

Psalm 123

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[0 : 0 0] All right, continuing in our psalm series, good morning again, and my name is Jesse, one of the pastors here, those who are listening to this online, thank you for doing that. If you're new, man, we are just towards the end of our psalm series. If you're missing, if you missed out on a bunch of them, they're available online on our website, oneharborchurch.com. We also have this amazing app, which you can do everything on, including finding those sermons and listening to those sermons, and I really would recommend you doing that. And by way of just reminding us why we're in this series, our goal is that through this series, we're going to be encouraged to pray more, because that's what the book of Psalms is.

It's a collection of prayers and songs that are focused to God. As people of God, we get to bring ourselves to Him. So it's praying more, but it's just not praying more, it's praying more authentically as well, coming and being the real us and bringing ourselves to God. So I don't know if this has been your experience. I grew up in church, I'm a PK, and so I remember my understanding of a prayer language was like you had to speak in the King James Version of English for some reason. So it's like, I would be speaking like this, and then all of a sudden I get into prayer, and I'm like, oh Lord, I beseech thee, that thou wouldest come unto thee. And it's like, oh, do I have to remember, it's thee before thou except after thy. It's like all this stuff, right? But we don't want to step into that weird religiosity where you have to approach God a certain way and use certain words and be really fancy. No, God's like, bring the real you to me. That's what I want. Bring the real you to me. And today we're going to be in Psalm 123. And Psalm 123 is part of a collection of Psalms called the Songs of Ascent. And I just want to give us a little bit brief background on what that means because the context I think is beautiful and helps us understand this Psalm a little bit more.

These Songs of Ascent were songs that Israel, the people of Israel, would sing on their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for feasts that they would celebrate together as a nation. And they were celebrating, they were coming together to remember who God is, how God saved them and redeemed them, and also to repent and entreat his mercy and favor. And they would do that together as a nation. And so on their road to Jerusalem, as they were scattered all over the nation of Israel, all over the territory, they would be coming together. And on their way, they would be singing these songs.

Along Obedience in the Same Direction is a book that I absolutely love. It was written by Eugene Peterson. And actually, it's considered like the gold standard. Amongst scholars and commentaries, it's considered the gold standard of teaching on the Songs of Ascent. If you want to read them in a very accessible, fun, helpful way, Eugene Peterson's book, Along Obedience in the Same Direction.

Get it, read it, you will be blessed by it. It really helped me in my sermon today. And I can't recommend it highly enough. So let's just jump right into it now. Psalm 123. We're going to start in verse 1. Of course, it says this, To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us. For we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud. This is God's word.

[3 : 47] Y'all are probably already excited because the last few Psalms have been like 31 verses, and you're like, that was it? Yes, that was it. All right. This Psalm is actually, it's considered a community lament. And remember, this was sung like people in a caravan heading to Jerusalem, same direction, same destination. And I think when we think about what the songs of a sense and what's happening here, in this community lament together, it's a beautiful picture of what it means to follow Jesus, where we are saved into a personal relationship with Jesus, but we are saved into a community of believers.

We are saved into a covenant people, where we get to gather together, where we do life together, this thing called local church. And so we travel through life together in the same direction.

You're not heading to heavenly Jerusalem on your own. We get to do it together. We get to, this direction is toward obedience to Jesus. It's considering what is my next step? What is my next sacrifice in following him? But you don't do that alone. We do that as a community.

We're meant to be doing it together in the flesh. And you'll notice how the pronouns change from verse one. I lift my eyes, right? It's very personal. I lift my eyes and then it switches right after that.

Everything is our and us and we. Now, I want to say this. There are some prayers that are best prayed together. I just want to say that. In fact, I would also argue praying alone is good. Praying together is great. Don't get me wrong. I love praying alone. I like having my quiet time. I love coming to God.

[5 : 29] I love that intimacy that I get to enjoy with him. Just being his son, sitting with him, enjoying what he says over me and speaking to him as well. Those are good things. I need that. But I also want to say, man, there is nothing more stirring and more encouraging when the church comes and prays together. There's just something powerful about that because we bring our collective faith and our collective faith, it's like the tide rushing in together. Just when it raises, all the boats rise, right? And that's what happens. And we need that. The Holy Spirit, when we're praying together, he's speaking to our hearts in both a unified way and I would say in diverse ways as well.

It's a beautiful thing. It's like bringing together different types of flowers that make this beautiful bouquet even more wonderful and amazing and marvelous. And the difference is the beauty.

The difference of how the Holy Spirit speaks to us, it complements each other, right? To make a better whole. And even though the first verse is very personal to you, I left my eyes. Oh, you who are enthroned in heaven? It moves quickly to that unified togetherness. And that's the power of community. There's power in community. It's like Rudyard Kipling wrote, right? The strength of the pack is the wolf. The strength of the wolf is the pack. The community of God is made up of unique individuals who aren't individualistic. There's a big difference there. We each have a part to play, right? Members of the body, we might have different roles, different talents, different giftings.

We're not all fingers. We're not all elbows. Some of us are two left feet, but that's another issue to deal with. We each have a part to play. We each have a role, but that personal responsibility is worked out in a unified way. It's like the different instruments of the orchestra playing their part of the same symphony. They're different sounds. They're different roles in the piece. They work together in harmony, and it creates this marvelous piece of music when it's played together. I lift my eyes to the one enthroned in heaven. You lift your eyes to the one enthroned in heaven. We together lift our eyes to the one enthroned in heaven. And when we're together, we have to be playing the same music.

And this particular song, this lament, it wasn't a time to rejoice. It was a time to complain. Bring your complaints to God and ask for help. And that's the thing about community.

[8 : 06] Like, just because, man, I'm feeling joyful today, I'm not going to lament with those people. There might have been some dude on those caravan, like there was probably a Jabez that was walking along. It's like, my life is great. I don't want to sing that lament. I want to step into one of those other songs of a sense that's like, it's, you know, it's lifting me up into the heavenly places with joy and exaltation and all that stuff. But now, man, when it's time to sing Psalm 123 together, it's time to sing Psalm 123 together, regardless of how you're feeling. And we do that because we are community.

And it's good for us to do that together. Because you know what? Somebody who's not feeling so hot, who's feeling down, they need you to come alongside them, no matter what you're feeling, to share in that lament that they're feeling. Like Romans talks about, we rejoice with those who rejoice, but guess what we also do? We mourn with those who mourn as well. And this thing, it helps us stay humble. We realize that we're a part of something bigger than ourselves. It's important to realize that. And we're part of something bigger than ourselves. We aren't our own masters calling the shots. We're God's people. We belong to him. So we begin by looking up to heaven. We look up to the one who sits enthroned in heaven. God is greater than us, right? We look up. He's in this place. He's an exalted father. He's an exalted king. He's the exalted Lord. He's greater than us.

The other day, I'm driving down the road praying. And I'm one of those weirdos that if you look at me at the wrong time, my mouth is moving. And I'm just trusting that. You know, they probably assume I'm on the phone with some like ear, you know, ear thing in and they'll let me off the hook. So I'm praying, man, like God, you're greater than me. I remember saying that. And there was this little pushback in my heart when I said that. I was like, there's this little part of me that was like, I didn't want that to be true. I like stopped. And I was like, man, Lord, that was weird. I know that you're God Almighty.

I know that you're greater than me. And we need to remember that. We need to reckon with that. We need to resolve that. And so that we just don't approach him in a casual way all the time.

Psalm 123.2 says, behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord, our God, till he has mercy upon us. Now, this isn't saying you need to be a groveling servant.

[10 : 40] It's recognizing that actually the help we need is what God alone can do. That's what that little section is about. And the posture we take, the posture of God's people taken in this Psalm is one of humility. It's recognition that God is the Almighty. He is our master. We are his servants.

We need his help. And this can be hard to reckon with, with what we know of God, because in the New Testament, right, when we look at that, it's like, man, now he's this loving father who's sent his son to die for us. And he saved us. And he welcomes us into his home. And man, we have confidence to enter in. And Jesus is our Savior and our faithful friend. And we get those things, right? And Jesus said too, like, man, if you need anything, just come and ask and seek and knock. Be persistent.

Let me know what you want. And so we, in one sense, we have all this confidence that we're meant to approach God with, right? We run into his throne room with confidence to ask for help in our time in need. That's what it says. But we don't do it like an entitled child. You know, writing about this verse, Eugene Peterson puts it this way, God presents himself to us in the history of Jesus Christ as a servant. With that, before us, it is easy to assume the role of master and begin ordering him around. But God is not a servant to be called into action when we are too tired to do something ourselves. He's not an expert to be called on when we find we are ill-equipped to handle a specialized problem in living. And he references another guy, Paul Shearer, who writes scathingly of people who lobby around in the courts of the Almighty for special favors, plucking at his sleeve, pestering him with requests. God is not a buddy we occasionally ask to join us at our convenience or for our diversion. God did not become a servant so that we could order him around, but so that we could join him in a redemptive life. See how helpful Eugene Peterson is? I mean, that puts it solid right there.

Many of us, I would say, if you're a Christian, you believe God is capable of answering your requests. And many of us, I would hope, believe that God wants to help you, that God wants to answer your request. But that doesn't mean he will do what we ask. And if he does it, it may not be in the way and the timing we prefer. Those of us who have followed Jesus long enough can say a hearty amen to that, right? That's how it works. If God is who he says he is, then we should be satisfied to approach him like servants, looking at the hands of their master and mistress. Which is to say this, we not only pray together, we wait on God together. That's what's happening in this psalm.

They're coming to God together. They're laying their requests before him. But you know what? They're saying, we're going to wait. We're going to wait on God. We're going to be patient. We're going to be persistent in our asking. We're going to be patient with how God wants to answer that. Now, we're going to get into the what in a minute of their asking, but they aren't calling it out like they have the ability to make it appear, right? They aren't saying like, because we asked, it will happen. Jesus said a little bit of faith has the force to move a mountain, but he never said faith forces God's hand to move. There's a big difference there.

[14 : 14] We don't want to be like the prophets of Baal, who got so desperate that Baal wasn't doing what they wanted him to do, that they started cutting themselves and started getting worse from there.

So like, man, if maybe if I just do enough or I do, if I'm allowed enough and I start screaming or start hurting myself, then Baal's going to step in and save the day. That's not how God works. God has a will. He has a plan. He has timing. That is beyond our manipulation. But here is the mystery of prayer. It says we still can come boldly and ask. We can even ask for God to work quickly.

You know, at our last prayer meeting a couple of weeks ago on Thursday night in the new space, we asked God to help us, right? There's kids' classrooms that need to be done. The upstairs office needs to be done. The youth area needs to be done. There's a lot that needs to be done. And we said, man, God, April 3rd's coming up fast. Please step in. Please help us to get that space ready.

May the contractors and the subcontractors suddenly their time become free. And so that's all they want to do. May all the things that all the issues with supply chains magically just line up and all the materials get where they need to go. We pray for that. And there's nothing wrong with that.

We weren't being unbiblical. We put our request out there. But now we're waiting on God together to come through, right? We're looking to the hand of our master. We're waiting. We've laid our request.

[15 : 49] We're saying, yes, Lord, come through, please. We're hoping and believing that he will. Now it would be amazing if it happens, everything happens in the timeframe we asked. But you know what?

If it doesn't, it's not going to rattle our faith and it's not going to keep us from going to God again in the future for something else. We ask and we wait, ask and wait, ask and wait. That's what the Psalm tells us to do. Look at the second part of verse two. So our eyes look to the Lord, our God, till he has mercy upon us. Our eyes look to the Lord, our God, till he has mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us. Oh Lord, have mercy upon us. For we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease of the contempt of the proud.

What do we do while we wait on God? Do we just forget about him until he answers? No. Our eyes keep looking to the Lord. That's what we do. We wait on God together, never, ever taking our eyes off him because we can't go anywhere else for help. Where are we going to go?

And here's why that's so important to remember. The more we look at God together, the more we know who he is, the more we know what he is like. And this affects how we wait patiently on him. We wait patiently because God is merciful. You know, my kids ask me for help again and again because they know me. They know I love them. They probably know they can manipulate me in some ways, right?

[17 : 36] Here's the thing. You keep going to the well that's full of water. You and I keep going to the well that's full of water. Three times this psalm entreats for God's mercy.

Three times. We keep coming to God for help and waiting patiently because he is a well that is full of mercy. And here's the thing. If God isn't merciful, then you know what? He's harsh.

He's demanding. He's unforgiving. And a God like that, you might ask for help once. You might ask it very timidly, but then you know what? You're going to go try to solve it yourself.

We think of phrases like, God helps those who help themselves. That doesn't even make sense. Like, why would you go to a God who helps those who help themselves? Well, you just helped yourself.

So why does God need to help you then? God helps those who can help themselves. When Jesus shared a parable about the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18, it talks about this guy. He goes before somebody, a man much greater than him, who he owed a large amount of debt. Totally unpayable. And he begs for mercy and the guy gives him mercy. Forgives his debt. And this guy goes outside and finds somebody who owes him a little bit of money. Remember, he owed a guy this much money. And then he goes outside and he finds somebody who owes him this much money. And because of his lack of mercy, he shakes him down, has him thrown in jail.

[19 : 13] Unmerciful people are always looking for ways to flex their power over others. But God, who is all-powerful, he chooses to show mercy.

The Bible says his mercies are new every morning. Every morning. He is a God who doesn't prove his power by putting us in our place. And he restrains that power willingly by showing us mercy all the time.

God's mercy doesn't mean, God's mercy, sorry, means that you and I, we don't get what we deserve. And he gives us what we don't deserve. His mercy is why he has compassion toward us.

Those are two sides of the same coin. When Jesus looked at the crowd in Matthew 9, it said he saw a bunch of people harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd. And it says his heart was moved with compassion for them. He had pity. And so he taught them and he fed them. He took care of them.

He met their needs. And it's because God is a God of mercy. That's who he is. This mercy moves him to action. God's mercy moves him to act on our behalf. And this is why the church, this is why you and I, we should never stop praying. We should never give up on praying together. It's why we should never stop waiting on God to intervene on our behalf. He is mercy. He just doesn't have mercy. It says that that is who he is. And if God is who he is, he cannot deny himself. Therefore, he cannot, it's impossible for him not to be merciful.

[20 : 55] The most merciful people in the world, I think, are grandparents, right? I mean, they let kids get away.

They let the grandkids get away with just about everything, right? They love them and indulge in that. They like, they like push the edge toward being too merciful sometimes, I think.

Like, that's why I can't wait to be a grandpa. My boys ain't gonna have to get any ideas. I'm not rushing into that. I don't need to like, I don't need to push that too fast, all right?

But I'm looking forward to that day, man. I'm looking forward because, man, there's like, I just see, man, grandparents just, they just love their grandkids. They're just so much, they're so full of mercy. It's a beautiful thing to behold. And here's the thing. We show mercy mercy to the people we love. That's, that's the reality of it. The closer you are to my heart, the closer you are to my mercy. That's, that's how it works. The closer you are to God's heart, the closer you are to his mercy. Israel knew they're God's people. Man, he called them into a special covenant relationship with him. Out of all the nations in the world, they were his precious people. Right next to his heart. Guess what? That's true for the church too. If you are saved and you're part of a church, that is true for you and I, you and I are right next to God's heart.

And the closer we get to his heart, the louder we hear it beating mercy over us, mercy for us. When you know God is merciful, you will pray. And here's the other part of that. When you know you are helpless, you will pray. And the church should never stop praying because we never stop needing God's help. Psalm 123 verse three says, have mercy upon us. Oh Lord, have mercy upon us for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease of the contempt of the proud. And following Jesus, knowing God's love, that is an amazing thing, but wearing his name makes you a big target. I don't know if you guys seen that old far side comic where there's two deers and one of them has a bullseye on his chest and the line on the bottom says, bummer of a birthmark, Hal. That's what happens with us. That's what happens with us. When you start following Jesus, you get a bullseye on you. It's a bummer of a birthmark. Actually, it's a great thing. You can't be on Jesus's team and put on his jersey and not expect opposition and oppression. And thankfully, I mean, unfortunately, we're not going up against a team like Marquette, you know, just saying. I know there's Marquette fans out there, got blown away. Now we got a real enemy. We got a real enemy. And we pray together for God's help because we have a real enemy that wants to hurt and isolate us. 1 Peter 5, 8 says our enemy is like a roaring lion who wants to take us out. That verse has come up a few times in the past couple of weeks. And I think we need to pay attention to that. I mean, it's going across to New Bern, that new space. It's exciting. But Satan, the devil, he never stops being himself. He's roaring. He's looking who he can take out.

[24 : 18] And you watch lions hunt, they isolate. They try to get their prey away from the herd so they can pounce on him. In Psalm 123, God's people are saying that they're tired of being sneered at.

They're tired of being the reproach of the nations around them. Proverbs 18, 14 says this, a man can endure sickness, but a crushed spirit, who can bear? We have a real enemy that wants to tear apart God's church any way he can do it. And I think the book of Nehemiah, it gives us an interesting history lesson about how that happens. We see God's people at a time when they're trying to rebuild Jerusalem's walls or doing like kingdom building, kingdom work. There's this building up, there's this restoration stuff that's happening. And then the enemies surrounding them, they bring opposition to get the work to stop. And they do it through four Ds, distraction, division, deception, and derision. And we don't have time to get into all four of those, but I want to focus on derision because that's what this Psalm 123 is focusing on. And look at the derision aimed at God's people.

Nehemiah 4, verse 2, it says, And he, Sanballat, the Horonite, said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves, talking about the wall?

Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish and burned ones at that? Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him and said, yes, what they are building, if a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall. These men were rulers and they were mocking. Their words carried weight. They were laughing and mocking about what God's people were attempting to do. They hated them. They wanted them to fail. And they were publicly, what they were doing is that they were publicly heaping shame on that small remnant of Israel, trying to do what God had called them to do. And unfortunately, shame affects our soul, right? Our soul is not made of rubber, despite what that lame schoolyard thing says, like, you're not the rubber and someone else is the glue.

Guess what? When things are done to you, when things are said about you, our souls are like buckets. And those things fill our souls. Those words and those taunts, those harsh actions, they affect you.

[26 : 52] They get into your soul. And the Psalm 123 is saying our souls can't carry much of that. We're not created for that. We're not created for that kind of jeering and contempt and taunting and mockery and hatred. The more shame your soul is filled with, the more you'll feel crushed.

And it's true for the other side of that, man. It's the empty soul as well isn't healthier. Maybe you've been in a family or you've grown up where there hasn't been any kind of kind word said to you. And that absence isn't good for us either. It crushes our soul. It becomes too much to bear.

And when things become too much to bear, we can lose hope in God. We can give up. Nehemiah 4.10 says what happened after they had sneered and jeered at them.

In Judah, it was said, the strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves, we will not be able to rebuild the wall.

If you've been mistreated, if you've been abused, if you've been betrayed, if you've been scorned, if you've been mocked, you start to feel like a city without walls, open and vulnerable to attack, the derision of people around you.

[28 : 30] You start to feel all alone in that place. You start to think, you know what? No one else understands what I'm going through. Nobody else gets it. That psalm says, or sorry, not that psalm, here in verse 10 of Nehemiah, it says, by ourselves.

Those people in Judah that were losing heart, they confess, man, we feel like we're by ourselves. We're all alone in this thing. It's like nobody knows the trouble I've seen.

Even as Christians, although God is doing the work of restoration in your life, there can be times when the enemy gets in a good sneak attack. And that sneak attack can really hurt.

It hurts, and the soul can feel very crushed, where we don't know what to do. We don't know where to go. And here's the thing. Shame undealt with will carry you into isolation.

Shame undealt with will carry you into isolation. The remedy isn't pulling yourself away and trying to get yourself together before you get back into community. The remedy is running to community, not away from it. Community is a beautiful place where you can come and you can confess what you're feeling. You can confess that pain. You can confess that contempt that has been poured on you. And you know what? Sometimes that's the hardest thing to do.

[30 : 06] Shame tries to keep you silent. Shame tries to keep you from voicing those things. And here's the reality, and I speak from personal experience and also witnessing in many other people. When you confess, you realize you're not alone. When you bring that into the light, you realize you have other brothers and sisters in Christ who are like, yeah, me too.

Psalms 123 is a people standing together. It's lamenting together to God about their enemy's derision that has been focused toward them.

It's realizing, too, that they can't fix it. They're hurting, but they know that God can. That's why they're bringing it to him. And God sent Jesus to defeat our enemies and to heal us from our shame.

Our greatest enemies are sin and death. Sin brings shame. It always does. Sin will fill your soul with shame. It crushes your spirit.

It will enslave, and it will want to isolate. It will want to drive you to isolate. And guess what? That's true whether you're doing the sinning or whether you're being sinned against. Sin makes us hide from each other, and it makes us hide from God just like Adam and Eve did.

[31 : 27] The very first sin. But here's the thing. God created them to be naked before each other. This doesn't mean we're becoming a weird cult.

All right? That nakedness is simply talking about emotional honesty. It is talking about soul-level vulnerability with each other and with God.

That's what it's talking about. See, the power of sin is in shame. The penalty of sin is death. Eternal torment and darkness. Not only will we not see, but we will not be seen in hell.

Think about that. It's a place of eternal isolation. What shame begins to do in this life, death without Jesus' salvation will bring to fullness forever.

As the band comes up, Jesus' death on the cross paid for sin's penalty. He defeated death for you and for me.

[32 : 30] That is great news. By faith, we are rescued from eternal death and brought into eternal life. Heaven is a place known for always having the lights on.

It's always lit up. No darkness. Always seeing and always being seen. Being known by God and being known by our family in heaven.

That's what heaven's going to be like. Fully known. Fully loved. Fully accepted. Fully accepted. It's going to be a place where we're going to have nothing to hide.

No sin to make us ashamed and afraid of each other. Jesus' death did that. Jesus' death also broke the power of sin over us in this life too though.

Shame feels very powerful. But you know what? The blood of Jesus is greater. Shame speaks words of content over you. The blood of Jesus speaks a better word.

[33 : 28] We sang about that this morning. Friends, if you have not accepted this Jesus as your Lord and Savior, man, I want to encourage you.

I want to compel you. Please, do that now. You don't need to walk out carrying any more shame. You can be freed of that. Christians in the room, if you're already a Christian, you and I, we wait on the Lord Jesus to show us favor.

In Christ, the year of the Lord's favor has come. Jesus said that. Like he read from a scroll and it talked about this year of Jubilee, the year of the Lord's favor.

And historically in Israel, it happened every so often that this year would come around where all debts were forgiven. And if you owed somebody something, that debt was forgiven and you stepped out of being under debt, under crushing weight of debt, you got to walk free.

You owed no man anything. And Jesus Christ came and he has brought us into a year of Jubilee. That is true. We are set free.

[34 : 39] Every debt is paid. Every sin is forgiven. Every stain of shame has been cleansed and washed away. So this is what I want to do.

I want us all of us to stand. I want to ask us right now to be very vulnerable.

Okay? And I hope that this is a place where you understand that there's grace, that you're loved and that you're accepted.

And it doesn't matter what you would possibly confess. We wouldn't be surprised. We wouldn't be shocked. We wouldn't think any less of you. We'd actually probably think a lot more of you.

And here's the thing. God already sees and knows any shame that we're carrying today. I want to ask us, what's the shame you're carrying today?

[35 : 43] And there's no sense in hiding it. God already knows it. And he wants us to call out to him for help, to confess that shame and that hurt.

He wants you to confess it to him and invite him into it. And I want to invite us to do something we don't typically do. If that's you, I want you to just raise your hand where you're at and just keep it raised.

Because you're not alone. You don't have to be ashamed. You're not alone. God knows, but let your community know as well so we can come around you and pray with you and lament with you.

You know, I've learned that God communicates, communicates his grace and healing most powerfully through his people. And we're going to pray in a minute together.

And if you look around, if someone close to you has a hand raised, I want you to just get around them if they're close by. Put a hand on their shoulder. Pray with them.

[36 : 50] Pray that their strong and loving Savior would heal them and free them. And I want you to invite you to do this as well. Pray the truth of the gospel over them. of what, who they are in Jesus over them.

Look around. Find those people. Don't be shy. Get a hand on their shoulder. Some people in the back over here. Some people over there. We're just going to take a minute to just pray.

Let's do it right now. Let's go for it, guys. Let's do it right now. Let's do it right now.

Let's do it right now.

spoken over us. Words of slander. Words of cursing. Words meant to hurt and wound. That all those are untrue. All the actions against us. A betrayal.

[38 : 41] A bitterness. And anger. They don't define who we are. We are more than people's words. We are more than our failures. We are what you say we are.

And in Christ, you say that we are forgiven. You say that we are loved. You say that we are cherished. You say that we are yours.

Protected. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Amen. Thanks for giving us some latitude to do that.

Not something we typically do. Just something I felt like is a good way to go today. We are going to take communion together now. And communion brings us back to Jesus.

To his sacrifice. In our place. Our Savior's body that was broken. His blood that was shed. To free us and to heal us. By these, sin's power is broken.

[39 : 47] By these, sin's penalty is paid. God's favor has come. And we take this together. And as we take it together, it's our confession.

That we are trusting. And believing. And praying. And waiting upon him. That we are stepping into the assurance of his grace and salvation.

That he is a God who is for us. His body broken. And his blood shed. Let's eat and drink together.