

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

September 8, 2019

SPEAKER

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SERIES

I Found Joy

PART

3

TITLE

I Found Joy In Suffering

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 1:12-18



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So one of my favorite things about that video is actually that I get to watch you watch that video. And there's something powerful about watching people who are happy, who are smiling, who are in some sort of state of mind, or being, that is really pleasant, because it sort of reminds us of what we want. We love to see people happy, because we want to be happy ourselves.

The fact is, is like this slide that you're about to see, to be human and to be alive is to both actively pursue happiness and joy, and to often experience pain and sorrow. It happens in the course of one given day. You can be happy this hour, and you can be really sad the next hour. And there's some people in the room right now who are sad because their circumstances are such that it's so heavy. It's just, it's so blinding on you, that it's hard to even fathom what happiness is going to feel like again.

Pain is a part of humanity. Job chapter five verse seven says, "Man is born to trouble, as surely as sparks fly upward." It's just the reality of life, is that pain is part of being human and alive. But what's interesting about pain is it leads us to circle wagon to become introspective and to forget the fact that there's a lot of other people that are going through pain, because there's something within us, there's this reflex towards self protection, that when we're going through suffering and pain, we rally around ourself and seek to get whole, and to get healed. And as a result of that we can forget the fact that everybody around us is also going through a great battle, a great war. And sometimes suffering, it helps to know that we're not alone.

And so, if you just would serve me, and those who are near you here this morning. Let me just ask you this question. If you have faced the death of a loved one in your life, if you've felt the pain of bereavement within your life, if you have faced something like cancer, or just illness, some significant disability, maybe the pain of loss, loss of your things, the loss of a job, or loss of money, or loss of a friend, if you've experienced anxiety, or maybe even humiliation, or rejection, or shame, or fear, if you've been the victim of prejudice, or abuse, or injustice, if anything like this has happened to you, would you raise your hand?

So the hands go up. And of course, you know that they would. But often times, when we're in it, the only pain that we can see is the one that we're experiencing.

What's interesting is if you pause long enough, and you recognize something happens in all of lives during that season, and that is that our joy tends to evaporate during that season, sort of like the morning dew. But wouldn't it be amazing, I mean, wouldn't it be a gift, and maybe even like the ... a really amazing lesson that if you could walk out of this room today, and you could actually learn of a reality that you could protect your joy even while experiencing inevitable human pain? I mean, would that not be worth a whole lot to you to be able to go through something so difficult in your circumstances, and yet maintain joy in the Lord? That is what we have available to us through a man named Paul and he wrote in a book called Philippians. And I know that some of you, you are literally neck deep in pain and suffering, and maybe you've already stopped listening to me because you've started worrying about what it is that you're dealing with.

And so, I want to pray for you. We also, as a church, want to be able to pray for people who've lost either a loved one, or their own home, or their freedom, or their own source of ... maybe even their source of security, and the fact that when a storm like the one that just came through comes through, places like the Bahamas, or our coast, there is a lot of people that, when we didn't feel the brunt of it here, a lot of people are reeling because so many parts of their life have literally become undone.

And I want you to know that as we pray for them, one thing that we want to be able to pray for is that because of your, frankly, your incredible generosity as a church family, what we've done is actually set aside, from what you've already given, \$50,000 to be able to send to help people who are in need. And so, what we want to do is to pray that those resources meet real needs in realtime. So let's pray together.

Father in Heaven, we come before you knowing that you are sympathetic to our pain because you sent your son not only to reveal who you are to us, but also to be a mediator to bring us to you, and you know what it's like to be a man. You know pain, and you know sorrow, and you know loneliness, and you know tears, and you know blood. You know all of these things. You know abuse. You know injustice. You know prejudice. You know bereavement. You know it all. You know the loss of freedom, the loss of things, even the loss of life. And so, we come to you, the one who is our great high priest, the one who can take us, and who can sympathize with us, the one who has all authority in Heaven and on Earth. And so we come to you, our maker, and we bow before you and we thank you that you have the power to help people in need.

You have helped me, and you've helped many of us in need. Indeed, you've helped all of us. And I pray for those right now who are struggling at such a deep level within their heart of something that they're going through. I pray that you would give them hope. Would you draw near to them? Would you help them to, Lord, to see that your presence in their life is the peace of their life. I pray that you would help them to feel peace, and feel security, and feel joy this morning in being near you.

And we pray for those who have lost their things or a loved one. So much more important than things are loved ones. And we pray, Father, for those who have as a result of the storm. We pray today that you would help them to grieve, that you would be close to them, that you would cause people to rise up who are close to them, and to be an encouragement, to be a help. We pray for people today who are in need of clean water, and food, and shelter, that you would help provide those things.

And so, we look in faith. Would you take these resources and, Lord, that of many other people around the world that will give to people who are in need, and would you please protect those resources and get them to the places that they need? We look to you in faith. Would you speak through weakness and help us to learn about suffering and joy? We pray in Jesus' name, amen, amen.

So it is great to see you. If you have a bible, look with me at Philippians chapter one. We're going to be in verse 12 to verse 18. Regardless of how severe your suffering has been ... You may look at me and think, "Man, does he have any credibility to talk about suffering?" The fact is, you may be right. Your resume of suffering may be much longer and deeper than mine. And so, what we do have though is we have somebody named Paul who wrote Philippians who can empathize and sympathize with all of us. We can learn from him. In fact, a few years before he wrote Philippians, he wrote another book. It's called 2 Corinthians, and in chapter 11 of that book this is what he says about his suffering up to that point in time.

He says, "I've been through far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received, at the hands of the Jews, the forty lashes, less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and day, I was adrift at sea in danger from my own people, in danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, and toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And this man, roughly a decade after he went into a city called Philippi and planted a church when he shared the gospel with them, he went to Jerusalem and eventually he was arrested, and then eventually, a few years later, he finds himself in a prison in Rome. And there the Philippians, the church in Philippi, they hear of Paul's suffering. They take up a love offering and then send it to him, and he, in response, writes a thank you letter to them, and it happens to be what we call the book of Philippians. And in verse 12, this is what he says, "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known, throughout the whole Imperial Guard and all the rest, that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

"Oh, some indeed preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love and knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former, they proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. Well, what then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice."

So I want to show you a few truths here, that all relate to Jesus, before we take the Lord's supper. The first is following Jesus will bring suffering. Now, you may have been sold the Bill of Goods, at some point in your life, that following Jesus was going to be an insurance policy from pain, but that's not true. The bible does not say that that is true. The bible teaches us that following Jesus will bring suffering.

Now, your suffering may not look like Paul's, or mine, or anyone else's, but it will cause something to take place in your life. You see, when we commit our life to Jesus Christ, we enter a spiritual arena wearing a jersey that Satan, our enemy, is not wearing. We inherit an enemy.

The commission of Jesus Christ that says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, and baptize them, and teach them,” that commission inherently brings conflict, because that commission is taking a message that Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the father in Heaven except through me,” well, that causes tension points.

And so when he says, “Now, what has happened to me,” we need to know what happened to him. But before we do, if you remember just a little ... This may be the first time that you’re here, and you’re maybe confused, what’s the difference between happiness and joy? Well, happiness comes from an old word, old English word. It’s the word hap, and hap means luck or chance. It’s tied to our circumstances. Happiness is tied to what happens. And so when he says here “that what’s happened to me”, he’s saying, “There’s circumstances in my life that, literally, they don’t make me happy. I don’t like a chain around my wrist. I don’t like prison. I don’t like the beatings. I don’t like looking at my scarred body. My circumstances aren’t what I want.” And yet, at the end, we find him with joy.

Now, what happened to him? Well, just one or two years after he wrote 2 Corinthians, that was the book that we read that long list of all the things that happened to him that were really bad, well, some more bad stuff happened to him. He decides he wants to go to Jerusalem, and it happens to be that that’s where his enemies are. Now, his enemies are not enemies because he’s beat them up, or stolen something from them, or ... No, they do not like the gospel. They do not believe in Jesus Christ. They do not believe he rose from dead. They do not believe that forgiveness is found by trusting Jesus. They believe that God’s grace is merited by good works. And so, they don’t like the message of the cross, or the gospel. They don’t like the message of grace. And therefore, they deeply resist the messenger.

Well, he feels so compelled he has to get to Jerusalem that he goes and he shows up, and he’s in the temple, and all of a sudden, his enemies see him and they cause a riot. They start beating him. They actually beat him and start dragging him out of the temple, and it says, “In order to kill him.” About that time, the Roman soldiers, they’re under the rule of Rome, they see what’s happening. There’s this uprising. There’s this little riot that’s starting, and so they run in and it says that they protect Paul by arresting Paul. They bind him with chains and the people are still beating him so badly that the soldiers pick him up on their shoulder in order to take them out ... to take him out from them.

And while they’re almost out, it’s like he’s here, he’s almost [inaudible] get to the back door where things are no longer throw at him, and there’s no more beating, and he goes, “Hey, put me down. I got one sermon in me for today and I want to give it right now.” They put him down and it says that he motions with them ... with his hands chained and they all become quiet and he starts preaching the gospel that Jesus Christ loved us so much that he came to this earth to die for our sin and after he was dead, three days later, he rose from the dead. And not only that, but this gospel should be proclaimed not only in Jerusalem but to ends of the earths, so that Jew and Gentile alike can become God’s people. And once he went there, they erupt.

And so, the soldiers take him out of there. Over the next two and a half years he goes through three different trials. He's moved to Caesarea. There's an attempt on his life. He's in prison. And finally, he appeals to Caesar, so they put him on a boat to Rome. When he gets on the boat, things are going pretty well. He makes a friend and things are going okay, and then the boat sinks. It's like, "Man, seriously." He swims to shore with everybody else. You know what happens when he swims to shore? He's wet, so they need a fire. It's so cold, and so he builds a fire and he goes over and gets firewood and he gets bit by a snake. I'm like, literally, when I read this I'm like, "God, give the man a break." It's piling on. Because some of the suffering is because people were were intentional to say, "I want you to suffer." But then a snake doesn't care about the gospel and I'm like, "God, just protect him from the snake already." It's piling ...

This is what I think of right here. You probably can't see it but the very bottom in the middle, there's a little white helmet. There's a guy down there and everybody's now piling on. And this is Paul. He finally makes it, "All right, okay. Great, we got a new boat." He finally gets to Rome and his prize to get to Rome is, "Hey, and here's your jail."

By the time that we believe that he writes Philippians, he's actually in house arrest, and yet he's chained to a solidier during this time. And you need to understand, the only thing that he's done is follow Jesus.

You see, 1 Peter chapter two verse 21 says that Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. You hear this often, "I have decided to follow Jesus." Well, when you follow Jesus, you're following someone the world killed. There's animosity involved when you follow Jesus, so why follow him? Why would Paul follow him? Why would you follow him? Why do I follow him? This is why, because being near Jesus is better than the absence of suffering.

Let me give a little illustration of this. We've all seen a wedding. Many of us have been in a wedding. Many of us were the bride or the groom at a wedding. And there's a point of the wedding where ... looks like this. You take each other's. You take each other's hand. You give your little vows, and your rings, and you exchange ... And what you say in this moment is, "I do. I take you as my husband or as my wife."

And then what's interesting is, at least in our context, we know each other, and so we know what we're getting, at least partially. And partially, what we know we're getting isn't good. We know that there's inconsistencies in one another. We know that we're sinners. We know how we normally sin. We know that if the person I'm about to marry comes from a family that's broken, and there's conflict within that family, what it means to me, and yet this is what happens when we get married. We look at this person and we say, "You know what? With this person, with this person comes these inconsistencies, and these elements of suffering that I'm welcoming into my life, and the reason I welcome them is because I love you. You are better than the absence of the pain and suffering that are going to come my way because those things are attached to you."

Well, when we come to faith in Jesus Christ we're saying, "Jesus, I do." And there's no inconsistencies, and there's no weakness, and there's no sin in Jesus Christ, and yet there's a significant part of the world who has a tremendous animosity towards Jesus, and so to associate yourself with Jesus is to bring upon suffering that came his way.

And the question, really, always come down to this, is Jesus the reason you came to Jesus? Because he's the prize of the redeemed, you see. Following Jesus will put us in unfamiliar places with unbelieving people who may accuse, or belittle, or reject. And I want to beg you, do not buy the lie that coming to Christ is an insurance policy from pain, where Jesus himself said, "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." He is the treasure of the redeemed. He is the prize. If you come to Jesus for any other reason than Jesus, your journey as a Christian will be marked by frequent frustration, sporadic joy, and often painful accusations that come from your mouth about his faithfulness to your deal.

He has promised to be with you. He's the prize. He is the word made flesh. He's our creator, our sustainer, the ruler, the righteous judge. He is compassionate. He is kind. He is generous. And he is your prize, and with him will come suffering but he is so worth it. He is so worth it.

The second thing is loving Jesus will protect our joy. Following Jesus, oh, it will bring suffering, but then you notice he's suffering in prison, but notice the last thing that we read. He says, "And in that, I rejoice." You see, joy is the good feeling in our soul that's produced by God when we're near Jesus. Of Jesus, it's spoken in Psalms 16 verse 11. You know what it says there? It says, "In your presence, there is fullness of joy." In other words, to be near Jesus is to be near joy. Happiness is tied to our happenings, and joy is tied to Jesus. But rejoicing is a little different than joy. Rejoicing is the personal application that tends ... that sends our joy out of our mouth, or out of our face, or out of our hands, so that other people can recognize, "This person is joyful. There's joy within because he or she rejoices."

And here he is, he's rejoicing. Why is he rejoicing? Well, he tells us why. He says, "Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice." You see, each one of us, we have a chief love. You can love lots of things all at the same time, but all of us have one chief love, one chief treasure. It stands above the rest. It's what you dream about. When you have nothing else to think about in your mind, that's where your mind drifts. When you're scared, that's the tower that you run to for security and protection. That's the first thing that you run to. It's your treasure. It's your chief joy. All of us have one.

One of the ways to identify what it is is to ask this question. What, if you took it away, would also remove my joy? For some of us in the room, it's our career because our identity is tied to our career. This is what people know about me. This is what I'm good at. This is what I'm applauded for. You take that away, there's no way that I could have joy. For some people, it's a person. It's a wife, a husband, a child. It's a parent. It's somebody.

It's a person. We look to him and say, "Man, if you took that person away not only would I not have happiness, I wouldn't have joy. There'd be just no joy in my life. For some people, it's security that's wrapped up, whether it's in finances, or your house, or to have enough money so that you feel just ... you feel secure. And if I have no security, then there's just no way I can have joy. For some people, it's really a much lesser thing. It can be a college sports team. You're so hungry for life and joy throughout your life, you're just saying, "Man, it's coming. This is our year," and all of a sudden they come, and it's August, and then lose their first two games and it's like, "Man, bummer. I lost my joy."

Now, here's the deal. Our joy is vulnerable whenever we treasure what can be lost. Let me just tell you something. You're going to lose your career, and your spouse, and your kids, and your parents, and your security, and the football game. You're going to lose all of those things. You realize that? And so, if we tie our joy, our central treasure around anything other than what cannot be lost or threatened, we will one day lose our joy. Now, we may love other things, and find happiness in them, and God can bring joy through other things, but if Jesus Christ is not our central joy, then we will be sporadic in our joy throughout our entire life.

You see, Paul's treasure was Jesus. That's why in this little passage we read he spoke of proclaiming Jesus, or him being proclaimed four different times. You see, Jesus was with Paul in prison and he was being proclaimed outside of prison, and so joy was spilling out of his mouth. See, unlike every other treasure that you could possibly have in the world, Jesus cannot be lost. He's the same yesterday, today and forevermore. Nothing can separate us from his love, which is why, surely, God's kindest command in the entire bible is you shall love the lord your god with all of your heart. Why? Because if we're loving God with all of our heart, our joy is protected. There is no command within the scripture that is more protective of your happiness and joy through life, and through eternity, than love God. Why? Because he can't be threatened. He can't leave. He's with us forever. He can't be toppled.

And so, loving Jesus will protect our joy. And so, there's pain coming as we follow Jesus. There's joy that'll be protected if we love him. But then the third thing is this, is trusting Jesus will fortify our joy. And this is what he does. It's fascinating to me. You see, now, we often times hear ... use the words, and it's important that we do, when we first trust Christ, we use the word trust. When we pray to receive Christ, when it's the very first time we're like, "You know, I don't know Christ and all of a sudden I'm trusting Christ with my life," and that's built in with what I mean by trusting Jesus will fortify our joy, but I want to take it a step further because most of us in the room have already trusted Christ the first time. But now, all of a sudden, we have a new piece of information from the scripture and now we have to ask the question repeatedly throughout our life, "Am I going to trust Jesus with my life?"

Now that I see this about giving, or going, or serving, or something in life, something that I see that he's telling me to, am I going to trust? Am I going to trust when I don't understand what's happening in life? Am I going to trust when the room is entirely dark? You see, this is what Paul did and this was why he was so captured, I think, with rejoicing.



Paul also, he was like us, he was trying to understand God's pace and his place, why am I here and why has God not gotten me out of here yet? What's he doing? And it's not all clear to him, but the thing that he kept doing was leaning god-ward. He kept looking to God. He kept saying, "God, I'm trusting you in all this. I don't know why that I'm here, and yet I'm still looking towards you. I'm optimistic. I'm not skeptical that somehow you've died, or you're no longer there anymore. No, I know you're there. I just don't understand. I'm looking to you. I need perspective. I need you to fortify my joy."

And what God does is a miracle. Just like this picture, there's a dark room that Paul is in, and it's the darkness of prison in his own heart, and God not only gives him one window of perspective to look through, and not only two, but three, and he tells us each one of those three perspectives that now give him new insight that allows him to rejoice afresh. The first window that he looks through, he says, "You know what? I never thought about this." He says, "But look, I'm ... it's become known throughout the whole Imperial Guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ."

In other words, at some point in time, probably in the Church of Rome, they were like, "You know, there's these Imperial guards that are emperor's body guards." There was either 9,000 or 10,000 of them, all depending on who you read. I don't know exactly. But they were untouched. And you can just imagine. You're like, "Man, how are we going to reach these people? We can't even have a conversation with them." And Paul looks around and he goes, "You know, I was always wondering that too. But you know what? I don't like to be in prison, but it just so happens that I'm chained to those guys, and they're chained to me."

Now, look, we don't know exactly if Paul's situation was like what we know in history would have been his situation if it was normal. And so, the normal situation ... Now, he was chained to them. We know that from Acts, but we don't know, necessarily, if they gave him a little bit more comfort because it was very clear that, during house arrest, is they gave him some extra freedoms. But he says he was chained, and if he would have been a normal criminal what would have happened is that soldier would have been chained to him for six hours until somebody else went on shift and he got off his shift, and then someone else was chained to him for six hours. And so, 24 hours a day he would have been chained to one of these royal body guards.

And instead of looking at these people as the problem, he looked at them as the opportunity. He said, "You know, I've always wanted to tell the gospel to these people and now, all of a sudden, God saw fit that one of them is chained to me for six hours." At the end of the book we actually find out that many of these people come to faith in Jesus Christ. It's a remarkable thing. And not only that, not only did he do his preaching to these guards, and other people as they came to visit him, but during this time he also wrote Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Think of how blessed we are that Paul didn't get all sour, but instead he picked up a pen.

And so, he said, “One perspective is, man, he’s opened up opportunities for me.” Well, then he goes over to the second window and he goes, “You know what? God give me a second window to look through that gives me a little bit of hope and joy right now to see what’s happening in spite of all my suffering.” He says in verse 14, “Then most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord in my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” In other words, he looks out and he sees that the Christians within the city, they’re like, “You know, Paul can’t do it, so I guess we better. At one time, we were afraid.” But now, all of a sudden, they started exercising a little bit more courage. And he goes, “So praise God for that. The church is growing as a result of this suffering. And so, man, let it be done.”

And then he goes into a third, and the third is so sad to me, and he starts talking about the motives that some people are preaching with. He says, “Some of them,” he says that they do so for good will, out of love, knowing that I’m here.” But then he says, “But other people preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.”

Now, let’s just be real clear. They’re all preaching Jesus. In other words, these are false teachers. These are gospel teachers, which proves that we’ve been a messy bunch from the beginning. What he just said was this, just imagine going up to a person and say, “Hey, I hear you preaching this gospel. Why do you preach it,” and the person says, “Well, I believe it, first and foremost, but the reason I preach it is because I’m trying to be an irritant to this guy in prison that I’m so jealous about.” Oh, what a horrible thing.

So Paul’s in prison. He’s like, “Man, that’s a big problem.” But also ... But he’s leaning forward to God, and so God opens up a third window and he says, “Oh, you know what? The good news is this, is that Jesus is being proclaimed.” He says, “God’s using all of my hurts to tell other people about my greatest love, and so I have to rejoice that Jesus Christ is being proclaimed.” And so, Psalm 28 verse seven, it says that the Lord is my strength and my shield. In him my heart trusts, and I’m helped. Is the ... It’s the song of Paul while he’s in this prison. He’s leaning to God to trust in him.

So what do we do with this before we take the supper? First application I have for you is this, is let’s begin our wrestling by settling on Jesus’ resurrection. Some of you, right now, you’re in the middle of a pit, and so you’re wrestling. You’re wrestling if there is a god. You’re wrestling if church is worth it. You’re wrestling if the bible is true. You’re wrestling with God’s character, with his goodness to [inaudible 00:31:49]. You’re wrestling with all kinds of things, and you can literally spend all kinds of months and years just wrestling because you’re hurting.

And let me encourage you to take the most pivotal step that you can take first, and that is this, settle on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even the bible says if Jesus did not rise from the dead, we, as Christians, are still in our sins. There’s no sacrifice and we, among all people, are most to be pitied. You see, if Jesus rose from the dead though, what it means is that not only he’s God, but he has authority. And having all authority, he endorsed the Old Testament, he authorized the New Testament, and he promised to never leave or forsake us.

Now, what does this do? Even in my own life, when I go through seasons where I'm wrestling with, "God, I don't understand this. It just makes me frustrated. Are you really close to me right now? Are you far away?" I run to the resurrection. I go back to the central reasons, the evidence of the resurrection. If you need help in knowing what that is, come talk to me after. There's lots of wonderful books that just help reinforce the evidence of why Jesus Christ rose from the dead. And I go back and I read that again, and I recite that again, and I think, "This is true. It is so true." And when I know that it's true, what it does is instead of me instinctively leaning away looking for something to tie my anchor to, now, all of a sudden, I lean into the scripture and I lean into my circumstances looking for what God is going to do, because I know that he rose from the dead.

He has all authority. He is for me. So when you don't know where to look in your pain, look to the cross and the resurrection. Set an anchor there.

Second is let's strain to see how our pain could advance the gospel. Pain is not going to leave us until we leave this earth, so we might as well leverage it like Paul did. So the next time you think, "You know, I'm stuck in this job," or, "I'm stuck in this nursing home," or, "I'm stuck with all these nurses and doctors because I have a disease that I never asked for," look at the people that now surround you that once did not. Look at the people that surround you that may only see his suffering, for their sake, through how you handle yours. And let it be a window where they can see the sufferings of Christ that gives you hope, and that gives you joy, even when you're going through a hard time.

And last is let's remember that Jesus endured suffering for us. He endured suffering for us. He went to a cross in order to pay for our sin. And one of the things that God gives us is called the Lord's supper, that we get to do now, is to remember and proclaim that we remember that somebody willingly, voluntarily went through unreal suffering in order to bring us good.

And so, for those that'll be serving us, if you want to go ahead and head to the back, and as you prepare those elements for us let me remind you of just a couple things. First of all, for those of you who have never trusted Christ, you can do that right now. If you'll confess with your mouth that Jesus is lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, the bible says you will be saved. If you have trusted Jesus Christ, we welcome you to this table. But if you have yet to trust Christ, if you're not certain yet, if you're not leaning towards Jesus, or you just don't believe yet, then the bible actually says to let these things pass, for to take them is to affirm to others that you treasure them.

And so we would ask, if you've not trusted Christ, to let it pass. But if you know Christ as your savior and lord, we welcome you to the table. As the things are being passed to us, the bread and the cup, I would ask you to consider your own heart and ask the Lord to search your heart to see if there's any sin that you need to confess, so that you can take this with a clear conscience. So let's pray together.

Father in Heaven, we come before you this morning and we thank you, Jesus, that you willingly went through unrivaled suffering and pain in order to bring us good. And so, we know that you're for us. We don't understand why we're going through what we're going through. But God, I pray that this meal, that this reminder would be just that. It would be a reminder that even in our pain that you're with us, that you see.

So we confess our sin to you during this time. We confess our love for you during this time. So use it as you see fit. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.



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