. Aaron looks at her and says, we got to do something about this. So they grab Moses. They sit him on a rock. They flank him on the other side.
- One person takes one hand. One person takes the other. They lift them up. They hold the arms up. And together, they persevere. I wonder, could that be the reason why God allowed the battle to be swayed by the strength of Moses' arms?
- So that we would see our need for help. To teach us that we aren't strong enough to last the whole battle alone. And that forces a question upon us, doesn't it?
- Since we are in a spiritual battle, who is holding up your arms? Who's your Aaron? Who's your Hur? Because if Moses couldn't do it alone, then you and I can't either.
- I wonder right now, can you think of the names of two or three people that you could text or call, and it wouldn't be weird to ask them to pray for you?
- [11 : 48] And are those people people that you could meet with face-to-face this week if you needed to, to pray together? Of course, there's nothing wrong with having long-distance friends or family who you can call for help and for prayer.
- Those relationships are a gift. We can be thankful for those. But do you also have someone local who can be that for you as well, and that you can be that for in return? I wonder if you think of church membership this way.

You know, church membership isn't just some kind of nice affiliation to have, like having a Panera card or something. You know, you kind of swipe it at the checkout, and every once in a while you get an email with some free goodies or something like that.

I mean, those are nice, but you know, there's not a lot at stake there. There's not a lot of commitment. No, church membership is being known by name in a body of Christ, being publicly committed to each other so that together we can hold up one another's arms in the midst of the fight.

It's admitting that we can't survive by ourselves, and we need each other. I wonder, have you thought about becoming a member of a church for that purpose?

[13 : 05] This is also why we have small groups throughout the week. If you don't think you need a small group, I'd encourage you to ask this question of yourself. Who are the two, three, four people that I meet with consistently face-to-face on a weekly or every other week basis to really pray?

Do you have that in your life? If not, friends, then you need to be in a small group or something like it because trust me, our arms aren't strong enough.

We're not going to make it alone. And what's more is that you need to be holding someone else's arms up too. It's not just about what you get out of it, but what you have to give as well.

And, you know, this strikes to the very heart of what it means to be the church, which is a lot of what this episode and the next episode are all about. Being a part of the body of Christ isn't just about what you get out of it.

We often can think of the church as sort of an event that we attend or maybe an organization that we're a part of. But, you know, for those of us who are in Christ, the church is something that we are.

[14 : 23] It's a calling that shapes our entire life where we give as much as we receive. So this week, try asking a Christian friend, whether from small group or some other context, this incredibly profound question.

How can I pray for you this week? How can I pray for you this week?

And then the next time you get together, ask about that thing and how it turned out. Now, here's where I'm going to give you a secret of ministry.

This is a deep secret. Only the initiates can really understand this. We're going to run a seminar this summer and make lots of money off of it. Here's the secret to healthy church ministry. Pray for that person and then follow up with them and ask them how it went.

And then pray for them and then follow up and ask how it went. And then, here's the big thing. Pray for them and follow up and see how it went.

[15 : 32] Now, I see. This is simple, right? It's simple. And yet, this is so profound. Because those rhythms and those practices are like a little seed.

And that simple rhythm can grow and grow into something powerful and strong and life-giving in the midst of our spiritual battles. When we ask and we show up and we pray and we continue to ask and show up and pray.

And that's when we start to hold up one another's arms. Because the battle, friends, is truly one on the hill. Well, the passage ends with the Lord telling Moses to make a memorial in writing.

And, you know, when we think about the substance of what is this memorial really all about, I think it basically says that the battle won't last forever. Now, first, we think this seems like a stark response.

The Lord will blot out the memory of the Amalekites. At first, that seems a bit extreme, maybe. But keep in mind, friends, that the Lord is a loving and holy defender of his people.

[16 : 50] He offers repentance to all, but those who continue to oppose him will face judgment like a wave crashing on the immovable rocks of the shore. But consider these verses in light of the spiritual battle to which they point.

God wants Moses to put down in writing that though the battle is long, it won't be forever. The Lord is our banner.

He is the mighty, unfurled standard under which we march. And his victory is secure. Moses here, after the victory over the Amalekites, built a stone altar as a memorial.

But, friends, don't we have an even greater memorial in the cross and in the empty tomb? We don't need to build any more stone altars because we have carved into the middle of history the great monument to God's victory, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ in the empty tomb.

And we too have it in writing, in the words of Scripture, that sin and death and hell and the enemy will not have the last word. God will uphold his redemptive promises for generations to come until eternity dawns and death is truly no more.

[18 : 13] But until that day, we need help. Because the external threats are real and the battles are long.

That's the first point we see here at the end of chapter 17. Second, chapter 18. We see that we need help now, not just because the external threats are real, but because the internal needs are great.

The internal needs are great. Now, this chapter, chapter 18, falls into two halves. In the first half, verses 1 through 12, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, arrives from Midian bringing with him Moses' wife and two sons.

Apparently, Moses had sent his family away to Midian at some point while they were down in Egypt. The text doesn't really say when that happened or why. We can speculate. It might have been for their protection.

While Moses was sort of having his confrontation with Pharaoh to protect his family, to send them away to his father-in-law. Now, Jethro, you see here, isn't an Israelite.

[19 : 17] But in these verses, if you scan down through verses 1 through 12, what you find is that he has heard all about what God has done for them. And in these verses, he becomes a worshiper of the Lord.

Look at verse 11. Now I know, Jethro says, that the Lord is greater than all gods. In other words, Jethro converts from worshiping the gods of Midian to worshiping the one true God of Israel, the Lord.

It's a pretty striking contrast between Jethro and the Israelites that we've seen over the last two chapters, isn't it? You know, the Israelites, they sort of see God's mighty deeds with their own eyes, and yet they grumble and complain.

And Jethro, on the other hand, he didn't see any of that with his own eyes, and yet he heard and he believed. Faith comes by hearing, the Apostle Paul says in Romans 10.

And that's true for us today. You know, we haven't seen the events that God has done. But like Jethro, we've heard and we've believed. And God has made us his own. But the second half of the chapter is where we'll focus the rest of our time.

[20 : 24] And this connects to our theme of help. Let's pick up in verse 13. Let me read this for us. The next day, Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, What is this that you're doing for the people?

Why do you sit alone and all the people stand around you from morning till evening? And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, they come to me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.

Moses' father-in-law said to him, What you're doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you.

You are not able to do it alone. Now, obey my voice. I will give you advice, and God will be with you. You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.

Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands of hundreds of fifties and of tens, and let them judge the people at all times.

[21 : 34] Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves, so it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you.

You will be able to endure, and all this people will go to their place in peace. So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens, and they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves.

Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country. So let's look at this section in three points. First, what's the need? What's the problem here? Well, Moses is judging the people morning till evening.

That is, he's the only one who's kind of arbitrating their issues and teaching them God's laws and statutes. But as Jethro points out in verses 17 through 18, that burden is too heavy for one person.

[22 : 34] And that word heavy there in verse 18 is the same word as weary. Back in chapter 17, verse 12, when Moses is up on the mountain getting weary. That's one of the details that draws these two stories together, telling us that the external and the internal needs are too great, too heavy to handle alone.

What's more, in verse 18, it's not just Moses who's going to get worn out, but it's the people who will wear themselves out as well. In other words, if Moses doesn't get the help he needs, the people won't get the help they need either.

They'll be standing around all day waiting for Moses, growing ever tired, ever impatient, with their problems ever unresolved. Both Moses and the people will just wear out. Now, it's easy to see how this relates to church life, isn't it?

Friends, a single pastor, one lone pastor, can't possibly care for the needs of a whole congregation. A single ministry leader can't possibly care for the needs of a whole ministry.

You know, while burnout rates among pastors can sometimes be overly exaggerated, it's easy to see, isn't it, how a single pastor, one lone pastor caring for a church of a few hundred people would be overwhelmed.

[23 : 53] It's not sustainable for the pastor or for the people. So that's the problem. Second, what's Jethro's advice? In verses 19 through 22, he tells Moses to look for able, God-fearing men, and to appoint them as officers over the people.

Notice, Moses isn't to abdicate his responsibility. He needs to stick with it. But he needs to start empowering and delegating some of that authority to people who can help. They will help bear the burden of caring for the people and of leading and of shepherding the flock.

And what we see in the Bible is that that principle carries right through into the New Testament. As the gospel spreads from city to city in the book of Acts, for example, we see Paul and the other apostles appointing elders or overseers in every church that springs up from the gospel.

And not just one, but multiple elders in each congregation who will be responsible to oversee the faithful teaching of the word and the faithful shepherding of the people. And most of those elders were not what we would call full-time pastors.

Now, there were men like Timothy who did give their labor full-time to word ministry, but the majority of elders were godly men who worked full-time in the marketplace.

[25 : 10] But notice the emphasis here in Exodus about these men. It's primarily on their character, isn't it? They need to be able men, yes.

They need to be skilled, but above all, they need to fear God and be trustworthy and hate a bribe, it says. And again, we see that same emphasis when Paul describes elders or overseers in his first letter to Timothy.

Yes, elders need to be able to teach, but the emphasis is on Christ-like character. Are they an example of genuine godliness?

Can people imitate them as they imitate Christ? If so, then we ask, are they faithful in teaching God's word to others, whether one-on-one or in small groups or in large groups?

And if so, those are the sort of men that you want to be elders or shepherds of the church. So third, what's going to be the result of all this according to Jethro?

[26 : 13] Well, in verse 23, Jethro says that the fruit of doing this, of receiving this help, of establishing this help, will be endurance for Moses and peace for the people.

Endurance. You know, one of the primary ways pastors and ministries will last for the long haul is if there is a healthy culture of eldership in a church.

If a church prays for God to raise up godly elders, if men aspire to grow in Christ-like character and teach others God's word, if church members receive the care and direction and instruction of lay elders, that is elders who are not full-time pastors, with joy and don't view them as sort of the second string to the real pastors, do you know what I mean?

Oh, I only got a call from James today. I wish I would have got a call from Pastor Matt. That would have been so much better. No, right? We're thankful and we're grateful for all of our elders, all of our shepherds.

We see them all as a gift that God gives to lead us and instruct us and to help us. Then, a ministry will endure. Second, there will be peace for the people.

[27 : 36] Now, in the immediate context of Exodus 18, this means practically that more of their disputes are going to be settled, so there will literally be less conflict and more peace. But, you know, peace is a holistic term in the Bible.

It's not just an image of an absence of conflict, but of wholeness and flourishing. So, the result here isn't just there will be more conflict resolution, but the overall spiritual well-being and joy of the people will increase.

You know, one of the things I'm so thankful for here at Trinity is that we have embraced this biblical picture of leadership. And we have seen how God brings endurance and peace through it.

You know, if you've been around Trinity for a long time, you know that there have been seasons in our life as a church where we've gone through big transitions or we've gone through hardships. And I will tell you that one of the things that God has used to sustain us through those transitions, through those hardships, has been the prayers of the people for the plurality of elders in the church to lead humbly and with the word of God.

Now, we can never sort of read God's providence in backwards, but friends, God knows what he's doing when he sets up the church, and we have seen the fruit of it in our congregation. So keep on praying for the leaders and for the elders.

[29 : 03] Pray for Jeff and for James and for Jonathan and for Matt and for Greg and myself. Keep praying that God will raise up more qualified elders in our midst. But of course, this principle doesn't just apply to eldership, right?

It applies across the board in church life because God equips all of us for ministry. The passage that we read earlier from Ephesians 4 presents a picture of every member ministry where we are all building each other up in love.

And in that passage, the pastors, the elders, the teachers, they aren't the ones who are doing the work of ministry. If you look and read it again, you'll see that they're the ones who are equipping the saints for the work of ministry. It's the whole church.

You know, so if you ask, well, who are the ministers around here? Friends, look to your left and look to your right. You are the ministers of the church.

In other words, you have an important, a vital, a critical role to play. Men and women, young and old, single and married. The ascended Christ has poured his gifts on his redeemed people and he wants us to use them so that we as a church can grow up into maturity and into the fullness of Christ, the fullness that Christ has for us.

[30 : 23] You know, where do we find the fullness of Christ according to the New Testament? You know, we don't find it in doing a three-week retreat in the middle of nowhere where none of these pesky people are around who keep bothering me, right?

Now, sometimes we do need to take a retreat and take a Sabbath. That's a good practice. You should all be doing it, right? But where is the fullness of Christ to be found? It's as we engage and serve one another in the body of the church.

In other words, the clearest picture of the face of Jesus Christ that we will see is in the face of one another in the family of the church. This is the fullness of Christ here.

And friends, if we're not serving, if you're not serving, then we are not growing as we could be or should be. If you're not sure what you're good at, we'll help you figure that out.

You know, don't just be along for the ride, in other words. Find your place here because the church needs your help just as you need their help so that we can grow up in love and experience the maturity and the fullness of Christ that he has for us.

[31 : 54] So yes, the internal needs are great, but if we all contribute, if we all take our place in the body, then the result will be peace, wholeness, and flourishing.

So these passages are telling us that we need help. Leaders can't do it on their own. None of us can do it on our own. But you know, here's perhaps the really surprising thing about all this, especially in chapter 18.

Perhaps the really surprising thing is that Moses receives Jethro's advice just like that. You know, he doesn't question it. He doesn't get offended.

He doesn't say, how dare you, Jethro? You just showed up. Now you're going to tell me how to do my job? He doesn't justify his actions or pridefully say that no one else can do what he does, which, you know, after the experience of the bread and the water in the wilderness, he might have had a pretty good case to make about how none of the Israelites were really ready to step into leadership.

And yet, he doesn't do that. And he doesn't rehearse all the times that he's been disappointed by people in the past. No. He doesn't respond in the ways that we so often respond, right? He immediately implements the advice.

[33 : 07] Now, what makes Moses so ready to receive Jethro's help? Well, I think the reason is because Moses has already known and received an even greater help.

You see, Moses knew what it was like to try to do it on his own and fail. That's what caused him to flee to Egypt in chapter 2.

Do you remember that? He tries to enact some rescue of his people in his own strength and it goes all wrong and he has to flee. And that's what landed him in Midian where he met Jethro in the first place.

Moses knew that he needed God's help above all. And he also knew that he had received God's help. God had rescued him from Pharaoh.

God had brought him out of his listless existence in the wilderness. How do we know that that theme was so deep in Moses' heart and mind?

[34 : 18] Well, look at verse 4 of chapter 18. What we find there is that Moses has named one of his sons in verse 4 Eliezer which literally means God is my help.

And friends, you don't name your kid something unless it has a really deep meaning for you. Moses was a man who knew he needed help and had received it from the Lord.

And isn't this something that's true of us too? Because the gospel tells us that we are sinners and we need a savior.

And that means that if we really get the gospel of grace in our bones then we know and we can admit at the most profound level that we need help and we need rescue.

But we also know that we've been sent the ultimate help in Jesus Christ. He did what we could not do for ourselves.

[35 : 28] He died in our place on the cross for our sins so we could be forgiven. He rose again in triumph over death so that we might never fear the future. Christ went up on the hill and his hands were pinned for us so that we could be redeemed.

and when our hearts receive that help that Christ offers through repentance and faith then that opens up to us all the means whereby God continues to help us.

You see when we know that we need help from the very start in the gospel then we become susceptible for help wherever it comes and we're ready to receive it. And as we see in this passage in Exodus 17 and 18 that most help often comes in the form of other people.

After all God could have directly revealed to Moses the need for able men to divide the labor. Right? Zap! He could have just uploaded it right into his brain like Neo in the Matrix. Bam! We need more elders.

God doesn't do it that way. Instead he reveals it through Jethro. God could have supernaturally hoisted Moses' arms in the air but he doesn't.

[36 : 43] Instead he sends Aaron and Hur to hold up his arms. And friends it's going to be the same for us. So often the spiritual help that we need will come from other people.

And when our hearts are resting in the help of Christ when we see ourselves as fundamentally needy and fundamentally graced and accepted in Christ we'll be ready to receive his help even in the form of another person.

and you know it works the other way too. Getting a hold of Christ not only opens us up to receive help it also opens us up to give help as well.

After all if Christ has done all that to help me surely then I can turn and help others. If the king of glory would humble himself and stoop to be my helper how could I not freely and gladly offer whatever help I have to serve others?

You see united to Christ our hearts start to change from self-reliance and self-absorption to humble joyful service. Friends in conclusion imagine what it would be like if that was the dynamic of our body life together.

[38 : 15] What if Trinity were a place where there was real help where you were seen and you were known and where people showed up and where people prayed and where people helped and where people were willing to step out and do costly service for one another and take on responsibility for the sake of the life of the body.

Friends would that not unleash a kind of spiritual energy in our midst that would be contagious not just in our body but in our city? What would that be like?

As we go to the table this morning Christ reminds us here of the ultimate help that he has given us and let's pray that God would make us willing as we receive the bread and the cup to both give and receive the help we need as we journey in Christ together.

Let's pray. Our Father we confess that we need help and we give you great thanks that in Jesus you have given us that and here in the family of the church you've given us the possibility and by your spirit the reality of really doing spiritual good to one another in the name of Christ.

Lord help us to see our need and help us to extend the help and use the gifts that you've given us so that we might be built up in love. We pray this Father in Jesus name.

[39 : 47] Amen.