Are you Ready to Wash Feet? By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: John 13:1-17

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Will you open your Bibles to John 13?

Now, this Scripture is one of those places of awe and approach with reservation like Moses approached the burning bush. And I want you just to take the Scripture and open it and hold it there before you. I am not going to take you anywhere else in the Word, but here as far as your turning is concerned. I want you to look at this picture. And, by God's grace, in the presence of our Lord and his Holy Spirit I want us to learn something from this portion of God's Word.

Now, in these countries as I understand it, it was the custom to wash the feet of guests who came to one's home. It was a very lowly service performed by a servant or slave at the door.

You remember our Lord rebuked a Pharisee one time. He said, "When I came into your home you gave me no water to wash my feet."

As I understand it, now people wore, in those countries, robe, turbans, veils for the women. And they wore sandals, open toed sandals. They were just strips of leather that they wore on their feet. And they would walk through the hot and dry and dusty roads and paths and with they came to a person's home, if they came to the home to eat lunch of dinner, when the came to the home they took their shoes off. And at the door a considerate kind guest would have a lowly servant boy or slave or a girl and they would be there with a basin of cool, refreshing water and the guest would come into the home and the servant would take his sandals off and put his foot in that basin of cool, clear water and just sponge off his feet and dry that one with a towel and then he would put this one up and they would wash that dirty, dusty foot and dry it with a towel and the guest would go on in and lie down or sit down at the table, whatever the custom was. The next one would come in and this little slave sitting at the door would do the same thing.

Well, according to this Scripture that we just read, the disciples had gathered together for supper and supper being ended they were sitting about the table talking or lying about in a circle. It doesn't matter, but they were there talking and visiting. And the master, the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the table and he went over here and took his robe off. They had an undergarment, a small undergarment that the men wore under this robe. But he

took that robe off, the seamless robe. And he laid it over on a chair, but I'm sure the disciples watched him. He didn't say a word. And they watched him not understanding what on earth he was going to do.

But he laid that robe carefully on a chair and then he went over and got a towel, a huge towel. And he draped it around him. And then he poured a basin of water.

I remember when I was a boy growing up we had those old whit ivory looking—I don't know what they made them out of—but basin. We didn't have running water in the house, but we had a pitcher of water and you poured the pitcher in the basin and pour the water and wash your hands. And he got one of those huge basins and filled it with water. And then he came over and kneeled down in front of one of the disciples and started washing his dirty, dusty feet. He took his sandals off. And they were amazed. They just were aghast. And nobody said anything. He was...he began to wash their feet, the master did, the Lord of glory.

Now, people have read this Scripture for years. I have read it as you have many, many times. And it has been preached many times. And even foot washing or feet washing has been practiced, literally, in many circles. And I would say this to you this morning. Under correct circumstances I would not object to it at all, under correct circumstances. If it were service that needed to be rendered, however lowly, I wouldn't object to it at all. But as a church ordinance, as a means of demonstrating my humility, I have to have reservations.

I think we are missing many opportunities to wash feet running around trying to literally wash feet.

But anyway, I have heard this passage of Scripture preached from several times and dealt with many times. But I have never really heard it dealt with in a way that I felt that it ought to be preached and ought to be presented. And there is no way I can exhaust it. Like I said to you at the beginning of the message, I can't touch the hem of the garment here. It is too sacred. It is too holy. It is too meaningful.

But I have found some things. I believe God has shown me some things about this Scripture and it comes from much preparation and study and looking into it. I have divided into four or five parts.

The first one is verse six and seven. Now here is the heading of this part of the message. Let me tell you this. Listen to me. Any real spiritual truth, anything spiritually that you learn...and when I say learn it I mean it become a part of you experiencing it. You learn it never to forget it. You learn it. It is not mental acceptance of a fact. It is something you have experienced. Any spiritual truth that you learn will come by revelation and by experience as God brings you to maturity in Christ.

Our Lord came to Simon Peter. He was washing the disciples feet, verse six, "And he cometh to Simon Peter. And Peter saith unto him," I can picture this in my mind. Peter

was always the outspoken one. He was always the impulsive one. He was always speaking his mind without reservation sometimes. And our Lord just brought his basin over and set it in front of Peter and he pulled his feet back under the chair or wherever he was seated. He pulled his feet back and said, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"

And then our Lord made this comment, verse seven, "Jesus answered and said to Peter, 'What I do, what I am doing you do not know now. You don't know. You don't understand. But you will. But you will."

Down in verse17 he said, "If you know these things, if you know them happy are you." In John 16 he said one day to his disciples, he said, "I have got many things to say to you, but you can't bear them. You can't know them."

Well, Peter knew what he was doing. That was the reason he objected. Our Lord said, "What I am doing you don't know." He knew what he was doing. He was washing their feet. But he didn't know what he was doing.

Do you understand what I am saying? That is why he was objecting. He knew what he was doing. "Do you, the king of glory, wash my, the fisherman's feet?" He knew what he was doing. But he didn't understand what Christ was doing or why he was doing it.

And listen to me now. Here is my point. This whole religious world knows here, outwardly, what Christ Jesus did. But they don't know what he did. No, they don't, Ryan.

They say he was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. We just got through celebrating it. We had all these little nativity scenes. If you couldn't find a boy baby, get a girl baby. It doesn't matter to us. If you can't find a real baby, get a wax dummy doll. It doesn't matter to us. If you can't get three wise men, get two. We're just celebrating.

Well, let me ask you this. Why was he born of a virgin? Does anybody know? Is it important? Is it significant? Why was he born of that particular virgin Mary. Why couldn't it have been some other virgin? Why the woman that was of the house and lineage of David, Judah, Jesse? Does anybody know why? There are untold reasons why, significant reasons, God honoring reasons, reasons without which you couldn't know God. Why was he born in Bethlehem? "Oh, thou, Bethlehem, thou art the smallest of all of them." Little old insignificant town out of nowhere, city of David. Why was he born of David?

This world knew what happened, but they don't know why. They know he went about doing good. Why? They know he lived on this earth 33 and a half years. Why? They know he was baptized. Now that is a silly thing for the Lord to do. Oh, not if you know why. Why a lot of them watched him walk down into that water and be baptized of John the Baptist, but there was only one there that knew why, to fulfill all righteousness and that was the one that was doing it. The whole world knows he died on the cross.

"What I do now, Peter, you don't know. No you don't know, but you shall know." And I'll tell you this. The whole religious world knows about that baby in Bethlehem and that man of Judea and that victim on that cross and that open tomb and that ascension and that exaltation. But they don't know what, who why or where. They could not give you an intelligent answer on any of those questions so they don't know what he is doing.

They don't know what he is doing now. He said they have eyes, but they don't see.

If I were to say that to you this morning you would say, "The preacher is getting old and senile and he needs to retire. Anybody with eyes can see."

No they can't. They can see the physical, but they can't see the spiritual. Our Lord said they have ears, but they don't hear. They have got hearts, but they don't understand. They have got minds...They can understand formulas. They can understand scientific research. They can understand geography and history. They can understand the mechanics of automobiles. They can do great and mighty wonders. But they don't understand or know God. That's right, Jim. That is what is sad.

Peter said, "Dost thou wash my feet?"

And our Lord said, "Peter, you don't know what I am doing. You don't know what I am doing."

The apostle Paul said, "Oh, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection." I wish that I could find somebody who was really interested in knowing him, in knowing him, in knowing who he is. I would love to take a few months and tell him who he is.

We want instant religion today. We want to run down here to Mr. Swaggert and get emotionally upset and come down the aisle and say a little prayer, kiss God good bye and say, "I will see you in glory."

But I wish I had someone who wanted to know who he is and what he did and why he did it and why he did it and sit down with me with a hunger and thirst, who will come and listen, who will take the Word of God and find out who he is and what he did and why he did what he did that God might be just and justifier, that God's attributes and character might be justly honored and satisfied and exalted, that God may be God and redeem sinners, to be able to give to everybody that asks him a reason, to give an answer for the hope they have. And if you have got a good hope you can.

All right. Notice the second thing. Here is the second thing I see here. Verse seven he said, "What I am doing you do not know. But you shall." And then in verse eight, now here is the very heart of the gospel of justification and sanctification. Here is the very heart. Will you listen? Listen right now so keenly. Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet. You will never wash my feet."

And the Lord Jesus said to him, "Peter, if I wash thee not thou hast no part with me."

Now, you can go into the pool or let the preacher wash you. But you have no part with him. He has got to wash you. He personally has got to wash you. They can bring you down and you just keep on doing it now. Out there in these churches, you know, we don't do it here. You can bring these babies and dress then in linen and satin. It's pretty. Put them on a little pillow. Get the godfather and godmother. Get some preacher to stand there and say some words and let him wash that baby. But that baby has no part with Christ.

"If I wash thee not, you got no part."

Then you can come down this aisle and get on your knees like the woman said on television the other day. "Go to an old fashioned altar." You need to go to an altar, but it is not an old fashioned church wood bench. Christ is our altar.

"If I wash you not... If I wash you..."

Our Lord is speaking of the cleansing of the blood, the washing of regeneration. That is what he is talking about. He is talking about the washing of the blood, the cleansing of the blood.

"If I wash you not, if I cleanse you not, if that blood which maketh atonement for the soul..." God said, "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."

Today's preaching and gospel is a bloodless religion. They want nothing to do with the blood of the cross. They want nothing to do with the blood of the mercy seat. But our Lord is saying here to Peter, "If I don't wash you, you have no part in the covenant of mercy because that is the blood of the everlasting covenant." You have no part in his righteousness because "he who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteous of God in him." You have no part in his resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in that first resurrection."

I want to obtain unto the resurrection of the dead by all means. Don't you? Christ said, "If I wash you not you have no part, no part. If I wash thee not, thou has not part in the eternal kingdom," in his body.

"If I wash thee not, you have no part in my prayers and intercession."

No use saying, "Blessed Mary, mother of God, pray for us poor sinners." She can't help us. Christ said, "If I wash you not, you have no part. I wash you."

Is that clear? Jesus says, "I am not coming this way, I am not going to...you are not going to wash my feet."

"Now we will wash each other's feet. We will get together. We will share and we will get a program going and we will do the best we can and we will get the law and we will reread it and restudy it and reevaluate it and see if we can rekeep it. But you are not going to wash my feet. Never."

"All right. That will be fine. But if I don't wash you, you don't have any part with me."

Now, I don't know how I can make that plainer than he made it. "You don't have any part with me."

Oh, boy, but listen to Peter now, verse nine. And I wish men today would get as alarmed as he did. I have just said that I read the master's comment. I said, "The master said if I don't wash you," are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you?

"That's old fashioned, preacher."

It's as old as God. Yeah, I admit that. He is the Lamb slain before the foundation. That is quite old fashioned.

"That is medieval. That is primitive."

Yeah, it goes back to the ancient gospel. It is ancient. It is primitive.

"Well, we are modern people."

Unfortunately, that is your loss. God hasn't changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The way of the cross is still the way home. The way of the blood sprinkled way, that is still the way to God. God has never saved sinners, but one way, the same way he redeemed Abel he will redeem you, by the blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. We are washed in the blood, cleansed in the blood, redeemed by the blood. The blood is our atonement before God. And our Lord Jesus said, "Peter, if I don't wash you, you have got no part in anything that is mine."

Well, he said, "Lord, wash my hands and my head and just wash me all over. All of my body are instruments of sin. Just wash me all over."

He got alarmed, but the master replied, now listen to this, verse 10, "Jesus said to him, 'He that is washed, he that is washed," past tense, "needeth not save or except to wash his feet. But he is clean. And you are clean."

In other words, even before he...he hadn't even gone to the cross yet, had he? That is where he shed his blood, on the cross. But this was before the cross. And he is saying to these disciples, he is saying to his sheep, he is saying to his own, he is saying, "You are already clean. You are already washed. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. You are already washed."

And the reason for that is this, that a promise of God is as certain and sure as an act of God. God doesn't have to wait for something to happen for it to be already accomplished.

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning."

You see the Scripture says, "Whom he foreknew, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. Whom he predestinated, he called. Whom he called he justified. Whom he justified he glorified," past tense. He has already done it. Christ was the Lamb slain before the world.

Abel came offering the blood of a lamb. Well, the blood of that lamb, an animal's blood has no power to atone. It has no power to cleanse, but Abel was cleansed. Abel was redeemed. Abel was accepted of God. Why? His sacrifice pictured and patterned Christ's sacrifice. It is done. It is done. You see that? Everybody prior to the cross was saved by looking to, in expectation and faith, the blood shed on the cross by our Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody after the cross is saved and redeemed and washed by faith looking back to Christ who is our sacrifice.

But with God there is no past, present and future. He is I am. There is no time with God. Everything that has been done, is being done and will be done, is already done.

Does that make sense? It doesn't to us. We are time creatures. With God there is no hour or day or year or month with God. There is no past, present and future. He said, "I am." And when our Lord was looking at these disciples he was saying, "You are clean. You are clean. I have been your surety from all eternity. I have been your atonement from all eternity. I have been your cleansing, the cleansing blood from all eternity." God has loved you. He does love you he will love you.

"Having loved his own he loved them to the end." Having loved them? Always loved them. God doesn't change. Do you see what I am saying? And that is what he is saying to Peter.

But he says to Peter, now watch this, "But you need daily washing. Your feet need washing. You are clean. You are clean. Clean in God's sight, clean before the law, clean in purity. Thou your sins be as scarlet I cleanse them, make them whiter than the snow. Though they be red like crimson, they will be whiter than wool. But your feet need washing, Peter."

Let me see if I can illustrate that. I visited in countries where they have public baths. People don't have the conveniences, modern conveniences we have in this country. They have private baths in every home, sometimes two or three. There are countries where they don't have public baths. They have public baths here.

A fellow would take his towel and he would go down to the public bath and that is where he would bathe. And he would bathe all over. He would take soap and wash and cleanse his hair, his skin, all over, hands, back, body. He would take his towel and dry himself off and put his robe on and walk home.

Do you know what the first thing he did when he got home he had to do? Wash his feet.

Why? Because he walked down a dirty road going home. And he had to wash his...but he didn't have to wash all over again. He was clean. But he had to wash his feet. And that is what our Lord is saying to Peter here. "Peter, you are clean. I cleansed you. I have washed you. I have redeemed you. You are clean and whole and pure in the sight of God. But, Peter, there is a daily cleansing, too. There is a daily sanctification."

That's right. Our Lord intercedes for us constantly. You see, repentance is not an isolated act. I am repentant. Faith is not an isolated act. That is what bothers me about people that say, "Well, I got saved when I was 12."

You got saved? You're not being saved? You mean, it's all finished? You kissed God good bye and told him you would meet him glory?

Oh, no. There is a daily coming to Christ. There is a daily repenting. There is daily faith, isn't there? There is a daily praying, "Lord, forgive me of my sins. Wash me. I have been washed, but wash me. I have been saved, but save me. I know Christ, but reveal him to me."

That's it. And that is what he was saying to Peter here.

The character of faith is perseverance. The character of faith is continuing in Christ. Don't you buy any other gospel. Don't you do it because it won't save.

"You are preaching works, preacher."

I ain't no such thing. I am preaching obedience. I am preaching commitment and I am preaching love for Christ. That is what I am preaching. It is all of Christ.

But Peter said, "You will never wash my feet."

"Then if I don't wash you..."

And, dear people, I can tell you. I don't care if you were raised a Methodist or a Congregationalist or a Southern Baptist or an Independent Baptist or a Landmark Baptist or a Catholic or a Carmelite or what you have been raised, redemption is in the blood. Salvation is of the Lord. And it is a mighty miracle of his grace whereby he takes a dirty, filthy sinner off the dung hill and washes him in the blood of the Son of God who is our sacrifice and substitute and cleanses him and makes him a new creature. And he cleansed him once for all. There is no further cleansing needed. There is a daily forgiveness and a daily walk and a daily pardon and a daily fellowship. That's right.

All right. Here is the next comment. Nearly everybody misses this. Here is a powerful statement overlooked by so many. Now, quietly and calmly read verse 10 again. "Jesus said, 'Peter, he that is washed, he that is cleansed, he that is under the blood, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit. And you are clean. You are clean. John, John's clean. Peter is clean. Nathaniel is clean. Luke is clean. But not all of you, not all of you."

And I just imagine his eyes went over and met Judas. Judas is not clean. He wasn't in the covenant. He wasn't in the suretyship. He wasn't in the cross. He was not cleansed. Isn't that what that says?

It tells you the next verse. "For he knew who would betray him. Therefore, because he knew one of them would betray him, one of them didn't believe on him, one of them wasn't his disciple, therefore he said, 'You are not all clean."

I don't know any verse of the Bible that is clearer than that. Now, you do what you want to with it. But our Lord said to Peter and the disciples as he washed Peter's feet, he said, "Now, he that is cleansed, cleansed in the blood...the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. He that is cleansed and purified within and without before the throne of the holy God, he doesn't ever need to be cleansed again. By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. There remaineth no more offering for sin."

We don't need a mass next Sunday. That is what a mass is. It is offering Christ again every Sunday. It is blasphemy.

A man said to me this week, "How do you get away with saying what you say from the pulpit? Doesn't your denomination hold any restraint over you at all?"

I told him I didn't belong to any denomination. This church is not under any rules or regulations from any organizations. I say what God tells me to say. And I am going to say it by his grace that Christ has been offered once and that all. And he cleansed us.

But he said, "You are not all clean. You are not all clean." For he knew who would betray him. And that is the reason I am saying to you, I am saying to you that Jesus Christ the Lord—now hold on to you seat—did not on that cross die for the whole human race. Now, come on, you just all messed up. You think he did. He died for those who believe on him. He didn't die for Judas. He said that. He said, "He is not clean."

You say, "Up to that time he hadn't died for any of them."

Oh, yes he had. He is the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world. And God's purpose will never change. Those who are ordained to eternal life will believe. And Christ died for them and cleansed them.

If you are here this morning and you believe on him and love him and trust him. He died for you and you are clean. You are clean. Isn't that something? Pure, holy and clean,

spotless. But if you are here and do not believe on him, no, you're not clean. There is no atonement for you. There is no cleansing.

You see, the Scripture says, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellow-ship one with another," that is fellowship with Christ, "and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." If you don't walk in the light you are not cleansed. That is obvious, isn't it?

"He that believeth on the Son hath life. He that believeth not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him."

All right. Let me show you the last portion now. Verse 12. "So after he had washed their feet and had taken his garments and was set down again he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?" Our Lord very calmly finished washing all of their feet and then he went over and took the towel off and laid it down and picked up his robe and put back on calmly, walked over and sat down. And then he looked at them and he said, "Do you know what I have done? Do you know?"

He said, verse 13, "You call me master and Lord and you say well. That is exactly what I am, the Lord of Lords, King of Kings, master." He said, "Call no man master on this earth. One is your master. Call no man father. One is your father. Neither be ye lords over God's heritage because you are brethren." Isn't that right?

"But I am your master. I am your Lord. And you say well. So I am. If I, then, your Lord and master have washed your feet, if I have taken the place of a common, every day slave or servant and sat at your feet and rendered unto you the most menial task, the most lowly task of the most lowly servant, I ask you. Is any service or task too lowly for you? That is what I am asking? If I, the supreme, revered, awesome Lord among you, my brethren," he is not ashamed to call us brethren, "have sat down before you and performed the most menial task, rendered unto you this service, is any service too low for you? Verily, verily, I say unto you," in verse 15. "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you. The servant is not greater than his Lord."

There is no class system in the kingdom of God.

Let me read you two or three Scriptures. Matthew, let me just read this. You listen to it. He said, "The disciples debated about who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus called a little child over and set him in the midst of them and said, 'Verily I say unto you. Except you be converted, changed in your haughtiness and in your pride and in your arrogancy..." Somebody has a little more money and somebody else looks down on those that don't have much. James said, "A fellow comes into your congregation, he is dressed in a [?] suit with a diamond ring on and a Rolex watch and drives up in a big car and you just pay him so much attention saying, 'Now you sit here.' Another fellow comes in not very nice clothes, overalls or something. You kind of ignore him. Let him find where he wants to sit. He is not worth much to us.'" Ungodly. That is ungodly.

Some of you have a little more education. You have got a masters and a doctorate and a bachelor of science and a Ph.D. You think you are somebody?

Oh, if the grace of God ever gets in your heart you won't think that. You will consider the least servant of God in this church to be more important than you are. That is what he is saying. That is right.

"You mean me come over here and vacuum these floors? Me? Me clean the rest room? Me shovel the snow? Me take a back seat? Me? Don't you folks know who I am? Surely you know who I am."

Yeah, unfortunately we do. We would never have known if you hadn't told us, though.

"Whosever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is great in the kingdom."

Do you know what he is saying? You know and I know exactly what he is saying. There is no Mr. Big in the kingdom of God.

Let me read you another one. Over here he said this. The master said this. "Again, there was a strife among the disciples of who should be the greatest."

We like offices in the church. I know churches where if you have got 120 members you have got 119 officers. That's right. They give everybody an office. We like the titles. We like recognition because we are so carnal, so fleshly, so lost.

Verse 25. He said, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but you shall not be so. He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger. And he that would be chief, let him be as one who doth serve."

I will tell you honestly. In this kingdom of God, in this...you see, they say the grave is the leveler. The grave. There are no rich and poor in the grave. There are no educated and uneducated. There is no old or young. There is no smart and foolish. The grave is...oh, no, no.

Grace is the first leveler. Grace brings the mighty down and raises the lowly up. In Christ they are brethren. That is right. And to me in the kingdom of God...somebody says, "What do you all do for the young people down there?"

Oh, we got young people 85 years old here. And we have got some of these young men here that are 70 years old and experiencing the gospel. They know Christ. So there is no age in the kingdom of God. We are brethren. Male, female, bond or free, rich or poor. We have got some folks here that God has blessed. And they know who...where they got it. God gave it to them. We have got some that are struggling. I can tell you this. Among those who know God they are one. And what is mine is yours. It better be.

Somebody asked me the other day if they could use my car. I said, "Let me tell you. That's my father's car and any of his kids can drive it that want to."

Do you believe that? Well, you better. We don't have anything that God didn't give. And he said, "I set an example."

Now, then. Listen to me and I am going to be so candid and honest. There is no use...Ken, there is no use us getting a basin of water and sitting out here in this chair and washing feet, is it? I took a shower before I left home. I don't need you to wash my feet. My feet are clean. But I have other needs. Huh? See what I am talking about? And nobody here needs their feet washed I don't think. I will check you at the door going out. I wouldn't mind really and truly if you needed it.

But let's find somewhere that we can be like our Lord. Let's...the high and mighty. Let's get at the door. Let's embrace somebody and speak to him and lend a hand and reach out and don't try to put...don't act a part. Just be genuine. That is where it is.

Grace makes you loving and genuine, kind and compassionate, gracious and tender hearted. And let's just put all this stuff out there in the snow pile about who is who and what is what and all this other thing. I tell you what I am. I am just a sinner, nothing at all. But I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord. I am a Son of God. And I tell you, I like that arrangement of equality.

I tell you one place God has created all men equal and that is in Christ. They are all just like him. That is what it is teaching. That is what it is saying.

Are you ready to wash feet? And I will bet you there are a lot of people who would bring their towels tonight to actually do it who can't wash it spiritually. But you know where you are ready to wash feet? When you read the first two or three parts of that Scripture and find out who washed yours first because our relationship with others depends on our relationship with him. If you ever find out that he...

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, took upon himself the form of a servant..." When you find out what he did for you, then you will wash feet. You are ready and willing to wash feet.

All right. Mike. Come lead us in our closing hymn.