

Good morning. I'll add my "Happy Father's Day" to all the other "Happy Father's Days" that you'll hear. It's funny to read some of the Facebook posts: Have an amazing Father's Day to all the amazing fathers out there. I almost want to go through and put a comment on each one of those and say to all you guys who don't believe yourself worthy of those accolades, "Have a good day, too, or whatever..." because this is quite the thing to live up to. We know of the *perfect* Father. We know of what a good reminder we've already had of his faithfulness, pardon for sin, and a peace that endureth.

We are in the summer sermon series in Psalms. (Say that succinctly...) We're going to look at Psalm 3 today, and I believe that this Psalm has for us answers to life's questions. One reason I believe that is because it is contained in the inspired, inscripturated word of God. Another reason is it's found in the Psalms. And we've learned, through several weeks now looking at the Psalms, these are real people really crying out to a real God in times of real distress and trouble. And God *really* answers.

So we want to look at Psalm 3, and I want to say a few words before we read from the Scripture. I don't know if any of you have taken a trip out to Western Maryland or West Virginia or any mountainous road---hills and curves and turns and dips and falling rock warning signs---but life sometimes seems like riding on a mountain road. We encounter some real twists and turns along the journey. Things head in one direction for a moment and there is no real time to coast, because just when you think you can coast, circumstances shift and we find ourselves needing to adjust accordingly. Sometimes the adjustment required is slight and sometimes the adjustment required seems unbearable. All adjustment, however, requires our attention. And so it is with living out our faith in God in this present age. The twists and turns of Providence require adjustment. And if we submit ourselves to God's loving sovereignty in the midst of the turmoil, we can, indeed, hope for an ever-deepening expression of faith in the One who made us, the One who ordains *all* that occurs---all those twists and turns---and the One who uses all of that for the ultimate end of conforming each of us, believers, to the image of Jesus Christ, his Son, to the praise and the glory of God. Amen? That's the purpose for which we were made---to bring glory to God.

So we're going to look at Psalm 3. The occasion of this Psalm is contained for us right in the first verse. You heard Pastor Randy talk about last week that the first verse really starts with that notation. The notation is this: "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son." "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son." So the occasion is that this Psalm was one of about fourteen that are linked to actual, historical, real occurrences. 2 Samuel 15 and the verses that follow record the events for us surrounding when David, the King of Israel---the great King of Israel---and his son, Absalom. We won't go into Absalom's history here for the sake of time, but David was the anointed king of Israel, and Absalom was a very popular man in Israel. In fact, he called popularity to himself. He would put fifty men in front of his chariot and he would have them go and announce his presence as he rode into various sections of Jerusalem. He would sit in the city gate and he would express empathy to those who had cases to bring to the judges. He would say, if only I were appointed a judge, I would do this and do that for you. So Absalom gained a very vast following. He built a reputation for himself being a man of the people. He eventually garnered enough support in Israel to mount what essentially was working into a coup for the throne. 2 Samuel 15:6 records that "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel" and 2 Samuel 15:12 tells us that "the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing." David eventually determined that it would be safer for him somewhere outside Jerusalem.

So the Psalm that we are about to look at, and Lord, give us detail, is a Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son. With that in mind let's read from Psalm 3, God's word for us.

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me;
many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God.
But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.
I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me from his holy hill.
I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.

I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God!

For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.

Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people!

God's word for us. Praise be to God for his timeless truth. He meets us in our moment of distress.

We're looking in June at Psalms that meet us in our sorrow. This is a Psalm of Lament. It's an individual Psalm of Lament. There are individual Psalms and corporate Psalms, and this one David penned as he fled from Absalom his son. But we'll see that the individual Psalms, even, don't stay singular-focused for very long. We'll see that eventually. We're built to glorify God. We were made to reflect the matchless character of Christ. We best glorify him when we express expectant faith in his faithful, strong presence. Now David was in a very real, harrowing experience. David, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, gives our heart an outlet when we are in life's harrowing experiences---the twists and the turns of life's journey.

In a roundabout way it's kind of encouraging, don't you think, to observe---and I know it's kind of sick---but it's encouraging to observe that David, the King in Israel, had family trouble. In fact, he had a lot of it. And I don't want us to sit from some distant position and say, oh good, I'm glad that's not me, but rather enter in. That's the human experience. Conflict is inevitable when you live among sinners. And that's what we have here. That's because there is none righteous, no not one. And so Psalm 3 and all of sacred Scripture help us to answer basic questions in the midst of pain and the living in the fallen world: Is God trustworthy? Is God powerful? Is God loving? Is God sovereign? Is God faithful? Will he keep his promises?

I want to make five observations from this poetic expression of David in the midst of turmoil. The first thing I want us to see is *The Problem of Sin and Its Many Pitfalls*. We see in this Psalm, like in all Psalms, there's really no easing into the pain. Immediately: O LORD, how many are my foes! Many rise up against me! Many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. *Selah*. Have you ever wondered *Selah*? (Not the musical group, 'Selah.' I think they took their name from this Hebrew expression.) This term here is a notation for the music directors. This means something's to change: instrumentation, tone, mood, attitude. You see as it's presented in Psalm 3 it's a perfect use---obviously, it's Scripture, right?---a perfect use of *Selah*. In these first two verses the psalmist is simply pouring out his heart. O LORD, how many are my foes! His focus is on the enemy. How many are rising against me? How many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. It's a desperate cry from groaning soul.

You see David employing the poetic device of synthetic parallelism. The college group went through the book of Proverbs and we learned all about parallelism, synthetic and antithetical, and all this. And this is one where we see the same word 'many' used three times, and each time, in succession, something else is added to it. It's built upon. It's like a tower, so that you can understand the enemy that David is dealing with. This is an enemy who is aggressive and organized. Many are the foes. They've set themselves all around me. They're organized. They have a plan of attack. They are acrimonious and they're personal. They're rising up against me, David says. This is a formidable enemy. And the third level in this is, they're accusatory. They're vicious in their accusations. They say out loud, so people can hear, there is no salvation for him found in God. They accuse God as they cut down God's servant. You see this? This enemy is pretty wicked.

And David is dealing with a real threat, and he is really outnumbered. Later on in the Psalm in verse 6 he talks about the many thousands of people who have set themselves up against me. Have you ever been in the minority? I want to be sensitive here, using that word, but regardless of race or ethnicity, I want to suggest respectfully that if you have publicly professed Jesus Christ as Lord and as Savior, your only hope of salvation in the Day of Judgment to come, then you are in the minority. If you seek to walk the straight and narrow path defined by Jesus as the God-pleasing way to live, you're in the minority. If you want to be transformed into the image of Christ, and not be conformed to the pattern of this world, you're in the minority. If you attempt to make the choices that you make based on the truth of God's word, you're in the minority. You can track with David in this Psalm. I can, too. Because

the world doesn't believe that God's ways are the way in which we are to walk.

So the enemy comes against us: the coworker, the neighbor, the relative, the friend. 'Why do you spend Sunday there? Wednesday night again? You're going to be...what...with kids...what? What? You have a group of people who get together, open up an ancient document, put it on their laps, sit around the circle, and wait for the brownies? The world doesn't understand what we do when we gather. But when we gather, we gather to hear from our God. The living and active Word of God speaks to us of his love and his truth and his promises and his rescue for sinners like us. If you love God, if you follow God in humble reliance on his grace, you're in the minority.

And David's response to seeing himself outnumbered and the imminent danger and the army rising up against him is, he cries out to his God. So we see *The Prayer of the Soul and the Object of Faith*. Now this prayer should not be mistaken for: "God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food." There's nothing wrong with that prayer---recognizing the greatness of God, recognizing the benevolence of God, recognizing that my heart needs to be grateful to God---there's nothing wrong with that prayer, but that's not this prayer. In verse 3 and 4 we read this: But you, O LORD---that's the covenant name for God, that's Yahweh. That's a short way for us to see again that God establishes a set of covenant promises, he keeps that covenant, and he brings people in to covenant relationship through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. He says, But you, O LORD, you are a shield about me. You're my covering, you're my glory, you are---literally, in Hebrew---you are the glorious one, the glorious shield, my glorious protection. You're the one who does all things for the glory of God. You are He, and you are the lifter of my head. Now that's the prayer of a soul that is resting in God's truth.

David says, I cried aloud to the LORD. I let my heart pour forth. I cried aloud to the LORD, and he answered me. And he answered me, David says, from his holy hill. I cried aloud to the Lord and he answered me from his holy hill. The intensity with which we cry out for help is directly proportional to the severity of the calamity that we are facing, or our *perception* of the severity of the calamity that we are facing. If we think it's a real threat and we know we're out of control do something about it, we will cry to the one who can. And that's the cry of David's heart. It's the cry that he lifts up to the heavens, it's an imminent-danger-recognizing, weakness-realizing, faith-saturated cry of the soul. Do you pray like that? Do I pray like that? How often that is not me in the midst of trial. This is a gut-wrenching groan that realizes that if I'm to have help at all, it's got to come from somebody outside me. It's the guy in the middle of the desert with absolutely nothing, no water, even, and he sees the rescue plane---that's the kind of cry. But that's not me in the midst of trial, and more often than not, I'm content with merely grumbling and complaining against my circumstances.

Sometimes, however, sometimes---by the grace of God, certainly---I catch myself in the midst of lamenting my circumstances, come to the crushing realization that a better response is actually one of thanksgiving. A better response in the midst of trial is actually one of thanksgiving. The rationale goes something like this: If God has providentially placed me in situations beyond my strength and control---and aren't they all, anyway, beyond my strength and control?---then I can be grateful to him, because without those times, I would never cry aloud to him for help. And if I never cry aloud to him for help, I will never see him act in ways that I can only imagine, and I might never have my faith in his love for me strengthened. Do you see how God uses trial? He uses adversity. He uses those things that he ordains for our good. But more importantly, for his GLORY. Because we were made to glorify God. That's how we glorify our Father in heaven.

Sometime this afternoon our family hopes to get to Glen Burnie. And at a certain point in the day we hope to be in my mother-in-law's backyard where she has a pool, a refreshing, crisp, clear-water pool---unless there're leaves in it. And when my kids were little the way that they glorified Daddy was, Daddy would stand in the middle of the water that was over their head, and they would jump to him, because Daddy is strong, Daddy will catch us, and Daddy won't let us see harm. And I'm just a frail, fragile, human Daddy. We glorify our heavenly Father when we run to him. When we fear, when we're tried, we run to him. We run to him and we throw ourselves into his everlasting arms of strength.

And David reminds us that the one he cries out to is the LORD---I mentioned that. L-O-R-D, don't forget that. As we go through the Psalms don't forget that. He's the Yahweh. He is Yahweh. He's the covenant-maker, he's the covenant-completer. David cries out to the LORD. He prays the promises of God. You, O LORD, are my shield, you're my covering, you're the glorious one. You're the one who does things for the honor of your name. And I belong to you, and because I belong to you, I cry out to you. It's just like in your family. If somebody messes with a Flora, you get the whole gang. How much more if someone messes with---if I could be so bold---the children of the heavenly Father. God says, I will work this out, and I will work it out in a way that will bring me honor and glory. And my covenant will be recognized again and more clearly as we go.

The glorious one, the lifter of our heads. 2 Samuel 15:30 records David's inner turmoil in the midst of the flight from Absalom. David ascended the Mount of Olives, Samuel records, and he was weeping as he went, weeping as he went. Barefoot. For the King in Israel, barefoot was significant. And he had his head covered. This is the cry of the heart. And David in Psalm 3 responds with this Psalm that says this is the glorious one. He is the shield about me. He is the lifter of my head. We saw a couple weeks ago the parable that Jesus used from Luke 18 of the tax collector who stood afar off and he wouldn't even lift his eyes to heaven. Those who are aware of their sin and the weight of sin, they don't feel worthy to raise their eyes. But God, who has accomplished all to conquer our sin, is the lifter of our heads. He's the one who says, look on me. Look on me, your salvation. The LORD is a shield about me.

Then David says that he answers. He answers from where? His holy hill. This is a reference to Zion, a reference to where the Davidic throne was established, where God set the covenant in place for David. And David says, you remember your covenant when I forget it. You are the God who never forgets. You are the God who remembers. You remember your promises even to generations to generations to generations. Your faithfulness, Lord. David says, he answers from his holy hill---not that God is limited to a particular mountain, we understand that. But this is poetic language that David employs so that all of us can benefit from the fact that God is faithful. Great is thy faithfulness, O God, to me. He's the powerful one, he's the faithful one, he's the loving one. He brings his promises to be.

And don't miss the phrase, 'he answered me.' I can't miss that. Please don't let me miss that and I'll try to help you not to miss that. God answered David notwithstanding the desperation that we can imagine characterized David's cry. David reminds us that our prayers are answered not because of the intensity with which we cry out, but rather because of the integrity of the one to whom we cry for help in time of trouble. That's what's going on here. God is being glorified in the midst of trial. That's what happening. He answers and acts for the sake of his name, for the honor of his covenant, from his holy hill, from that which signifies his righteousness and his justice. He answers in order that he might receive glory. With a strong reminder of the faithfulness of the one with whom he cries, David proclaims that he has peace.

David has peace within when all without is in chaos. Can I just say that again for my own soul's benefit? David has peace within when all without is in chaos. He records that here for us as well. *The Peace of the Sufferer and the Ever-Changing Storms of Life*. David says this: I laid down and slept. I laid down and slept. And I woke again. That's a phrase that is packed with power for any of us in this room who have lost sleep agonizing over what tomorrow holds. For any of us who fret and take that fret into the bed with us, this is a powerful reminder of the peace that is possible resting in the promises of God. David said, I laid down and slept, and I awoke again, for the LORD sustained me. He didn't say, I laid down with a bottle of whatever---liquid or pill form. But he laid down with the promises of God, the faithful one, in view. And he slept.

I had just completed my junior year in high school in the summer of 1981 when Spielberg and Lucas released the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Familiar? And I was an instant fan of Indiana Jones, the archaeologist adventurer who went on all these quests. The movies got worse over the years, but that first one was pretty good. There's a scene early on in the movie when Indiana Jones has already been through this harrowing experience and he gets on the plane to find the headpiece to the Staff of Ra so he can blah blah blah.... And he pulls that trademark fedora

down over his eyes, folds his arms, and goes fast asleep. Now, you say, everybody sleeps on planes, that's stupid. But what's going on there, the moviemakers know, that sleeping in the midst of stress, turmoil, chaos---it shows an inner confidence that we don't really have. So when you put your hero forward as one who can sleep in the midst of all this stuff, the moviemakers knew what they were doing. And David says that doesn't come from any confidence that he brings to the equation, it comes because the Lord is the one who sustains. The Lord is the one who sustains.

There's nothing wrong with trying to figure out how to deal with our situations, you know that. There's nothing wrong with trying to put together things that might help us deal with the choices that we need to make. But David says a calm, quiet confidence can cover your soul, undisturbed sleep. Here's the plan. I prayed, I cried aloud, I recognized the character of the one to whom I've made my plea, I rested confidently in the fact that he will answer according to what's best, then I laid down and slept. I laid down and I slept. And then I awoke, because the Lord sustained me. The quieted soul.

The perfect peace that we see here is probably best seen in our Lord Jesus Christ in the rage of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. The seasoned fishermen who were used to waves were terrified, and who is there in the midst of them, sound asleep in the boat? Jesus Christ, our Lord. Because he had the confidence that he was in the center of his heavenly Father's holy will. Nothing was going to cause him harm outside of God's sovereign decree. Jesus stood---and this is the second person of the Trinity, incarnated in flesh---and he said to the wind and the waves, "Peace. Be still." And the wind and the waves obeyed. He's the same Lord---yesterday, today, and forevermore. He's your Savior. He knows the trials that you came into this room heavy with and are even considering as we encounter his word. He knows those, and he says, "Let me say, 'Peace, be still.'"

I said there's nothing wrong with trying to figure out what to do. We shouldn't just blindly walk through everything--*I'm just gonna let go and let God. I ain't gotta do nothing cuz Tim said so.* We don't do that. But what we have to make sure we guard safely against is that our plans, our plan-making, often interrupts our prayers. In fact, they preclude our prayers. We don't pray because we're too busy making plans! And how often is this my experience, that my strategizing shanghai's my sleep? That's where I live, I don't know about you. Do you live on the same block that I do? If we're not careful our plans will preclude our prayers and our strategies will shanghai our sleep. God says, that's not what I want for you. That's the theme of Proverbs 3, as well. Proverbs 3---you know the famous verses, verse 5 and verse 6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight. But if you follow that thought of trusting in Yahweh, and you get to verses 21, 22, 23, 24, the writer of Proverbs shows us the same exact thing. Verses 24 and 25 say the one who is trusting the Lord will lie down and not be afraid. They will lie down--and listen---their sleep will be sweet. They won't be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked when it comes. Why? Verse 26: For the L-O-R-D will be your confidence and he will keep your foot from being caught. That's the God that we serve, that's the God who saved us. He doesn't want us fretting out loud, like we've hear popularized. That's not what prayer is. Allen Harris was right. I'm referring to an article that our former senior pastor Allen Harris wrote called, "Why pray when you can just fret out loud?" And he rips into that concept pretty well---it's good.

The Psalm is structured in a way that we hear that prayer is offered in verse 3 and 4, and we see the results of that prayer. Then we get a little bit more of the content of the prayer in verse 7. We see *The Promise of the Savior and the Power with Which He Reigns*. You can see the personal relationship that David enjoys with his Creator. You don't miss the personal nature of his pronouns. Arise, O Lord, and save me. Save me, O my God. This is quite the prayer, isn't it? It would be one thing for us, you know, in our polite fellowship groups and board meetings and stuff: Arise, O Lord, and save us, your people. But David goes a little bit further, doesn't he? STRIKE ALL MY ENEMIES ON THE CHEEK! BREAK THEIR TEETH OUT! I don't know how he said it. But I'm going to tell you something. You start to cry aloud to the Lord, you get a little bit of a sense that he's pretty serious. This enemy is real, the threat is real, but what is he praying? What is he praying? Is this like Conan the Barbarian? *Crush the enemy. See them driven before you. Waste them.* Is there nothing but destruction in view? I dare say, not at all. When we see the use of the cheek, when we see anything about the face being struck, it is a reference to

humiliation. You see this in Jesus's teaching from The Sermon on the Mount. If someone strikes you on the cheek on the right, give to them the other as well. If someone really humiliates you, use that time of humiliation to learn of me, the one who was humiliated for our sake. So to strike my enemies on the cheek is to bring them to a humble place. Bring to my enemies humiliation.

When I was in eighth grade I had a pretty nasty mouth on me. Some of you who know me currently would say, so you were eighth grade last week? It was really bad. And I said something very offensive to a girl who was a friend in our group. I said it about her, not to her. But when she heard about it, the very first time she saw me again, she walked straight up to me and slapped me across my face. And it was humiliating. And it should have been. I wasn't glad for it at the time, I was embarrassed beyond recognition. I hated her briefly, probably---well, we're Facebook friends, I don't hate her any more. But I count that time as one of several in my younger years that God powerfully and intensely used to bring the humiliation that I needed to see my need for a Savior.

You know this, that humiliation always precedes salvation. Always, humiliation precedes salvation. If Jesus had not humbled himself first, there would be no possibility of our salvation. Jesus didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped or to be held tightly to, but he emptied himself and took the form of a servant. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. My heart, then, and yours, must be humbled if we are to ever receive the gracious provision of Jesus Christ for sinners.

So David prays, strike them on the cheek! Bring them humiliation. Break their teeth out. They're coming like wild animals against him. What you do to neutralize a wild animal? You cut their claws and you break out their teeth, or you at least file them down, so they can eat. David says, render their power impotent. Humiliate them. Bring them to the end of themselves. And he says all that because he still has in view that God does all things for the glory of God and the faithfulness of his covenant. David was praying for a severe humbling for his enemies. And with the severity of the prayer of David, it's interesting to note in 2 Samuel 18 when David hears of the death of Absalom, do you know what his response is? 2 Samuel 18:33 records for us that when David heard that Absalom his son had died, he openly wept. He didn't even remove himself, as the king would do, to a private place. He openly wept. Whoever was there knew it. He was grieved in his heart at the results of that. That lends something to the prayer that he's praying.

David prayed for humility. He prayed that their man-made power would be rendered impotent, so that they might be brought back to the fact that they are part of the covenant. Remember, this is Absalom. These are the Israelites. These are the subjects of David's kingdom. That's who he is praying for. And that's *The Pattern of the Saints and the Faithful One Who Blesses* his people. Verse 8 brings the Psalm full circle. Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessings, O LORD, be on your people. The many that were rising up---remember, in verse one and verse two---the many that were rising up and saying that there's no deliverance for David in God. There's no hope for David in the God that he serves. David concludes the only hope that any of us have is in God and God alone. That's what he's praying. He says, salvation belongs to the Lord. It's not found in the strategies or the plans of man. It's found in Christ and Christ alone. He says that the many were rising up and the accusatory tone that they took---they will be put to shame because God is not mocked. In the Day of Judgment, God will be completely vindicated.

In 2 Peter, chapter 3, the apostle that walked with Jesus says these things concerning the Day of Judgment: Do not consider God slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but he is patient toward you, Peter writes in that letter. And who he is addressing that letter to are the saints, the Jews, those who have believed the gospel. He says, God is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wishing any of you should perish, but that you should all reach repentance. God will not lose any of them that Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice for.

And David's focus turns rather roughly from the 'me' and the 'my' of his Psalm to the 'us.' Your blessing, O Lord, be on your people. We are a community of faith, David confesses. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and salvation is never intended to be a solo endeavor, concerned with only *me, myself, and I*. That's supposed to sound pathetic, because

when we hoard the grace of God, it's pathetic. And David knows that. God, please, your blessing on your people, not just individual persons---although he does save us in a personal way, and he meets you and me personally. That's the kind of God he is. He can do that.

So where are we today? Where are you? Where am I with this Psalm? What is God communicating to you through this word today? How do you view the adversity in your life? How you view the circumstances you are currently in? Can you acknowledge that the life you are currently experiencing is the life that is sovereignly and lovingly ordained by your heavenly Father? That's a tough one. I don't candy coat that. That is tough. But what's your alternative? Are your prayers informed by God's loving sovereignty or do plans preclude your prayers and does your strategizing shanghai your sleep? When you pray for your enemies is it a humiliation-that-precedes-salvation kind of prayer or is it a humiliation-that-wants-destruction kind of prayer? I need to check my heart on that one. A lot.

When you reflect on the salvation that God has purchased on your behalf through the blood of Jesus Christ, does your focus shift from yourself to others in the community of faith currently, and ultimately to others in the community of faith yet to be? Because that's the salvation that was purchased for us. That's what we are going to celebrate. This is a communion service. This is a service of the community of faith, where God gives us visible signs and seals of the faith that we have in him. He gives us bread to view, to smell, to taste, to ingest. This is my body that was given for you. I lived in your place, I died in your place, and I rose from the grave victorious, so that your hope would be in that place that I prepared for you in that day. This cup is the sign and the seal of my shed blood, because we can't relate to a holy God in and of ourselves. We need a covering, we need a glorious covering, a shield about us. And we need forgiveness for sins that causes our heads to be lifted up so that shame is no longer part of the equation between us and God. We are the ones who have been restored and redeemed. We are the ones who would have loved to have had just a place of service in the kingdom, but he takes us from that to a place of sons and daughters.

This is a meal where the King has laid out his life, and he invites you. This is where Jesus Christ invites all of you, beloved, who have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You've made a public profession of your faith in Christ. You've made that known, whether it is through membership in this church or membership in the visible church of Jesus Christ. You're invited to this table if you have publicly professed that faith. You're invited to this table and welcome to celebrate Christ if he is indeed your only hope of salvation. The warning that the minister serving in Christ's place gives is a warning for all who might be here who think they should take this out of some kind of superstition or hope that maybe the bread and the juice can do something mystical in them. Salvation is in Christ alone. These symbols are received by faith. We live our lives in this flesh by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

In a moment I'm going to pray, and I want to invite the elders to come forward. And as I pray and conclude this and pray for this meal, I want us to ask the Lord to help our hearts. Is that your faith in Christ alone? Then please, by all means, by all God's appointed means, come celebrate Christ for you. Let's pray together.