

Surprise!
Proverbs 16:1-9
9/27/15
Doug Lee

Thank you for the worship this morning. As always, we enjoy worshipping with you. Just a quick missions moment, if you don't mind just my sharing something about what I do. So I am—yes, my claim to fame is I'm the father of Nathan Lee. But we moved here last November to be near them, because of their disabled daughter, Emily, and it's been our delight to be that close to them. We've lived in Alexandria for ten years. And I retired from the Army out of the Pentagon in 2008. The day after I retired, I became the endorser for this denomination and six other denominations—endorser of chaplains, military and civilian. You can't be a chaplain in America, in most places, unless you are endorsed, certified, you're legit, through a recognized endorsing agent. So I'm the endorsing agent for this denomination and six others as well. It's my privilege, in that task—here's what I do. I had to figure this out so my kids would understand—my adult kids. What I do is I catch, credential, care, and cover chaplains. That's what I do. I do a lot of traveling. I work full-time. Just came back from Minnesota, where I saw two chaplains there. And so it's a privilege for me to serve this denomination and its chaplains.

And speaking of chaplains—please remember, as a family, to pray for chaplains. The ministry, for them, is wide open, and they have incredible opportunities. If they were all standing here before you today, all three hundred of them, they would tell you that they have incredible opportunities out there, in spite of the challenges that have come into the military over the last four years. You need to know that. On the one hand, unbelievable positive work. And while I'm standing here, there's a chaplain talking to a pilot someplace. There's a chaplain on the fantail of a ship. There's a chaplain in a hospital. There's a chaplain preaching somewhere. There's a chaplain advising a commander. There's a chaplain counseling somebody—maybe on Skype, maybe personally. There's a chaplain somewhere in the world representing you that's talking about Jesus to somebody, even as I'm standing here. And for that, we can really rejoice. But you need to pray that they'll continue to be bold, because the challenges definitely are out there, and you can read about them—and are reading about them in the paper, aren't you?

The military seems to be a gateway that has been chosen by some to present values that have not been a part of the military for most of—all of its history, really. But not only the military is affected, but other businesses as well. So folks, we need to be praying for our chaplains who are in that particular environment, and then praying for wisdom for all of us as we live in a watching world and a world in which the flesh and the devil are very active these days. So please pray for your chaplains, would you?

Would you turn on the Powerpoint, and let's turn to our Scripture passage this morning. And I'd like to begin there out of the Book of Proverbs 16. If you have your Bible or a Bible handy, you might want to follow along there. I'd like to read this for you, focusing on one particular verse for today. Proverbs 16:1-9. Of course, the Proverbs are sometimes a collection of various thoughts, and so there's not particularly a theme running through this—but yet, I think you'll detect a theme. So the Bible says:

To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue.

All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord.

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

The Lord works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster.

The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.

Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil.

When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.

Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.

In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

Let me read it one more time: "The heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." Do you believe that? If you do, would you stand with me, please, as we—you might say—take a little time here to proclaim what we believe for this denomination and mine as well, as a statement of faith called the Westminster Confession of Faith. And it's got—every single chapter is an incredible chapter to help us understand God's Word. But I found a modern translation of two particular chapters of the Confession. So if we could get that on the Powerpoint, I'd like to read it together. And essentially what you are doing this morning, if you believe this—I'd like you to read it boldly and think about what you are reading. So let's read it together. The Westminster Confession, "God's Eternal Decree." Together.

From before the beginning of time, God has decided and put into place everything that happens. He makes these decisions freely by His wise and holy will. Nothing He's put into place can change. Still, He orders everything in such a way that He's not the author of sin. And He doesn't force us to do things against our will. He is the root cause of everything, but this doesn't mean secondary causes are not involved – in fact, God is the reason other causes exist.

And the next chapter, chapter four. Together:

God, our great Creator, holds up all things, directs them, and tears them down. From the biggest to the smallest, He governs everything. This wise and holy care is called God's "providence." God governs according to His perfect knowledge of everything in the future, and in line with His free and unchanging will. His providence deserves our praise – for His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

That, my friends, is what the church believes. Amen? You may be seated.

We're fairly new to this church, although we've been visiting for ten years, actually, coming in from Alexandria to visit our family. And now we live in the area, but we still don't know a lot about you. And so if you don't mind, I kind of like taking quick surveys when I visit a church, since I don't know you. So let me ask you one quick question this morning. How many of you—I'll give you a moment to think about it, and I'm going to tell you what I'm going to ask you—like surprises? Just raise your hand. How many of you like surprises? Okay. That's pretty good. About a quarter of you like surprises. Let me ask it a little different way, to clarify. How many of you like positive surprises? Okay. All right. Very good. Makes sense. I'm with you. I'm with you on that one. My wife likes surprises. She likes especially when I bring home flowers that she didn't expect, and there's no particular occasion, and I bring home some flowers from Weis or Safeway. Right? She does not like surprises when, let's say, it's dark at night and she gets up, and I'm up, and I stand behind the door and jump out at her and say, "Surprise!" She doesn't like that kind of surprise.

You can think of surprises in your life, can't you? Think of the person sitting next to you and your family, and what surprises they like and don't like. We all like surprises at birthdays and Christmas, when we don't know what we're going to get, maybe, and maybe someone will give us a gift. And sure enough, that big day comes and we get surprised by who gives us wonderful gifts. And we could go on. In one sense, all of life is a surprise, isn't it? Because we don't know what's coming next.

I like jokes. I like good jokes. And what is a joke? A joke is a surprise. You wouldn't laugh at a joke if it was an obvious thing it was telling you, would you? I remember—I haven't asked Annabelle for permission to do this, but this was a long time ago. Annabelle, is it okay if I share a little story about you

this morning? It's a nice one. It's a nice one. It went something like this. "Grandpa? Knock knock." "Who's there?" Well, there's a lot of things you could say. First you say, "Well, who's there?" And she would say—I'm sorry. I'm getting jokes mixed up. I'm terrible at jokes. The question was—not a knock-knock joke—but, "What is black and white and red all over?" Maybe you've heard that question. And so the answer is obvious—a newspaper. But she said, "No, Grandpa, it's not a newspaper." I said, "Well, black and white and red all over—a zebra with ketchup on it." "No, that's not the answer." And then she gave me an answer that was something—I don't even remember what the answer was. I've got a complete blank on this, because I messed up the joke there at the beginning. You may not remember that, Annabelle, but I remember we all laughed because it was a surprise. That's my point. It was a surprise.

Life is full of surprises. We like jokes because of surprises. And God is a God of sovereign surprises. The verse we're going to focus on today, Proverbs 16:9, is, "The heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." Would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, this congregation said they like positive surprises, and, Lord, you are full of them. Every day we see your mercy in small ways and big ones. And Father, we know because of what the Word says about Jesus Christ that this surprise of you opening up our hearts and prompting us to come to Jesus was maybe the biggest surprise of all. Lord, I pray that we might leave here today appreciating all your sovereign surprises. In Jesus' name. Amen.

This Proverb has four parts to it, that I can see. I don't think Solomon intended this to be a four-part sermon, I really don't. He was just giving some good, wise thoughts. But I think the division of it is really important today. So the first point—I just want to remind you, if you're taking notes—is simply this. That we must, as we think about God's sovereign surprises, make sure we are guarding our heart. Guarding our heart. This is important.

The Bible has a lot to say about the heart. The heart can be translated as soul, will, personality, person, persona. The heart is a big word in the Scriptures. But the Bible also reminds us that the heart has a good side, you might say, and a bad side. Paul addresses it briefly in Romans seven when he says we do what we don't want to do and don't do what we ought to do. He's really talking about the problem with the remaining corruption in our hearts. If you're wanting to enjoy God's sovereign surprises, you're going to want to first of all make sure that your heart matches God's heart.

Let me give you just a few examples in Scripture about the importance of the heart. Just a few, because there are many, many others. Jesus said, speaking of some of the Pharisees and so on, "Their heart is far from me." You can have a heart that's far from the Lord. He also said, thinking of the parable of the seed of the sower, "The seed on the good soil stands for those with a noble and pure heart." An evil heart, and a pure heart. Paul said in Ephesians three, "May God grant you to be strengthened with power so that Christ may dwell in your heart." Your heart—we speak about accepting Christ into our hearts. Who we are. Giving him control over our lives. That's what a Christian is—someone who has Christ in their heart.

We also read in 1 Samuel that the Lord said, "The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart." Whose name happens to be David. God calls David a man after his own heart. In Psalm 37:4, the Bible says, quoting the Old Testament, of course, "Delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 141:4 says, "Let not my heart incline to what is evil." Proverbs 16:5, the same passage we just read today, says, "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord." In Proverbs 15:13, just a chapter before, it talks about a happy heart, a discerning heart, someone who is a joy to the heart. The Bible says those who are wise in heart are called discerning. A wise man's heart guides his mouth. In Matthew twenty-two, Jesus again said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind."

I say this as a bit of a preface today, because we're going to talk about God's sovereignty and appreciate what he's done for his in his sovereign hands. We want to be someone who is a man after

God's own heart. So I'll begin this morning by just reminding you that your responsibility in life is to make sure that you are matching your heart with the Lord's in all that you do—matching your heart with the Lord's in all that you do.

Some of you are in high school and headed to college, and one of the main questions, I think, that ought to be asked by a high school student planning for the future—if you don't mind me saying so—is the question, "Lord, what do I need to do to match your heart as I make my plans for the future?" "Lord, is my heart in tune with yours as I'm doing these studies and applying for colleges and so on?" "Lord, is my heart in tune with yours?" It doesn't have to be a high school student, though. You can be a college student at the end of college looking for a job, and you want to find a job in which you can serve with a heart that matches the Lord. But all our lives we go on, don't we? Every day, we ought to be asking, "How can I match my heart with yours, Lord?" It's one of the main tasks of the Christian. And coming to church and being available to the means of grace, prayer, the preaching of the word, communion—it's all a part of strengthening your heart. And it's so critical, and it demands another whole month of sermons on the heart. So we'll just leave it there. If you're a believer today, the Bible encourages you to guard your heart.

Secondly, though, the Bible speaks to us in this verse about making plans. Isn't it true that the heart of a man plans his way? Now, we make big and little plans every day, don't we? We make plans to choose a cheeseburger over a pizza. Little, tiny plans. We make plans to put on this shirt rather than that shirt. But we also make—and God, I think, is particularly speaking in these Scriptures—about the important plans we make. And if you are a man here who is among those who did a good job of proposing to your wife, I would hope that you made that decision and request out of a thoughtful heart that matched the Lord's. Maybe she asked you to marry her. I don't know how it works in your family. But big plans like that, you want to make sure they are from the Lord.

Let me just give you a little example, because you kind of have to search to find some thoughts and Scriptures about plans, although we know—as we read today—that God has a plan. He had a plan for you in the womb and before. He has a plan for all the nations. He has a plan for everything that he has created. But the Scripture does say a few interesting things about plans. We read one of them earlier. "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer is from the Lord." "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit." We also read in chapter 21:5 of Proverbs this: "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty."

And there's one other verse that I think is kind of interesting from Isaiah. We don't have time to talk about this, but Isaiah is talking to the exiles about what's going to happen in the future, and he says this: "He who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands." That word "noble" in the Old Testament is a word meaning liberal in a sense of being generous, large-hearted, devoted to others, like in his country and family and neighborhood. Large-hearted is what that means.

When you put verses like those all together, and you read the stories of people in the Scriptures, you realize that many peoples' plans change. We'll talk about that in a minute. But people do have plans. They have plans to take care of their families. They have plans to do this and that. And we ought to make big plans, though, in my opinion—noble plans. And I say that to you because I've met plenty of professing Christians who have plans, but really the plans aren't too large. They're not too large. Some Christians say, "Look, all I want out of life is just simply to be happily married"—that's a good plan, by the way—"to be happily married, rear my children, and just be comfortable. Be happy. Be at peace." And that's not a bad idea. We all would love to have peace. But what about how you are rearing your children to make an impact for the kingdom of God in the future? Are you helping them think about making big plans for their life, and not just making plans that are just ordinary and small?

I have to share with you a story from my wife, when she was about in eighth grade. She tells the story better than I. But here was an eighth-grader who loved Jesus. She grew up believing Jesus was her Savior. And for that, of course, she was eternally grateful. But when she was in eighth grade, as she tells

it—these are not my words, now, but she tells it—she had greasy, stringy hair, freckles, a loud voice, and no boy would ever want to like her, ever, ever, ever. That’s what she felt like. Maybe some of you recall feelings like that when you were younger. She also came from a home, though, where her mother taught her to pray specifically for things, so she had many examples of God answering specific prayers. So one day, as she tells it, she just said, “Lord, I’m just sick of all this. All my girlfriends seem to have boys who might like them.” By the way, parents, this was before dating contracts and before courting and all that sort of thing. All right? That was a whole different season of life for us. And I’m not so sure I would recommend this prayer. But nonetheless, she was praying that she would—that maybe someday a boy would like her. But the boy she wanted would be somebody who love Christ, and maybe they would even go together in high school and other people would become Christians. There were other parts to her prayer.

Well, that next summer between eighth and ninth grade, a new boy did move to her school who was a Christian. And guess what? God answered that bigger prayer of this little eighth grader, for they were involved in Christian leadership in their high school, and the others were impacted by God’s grace, of course, but by their influence in the high school and so on. And she tells a story that God very particularly answered that prayer for her as an eighth grader. It wasn’t just a prayer of a boy, like me, please—but a boy that would help me serve Christ. That’s an example, I think, of an eighth grader’s larger prayer. We’ve now been married forty-six years, and so that was an interesting story as we look back on all that.

But I’m concerned that we as believers, as a church, are making plans that really impact the kingdom in big ways. Columbia Presbyterian, you have been doing this in many, many different ways, for which I’m very grateful. And your current leadership is looking for new ways to expand the kingdom here. But we should be thinking big all the time. Match your heart with the Lord’s, make your plans, and make them big.

But whatever plan you’re making as a Christian, point number three has to be brought into the picture here right now, and that is the phrase: remember but the Lord. Remember but the Lord. One of my first big adult surprises was when I was starting college. And I’m a Vietnam-era person. You can probably guess that. And I had a low draft number—number fifty-five. Everyone who had a draft number under a hundred was going to go to Vietnam. So I said, all right, if I’m going to go to Vietnam, I might as well go and become an officer. So I joined ROTC at University of Minnesota, because that was my plan. In my heart, I thought I wanted to serve the Lord there in that way. I wanted to follow my dad, who was a World War II Navy veteran. And I thought it would be wonderful to be able to do that. And in my heart, I made some plans. And I joined ROTC and learned a few things about the military there. But between your sophomore and junior year, you have to get a physical. You have to do some other tests and some things. And maybe you get accepted. Maybe you get a scholarship for the next two years.

One day they called me in at the end of my sophomore year, and they said to me, “Well, Cadet Lee?” “Yes, sir?” “I’m sorry to tell you, you can’t be in the military.” “What?” “That’s right. We took an x-ray of your back, and you’ve got a congenital back defect in your fifth lumbar vertebrae.” “Really? I don’t have any problems with my back? I did sports and I’ve never been injured. An injury in my back that keeps me from being in the military?” “Yes. I’m sorry.” He didn’t say pack your bags, but essentially they meant that. And suddenly I was a young man who experienced a “but the Lord.” I didn’t quite see it at the time, but that’s what he was doing. I’ll tell more of the story later. But that was an experience for me that was pretty dramatic, and my heart was broken, because I really felt I needed to serve my country and follow my dad’s footsteps. But the Lord.

Scan the Scriptures in your mind for a minute. How many people can you think of who had a “but the Lord” experience in their life in the Bible stories? It would be a great question for a dinner discussion sometime with your kids. How many “but the Lord’s” can you tell me about in the Scripture? We can talk about a few, couldn’t we, right off the bat. We could talk about Noah, minding his own business, and

suddenly God says, “Noah, I want you to build an ark.” What about Abraham? Abraham, minding his own business in what is now Iraq, and God just suddenly said, “You are my man. You are going to be the father of a multitude of nations as great as the stars in the heavens and sand in the sea. I want you to move.” We don’t know what Abraham said exactly, but it might have been something like, “But Lord—” And he said, “Move, Abraham. Move.” What about David, just delivering food to his brothers in a battle zone. All of a sudden he becomes a hero of the nation. But the Lord. And then that turns into a kingship. That wasn’t David’s plan. He had other plans—to be a shepherd, to be a good boy, and to bless his father. But God had other plans for him.

You could think of some of the prophets who experienced a “but the Lord” or Moses, others in the Old Testament. Right? But the Lord. They were going this way. They were trying to follow the Lord, and they were going this way, and he says, “But the Lord.” One of the best examples, I think, may be the one of Mary, who was betrothed, and suddenly she gets this news that she’s pregnant. Talk about a surprise. That was a huge, sovereign surprise. And she responded to it joyfully and with Mary’s Song, as the Bible says about her words. Then the apostles. Their plans were to be a physician, a fisherman, a tax collector, and whatever else, and God just comes along through Jesus and says, “I want you to follow me.” But the Lord.

A sovereign surprise is always a “but the Lord.” And sometimes his surprises mean that you’re able to accomplish what your plans were. That can be a surprise too. But there’s going to be a “but the Lord” in there. I remember one of the most dramatic “but the Lord’s” for us and for my son and daughter-in-law was they were enjoying life with their oldest daughter, and they were pregnant again, and they had a baby who had a fatal disease—spinal muscular atrophy. And they were living with us. And we, by this time, had realized that she was quite ill and had heard nothing about this disease, but died in our home in Alexandria. Now, let me tell you—Nancy and I did not plan to outlive any of our grandchildren. Some of you have been there. You don’t plan things like that, do you? But the Lord intervened.

And I suspect we’ll all have some very interesting questions for God when we get to heaven. And then, to top it all off, Nathan and Anna made their plans, and then Emily was born with the same disease. And by God’s grace, she’s now ten years old, baptized in this church. And God has been very gracious in the midst of that “but the Lord,” because there have been other surprises along the way from those—not to mention a world-wide ministry Nathan had with their website, not to mention the care this church has given them and their reception of your love and so on. Isn’t that a “but the Lord”? You don’t plan for things like that. And we even sang and read some words about God’s greatest to the least decisions. And what, can we accept good from God and not evil? All these are “but the Lord’s” in his sovereign surprises.

Most of his sovereign surprises are on the positive side, but then someone could say, “Well, Doug, you can’t say everything that God has done is not positive,” and that is true. That is true. But they don’t feel like it when some of them come our way. I imagine if we had time—and I’ve been recommending to some other folk some other places—that a great church retreat would be getting together and you sharing some of God’s sovereign surprises in your life. What if you knew some of the sovereign surprises that were part of the people sitting next to you this morning? What if you knew them and could rejoice with them about how God worked through that? What if we could share more of these sovereign surprises? I do believe that heaven is going to be an eternity of asking God questions about why he did what he did, and when did he do it—you know, all those sorts of things. And we’ll get input and information on his sovereign surprises. Maybe someday there will be a retreat like that, where people can just share how they were surprised by God, and what God did with them to result in that surprise.

We see the last part of this verse pops up quickly, doesn’t it, when we talk about “but the Lord’s”. And that is because, you see, God determines our steps. Everything we read this morning and sang about has to do with this little phrase: God determines our steps. He knew us before the foundation of the world. He holds everything in his hand. Jesus, who is the Word, created by his spoken word and holds

things all together. The first hymn we sang talked about the voices of the waters. The writer was trying to give us an impression about God holding all that together. Because, you see, God determines our steps.

Great verse in Jeremiah 29:11, “And I know the plans I have for you,” he says in Isaiah. Do you believe that? If you’re a Christian this morning, do you believe that God is really sovereign? And when things come into your life that don’t seem so positive, do you really believe that he has something to do with that and wants you to respond to that somehow or not? And I’m speaking to myself, of course, because I have as hard a time as anybody saying, “Lord, why is that stinker that I work with—why do I have to work here with that person?” Some of you may have asked that question. Why? Why are you putting me here? What good is there for me to keep being frustrated every day with that person over there who is just acting this way and acting that way? And we have to ask the question: Lord, how am I supposed to respond to this? And you get input, insight, you get wisdom, you pray about it, and so on. But isn’t that a sovereign surprise? Of course, sometimes you can’t always choose where you’re going to work. If you’re desperate and a job is offered, you take it, and there you are. Everything that comes into our life, it seems to me, from the Scriptures and from our own confession of faith, points us to that God is a God of sovereign surprises.

So, what do you do with this information? Well, let me just say this. I appreciate it—I think I learned it at this church—when we do the benediction at the end, many of you hold your hands like this. And I never thought about that—it’s hands of receiving God and receiving what he has for us and so on. Many of you hold your hands out like this. I don’t think I’d done that before I came to Columbia Presbyterian. But thinking about that and this verse has given it a kind of a whole new meaning, for me, because when I hold my hands out now, I’m saying, “Lord, thank you for the Word this morning. Thank you for this. Lord, help me to receive your sovereign surprises this week—next minute—tonight. Help me to receive your sovereign surprises.”

Wouldn’t it be great if we were known as people who looked at life—whether at work, the neighborhood, within the family context—if somebody says, you know, I trust God, and all this, I believe what he’s doing. Let’s work this through. Let’s enjoy this sovereign test that God has given us—this sovereign surprise. Let’s do that. For there are people in the world who wake up in the morning, and their attitude is more like this: Okay, Lord, I know you’re there, but I’ve got my plans for the day. I’d prefer not to be bothered by what you have for me. I’ve got things I have to do, Lord. I’m not particularly interested in dealing with that personnel issue at the office. I’m not interested in calling my sister or brother or family member. I just don’t want to do it. I’ve got my plans today. And they approach life with a rebelliousness that’s obvious. And then when something does come that they don’t like, they just get more stern and upset with it, and they get angry. They don’t like God’s sovereign surprises, do they?

Others are more casual, maybe, and they approach each day with their hands in their pocket, kind of ignoring God. You know? Kind of waltzing through life. They don’t have their hands out or their fists clenched. They just kind of walk around kind of ignoring God and what he’s trying to do. And so even though there’s a person at work that’s thinking about—or a person at school that they know is kind of interesting in spiritual things—they just don’t want to be bothered by pursuing that anywhere, asking a serious question to them and getting it done. They just kind of ignore God’s sovereign surprises.

I’m one of those who believes, even though it’s hard for me to do, that when God brings people into our life, they are sovereign appointments. They are not there by accident. I also believe you are in your neighborhood by God’s sovereign plan. And the reason that house closed is because God has some plans for you there. Do you have big plans for being in your house, or little tiny plans? Do you have plans that somehow affect the neighborhood or not? A sovereign God who determines our steps, who surprises us, is a God you want to introduce to others—you would hope. And I struggle as you do with boldness and with creativity and how to do all those things. But, my friends, in his heart a man makes his plans, but the Lord determines his steps.

So, when you leave today, why don't you try this—if you haven't—as a gesture of, “Lord, help me receive your sovereign surprises today, tomorrow, the next day.” Maybe at dinnertime today or tomorrow or Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday, maybe you could talk to you kids over the dinner table about what sovereign surprises hit our family today? What sovereign surprises hit our family today? “Honey, what happened to you? Anything happen to you at school you think could be a sovereign surprise?” “Honey, at work, was there a sovereign surprise that happened to you? What happened? What kind of sovereign surprises are there?” And then give praise to God for what he's brought into your life. And of course I would hope you would then, thirdly, as you look into the Scriptures and read it, I hope you would read it with these kind of spectacles: this is a sovereign God's Word, and from this we see more of, maybe, the reasons for some of the sovereign surprises in your life. And you get understanding and wisdom through this. Our God is an awesome God. Our God is a God of sovereign surprises. May you enjoy them until Jesus comes. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we approach you this morning as a sovereign God with a huge capital S. You're bigger than we can know, really. You are more awesome than we can think. But your Scripture, over and over again, tells us about who you are, and the fact that you are a God who guides our steps. You have an eternal plan for the earth, for your people, for us as individuals. Lord, may we be great receivers of your sovereign surprises. In Jesus' name. Amen.