

A Crisis of Faith

Sunday Morning
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sermonaudio.com

Preached On: Sunday, September 3, 2017

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By your Spirit, I will rise from the ashes of defeat. The resurrected King has resurrected me. Now this may sound old school but can I get a witness? By your Spirit, I will rise from the ashes of defeat. Folks, we are all broken. We've all had issues. We've all faced defeat but I've got news: the tomb is still empty and because the tomb is still empty, he can raise from the ashes whatever death or heartache or pain or frustration or disappointment that you're dealing with today. So as we prepare to be challenged to see resurrection happen in our life, can we just be honest and lay all those issues before him and allow him to raise them today.

Lord, as we come to this time of challenge, as we open up your word and we are convicted by the lack of our ability, we are convicted by the lack of our know-how but hopefully convinced by your ability and your wherewithal, Lord, help us today to put our own desires, ambitions, hopes, whatever they may be, to the side and may you rise up from the pages of Scripture and because you rise up in our heart and our life, may the ashes of our life, may you resurrect them today. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning, I want to encourage you, open your Bibles to the Gospel of John 8, but we're going to utilize John 8 kind of today as a springboard. In fact, the majority of today's message is going to come from the book of Genesis. We are going to be in chapter 12 and 15 and 22, and for the sake of time, I'm not going to necessarily go back and read all those verses but you may want to have them open because I'm going to allude to specific verses in the book of Genesis. But we begin in John 8 and if you're a guest or a visitor with us, we are very slowly and steadily walking through the Gospel of John, kind of laying a scriptural foundation for what we find in chapter 15. In fact, in chapter 15 of the Gospel of John, Jesus makes this incredibly profound statement, he says, "I am the vine and you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him shall bear much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing." You see, this journey through the Gospel of John is to lay the groundwork to understand what does it mean to really have Jesus as the vine and for us to be the branches? What does it really look like to bear fruit? And can we come to the realization that apart from him we can do and be nothing?

But today we come to John 8 and we actually come to the end of a dialogue within the dialogue. You see, beginning in chapter 7, the feast of Tabernacles commences, that time

where the representatives from all the families of Israel would gather together and there Jesus shows up and those who despised him and those who were not appreciative of him, they began to chastise him and criticize him for that which he has taught and that which he has done and things begin to escalate a little bit. In fact, even among the religious leaders of Jesus' day at the end of chapter 7, they got in a fight among themselves of who Jesus really is. By the time we get to chapter 8, there is a woman who is brought and thrown at the feet of Jesus and the challenge is do you obey the law of Caesar or obey the law of Moses. Then Jesus continues the dialogue and things get heated and they get a little personal. Last week we saw they were arguing whose father were the representatives and whose father was Jesus'.

So what we see over the course of two chapters in a brief amount of time chronologically is we see as we are going to discuss today, we see a crisis of faith come to a climax. In fact, here at the end of John 8, these individuals are going to be faced with much like what we are faced with on a regular basis, that which they have known, that which they are familiar with, that which – listen – they are comfortable with, is going to come to a place where they've got to make a decision. Do they keep on doing and experiencing what they've always known or do they allow the Lord himself to interject in their lives and potentially see things differently but yet for God's glory and his honor and his benefit? In fact, today as we turn to John 8, we are going to pick up the story in verse 48 and we are going to see this crisis of faith in these men's lives and then see how can it apply to ours. It says,

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that you are a Samaritan, and you have a devil? 49 Jesus answered, I don't have a devil; but I honour my Father, and you dishonour me. 50 And I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeks and judges. 51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. 52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that you have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and you say, If a man shall keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom do you make yourself to be? 54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honours me; of whom you say, that he is your God: 55 Yet you have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57 Then said the Jews unto him, You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham? 58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. 59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

What we see here is this crisis of faith, and allow me as we begin, let me define those terms for us because I think it's important to understand what do I mean by crisis and what do I mean by faith. When we define the word "crisis" by just the dictionary

definition, it is a stage in a sequence of events in which the trend of the future events, whether they are good or bad, is at that point determined. It's a turning point or what our 21st century language might say, it is a tipping point. When we enter into a crisis of life, what we recognize is based on the decision we make, based on the direction we go, things tomorrow will be different than they were yesterday. And that's what we find in these individuals' lives. They are at this point where they must make a decision about Jesus. They had talked about Jesus, they had argued about Jesus, they had preached about Jesus, but for the very first time here in John 8, they actually pick up a rock and they are willing to throw it at him.

They are at a critical crisis point. What are they in a crisis over? Faith. You say, faith is complete or total confidence in someone or some thing. Now, let me share you with you what this crisis of faith is in their lives. Everything they have known, everything that they learned in school, everything they were taught by their parents, everything the rabbis shared with them, was about who the Messiah would be: his identity; his actions; and what he ultimately would fulfill. And here is this rabbi who they would say is a rogue rabbi from Nazareth, he has come in their midst, he has healed, he has delivered, he has raised, he has taught, he has preached, and they've got a decision to make, if he is who he claims he is, then everything they've been taught is going to change. So the question is are they going to change or is he going to change them? It's a crisis of faith.

Now, notice what Jesus says. He says, "Your father, Abraham, he saw my day. He rejoiced at my day. He was glad." And Jesus throws the proverbial ball back in their court and says, "Hey, we want to talk a lot about Abraham. Go back to his story and see that not only did he talk about and preach about who I would be, he actually saw me." Now this gets them all roused up and so we kind of see this crisis come to a head. Here's what I want to do today, I think it's easy, it's easy to look back 2,000 years ago and say, "Well, these guys, man, they missed the boat." It's easy to look back and say, "Well, if they had just made a better decision." You see, we have this privilege of hindsight but what I want to do today is I want to take their crisis of faith, I want to take their relationship to the teachings and the person of Abraham and I want to take your life and I want to overlay it back in the book of Genesis and see what does it look like when you and I enter a crisis of faith. What does it look like when we wake up and we don't know where to turn. What does it look like when we wake up and this life that we expected to go one way has gone a completely different way. You see, it may be on a magnitude of greatness or maybe you just sense it building, but every one of us at some level has either or is in the midst of experiencing a crisis of faith. Here's the question we have to ask ourselves: we've all got a stone in our hand, are we going to throw it at God or are we going to drop it in submission to him?

So if you have the book of Genesis open, let me encourage you to go back to chapter 12 and I want to talk about the sequence of events. When we talk about a crisis, it's a stage in a sequence of events that's leading toward future events where things are determined. What do we see happening in Genesis 12 and we want to begin with what I call the plan of God. In Genesis 12 on the heels of the Tower of Babel, the Lord comes to a place known as the Ur of the Chaldees, a man by the name of Abram. If you'll notice in verses

1 through 3 of Genesis 12, he calls Abram out and he says, "Here's the deal." He said, "I'm going to multiply your seed." Now remember, we're going to talk about this. He didn't have a child as of yet. He and his wife were past the childbearing days. He said, "You're going to have a child and I'm going to make all nations come unto you. You're going to be a representative. You're going to speak the truth of salvation and redemption and reconciliation to all nations, so much so that those who bless you will be blessed, those that curse you will be cursed." That was his plan.

Now, I want you to flip a couple of pages over to chapter 15, verse 5, and we see the rest of the story as old Paul Harvey would say. Chapter 15, beginning in verse 5, notice what the Lord does. He has Abram go outside and look at the stars. He says, "Can you count the number of them?" He says, "So shall the number of your seed be." What we see in Genesis 12 and in chapter 15 is the plan of God laid out not only for redemption and reconciliation for the world and for culture at large, but in particular through the person who we know as Abraham, the one who Jesus said, "He saw my day and he rejoiced."

Let's talk about the plans of God for just a moment. You know, the first thing we notice about Genesis 12 is that the plans were according to God's terms and not Abraham's. I want you to think about the story for just a moment. Here's a man who is quite comfortable with life. Things have been going well. He's got a good job. He's got a good family. He's got a good place to live. And all of a sudden, the Lord comes to him and says, "Here's what I want you to do, I want you to leave your steady income, I want you to leave everybody you know, I want you to take the brat of the family, your nephew Lot, and I want you to go to a place you've never seen, never heard of, and I want you to start all over even though you're at what we would call retirement age." What person in their right mind would say, "Yup, that's what I want to do." In fact, we discover oftentimes when God is at work in our lives, it looks completely different than how we would have drawn it out.

Just this week, I had the opportunity, someone in our church congregation, we found ourselves at a place outside of the church and just kind of the two of us talking and I've noticed over the last couple of weeks this individual, this man, he's been losing a lot of weight. Now can we all be honest? Anybody who's ever struggled with weight loss, when you've been losing weight and you've been successful and somebody comes up and says, "Hey, are you losing weight?" it makes you happy, doesn't it? I mean, it kind of gives that smile on your face. So I just went up to him and I said, "Hey, I've noticed, you've been losing a lot of weight. Is that true?" And he said, "I've lost 55 pounds." I said, "Man, that's incredible. That's like, I mean, you've lost a four year old. I mean, that's incredible." I said, "Can I ask how you've done it?" He said, "Sure." I said, "What's your diet plan?" Listen to what he said, he said, "If it tastes good, I spit it out. If it tastes bad, I eat it."

Now let me translate that to a conversation I had yesterday. Yesterday morning I was speaking to a friend of mine in another state who was about to receive a visitor at his front door propagating and advocating an alternative false religious system. He called me up and he said, "Jeff, let's be honest, they're not going to win me over and I'm probably not going to win them over. How do I handle this?" And I began to share with him, I said,

"Friend, let me tell you something: anybody who is selling, peddling or propagating a faith based system that appeals to the flesh, it's not of God."

Allow me to illustrate. There are billions of people on this planet who have a faith system, a religious system that says that they shall reign and rule the world and everybody else must be in subjection to them. Boy, that sounds like man, does it not? That sounds like something we want. There are billions of people on this planet who say, "If I can just meditate enough and pray enough, all my problems will go away and I'll just kind of go into nothingness." Woo, that sounds like something humanity desires, does it not?

You see, just like a diet plan, oftentimes if not most of the time, when it's God's idea, it doesn't sound like what we would have drawn up. Abraham would have never said, "Hey, God, I've got this great idea. I'm going to leave everything I know, go to a place I've never seen and start over in my late years of life." It sounds good, doesn't it? Think about what Jesus said, Luke 9:23, "If any man come after me let him deny himself." That doesn't please the flesh. "Let him take up his cross and follow me daily." And so we see in the life of Abraham, we see the challenge that Jesus puts forth to these men in John 8, we see in ourselves when God is moving and working and there's a crisis of faith in our lives, his plan is according to his terms and – listen – according to his timing.

We read chapter 15, verse 5, where we hear about this child named Isaac who will be born, whose descendants will be more numerous than the stars of the sky. You realize that this didn't happen within the same chronological year of Genesis 12, in fact, between 12 and 15, there is a time span that so frustrates Abraham and Sarah that in chapter 16 they think somehow, some way, God's got it wrong and we're going to do this ourselves. We're going to utilize Hagar. We're going to have a child by the name of Ishmael. It may not be the child of promise but it works for us. They messed everything up. What we see is God's timing is rarely the same as ours.

Now you've heard this before: God is never late but he's also never early. Here's what I've discovered in my life, when there were times in my life where God was really moving, he was really interjecting his plans into my life, it was never – listen – it was never according to the spreadsheet that I had imputed on the computer. Allow me to walk through just a few brief moments in my life. When I was a young man and the Lord called me to preach, when he called me into the ministry, that was not on my agenda and that's not what I was looking for on that day. In fact, it wasn't according to my timing, I had other plans.

The day that I met my wife Tracey, I didn't realize as she was walking in the door. It wasn't according to my plans. That was not what I had on the agenda for that day and for the rest of my life. You see, he interjected according to – listen – his time and not mine.

Over the course of the last years, our family has moved numerous numerous times. In fact, let me get personal with you. I'm going to go back about 18 months. Those of you that don't know, I am Texas born, I am Texas bred. Please, O God, let me be Alabama

dead. I'm tired of moving. I'm tired. Eighteen months ago, my life was fine. Kids were getting settled in. House had been remodeled. Everything was good and all of a sudden the Lord said, "Ah-ha! You're moving." It wasn't on my time scale. It wasn't my timing.

Abraham was up in the years of his life. The last time or the last point he ever wanted to move and start over again. And so a crisis of faith occurs when the plan of God that is not according to our terms and not according to our timing begins to take effect in our lives.

Now I want you to turn over to Genesis 22, one of the most critical chapters in all of the Bible probably or shall I say, possibly what Jesus was alluding to when he said, "Abraham saw my day and he rejoiced." Genesis 22, Abraham is going to take Isaac. This is the son of promise. This is the son of his wife Sarah. This is the one who the Lord said would bear the seed and the lineage more numerous than the stars. In Genesis 22, I want you to notice the story. You probably have heard of it at some point in your life before. Abraham takes his son and he takes him on top of a mountain and on the third day he tells his servants, "You stay here. We're going to go up and we're going to go and worship." And there's this conversation that happens between Abraham and his son where his son says, "Ah, dad, I see the wood and I see the fire but I don't see the lamb for the sacrifice." And Abraham says, "Don't worry, son. The Lord will provide his lamb." They get to the top of the mountain. There Isaac is tied to the wood and Abraham brings his hand up with the opportunity of sacrifice as commissioned by God and the angel of the Lord steps in and says, "Abraham, Abraham." He says, "Here am I." He says, "Don't touch your son. The Lord has provided." He looks behind him and there is a ram caught in the thicket by the horns and the Lord provides the sacrifice.

Now I understand that's the New Revised Jeff paraphrase of that story there in Genesis 22 but I want you to see something happen in the life of Abraham that is so important to our own personal crisis of faith. Not just the plan of God but hear me: the participation with God.

I want you to notice particularly in verse 4 and 5 what Abraham says to his servants. "We're going to go and worship." Now the story that I just recounted for you, you'll notice you didn't hear anybody sing a verse of any song. Nobody preached a sermon and there wasn't a building to be housed. You see, let me define worship for you for just a moment. Worship is our willing response to a self-revealing God and when you do what God asked you to do, you are worshiping. So we see this participation that Abraham does with God, that it was an act of worship. God asked him to go on the hill, he goes on the hill. God asked him to take his son, he takes his son. Worship is when we do what God has called us and asked us to do which means that our quantity of worship should be greater not on Sunday than on Sunday because we have more opportunity to do what he's asked us to do.

You know, one of my favorite stories of years gone by, in fact it was famously recounted in the movie "Chariots of Fire." The missionary to China and former Olympic champion, Eric Liddell, an individual dedicated to the cause of Christ and the message of Jesus Christ who felt the calling of God to go to China, but before he went to Asia, he fulfilled

his dream of running in the Paris Olympics. There came a time in his life, in fact it's recounted very vividly in the movie "Chariots of Fire" where there was this very religious, very pious, very shall we say knowing the things of God in such a way, it was his sister, who comes to him and says, "Brother, if God has called you to Asia, you need to go to Asia. Why do you waste your time running?" I love his response. He said, "God made me fast and when I run it makes God smile."

Do you understand that worship, Abraham's worship, is what happens when God says go and you go. When God says stay and you stay. When God says stop and you stop. When God says begin this and you begin it. When God says turn here and you turn there. You see, what we see in the life of Abraham as he participated with God's plan is that worship took place when he was where God asked him to be – listen – doing what God asked him to do.

So it was an act of worship but it was also an act of the will. Notice in verse 4 and 5, he says, "We will go to the top of the mountain. You stay here. We're going to go." In other words, God did not drag him up on that mountain. God did not force his hand to raise that knife. He said, "Here's the plan. I'm going to picture my son, I'm going to picture the salvation of humanity, I'm going to picture redemption. You can be a part of it or not."

You know, the last few weeks in my own personal Bible study, I know, I know, I know I'm a little bit strange and I'm a little bit odd and I'm about to give verification to it. The last couple of weeks, my own personal study has been in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy. Now you've got to really have a lot of caffeine in you if that's what you're going to study but nonetheless, just reading through Leviticus and Deuteronomy over and over and over again. You say, "Jeff, why would you want to? Are you just a glutton for biblical punishment? Why would you do that?" Well, this is the story not only of the Israelites in the wilderness but it's the commandment of God when you enter freedom, this is how you should live and as we are free in Christ, he gives us instructions, "This is what you need to be a part of. This is what you need to have no business doing." And as I'm reading over and over and over again, there was this word that just screamed at me the last few weeks. Ten times in those two books of the Bible there is this word, listen to this word, it's called free will. It says, "Bring a free will offering unto the Lord." And as you begin to dissect Leviticus and Deuteronomy, here's what you discover: that there were feasts and there were ceremonies and there were things that they as Israelites did not have a choice in, they didn't have a decision in, but the Lord said, "Hey, if you want to be blessed when you go into the Promised Land, here's what you need to do. You go out on your own and you willingly participate with me and see what I can do through it and with it."

You see, nobody drug Abraham up on that mountain. Nobody forced the knife in his hand. He took his only son and he willingly allowed him to be the picture of and in his mind the fulfillment of the call of God and the plan of God in his life. So when we talk about a crisis of faith, we see that God's plan is not according to our terms or our timing, we see that when we participate with God, whatever he's asked us to do or wherever he's asked us to be, it's an act of worship that we willingly participate in. Ah, but there's one last aspect, the purpose. You have to ask yourself why. Why is this the means? Why is

this the mechanism? Whether it's in John 8 with these individuals who are so against the things of Jesus or whether it's in Genesis 22 when Abraham has his son Isaac tied to this wood, you say, "Why is this the means? Why is this the mechanism? What is the purpose?" Because God desires our surrender.

You see, here's the problem with humanity and we all suffer from this: we think deep down inside we've got the answers, we've got the solution, we've got this. How many times have you seen somebody go to the emergency room because they said, "Hey, guys, watch this"? Same thing and yet what does he desire? He desires us to surrender. He called upon Abraham to surrender his dreams, surrender his hopes, surrender his plans, surrender in our culture, surrender your spreadsheet and let me take care of this. What was he asking the men in John 8? Surrender your upbringing. Surrender your teaching. Surrender all of your preconceived formulas and allow me to speak in and move in your lives.

So what is the Lord desiring? He wants our surrender. He wants us – listen – he wants us not to give up. He doesn't want us to give up, he wants us to give in to his means, his ways, his plan and the way he calls the shots. What he ultimately wants is us to realize this: God knows a lot better how to live this life than we do and if we will surrender to his plan and participate with him, we'll understand his purpose is exactly like Ephesians says, to conform us more to look like him in that perfect picture of his will for our lives.

But there is one aspect that I think we have to address from Genesis 22 and it's to reveal the supernatural. Now, Genesis 22:5 has one of those biblical nuggets. If you have your Bible open, I want you to look at Genesis 22 because here is Abraham, he goes up on the mountain, he's taking his son. He has a couple of servants with him and he says, "You hang onto the donkeys here. We're going to go up on the mountain and worship." Now you know and I know what God has asked him to do, right? He's asked him to sacrifice his son. He has asked him to put a knife in him. He has asked him to offer him as a burnt offering. And by the way, if you go back in Leviticus and study burnt offerings, that means nothing left. Look at what he says to the servants, "And we will come back." In fact, in Hebrews 11, beginning in verse 17, it says Abraham believed that God was able to raise him from the dead.

You see, oftentimes the crisis of faith that is in our life, the struggles that we're going through just like these guys in John 8, we think, "Oh, woe is me!" We think, "O God, do you not see what's happening here? This is not fun. This is not good." Do you know what God is saying? "Yeah, I understand that but I'm in the business of raising things from the dead." So you understand that there are people who experts have said, "There's no hope for them." God says, "I can raise them from the dead. If you don't believe me, check out a guy named Lazarus in just a few chapters." There are relationships, there are marriages, there are children that people said, "There's no more hope," and God has raised them from the dead. Check out the prodigal son in Luke 15. There are finances. There are futures. There are hopes. There are dreams. There are expectations where you say, "They're just dead and they're wasted. They are the ashes of defeat." But by his Spirit he shall raise us and resurrect us.

You see, what we see in the life of Abraham is that he was called to a place he knew not of at a time in which was not convenient for him and asked to participate with God so that God could show him what resurrection looks like because that's exactly what Jesus Christ would do for each and every one of us. He would allow himself to die a horrible death on the cross and raise from the dead three days later.

So the question becomes so even though we understand all that and so much of it is cerebral, how do we respond today? Go back to John 8 and I want you to see how these men responded to Jesus. Now for not just these couple of days at the feast of tabernacles in chapters 7 and 8, but for the entire ministry of Jesus and, by the way, we're getting into the last year of his ministry here in John 8, they hurl insults at him, they have slurred their speech toward him, they have been angry toward him, they've conspired with people they completely disagree with, but here is that turning point, here is that crisis, here is that tipping point. Notice what they do: they took up stones to cast at him but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple going through the midst of them and so he passed by. You see, these men had two choices and you have two choices as well. You can either reject him like they did, or look back in verse 30 of John 8, it says, "And as he spoke, many of them believed on him."

You know, it's interesting to me that at the beginning of John 8, these men are asking Jesus to throw a stone at a woman who has been caught in sin and here they pick up a stone themselves to hurl at Jesus. Let me make this real practical, real everyday life: crises of faith, they happen every day. Some seasons of life, they're more intense than others. Sometimes they seem unbearable. Sometimes it's just another part of life. The way I see John 8 coming to a close, we've got a choice, we've got a decision to make: that stone that is in our hand just like those men had, we can either take it and we can hurl it up to the heavens and say, "O God, how dare you?" We can throw it at his face and say, "O God, why would you allow this?" Say, "O God, why me? Woe is me!" Or we can drop the stone in the dirt and surrender and say, "God, you know more than I do. You're smarter than I am. You're wiser than I am and you're able to raise from the dead and I believe you can raise this situation as well."

So let me ask you about the crisis that you're going through. Maybe it's the crisis of a stage of life. Maybe it's a family situation. Maybe it's a medical scenario. Maybe it's financial. Maybe it's job related. Maybe it's relationship related. Are you going to throw the rock at God and say, "God, I'm tired of this. I'm sick of this. No more." Or are you going to drop the rock and say, "Okay, God, I'm going to watch you raise the dead in this situation because I'm going to trust you know better than I do."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe this morning you find yourself in that situation, not just in a crisis of this life but the crisis when it comes to eternity. Maybe today you realize that your entire life, no matter how many years that has been, has all been about doing things your way in your time and the way that you would want to do them. Maybe you realize today for the very first time that

you're really not the solution, you're the problem. I've got great news for you: Jesus Christ is the solution to your sin problem.

You don't have to join a class. You don't have to sign up for a series of seminars, check off a bunch of boxes. In fact, if today you're that person who wants to surrender and give up doing it your way and start doing it Jesus' way, I've got great news, you just really need to have a conversation with God. You don't have to have this conversation out loud. In fact, you don't even have to say the same words I would say but maybe your conversation would go a little something like this. "God, today I just want you to know I'm surrendering. I'm not giving up but I am giving in. I'm willing to confess today that I'm the problem. I'm the one who's messed up. I'm the one who has sinned. I'm the one who has rebelled. And I believe today that Jesus Christ is the only solution to my sin problem. God, today I believe that Jesus loved me so much he was willing to come and be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus loved me so much that he was willing to endure the cross and the shame and the agony and three days later raise from the dead on my behalf. God, today I don't know all the answers to all the world's problems but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

This morning with our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, you know, maybe that's the conversation you had with God. We would love to celebrate that with you. We would love to have that conversation with you about what's been happening in your life and what's happening in your life. Or maybe that conversation with God took place years ago or decades ago and maybe today you realize you've been throwing stones at God rather than dropping them on the ground as you should be and maybe you need to talk about it, maybe you need to pray with somebody. We would love the opportunity to have that conversation. Whatever the Lord is doing in your life, we just want to celebrate it today.

Lord, as we come to this time of response, as we come to this time where we can actually tangibly physically demonstrate and show with our actions that which has happened in our heart, God, thank you for second chances. God, thank you that when we've been upset with you and angry with you and we've shouted at you and we've even thrown rocks at you, that in your grace and your mercy you still stooped down in desire for us to be a part of your plan, participating with you for your purpose. So God, help us to just simply respond appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

If you would, stand with me as our team leads us. Any decision, I'll be here at the front.