

God's Grace When We're Under Siege

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 November 2023

Preacher: Eric Santiago

[0 : 0 0] sending out, multiplying, all that good stuff. And so that's what the advanced movement of churches is about. It's church strengthening, it's church planting. And so they were in this week because we had a conference of all the pastors and leaders of those churches of advance that are on the eastern part of the United States.

Eric was one of the keynote speakers, and man, he slammed it out of the park. Really ministered deeply to so many in the room. I'm excited for you to hear from him today, but first I want to let his better half actually have a little say and maybe just give us an update about Monument and tell us something that we can maybe be in prayer for for your church.

Hello, good morning. Welcome from Monument, actually. They know that we're here and they are praying for you. We pray for you often. So update on Monument.

We are a people on the move. We are following the pillar of smoke and the pillar of fire. Like that's kind of our thing right now. So we're kind of moving around a lot. We've been in nine venues in the last four years, which has been a little crazy.

But the thing that I will say, it has really created a steeliness in our people. If you're still there, you really want to be there. So I really... Then you've been able to find us.

[1 : 1 5] Yeah, if you can find us, then that's awesome. So we've been really grateful for that. I actually, that has had some unintended, really excellent consequences that we weren't expecting.

We have a lot of young adults coming these days. So they make up about almost a quarter of our congregation, which is pretty cool. So we're always, if you think to pray, we're always wanting to figure out how best to engage with them.

We have a wonderful prayer and worship culture, which is amazing and really, really grateful for us. So that's something that we continue to develop.

So those are just some of the things that we're kind of about, that we love, that we feel like the Lord has put his fingerprint, some things that he's made and put in us. And so if you think to pray for any of those things, that would be amazing.

Awesome. Cool. Thank you for sharing. So yeah, I just want to just commend them to you guys and also for Eric. And he's going to teach us today.

[2 : 1 4] But open your hearts to them. We got to hang out with them yesterday. They stayed over at our house. And so we just got to spend time, me and Haley. And man, they just downloaded a lot of wisdom into us in that short period of time.

Really ministered to our hearts in a lot of ways. And so we just, we really do just appreciate you guys profoundly. Thank you so much. Thank you for the friendship that we have. And it's growing and it's, yeah, it's, I just look forward to the years ahead of us like, you know, doing this together even more.

So thank you so much. So I'm going to get out of the way, hand it over to you, my friend and go for it. Okay. Well, thank you for that, Jesse. It's, it really is good to be with you guys.

I love our partnership. We're better because of this partnership. And just like in a church with members, we have a partnership among many churches with different cultures and we can borrow and learn from one another.

And that's what I've really enjoyed being able to do. So yeah, want to wish you a warm greeting from Monument Church. Come and visit us. Every once in a while, somebody will just pop in because people get up to DC and we're just about a half hour north of there.

[3 : 2 5] You're going to have to check the website just to where we are. But all right, I want to jump right in because I've just felt to preach on this particular passage today. And part of it is we've been in 1st and 2nd Kings.

I don't know how much time you've spent in 1st and 2nd Kings. It's not the one you might typically leap to. We read the Gospels, we read the Psalms, but the whole counsel of God, the whole book of the Bible has so many nuggets and so much richness and wisdom for life today, for our lives right now.

And so I just want to commend these books to you. Basically, 1st and 2nd Kings are books mostly about the failed kings of Israel, the disobedience that the kings led the people into, their idol worship, but also how the ministry of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, his protegee, served on behalf of God as God intervened.

The grace of God is so powerful. It's so potent and it's so present in these books. And actually, one of the things I love is, you know, people who don't know much about the Bible think it's a lot about God's anger and his wrath.

And you just see, when you start to look closely at what the people of God did and how kind he was despite those things, it is so much a book about his grace.

[4 : 46] There is wrath. There is justice. But the amount of mercy that comes through these books is just so powerful. And so these are kind of obscure stories. You're going to learn, like, what? But they're not just random fables and myths and legends.

1st and 2nd Kings are some of the most potent and necessary books of history of this time, in ancient history that we have. And so this isn't made-up stuff.

This is accounted for by the Holy Spirit who has given these things thousands of years later for our benefit. So I just want to encourage you, lean in.

Because it's actually a good chunk of Scripture, but it's like a story. I'm reading out of the New Living Translation. I think you might be seeing the English Standard Version, which is fine. I read out of the New Living sometimes because it's very story-like.

And it's, I think, still doing this justice, but helping us understand the narrative. So I'm going to jump right in to 2nd Kings 6, verse 24. And it comes just after another battle that is accounted for.

[5 : 51] And it just kind of keeps clipping along in terms of telling the story chronologically. So in verse 24, it says, Sometime later, however, King Ben-Hadad of Aram. Now, Aram is Syria, what we would know as Syria today.

He mustered his entire army and besieged Samaria. That's just the capital of Israel. So there were constantly these battles going on. I just got to say, even reading this this morning, I'm thinking of Israel and Palestine.

And like, those of you who've been around for a while know that that thing's been going on for a long time. Those who read the Bible know it's been going on for thousands of years. And it's like, man, this just does not seem to get settled.

We so need Jesus to break in and bring the final peace. But here you are, another account of a war that was raging right in the same area with almost the same people.

Well, it says in verse 25, As a result of this besieging, there was a great famine in the city. The siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for 80 pieces of silver and a cup of dove's dung sold for five pieces of silver.

[7 : 00] The immature among us, including me, are like, like, my study did not conclusively reveal why you would want a cup of bird poop. However, what this is meant to characterize is the desperate situation that is happening here because of the famine.

So basically, like, who wants a donkey's head? Well, that was food by that point. Everything was so dire. Food was so scarce. They would be eating the head of the donkey. Number one, they didn't eat donkeys to begin with.

They ate other choice meats and barley and flour. But here they are, not only eating a donkey, but eating a donkey's head. And some speculate they were also eating dove's dung or that it was fuel to cook the donkey's heads.

Can you imagine that's your meal? You're cooking a donkey's head over dove's dung? I mean, it sounds silly, but it's actually absolutely desperate. And that's what it's trying to do.

These things were in high demand. These undesirable things were in high demand and expensive. So then it says, one day, in verse 26, as the king of Israel was walking along the wall of the city, a woman called to him, please help me, my lord, the king.

[8 : 12] He answered, and I just, his answer here is just so staggering. He says, if the Lord doesn't help you, what can I do? So he's kind of taking a shot at God.

And by the way, this woman who's crying out to the king of Israel for help is basically just kind of whatever. She says, I have neither food from the threshing floor nor wine from the press to give you.

He says this, I have neither food. I can't help you. But then he says, then it says, the king's asked, what is the matter? So she replied, this woman said to me, come on, let's eat your son today. I know. It's shocking. Then she says, then we will eat my son tomorrow. So we cooked my son and ate him.

The next day I said to her, kill your son so we can eat him. But she has hidden her son. Now again, this feels sort of otherworldly. Like, can we even really understand this? Can we connect to it?

[9 : 15] I got to tell you, this actually is not, this has happened in modern times. In the early 1900s, there were accounts of a war in Ukraine. Does that sound familiar? Where actually they were so desperate and in such great need of food and famine that they were eating their children.

Now I don't want to major on that or stay on that, but it's in the word of God for a reason. And again, to portray that this kind of situation was absolutely desperate.

And that actually, that's not just thousands of years ago. It has happened not too long ago. Verse 31, the king heard this. He tore his clothes in despair.

That's the right response. And as the king walked along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing burlap under his robe next to his skin. So this is a sign of repentance actually, because they realized this difficulty was from God.

It was because of their disobedience. And so he was like, okay, got to do the repentance thing. And so put this burlap next to his skin. And why did they know this?

[10 : 20] How did they know what was going on? Well, it's foretold in Deuteronomy chapter 28. It says when they disobey, this is actually exactly what's going to happen.

This is what God is going to give them over to. In verse 53, it says, and you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you.

This was entirely predicted and predictable. And so he knew, I need to repent. Obviously, we've done something wrong. We have made God upset. So there is repentance, but there's also something else.

Let's keep going in verse 31. So then the king says, may God strike me and even kill me if I don't separate Elisha's head from his shoulders this very day.

The prophet, the voice of God, the king vowed. Elisha was sitting in his house with the elders of Israel when the king sent a messenger to summon him. But before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the elders, a murderer, speaking of the king, has sent a man to cut off my head.

[11 : 33] When he arrives, shut the door, keep him out. We will soon hear his master's steps following him. So the king was going to follow. Verse 33, while Elisha was still saying this, the messenger arrived, and the king said, all this misery is from the Lord.

Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Chapter 7, verse 1 says, Elisha replied, listen to this message from the Lord. This is what the Lord says.

By this time tomorrow, in the markets of Samaria, six quarts of choice flour will cost only one piece of silver, and 12 quarts of barley grain will cost only one piece of silver.

This is cheap compared to the present price of bird poop. It's just amazing. Really? Maybe overnight this is all going to change so drastically? Well, the officer assisting the king said to the man of God, that couldn't happen, even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven.

Man, you're standing next to that guy like, no, no, don't go there. That's not the right answer. But Elisha replied, you will see it happen with your own eyes, but you won't be able to eat any of it.

[12 : 42] Man. You just kind of want to go, that kind of words, those words from a prophet of God are just chilling.

Now, in the next verse, we have a bit of a scene break. We cut to verse three. Now there were four men with leprosy sitting at the entrance of the gates.

Why should we sit here waiting to die? They asked each other. We'll starve if we stay here. But with the famine in the city, we'll starve if we go back there. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army, the enemy army.

If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway. So at twilight, they set out for the camp of the Arameans. But when they came to the edge of the camp, no one

was there.

For the Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sounds of a great army approaching.

[13:42] The king of Israel has hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us, they cried to one another. So they panicked and ran into the night, abandoning their tents, horses, donkeys, and everything else as they fled for their lives.

I just want to pause there and say, you know, God can do whatever he wants. And he can use whatever means he wants to change the situation drastically. Whatever situation is bearing down on you, he can actually just, I don't know, in this case, cause them to hear the clatter of speeding chariots.

He just creates in their mind this thing. He's so creative with the things he does as well. But he can do whatever he wants. He can change the circumstances easily however he wants to.

Man, when we revisit these old stories, we go, he did that. He's the same God who does the same things and will, if I would only just continue to trust him.

The beautiful thing is, verse eight, it says, when the men with leprosy arrived at the edge of the camp, they went into one tent after another, eating and drinking wine. And they carried off silver and gold and clothing and hid it.

[14:57] Finally, they said to each other, this is not right. This is a day of good news and we aren't sharing it with anyone. If we wait until morning, some calamity will certainly come upon us.

Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace. So they went back to the city and told the gatekeepers what had happened. We went out to the Aramean camp, they said, and no one was there. The horses and donkeys were tethered and the tents were all in order, but there wasn't a single person around.

Then the gatekeepers shouted the news to the people in the palace. This is the last couple of verses. I know this is a chunk, but you start to envision what is going on here. Verse 12 says, the king got out of bed in the middle of the night and told his officers, I know what has happened.

The Arameans know we're starving, so they left their camp and have hidden in the fields. They're expecting us to leave the city and then they will take us alive and capture the city. Where he got that, I have no idea, but he seems quite certain of it.

Then it says, one of his officers replied, we had better send out scouts to check into this. Let them take five of the remaining horses. If something happens to them, it will be no worse than if they stay here and die with the rest of us.

[16:11] What an incredible and strange story. I'll give the end of it as I conclude the message, but man, what it does is it teaches us some very important things.

See, we want to follow Jesus. We want to live according to his word. We want to obey what he does, but we can't. Or we struggle. Or every time we try, it seems that we hit some obstacle and we need him.

We can't do it without him. So in all of our best intentions and our greatest skill and whatever else we think is going to do it, there is no way to actually do it without him and what we see in his word and how he instructs us.

And so what do we see that's happening here in this story that helps us when we're under siege? I mean, you ever feel like you're under siege? You ever feel like you're in difficult circumstances? You don't know the way out? Well, man, there is an incredible pattern of how to respond to these things sitting right here in the pages of scripture. The first thing I see is that what we really need is godly wisdom.

[17:22] That is the first thing that's abandoned here with King Joram. I don't know if you guys remember the story of King Solomon, but King Solomon is known for his wisdom, right? They said, God said he would give him wisdom like no one else, riches like no one else.

And he was known for his wisdom. Well, what's interesting is there was a story of two women who came to him about their two sons. If you remember the story, he resolves the situation and it was actually a huge witness to the people of Israel of his great wisdom.

Well, here King Joram has an opportunity to do the same thing and wisdom goes entirely out the window. He doesn't even really try. He just rips his robe.

He doesn't press into God. He doesn't look compassionately upon the situation. He basically just gives up. Emotion has taken hold.

He's so frustrated. He's been under these dire, admittedly, circumstances for all of his time and he's just kind of had it. And I just want to encourage us, when you're really in the thick of it, do you seek godly wisdom?

[18:31] How do we do that? The word of God is the best source of godly wisdom. But because we're often so emotionally entangled in our situation, we just start making decisions out of some other place, out of fear, out of frustration, out of anger, out of insecurity, uncertainty.

And actually, we need to pause and look to the word of God. He wants to speak to us ongoingly, every single day throughout the day. I think our sense is that he's distant, quiet, doesn't care. I think that's the default of the human soul. Is that's what we kind of think of. And he's like, no, no, no. Don't you see? Even these guys, as disobedient as they were, I broke into their lives. I intervene and I want to do that for you. It wasn't until this morning when we were in worship and I read, I thought of this passage that is a well-known passage, but I just felt like God gave me just a new insight.

Hebrews 4.12, again, reading from the New Living Translation, says, for the word of God is alive and powerful. You may know it as alive and active. It's sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow.

[19:51] I've always gone, what exactly does that mean? And I really think one of the things it means is that our soul and our spirit are often just tangled together. We can't discern and understand the will of God.

Our soul's emotions are just clouding the whole situation and the word of God can just come in and cut these things and separate these things and make them clear and provide a way forward and wisdom in the moment.

Man, that was so helpful to me. I was just sitting here in worship and I actually just saw this razor blade like cutting and I went, what is that, Lord? I just felt that he wants to help us by his word cut and separate the entangled emotions and confusion that happens when we're under siege.

Go to his word. Go to his word. You know it's good. Why don't you read it? Why don't I, first and foremost, immediately in every situation, leap to his word?

Because I think there's so many other better sources or I just am overwhelmed and I sit there and ruminate and spin on these issues and he just says, open it up and I want to speak to you through it.

[21:05] Godly wisdom is what we need. Who do you go to for godly wisdom? Because brothers and sisters who we know and love and have a relationship through Jesus Christ actually offer godly wisdom.

But I really think you've got to go and say, hey, I really want your perspective on this. Somebody might even see you kind of wandering around and meandering off track but might not feel the invitation to say something.

Hey, have you considered? Because normally when they're not in this situation, they're able to see some things a little bit clearer. But we've got to invite that. It doesn't have to be everybody but who are the people that you go to that you've pinpointed that you've built a relationship with and you say, I need your wisdom in my life.

King Joram wasn't doing any of that. And that's why it's such a great illustration for us to understand. Who do you go to when you can't see straight or the circumstances are overwhelming? So important. All right, next, we see godly wisdom. We also see something that we need in the midst of siege, in the midst of chaos and confusion is authentic repentance.

[22:14] repentance. Not just a version or a picture or an image of fake repentance. See, that's what's happening here. So basically, you know, the woman tells the king the story and it says, when the king heard this, he tore his clothes in despair and as the king walked along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing burlap under his robe next to his skin.

Great, box checked. You're repenting. But actually, in the next verse, it says, may God strike me and even kill me if I don't separate Elisha's head from his shoulders this very day, the king vowed. You cannot simultaneously turn toward God and then just want to kill him. Basically, Elisha was God's representative in the earth in this moment.

So here you are and you're going, okay, Lord, I turn to you and I basically want to kill your guy. So it just, you know, God is big enough to handle it if you're wrestling with him.

You might even be shaking your fist because of disappointment. He's big enough to handle that. But don't try to make it seem like you're repenting when you're shaking your fist.

[23 : 26] And to do these things simultaneously is just silly. I find that when I wrestle with God and I shake my fist, he wins 100% of the time. But it's a beautiful thing because he's willing to engage with me.

He's willing to meet me in that. And then I can finally turn away from whatever it was that I was looking to satisfy me and toward him. In this case, King Joram and his anger.

When we get into the midst of anxiety, depression, frustration, confusion, what do we turn to that is not for our own good? Repentance is not some self-flagellation.

So many people have given it such a bad word. But it's, you know, just a few chapters before this story, you may remember Elijah, when the fire comes out of heaven, he's actually going up against the prophets of Baal.

And it was like, okay, let's prove whose God is real. Of course, we know it's Elijah's God. But in order to try to call God out of heaven by fire to burn the sacrifice, Elijah prays a simple prayer.

[24 : 33] the priests of Baal actually start cutting themselves with stones because they know they've got to make some kind of sacrifice to please this God that they're trying to serve.

But what we know is that actually it's not by cutting ourselves, it's not by our own blood gushing that saves us and cleanses us of sin. We do have sin, but it is the sacrifice in the blood of Jesus Christ. Aren't you grateful that we don't have to cut ourselves with stones? Repentance is receiving that free gift of his grace and turning back toward him away from the things we are so inclined to go to in the midst of our difficulty.

We need authentic repentance. Not just a nod to God as a religious notion, but turning away from our sin and to him for our own good.

For our own good. All right, that's the second thing. Godly wisdom, authentic repentance, and then the other thing we see is patience. We typically just want to be out of the situation, right? Is anybody in a situation right now that you'd like to be out of?

[25 : 42] You can raise your hand. Yeah, a lot of people. And that was half of the people that were willing to raise their hand. We just want to be out.

We're like, there's no point in this, of course. I mean, here it is. chapter 6, verse 33. All this misery is from the Lord, the king says.

Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Gosh, I was like, I've said that. Like, maybe not in those words, but I've said that. Like, I've wanted out.

And why wait for him? He's obviously taking too long. He doesn't understand the nature of the circumstances. Right? Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Patience is not just a platitude or a bumper sticker.

It's deep and it's raw when you are waiting in the midst of difficulty. And I just gotta say, these guys were eating dove's dung. That's pretty bad. That's pretty desperate.

[26 : 40] They had famine. They were eating their own children. I mean, this was desperate. We lose patience in far easier circumstances, don't we?

Patience is one of the best indicators of our disposition toward God. Waiting is a sign of deep trust and belief in the sovereignty of God. I know he will come.

Nope, I am not moving. I'm not moving. I'm restless. I want this to be over, but I know he will come. And not only do I know he will come, he hasn't forgotten about me. He isn't just leaving me here to rot.

He's trying to teach me something. He's trying to teach me how to wait on him. How to have faith in him. When my greatest inclination is why haven't you come yet, Lord, I will take this into my own hands.

For those of you who raised your hand and those of you who didn't, I just want to encourage you. This is a one-on-one example of how impatience just takes us right out of obeying God and honoring him in our lives.

[27 : 50] I'm so inclined to be impatient. I so want it yesterday, especially when I was younger. Now I get older and I'm a little less impatient. I see that God does things over time.

He takes his own sweet time. Will you let him? Will you let him take his own sweet time in that situation you're desperate to be out of? Because he's active right now.

He's doing work in your heart. The other thing we see here, and this is such a chilling line, chapter 7, verse 2, that couldn't happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven.

The servant is just shutting down even the possibility of God's intervention. And he's not even saying he might not intervene. He's saying, actually, even God can't do it. All the provision of heaven cannot change the situation in the way that you're describing.

Why? Why is he so cynical? See, that's the other thing that I see that I feel like when we are under siege or we experience difficulty over and over and over and we don't see God act like we think he's supposed to, we basically just start to think he's not going to act at all.

[29 : 14] That's not going to happen. I mean, even the king. Cynicism and skepticism. I just can't believe this line. And again, I want to cut him slack.

It's a tough moment. But in verse 12, he says, I know what's happened. I know. I know. I've got it. I've got this figured out. The Arameans know we're starving, so they've left their camp and have hidden the fields.

They are expecting us to leave the city and then they will take us alive and capture the city. He doesn't know anything. He doesn't know anything. He's totally wrong, but he probably sounds smart, doesn't he?

Cynicism sounds so smart. Are you too smart to be fooled by good news? Are you too smart to be fooled by good news?

We want to appear like we've got it figured out. And usually the negative, cynical, skeptical perspective is the one that sounds the smartest and is yet the most faithless.

[30 : 14] Man, I've got to tell you, when these words confronted me, I was just like, oh, have I, is that me? Of course it's me. Has my heart just grown a little bit of a layer on it that says, I know better.

God can't, won't, do, anything. I think in our church and community life, one of the ways this manifests itself is we become cynical about the prophetic and prayer.

I mean, by the way, that's what's happening here. Elisha's prophesying and the guy's like, nope, that's not gonna happen. He's going, no, no, I have good news. And he's saying it, how?

How does he know that? By the spirit of God. See, I know that many people, maybe even in this room, have had experiences with this thing of speaking by the spirit of God that have just caused you to go, I'm not interested.

And I get it. Either it didn't happen or it was handled in a silly way or people got too obsessed with it. And so, a lot of us, especially that were around in the 80s and 90s, were like, yep, so we're just not, we don't do that anymore.

[31 : 30] You know that thing that's very much in the Bible, which by the way, the Bible is a prophecy. We don't do that anymore. Do we really? I mean, we believe in the gift of it, but you know, we don't really do that anymore.

I mean, how's your prayer life? Like, how's, how's you asking other people for prayer? Because if you've grown cynical and skeptical of the prophetic and of prayer, you just kind of don't really do it anymore.

I really believe, and even I've been reflecting on this, there are people here who have prayer and prophetic gifts that are kind of laying a little bit dormant because of cynicism. Like, in the midst of the battle, when you are struggling, do you run to people and say, I need you to pray for me because it works.

Because he cares and somehow he's seen fit to move through one another to help one another. How often when somebody says, I feel the Lord saying, I don't know how much that happens here. We explore and experiment with this at Monument Church. We don't want to get off track and start acting silly about it because I've seen that before and it doesn't represent God well. But we don't want to shut it down either because Paul says, don't shut it down.

[32 : 43] I wish that you all would desire to prophesy, he said. He also said that no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit of God, which basically means that that's prophecy. Let's demystify what prophecy is for a moment and start to explore and experiment and expect that God wants to speak to us and through us and not just go, no, no, no, prove it.

You need to prove that because Elijah couldn't prove it. Oh, he did the next day. It was proven. So what I think we also need to take from this story is not just godly wisdom, authentic repentance and patience, but an element of anti-cynicism.

And I don't mean just hope because that's what it is. It's just hope. But not just a passive, yeah, I think God might, no, it's like, I want to kill cynicism the sense that, yeah, I'm smarter than that. I'm not going to be fooled by good news and actually just let a hope rise in us that says God is here, he's moving, he's present, and he will act on our behalf ongoingly, especially only in times if we would just ask him.

I'll summarize the end of the story. The scouts went and found that what the lepers said was true. The Aramaeans had fled the camp, leaving the clothes in their wake, not plotting against Samaria at all, as the king had suspected.

[34 : 12] So the Israelites plundered the camp, and because of the windfall of all of what they had, just as Elisha said, six quarts of choice flour were sold that day for one piece of silver, and 12 quarts of barley grain were sold for one piece of silver.

Overnight. Overnight. The circumstances changed overnight. Why? Because God said, we're going to change the circumstances now. That's why we wait, because at any moment, he just wants to change the circumstances.

Our part, faithful, patience. His part, to do whatever he wants. Thank you, Lord, because you know better than I do. Oh, and that officer that Elijah said would see but not eat any of it, he was put in charge of the traffic at the gate, and he was trampled.

He was dead. So not only did he not eat, but he died. Man, what a tale. He died because of cynicism. I don't believe God for a second.

I just think it's good for us to honestly assess, have we gotten there? Do we go there? Are we stuck there? Because if we are, we can go to Jesus and say, help my hardened heart.

[35 : 28] See, because I think this happens when we encounter discouragements and disappointments and missed expectations and dashed hopes, and life is full of them.

Isn't it? I don't know anyone who hasn't been disappointed, discouraged, had expectations that weren't met, and we need to know how to deal with this.

John Piper has this incredible quote, and I think it's so important for us to process our souls. and he starts the quote with one word that I just want to pause on, occasionally.

And why does he say occasionally? Because he's saying you'll have to do this again and again and again. There's going to be a rhythm of this in your life if you're going to be able to process the difficulties of life well and stay hopeful.

you're going to have to do this. You're going to have to acknowledge this. He says occasionally weep deeply over the life you hoped would be.

[36 : 37] Grieve the losses. Then wash your face, trust God, and embrace the life you have. Embrace the life you have.

But you cannot do that with hope and faith and love toward God unless you've been able to weep deeply, to grieve the losses you've experienced.

There is not a single person in this room who's hoped for something and didn't get it. Could be the wrong thing, could be the right thing, doesn't even matter. It's just that that has been the experience that can so easily lead to a disposition toward God that we just don't want to have.

So we do need to just repent of resentment for not getting the life we wanted. It's not sinful to desire but when it becomes an idol to fixate and then resent God in the midst of it.

He just wants you to turn back to him and just when you think he can't, he won't. He breaks in. I want to land us there and just mention one final thing which is these wonderful lepers.

[37 : 54] These guys are the outcasts of the story. These are the marginalized. These are the diseased. These are the guys that basically say either way we're probably going to die.

These are the guys that in a sense were going to die of the disease or some other. Oftentimes when you hear a story you kind of try to find yourself. Can I encourage you to find yourself in the leper?

because that's who we are. The ones who were destined and doomed for death until Jesus Christ came and instead gave us a feast.

Instead he gave us a feast. We were doomed. We were diseased. We were broken and we were destined for eternal separation from God and instead he invited us to a feast.

Now can I encourage you don't just enjoy it share it with other people. They said this is not right. This is a day of good news and we aren't sharing it with anyone.

[38 : 55] Oh can I just encourage you it's easy for us just to come and have a nice moment in this community together and fail to share it with anyone. The temptation is overwhelming.

It takes work and effort and we have to put ourselves out there but actually sharing what we have been given is the call of God upon our lives. We need to go and share the good news.

Luke 4 Jesus says the spirit of the Lord is upon me it's upon you because he's anointed me he's anointed you to proclaim the good news to the poor.

To proclaim the good news is what he's called us to. I want to invite the band up if Blake and Majan could come up. We're going to take communion and we're talking about this at the end of the last service and just thought what an amazing privilege we've been given.

We were the lepers in the story and we were invited to a feast. they were feasting on their children and we are now feasting with God through Jesus Christ.

[40 : 15] That's what communion is all about. I'm going to welcome Jesse to come up and just walk us through that but then we're going to have an opportunity to pray for folks and I want to just continue to call you to lean in to this moment.

I think God's not done for this yet. Amen.