

Romans 5

Sunday 12/30/2018

It is wonderful to be with friends. It is a wonderful thing to be saved. Forty-seven years ago, I did the smartest thing I have ever done in my life: I trusted Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior. Four years after that, I did the second smartest thing in my life: I married Karen Auckland. It has just been a blessing.

We met each other, and she asked me out for our first date. She wanted to go visit her Roman Catholic priest and give him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So we spent our first date up in Cleveland, Ohio. She picked me up. I said, "Well, if we are going to go out on this date, you pick me up." So she picked me up. We drove up to Cleveland. We spent two hours with her Catholic priest and witnessed to him and just took him to the scriptures. It is wonderful to sit here and see all these Bibles open. That is what we did with him. We took him to the scriptures. We went through the scriptures, and he chain-smoked for two hours. He broke out in a sweat. By the time we left, we left him a stack of Gospel literature and found out later that he left the priesthood, got married, and moved to California. We do not know to this day if he ever got saved or not, but we know he left the institution that he was in, and he had the Gospel in his hands.

You have something precious in front of you. I know you know that, but I want to say this: I am only here this morning because of this Book and the God of this Book. If I had not been taught from the get-go to get in this Book, I would have quit a million times. I would have, but it is this Book that gets in your heart and it gets in your bones. It is a fire within you that even when you want to quit, you say, "What am I going to do? Where am I going to go?" I know Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. I know no man can come unto the Father but by Him. He is everything.

The reason I married Karen Auckland was because we just wanted to keep doing what we did on our first date for the rest of our lives. That is what we have been doing. We have been having a great time, and it is wonderful to be here. I want you to know this is an answer to prayer. About a month ago, I was sitting at my desk, and I said, "Lord, we need to get out of here. I do not know where, I do not care where, we just need to get out of here for a few days." The next thing I know, Danny called me and said, "Do you think you would be able to work in it?" I said, "Yes, yes, yes. We will be there. Tell me when, tell me where, tell me how."

I just want to share with you a few things that I picked up along the way. We were talking the other day, and we just said, "The whole thing is just get to know Jesus Christ." The only way you are going to get to know Him, and you know this, is through the Book. So get to know Him, get to love Him, and appreciate Him, and then make Him known. Get to know Him, make Him known, and then just stay faithful. Finish the course. Come hell or high water, finish the course. In spite of your in-laws and outlaws, finish the course. In spite of everybody, because you are going to meet some people that are hard to deal with in this life. You just are. So just give them to the Lord and keep moving forward.

Let us pray. Father, thank You so much for these people this morning. Thank You so much for this place. Thank You for Bob and Barb. Thank You for Danny and Jamie. Thank You for Woody

and Kelly. Thank You, Father, for their hospitality. Thank You for their charity toward us. Thank You for Jim and Kathy. Lord, it is just so good to be this far down the road and still have some friends. Lord, we thank You for that. We thank You that You are the greatest friend. Lord, we love You this morning. We appreciate You this morning. Lord, we just want You to meet with us here this morning. We want You to make Your presence known. We want You to fill this place with Your presence. Because if You do that, Father, we will leave this place satisfied today. So Lord, magnify Your Word here. Direct these thoughts. Direct these words. Direct my deeds and my day today that I might bring glory to my Lord and my Savior, Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We are trying to get our people to see something. I have met so many Christians in my life that think that God is here to take away all your fun, that God is here to ruin your day and ruin your life. I keep trying to get them to see, "Wait a minute. Did you read John chapter 10 where He said, 'I am come that you might have life and that you might have it what? More abundantly?'" That should be a good thing. We should be the happiest people on the planet. We really should be.

Guess what? We all have problems. Trust me, we all do. Some bigger than others. Some that seem so big, but sometimes we make them much bigger than they are. God is able to take care of all your problems. If you will learn, someone gave us a little plaque this Christmas. Karen's sister gave it to us. It said, "Give it to God and go to sleep." That is good. That is good doctrine right there. Give it to God and just go to sleep. I want you just to think about that. God has given you life, and He has given you life more abundantly. He wants to do in your life and my life exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask, all that we can think, all that we can imagine.

He wants to get you involved in something that a gentleman coined the phrase: He wants to get you into the adventure of adversity, where you start realizing that your adversities and sorrow and suffering are your friends to get you closer to Jesus Christ.

I. The "Much More" of Justification

Romans chapter 5, look at verse 9 and look at the first two words. What are they? "Much more." Man, this is a much more thing that we got ourselves into here. Paul is talking to the believers at Rome of all places, and he says, "Much more than being what? Now, right now, today, in this moment."

Romans 5:9

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

I am sure probably everybody, 99% of the people in this room, know that. That is a good thing. Joe Silvestri is going to heaven not because he is wonderful. I asked my wife. I am going to heaven because Jesus Christ is wonderful. I am going to heaven because I am justified by His blood. That is the only ticket to get me into that place: Him and His shed blood on Calvary's cross.

Romans 5:10

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Boy, this Romans chapter 5 will get you in a lot of trouble because you find out you are an enemy. You find out, no, I am glad you are sitting down for this one, you are ungodly, and you are a sinner. It is hard to find sinners today. It really is. I have been witnessing since I got saved. It is getting extremely difficult to find sinners today. But when I go to Romans chapter 5, God says I am a sinner. God says I am ungodly. God says I am an enemy of God until I get in Christ Jesus. Now, you know what? I am one of His beloved sons. Believe it or not, He has adopted me, and I am His son, and He loves me like I am His own son. That is a wonderful thing.

He says, "For if, when we were enemies," before you got saved, you were an enemy, "we were reconciled to God." God made reconciliation. We are back on talking terms. We are getting things worked out now. That is what this Christian walk is all about: it is working some things out of your life. I will tell you what I have learned: my biggest enemy is not my sweetheart wife, because that happens to a lot of people. They think it is their spouse. "She is the enemy." No, she is not. You know who the enemy is? You are the enemy. You are your worst enemy.

The problem Christians are having today is they have Jesus stuck on the cross, and they are on the throne, and they need to reverse roles. They need to get on the cross and stay on the cross and keep Him on the throne of their heart. When you do that, you are going to have a more abundant life.

"Much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." You know what that is? That is not getting saved. That is talking about living saved. We sat down in the airport, and these two women from Cleveland were sitting across from us, and a gentleman was supposed to be on the other side of the room to catch his flight, and he sat down two seats away from us. He sat there and he just looked around, and he went, "Are you guys believers?" Nobody had said a word. He looked at my wife and I and looked at these two women, and he said, "Are you guys believers?" We said, "Yes," in unison. Man, that hour that we were running behind went by like it was five minutes. It was like having a family reunion, and I never met these people before in my life.

I do not know where you were before you got saved. I know where I was. I know David Spurgeon has said the same thing. He was looking for brotherhood, and that is why he became the national vice president of the motorcycle group called the Outlaws. He said, "I was looking for one thing. I was looking for brotherhood." That is it. I think that is what we are all really looking for. It really is.

Someone handed me a book one day and said, "Brother, I think you will appreciate this author, and I think you will appreciate what he has to say." I am going to quote something that he said. His name is Major Ian Thomas. I never heard of him in my whole Christian life. He was from England, and he was a major in their army. He said this: "The life that He lived qualified Him for the death that He died." You with me? You got it? The life that Jesus Christ lived qualified Him for the death that He died. He lived the perfect life. Therefore, He could die the death that He died, and He could be my Savior because He was God Almighty manifest in the flesh and lived

the perfect A-plus life for me because He knew I would not quite make it to the A-plus, nor would you. So He says, "Hey, the life that He lived qualified Him for the death that He died."

Now listen carefully: "The death that He died qualifies you for the life that He lives." Aha! The secret. The secret is in my Christianity and in my walk: the death that Jesus Christ died over 2,000 years ago outside the gates of Jerusalem qualifies me for the life that He now lives. All I have to do is become a channel, only a vessel that is willing to be emptied of self and filled with Him.

II. Our Old Man Is Dead

Our first point is our old man, that old man that is giving you fits this morning, that old man is dead. He is dead. We just have not realized it yet. When you realize your old man is dead, guess what? Get ready for the much more life when you recognize that.

Romans 6:6

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

What do we know? Our old man is crucified with Him. He is dead. I just have to keep reminding him, "Hey, bud, you are dead. You are dead. No, no, no. You cannot do that. You are dead. No, you cannot indulge in that. You are dead. Dead men do not do that." That is the key.

We have been a church for 25 years. We have had three church splits. You know what that is? That is business as usual. You know why? Because you have got a bunch of imperfect people on this planet who all they think about is themselves. They have their personal agendas and what they want to do. Some of them might have been called to preach, but they did not want to accept the call, so they want to pastor by proxy through you. They want to tell you how to do your job. That is how it works.

Here is something I have learned: a dead man does not worry about what anybody says about him. You can walk in that funeral home and say, "Well, you so-and-so." That guy will not even move. He will not even twitch. Why not? Because he is dead. He does not care. He is not hearing you. The world does not appeal to him anymore. The flesh does not control him anymore. Guess what? The devil cannot give him fits anymore. Our old man, knowing this. What do we know this morning? We know that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, and henceforth, we should not serve sin. You are not here to serve sin. You are here to serve the Savior. So we have to get on board with that.

Hey, you want to be happy? I am going to tell you how to be happy. I can tell you this, the greatest book. I forget who it was, but the brother came to me last night. He said, "Hey, brother, last time you were here, you mentioned this book. What books are you reading now?" I said, "You know what? I just want to remind you of one thing. The greatest book I have ever read is this Holy Bible, and I am still reading it." I have been reading it since I got saved.

When I ask a guy, "How do you know if you have been called to preach?" he told me, a great preacher, he said, "Wallow in the Word, brother, wallow in the Word," and walked away from him. I went, "I said, well, I guess if he is the great preacher that I think he is, I ought to take his advice. I am going to go home and wallow in the Word." That is what I have been doing for the past 47 years, and that is what has kept me out of trouble. Hey, I could get in trouble just as easy as you can. The thing that is going to keep you out of trouble is you are going to have the Word of God in your heart and mind, and you are going to say, "You are dead. You cannot do that."

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, and henceforth, we should not serve sin. Who are you going to serve the rest of your life? Who are you going to live for? I have learned that my God and our God is so gracious. If you want to, He will let you live for self the whole way, the whole rotten way. He will let you do that. But He would love you to get on board and just surrender to Him and say, "Lord, if You want me to sweep floors the rest of my life, I will sweep floors."

When I had to leave New York City, and we wound up in Wooster, Ohio, do not ask me how, but we did. I told my wife, "I am going to go get a job somewhere. We have four kids. We have to eat. We have to keep a roof over our heads. I am going to go get a job in a factory. I have been in factories my whole life. I am going to start out pushing a broom, and I am not even going to tell anybody I am saved." You say, "Oh, that is horrible." I figured, "You know what? If my life cannot speak any louder than that, forget about it. There is something wrong with me." So I went in and started pushing a broom.

Next thing I know, someone came up to me and said, "Hey, I noticed you are a little different." Like peculiar. We went through that town last night. Hey, that is what we are supposed to be. We are supposed to be a little odd, a little peculiar. That is not hard to do today. But we are supposed to be peculiar. It is supposed to be different. After a while, someone would say, "Are you, like, what are you?" I would say, "Well, I am a born-again, Bible-believing Christian." Then they would say, "Where do you go to church?" I was like, "Oh, Lord, here we go, man." I said, "In my living room." I thought, "They are really going to think I am a kook now." They were like, "Well, what time do you start? Do you mind if I join you?" Next thing you know, we had 30, 40 people meeting in our house.

The one thing I prayed for with the house was, "Lord, give us a house with a big enough living room that if we need to meet in it, we can." We found out the people that lived in our house before us used to meet in our house for church. Ended up with a 15 by 30 living room. I said, "Lord, I think that will work." We made it work for as long as we could.

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Who are you going to serve? You have your whole life ahead of you. For some of you, that could be 60, 70, 80 years. For some of us, it might be a few days. For some of us, it might be a few hours. You do not know what is going to happen.

2 Corinthians 4:10

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Boy, there is a key. I have to bear about in this body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in the body, in our body. I think about this: one of the verses they messed up in all these new and improved Bibles is they got rid of "God manifest in the flesh." Jesus Christ was God Almighty, Jehovah God, the Most High God, the Almighty God manifest in the flesh. You know what He wants to do today? He wants to be manifest in your flesh. He wants to be manifest in my flesh. He wants to be seen. He wants to be heard today. But we have to willingly offer ourselves to Him and say, "Lord, here am I, send me," instead of, "Here am I, send him." That is how most of us want to answer the call. "Here am I, send Jim Lake. He will do it. I do not want to go there, Lord."

John 12:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Here is a great spiritual truth from the Lord. If you get a hold of this truth, you are on your way to that much more, and that more abundantly, and that exceeding abundantly. He says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die." Oh my. He wants me to get out of His way. He wants me to die. That is not very nice, but that is the only way this thing will work. If this corn of wheat will fall into the ground and die, if it will not do that, it is going to abide alone by itself, He says. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.

Hey, you want to bring forth much fruit? You have to be planted. We had a kind of a crude preacher for many, many years that we followed in New York City. I remember one time he took me out and said, "I want you to come to this funeral with me so you know how to preach a funeral." So I came to the funeral, and he preached, and I took notes. We got all done. We were heading home, and he said, "Well, we got that one planted." I looked at him like, "What?" You know what he said? He said, "Except that corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if you plant that thing in there, you are going to bring forth much fruit." We have to die. We have to get out of the Lord's way so He can get something done. We have to make ourselves available and say, "Lord, I am willing to do whatever You want me to do. If You want me to put the chairs away, I will put the chairs away. If You want me to vacuum the carpet, I will vacuum the carpet. You want me to clean the toilets? I will clean the toilets."

You know why our nation was great years ago? Because you went into a factory and you started out pushing a broom and cleaning toilets, and then you worked your way up the ladder to become an executive. Then all of a sudden, we got this bright idea: "They need to go to school first and get educated, and then we will make them executives." Well, that guy does not understand what happens down at the bottom to get everything to happen for him up at the top, because he has not been through the system. So we have a faulty educational system today.

III. The Abundance of Grace

Our second point. We are going to get there after we read Romans 5:15 and 17. Paul is talking here in Romans 5:15.

Romans 5:15

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Oh, is not that sweet? Let us do that again. "Which is by one man, Jesus Christ." Oh man, that is the sweetest name I have ever heard. I just told my church again last week, I said, "The sweetest name is Jesus, and the second sweetest name is Karen." I said, "I just want you to know that she is my best friend and my comrade in arms. She would follow me into battle anywhere and go to hell and back with me." She has proved it over the years and years and years that we have done what we have been doing.

"For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." I have a question again: would you like to be one of the many? All you have to do is volunteer. "Lord, I want to be one of those many. I want to be the more abundantly. I want to be the exceeding abundantly. Lord, I just want to walk with You. I want to please You. I want to do whatever it is You want me to do without any accolades, without any glory, just to put a smile on Your beloved face." If we do that, folks, we would have revival in America. We would.

Romans 5:17

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

Now he is talking about Adam there. Remember back in the garden, one man's offense. He disobeyed God. He ate of that tree that they were not supposed to eat of. "If by one man's offense death reigned by one." What are the next two words? "Much more." Much more. "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness." Now watch it carefully. "Shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." You can reign in life. It does not have to be, "Hey, brother, how are you today?" "Well, one step at a time, brother, by the grace of God." I do not want to hear that. I want to hear, "Bless God, man. The Lord has been blessing us. We have been having a great time. The washer broke. The car got wrecked. The house burned down. Glory to God!" That is what I want to hear. I do not want to hear, "My pinky hurts." Really? Man, what an army that we are for God, huh?

IV. The Law of the Spirit of Life

Our second point, go to Romans chapter 8. God has laws in place in this universe. When you start looking at this thing and start seeing some of this stuff, you say, "Oh my goodness, He has got a law of faith." That is one of God's laws in the universe.

Romans 8:1-2

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

There is therefore now, right now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. But it is conditional. That no condemnation is conditional on this next statement: "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Now here it comes. Here is one of God's laws: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." I do not have to let sin reign over me anymore. I do not have to. I can if I want to, but I do not have to because there is a higher law in place.

We were on our way here, and there is a law. What is that? Gravity. That is a law. Every time you do that, it will work. The law of gravity just about took me off there. That is a law. But you know what? We saw that law superseded. Now it took Jim a while to see it superseded yesterday, but we saw it superseded. That plane was on the ground because of the law of gravity. Pretty soon, a new law, a superior law, a higher law took over. With the law of aerodynamics, pretty soon, we were up 30,000 feet looking down on the clouds and looking at other airplanes going by. One law superseded the other law.

Again, which law would you like to live by? Are you going to let the law of sin reign over your entire Christian life? Or are you going to supersede that law with the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus? You can overcome that law of gravity, that law of sin that is going to take you down. Hey, if you do not get saved, that law of sin will take you way down. I remember hearing a song back in the day before I was saved, "Going down, going down, going down." You know why? We were all going down until I met Jesus Christ. Now I am going up.

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

I am dead. He said it. "I am crucified with Christ." Nevertheless, I am still stuck here. "Beam me up, Scotty." Hey, I wanted to get beamed up, man. I was hoping that was a part of this salvation thing. I was hoping, man, when I got saved, I would get raptured in the moment. I was like, "Oh, Lord, now I am stuck here. How do we do this? This is an ugly place, and sometimes a lot of ugly people. How do we do this?" He told us how to do it. If we get on board with the much more, if we get on the board with "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I still have to live, yet not I, but Christ, Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ liveth in me if I will let Him." "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live it by the faith of the Son of God, who are precious, who loved me." And He proved it on Calvary. "And He gave Himself for me."

V. The Purging Blood of Christ

Go to Hebrews chapter 9. Folks, this salvation thing, I hope we all grow into it.

Hebrews 9:14

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

You say, "Hebrews, that is a transitional book." I know it. So is Matthew and Acts. But, boy, you can get blessed if you will go there and take it inspirationally. Hey, put it in a proper context. Know whose mail it is. I am not going to go there to try to prove my salvation because I read in Hebrews that you could lose it. In Matthew, you have got to endure it to the end. Acts, they do not know which end is up. But you know what? Man, I am getting more and more blessed out of this book of Hebrews as time goes on.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ." You forgot where we were. I know it is hard to follow this guy. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God?" What is that blood going to do? "Purge your conscience." You know what we are all suffering from this morning? Guilty, defiled consciences. We all are in the same boat. Let us be honest. We are. Well, God has got a remedy for that. So you can get up this morning and say, "Lord, cleanse my conscience in the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh God, would You cleanse my thoughts and my words and my deeds today, so that I could just be pleasing to You for a change? Cleanse me in that blood there that You mentioned, that blood of Christ that will purge this defiled, guilty, condemned conscience." He is going to purge that conscience from what? From dead works. I like this. "To serve the living God." We have the blessed privilege of serving the Almighty, eternal, living God today. Hey, all I have is today. No promise of tomorrow.

VI. Standing Fast in Liberty

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

You know what I see here this morning? I see liberty. That is what I see here. Stand fast in that liberty. Remember, do not get hung up in churchianity. Stick with your Christianity, that personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. We do not want that. So you know what? I am supposed to stand fast in that liberty. I am supposed to stand fast in that liberty moment by moment.

Earlier when I started out here, I told you this is the best book I have ever read in my life. The second best book I have ever read, and I have been reading books voraciously for the past 47 years, the second best book I have ever read in my life was written by a woman in the 1800s called *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. My wife read it 20 years ago, and she was reading it, I do not know, maybe a couple years ago, and I said, "Honey, what are you reading?" She said, "I am reading *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*." I said, "Oh, where did you get that?" She said, "I do not know, someone gave it to me 20 years ago, and I read it back then, and I do not think I was ready for it." But she said, "Man, this thing is good." I said, "When you are done, can I read it?" She said, "Sure." I said, "Do you mind if I highlight it?" Do not give me a book if I

cannot highlight it. Man, I took out my highlighter. It was yellow. The next time through it was blue, which turns it to green. Next time through it was red, and man, I read that thing probably 12 times.

Then I went back and I read Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8. Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8. Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8. And I went, "Lord, I think I am getting this thing. It is starting to make sense now."

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

A guy asked me, "Are you reading anything else?" I said, "Yeah, I just got a hold of another one by a guy named James McConkie." Never heard of him before in my life, but he wrote the greatest work on the threefold secret of the Holy Spirit. I got talking to a guy, and he found a little booklet by this guy called *The Surrendered Life*. Is not that what Paul said in Romans chapter 12?

VII. Presenting Our Bodies as a Living Sacrifice

You know what I see in our Christianity today? I see Christians wanting to worship the Lord in the spirit, wanting to rejoice in God in their soul and magnify Him in their soul, but they do not want to give Him their bodies. That is the problem.

I am going to read you a quote, and I am done. This is an old preacher. He says, "Ah, beloved, if the refusal of the sinner to give up his sins under the pleadings of the Holy Spirit is a solemn responsibility, is not the refusal of the believer to give up his life after he has experienced all the mercies of God also a sad and a solemn thing to the heart of that same God? If the sinner is guilty in steadfastly resisting Jesus Christ who wants to save him, are not we much more so in resisting the same Christ who has saved us and now wants to use us for His glory and the salvation of others?"

He goes on and he says, "And how He pleads for the yielded lives of His children. Hear Him as through His servant Paul He voices that tender, that tender, loving entreaty."

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

He goes on and he says, "What a scene is here. Not men, not Paul, but Jesus Christ through man, beseeching His children for the lives He so much needs for His service. Picture Him entering this room right now. As we sit here with hushed, expectant hearts, the door opens, and Jesus Christ enters. He makes His way through here, and we see that form that was once familiar by the shores of Galilee, that was once familiar in the streets of Jerusalem and in the thronging feasts of old people, passing quietly to the teacher's place. He turns, and we look upon the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the smile that gladdened the hearts of His own 2,000 years ago. The same

familiar voice that thrilled their inmost being as He spoke the words of life and the words of peace. The same gaze that bespeaks Him at once the Man of Sorrows and of tender, compassionate, quenchless love. How still our hearts grow. How filled the room is with His presence. How breathless we sit. Once self-absorbed, now Jesus Christ-absorbed. And now, as the instinct of prayer steals into our remorseful hearts, we would beseech His forgiveness for our coldness, which now seems to us an awful shame. We would beseech His forbearance with our selfishness, which now fills us with astonishment and grief that is unutterable. We would beseech His forgetfulness of our lack of communion, which now in His presence seems almost unforgivable. We would beseech His compassionate grace for our failure to tell the heathen world of His love. And now it seems as a red-handed crime that as our heart is flooded with the sense of our unworthy worldliness and faithlessness, our lips begin to move and our knees begin to bend and petition the hold of marvel. Do our eyes deceive us? He, the King of Glory, the Lord, the Creator, begins to beseech us, His subjects, His servants, the created. Stretching forth His scarred hands, touching His blood-stained brow, pointing to His pierced side, all tokens of the mercy of God, He speaks: 'Children of God, I beseech you by the need of dying men. I beseech you by the shortness of the time. I beseech you by the follies of this world. I beseech you by the wasted years of your life. I beseech you by the secret longings of your own heart. I beseech you by My blood that was shed for you on Calvary's cross. By My death instead of your death. By My resurrection which is life for you. By My glory prepared for you and by My kingship to be shared by you. I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.' By surrender, by sacrifice, and by suffering even unto death. Touched by the vision of His matchless love, we should lay ourselves, spirit, soul, and body, at the feet of Him who loved us and who washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and our Father."

Let us pray. Our Father, thank You for loving us. Thank You for Your unbounded love, Your unconditional love. Thank You for loving us, Lord, when we were unlovely, so unlovely and so ugly. Thank You for loving us in the person of Jesus Christ. Father, by the Holy Spirit of God this morning, we ask You in Jesus' name, as Your Word says, to work in us to will and work in us to do Your good pleasure. Father, would You be pleased today, and I know You would be, would we be willing today to allow You by the Holy Spirit of God to take control of us, our whole spirit, soul, and body, that Jesus Christ would be magnified and that You, Father, would be glorified in and by and through Your beloved Son. In Jesus' name. Amen.