



Wisdom & Maturity 8

Taking Comfort in God's Expressions of Grace

Pastor Mike Fabarez

When we see these babies up here on the stage, we think about the hope and the future of these kids. We think about it. We envision it. We pray for it. But all of us along the way, we get to the place where I trust you're at, where you think not only about your life and where it's been, but your life and where it's going. And you think about the end of life and you think about the fact that every one of us, as the Bible says, it's "appointed once for a man to die." And then comes the judgment. And you think about the reality of that and that's a sobering thought.

And I trust that many of you here, as you have understood the gospel, you've understood the doctrine of grace, you know that as you stand before your maker one day, the thing you're going to need is his grace. If you're going to be saved from the penalty of your sin, if you are to be saved from judgment, the Bible is very clear that it's "by grace that you're saved through faith. It's not of yourselves, it's a gift of God, not as the result of works so that no one should boast." I mean, this is one of the first verses we teach these kids so that they understand that salvation can't be earned. It's something that God grants and gifts to us.

So I guess in a way, if you think about what you're going to need on the day you meet your maker, you're certainly going to need grace. You're going to need to be encapsulated in grace and clothed in grace. You're going to need to be, as Paul said to the Galatians, "clothed in Christ." I trust that many of you know that, you can nod at that, and you wouldn't speak like Michael Bloomberg, for instance, the former mayor of New York City who was being interviewed. I read this article in Bloomberg and it was an interview from The New York Times. They sat him down talking about the end of life as he gets older, he's nearing, you know, the octogenarian age now. And he was asked about the afterlife and he said, "Well, if there is a God and if there is a heaven, I'm telling you, I'm going to get there. And when I get to heaven, I'm not going to be stopped by an interview. I'm going to head straight in. I have earned my place in heaven. It's not even close."

So I think most of you with some understanding of our need for grace and you've been clearly taught by the Scripture that you can't earn your way in there to have someone say that so blatantly. Right? "I'm heading straight in. I've earned my place in heaven. It's not even close." You would gasp at that, as many of you did. It's appalling. But I wonder as wrong as we can look at that politician and say you have no idea what you're talking about, I just wonder if the angels look at us and think, well, you have no idea what you're talking about when you think about your life in this age.

In other words, we know that when we get to the threshold of the next life we think wow we need God's grace. I just wonder how much you think you need God's grace today, this week. God's grace, his favor that he gives us that we don't deserve, the unmerited blessing and acceptance of God. We say we're saved because Christ has done something for us that we could not do for ourselves. And God has granted us this. It is a gift of God. It's not your own



doing. And you say, "Well, I believe that I need grace on that day." I just wonder, how about this week? How about tomorrow? When you wake up on the other side you know you need grace. When you wake up tomorrow morning I just wonder how much you think you need grace.

I know you've heard the phrase and it's become a saying, I hear, especially around church every now and then when I ask someone how are you're doing, that's kind of the expression, "How are you doing? How are you doing?" And some of you will say, "Better than I deserve." I'm not knocking that. I'm saying you're absolutely right, man. 100%. You are better than you deserve. And by saying that what you're trying to do, I trust, not just echo some popular, you know, radio broadcast, but you think about the fact that I know that what I have right now, what I experience right now is grace. It's unmerited, it's unearned, because if I got what I deserved, I wouldn't be living the life I'm living right now.

Now think about that. We're going to live in eternity that we know we don't deserve. There's one day you're going to say that when you have a clarity about that. I know I'm not getting what I deserve. But right now I wonder, do you think you're getting what you deserve, even if you use that saying sometimes, I'm better than I deserve? I 100% agree. But I think it can be just a response and a set of words that we don't know quite the profundity of. If I ask you the question, well, then what do you deserve? What do you deserve right now? What do you deserve today? What do you deserve this week? See, it takes a very robust doctrine of sin to be able to say, I'm not living right now the life that I deserve. I know I deserve far worse.

It takes some clear doctrine of grace to be able to say, I know that I will not be, as Michael said, heading straight in, I've earned my place. It's not even close. I hope you recognize, well, I know that's not true. God is holy, I'm a sinner and we all fall short of the glory of God. How far do we fall short? Really? I mean, the most accurate thing Michael Bloomberg said was not even close. You're right. It's not even close. But it's not in the way you're thinking. You don't measure up. It's not even close. There will be an interview, it's not "I'm not going to get interviewed." It's called the Judgment. Your life's going to be evaluated and it's not going to be based on some scales that are going to say, well, how good were you? Because, of course, Bloomberg thinks he's a really good person.

So it's not even going to teeter. That's way better. But if I asked him, like, let's talk about your life. How about the girl that you're presently living with who's not your wife to use a John 4 expression of Jesus and the woman at the well. Do you want to talk about your sin? "Well, yeah, but it's outweighed by the good that I do." But we know it doesn't matter. We fall so short of the glory of God we need God's grace in the next life. And I'm asking you right now how much grace do you need to get through the rest of today? And do you really believe that? I just wonder if the angels look at us sometimes and think about our thoughts about, "Well, I worked really hard. I should get that promotion. You know, I've exercised and eaten well and I don't understand why I got sick. You know, I've done right in this company. I don't know why I'm not getting promoted." And we think I've done this, I deserve that. And we think in ways that angels would gasp at, the way you gasp as you think about the next life.



We've got to recalibrate our thinking about the greatness of God, the undeserving nature of people like you and me to not just enter into heaven, but to live on this earth and have what we would often call the common grace of God, which is hardly common at all. Because if anyone doesn't deserve the daily things that we do have that are blessings to us, "every good and perfect gift comes from God," not our planning, not our intelligence, not our own greatness, our intuition or whatever. We don't get the credit to be able to say, I'm going to rush right into this next blessing of life because I deserve it.

I'd like to help with this kind of thinking. I'm going to do it from a passage that would seem strange. At first blush you read it and you think, I don't see what this has to do with it. Well try to follow along in this passage with me as we continue in our series on Wisdom and Maturity. What I'm trying to get to here in this introduction is you're going to need some wisdom and maturity to think like this about your own life. And I'm saying it's accurate. It takes a robust doctrine of sin. It takes a clear vision of the greatness of God, and it will lead you to embrace the doctrine of grace in a way perhaps you never have. And I think we can gather all of that from this passage in Acts Chapter 20 verses 7 through 16, which is at the end of our series on wisdom and maturity. I want to talk about us understanding the expressions of God's grace, not just on that day, but on this day.

So turn there with me if you're not already in this passage and let's look at what happens here in a scene that I assume most of you have heard before about a guy named Lucky. That's his name, Lucky. Eutychus. It's a Greek word, but Eutychus means lucky. And if you read this verse at least through verse 9, you're going to say he didn't seem very lucky on this day because Paul is preaching in the city of Troas. And let's pick up the story in verse 7. He'd spent a week there and he's getting in one more Sunday at this church when it says in verse 7, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread," probably included the Lord's Supper and what was called the love feast, the communal meal and all of that, "and Paul talked with them." Now, that's not the word "preached," but it is a word where you got him at the front and he's just discussing, he's answering questions. He's teaching from the truth of what God has revealed to him as an apostle, and he "intended to depart on the next day."

So he's leaving. This is his last chance to address this church at Troas, which, by the way, isn't as big as Ephesus. But still, some historians say in the first century it was already cracking over 100,000 people at Troas. So it's a big city and probably plenty of Christians here listening to the Apostle Paul and he knew he was going to leave them, so he prolonged his speech until, bottom of verse 7, what's the word? "Midnight." You think I preach for a long time. Midnight. "And there were many lamps." Of course, you're going to need that from sunset until midnight you're going to have to light the lamps, those oil lamps are going to burn. Matter of fact, this is a big word that was used of the same things that were carried into the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. They were translated there "torches."

So this is a big room. It's a big upper room. And it's filled with these torches that were lit, probably fueled by oil. And you can imagine just if you were to even light some things in your own house to keep it lit, you're going to have all of that heading up, as it does into the top



regions of this place where Paul is preaching "and a young man named" Lucky, verse 9, "Eutychus, was sitting in the window." So he's on the windowsill. "He sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer," Luke adds, and it seems like Luke's getting in a little bit of a jab here. But Paul is going on and on. Eutychus, it says a young man, by the way, in verse 12, you see the word "youth." Now, the best we can understand about this word that would be employed for a young person is not a kid like a child, like a five-year-old. He's probably a 10 to 12-year-old. That would be the appropriate use of this vocabulary word here. So picture that. He's 10, 12, maybe 13 years old. And he's sitting there in the windowsill.

He falls into a deep sleep as Paul just goes on and on in this discourse "and being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead." Now, you've heard this story before. You've read the story before. You know where it's going. But let's just stop right here at verse 9 and say, what would that be like? We're a big enough church. We have enough going on here all weekend that I'd say two, three times a year we have some kind of medical event and sometimes you'll walk out and there's going to be paramedics and fire trucks out there and we got someone who had some kind of medical crisis. But if that medical crisis took place in our church, in the church service, and someone actually expired. Right? That would be a day you'd remember at church.

It happened at our church, the church I grew up in a couple scenes like that. I had one near-death situation that I was in and one where the guy actually died at the church. These things you don't forget, this is like huge and dramatic. You can imagine. I remember the one my wife and I were there as teenagers watching this play out as a kid got hit by a car right out in front of the church. And it was horrific. I mean, they were all a part of our church. The guy who hit the kid, the kid, the dad. And everyone was yelling and screaming. It was chaos. It was pandemonium. And you can imagine scooping up the lifeless body of a child, a 10-year-old, a 12-year-old, and hearing the moaning and the wailing of the like, "We came here to church and a child is dead." That's a big deal. That's a big deal.

So let that sink in for a minute before you go on to verse 10. This was a day at church that no one would forget. Not only because we know it turns into this miracle, but that scene alone. And by the way, not to throw this kid or his mother under the bus, but it's probably not the best place to be sitting. Right? Especially when the sermon is going on and on and on knowing what's happened. I'm just saying, if you, I would assume Orange County parents, you're going to see your kid up on that windowsill and say, "Get down, get off of there." Right? This is a dangerous place to sit. And it is about the 10, 12-year-olds who will do stuff that is risky and unnecessarily dangerous. Am I right? So there is a little folly here in this. I'm not saying, oh, wow, the kid deserved to get tossed out the window. But I am saying it wasn't very smart. And here we have death. And it enters the congregation at Troas.

Now, verse 10, "Paul goes down and bent over him." Now you can imagine the crowd. This kid goes out, and even if it was just started slowly, like only a few people saw his sandals flip off, you know, as he heads down outside, people are going, it's soon everyone's going to be rushing down these two flights of stairs to get down. And Paul the leader, so he knows, he's not first there, but he comes there and he bent down. "He went down and bent over him, and



taking him in his arms, he said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." Now, you can read that text and think, oh, you guys just didn't know he's really alive here. That's not what's happening here. And we know that because, I mean, lots of reasons. Let's start with the big picture.

There's so much correspondence here, and I'm not saying this is necessary in the book of Acts, but so much correspondence here to the prophets of the Old Testament. Elijah and Elisha have similar situations take place almost eerily parallel to some of the things that are happening there in terms of them being the agents of restoring life. And there are only a few. I mean you can count them on two hands, less than two hands, of the situations where life is resuscitated from real death. One of them, by the way, is in the first half of the book of Acts in Chapter 9. Peter, who's the key figure in the first half, the Apostle Peter, he raises, you might remember, Tabitha, a.k.a. Dorcas, to life. Remember that? And it's like there was no mistaking she was dead. They had already cleaned her body, wash her body. They were preparing her body for the grave. And Peter comes in and raises her from the dead.

In the second half of the book now we have the shift from Peter to Paul. So the Apostle Peter, second half of the book, the Apostle Paul. I mean, this is really the key figures are the acts of the Apostle Peter, acts of the Apostle Paul. Of course, others too. But that's the key. And now we have again, just like Elijah and Elisha in the Old Testament, we have another resurrection. And it's a big deal. It's a big deal because much like we saw in the Old Testament as the school of the prophets was assembled under Elijah and Elisha, we have the writing of the Old Testament. I mean, Moses unique starting that just like we had the gospels unique starting with Christ. But then we have the prophets being laid out in the Old Testament and the affirmation from God, the miraculous affirmation from God with miraculous signs, a rash of them with Elijah and Elisha in particular, the two big things of resurrection. And then you have two resurrections in the book of Acts through these two key apostles, Peter and Paul, the apostle to the Jews, the apostle to the Gentiles.

So there are lots here that we would expect that this isn't just well, I want to read here that he went down, he did CPR, chest compressions, and he wasn't really dead or whatever. He was dead. And yet he's saying now as he gets up from this, "Hey, stop with the pandemonium. Stop with the yelling. Stop with the grief. Dry your eyes. The kid is alive." "His life is in him." Verse 11, "And when Paul had gone up and broken bread and eaten." Right? Okay. Is that the Lord's Supper? Is that the meals at the potluck that was extended past midnight? I'm not sure. But he's going to eat. And "he conversed with them a long while until daybreak." So his preaching wasn't quite finished yet, interrupted by a little resurrection. But now he continues on until morning he's preaching, this guy, right? I mean, you don't want this guy as your pastor it seems. He's preaching endlessly all the time.

"And they took away the youth alive." And here's a weird way to put it. "They were not a little comforted." In other words, they were massively comforted. That word "comfort," by the way, if you got your software out or you got your Greek New Testament open, is the same word we were looking at as the centerpiece of last week's sermon. The word encouragement, "Parakaleo" means "encouragement." "Para" means "alongside" or "next to," "kalao" means



"to call in." And we talked about the fact that people need to be encouraged and "all the more as we see the Day drawing near," we need to encourage one another. We need that strengthening.

Well, one time you need strength is when someone is falling down in grief over the loss of their child or someone in the church, there would be a lot of wet eyes in this congregation if someone died here this morning, some 10-year-old died. And now they are massively, not a little, but massively comforted, the same word. It's why the English translators here putting the word comfort for us. Not a bad translation. So why isn't it encouraged? Because it seems weird in our English parlance of the word encouragement to say encouraged. It's like they were just strengthened. No, but it's the same concept. But in grief, man, if you ever need comfort, if you ever need encouragement, it's when you're grieving like that. And how are they comforted? By the fact that the story that was tragic is now amazing. He's alive. Amazing.

Well, then we have all this information, and maybe that little map will help you there. It's not a great map, because it's small. But if you look at what's next, we're going to sail back to Jerusalem. That's where we start in verse 13. "But going on ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos." Assos is the port city. They're going to pick up supplies. They're going to do whatever they're going to do there in that port city. But we remember Luke now is back in the scene from Philippi forward. He's back in this speaking in first-person plural pronouns. We picked up at least seven names last week we looked at in the first six verses of Acts.

So we got a big group. We learned from Second Corinthians Chapter 8, he's bringing a gift that he collected through the Macedonian and Achaian churches and even in the Asian churches to bring to Jerusalem because of the terrible famine and all that was going wrong there. They were bringing a financial gift. And so you'd think, okay, we got everything packed, we got the money chest packed, we got all the supplies packed, we just got to stop in Assos and so they were "intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land." Now, that's a weird statement. That's mysterious. We're going to get on a ship and we're going to leave. We're going to get going because you needed to get back to Jerusalem. That was the plan. And now you're going to start walking? What are you talking about?

Verse 14. "And when he met us at Assos," and it's hard to see on the map because it's really small but this kind of peninsula section of modern-day Turkey in Asia Minor, he walks across, which is a distance as the crow flies of about 20 miles. But the roads, the ancient Roman roads that are still there, parts of them at least that are uncovered, some are preserved perfectly and intact as Roman roads were built so well, is about a 31-mile trek from Troas to Assos. And so he ends up meeting them there. Everyone else gets on the ship. He goes by foot. Or maybe he rented a camel or something or a donkey or a mule. "We took him on board then, and we went to Mitylene. And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we went to Samos; and the next day we went on to Miletus. For Paul had decided to set sail past Ephesus," verse 16, "so that he might not have to spend time in Asia." Well, that's mean.

Well, here's the thing. He spent three years in Ephesus. He had so many friends there, so much experience there. He thought, if I stop here, I'm going to be stuck here for a while. I mean, everyone's going to have to have me over for dinner. And I preach long sermons and it's just going to be... It's just going to take forever. So we're just going to pass this spot and we're going to go on to my leaders. But why? Because "he's hastening to get to Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." And just for a little footnote, historically, probably because it was one of the feast days of Israel, Pentecost was. It was one of the feast days that was required by the Jews to bring an offering and they brought them not only for the temple, but they brought them for the poor. This was a key time for giving alms.

Now, Paul's concerned with the Christians, of course, and he's going to help the church and the Christians in Jerusalem who are suffering through this famine. But he is bringing a gift of alms, of giving to the poor, from the churches in the rich regions there in Asia Minor and Achaia and Macedonia in modern-day Greece. And he's going to bring that money and he's probably thinking now I can also appeal to whoever can in the pilgrimage feast. They're coming from all over the place, from Alexandria, from Syria. They're going to come and bring their alms. I'm going to take the Christians there and maybe have them give and add to this, and then I can distribute it to the poor Christians in Jerusalem, probably, whatever. I'm speculating there but that makes sense why he wants to get there by Pentecost.

He's no longer going to celebrate those festivals the way he would have as a Jew. Maybe he was even just coming to celebrate the birth of the Church, whatever. That was his intention so he goes. The weird thing about it is why would you walk 20, 30 miles? And we'll look at that when we get there. And I think all of this will help us tie this theme together. And the theme together is us understanding our need for grace. I think you would need grace and you'd know you'd need grace, you would palpably know you need grace if someone who you love died today. You would say, "Oh God, have mercy me, be gracious to me." And the ultimate encouragement would be if the person who died is really not dead, they come back to life. Now, that would be a miracle. That would not be expected. That's the thing that happened very rarely in Scripture, about seven of them in all of the Bible and even the healings, very rare. We have 14 instances of healing descriptions in the book of Acts. A lot of sick people who never got healed all throughout Asia Minor, all throughout the map of the book of Acts. So that's not common.

But if God were to reverse something like that, that would be like, wow, that's a massive encouragement and I would be encouraged by that gift of grace. Because here's the thing. Here's what God promised. That we as human beings, because we are sinful, we are all going to be subject to death. Romans Chapter 5 explains that, the foundation of that is Genesis Chapter 3, "The wages of sin is death." We know that from the book of Romans Chapter 6, Chapter 3, the idea of us dying. We know that's going to happen. You can die at 12, you can die at 22, you can die at 102. But we're all subject to death. That's the plan. For God to reverse that at any point when there's something either through a foolish mistake, an accident, or whatever it might be, that's an amazing act of grace. You would say if your 10-year-old died and then all of a sudden was alive two hours later, you'd say, "What an amazing gift to grace." And I trust you'd be encouraged by that.

But here's the deal. That's the most extreme need for you saying, "Oh, God, I need help, I need grace, I need your favor. Fix this." There are a million other things between a normal, great day, a normal, great Sunday and the tragedy of a death in your family. Big, big difference. And I'm just saying, let's just think of everything in between that should help us to remember that there's a lot going on in our lives that we would say, I need God's favor or it could be far worse. Let's get back to our little thing that people say. If I say, "How are you?" You say, "I'm better than I deserve." I'm thinking, what do you deserve? And here's what I'm trying to get us to understand. There are a lot of things that happen and we do them. Let's think about moral decisions. "If we sow to the flesh," the Bible says, here's the law, "we reap from the flesh corruption." If we do what is wrong, there's a consequence for that. The ultimate consequence is death.

Let's go back in our minds to Acts Chapter 5. Ananias and Sapphira watched Barnabas give money and everyone applauds him and they think, "Man, that guy's generous." So they come in and conspire to sell a piece of property and pretend they sold it for a particular price, which they didn't. And so they lie. They lie by leaving out some of the truth. They are deceptive so that they can bolster their reputation. And do you know what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Chapter 5? They both died and everyone like fear fell over the congregation it said. Well, of course it did. Why? Because everyone in the congregation has lied. Everyone in the congregation probably could look back at the last week and say, "We tried to promote our reputation in some small way at least, maybe in a conversation. And we know that wasn't right. That's all they did kind of on a bigger scale, and they did it to the pastor. So I don't know, I'm feeling like afraid." Why? Because "the wages of sin is death."

Talk about Nadab and Abihu. Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, they had this prescription of how they're supposed to do the things they're supposed to do on the worship platform in the tabernacle with the altar and they didn't do it. They burned unauthorized fire before the Lord. And what did God do? He struck them dead. "The wages of sin is death." And the reality of that most people don't comprehend, but you as Christians, knowing you need the grace of God for judgment day, you should know that really, if God were to give us justice, if we were to get what we were to deserve, if we were to get what we are deserving of getting, we would not have a great afternoon. Am I right? That's the reality. I need grace now as much as I need grace then. Because there are hard edges to truth and truth says that if we do this, there's a consequence for that.

And God, even in the Garden, when Adam and Eve took that piece of fruit and they ate it when they weren't supposed to, "in the day you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in that day you shall surely die." But they didn't die, not physically die, but they lost some privileges. Things got harder. Their relationship with God was strained. Think about that. That relational death may have taken place, but their death now began, including the death of their bodies, the death of the Garden, getting kicked out of the Garden, the ground producing thorns and thistles, their bodies getting sick. Think about this now. Everything got harder. And it got harder and what they needed along the way if they were ever going to survive, which they did back in that day, prior to the flood for almost a thousand years. And all



of that was punctuated by God's sustaining grace, "In him we live and move and have our being." "He gives us life and breath and everything else." In Christ all things consist.

Now, if we think about that, what we deserve is something far less than what we have. And if you think about even the decisions that you've made, if the Bible says you shouldn't lust in your heart and you have, if the Bible says you shouldn't gossip and you have, if the Bible says you shouldn't steal and you have, if the Bible says you shouldn't lie and you have. And if that's going on you should go, "Wow, If I'm living here, having broken many of God's rules, doing what is wrong, and I'm still sitting here thinking about what I'm going to do for lunch today," then you're living in the grace of God, right? There's a lot going on in your life that is good.

And I just need you to know in the world in which we live, we have a world that's pushing against what God has said to do. We have an enemy, Satan, who is about death and destruction. "He comes to steal, kill and destroy" And our bodies, we have a part of our body called our flesh, right? This impulse of selfishness to do wrong. It's the constant thing, baiting us into taking the temptation. And so we're constantly in every way affected by culture, the world, affected by our own impulses of sin, our flesh and we got an enemy that's out there messing things up and tempting us all week long. The reality of those things, you think if I engage in any of that, thinking like the world, giving in to fleshly desires, which the Bible says none of us is without sin, First John 2, "We all stumble in many ways," James Chapter 3. If this is a reality and we're still around thinking about how we're going to spend our vacation that's an amazing thing.

You're living in grace and you need to, number one, "Expect a Continual Need for Grace." We never abuse that. But number one, you ought to think that through that we should, as Christians in a fallen world, in a fallen body, making some dumb decisions, sometimes foolish, sometimes folly, sometimes rebellion against our Father. You just need to know, you need grace, you need God to be kind. You need God, to quote Psalm 103, "to not reward us according to our iniquities." And when he doesn't reward us according to our iniquities, what happens? We're living in grace. We get God's grace.

Now, people struggle with that because, well, if I'm getting God's grace, I'll just sin. Well, listen, you're not always going to get God's grace. Ask Nadab and Abihu or Ananias and Sapphira, or many other people who have done things they should not have done and they've paid in some big way. And it happens a lot. And I'm just saying that we need to be the kinds of Christians who say I cannot think with a presumption that I should get whatever it is I work for, whatever it is I plan for, because, you know, I'm a pretty good guy. Job was a pretty good guy. Would you agree with that? Not only is he a pretty good guy, God said he's an outstanding guy, comparatively better than his neighbors. Just like Daniel, better than the other people. Just like Noah, better than his neighbors. Just like Abraham, better than his neighbors. They're all flawed. They're all sinful, but they're better.

So they're not good in an absolute sense. But they are good and righteous in a comparative sense. And God says, "Hey, have you considered my servant Job?" He says that to Satan. And Satan goes, "Oh, he only loves you because you're being nice to him, he only loves you



because you're giving him all that stuff." Now, here's one thing Job understood as he sacrificed as the patriarchal priest of his family. This is obviously before the Levitical law. He was there sacrificing and you did that as an act of understanding that you were a sinner. Matter of fact, he sacrificed for his children because he knew his children were sinners, so they might have even sin in their hearts, "some I don't even know about. So I'm going to try to plead and intercede before God, the holy God, for my sinful children and my sinful life."

And so he understands grace. If there's one thing Job understands is grace. And everything goes wrong. God then takes his children who he knows are sinners, he knows that, and the house comes and collapses on top of them all and a servant comes in and says, "Your kids are all dead." I just want you to think about that. When you say I'm better than I deserve that your kids are all alive, you're like I'm better than I deserve. Do you really know what you're saying? Think about it. I think Job knew what he was saying. Do you know who didn't understand what he was saying? His wife. Let's look at that. Job Chapter 2. His wife did not understand. Let's exonerate the husbands here for a second on Father's Day.

Job understood it. His wife did not. And his wife thought, like most of us think, including the men in the room, we think this way, "I am doing better than other people. I deserve the good stuff." And we think that, we don't say it out loud very often if we're good in our theology. And yet the reality is when the bad things happen, we think, why are bad things happening to good people? Right? You've heard that.

Well, look at what his wife says, Job Chapter 2, drop down to verse 9. His wife says to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity?" It's a bit of a rhetorical statement, like "why in the world are you doing that? Why? I mean, why would you keep doing good if the good isn't paying off? Think about it. You're so concerned about whether or not God is pleased with your children. Your children just died. You keep trying to do the right thing and you think, you know, I want to serve the Lord and please the Lord and you do all the stuff that you do and yet here you are sick. I don't understand that."

But here's the idea in his mind that she doesn't get. And that is "I don't understand why you keep being good. I don't get it. There just doesn't seem to be any reward in it." Well, I do think that Job understood grace. She didn't. She thinks you should be mad at God, "Curse God and die." Just give it up. Stop. Just give it up, check out and you should be mad at God. He said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak." There's an archaic, ancient way to say it, but there it is. You're being ridiculous. Why? Because he understands something. What does he understand? "Shall we receive good from God?" Now, look at that phrase.

There is something Job understood. He could be comparatively better than his neighbors but he knows he's better than he deserves. He knows that. So he's getting good from God. Here's a word to describe that - grace. He knows he's getting grace because as a sinner he knows he should be cast into outer darkness away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power to quote what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. That's what he should deserve. But he knows I'm not. I may be better than my neighbors if he even thinks in those terms



comparatively. But the reality is, I know I don't deserve the good that I have and God has given me good. That's grace. "Shall I receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Because here's what he understood about the evil. "The wages of sin is death." I understand this: "you sow to the flesh you reap from the flesh corruption." I know I may not have indulged in the flesh as much as my friends have or the people in the neighborhood. But I understand this. It's gravy and grace to have the life that I have. And here's God's divine commentary on that, bottom of verse 10. In all of this, Job was kind of thinking in crazy terms. No. "Job did not sin with his lips." He was saying the right things. Now, what we know, because when we get to Chapter 3, we know some things are brewing in his mind and he ends up trying to shake his fist at God. So we see this all deteriorate. But the idea in his mind as he says this, at least the words are coming out and God is saying, this is it. He's got it. He understands it. He didn't sin with his words here.

He doesn't accuse God of being wrong because God, if he took the whole world, including your life and your family and your health and wadded it all up and threw it in the trash, God would be perfectly just in that. Because we are all sinners living in a sinful culture under, as it says in Second Corinthians 4:4, the lordship of Satan, the god of this world, he's doing his mess here. First John 5, he's out there "and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." And we now, even as Christians proclaiming Christ and trusting in the finished work of Christ, in our flesh we continue to sin. I mean, we don't sin like we used to perhaps, but you and I can think honestly about our sin and we would never talk like Michael Bloomberg. Right? We know that. And so we realize this. We need grace every single day.

You are, in fact, better than you deserve. And I am better than I deserve. And I know that takes a robust doctrine of sin and depravity for me to get to that place. But we got to get to that place because when the kid falls out of the upper window and death comes to our day and it's coming, it's going to happen, someone you love is going to die. It could happen this week, next week you're going to get diagnosed with some cancer. You're going to get some brain tumor or something is going to go wrong in your body or some terrible things are going to happen to your business or you're going to lose your home or something horrible is going to happen to your relationships. It's going to happen. And for you to continue to say I'm still better than I deserve can be a hard thing to say.

One more passage on this and then I'll back off just a little bit. Lamentations Chapter 3. Lamentations. That's not a happy book. Lamentations. It's a lament. And Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. But in the middle of this, in Chapter 3, here's the centerpiece of this book. It's an acrostic poem in Hebrew and he's talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and how sad everybody is and all the best of Jerusalem is being hauled off to Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar and his armies have just wreaked havoc in the land. And in Lamentations Chapter 3 dropped down to verse 19. I hope some familiar words to you. He says, "Remember my affliction and my wanderings." Okay.

Even if we think about it corporately, the first person plural "my" like our affliction and our wanderings. The reality of Israel being taken captive by Babylon was that they had been



warned a million times. The prophets had come and said, "Stop with your idolatry, stop with your compromise, stop with your selfishness. You're not keeping God's rules. You don't care about God. Stop. Or there's going to be judgment here. You're going to sow and you're going to reap." And the wanderings of their moral life certainly had led to their affliction. How bad was it? Well, now they're sitting there in the detritus city of Jerusalem had been torn down by the armies. And it's like "wormwood and gall!" They're drinking poison. It's gross. "My soul continually remembers it and it is bowed down within me."

Now, the humility of knowing I know we deserve this. I know we're getting what we deserve. I know we have no promises of prosperity. We really as human beings, are fallen. Right? We should have way worse than we have. We are humble. "But this I call to mine, and therefore I will have hope." How? Why? What? What are you going to think? Verse 22, "The steadfast love," the covenant love, the love of God that he sets on us and doesn't remove even when we're bad, right? "It never ceases; his mercies." You know what that means, right? I'm laying off what you deserve. I'm not giving you the full vent of your sin here that you deserve that "never come to an end; they are new every morning."

If you're singing the lament of Jeremiah, you still have something here. You've got life and you've got breath. Even though you've lost your property, you've lost your family. Some of your family's been taken slaves by Babylon. "They're new every morning." God is faithful. He continues in his covenant love to be faithful to the people and it doesn't feel as good and a lot of your privileges are gone. But "'The Lord, I'm going to make him my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I'm going to hope in him.' The Lord is good to those who wait for him." Just wait, be faithful, bow your head down and accept the reality of your sin. I get that. Have that "soul who seeks him." To the soul that seeks him the Lord is good. "It is good that one should wait quietly," and humbly, not shaking their fist at God, not cursing God, "for the salvation of the Lord." That picture of knowing in the midst of suffering that God is still going to give us good that some of you, because we're not seeing apostles raise the dead here in this age, I hope you understand, God gives grace even in the terrible situation.

I was just reading a book about a professor of theology who was driving down a road at night after a play with his mother, his wife and his kids, and they got hit by a drunk driver. And the mother, his mother, his wife and his daughter of, what, eight or nine years old, all of them died in that car accident. He was there in the strewn bodies in the ditch trying to bring them back to life. And they all died. Right? Mouth to mouth, everything he did, he couldn't save them. He writes a book about the grief. It's interesting because the book's called *The Disguised Grace* because he sees the grace of God, even in the midst of the loss that he's experienced. And one of the chapters which we would have titled "Why Me?" he titles "Why Not Me?" Right? I mean, there's something there about that.

There's something that helps to recalibrate. Now, wait a minute. I understand the world is filled with death and pain and violence and drunkenness and problems and all the issues. And I'm just thinking, I've got to get this in perspective. Did he love his wife? He cherished his wife. They were married for over 20 years. Did he love his mother? Of course, he loved his mother. He loved his mother. Right? I mean, of course. And he lost them all in one accident in one



day. And all I'm telling you is there's something about even in the midst of pain, God being able to give us that grace. You're going to need his grace every day to get through every challenge of life. And a lot of it we're contributing to. A lot of it are decisions we're making that are foolish. A lot of the things that we do even contribute to it and should be far worse. But we are better than we deserve.

Back to our passage. That was way too long on that topic. But I want to get you ready for what's coming here. Verse 10, Paul bends over, leans down, goes down, bends over this kid, takes him in his arms, says, "Don't be alarmed, for his life is in him." So here is a resurrection that takes place. This kid is resuscitated to life. Now he later dies, but he's risen here. "Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them." I'm sure they're talking a lot about what had just happened, obviously. He had eaten bread, "conversed for a long time until daybreak." I mean, it would be hard to go to sleep, I would think. "And so departed. And they took the youth away alive," and they were massively encouraged, they were massively comforted, "and were not a little comforted." They went away going, wow, that was a gift of God.

And there's a lot that should happen in our lives that does not happen. And when it does not happen, we ought to take notice of that. And we should be encouraged by that. We should take comfort in that. Let's put it that way. Number two, we should "Take Comfort in God's Gracious Gifts." Now, we're probably not going to have a resurrection in the congregation this week, I would say. I can safely prognosticate that. But here's the deal. There's going to be a lot of little resurrections of some kind. There's going to be something. There is going to be some little thing that happens that you say, "Well, there is an act of God's grace, there's a gift of God, there's a restraint of evil in my life. There's a pulling back of something that I know should happen or could happen or would happen or has happened to a lot of other people. But to me today, it's not happening. It's a grace of God. My marriage continues, my house I still live in, my body is still functioning, my lungs are still oxygenating my blood. God is good."

We need to see those gifts and recognize that God is in those gifts. And you ought to say there is some encouragement. There's comfort. Now, that can be hard when it's difficult. But I'll tell you, it's like that analogy that Jesus gave us. I should at least give you the reference. It's found in John Chapter 16 when he says, "When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she's delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born in the world. So also you'll have sorrow now, but when I see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

Now there's a sense in which the joy that they have at seeing the resurrected Christ. That's true. And it settles into a kind of joy that anchors them through all the trials. But the ultimate seeing of Christ that he talked more about than the other was this: I'm coming back with the glory of my Father on the clouds, and I'm going to establish the kingdom of God. You got to pray for it every day, "Your kingdom come." That ought to be our focus. So the time when we see him and he comes back because we're not living there in the first century seeing the resurrected Christ. But now when he comes back and sets up his kingdom, that's the kind of



unmitigated, unending joy that we're going to have, where he wipes away the tears and there is no mourning, no crying, no death. That's the good stuff. And we all agree that that's the good stuff. And when that happens, no one's going to take away your joy. No one. I mean, that's going to be the ultimate fulfillment of that statement. But for now, it's like the pangs of childbirth. It's like contractions.

Now, I just want you to think about this. We touched on this last week "all the more as you see the Day drawing near." What does the Bible say? The forecast is things are going to get worse. It's going to be like the days of Noah. So we're in bad times. And even with our bodies we have that experience, right? More stuff hurts on my body than it's ever hurt in my whole life. I mean, getting old is not fun, right? Yeah, right. So here's the thing. We have this experience of things getting worse until they get better. And I just want you to know it's like the contractions and the thing that gives us hope, even when the contractions get close together, is that we know where this is headed. But the thing about the person who is sitting there in the maternity ward at Saddleback Hospital between contractions getting a drink through the little straw or whatever, eating the ice chips or breathing or holding her husband's hand without yelling or getting their head wiped. There's a respite between the contractions.

And here's the thing. You can tell it's come on, keep going. And we jokingly said in the baby dedications, you know, it was the whole day wasn't fun, but the day was great. Why? Because the baby was born. I want you to think about that. We have this experience of the difficulties. We could even have Nebuchadnezzar's army come in and wipe out our church. But between the times of watching the terrible things of life happen, the respites are God's grace. And we know, even though they seem to be fewer and fewer and far between in terms of the kinds of times when we sit back and we feel that satisfaction of the blessings of God in our life, because a lot of things are going wrong, the outer man's the king, the inner man gets renewed day by day as we focus on what's coming, the birth of the baby, the birth of the kingdom, it's coming.

And so that helps us. But what we got to do is between the struggles we got to look at those gifts of God's grace, whatever they might be. You have a good afternoon, you get a good night's sleep, all of those things that may be decreasing as we get near the end. These are reminders of God's gift. You ought to be encouraged by every single one of them. Take comfort in God's gracious gifts. We've got to realize that. We've got to do that. And there's no passage I love more than Psalm 103 just to make this point. Go there quickly with me. Psalm 103, where David writes to speak to himself, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." He talks to him, his inner person, hey, you got to bless God "and all that is within me." It ought to be sincere. It ought to be wholehearted. "Bless his holy name."

Why? "Bless the Lord, O my soul. And here's the thing that's going to fuel it, "Forget not all his benefits." Does that kind of comport with that second point you just wrote down? His gracious gifts you have to itemize those. You have to remember those. "Well, I didn't have any death sentence that got reversed this week in my child." I understand that. But you had something, a benefit that came from knowing God. How about this? Your sins were not fully dealt with by



the justice of God. "He forgives all your iniquities." Because of your iniquities, "The wages of sin is death," and that hasn't happened.

Matter of fact, as a Christian, you recognize, drop down in this passage. How about this, verse 11, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west," verse 12, "so far does he remove our transgressions from us." Now we know that's a truth that gets us qualified for the kingdom. But look back up to verse 8. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He won't always chide," now he does discipline, "but he won't keep his anger forever." Here's the key. "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor does he repay us according to our iniquities." That's what we deserve. That was point one.

Now look at all the good that takes place. His love, his steadfast love. And it's not only forgiveness, but go back up to the beginning of this. He heals all your diseases. Some say, "Nah, I'm sick, man. I got some chronic thing." I get it. But right now you're sitting here listening to the sermon on Sunday morning, right? And you're oxygenating your blood and you're alive and you probably are going to have some food and it will probably go through your mouth, not some tube in the side of your body. I mean, God is still granting you stuff and he's keeping you going to this day. And not to mention "he's redeemed your life from the pit." You avoided the pit, the grave. Right? There were times that you could have been dead but you're not. "He crowns you with steadfast love and," there's our word, "mercy." Not only that, you've pushed back from the table with a few meals, haven't you? Verse 5, "He satisfies you with good, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." You had those times. "Well, and not as often as they used to be." I get that. But you should be counting every benefit that God gives. "Every good and perfect gift comes from God."

There was a hymn that I used to hear as a kid, and I hated it. I hated it because it was so dorky I thought. It was written in 1897 by a businessman in New Jersey who turned into a preacher and a hymn writer. And it maybe it was the tune, but I just thought it was so silly and just the way it was worded until I started, I became a Christian, and I started studying our need for the very thing here. I've quoted this psalm, I don't know, probably ten times through 35 years of preaching because it just encapsulates the need that we have to do exactly what we're talking about to forget not all of his benefits. Here it is. Maybe you've heard it.

"When upon life's billows," the waves, "you are tempest-tossed," you're in the middle of a storm.

"When you're discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.
Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings and see what God hath done." Have you ever heard the song?
"Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy that you're called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by.



Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God hath done." How about when you're...? But everybody's got a better life than me. And they're not sick and their kids didn't die.
"When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you his wealth untold.
Count your many blessings, money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your Lord on high.
Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God hath done.
So amid the conflict," great line, "So amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend," they'll stand and applaud, "angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.
Count your blessings, name them one by one.
Count your blessings, see what God hath done."

That is what we need. And you've got to attend to the specific realities of what God is doing between the contractions of your pain. And when you say I'm better than I deserve, you need to say that when your business crashes, when your marriage is messed up, and when you have to bury someone in your family. I'm better than I deserve because I can see the hand of God in the midst of my struggle, in the load of my care, in the difficulty of my relationship and the problems with my finances. I can see him and I see that I don't forget his benefits because it brings me that sense of God's favor in my life and I need it.

Now, that's the truth. And you need to know it. We need to expect a continual need for grace. And we live in a sinful world. You continue to sin. We see God's grace and with refraining and not paying you back according to what you deserve. And you are given things that you should say, "Wow, look at that. I should be encouraged that God loves me and continues in his grace to give me these things." And I can say that, you can go to your small groups and you can talk about it, but you're never going to make this a part of your life unless you do one more thing. And I think it's embedded in the next section about Paul's travels. And I could be wrong, but you ask him when you meet him.

But here's the thing. Verses 13 through 16, here's a statement about his plans. "They were going to go ahead to the ship," and everything in my mind, everything in my mind, Luke and the team and everyone else who is with them, it makes complete sense that Paul's going to get on that ship and they're going to go to Jerusalem. Why? Because he's trying to make haste to Jerusalem. Everything makes sense that he's going to get on that ship. "Intending to take Paul aboard there," middle of verse 13. "For he had arranged, intending himself to go by land." What do you mean? He packed a backpack. He rented a mule. "And when," verse 14, "he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene."

Now, if we're going to go and I'm trying to make haste to South America and we're going to take a boat out of Newport Harbor, if I am there and the day you've packed all the stuff, you've gotten everything together, you pack the Bibles for our mission trip or whatever we're



doing. And I say, "Well, I know we're going to stop in Dana Point to get some supplies at the harbor there. I'm going to walk." You're going to think I'm crazy, right? "What? You're going to walk? No, no, no, no. Get on the boat. Get on the boat, Pastor Mike." I say, "Nope. I'm going to walk." Now, that's a weird thing. And my question is why? And every commentator writes a commentary on this and they all ask why. And they come up with fanciful reasons why Paul didn't get on the boat and they're all speculating. And I'm telling you, I'll admit it, I'm speculating as to why. But there's a reason. Paul is not nuts.

There's a reason he's not getting on the boat. And I'm just saying why? Because the commentators go everywhere. I mean, some of them are like, he didn't pack his Dramamine. He's going to get seasick or something. It's like, no. So you asked him if he was seasick. That's not the reason. But here's my guess. It's the guess that I think makes him obedient to what the Scripture continually tells us to do. And it's hard to do when we're with the guys and we're always busy and we're always in the midst of activity. The guy can't even sit there and preach at Troas and be done by 9:00. He's preaching past midnight. And then when all this happens, you think, "Let me get a meal here, I'm going to bed." He's staying up and talking with these people until the morning. What he needs right now is a break. What he needs right now is time by himself.

And you should look this up. Or maybe I should post some things on social media. There is a great section of the Roman Road that still is in place from Troas to Assos. It's a 31-mile trek, and in that 31-mile trek, it's beautiful, it's idyllic. Even today, you can see it and you can see the hills and mountains that would not have changed at all in terms of the topography of it all. And Paul takes this by himself. And I'm thinking, why do you do that? It's a two-day travel, a two-day trip. And of course, that night that he's going to sleep, imagine that night of sleep. He'd been up the night before. He had been the agency of one of two resurrections in the book of Acts. I mean, he's going to get away. Why not sleep on the ship? The guy's getting away.

And here's what I know about when he gets to Miletus and he calls the leaders of the church of Ephesus, he starts talking about things. We're going to call it a series on something like Principles on Leadership or Christian Leadership or something. That's coming up next. I already got the title. I've just forgotten it. I won't forget it when we start preaching. But the next series, like eight sermons on what Paul says to the Ephesian elders. It is going to be hopefully a good, good series of sermons. But here's the deal. He gets around to talking about the fact I know I'm never going to be able to make it back to Ephesus again. And I was in Miletus but they've come and they've traveled, they've met him there to have this discussion.

But he says, I'm going to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, but I know it's going to be change and it will be difficult. But he's writing elsewhere and speaking about this future, and he's doing it with such steeled resolve and courage and commitment. And I can only think that he's thinking about this with such strong, courageous optimism and fearlessness because of what he's just been through. I mean, think about what he just went through, and I think he just needed time. I'm just guessing, we'll find out one day, to do what the Bible says we must do,



and that is we've got to do, here are a couple of words, we need to remember the deeds of the Lord. That's everywhere in the Scripture.

And here's another word that the Eastern religions have ripped off from us, meditate. We're supposed to meditate on the things of the Lord, on the word of God. Meditation is not sitting in some hot yoga class sweating in the corner zeroing out your mind. Meditation is, here's a good synonym in English, to cogitate, to ruminate, to take a truth and to get it in our head, and to continue to soak it up in our minds, to keep our minds very active and keep it focused and undistracted on those things. Right? Paul needed to get on a mule or walk this 31 miles to the next port, even though that made no sense and it was going to be way slower. He did that and he cut across this little peninsula of land in modern-day Turkey.

I think, number three, to "Take Time to Reflect on God's Grace." It steeled him, it encouraged him, it strengthened him, it emboldened him. But it was about the fact that God was going to be gracious TO him, just as he had been gracious THROUGH him in the ministry there in Troas. Now I could be wrong but I know this is a biblical concept because you and I are supposed to be thinking about... How about this one? I'll end with this, turn to Psalm 77 to think about remembering the deeds of the Lord. This is the command that we have, just like Jesus did it, right? He got away. I think of Mark Chapter 1, where they said, "Where were you? We were looking for you." He was apart by himself, spending time alone. Jesus wasn't a recluse. He wasn't antisocial, but he needed time to reflect on his relationship with God the Father. And he needed that sense of even thinking through, gathering wisdom, gathering himself in those situations. And so should we. We need this time to reflect on God's favor on us. That favor makes us strong. It encourages us.

Psalm 77 verse 11. Psalm 77:11. "I will remember the deeds of the Lord." Here's the godly thing Asaph says, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember the wonders of old." Verse 12, "I will ponder all your work." If I'm supposed to not forget any of his benefits, now I'm called here to ponder it, to remember it, to think about it. "I will meditate," there's our word, "on your mighty deeds." I'll ruminate on it. I'll give my mind to it. I'll focus on it undistracted. We got to have that. "Your way, O God is holy." I mean, you're perfect, and I'm not. I need grace. "What god is great like our God? Yet you're the God who works wonders." You've been kind to us. You've stooped to do good things. "You've made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm," look at what you've done to us, "you've redeemed us, your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph." I mean, that's just a great statement of him recognizing, Asaph, recognizing the grace of God upon him and his people. And he says, I'm not going to forget it. I'm going to remember it. I'm going to ponder it. I'm going to meditate on it.

I'm just asking you to take this sermon and not just go, "Oh, that's something, that's true, I should do that." Or go to a small group and say, "Well, let's talk about that." You've got to get by yourself and you've got to ruminate on the things that God does to show you his favor. You're his child. He said he's favoring you. He's been good to you, he's given you gifts that you need to focus on more than the complaining and the moaning and all the stuff that you do to look at the bad stuff. You're looking at all the contractions and you're not looking at the



respite between all that. And even in the difficulty you're not finding the faithfulness of God saying "his mercy is new every morning. Great is his faithfulness." We need a lot more of that than we have. I assign you to that task whether or not that was what Paul was doing, I think it was. But we need to be people who are obedient to Psalm 77:11.

They went to church that day and everyone left encouraged in Troas. It came through a means they never went to church expecting them to be encouraged, right. The resurrection of some 12-year-old kid. But I hope today you go home encouraged that what we have is a life that is enveloped by grace that we do not deserve. We are doing better than we deserve in every way, and we will do better than we deserve on Judgment Day. I don't want you just thinking about realm two as when you're going to need the grace of God. I want you to think about realm number one, the one we live in now. Tomorrow morning. Today we need the grace of God. And because of God's mercy, we have it. We ought to rejoice in that.

Let's pray. God, help us in a world filled with struggles and even personal loss and difficulty, to remember that in this fallen world, with an enemy that is wreaking havoc in the world and flesh that continues to give in and capitulate to temptation when we know we shouldn't, we deserve so much worse than we have. We deserve to have no hope. We deserve to have no redemption. We deserve to have no blessings. And yet you've lavished those on us, even though it may not be as much as the guy next door or the other Christian in my small group, we have so many things for which to be thankful. But we've got to remember those benefits, we have to ponder them and we have to meditate on them. So God give us more time, even this week. Let us make time to walk down a road, maybe walk down a beach, through a park, spend time by ourselves on a bike ride, whatever it takes just to shut out other things and other people to spend by ourselves remembering your kindness to us. God, of course I'm saying all that to Christians here this morning. But if people are here and they have not put their trust in Christ, today's the day for them, God, to see that that grace is provided even though they might think like Bloomberg and think they deserve it all because they're halfway good or more than good. In reality, God, we know that our righteousness is as filthy rags. We need your grace, yourself, specific grace in Christ. I pray more people would experience that even today.

In Jesus name. Amen.