

The Lost Ark

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[0:00] And let's dive in this morning. Okay, we're off from a week. Last week did Church in the Park. That was really cool just to be here together It's cycles of dysfunction.

It is hard to read, Judges. Because the people just continually turn away from God and then God will like come to them and show himself to them. And they'll kind of turn back to God.

And then they turn away from God. And you see this spiral. And Elliot said this. He said, spiritual decay is a process. Spiritual decay is a process. And what we see in that process is confusion and chaos.

And we feel that in our own lives, right? You feel it in the world. You see this. You know you're in spiritual decay when you feel this confusion and chaos. And eventually the result is death. I mean, I wish I could say like, well, sometimes you can just pull out of it.

Or humans, we can kind of... But when you get enough spiritual decay, there's enough chaos, eventually death just happens. And here in 1 Samuel chapter 4, we're about to hit the bottom.

[1:23] Okay, this is about to be the low point of chaos. I'm talking Highway 70 right through James City at 8 o'clock in the morning when you're late to work. Chaos, okay?

Like you're like, ugh. Come on. That's okay. Good thing's coming. But when you feel it, right? And you feel us reading this, just like, come on, guys. Come on. But there's hope here.

So this section, it starts with this chaos and conflict and confusion. But it ends with victory and peace. Okay, so when we look at this, I want us to be thinking about our lives and say, when we feel that spiritual chaos, man, when life hits us, how can we get to victory and peace?

Okay, so let's watch what happens. And we're gonna jump right in here. 1 Samuel chapter 4. And I'm not gonna read the whole section, but I'm gonna bring out parts of this. So if you have your Bibles open or you have your phone, have it out on your phone and you wanna fill in some of the gaps, that's great.

1 Samuel 4. And Samuel's word came to all Israel. Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer and the Philistines at Aphec.

[2:31] The Philistines deployed their forces to meet Israel. And as the battle spread, Israel was defeated by the Philistines who killed about 4,000 of them on the battlefield. When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, why did the Lord bring defeat on us today before the Philistines?

Let us bring the ark of the Lord's covenant from Shiloh so that he may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies. So the people sent men to Shiloh and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty who was enthroned between the cherubim and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

When the ark of the Lord's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, what's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?

When they learned the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, the Philistines were afraid, a God has come into the camp. They said, oh no, nothing like this has happened before.

We're doomed. Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. Be strong, Philistines.

[3:45] Be men, or you'll be subject to the Hebrews as they have been to you. Be men and fight. So the Philistines fought and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great.

Israel lost 30,000 foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas died. What happens next, I'll just summarize it, is Eli hears about it.

A man runs to him and tells him what happens, that his sons have died, the ark's been captured. And then, first time before 18, it says this, so when this man comes to Eli, he said, when he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man and he was heavy. He had led Israel for 40 years. And then Eli's daughter dies in childbirth and we see this prophecy that had come to Samuel before about his reign of being a priest and his sons, the dysfunction that was going to be a time when it was going to be over.

And now we see that come true. If this feels a little depressing, it's because it is. The process of spiritual decay, that's a depressing process.

[4:55] It's hard to watch. Part of it, I think it's hard because we've all felt it ourselves in our own soul. We see it in our own world our own society. It's hard to watch. You're going to hear this at City Grace. It's one of the things that we say, sin always takes you farther than you intended to go and costs you more than you were willing to pay.

And here's what we see it there. That's like, they did not intend to pay that or go that far. Chapter 5 and 6 move into the Philistines. They take the ark and they move it to their temple of Dagon. I'd love to talk about that more, but just for the sake of time, we've got to move through this, but they put it before Dagon. They come back and Dagon has fallen over. They put Dagon back up and then Dagon falls and Dagon's arms break off, head breaks off.

So God is really showing here, he's demonstrating, like, I'm not just another God. I'm not just something you can move around. I'm not... And what's interesting about this is that God's showing his authority in his own timing.

Okay, so the Israelites, they want God to show up for them in battle. They're like, let's go, God. You can show us your power. And God does nothing. God is silent.

[6:06] And they get destroyed. And now you have the Philistines who also, like, have this sacred object of God's, and they put it in there like a trophy, like, they don't really have a respect for God's power. But now God shows his power.

They're not asking for it, but he shows his power in a way that they understand, like, he has authority. God is not a trophy. He will never be dictated or forced.

God is free. So both the Israelites here and the Philistines, they misuse God. They try to dictate God. And then the Philistines move this ark around because these plagues happen, like, there's rats, and then the people break out in tumors.

Some historians think maybe this is similar to the bubonic plague where people are getting sick. So they call together their diviners, their viners, their mediums. They ask this question that's actually quite faithful.

They say, well, what should we do? Like, what are we supposed to do with this? And eventually, they decide to offer a trespass offering to Israel's God. And they make some gold objects out of the things that were plaguing them, the rats and the tumors.

[7:11] And it seems a little strange to us, but then they send this thing back. They send the ark back with these objects, this trespass offering. They send it back to Israel and these milk cows, it says they're milk. The milk cows, which again, is a little symbol of like God's divine providence because these cows would not, they're not hauling.

There's not, these are not the kind of cows that would know where to go. But they're like, if it goes where it's supposed to go, we know that like the Israelites, God is like, we're done with him. He's gone. And the milk cows take it back to Israel.

The Israelites offer this sacrifice. They take all the stuff and they make a sacrifice out of it. You're like, okay, maybe they're on the right track here. But then a bunch of people die because they look in the ark.

Y'all, everybody knows you don't look in the ark. You're not supposed to touch it. I grew up with Indiana Jones. Okay, I don't know, I'm a little old, but like, I think I was a kid and my sister's probably covering my eyes.

There's one where like, they find the ark, young people, I don't know if it's worth watching. It's kind of weird being watching old effects. They're a little weird. People's faces are melting off. My sister's like, oh, don't look. And I'm like, you don't look in the ark, guys.

[8:11] Everybody knows that. They didn't have Indiana Jones, but they still. And a bunch of people die. And then they ask this question. Okay, so they ask this question. This is how far they've come. Like, they're just like, touching the thing, looking in the thing, like, so far.

Then they ask this question, 1 Samuel 6, 20. And the people of Beth Shemesh asked, who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here? Now, I want you to remember this question. Okay, this is a very important question. Like, well, who, first of all, when do we do this thing? Like, where should we put this? But who can be before God? They're struck with the fear of God. Like, whoa, who can even be in this God's presence? Like, it's their own God. And they're scared out of their mind because all these people just died. They had a God encounter and it shakes them up. So keep that question in mind. Like, who can be before God? How does this work?

Again, it's pretty depressing. We have confusion and chaos. And again, now, where are we? We're at death. We have death in childbirth. We have death from war and battle. We have death people breaking their necks because they're falling over.

[9:13] Diseases and plagues. We have people just struck by the Lord. No one, no one reading this right now should be thinking like, you know, I think, okay, we got this. Okay, humans, you know, we're actually okay on our own. Like, we can work it out.

Eventually, we'll get this right, right? Like, no one is thinking that right now. So we're in this dilemma of like, well, it's not working as us, right? Like, we do not have this, but also like, we're scared to death of God because look what he can do.

So here, I want to enter, I want to do a little bridge here. I want to connect some things with this overarching question that we have to ask. And if you don't understand this question that you won't understand the Old Testament, you won't understand like, what are they trying to do?

The question is, how can holy God be with sinful humans? Okay, and maybe we take that for granted. We're like, well, I don't know. But this would have been a question on their minds. In fact, if you travel to the East, if you travel around the world, people are still asking that question.

When you see the idols in other nations, the temples, and the things you like, people are still trying to ask this question of how can God, holy God, live with sinful people? That's the framing question I want to look at.

[10:18] And that's the big question and the smaller question is like, how can we stop this spiral, this spiritual decay? How can we stop this cycle, man, of just like, chaos? 1 Samuel 6.20.

Back to this verse. The people, they ask, who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here? Who can be with God? Will we do this thing? From God's perspective, look back at Exodus in 33.

I love this. God says this. He's telling Moses and the people, he says, go up to the land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go with you because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.

Like, God himself is like, yeah, I might just destroy you. So there's this dissonance between God's holy perfection, right, and then evil. Like, how does God, who's holy and perfect, be with people who are evil?

Okay, and here's a little segue. Again, hang with me here, but the good news is that God's giving himself. He's like, I'm actually gonna come. I'm gonna be with you. So this started, like, you go, how did we get here with the ark and all this stuff?

[11:20] Like, this started back when God brought his people out of Egypt and then you have Mount Sinai and they're at Mount Sinai, remember? And the people are scared to death. There's like, the mountain's shaking. It's like, and Moses goes up and they're like, just go, Moses.

Like, they're not supposed to touch it. They don't even wanna get near it. Okay, so you see this holiness. They don't wanna be close to it, but they send someone up there and God gives them this system of boundaries.

I'm like, well, I'm gonna be with you. I'm gonna live with you, but there's some boundaries here and that's where we get the tabernacle. Okay, this is in the wilderness. Like, God gives a tabernacle and then later the temple and I'm gonna throw a temple image.

I'm just gonna kind of scream through this really quick but the idea of the tabernacle and then the temple was, like, there's a system from getting from the mundane things, the sinful things of the world into the holy things of God.

Okay, there's barriers. You can't just, like, walk right in there. You know, you will die. And so he has all these, these systems to purify the people, like, there's sacrifices but it's, even the way it was built was to show that, like, this is just, like, the sinful worldly stuff but then you get into it and, like, even how it's symmetrical and things, then you get into the holy place, the holy of holies.

[12:29] And that's where the ark comes from. In Exodus, God gave very clear directions of what this ark was. He's like, here's the box and it's supposed to be overlaid with gold and inside we have the Ten Commandments, all right, which sometimes it's called the tablet of the, the stone tablets of the testimony.

Sometimes it's the ark of the testimony, okay, you have that in there. You have the manna, this jar of manna and then you have Aaron's staff that had budded, right, so it's like, who's gonna be the priest?

Who really has the authority to be priest? And Aaron's, they had all these staffs and rods and Aaron's buds, like, that's crazy, right, so that's in there. Okay, now you know, okay, if you find it, don't look, you know it's in there already, don't look, okay, it might be in the Smithsonian, I don't know, no, no, it's gone, guys, it's gone, it's gone.

All right, so that's in there, right, and here's, here's the thing you have to understand, right, this thing is, it's called the footstool, so in the temple, you're like, what is a footstool, and there's another image here, old ancient stone thing, of like a king reigning, so you have a king reigning, and the king's feet are on the footstool, and that's his throne, and it's a place of judgment and mercy, like you'd come before the king with awe, and like, in fear, but the king would judge, or the king, the king could have mercy, just like what the king said, and so here in the temple, we have the Holy of Holies, and the ark is, is the footstool of the Lord, so the king is, the picture is, the king is reigning, like God is, he's in there reigning, with his people, but this is where he sits on his throne, to judge the people, or to give mercy to the people, and no one would walk in there, just like you'd approach a king, no one would just like, mosey in there, they're scared out of their minds, but God is with them, Exodus 25, 22 says this, there above the cover, okay, he's talking about the ark, above the cover, between the two cherubim, that are over the ark, of the covenant law, I will meet with you, and give you all my commands, for Israel, so here's the point, sinful man, with holy God, it just shouldn't work, there's just no way, it should work, but God desires us, he loves his people, he's an issue, he always initiates,

God keeps pursuing, this book we have, this scripture we have, the Bible, man, it is like, it's a love story, it is like God, continuing to, to find a way, to reach these people, who continue to like, leave him, if you don't, if you don't believe me, just read Hosea, love that book, it's hard to read, but if you want to know like, who are we, who's God like, go read Hosea, it'll blow your mind, like what, who God is, and who we are, God loves us, he keeps pursuing us, like someone in love, right, like a parent, like this, why he gives us all these things, but over time, we see this with Israel, people start to drift, eventually, they're not really, into the relationship, this whole covenant, like there's so much obligation, they feel like there's so many rules, I have to do this, can I just have the blessings, can I just have the stuff, they just really want to like, have what God can offer, and so they use the very symbol, of his presence, as a way to manipulate God, and just get the outcome they want, we just want the victory, look at first Samuel four, three, it says, when the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, excuse me, why did the Lord bring defeat, on us today, before the Philistines, let us bring the ark, of the Lord's covenant, from Shiloh, so that he may go, with us, and save us, from the hand of our enemies, now a lot of versions, a lot of versions, yours might say it, so that it may save us, they literally like, let's go bring the ark, so that it may save us, from the Philistines,

[15:53] God's people had God, in a box, man if we just take the ark, guaranteed victory, that is like the definition, of idolatry, replacing God, idolatry always pulls, our allegiance, to something we can control, have you ever put God, in a box, have you ever desired, God's blessing, or power, or something he can do for you, without actually, or maybe just over, overlooking, or not desiring, God, I have a good friend, we lived together in Malaysia, and she was telling me, a story, her name is Rebecca, and she was telling me, a story about, when she was, late high school, heading to college, I think, and her father, came down with cancer, and man, the family prayed, you know, with all the treatments, and it was a long journey, it was a long haul, and she prayed, and prayed, and prayed, and prayed, and there came a point, towards the end of his battle, that it was obvious, that he was, he was not going to live, and she said, she said, you know,

I was, she said, I realized at that point, I was putting my faith, in prayer, and I wasn't putting my faith, in God, I was like, what, you can do that, like, I'm still unpacking that one, like, whoa, even the good things, God gives us, he gave him the ark, he's like, I'm right here with you, even all the good blessings, that God gives us, to draw, to really, to draw us to him, even those things, can be the

things, that can hijack our heart, and we can try to control, and we can kind of, veer away from him, again, idolatry, always, pulls our allegiance, to something we can control, okay, so that's the, that's the kind of bridge here, back to the story now, and back to the question, I want to answer both questions, okay, so how can holy God, live with sinful people, sinful humans, that's the overarching question, and the smaller question here, is like, how can we stop this cycle, of spiritual decay, how can we get out of this chaos, that we even feel in our lives, right, so 1st Samuel chapter 7, praise the Lord, for chapter 7, here we go, so the men of Kiriath-Jerim, came and took up the ark, of the Lord, they brought it to Abinadab's house, on the hill, and consecrated, Eleazar, his son, to guard the ark, of the Lord, the ark remained, at Kiriath-Jerim, a long time, 20 years in all, then all the people of Israel, turned back to the Lord, so Samuel said, to all the Israelites, if you are returning, to the Lord, with all your hearts, then rid yourselves, of the foreign gods, and the Asherith, and commit yourself, to the Lord, and serve him only, and he will deliver you, out of the hand of the Philistines, so the Israelites, put away their bales, and asterisks, and serve the Lord only, then Samuel said, assemble all Israel, at Mitzpah, and I will intercede, with the Lord for you, when they had assembled, at Mitzpah, they drew water, and poured it out, before the Lord, on that day, they fasted, and there was, and they confessed, we have sinned, against the Lord, now Samuel was serving, as leader of Israel, at Mitzpah, when the Philistines heard, that Israel had assembled, at Mitzpah, the rulers of the Philistines, came back, came up to attack them, when the Israelites, heard of it, they were afraid, because of the Philistines, they said to Samuel, do not stop crying out, to the Lord, our God for us, that he may, he may rescue us, from the hand of the Philistines, then Samuel, took a suckling lamb, and sacrificed it, as a whole burnt offering, to the Lord, he cried out to the Lord, on Israel's behalf, and the Lord answered him, so like the people of Israel, they have this God encounter, chaos hits, they feel defeated, they feel that loss, and they ask this question, like, why, what's happening, or maybe we're tempted to ask it too, like, why is God against me here, when we feel that, when we sense it like, maybe God's in this, maybe God's trying to teach me something, maybe something, what do we do, what's next, and we know it doesn't work, right, just like, more I got this, like, I'll just go fight them, and back, that does like, right, same as stay in the cycle, how do we get out of that cycle, here we go, we're just gonna look at what happens, in that chapter, here's the progression, that the Israelites, with Samuel, Samuel says, well first, return to the Lord, with all your heart, we see that in verse three, there's some internal action, like, there's some choice, like, inside my heart, inside my choice, I gotta be like, I don't got this, and this is a Holy Spirit thing, like, Jesus has to initiate that in us, I don't, I wish I could say like, man, we're just gonna get it, and like, pull ourselves out, and like, grab those bootstraps, like, but God has to do this in us, like, this is a Jesus thing, we need to be praying for this, so we return to the Lord, with all our heart, internal action, and then, the second thing to do, they recognize, and put away the idols, in their life, right, this is an external thing, we gotta live this, right, we gotta look at like, what is it that's hijacking my heart, what am I doing, like, what's, what's happening that's causing this chaos, and in me, you know, what do I really want, here's some questions, when we start feeling that, we start sensing like, man, there's defeat and chaos in my life, I don't know, I don't know what it looks like in your life, I have a pretty, I have a pretty, vibrant anxiety trigger, that's mine, like, when I get overly anxious, I'm like, oh, okay, there it is, you know, three weeks later, I'm like, oh, gosh, okay, so here's some questions for you, that might just help reveal what's in your heart, these are just things that like, they kind of help me, is there something I want more than God, like the Israelites, they're like, we just want the victory, is there some area of your life, like, man, I just, if I could just have victory, if I could just have success, again, it wasn't a sin to go to war, like, that's what they did, but, they had to consult God first, right, this had to be God's war, he's like, guess what, you're not, it's not your battle, it's my battle, so we need to make sure, is there something I want, am I battling with God, are we battling the same thing, another question, is there something I'm trying to achieve on my own, you know, I haven't consulted God yet, but I'm just, I'm gonna go, I'm gonna go do this thing, and, another question, these are, these are so great, right, it's like, [22:03] I feel so good about myself right now, am I getting ahead of God, so am I moving at my pace, not his, you know, like, man, guys, if you could just throw that SUV, throw that, throw that arc in the back of my SUV there, you know, let's just get that box, let's just, let's load it up, let's go God, you know, am I getting ahead of God, when, I can't remember if I've told you this, so forgive me if you have, but when we first moved back to the United States, we'd never own a home, I was so

excited to finally have, what I thought would be my dream, my dream home, and, I've always wanted to live, not around people, I love people, I love people, I just don't want to see them, when I'm on my front porch, right, it's my dream, and so, I always want to live in the country, whatever, so I would like, ride my, this is 2021, y'all, like, nothing was for sale, and if it was, it was only for sale for like two weeks, and then, anyway, it was crazy, some of you know, and so I'm driving around, and I'd get on my motorcycle, guys, for months, I would drive, I was looking in Vanceboro, I was looking in Coast City,

I was looking at every, trailers, land, farmhouses, it doesn't matter, I was looking all over, and, in my spirit, like, I kept hitting that wall of like, I knew, like, this is not a God thing, this is not his timing, this is a Kirk thing, did I stop?

No, I kept going, I'm like, there's got to be something out there, one Sunday, I drug my family out to this land I found, so beautiful, so perfect, great price, 16 minutes away, and we had this little picnic, and then they were all just like, Dad, why are we sitting out here by the woods?

Like, why are we here? And I was like, oh, you know, like, oh, it was just very obvious, you know, and then you start pushing other people, like, why don't you want this, okay? It's very easy to get ahead of God, do things at our pace, try to achieve things on our own, and we know in our spirit, when you start feeling that, since the Holy Spirit's like, it's just not you, man, like, this is not for you, this is not your timing, like, we start to, when we're fighting against God, we kind of know, maybe for you it's a work thing, maybe it's a relationship thing, it's like, if I could just fix this thing now, I'm gonna just fix it now, this issue at work, or this person, if I could just fix that person now, I'm gonna just fix it, we try to do that, don't we?

Like, come on, God, I'm writing this, so, where's the box? Let's just, one more question, it's more in the affirmative, like, if we, if we think like we, okay, this dissonance happened, the chaos happens, we're like, okay, am I moving in the right way?

[24:31] Is God in this? I like to ask this, am I trusting God for the thing I want the most right now?

Like, this is the thing, I know what it is I want, am I trusting God for that, and can I accept his outcome for this situation?

Like, the idea was Israel, it started in the wilderness again, there was a cloud, and God's like, we're gonna move, when I move, when the cloud moves, you move, the cloud stays, you stay, very simple, God would initiate it, they'd go, God's like, we're gonna move this way, we're gonna fight these people, then we fight, if I don't go, you don't go, very, that's it, can we trust God for that?

Again, Israel wanted victory, all good things, they want protection, their family, it was all good stuff, they wanted, but it wasn't God's timing, can I trust, the thing I want most right now, can I accept God's outcome?

When we moved overseas, each time we'd come back home, and go back overseas, my wife kept having these reoccurring dreams, she'd have this dream, that we were in Target, and it was, one of those like, I like, almost like a shopping spree, like you're grabbing all the things you need, before you go to Southeast Asia, and it's like, your cart's full, and like, all the stuff, remember, she'd get up to the front, and like, there's a few people in line, and before she would get to the checkout, like the plane was outside, and like, hey, your plane's boarding, your plane's boarding, you gotta go, and she'd be like, oh, and you have to leave all the stuff, and go get on the plane, like she'd tell me that in the morning, I'm like, I had this dream, and I'm like, oh, that's so sad, like we can't take all our stuff from Target, that's a terrible dream, when we were home for a while, we got to put our kids, we were home for a two-year stretch, and we got to put our kids in public school, we lived in Minnesota at the time, and we were going back to Laos, but we had a, we were here, and it was super cool, because they got to be in,

I think it was like kindergarten, or second grade, I, maybe they were older, time's a little funny, like that, but anyway, they got to go to school, and they had a really great experience, and again, I remember my wife telling, telling me that like, when she went to pick them up, it was like their last, it wasn't the end of school year, but we had to go, so last day, and they gave all their little friends, gave them notes, like goodbye, we're going to miss you, have fun in Laos, where's Laos, but have fun in Laos, you know, all this stuff, you know, and Kayla said that it was very hard, because as she walked away, she remembers like thinking like, oh my gosh, like we're leaving all this, this room, this classroom is beautiful, like these resources are amazing, and then she started to think like, man, what, what am I doing to my kids, like what am I dragging them into, we're going to Laos, it's an underdeveloped, landlocked, communist country, like we have a little kind of makeshift

homeschool, we're trying to do with some other foreign kids, and like, look at all they're missing, and so we had to search our hearts, over and over and over, and we asked this question of the Holy Spirit, let the Holy Spirit ask us like, do we want guaranteed access to the things we need, or do we want God, and can we trust that he's going to provide the things we really need, in that place, that doesn't look great, do we want security for our kids, do we want a good education for our kids, at least a sense of guaranteed safety for our kids, or do we want God for our kids, and do we want our kids to want God, when life gets tough, by the way, we're still searching our hearts, we're still asking those questions, because it turns out, you don't, you don't ever stop being a parent, so when we turn to the Lord, right, we discover these things in our heart, and God's, the Holy Spirit's very kind to us, the Holy Spirit will nudge us, if there's things there, he'll show us, what's next, what do we do next, when we look at Samuel, we look at the Israelites, and in verse five and six, look what do they do, they gather together, they fast, they pray, and they confess their sins, for us that might be personal, you know, when life gets a little crazy for you, or things start happening, [28:35] I would encourage you, take some time to pause, fast, whatever kind of fast, pray, but then you do need to get together, with other people, look how they gather together, you need your brothers, and sisters in Christ, maybe trusted people, where you can be like, hey, let me tell you what's going on, tell me what you're hearing, what's God saying to you, but then the whole community, gets together, they confess the idols of their hearts, their sins, their offenses, they receive prayer, and forgiveness, this was so cool, this last week, I don't know, some of you got to be here, but we did this little prayer, and pizza thing, and we started with, confession, which is a little, it's a little, it's a little different, sometimes like, ooh, we're going to do this for real, like with other people, but it was really, it was really cool to see how God used that, because in my group, and no names, if you're not here, don't worry, I'm not going to be like this person, but like Pierce, whatever, but no, in our group, in our group, we all struggled, like the thing that kind of came out of confession, one way or another, it's like we have a judgment issue, like we tend to think our perspective's right, and we tend to judge other people, who don't look like us, see like us, think like, whatever it is, right, we tend to have this judgment, man, we confess that, it was awesome, and it was nice hearing other people's confession, like, oh yeah, you also struggle,

I struggle, you struggle, that's right, we all need to lift this up, and I felt like we were praying for each other before God, it was pretty cool, and then when we got to the end of the night, this was really cool, what happened in our group was, we were praying for like, what does God have for us next, and man, all of us were just kind of like sensing like God, and you heard this in the group, like God has this like, we need to reach out to people in our community, God's giving us a heart for New Bern, like we got to get out, we got to help people, it's the lost, the needy, whatever, it's like, and I really believe, that God had to get us over our judgment of people, before he could give us that vision of like, now I want you to go love people, it's important to get together, and do this together, it's not complicated, 1 John 1:9 says this, if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just, to forgive our sins, and cleanse us from unrighteousness, don't over complicate it, confess, receive forgiveness, turn to him, if you have a brother in Christ struggling, be like, hey, here's what it says, let's do this, these are the steps, right, these are the steps, that break that cycle, of chaos, the spiritual decay, in our lives personally, and then as a community, turn your heart to the Lord, recognize idols, gather together, and then fast, pray and confess, but then God offers us one more thing, in this passage, I'm gonna finish with this, I forgot to grab this, I'm gonna grab the communion, while I do this, but, the last point is to honor the sacrifice, and I wanna grab this, because we're gonna move into communion here, in a moment, I'm gonna bring up the like, the smallest visual aid ever, but you guys know what's happening, I wanna have this before you, okay, because, I want you to be thinking about, what we're doing here, in a few minutes, as we go into this, so let's put that right there, honor the sacrifice, 1 Samuel 7, it says, well Samuel, was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near, to engage in Israel in battle, but the day that, but that day the Lord thundered, with a loud thunder, against the Philistines, and threw them into such a panic, that they were routed, before the Israelites, so the Philistines were subdued, and they stopped, and evading Israel's territory, throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the Lord, was against the Philistines, the towns from Ekron, to Gath, that the Philistines had captured, from Israel, were restored to Israel, and Israel delivered, the neighboring territory, from the hands of the Philistines, and there was peace, there it is, victory and peace, between Israel and Amorites, so finally now, we see that chaos, and death has stopped,

God's people will return to him, the process of spiritual decay stops, and it ends with victory, and with peace, so here's the final question, right, we see that, that's what stops the cycle, but how can holy God, dwell with sinful man, because I'll be honest, at the end of it all, like if we're not going to, repeat this cycle, what we really need, is we need God, we need to have God's presence, that is it, it's not the ark, not the temple, not the victories in battle, like we just need God, and now we don't have the physical temple anymore, we don't have the ark, we know the tabernacle, how's it work for us today, 1 Samuel 7, 9, right before that passage I just read, then Samuel took a suckling lamb, and sacrificed as a whole burnt offering, before the Lord, he cried out to the Lord, on Israel's behalf, the Lord answered him, when you look back in Leviticus, chapters 1 through 6, there's all these prescriptions, for like the different kinds of sacrifices, so if you did this, you brought this, maybe a dove, or maybe a small animal, or maybe a grain, if you were poor, you didn't have much, you bring some grain, whatever you have, there was a way that God said, you can come near me, you can come near holy God, if you bring these things, and then you won't die, but there has to be blood, again there's this thing of like, sin always costs life blood, because when we sin, it's always relational, and like there's always like, this death like experience, that you feel someone else feels, something how we offend God, there's some, that's the debt right, we all know that, what's the way to sin, death right, there's death occurs, and so death is the payment, so that's why you bring this stuff, here's the thing that would happen, in the tabernacle that's happened, in the temple that's happened, one of the sin offerings, was called the burnt offering, or the whole burnt offering, and here's how it works, okay, and be thinking about this, here's how it works, the person who had the offense, against God, they knew there was sin of life, they would come to the temple, the tabernacle, they would bring this animal, and they'd have a lamb, or a ram, a sheep, whatever, and they'd come before the priest, and the priest, would take the animal, and the person bringing it, right, you had to bring something, you can't come empty handed, because if you come in empty handed, you're carrying your sin, guess what gets on the altar, to be burned, you do, so you can't come empty handed, so you got to bring something, so they'd bring the animal, but then the priest would have them, have the person who brought it, put their hand, on the head of the animal, and they would transfer, that was a transfer of sin, like you were transferring your sin, onto the animal, while the priest killed the animal, so the priest would slaughter the animal, while you have your hand on that, like you're watching this happen, like your sin is now being transferred, and the animal's taking death, right, pain with death, they would take the blood, they would like, pour it out around the altar, they'd like, sprinkle it all over the horns of the altar, and stuff, that's the blood, like remember, there has to be blood, blood's the price, and then they'd take the animal, they'd clean it up a little bit, and then they'd put the whole animal, it's the whole burnt offering, they'd put the animal on the altar, and the animal's consumed, that meant that your sin, that was transferred on the animal, is now consumed, it is gone, and you can walk away, out of the tabernacle, out of the temple, and you're clean, you're pure, you're holy, you're made right, there was one day in the year, called the Day of Atonement, when the priest and Aaron would take, they'd take two goats, and same thing, one goat would be, for the whole people, to atone for the whole people, he'd put his hand on that goat, all the sins of the people, would go on that, and then that goat, became a whole burnt offering, and the blood went everywhere, and the holy place, and the temple, in other words, it was clean, like sorry God, that we're coming even into your space, but we're cleansing it, the debt's been paid here, blood's been paid for this, and then the body of the animal, gets put up on there, and it's consumed, all the people's sins gone, but there's this other one, called the scapegoat, there's two goats, and that goat, he would put the sins of the people, on this goat, and then they would release it, into the wilderness, in other words, it's like, all your sin is carried out, into the wilderness, it's gone, it's taken away from you, outside this camp, this holy camp, where God is dwelling with us, right, this is how holy God, dwells with us, do you see it, like when John says, he looks at Jesus, says look, that's the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, he's like, that's the one, that's the, he's the burnt offering, like he's the one, that's taking all of our sin away, so that we can walk away clean, he's also the scapegoat, Jesus is the one, who took our sin into the wilderness, right, so we can stay in the camp, like listen, you might have grown up, in a system that tells you like, yeah, you really need to clean up, before you come to God, if you just fix your problems, then you can come to God, no, like Jesus took it, first one, you can be clean, but he also took it away, so you can stay in the camp, you can stay with holy God, with your problems, because Jesus took it outside the camp, so now we can stay in the camp, we can be with God, do you see it, so beautiful, you're welcome to stay in the camp, the temple's open, holy God is living among us,

forgiveness and healing, they're always available, right now, all right, band, you can come on up here, let's do this, we're gonna jump into communion, we're gonna celebrate this, as we celebrate what Jesus has done for us, again, if you're not quite in that relationship yet, you're like, [37 : 22] I don't know if I have that relationship, with this God, you know, I've kind of been living my own way, I want to encourage you today, this is not for you yet, you can't celebrate this, until you've received it, figure out what's going on in your heart, you're like, God, I've been holding on to something, and just confess it, it is simple as that, Jesus did this for you, and then come talk to us, afterwards, pray with somebody, we'd love to pray with you, there'll be a prayer on the screen, you can pray, or you can use your own words, if you are in relationship with Jesus, as you come get the bread and the cup, I just wanted to walk through these steps, maybe, just like, okay, Lord, I want to turn my heart to you, maybe I need to confess, maybe there's an idol, Holy Spirit, just, it could be something small, something big, doesn't matter, and then let's honor that sacrifice, and maybe you want to imagine this, just imagine, taking your sin, whatever form, whatever this looks like to you, but take your sin, all this, whatever God's put on your heart, you're like, I don't need that, that's something I don't need in my life, and picture transferring it to Jesus, as he takes it to the cross, and it's disintegrated, it's consumed, it's gone, it takes it to the grave, and you can walk away free, let me pray for us,

Lord, as we celebrate what you've given us, words can only do so much, but God, you, by your Holy Spirit, can do things in us, that we can't even imagine, because of what you've already accomplished, what you've already done, so do that, do those things, we come to you, with hearts of confession, seeking you, in your name Jesus, amen.