

## The Word Part 4: Mixed Reception

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A sports arena or some kind of audience participation where people are actively booing the person who has come onto the stage, right? Something has happened. Either they're doing a poor performance or they're just not pleased with them and they call this a mixed reception and it sort of reminds me of that image we have in Ezra when the temple has been rebuilt, the second temple that is, not Solomon's temple, for that was destroyed. But this second temple was built and those who built it, who never knew the old temple in its former glory, are rejoicing but those who are older who saw the glory of Solomon's temple are weeping and it's hard to differentiate between the two. This has a mixed reception. John in his prologue, as we said, it's sort of like an overture; it's surfacing all the main themes of the gospel. He's talked about light and darkness and life and death. He's talked about witness and testimony. He's talked about and will talk today about the new birth. These are all themes that will become more developed as John unfolds his gospel, but he also foreshadows the reception that Jesus experiences in his ministry, in his life. Now at this point in the gospel, Jesus has not even begun his ministry. In that way, although he's foreshadowing how the people of God received Jesus, some reject him, but others accept him, he's also connecting that to eternity past because who is Jesus? Well, Jesus is the Word, the Word that existed before time who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was God. It is that Word that is life and that life is the light of men that has come, that is coming into the world. And so John is connecting the preincarnate Jesus Christ and his reception in the world with how the incarnation is received by not only the people of God, but the world around him.

So again, this morning, we're going to read the entire prologue, but we're going to be focusing our attention on verses 9 through 13. So if you have a Bible or your bulletin, please, as you're able stand with me as we read from the gospel of John.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light,

which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray together.

*Almighty God, heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your word, and we thank you, Father, for the coming of light into the world that has given light to all of us, that has opened our eyes from sitting in darkness and has revealed the truth to us so that we can walk in the light. Father, open the eyes of those who still sit in darkness and open our hearts to receive this word again for we thank you that it comes in Jesus' name. And Amen.*

You may be seated.

You'll notice that these verses, verses 10 through 13, really foreshadow the entire book of John. Verses 10 through 11 show the people rejecting the Word, and in many ways the entire book of John from chapter 1 to chapter 11 is a commentary on the people rejecting Jesus, whereas verses [unintelligible]. In chapters 12 through 21 show us in intimate detail the acceptance of the disciples of their Lord and Savior, Jesus. So in many ways, John is foreshadowing the whole structure of the rest of this book.

Since Jesus is the Word, he has been rejected and accepted by men since the beginning and so we'll look this morning beginning at verse 9 where John says, "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." Notice that this light, we wonder in what sense is John speaking about light because we can think about light in many different ways. We can think about the light of reason, the light of intelligence, the ability to have a conscience to determine between right and wrong, but we can also think about light in terms of enlightenment, the way that the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts to receive the gospel. I think that John is speaking particularly here about light in the sense that Jesus is the reason and wisdom of the world.

Right, we talked about this many weeks ago when we looked at verses 4 and 5. The light of men, what does it mean that the Word is the light of men? What does it mean that the Word is coming into the world and giving light to all men? Well, in the wisdom of God, God created the world through his Word and it is designed and ordered and structured and it all points to a Creator, right? He is the one who all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made, verse 3. So I think that what John is referring to is the light of reason, that all of God's creatures who are made in his image, that's man, male and female, men and women, who are made in his image have the ability to have intelligence and wisdom and they have a conscience, a conscience that tells them what is right and wrong. Now of course, because of sin, the light in us is darkened, right? So we don't fully live the way we were called to, or we might say we don't live in accordance with nature. We live against nature, right? God has created the world in such a way and in our rebellion, we turn against that in sin.

And so we notice that because there is darkness in the world, the world, as verse 10 says, the world does not know him. Although he made the world, the world does not know him and we sort of scratch our head, how is it possible that the world that God created through his Word does not know him? And we have to ask in what sense is John using the word "world"? Well, in the New Testament, the term "world" in Greek is *kosmos*, has three basic meanings. The first meaning is that the earth, the created order; and the second is the nations or the human community, us as people as made in the image of God; and the third is the ways of fallen humanity who are alienated from God and his truth. And it's this third way that John uses the word "world" most often, even when it seemed to be neutral as in, "God so loved the world that he sent his only Son." Even in that sense, the world is needing a Savior. It needs to be saved from its lost condition. So John most often uses this word "world" in terms of the fallen world, the condition of men who have been darkened so that the light of seeing Jesus Christ has been dimmed. They don't recognize Jesus.

They don't see the Creator, right, and we can think of the classic example from Romans 1 in verse 19 and following, Paul outlines what does this look like, what does it look like when men who know that there is a God, they look out at the creation and they can see that God has ordered and made everything and it is all very good, and yet they suppress that truth in unrighteousness. One of my favorite illustrations from Van Til is of suppressing the truth [unintelligible] a pool. What happens when you're holding that ball underwater? Well, the pressure of its displacement, and I'm not a physics major, but I know that the pressure of that is always trying to force its way back up. Well, that's what it's like for the unbeliever to suppress the truth in unrighteousness. They're always trying to hold the truth down, what they know to be true about the creation, about how God has made them, and how they should live before God. They are suppressing. They are pressing it down. And so when John says he was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him, we can think in terms of the Word being the creation by which everything we see came into existence and yet we refused to acknowledge him. We refused to say, "That is created by God."

Light, as we have looked at over the past few weeks, is symbolic for truth, but it's also for moral purity and these things go hand in hand. It's these two aspects that the world, we might think in terms of darkness, reject the light of God's truth. And so when you reject the light of God's truth in John's gospel, you are blind. You do not see the truth. Jesus is going everywhere opening the eyes so that those can see, but there are many who remain in darkness, who remain blind to the truth and this blindness, this blindness to the truth, leads to moral impurity, this darkness leads to doing the works in darkness. And we've seen the chaos of truth becoming relative in our own culture as moral relativism has really gone to seed. How many of you have had an argument with somebody who said, "Well, that's fine for you but not for me. That's not my truth." And you sort of scratch your head because it's like how do I even proceed in an argument with somebody like that? If they have their truth over here, and if this person has their truth here, and this person has their truth here, then we have no basis for a common good and we can have no peace in our culture, we can have no common fellowship with one another because we have removed the basis of objective truth. And so everybody argues for what they feel to be right, right?

And so what gets enthroned as objective is our sentiments, our desires, and all of this comes down to worship, right? You become what you worship and if you worship in the dark, you become darkness. If you worship the living and true God, then you walk in the truth. You see, for Paul ends that, or not ends but he says in Romans 1:21, "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." So as a direct result of them not honoring and giving thanks to the God who had created all things, the Word, because they refused to give thanks and honor to him, they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

You see, the result of rejecting the truth is always walking in a lie. The worship of God, you will walk in objective truth because he has revealed himself. He has told you what truth is and how you are to live, and we endeavor, although imperfectly, to live according to that revealed will. But if you are the measure of truth, then how do we gauge whether we are walking faithfully, especially when your level of truth is different from this person's level of truth? And so we can have no common good and this, of course, leads to moral relativism, so we began to call things that are evil good and good evil. And we have watched this as some of the most absurd things have become just truths that we must accept. I mean, think of how rapid [unintelligible] part of life, that we should accept that a man who thinks that he's a woman and we should call him that or treat him that way. Now [unintelligible] to point to the absurdity of turning away from the light while always recognizing that there are people for whom Christ has died for to purchase their salvation who are trapped in the sin of what we might call gender dysphoria, and that's sad and we want to help those kinds of people, right? That's a real thing that people because of sin are confused and their minds are darkened and so they believe things that are not true. Now, it's not loving of us to join them in that fantasy but it is loving for us to speak the truth to them, to point them to the only way of healing, and that's healing for all of us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we see in verse 10 that the world rejects the Word. They reject the Word, that is the light that was coming into the world, and a rejection of that Word is a rejection of truth, and it leads to blindness and it leads to moral impurity. But notice verse 11, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." And I want you to notice that the word "receive" is set in parallel with the world not knowing Jesus. The world doesn't know Jesus just like the people of God don't receive Jesus. They're parallel. Knowing and receiving go hand in hand. And his own people, his own covenant people, the ones that he entered into a special relationship, who revealed himself more fully than he did in creation to lead them to salvation, what do we find in the pages of scripture but that over and over and over again they rejected God? And we read from Jeremiah the stark comments of God that they had reached this point where they were trusting in the temple, they were saying, "The temple, the temple. We have the temple, we're safe. What can our enemies do to us?" They were resting in in formalism, but they had rejected the worship of God. He was saying, "How can you come to me and worship me when you're doing all of this? When you're filled with moral impurity?"

And again, John, although he's foreshadowing the reception of Jesus' ministry, when Jesus comes in the incarnation, how he's received. Well, he's not received well. We know because it culminates in his death. They don't receive him so they kill him, which is what they have done to all the prophets since the very beginning. Essentially, the covenant people of God reject the light by not walking according to the truth and, again, this leads to moral impurity. It's exactly the same as the world around them, except they are sinning against greater light.

In our reading this morning from Jeremiah 9, it's 9:13 and 14, it says, "And the LORD says: 'Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it, but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their fathers taught them.'" You see, first table violations of the law of God, that's the first four Commandments, always lead to violations of the second table, right? And Jesus' famous summary of the law is, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself," and that summarizes the 10 Commandments. Well, if you pervert the worship of God, if you reject the truth, then of course what inevitably follows is your life of loving your neighbor will also be rejected.

So what Israel was prone to do was have other gods. God said, "You should have no other gods before me," but they were enticed, right? And he warned them even before they went into the land, he said, "Be careful, be careful to drive out all of the other people in the land because they will be snares to you. You'll be tempted to worship their gods. You will be led astray to false worship." But then it's not just that they added [unintelligible] using idols, they made calves in Dan and Bethel, and they set them up as the worship of Yahweh. They thought that they were worshiping Yahweh, but through these idols, exactly what God had told them not to do. And of course, by breaking the first table of the law, they filled the land with all kinds of other sins, right? They murdered. They committed adultery because a lot of the idol worship in the nations around them included temple prostitution, and they engaged in those kinds of sexual immorality. And God is saying, "Because you have not obeyed my voice to walk

according to it but have stubbornly followed your own hearts and have gone after the Baals."

This is summarized so neatly in Jesus' parable of the wicked tenant in Matthew 13. He tells of a master who planted a vineyard and he expected fruit from the vineyard. He planted it, he did everything for it, he built a wall around it and he lent it out to tenants and then he went away to a foreign land. But he sent servants, year after year he sent servants to go and retrieve the fruit of it but some they beat, some they stoned, and others they killed. And so he sent more servants, and they did the same, and finally he sent his son and they said, "Look. It's the heir. If we kill him, we'll inherit the vineyard." And so they killed the son and Jesus is pointing at the Pharisees when he said that because they were rejecting Jesus, they had elevated not the law of God, not obeying God's standards of living, but their own traditions. In fact, they were breaking the law of God just to keep their traditions. They're saying, "I know, I know that the Bible says I need to honor you, mom and dad, but really, what I'm going to give to you in honor, I'm going to give to God, so I'm free from honoring you." Over and over again they used the Sabbath as a bludgeon not to build people up, but to hurt. And when God sent his Son, their Messiah, to his own, his own people did not receive him. They looked. They touched. They had in their very presence the God who created the universe, who spoke and everything came into existence, and they did not receive him. And we look down on them and we think we would never do things like that. We look down at Israel throughout their history and we think, "I would never have done the kinds of things that they do." But we do. We find subtle ways to allow the idols in our hearts to reign supreme where Christ should be Lord. It's always the same pattern, who you worship determines your moral purity.

Brothers and sisters, we are inundated by idols who are calling you to worship them. Now they're not graven images like you may think, but they're the god of materialism, of consumerism, and we are formed to think that if I can just get that next purchase I'll be happy. They're the therapeutic god that says really God is just here to meet my needs, to make me feel better about myself, to feel good about who I am and my new identity, really just positive things. And we end up inevitably shaping the church to cater to these other gods, not the God of scripture. You see John in 1 John 2:15 says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

You see, we have to do two things simultaneously: we have to be in the world but not of the world. Flannery O'Connor said one time that we have to cherish the world at the same time that you struggle to endure it. You see, I mentioned that the New Testament uses the term "world" three different ways, [unintelligible] politics, the nations, and the ways of fallen humanity alienated from God and his truth. Well, we have a responsibility to care for the world in the first two ways, but in the third way, the ways of fallen men in the world, we must wholeheartedly reject. Yes, we have an obligation to creation care, to worry about how we are stewards of the world that God has given us, but we need to do that through the framework of scripture, not because we want to deify creation so that we

might worship it as some environmentalists tend towards, but so that we may honor God and be good stewards of the things he's given us.

And the same with loving our neighbor. Yes, we care about social justice, we care about social justice, we want to see the wrongs in this world turned to right, but we always want to define justice by what God calls just, not by what the world calls just. So we do work for justice. We do care about the poor and we intercede for the widows and orphans and we set-up things like Mercy Ministry to meet the needs of the poor and those who have felt needs within our community and beyond if we're able, but we always have to be interpreting our creation care, our social justice, through the word of God because the world is trying to do the same thing, but it's the world that is set against God, that is an enemy of God. So it will take good things like creation and elevate it to the place of worship, to the place where we really should be just eradicating all of humanity because we're the problem, we're the ones that have led to all the climate problems, right? But that's not the solution. The solution is to be better stewards of what God has given us, to use our gifts as the image of God to spread his glory. That's the same way as we're working for justice, we want to analyze and look at the reasons. We just had two men in the PCA write, pastors, ministers of the gospel, write a book on reparations advocating for white people to pay African Americans. Now, this is problematic, right, because the sins of the fathers are not visited upon the sons. Now we may repent as a culture of the ways that we have treated our brothers and sisters of different color, and we may have to repent individually for the ways that we have treated other people, but do we need to pay reparations for things that we never did, that we never sinned? And how much? How much reparations is enough? Who gets to set the number and what does [unintelligible] to be?

So we need to look at social justice issues through the grid of scripture and we need to be asking ourselves how can we be faithful, how can we repent of past sins, of course, and how can we work towards unity that we all have in Christ through the Spirit. We need to be looking for various ways to do that well but we need to be careful that as a church we are not being formed by the world, that we as a church don't adopt a therapeutic model that all my preaching is really just self-help for how you can live your best life now. We need to not fall into the market model where God should just bless me. If I have faith, then I should have a Mercedes-Benz and a Learjet. Why not? And we need to be careful in adopting a political model. We have seen this over and over, right? We saw it at the turn of the 20th century with liberalism and the mainline church adopting a liberal and progressive politic, and that it being entwined with the gospel and so that it even formed and shaped the way they defined the gospel. We need to be careful as conservatives not to do the same thing, not to fall into the cult of Trump, right? We don't want to make the church and its mission identical with conservative politics. These things are dangerous, right?

[unintelligible] formed to the culture around us and you are being formed by them. They are catechizing you every day because I guarantee you that you watch more Netflix or look at more Facebook than you do read your Bible. I know because I do. Right, it happens. It's a part of our life, but we have to put counter formation in place so that we

can be reformed so that we're constantly aware of the culture's pressure to change and conform us to its image. We are not the world in its fallen humanity. We are new creations in Christ and the life that we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God, and that means it influences everything that you do. Not just that you're coming to church on Sunday, but how you love your wife, how you raise your children, how you educate them, how you interact with your neighbor, how you are an employee. The ways that you love those who are in the world, all should be determined by your love for God and his love that is set on you. David Wells says worldliness is what makes sin look normal in any age and righteousness seem odd. You are odd. You're odd, embrace it. Embrace that you are odd because God has called you to be holy. And the world will mock you for it. And it will malign you because they have made sin look normal.

But it's not all just bad news. Notice in verse 12 but, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." You notice that there are a couple of things that separate those who did not receive him from those who do. And notice how he identifies receiving with believing. Receiving Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, means to believe in his name. Those who have received him, they believe in his name. Those who have received him, they know him. The world does not know him, but they know him, they have received him because they believe in his name. Faith is the operative difference between those who are in the world and those who are not of the world but are in the world. They believe in his name and the name is more than a label, it's the character of the person. It's the person themselves. You believe into the name of Jesus, you were baptized into his name because it's in him that your salvation is found. Those who believe in Jesus are those who know him and have received him.

John is just articulating in the nature of saving faith. It's not just knowing about Jesus, it's not just knowing facts about him, it's not just assenting to certain propositions, it's receiving him, it's taking him into your life, it's having your life hid in his. It's more than a casual reception. It's not just inviting Jesus into your heart but just as a rejection of Jesus, of the Word, took on public characteristics, right, John can say they rejected him and it's known, they know it because it's public, this same way it's known who has received him, people know when you have done either/or. When you have rejected Jesus, you make it known by the way you live, you walk in darkness, but if you have received Jesus, how can you walk in the same way as those who have not? How can your life be a mirror image to theirs? It must be so starkly different so somebody can say, "Oh, he has received Jesus." You see, our faith is an allegiance and it's an allegiance that demonstrates itself in the life that we live.

John knows that there are people who have received Jesus because their lives are transformed and they're not the same, and this kind of belief leads to adoption. If you were in our Sunday school, we talked this morning about adoption. John doesn't just use the language of sons, but he uses the term children. [unintelligible] We have all privileges and notice what he says, "who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." We have a legal right to be qualified as the children of God, to be adopted in his family. How can you call God Father? Well, because you were adopted into his family and you can cry out to him and say, "Father and God," and he hears your prayer.



Michael Horton, a theologian, said, "Adoption is not a goal held out to children who successfully imitate their parents, nor is it the result of an infusion of familial characteristics or genes. Rather, it is a change in legal status that issues in a relationship that is gradually reflected in the child's identity, characteristics and actions." John doesn't say those who received Jesus, who believed in him, over the course of their life they became more like him and they earned the right to be called children of God. No, he said, they believed in him and that gave them the right to be adopted into his family. They didn't have to work to be adopted into the family. God made them his children. Amen? Because I don't know about you, but I couldn't earn that. That's an identity that I continually fall short of and it's marvelously encouraging because sanctification, the living end to who you already are, is accomplished in Christ just like my forgiveness of sins, and that gives me hope.

Paul uses a different metaphor, uses the clothing metaphor, right, put on Christ, and in that sense you're learning to be comfortable wearing Christ, you're learning to be comfortable walking in a new identity. You are not in the old Adam. You're in the new Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have to live like that is true, but that takes time. You have to get comfortable with the clothes that you're wearing so that you can wear them well, so that they really demonstrate your inner identity.

But also notice that it's biological, it's a new birth or to be reborn. The theological term we would use is regeneration. We see John surfaced the theme of new birth in verse 13 which he will flesh out [unintelligible] talked with Nicodemus. And notice that new birth is not a result of belief. Belief is a result of the new birth. The logic of John is so important here. Receiving Jesus by believing him gives you a legal right to adoption, but those who were adopted because of their faith in Jesus were born not by natural means, not by the will of men, not by blood, but of God. The people who are born of God believe and receive Jesus. The people who have been regenerated, God has taken away their heart of stone and given them a heart of flesh, they respond to Jesus and say, "Yes, I want him!" They receive Jesus. They put their faith in him. They believe in him because their hearts have been changed. You don't believe in God and then God gives you the new birth. That makes the new birth dependent on you. That makes your faith the reason that you are born again. But that's not what John is teaching. John says that, "he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Your new birth is the sovereign work of the omnipotent God and no one else could do it. You cannot make yourself alive when you are dead. It was not the faith of the person that made them born of God. Jesus says again in John 6:63, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'" And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh is no help at all. No help at all, and

that means the flesh in the sense of the world, the flesh that is set in opposition against God, you cannot use it to find your way back to God.

One important thing we notice from this is that we must interpret our experience by the word of God. We don't take our experiences and interpret scripture, we interpret our experiences from scripture. Yes, I called on the Lord, I asked him to save me and he did, but it wasn't me that initiated that. I never could have on my own. I know because scripture tells me that God was doing a prior heart work, that he was changing my heart so that I was born from above and it didn't depend on me, didn't depend on my flesh.

It may seem dire when considering that the world and even the church often rejects Jesus, but what we notice in verse 12 of the 13 is that God always preserves a remnant. He always has his people and this is encouraging because sometimes we look out there and we think, "Wow, the church is really going down," but in other parts of the world the church is thriving and growing by leaps and bounds. So take heart, don't be discouraged because there are always people and there will always continue to be people who receive Jesus. So continue to do the work of bearing witness like we talked about last week. And since God is the one who gives the new birth, faith and adoption into his family as gifts, the only right response is thanksgiving. The only right response is to lift up our hands and sing the doxology, praise God from whom all blessings flow. That's the response of reading about people whose lives are transformed because God gave them the new birth, because God adopted them into the family and justified them. That's good news. And to accept Jesus is, of course, to walk in the light. To walk in the light is to walk in the truth and truth leads to moral purity. So if we are to walk in the light then we are to walk according to God's word, and that means not just the first table of the law. Well, I don't make idols, but do you love your neighbor? Do you love your neighbor as Christ loved you?

This has huge implications for our whole life. We have to be constantly examining our hearts as regards worldliness, and there's no neutrality out there. There's no looking out at the world around us and thinking, "Well, that's just a neutral thing so it's okay for me to engage in." No, there's no such thing. Everything has a purpose and it's either leading you to worship God or it's not. So you have to ask yourself, is this thing I'm about to do going to worship God? Is this website that I'm going to look at going to worship God? Is this comment that I'm going to make on Facebook going to worship God? Oof. Watch out. We are called to love our neighbor, not to adopt his standard of living, but we still have to love him and we still have to reach out with the good news of the gospel. Amen?

Let's pray together.

*Father, we thank you for your lovingkindness and your faithfulness to us who were dead in our sins and trespasses, but because of your lavish grace, you have made us alive together with Christ. You have adopted us into your family and we can cry, "Father," and we know that you will hear our prayer. We thank you, Father, that the faith and the adoption that we have are gifts that you give us for we are weak, our faith is weak, and we don't always walk like people who belong to the family of God, but we know that with*

*you we can find forgiveness. So we give you thanks. We worship you for the greatness and the goodness of this [unintelligible] that shapes the way that we live, the way we love you and the way that we love our neighbor. We who have received Christ can never be the same again. And we give you thanks Father, for this portion of your word, seal it and quicken it to our hearts, where we pray it in Christ's name. Amen.*