

God's Plan in the Poetical Books

God's Plan in Scripture

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About a week ago we had the privilege of hosting a strength training event at our Community Center hosted by IU Health. One of the reasons we built our Community Center was just to offer our facilities for various programs and events that would be of help and interest to our neighbors and throughout the week we're constantly allowing area organizations and businesses to use the Community Center in that way and we're glad for that. Well, often those events come with requests for additional services: for furniture set-up and tech support and all that sort of thing. We try to serve our neighbors well by making those kinds of resources available if they're needed. The challenge with this particular IU Health event was that our tech team was going to be in Texas for a very important annual training conference so we offered the services of a man named Luke who volunteers in many of Faith's ministries. Well, when the event was over, here's the first email we received from one of the conference leaders, "Greetings all, I want to say that Luke did a fantastic job bringing all the AV and technical parts together for the IU Health Strength Training last week. Luke was very accommodating and took a proactive role in every session. Without his technical leadership we would not have had the excellent training experience that was produced."

Then there was a second response from someone else from IU to that particular email that went like this, "I agree. Luke was amazing. I was so impressed by his dependability and knowledge. Our facilitators were extremely relieved and appreciative of his presence at all the meetings. He was an important part of the team." That then allowed Donny Payne, someone from our tech staff to email them back and say this, "Thanks. Luke expressed his appreciation to me for being able to work with such a professional bunch. He really enjoyed working with you all. Thanks for your kind words and we appreciate the fact that you were able to use our facility for your event. Knowing that I would be at a conference in Dallas," Donny said, "leaving this in Luke's capable hands was not a worry for me."

Now, that's exactly the way we would want to serve every community group that requests our help, wouldn't you say? I mean, what a wonderful testimony of how a church should seek to be a blessing to the community. Now, you might say, "Well, who is this Luke?" Well, here he is right here wearing the Mountain Dew shirt, the other guy is from like the Newsboys or something. But, I'm talking about Luke. He's a young man who attends our school who's a member over at First Assembly who's in between his sophomore and his junior years of high school yet he can provide the tech services for an entire conference in a way that this secular business was extremely well served.

In fact, this is the way that email conversation ended, “Please let Luke know that if he ever needs a professional reference, I would be happy to provide one.” A young man who has just finished his sophomore year of high school steps up to the plate and can serve like that. What is your response? I mean, what is that? And since I’m a trained counselor, of course, I can read your mind which comes in very handy at times like this, so I know what you’re thinking. You’re saying he was living in a way that was worshipful and wise and wonderfully practical and was being a delightful partial fulfillment of a major provision of the Abrahamic covenant. I took the words right out of your mouth, right? Yeah.

With that in mind, open your Bible, please, to Psalm 100. Psalm 100, that’s on page 435 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you. So, Psalm 100 or page 435 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

Right now, we’re doing a study entitled “God’s Plan in Scripture.” This is an overview of the entire Bible in ten weeks. Seriously. God’s Plan in Scripture. You may recall that three weeks ago we started with a single word summary of the entire Word of God and we said if we have to boil it down to one word, then the word we’re going to select is Jesus. It’s similar to what Paul would say in Colossians 1:15-20 about Christ. He said, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him,” by Christ, “all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” And so, if we can only use one word to summarize the focus of God’s plan, there is no better word to use than Jesus. It’s all about him.

Also, on that first Sunday, three weeks ago, we emphasized this threefold division of creation, fall and redemption. When you think about understanding God’s plan in Scripture, think about CFR: creation, fall and redemption. In fact, we just saw all those themes in this key passage that I just read from Colossians 1 and we’re going to see it in just a moment in Psalm 100. It’s all over the Bible.

Then we started looking at particular sections of Scripture. So, Pastor Aucoin two weeks ago did a marvelous job guiding us through the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Then last Sunday, Pastor Green, gave us a fabulous overview of the historical books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah. That was a big task and he did it very, very well.

That, then, brings us to this delightful study of God’s plan in the poetical books. And we’re talking now about Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. And

here's a summary of what we're going to try to emphasize this morning that God's plan is to help you live in a way that is worshipful, wise and wonderfully practical. And the poetical books are designed to help you do exactly that. You see, that's what our friend Luke did last week at the Community Center. It was worshipful what he did. It was wise. It was wonderfully practical. Sophomores in high school can do that.

With that in mind, let's read this great text. Psalm 100, "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness." Friends, this is a poem. "Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations." What a great poem.

Now, I realize, and let's just get this on the table, I realize when you hear me say "poetical books" you might say, "Really? Really, I'm not much of a poetry kinda guy." And, honestly, I would probably say the same thing myself. If we're talking about what our culture sometimes serves up as poetry and I'm not criticizing that, I'm just saying that's not really my thing. But, I'm talking to you this morning about biblical poetry and biblical poetry is something that God has designed to help us get our lives in sync with his plans. So, we need to get all over the poetical books today. Ready for that?

Let's start by thinking about them from an historical perspective and I'm going to try to give you some principles of how is it that we interpret our Bibles. And when I said we're going to study Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, if you were thinking, one of the thoughts that would've come to your mind is when were those books written historically? How does that fit into the historical framework of the Bible? If you want to understand the Bible, there are certain dates you need to know and I make no apology for suggesting that you ought to commit these dates to memory in case you were wondering what you were going to be doing this week.

Now, think about what we've studied the last couple of weeks together. Genesis 1-3: no one knows when the earth was created or when Adam and Eve lived. We know how God created the world, but we don't know when. And it doesn't help our cause to set dates when the Bible doesn't. We also don't know when Noah lived. We don't know when the Flood occurred in Genesis 7. Again, we know the "what" but we just don't know the "when." We would say the same thing about the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. The Bible does not give us a date nor does corresponding secular history, however, all of that changes in Genesis 12 because there we're introduced to a man named Abram whose name was later changed by God to Abraham. And that's the first person that we can give an accurate date for because there's enough historical fact in the Bible that we can correspond that to secular history.

So, here is the date you need to know: the call of Abraham occurred in 2165 BC. And what's significant about...that's one of the most important chapters in the entire Bible, what's significant about that is that while man had repeatedly lived in a way that was

rebellious, wicked, contrary to the intent of man's design, illustrated by Adam and Eve's fall and the conditions during the time of the Flood and again at the Tower of Babel, still God comes to Abram and he initiates a covenant. If you're going to understand the plan of God in Scripture, you have to know that concept of the covenants. And the Abrahamic Covenant had a threefold provision, you need to know that too: land, seed and blessing. Again, the threefold provision of the Abrahamic Covenant, you see it all through the Bible: land, seed and blessing. God told Abram that through the nation that would descend from him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And while I'm getting a bit ahead of myself, that's exactly what Luke, this sophomore in high school, did last week. More on that in a minute.

Now, the rest of the Book of Genesis shows the outworking of that covenant, both good and bad in the lives of the four great patriarchs. Do you know their names? You need to. So, less NBA finals, more study the Bible. All God's people got that? The four great patriarchs of the Book of Genesis are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Boom. We're already through the first book of the Bible. We are cranking this morning.

Then, you have the Book of Exodus where we read about another crucial participant in the outworking of God's plan, his name would be Moses. That's right, who led the children of Israel to the brink of the Promised... what was the first provision of the Abrahamic Covenant? You see how all of this fits together? The Promised Land. Well, when did Moses live? We think that the crossing of the Red Sea, just to pick a date in his ministry, occurred about 1440 BC. So, what I'm trying to show is there's a lot of time between Abraham and Moses. And if I see you at the community picnic next week or something like that, I very well may ask you the threefold provision of the Abrahamic Covenant and surely, while you've got a hot dog in one side of your mouth you can squeak out land, seed and blessing. And, when I ask you who came first, Abraham or Moses? You'll know. Right? If you have to put a little work into getting this framework down this week, fine, fine, fine, fine, fine.

Now, the rest of the Pentateuch explains the sacrificial system, the emphasis on God's desire for holiness among his people as well as the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness because of God's people's unwillingness to believe his covenant promises to them. So, that gets us through the Pentateuch which takes us to the historical books that Pastor Green taught us about last week.

Now, what's significant about those books especially is that it's at that time that the chosen people of God demand to have a king and they even said, why? Because we want to be like the other nations. And God explained to the prophet at that time, Samuel, that the people are not rejecting you, Samuel, they're rejecting me because of their desire to be like the other nations. So, that began the period of the kings which was a mixed bag for sure. Who was the first king of Israel? King Saul followed by a shepherd boy named David. If you say, "Where is all this going?" It's going to poetry. Don't be fussing at me, we're enjoying history because we're heading for poetry. Don't you love church?

Now, here you go, who was the shepherd boy who was the second king of Israel? David and when did David live? Well, to just round off the numbers, around 1,000 BC. You can remember that. Followed by his most important son from a biblical perspective, Solomon. We'll get back to him in a moment.

Now, Rob talked about this last week but I want to be sure you get it: during that period of time, a terrible tragedy occurred when after the reign of Solomon, the nation of Israel actually was divided and that happened in about 931 BC. You say, "Why do I need to know that?" Because a significant percentage of the rest of the Old Testament occurs in the next 200 years and you'll never understand the minor prophets, you'll never understand the major prophets unless you understand that historical background. And so, the nation divides in 931 BC. We also know that eventually the northern kingdom fell to Assyria in 722 BC. And the last date I want to give you this morning is the fall of the southern kingdom to Babylon in 586 BC.

Now, here's the question before the house. And, again, if you want to understand your Bible, I hope you ask this question in your mind as soon as I announce that we're going to talk about Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, is where do those fit into the historical framework of the Bible? You want to know that, don't you? You want to know that like bad-ly. Good, I appreciate that level of enthusiasm.

Well, the Book of Job, when was that written? Here's the best answer we have: we have no idea. There's nothing in the book that would help us date it for sure. Now, some people believe that Job actually lived during the time of the Patriarchs. Some believe that the Book of Job is actually the earliest book that was recorded from all of our Bible. Some people believe that Moses wrote the Book of Job. We simply don't know when Job lived. Well, ok great.

What about Psalms? Aha! Psalms is a lot easier. Why? Because a lot of our Psalms were written by King David and you already know because you were listening intently to the Word of God that David reigned around 1,000 BC. So, that aspect of the poetical books was about then.

Then we have the Book of Proverbs. Easy! Because most of the proverbs were written by Solomon. So, we're talking about the late 900s BC.

The Book of Ecclesiastes? Easy! Because we believe that was written by Solomon. Again, late 900...see how easy this is?

And then the last poetical book. Let's see if we can get this one. The Song of....Oh yeah, Solomon. So, again, historically, the latter 900s BC. All I'm trying to do is to help you locate these poetical books historically.

Now, let's think about them for a moment from a literary perspective. Any time you open your Bible to anything, you need to ask yourself, What type of literature am I studying right now? And the Bible generally, and I'm taking this from Sandy and Giese and their

chapter “Literary Forms of the Old Testament.” I really like this chart. In the broadest sense, the Bible is going to break down into either prose or poetry, that’s the type of literature it’s going to be. For example, when we read something from the Bible that’s law or something that’s history or something that’s narrative, that is prose literature. You say, “You know, I remember that word from high school English but I forgot.” Seriously? I had to look it up, too, just to be sure. Prose: a normal form of written or spoken language without rhyme or metre. For example, if I said this morning, “Pastor Folden is handsome, really handsome.” That’s prose. But, if I said instead, “Roses are red, violets are blue, Pastor Folden is handsome and good looking, too.” By the way, I came up with that on my own. Feel free to clap because I was pretty proud of that one. But, you see, both approaches make the point, don’t they? The prose made the point, and the poetry made the point. I tend to think the poem was just a little more memorable. There you go.

Let’s keep going on our chart. The Bible also has a lot of prophecy. In fact, the next two Sundays we’re going to talk about the major prophets and the minor prophets and what’s interesting about them is they contain a mixture of both poetry and prose. You’ll hear more about that in the next couple of weeks. For our purposes this morning, we’re talking about poetry, we’re talking about psalms of lament or psalms of praise or proverbs, other forms of wisdom literature. Now, there’s a lot more that we could say about that but all of this shows how creative our God is. Think about that, he could’ve given you the Bible in straight prose, straight narrative and that’s it. This shows you how creative God is and it also shows you what lengths God was willing to go to in order to help us understand his plan. Praise God for that.

Now, think about them for just a minute from a theological perspective. Now I recommended three weeks ago a series of additional resources including a sermon by Pastor Phil Gerard of Midway Bible Church who proposed that one good way of summarizing the theology in the Bible is that there were four gifts given to man in the garden that were lost because of the fall. One of those gifts was he was in a right relationship with God and he was in a right relationship with himself, he understood where he fit in the program and in a right relationship with others, he and Eve weren’t fussing all the time, not for long, but not fussing all the time, and in a right relationship with his environment. And he went on to suggest that the rest of the Bible is about God progressively restoring those blessings.

Now, hear this, you can make the argument that the poetical books teach us how that restoration process occurs because if you’re living in a way that over time is becoming more and more worshipful and wiser and wonderfully practical, then you will be in a better relationship with God. And you will be in a better relationship with yourself and in a better relationship with others and a better relationship with your environment, your circumstances. See, in Christ, you’re fulfilling the purpose of your design. There is a sense in which it’s back to the Garden of Eden prior to the fall. Just like Luke, our sophomore in high school, did.

Now, what can we learn from these five great books of the Bible? How do we summarize this in a way that is practical? For one thing, God's plan is for you to live in a way that is worshipful. See, that's where the Book of Psalms fits into this discussion because in many ways, the Book of Psalms is a hymnal to help us live in a way that is consistent with our design. In fact, I want to ask you to already begin thinking about this sentence, how would you complete this in your particular life: in the three to four places I spend the majority of my time, I can show how worthy God is to me by blank. In the three to four places I spend the majority of my time, how can I show that God is worthy to me? What does a practically worshipful lifestyle look like? And what I'm suggesting is: the Book of Psalms was given to help you answer questions like that.

What's the structure of the book of Psalms? If you've read it, if you know anything about it at all, you know it divides very easily into five books and you have there in your notes the way the Book of Psalms breaks down from a structural perspective. You can also think about this through the lens of the different types of Psalms. For example, there are hymns. Our text this morning is a marvelous hymn of praise to God given in a poetical fashion. God could've given it to us straight, as prose, but he gave you a poem that is a beautiful poem from the Word of God. There's also Psalms of lament, many of them. And, again, the Lord could've given us that kind of information in a very straightforward fashion but because he wants us to feel these laments deeply and authentically, he provides them in meaningful poems.

There's also thanksgiving Psalms and Psalms of confidence and Psalms of remembrance and wisdom Psalms and kingship Psalms. And, sure, many of the Psalms have elements of all of this mixed together. I'm also not, and I really don't like this, I actually had to write this sermon and then cut a bunch of thing out and I never like doing that. I just can't get into the parallelism that comes through the use of poetry that helps to emphasize certain ideas but the big point is this: God's plan for you to live in a way that is worshipful and the Psalms can help you do that. Well, you may say, "What does that even mean?" Maybe we need to back up? Let's define what we mean by worship.

From their grade book "Life in the Father's House," Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely says this, "Our word 'worship' is derived from the Old English word 'worthship' and that helps us understand its basic meaning. Worship is acknowledging the unique worth of an object and showing honor and respect to it. So, biblical words like 'honor' and 'respect' and 'awe' and 'adoration' and 'reverence' and 'glorify' are often near synonyms for the term 'worship' communicating a similar idea. Obviously, this practice is not one that is limited to public gatherings, in fact, in Scripture, those terms are used much more often in regard to our personal relationships with God than our activities in the presence of other Christians."

Now, you say, "Ok, I get that. I'm showing the worth of God by the way I live, but what does that look like practically?" Well, that's where Psalm 100 comes in. Psalm 100 in my mind summarizes much of the purpose of the Old Testament. It summarizes what the conditions in the Garden of Eden prior to the fall of man looked like. So, what did we see in that text that we saw? And think about Luke and the way he chose to live and think

about this question I'm laying out before you of what does a worshipful life look like in the three to four places you spend the majority of your time? Well, for one thing, it's joyful. "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth." Joy always comes from thinking what is true and acting in a way that is consistent with that truth. Imagine what unmitigated joy Adam and Eve experienced in knowing and worshipping God prior to the fall. And in Christ, you can be restored to that condition when you're a grump and not worshipping, that would be the shorthand for that.

Also, we saw that a worshipful life is submissive and "Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." See, in Christ now, we can have a right view of ourselves and a right view of our King. It's submission out of love and a proper understanding of the Lordship of Christ which means when we submit to God we're worshipping him.

We're also thankful. "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations." And if you know your Bible well, you might be thinking about Romans 1 which is the polar opposite of what this passage is talking about. Persons who refuse to glorify God, they refuse to worship him, they refuse to acknowledge him as their Creator, they refuse to submit to him, they refuse to be thankful and they chose to live their life the way they wanted to. The polar opposite of the point of the Bible. The polar opposite of worship.

God wants us to live a worshipful life and this is to be a major focus of our daily living. See, that illustration I used about Luke at the very beginning, I chose that on purpose because I wanted to use a common example to point out that Psalms can help us live in a way that is consistent with our design every day. See, Luke was joyful in his service and he was submissive in his service and he was truly thankful to both God and IU Health for the privilege of serving. That's the kind of worshipful life that the Psalms teach us through creative poetry. And as a result, Luke was able to be, remember Abraham in covenant, land, seed and blessing, he was able to be a blessing to our neighbors. He was able to be a blessing to the nation.

Now, let's return to the question I posed a moment ago. How would you complete this sentence for you: in the three to four places I spend the majority of my time, I can show how worthy my God is to me by blank. What does that look like for you? Now, you might say, "Well, are you suggesting that washing dishes at the kitchen sink could be an act of worship?" Absolutely. Absolutely. "Are you suggesting that folding the stinking laundry can be an act of worship?" Yep, you probably better not call it "sinking" because you're too busy thanking God for the healthy body that you can use to perform that task and thanking him for the financial provision that your family has been given to have those clothes and have that machinery, etc. etc. All of that can be actions of worship. You're saying, "Obeying my boss can be an act of worship?" Yes. "Expressing thanks to those around me can be an act of worship?" Yes, yes, yes. And a million other ways. 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Now, here's a corresponding question: how would you rate the focus of your average day from the perspective of how much of it is lived worshipfully? That was a good question, wasn't it? You may say, "Well, Pastor Viars, ok, you go me because I struggle maintaining that focus. Things get so busy and so crazy I struggle maintaining that focus." Well, guess what, my friend? It's poetry time. It is poetry time. There are 150 Psalms, why not take the month of July, let's do the math, read five Psalms per day and see whether that does not result in a more worshipful life. And, while you're doing that, don't forget to thank God for giving his revelation in such a creative fashion.

That's Psalms, I've got that, a worshipful life. How does the Book of Proverbs, this other major poetical book, how does that fit into the discussion? Well, God also wants you to live in a way that is wise. And, again, if time allowed this part of what had to be cut out, we could talk about all the parallelisms in the Proverbs that help us understand God's Words about wisdom. That's ok, think about the structure of the book: there's the preamble and then there's an extended discourse that goes all the way through chapter 9 on wisdom and then there's Solomon's Proverbs and then sayings of the wise and then sayings of a man named Agar and sayings of King Lemuel and then a poem about the virtuous woman. All of that is poetry.

Yesterday, we had our seminary graduation. It was marvelous, absolutely marvelous. And you know what were doing? We're being poetical. You say, "What?" Yeah, the seminary guys, each one of them, took time, each one of our graduates, to thank his wife for the sacrifice that she had made over his three year seminary training. And we actually read from Proverbs 31 about the virtuous woman. What was that? In a seminary graduation, what was that? Well, it was two things: it was being poetical and it was being smart because for those men to, in that setting, acknowledge the worth and the sacrifice of their wives, that is true. And wisdom is bringing your words and bringing your life in line with what is true.

Now, the key verse of the book, Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." That, in and of itself, is a...want to guess? A poem. Which makes the point, yet again, that the Lord has gone to extreme lengths to restore us to the position of worshipful, wise living to which we were created. And I realize some might say, "You know, Pastor Viars, that's my problem because if you knew my story, if you knew my past, it was anything but wise living." Ok. Well, we're not talking about your past, are we? We're talking about today and we're talking about where God wants to take you.

Here's some great hope, Psalm 19:7, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure," doing what? "making wise the simple." That, by the way, is a poem. A poem intended to give us help and give us hope that it is possible for people like you and me to actually become wise. It's never too late to let the poetry of God help you grow in living in a way that's wise.

You know, I'm glad for the many people who would say, "That's the way I want to live." And if you would say, "Well, but I struggle with that. I struggle with being wise." Well, we're going to have to add to our reading plan. You had already committed, I think, to reading five Psalms per day during the month of July and you would get through the Book of Psalms, well, how could we get through the Book of Proverbs? How does this work? How many Proverbs are there? 31. How many days are there in July? 31. All we would have to do is add one Proverb, some more poetry, it's poetry time, and one more Proverb to our list every day. Five Psalms, one Proverb every day during the month of July. I would challenge you to do that and see whether or not that helps you grow in a worshipful lifestyle and living in a way that is wise.

And, again, when I look around, I see that in so many places...like, for example, these folks who have worked in Vacation Bible School. Some young, some not so young, God bless them all... what in the world were they doing? They gave up a whole week. Some of these people who are coming to our church today, they are dead-dog tired. Why did they live that way? It's because they love to serve the Lord with gladness and they want to have an impact on the nations. They want to have an impact on those who live right around us. They were worshipping God while they were teaching the Word to children and they were living in a way that is wise because they were investing their life in things that time will not take away. They were storing up treasures in heaven. That is the essence of wisdom and if you're one of those persons, thank you for doing that.

We've been working on the strategic ministry plan and we're at a very important place in that and you've done such a great job. It really is. That plan is looking good and it's because our congregation has worked so hard at the surveys and then at generating initiatives and then at ranking the initiatives. The plan is not done and we are continuing to refine it but it's at a very, very good place. Why? There are a lot of people around here who are serious about worshipping God every day as a lifestyle and are growing in biblical wisdom and, therefore, can determine what God would want us as a group to do together.

Then there's the matter of Faith West. What is our goal over there? You have all sorts of people, I'm sure, asking you, "What are you....what is that? What are you trying to do over there?" Here's an answer: to teach college students poetry. Try that one on for size, see how far that goes. What do we mean by that? Well, to take the truth of the Word of God, places like Psalms and Proverbs, etc. and to teach young people during their college years to want to live in a way that is worshipful and to want to live in a way that is wise.

Pastor Folden mentioned this cleaning extravaganza this Monday and Tuesday from 4 or whenever you can get there until 9:00 that night. And we'd like to get 100 people, at least, in that building. We need that many people. I'm just telling you right now, we need you. We need you bad. And I want to ask you to sign up. You say, "Well, what are the qualifications?" You have to have one working appendage. I mean, that's basically what you need in order to get over there and do that. But here's the thing, here's the thing, what are we going to be doing on Monday night and Tuesday night? We're going to be worshipping God, that's what we're going to be doing. And we're going to be living in a

way that is wise. We are going to....what does this text say? Serve the Lord with....gladness. If you can't do it with gladness, stay home. You want to grump? Stay home. But, if you want to serve the Lord with gladness, come out with the people of God and have a great time serving him together.

And we'll also be coming into his courts with thanksgiving amazed that God allowed us to do that together and thankful for the ministry opportunities that we're going to have. And so, it's not about grumping people cleaning like they wish they were somewhere else. It's going to be a bunch of people who are worshipful and wise, having a fun time together serving our God.

Now, I realize you might look at your watch and say, "You're in trouble yet again because you've got three more books and you're almost out of time." Hey, I'm a seasoned professional. Yeah, let's go with that. But, think about how these last three books actually fit into the very framework we're talking about this morning. You see, God's plan for you, the practical Job, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. God's plan for you is to live in a way that is worshipful, wise and wonderfully practical even when facing severe hardship. Which book would fit into that conceptualization? Job. "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped." Even when questioning the meaning of life, you can be worshipful and wise like the Book of...Ecclesiastes. The conclusion when all has been heard is, "Fear God and keep his commandments." Even when wrestling with human sexuality, the Book of Song of Solomon can take something that the world has ruined and make it worshipful and wise.

Well, where does all this leave us? I'm suggesting to you that the poetical books can help us get in sync with God's plan ourselves and help us clarify our mission in the world in which he's placed us. On a personal basis, I would ask you, Do you know that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven? Have you placed your faith and trust in Jesus Christ who can transform your life into being restored the way we've discussed today? If not, I want to encourage you to do that. Today.

Christian friend, practically speaking for you, What would a lifestyle that is more worshipful and wiser look like in the coming days and what specific steps could you take to make that happen? What about those of us thinking about this from the church's perspective? Think about this passage, "God be gracious to us and bless us and cause his face to shine upon us." Why? Here it is, "That your way may be known on the earth, your salvation among the nations." Let the nations be glad. You see, it's not just about us, it's about the impact that God can then use us to have on others. "And sing for joy; For You will judge the peoples with uprightness And guide the nations on the earth. Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, That all the ends of the earth may fear Him."

And here's the bottom line: when you get a congregation of people together, who're developing a worshipful lifestyle, who are just growing in biblical wisdom to the glory of God, that can have a tremendous impact on the neighborhoods on which we live. You

may have noticed if you are ranking the strategic ministry surveys, one called “Consider Launching a Community Development Corporation.” You might say, “Where did that come from?” Well, the city of Lafayette asked us to come downtown a few weeks ago and the short version, it’s a really long story, here’s the short version of it, there are Federal dollars that are available for neighborhood rehabilitation and the city cannot spend those dollars themselves, they have to work in conjunction with a 501C3, a nonprofit organization. And there are some doing that downtown and doing it well, but frankly, there’s greater need and there’s more funds available and the city is looking for an additional faith-based 501C3 to do that. And they’ve said we’ve kind of looked at the landscape, we think Faith can do that and we want to ask you to do that. And the way it works is, you select a home or a series of homes on a street that’s in trouble and you buy that with Federal dollars, rehabilitate it and then flip it with the purpose of putting some people who have been well trained in home ownership in that place to seed more reliable and appropriate living in that place with the goal of improving that street and improving that neighborhood.

Isn’t it fascinating that the city government would come to you and ask you to consider doing that? And we’ve got a ton of research to do before we’re ever going to be presenting that formally. But, I would just say that that’s the purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant, that God would redeem people into being worshipful and wise and they, in turn, could be a blessing to the nations so that others would come to know him.