

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Fully Alive

PART

31

TITLE

It Is Better For You

SCRIPTURE

John 11:45-57



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Well it's great to see you. Hope that you have had a great week and I want to ask you to turn with me to John Chapter 11 in your Bible, if you brought one. If you didn't, there should be one near you in a chair in front of you. And if you don't have one at home, please take that home as a gift. We'd love for you to have your own copy of the Bible.

And so this is a great week, thanksgiving. And if you're a guest here at Providence, welcome. We're really, really glad that you're here. If you're in this room or in the amphitheater or at home or somewhere else, welcome. We're glad that you've joined us. Even before we move into John, in these amazing verses, verses 45 through the end of the chapter.

I want to take just a few minutes and just to talk to our family. Little family time so if you're a guest we're glad you're here, but these words are really towards our people so that they can hear something that's important in terms of an update. As all of us know here at Providence, back in May, we actually voted to do two projects, the East Parking lot, which is going great.

And then to see this room sort of expanded, which would mean that the back wall and the side wall over here and this ceiling would all move out. And we said a loud, loud yes to that, which was fantastic at a price not to exceed \$7.75 million for the two projects. Now, it's important for us to always anchor why are we doing these things?

Because God's word tells us that he's on a mission and that mission is that his glory would be known, that knowledge of his glory would fill the earth as the waters they fill the sea. And so we want to be on mission with God. And what that means is that we want to be here to help people, to really connect with Christ, with each other, to grow in truth and love to serve each other and our own city.

And then to take the gospel, which is the good news about Jesus, that he came, he died, he was buried, and he rose from the dead in order that we can be forgiven. We want to take that not only to people in our city and our country, but even to the ends of the earth. To that end, we said yes to these projects. And so what I want to do is to, just to give you just a little bit of a brief update, okay?

Our East parking lot is really going well. It's actually close to being paved, which is awesome. All the drainage, grading, all the curbs, they're all there, which is fantastic. And so next week or so you should be able to see rock and then eventually a lot of asphalt, which is awesome. And a great news with this is that we are at or under budget, of that 7.75 million. One million of it was for that parking lot.

And so that's going fantastic. And for everyone in this room who needs patience in particular when you come in here and you have to find a parking place and just want to say thank you and keep enduring. It's close. Okay? I promise it is. It is close and we're very excited about that. The second part of that is this room here and as we voted, what we voted on at that time were numbers that were based on the bids that we received.

And then soon thereafter they found soft soil here which would need to be fortified and they also found rising prices and just raw materials in the marketplace. And so I shared with you that it looked like that if we would go past 7.75, which it'd look like that that was a real possibility, that'd be important for us to meet again, which we were going to do tonight.

On Thursday of this week, we actually got all the final bids. We thought that there will be a slight increase in price and there wasn't a slight increase in price. There was a dramatic increase in price, okay. With that what we want you to know is just a few things okay? You say, well, "How come you saying this before you preach?"

Well, that's a good question. I don't know, John probably should have come first, right? But one is we're not going to meet tonight and I wanted you to know why we're not meeting tonight. That has been moved back three weeks to the second Sunday night of next month okay? I want to ask you, as a church family, would you please join us in praying for the Lord to give us wisdom in what to do next and when to do that.

We had all of the information Thursday, an hour before our meeting and so we had very little time to process it. There's lots of information that we need, but primarily what we're doing is just seeking the Lord's direction right now. And so just to be totally honest with you, there's two things as it all relates to this that sort of raced through my heart right now.

One is a sense that I am a little bit saddened by it to be honest with you. But my sadness is based almost exclusively on the fact that you have as a church family, you have given so generously and so faithfully and I would just really love to be able to give you some amazingly good news this morning okay? And so, that saddens me.

And yet as I think about what we've been learning in John and in particular in John Chapter six, John Chapter nine in John Chapter 11. What we see over and over again causes me hope and that is that we see God moving and protecting and providing behind the scenes when we cannot see it at first and who knows what the Lord is doing?

But I do know that the Lord is doing things. And so I would just ask you over the next several weeks, would you be faithful to pray for us for direction? I absolutely believe that God has a plan and we only want that plan. Amen?

Let's pray together. Father in heaven as we come to your word this morning in John, God we confess to you that we are striving as a people imperfectly but persistently. God, we are striving to want to know you and to love you and to walk with you and to enjoy you and to walk with each other and to be about your mission here in the world.

And we pray, Father, that you would give us wisdom as a body as we seek to take our next step. I want to thank you so much that you placed the book of John in the Bible, that you inspired this man to write what he saw and what he heard in his time with Jesus. Thank you God that you inspired it. You placed it here for us and we pray, Father, that you would speak through weakness.

That you would glorify Jesus Christ this morning. As we read this, I pray that you would give us belief in our heart, understanding in our mind that we could apply it in our life. We love you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, about 20 years, it has actually been about 20 years since this happened. I was in St Louis and I was actually in a setting smaller than this, but like this.

There was a bunch of students that I was there in front of and as I was sharing the gospel that Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead. A student stood up in front of everybody and he says this, he asked me, he says, "Isn't Jesus just a crutch for weak people?" Which was bold, right? And yet probably honest. I don't know if it was or not.

But what I do know is that when I looked at all the other students in the room, it was like a shot of caffeine that was just injected into their arm and everyone was very alerted and very awake and very conscious about what was just asking, how I was going to answer that. Some in the room already knew the Lord and they wondered how I'd answered it and some of the room didn't know the Lord.

And I think they also wondered how I was going to answer. And so I thought for a moment and then this is what I said at the time. I said, "Well, it's a great question," I said, I think this is how I'd say it. "If you mean that we as people who believe in Jesus are leaning on a myth because we're too afraid to walk alone, then I would say no. That Jesus is not a crutch."

"But if however you mean that we as believers know that our sin has broken our spiritual legs, making us helpless to get to God and Walk to God. On our own, and so God sent his son Jesus from heaven to Earth to live and to die and to rise again so that we can lean upon him and his death and resurrection. Then yes, Jesus is our beloved crutch."

Right? And it's interesting that all depending on how we view ourself, when we look into the mirror, the idea of a crutch is either in a fence or a kindness. And so I would encourage you to look at your heart because this is what we see in John Chapter 11. We see some people who viewed Jesus as a gift to their need and we find some people who feel insulted as if they have been offended because of who Jesus is.

So let's read what John writes. "Right after Jesus Rose Lazarus from the dead," verse 45 says, "many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, and some of them went to the fair season, told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, what are we to do for this man performs many signs?"

"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, his name is Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all." Very kind, man. "You know nothing at all, nor do you understand that it is better for you, that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish."

And he did not save this on his own accord, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad. So from that day on, they made plans to put him to death. Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness where he stayed with his disciples.

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand and many went up from that country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple. "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know so that they might arrest him.

So what I want to show you here, sort of the thesis of this sermon and what I see here, and hopefully what you'll be able to see here is this, is that Jesus' death was designed by God as a substitute to redeem a racially diverse church. Now, I'm going to break that into three parts, okay? But this is where we're going. Jesus death. It was not an accident. It was designed by God himself.

It was designed as a substitute and it was also designed to redeem or to purchase a racially diverse church that would worship Jesus forever. So we're told here in verse 45, that one's Lazarus was raised from the dead, that some people ran to Jesus in belief and some people ran to the Pharisees in fear of the fares sees these elite religious leaders, right?

Immediately gathered the council. Now the council was something called the Sanhedrin. Now we don't have one of these in America, but if we did, it would sort of be the collection of our senators, our president and the Supreme Court all combined into a 70 member ruling body. But they didn't have complete authority because they were under the authority of Rome.

And so though they had freedom and authority to operate under their laws, they lived under the umbrella of Rome's authority and they always lived under the fear of Rome. And it's interesting that what happens here is this. Is this supreme court kind of body. They're called together, and these pharisees, they say to them these words, they say, "Guys, look, what are we going to do?"

For Jesus, He's performing all kinds of signs and miracles and if we let him keep doing these kinds of things, more and more people are going to believe in him and then the Romans are going to come and they're going to take away both our place and our nation. So it's interesting to me that people that were entrusted with the law, we're not concerned in any way with either justice or truth but only with protecting their turf.

You see, what they feared is that if enough Jewish people began to believe that Jesus was indeed the Christ, that it would potentially stir up this Zionist frenzy that the Messiah had come. And that might strike a rebellion and the hearts of the people towards Rome. Because the Messiah was going to throw off all other nations and authorities, at least they thought so in their mind.

And as result of that, Rome and all of its strength would come into Jerusalem and they would not only take away their freedom and their temple, but in particular for these individuals, he would take away their authority. And so they're terrified in this. And ultimately, what I want you to see here, that this is the terrifying power of spiritual blindness.

I want you to think about what's happening here, right? Let your creativity just sort of race just for a moment. There're speaking about a man who is so powerful that he spoke words and a dead man, came back to life. And they start their sentence, "If we let him." That's like if the incredible hulk was real and he came in here and he started throwing chairs and all kinds of stuff around and I gathered some of our leaders and we said, "Now guys, if we let him, if we let him, he's just risen a man from the dead by saying words."

And what's amazing is even though they know that this is taking place, instead of pausing to consider what authority this Jesus might have over their personal lives. I mean, this is a guy that can raise people from the dead. You should probably ask, what should I be doing in relationship to that man? All they can think about is how to protect their turf.

And so they're terrified. And this is when Caiaphas, the high priest, he wants to speak, he's got a word that he wants to share with everybody. And he starts off kind of cruel, and he says, "You guys don't know anything at all." He goes, "This is not about stopping him or slowing him down." He goes, "We don't need to do that. What we need to do is kill him."

"We need to go ahead and just kill them because it's better to have one man to die then for the whole nation to die and what John does in verse 51 and 52, which is where this sentence and where all three points come from. It's from those two verses. What I want you to see is that what John's going to do is 50 years after the fact, he comes in and he's writing these things down and after the end quote in verse 50, John then says now, "Let me tell you what's really going on."

And he takes the curtain and he pulls it back and he says, "Let me tell you, there's a whole lot more happening here behind the scene." The first thing that's happening is this, is that Jesus' death was designed by God, the father. It was designed by God the Father Caiaphas said, "It is better that one man should die for the people."

And John wrote of what he just said. He did not say this on his own accord, but he did what? He prophesied. Now, what does it mean to prophesy? When the old and New Testament God Almighty would work in a way that he would plant words into the hearts of people in their heart so that when they open up their mouth to speak, they were actually speaking what he wanted them to say.

So when John says, of what Caiaphas has just said, when he explains what Caiaphas has said, there is maybe a mystery, but actually God is the one who told them to say this. Caiaphas had a meeting, and God had a different meeting, but God still in his authority, he gave him this to say. It was God who brought these words to the mind of Caiaphas.

And so I want you to think about it almost like a mom who's driving their young son or daughter to a birthday party. All right? So mom's there and says, "Now look sweetie, when you go into the birthday party now it's really important to go up to a mother and say, "Hey, thank you so much for inviting me." And then when they serve cake, make sure that you say thank you when they put it before you.

And then when you're about to leave the party, maybe a really good thing for you to go up to so and so is mother or father and say, "Hey, thank you so much for the birthday party, for inviting me." Now the child goes to the Party and the child starts speaking and everyone goes, "Wow, what a wise. Just kind thoughtful little boy or little girl. It's just amazing."

And yet it was the parent who is behind the scenes working because the parent was wiser and this is what's happening here. You See, Proverbs 21:1 says, "That the King's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord and he turns it wherever he will." What that means is that when God says, "You know what? I think Mike, this king or this president or this ruler or this pastor or this husband or this wife or whatever, when there's a river in his hand, he goes, you know what? I think I want him to turn this way now.

I think I want them to turn this right there. You see if there's standard, God is sovereign and all of his ways and so what? So Caiaphas had a plan and his plan is Jesus needed to be dead and out of the way, but God also had a plan and his plan was Jesus to be dead and risen and reigning forever and so God planted in Caiaphas the words.

It is better that Jesus died. Think about that for a second. Think about God, the Father thing of His son. It is better that he'd die better. It's better, think about that. And so what we understand here is that Jesus' death was not a tragic set of events which God like a paramedic who rushes onto the scene of an emergency fixes and restores for the good of people.

No. What we find here is that Jesus' death was the loving set of events which God like a surgeon planned for our good. Acts 2:23 confirms that when it says, "Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan and for knowledge of God. "You see it was God the father who served his son a death warrant that would find him in a garden. There was absolutely no escape because this was the word of God.

And so my way of application, you say, "Okay, what does this have to do with me, the fact that Jesus died?" Well, what it proves is that God is working to do amazing things and good things and protective things even when we cannot see or when it seems like evil people are triumphing. And so by way of application, I would simply exhort us.

Let's trust that God is at work and the darkness of our days. We have seen throughout John Chapter 11 and in John Chapter four and six and nine, sometimes our vision of God and his nearness, our vision of God's interest in our life, and the daily operations of our life, that God's helpfulness in our lives, sometimes our vision of these things becomes utterly blocked. We just cannot see what he's doing.

I would just exhort us as a body and you as a believer, is that when His hands seem hidden, and when His will seems to be a mystery, keep looking, keep looking up. Don't assume that, that's the time just to take things into your hands. You see, there's a proverb, it's Proverbs chapter 4, verse 18, and this is what it says.

It says, "The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day." So just like this picture, what this proverb says is that the will of God is uniquely lit up so that the further you walk, the clearer things get. Now, this is true on what I would call right and wrong decisions as well as right and left things that we need to decide.

Right and wrong are things that there's words within the Bible when God says, this is sin sometimes ... so it's right or we absolutely know what His will is. We look at it, but isn't it true that even then sometimes when you have to take your first step on something, that we have absolute clarity within the word, sometimes even then it seems like the first few steps are dark because logic and culture and everything else around us says, I don't know that's a good idea.

But, it's interesting that the further you walk down that path of God's will, the more light the path will offer. And it's the same thing with what I would call right and left decisions. Right and left, what all that simply means is that when you read the scriptures, right, you don't ever find a sentence like move to St. Louis. Take that job, right?

You don't find that. And so what you do is by the use of your own discernment, with an open scripture, praying to God, asking God to place his inclinations in your heart, not violating any principal within scripture, asking other believers, all of a sudden you start to think, you know what? I really believe this is His will, and sometimes the first few steps can still be very dark.



And that's precisely when you have to say, you know what? I'm going to take a step, and what it says is that the further we walk down, God's will, the more light in that particular area we will know and enjoy. So I exhort you to trust His heart with wherever you're at today. I know every one of us in some way, there's an area of darkness, right? Lack of clarity, what we're supposed to do.

I just exhort you even when you don't feel like you see him. Look for Him. Keep looking for Him. For as evidenced by the resurrection of Jesus and Lazarus, God proves that he loves to snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat. The second thing I want you to see here though is this is it not only was his death fully designed by God, the father, but it was designed as a substitute.

It was a substitute. See, we're told here in verse 51 and 52, "For Caiaphas, the substitution in his heart was, let's kill Jesus so the Romans won't kill us. When God spoke and planted those words." God also had a will though, and so for God, the substitution was, I will kill my son so that I don't have to kill everyone. Isaiah 53, verse 6 says, "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Jesus was our substitute, him dying for us. 1st Peter 2, verse 24 says that "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree." You see, when he says it is better for you, that one man should die for the people. The word for can also be translated in place of, or someone has a death sentence and they removed and someone else takes their place. They die in their place.

Sometimes, I think I mentioned this last week, but sometimes we start to think of Jesus' death only as a sacrifice, which it absolutely was. A loving sacrifice where he just, he gave himself for us, and that's absolutely true, but it goes further than that. And the reason is this, if it's just a sacrifice, that's where so many people come to the conclusion that Jesus died for us to give us a second chance.

But friends you need more than one extra chance. He could give you 10 million chances on this earth and we would blow every single one of them. We needed more than another chance. We needed someone to be righteous for us, and that's what substitutionary means. It means that when he came and he died on a cross, he died for us. The rich became poor so that the poor could become rich.

And how we became rich is this, not only was the one side of the sacrifice that he would die for us but when he rose from the dead and we place our trust in him, he gives us his righteousness. So Romans chapter 4, verse 8 says, he says, "All the righteous requirements of the law had been fully met within us." So what he's saying is this, is that he doesn't just give us an extra chance.

He fulfills all righteousness in us. His substitute was not only to take away, the bad, but it was to give us the good that we did not have. See, there was one sacrifice. One substitute, and there's one way and truth in life that leads to God the father and Jesus did it all. So by way of application, let me encourage us with this, is let's rest in Christ substitution in the darkness of our imperfection.

Let me explain what I mean by this. If you and I and we as a church family do not learn, and love, and cherish the truth of the fact that we're justified by faith, then we will often live paralyzed in the regrets of our failure. All of us have written in pencil and then we turn around, and we try to erase what that is, right?

Well, it's interesting like this picture, each one of us, we sin and sometimes even those of us who know Christ, we go back to Christ and we say, "Christ, would you forgive me of that sin?" And so in our hearts, there's an eraser, and yet isn't it interesting that even after you erase, you can still see a little bit of lead so you can take out one of those mega erasers and just really try.

But what's amazing is you can take out all of the lead and you can still see the impression within the paper. The fact is you and I, you can look back upon some of your darkest days right now and even as a believer knowing that you're a Christian. You can be paralyzed today in regret for what you did 10 years ago, and God doesn't want you living like that.

And so what he did was he came to this earth. He died and he rose again. But not only did he rise again, he said, I invite you to trust me and if you will, I'll take all of your sin, but I'll give you all of my righteousness. What a difference it makes to be assured in the darkness of our imperfection, that we have a perfect righteousness outside of us that's not dependent upon how well we're doing today.

There's a guy named John Bunyan. I love to read John Bunyan. He's in heaven right now. He's a great writer. And John Bunyan, he really struggled with this in his life. He really struggled that for a time of how do I wrestle through the regret of my past, and he got to the place to where he was kind of some days paralyzed, where he felt like he couldn't even tell people the Gospel or help other people because he was so consumed and overwhelmed with the regret and guilt of his own past.

And this is where some of us are even maybe today. So I want to read a part of his journal. What he wrote of how it was that God liberated his heart so that he wasn't consumed and paralyzed by the guilt of his past. He says, "No one knows the terrors of those days, but myself. And then one day the truth came to me and the truth was this, your righteousness is in heaven.

And this fell upon my soul and I saw with my soul Christ at God's right hand, and there I say sat my righteousness. So that wherever I was, God could not say of me, he lacks my righteousness, for my righteousness was just before him. I also saw that it was not my good behavior or good frame of heart that made my righteousness any better with Him.

Nor was it my bad frame or behavior that made my righteousness worse before Him. For my righteousness was Jesus Christ and Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever more." And he says, "And now did my chains fall off my legs." You see, for you and I, the Bible says that not only is he going to forgive us and has forgiven us, he could leave us in the dark.

About the day of judgment though, in order to cause us to live in fear, but he doesn't want that. And so he says to us these words, he goes, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. He tells us the declaration of innocence even before we get to the judgment seat of Christ because he wants us to not live in paralyzing fear and regret.

And so friends, I want to just exhort you in the darkness of your imperfections, dwell, and think, and love, and trust in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that's been poured out to you, if you know Christ. And let me just say that if you don't know Christ this morning, if you've never trusted him, this is an opportunity for you. There is absolutely nothing you can do to erase the guilt of your past.

There's nothing you can do to restore the paper so that the impression will not be there. But Jesus has done it for you. And the Bible says that if you will look to Him in faith, and believe in Him and trust Him and say, Christ, I confess to you that I am a sinner and my sin violated you. My sin is an offense to you, but I believe that you sent your son to this earth to die on a cross, and he did die on that cross.

But he didn't stay dead. God, I believe that he rose from the dead, and I trust him and I place my full confidence, and only confidence in what he did in his accomplishments. And the Bible says that if you insincerity of heart, will look to God in faith and believe in his son, Jesus Christ, He will forgive you of all of your sin. Isn't that amazing news? It's incredible that He's done this.

And so we see here two things. First of all, right is that Jesus' death was designed by God. It was also designed as a substitute, but then there was a prize. There was a prize that Jesus did all this for. There's some reason that he did this and then he tells us is this. Is that Jesus' death was designed to redeem a racially diverse church.

Now he died for more than a racially diverse church, but our text specifically points to a racially diverse church. It could be economic, it could be social, it could be cultural, it could be ethnic, it could be gender, it can be age. It could be anything. It's a diverse church, but our text says a racially diverse church. And let me show you where.

You notice that when he said it's better for Jesus to die than for the whole nation, and when John says, ... actually, he didn't say this on his own accord, he prophesied here it is. That Jesus would die for the nation. Now the nation, he's talking about there is Israel, that's the Jews, but then notice he goes further, but also to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad, who scattered abroad, who is the Gentiles.

You see, God's plan is to gather all of His children and all their diversity, into one flock in order to worship Him forever. One day Jesus was walking and he went to his hometown called Nazareth. You can read it a story sometime in Luke chapter four, and Jesus, he goes to the synagogue.

Someone needs to read the scripture for that day and so he stands up, and he walks up and he takes the scroll and he opens it up and he reads from Isaiah chapter 61, about how when the Messiah comes that he would preach good news to the poor. All eyes in the whole synagogue are glued upon Jesus. He closes the scroll, he hands it back and he goes and he sits down and everyone's just looking at him.

They've heard that he's already done miracles, and so he speaks and he says, "I want you guys to know something?" He didn't quite say it like that, but he said, "This has been fulfilled today in your presence," and it doesn't cause a riot. It says that they spoke well of him, and they continue to wait and look at him because they were hoping for a little miracle show. Come on, just do a little circus.

Just a little one for us. You know, and he doesn't. Instead, he says that he wanted to tell the people what a little glimpse of what the kingdom would be like. And he could have talked about all kinds of stuff. He could have talked about mercy, or grace, or humility, or love. Instead, he specifically talked about something that they needed to hear that day.

So he pulls two stories out of the Old Testament. Both stories make a Gentile the hero. Where the Gentiles faith was honored by God and all the sudden the people in the synagogue, they can't take it, and so they start a riot. Why would this cause a riot? Listen to me. This is why. Because prejudiced hearts can only love and imagine a prejudice kingdom.

You see, one thing that you need to understand is that whatever you envision right now about heaven, you're wrong. And so am I, and the reason is because, God is not bound by your creativity, and how you envision heaven and how I envision heaven is we take the greatest things that our mind can imagine. Even things that we've read within the scriptures and then we try to imagine what they're like.

And we say, that's what it's going to be like. It's going to be better than that. It's going to be better than that. God is not bound by our own imagination, so you got to ask the question, why would Jesus in this path, why would he do this? He knew it was going to cause problem. Why would you poke a bear when you know the bear is going to wake up and growl?

And he did it because he knew the end of the story and what his kingdom was really about and what he was pursuing on the earth towards that kingdom. At the end of the Bible, it tells us this, it says, “And they will sing a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals because you were slain, and with your blood, you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

You see Providence. If we love the substitution that saved us, we must love what the substitution bought, and what it bought was a church of global diversity. I want you to look at this picture right here. I want you to think about every single hand, and all of the different colors, and pigmentations and every single hand that you see there has a story.

They all have parents, they all have fears, and they all have insecurities and they all have [inaudible 00:38:55] the heart, they all have sin. They all have a need for a savior. They all grew up different. They all perhaps even speak differently, and yet they all have the same need and what God’s plan is, and why Jesus did this.

He said, is to take all of that diversity, and bring it together, not just in heaven, but even while we’re here on the earth to begin to move towards what he’s going to create. And so as a church family, I want to encourage us with something. I think this is the fourth time this year that I’ve talked about this idea of what can we do as a church family to move towards what we will see in heaven while we’re here on the earth in terms of diversity racially.

Now, I just want to encourage you again, maybe with just a little bit of a spin and it’s this. It’s let’s pursue the kind of racial appreciation we will enjoy in heaven. You see, it’s one thing to say you’re welcome here because we have chairs here. It’s another thing to appreciate the fact that people are here who look and sound differently than us. If Christ died for this, then it is a hill worthy of climbing.

I’ve said before, I’ve spoken several times this year about this, right? As a church, I think that we as a people are generally welcoming of people who do not look like us, so long as they come on our terms. And they don’t expect more than the rest. And they desire to be like us and sound like us and sing like us. But providence with the help of the Holy Spirit within our hearts, we can go further and deeper than this.

We can not only be willing, and accepting of this and okay with difference, we can actually learn to appreciate the difference. To be grateful for the difference, to love the difference. So, I want to encourage you to welcome guests, every guest that you don’t know, no matter what they look like. I said in the first service, we need to be careful, right?

Because you look around and there’s more people that look like me and who don’t look like me, and if everyone who looks like me, they all run up to the one person, who two or three that don’t look like me, it’d probably be a little overwhelming. All right? Ways that people should be incredibly welcoming because every single person is created in the image of God.

I would also encourage you to invite people that you know. Not only to Providence, but I encourage you to invite people who are different than you and who look differently into your home. To share a meal and when you get there, I would encourage you, or when they get there, to pursue understanding of what it's like to live.

What it's like to worship in this place, in this church, and to understand, and to gain understanding and appreciation about how other people who were also created in the image of God, who have fears and insecurities just like you. How they internalize the things that are happening all around us. And then last, I would encourage us to stand up, for people when necessary.

Within the body, what that means is that we have to know each other well enough, and love each other enough so that we can carry each other's burdens, when cultural things splash, and all the sudden there's this thing that ignites within our culture. Every single one of us process that information a little bit differently and we will be healthier as a body if we understand and know people personally who process that a little differently than we do.

It'll make us wiser and more loving as a people. Well knowing the volatility, the moment Jesus leaves for a time he goes out to the wilderness and we're told that the Passover was at hand. The time when they commemorated that God had told the people of Israel to sacrifice an unblemished lamb, to take that blood and put it over the door post to avert the wrath of God.

This is what we find right now. This is the Passover and this is the bridge between where John has been and where John is wanting to get to, and that is the rest of John takes place in seven days. It's Passion week and we're going to be there for six months. Jerusalem is filling. Anticipation is brimming. Jesus warrant has been publicized.

The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is going to enter Jerusalem the next day. John has led us here, so may the Lord stir our hearts with wonder as we examine these seven days together, so let's pray together. Father, we love you. Thank you so much for the kindness that you pour out to us in Jesus that you died, and you rose again. We thank you that, that was not an accident.

That was not a mistake, that was not a plan that went bad, but it was intentional. It was deliberate. It was purposeful, in order to be a substitute for our sin, to give us righteousness. To create a diverse church that would glorify you.

We thank you for your kindness and as we give not only with our singing but with our hands. We pray, Father, that you would take these offerings and that you would expand them for your glory and honor. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.



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