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SPEAKER

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Planting Our Lives In The Church

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 90; 1 Peter 2:4-10



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If you're new here to Providence, we love to take time each time that we gather to open up God's Word. So if you brought one with you, Psalm chapter 90. If you don't have one with you, there should be one in a chair near you. If you don't have one at home, take that Bible home as a gift. We would love for you to have that. We'll be in two different places. Psalm 90, and then we'll also be in First Peter, chapter two. This sermon, if you've been here before, it's going to feel a little different than when we were in John where we looked at one passage, and stayed in that one passage until we finished. Then we prayed and then we went and had lunch. It's going to feel different than that. Okay? There's going to be several passages to walk through, but there's two that I'm going to have you turn to. We're going to start in Psalm 90. If you would, let's bow and let's pray together.

Father, as we come to your word, we believe that what it says is true. What it says is that without your holy spirit at work in our life that we won't understand what we're about to read. I pray that you would be gracious to us, and faithful to your promises to speak to us by your spirit, in your word, to do good to us as a people. We're grateful and we ask for help. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, every single one of us has a number of days. Life as you know it is brief. Those days, they seem to evaporate, and particularly the older you get. There's a man named Job who while in a really hard place of his life, he was really contemplating how many of his days just seemed to come and go, and come and go, and just the speed of the number of days were evaporating in his life. So he wrote in Job chapter seven, verse six, he says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and they come to an end without hope." You're probably not going to sell very many coffee mugs or t-shirts with that written on it, but there's a lot of truth to what he's saying if you really understand what those words mean.

And most of us, or at least some of us, don't know what a weaver's shuttle is. So let me show you. There's two of them, one in each hand. It's wood, and it's slick, and it's easy to pass back and forth. What it does is it holds the yarn and it lets yarn pour out unencumbered. What Job is saying here when he says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," he's saying that our days pour out like yarn pours out of a shuttle. The fact is there's no pause button. He says, "I have no hope whatsoever that they're not going to come to an end." Everyday I wake up, it's one less that I'm going to wake up.

It's interesting how it really does seem to speed up in time, that that shuttle seems to move faster and faster the older you get. I don't know if you know this, but in five months, you and I are going to walk into Walmart and this is what we're going to see. Right? It's coming. Right? Christmas is coming. There comes a time in each one of our lives, like a moment in time, when it's almost like there's a flip and it's switched ... and all of a sudden life becomes different than we once saw it. Instead of looking at life and seeing how long we've lived on the earth, we start thinking about how long we have left to live on the earth.

Not only how long we have left, but what are we going to do that matters of significance in the time that we have left? It's true of us individually. It's also true for us as a church family. So seven months ago, your pastors, elders, myself, we started praying and seeking the Lord, saying, "God, what's next?" What's next for Providence when our current vision, right? Which was to set aside for two years leaders, ministries, and strengthen them, resources, in order to prepare us for the next 20 years. The fact is that shore is approaching quickly of when that vision expires. So we started praying, "God, what is next for us as a church family?" It's my joy over the next three Sundays, not only to share with you where God is telling us to sail, but to show you how you personally can be a part.

Here in Psalm 90, any time I'm thinking about future planning in my life, goal setting in my life, I always go to Psalm 90 at least one time. Because Psalm 90 is written by a man who is contemplating the brevity of life. It's written by Moses. Moses is at a place and at a stage of his life when this is written to where he's really tired of people dying. You see, he's led Israel out of Egypt. They've gone, they've almost made it into the promised land, but then they rebelled against God. So God says, "All right. This whole generation is going to wander around in the ... in this big desert, this big wilderness until you all die. Your children will be able to go in but we're going to wait and we're going to wander around out here until you're all dead." Quite a consequence. And it was for Moses as well, because he had to lead them through the sand box for 40 years. He was the one who was contemplating every single day well, there's another person that died, and another person that died. So the brevity of life literally sat upon his brow when he's writing Psalm 90.

He begins with a prayer. He says this, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, wherever you had formed the earth and the world from everlasting to everlasting, you were God. You returned man to dust and say, Return O children of man, for a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is passed or as a watch in the night." Now when he compares our brief life to God's ... That he's eternal, he's not saying that our life doesn't matter. He's not saying that you're insignificant. What he's saying is that our lives only make sense and they only find significance when we view our lives in the context of God who is eternal. Because on either side of our time on the earth, God is eternal in both directions. He's everlasting in all ways.

If you really think about this, it should make you pause, and that's exactly what he does. He tells us to pause. Look at verse 10. Verse 10 he says "That the years of our life are 70, or even by reason of strength 80, yet their span is but toil and trouble." They are soon gone and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fear of you. So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. He tells us to pause and this is why. What he's saying here is this: That if you and I were able, we're not, but if we were able to see with unveiled eyes the totality of our number of days on the earth; and at the same time we were able to see the totality of God's glory and righteousness, and perfection and holiness, and love and wisdom, and compassion and generosity; and we were able to see both of these things, our hearts would be inclined to take our number of years whether they're 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 years, and we hand them to the Lord and we say, "God, would you order each of my steps?"

You see, anytime that we start thinking about future planning, goal setting, you and I really should do something first. That is that anytime we consider our life and what we should be doing, we should stop and start considering what he is doing. Then align our life with what he's doing because what he's doing is going to outlast our life. Every one of us in this room wants to invest our days in something that's going to outlast our days. This is why he prays at the very end. Verse 16 and 17, he says, "God, let your work be shown to your servant." You see what he's saying? God, help me to see what you're doing in the world so that I can align my life to you and around your mission.

Verse 17, "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us." Yes, establish the work of our hands. So the question that we should be asking before we talk about any vision for what we're going to do in the next three years, is what is God doing in the next three years? What has he been doing ever since time began? What is he doing in the world outside of us? We should go, "Let's align our life and our church family to that." Then we'll be assured that what we invest in will last forever. That he will establish the work of our hands.

So, what's God doing? What's God doing? Well, Psalm 115, verse three says that our God is in the heavens and he does all he pleases. So the simple answer to what he's doing is what makes him happy. That's what he does. The Bible tells us that what makes him happy, his desire is to display his glory and the fullness of his glory to all the peoples in the face of the earth.

We're told in Habakkuk, chapter two, verse 14. It says "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." This is his desire. That his glory will literally make an impression upon every single person on the face of the earth. That it would fill, everybody would be aware of who he is. It's amazing that God created us for this end. That we would enjoy him and enjoy a relationship with him. But the Bible says that very soon thereafter, we sin, we rebelled against God. Then sin caused a tidal wave of futility and brokenness to sweep over not only our life, but all of humanity. God did something that was unthinkable and that is that he made a promise to rescue us. Instead of crushing us, he promised a rescuer whom he would crush on our behalf.

Then what it says in the Bible, which is pretty amazing, is that he said how I'm going to bring this about is going to be something called my mission. This is what I'm about. What we see throughout the whole Old Testament is the mission of God is simply this: It's to display his glory to all peoples by creating a holy people who enjoy his grace and declare his glory and anticipate his rescuer.

So God came to a man named Abraham and he says you don't have any kids, and you're really old, and you're wife is barren. But you're going to have kids. You're going to have a son. It's going to be a very important son. He's going to have kids, and they're going to have kids. There's going to be a nation that's going to come out. You are going to be a holy people among all the people. You have a job description. This is what I want you to do. I want you to enjoy my grace. Enjoy a relationship with me. I want you to proclaim with your lips and with your lives my glory; so that other peoples who don't know me, that they will be able to know me. I want you to anticipate the day when my rescuer comes to deliver you from sin.

And so, in the fullness of time, God sent his rescuer. His name was Jesus Christ, his son. Jesus came from heaven to earth and he lived a perfectly righteous life on the earth. Yet he went to a cross to pay for my sin and your sin. Then he rose from the dead. When he rose from the dead, people saw him and believed in him. They trusted his accomplishments. They trusted in his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of their sin, and God Almighty, he grouped them together. He collected them together into little peoples called the Church. People in this city, and in this city, and in this city, and where they believe. All of sudden, what God was doing, he gave the Church, not just a mission, he allowed them to be a part of his mission.

What's the mission of every church in the world supposed to be? To display his glory to all peoples by enjoying his grace and declaring his glory, and anticipating his rescuer. You see Providence still today, we're waiting aren't we? He's coming back again. When he comes back again, he going to literally deliver us from this world. We're going to be able to spend forever without the capacity to sin. We can't wait for that day. This is our job description. Every church uses it's own unique words in order to describe this mission that aligns with God's mission. Here at Providence, we say it like this. We say, "We exist to glorify God by introducing all peoples to Jesus Christ and growing them up to love and worship them."

If you really look closely at the mission of God and you look closely at this sentence, you'll find the enjoyment of his grace, the proclamation of his glory, and the waiting with anticipation for his rescuer embedded in those words. Then God gives us a strategy. The strategy, in order to fulfill this mission, he says I just want you to follow me. Not impress me. Follow me. See what I'm doing and join me there.

We look around the world and in the Bible, and we see Jesus connecting people, and growing people, serving, people, and going to people. If we want him to establish the work of our hands, then when we come to you and we say here's the mission, the vision for the next three years, we're not supposed to be creative with a new mission. The mission and the strategy has already been established and it's in his word. Every year few years, it is a good thing, it's a helpful thing, for a body of believers to envision our next steps to help us to walk together.

So over the next few years, you're going to hear this language. It's called PLANT. The language comes from a little passage, three verses, that Paul wrote in the sixth chapter of Galatians. Let me read it to you. It says, "Whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh, will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up." What you find here is Paul is reminding us of three very important truths. Principles that we should never forget. That literally make the foundation of this vision.

The first you see from the very top whatever one sows, that will he also reap. From there, we understand that there's a link between the seeds that are planted in the ground, and the harvest that comes up. There's a link between seed and fruit. Everyone of us knows this. You plant apples, you get apples. Right? You plant love, you don't get bitterness.

If you plant bitterness, you don't get unity.

If you sow seeds in the spirit, you don't reap the flesh. You reap the spirit. That's what he's saying, is there's a link between what we put into the ground and what we're going to be able to see. The fact is now for 39 years at Providence, there's been seeds planted in the ground. Good seeds, and anything that we're now enjoying is not only a cause of God's grace at Providence, it's also because good seed has been planted for so many years that we can look back and we say, "You know what? Because we keep teaching the Bible, that's good seed in the ground, and it yields a harvest of righteousness." But Providence, if we want to see more harvest, then more good seed has to be put into the ground. That's what we're talking about. Right?

The second thing is this. Second thing you see is these words, "And let us not grow weary." So what do we learn there? We learn that planting is hard. It's tiring. It's not easy. There's other things that are more enjoyable than planting seeds in the ground.

The third thing that we learn comes from the last words there, and is, "In due season, we will reap if we do not give up." What we're talking here is this: Endurance is always rewarded, but most of the time in spiritual things, it's in ways that you can't quantify." What do I mean by that? If I cut open an apple and I ask you to come up here and count the number of seeds that you find in the apple, it would be just mathematical. Right? We'd say those were the seeds, now lets count them up. We could all do that. But won't you cannot quantify is how many apples are within those seeds. You plant those seeds, you have no idea how many apples, generation after generation of apples and seeds and apples and seeds, can actually be seen.

So you think about the man who came and spoke here at our last mission's festival just a few months ago. Amazing man. He's from the Middle East. He goes to medical school in San Diego. There's another college student, he sees him studying biology in the grass. He walks up and he says, "Hey, do you know who made the body that you're studying?" All of a sudden he begins to tell him about the Lord, and he shares the gospel with him and Ahmad comes to faith in Christ. Instead of becoming a doctor, Ahmad believes God wants him to go back to a closed country in the Middle East and start an evangelical seminary in order to build, to produce, and to train future church planters that can go into these regions with the gospel.

Now, some 30 years later, there's over 500 trained church planters that have planted churches in 22 out of the 23 Arab-speaking countries, all of which where it's illegal. The gospel continues to go forth. Do you think that that little kid, I say little kid. That college student at San Diego, who looked over and saw Ahmad studying a biology book ever could imagine the harvest that would come from opening up his mouth and saying, "Do you know who made the body that you're studying?" There's no way. There's no way. Yet that's what's available to us, Providence. It's an amazing thing.

So, over the next three years, we want to focus on planting three really good seeds in three really good soils. That is we want to plant our lives in the church. We want to plant the gospel in our city. And we want to plant churches in the world. In the two coming weeks, I'm going to spend more time talking about, in fact next week, I'm going to talk about that we want to see 1,000 of us over the next three years lead one person to faith in Christ. Then begin to disciple them so that they are confident enough to go and tell someone else the gospel, and lead them to lead somebody else, who could lead somebody else, who could lead somebody else.

Then the third wave, we're going to talk about how can we as a church family plant local churches in places where there is no churches. What you have to understand though is this: Is that if our lamp is not blazing here at home in our praying, in our serving, and our worshiping, and our singing, and our growing, and our connecting, and our giving, our light will simply not be able to reach very far. So we want to look just for a little bit here this morning, about what it really looks like to plant our lives in the church.

First Peter, chapter two, verse four. If you had your finger there, you can turn there. If not, it's near the end of the Bible. First Peter, chapter two, starting in verse four, it says this, "As you come to him a living stone, rejected by men but in the sight of God, chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. To offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture, behold I'm laying in Zion of stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious. And whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe. But for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. They stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race. A royal priesthood. A holy nation of people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

So, as we just focus our lens upon planting our lives in the church, what I want to show you here is three really important things of why that's such a noble thing for you to do. What you see in this text is really three big truths.

The first is that God connects us to his church when we come to Christ. You see verse four? As we come to him, a living stone, rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious. You see Jesus is the cornerstone. He's the first stone that you put down in your life so that the rest of your walls and all your decisions, and your actions of your life, everything that makes the house of your life plumb, it has to be built on a cornerstone. He's saying that for those of us who have seen Jesus Christ, and God's given us the gift of faith, he says that he doesn't set up a romantic table for two where we spend the rest of our days with just us and Jesus. He says that he takes another chair and he adds it to a already very populated table, and allows you to sit with the whole family. This is what he's saying. He says he connects us.

First thing he does is he has to regenerate us. The Bible says that you and I, we're all dead in our sin. If you've not trusted Christ, what he says is that God pokes you and you're not all that impressed with it. So God has to move in your heart. Some of you may be here today and think, you know, I'm going to come to church in order to turn over a new leaf. But what the Bible teaches, right, is that turning over a new leaf is not going to get you to heaven. Right? We add nothing to Jesus' accomplishments. He died and he rose from the dead. He gives his righteousness to everyone who places their faith in him.

So what the Bible says is that when we trust Christ, he regenerates our heart. He gives us new operating system, a new engine, but that's not all he does. He takes us, who each one of were a dead stone, and he says that he makes us a living stone. But then notice what he does with that living stone. He forms them together to create a spiritual house. Now what's the point here?

The point is you're not a house. You're a stone. I'm not a house. I'm a stone. But if we take you and me, and a bunch of other stones that have been made alive in Christ, and all of a sudden, we allow God to move us together, all of a sudden, we become a spiritual house that can actually do things that are pleasing to him. That's the second thing. Why does he create this house?

Well, God forms the church to glorify himself. You see verse nine and ten? Look what it says. He goes, "But you're a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." Then he says that we are now a people and we've received mercy. You have to ask this question: Why did he do any of this to you, or to me?

I mean why are we chosen? Why are we a new race? Why are we part of a kingly line? Why are we set apart as priests? Why are we God's people? Why do we receive mercy? The reason he says comes after the word that. That's our purpose statement, that. That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into this marvelous light.

Providence, listen very carefully. There's a lot of people who make a lot of assumptions about what the church should be doing. The Bible tells us we have one task. That is to say excellent things about Jesus Christ. That's our job description. To proclaim the excellencies of the excellent one.

Now, how do we do that? That's the third point. Is that God is glorified as his church offers spiritual sacrifices. You see verse five? He says that we the spiritual house, this holy priesthood, we offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What is a spiritual sacrifice?

Well, sacrifice implies it's costly. You have to pay something. If you put energy here, you can't put it over here. So it demands a decision of getting one thing and not another. It's a sacrifice. But then notice he says it's a spiritual sacrifice. What that means is this: Is that these sacrifices, they're costly. What they are they're acts of faith given in response to what God says pleases him. In other words, he's not asking you and I to be creative in what kind of sacrifices we bring to him. He says I've already told you exactly what I want. And if you want to know how you say excellent things about me, it's not by ignoring all of these things and standing over here in spite of all of that, saying, "Jesus is excellent." He says, no, no, no. If you want to say that I'm excellent, here's how you say that I'm excellent.

Colossians 4:2. "Continue steadfastly in prayer." When we gather together as a church family, what we're saying is Jesus is excellent. He's excellent. Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 25. "Do not neglect needing to gather as is the habit of some, but encourage one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near." When we gather together as a church family to worship just as you are right now, we're saying excellent things about him. When we gather in life groups, we're saying excellent things about him.

First Peter, chapter four, verse 10. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others." When you use your giftedness to serve the body of Christ, you are saying excellent things about Jesus.

Second Corinthians, chapter nine, verse seven. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." When you give financially to what he's doing in the world, you are saying Jesus is excellent. His mission is excellent. His glory is excellent. His church is excellent. For many of us, what we try to do so many times in our life is we say, "Well I want to tell him he's excellent on my terms." God says that's just not a spiritual sacrifice. That's called ideology. God just says this is how I'm going to be pleased. If you put your hand to this plow, I will be pleased.

So Providence, over the next three years in this area of planting our life in the church, we really want to see two things. Two big categories, right?

One is we desire to see our whole body given to prayer. We desire to see our entire body of faith hear given over to prayer. You see, God has promised power to those who pray. The reason this is serious is because the less acquaintance we have with God's power, the more we improvise and then attribute power to our substitutes. We start thinking it's about being charismatic and clever, wealthy. But God does his mission with his power. If it's not done with his power, it's not done at all. [inaudible 00:30:56] how are we doing with this? Well, you know when we ... Six times a year, we stand up and we plead to the church family, would you come back and pray tonight. Six times a year. On average, between 250 and 350 people come back. So you just have to ask this question, is our lamp blazing? Is the fire in this lamp so hot that it has the capacity to take the gospel to the ends of the earth?

The second thing that we really want to see is that we desire to see our whole body engaged in worship, a small group, serving somewhere within the body, and giving. Now listen, whatever help that we ... health that we enjoy at Providence is due to God's grace alone, and God's grace working through the faithfulness of many of you who are already absolutely engaged in all of these ways. So if this is you, do not hear me saying do more. Hear me saying really grateful. Really grateful.

To those who may be more often than not enjoy watching your brothers and sisters row, I encourage you to grab the oar, and help. See the church is like a warship, not a cruise ship. Everybody has a station. Everybody has a place. If everyone does their job, things move forward. Everybody is called to row.

So when you think about different things in terms of where we're at, in terms of of giving, in terms of small group attendance, serving, attendance. It's an interesting thing at Providence, to be totally honest with you, there's a lot of you that serve, just really grateful for that. There's a whole lot of you that also engage in a life group or a small group of some kind, and so I just ... We just say, we just commend. It's an amazing thing. We're a little weaker, or at least a little bit more shaky, it's a little more puzzling when you look at some of these things when it comes to giving and worship attendance. You say we're here. I know that. I'm really glad you're here. It would be very lonely if you weren't here right now. But the fact is, as you sort of look at those things, at least I'm told, I don't look at this information, but I'm told within our body, 50% of our body give financially and 50% don't. I'm talking about our members. Okay?

Then when you look at attendance, like last Sunday it was a great Sunday, there was 1,800 people roughly that came and sat in the seats to worship the Lord. I just say, "Man that is an amazing thing." Right? If there's any concern with that, is that if you look at any given month of people who call Providence their home, who are members or who are engaged in a life group, if everybody came all to worship on the same Sunday. I'm not talking about every visitor in Raleigh. Like those who were here either last week and are not here this week. If everybody at Providence all came at one time, there would be over 2,500 people. That would not count any visitors, any children under the age of six, or anybody who's not also involved in a life group. So any given Sunday, there's seven or 800 people that call Providence their home who don't come. So I just ... you have to ask that question, right? Is our lamp blazing? Is it blazing?

So for you, I would simply make this appeal. Only you know, and only the Lord can speak to your heart. And I realize that there's reasons and seasons for all of our life. That's why that's between you and the Lord. I would just ask you just to look and say in the next three years, is there any way that perhaps I'm not, but I need to lean in and plant my life in the body in any of these ways. We're just going to trust your relationship with the Lord. That's up to you. Some of you are wondering is there a card that we're supposed to fill out with this vision. There's not. It's just between you and the Lord. As you give each week, that's what we'll use in order to fund this vision. All right? That's between you and the Lord.

I want to just encourage you to consider what would it look like ... What would it look like for you if you're not, to engage in some of these ways? Being involved in a life group, serving if maybe you're not doing that. To help you, there's a little video I want to show you now. Okay. Watch this.

Joe Pender: Hi. My name's Joe Pender, and this is my wife Jennifer Pender. We also have two kids, Joey and Jordan. Jordan is our daughter, ten years old. Joey is our son, eight years old. We've been going to Providence on and off now for about ten years. We were mainly visiting the church, but we tended to leave a little empty until recently. We've really tried to plant ourselves and get involved in the church. It wasn't til about two years later that my wife had a group of friends that kind of helped us go to another step.

Jennifer Pender: I teach exercise, and a bunch of the girls were involved with Providence. This one girl, Leann, kept asking me to go to class; and we were very intimidated. Leann assured us that everything was going to be fine, so we went to Next Steps. We went to our first class. It was the most welcoming, most conversational. I never felt so connected with a group so fast. Then what in turn happened, we got our kids really involved. I cannot tell you how much we've learned in these past two years. In these past two years, I got baptized, Jordan got baptized, and it's been a game changer for our family.

Joe Pender: The great thing about Providence is that it's a big church, but the intimidating thing about Providence is it's a big church. For us, until we started making relationships, it became more than just a building. I think it's important for anyone that's looking into the church, please take the next step. Please find a class. Please find a relationship. It starts with one person. One thing that worked for us was the tent. It's really been a great growth opportunity for the family. We're getting to meet people in the church, and every day that we do it, we become more invested in the church.

Jennifer Pender: Everyone wants to feel that connection. It's that connection to God. It's that connection to your family. It's that connection to your friends. Then that's where that sense of community comes from, and that's what we need here; and that's what Providence provides.

Brian Frost: So as you think about the truth, right? That everything that we do flows out of everything that we are. As a church family, as we think about engaging in the mission that God is in, it's critically important that we first pause, look at our heart and look internally; then say are we as healthy as we need to be? Is the lamp blazing so the light can go far?

You know, one of the gifts that God gives us as a church family, to be able to rally together and to remember the most significant thing about us, you notice in that text. But the only thing we all have in common in this room, if you know Christ, is that we've received mercy. That's our only commonality. That mercy came because Jesus died. He gave us something called The Lord's Supper which we're going to do right now in order to celebrate that. So, the guys that will be serving us, if you want to head to the back and you want to get those items ready.

God gave us this supper. It consists of bread and a cup. It's symbolic of Jesus' body and his blood. The Bible tells us that we take things first of all as a confession in order to remember what he's done, but it's also a confession to proclaim that we believe what he's done. And we're hoping in what he's done. So if you have never trusted Christ, we would simply ask that you let these items pass, and maybe after the service you can even trust Christ and next time we do this, you can participate.

For those of us in the room who have trusted Christ, this is for you. You're welcome to partake. The Bible says that first we need to examine our hearts. So, as the items are being passed out, I would just encourage you to confess your sin to the Lord so that you can take this with a clear conscience. Let's pray together.

Father, we love you. Thank you for your grace, upon grace, upon grace. We pray, God, that as we remember what you have done and proclaim our faith in what you've done in taking these things, that you would give us encouragement, that you would give us peace, you would comfort our hearts; and God, that you would help us to remember all that we share in common as a body because you've given us mercy. We love you, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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