

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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I Found Joy

PART

10

TITLE

I Found Joy In Pressing On

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 3:12-4:1



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It's great to see all of you here. If you're new with us, welcome. We're thrilled that you are our guest. We found joy in the Lord. That's who we are as a whole church family. If you're new with us and you wonder who we are, we found joy in knowing Jesus Christ. We're amazed at what he did and who he is, and so we love to sing to him, and we love to open up his word. There's a truth that all of us know in life, but we forget routinely in our own life. That is that the longer the race, the harder it is to finish. Life is a pretty long race, at least for most of us. Therefore, it gets difficult. There was a really cool story. It happened a long time ago, about 20 years ago, but there was an athlete, her name was Beth Anne DeCiantis, and she inspired really an entire sports world as a runner.

She was wanting to run in the marathon, so 26.2 miles, and to make the trials for the games, she had to run it in less than two hours and 45 minutes. Now, I believe that the time has changed since then. It's been lowered because people keep getting faster, but, at the time, two hours and 45 minutes. If so, she'd make the Olympics. She was pretty, well, she was excited about running. She starts, and at mile 23, which for most of us, it wouldn't take mile 23, but at mile 23 her legs start to cramp up. I don't know if you've ever run with legs that are actually cramping, I mean, like all the muscles in your legs, top to bottom, but it's a hopeless feeling because you know you don't have total control, and so you fear you're going to fall all the time, and it's incredibly painful.

This is what happened to her. She continued to run another three miles with her legs cramping up, trying to make this one particular time so that she could make the trials for the Olympics. 200 yards from the finish, she has two minutes left, and she collapses to the ground, so she waits there for about 20 seconds, and finally she pulls herself up, and she starts putting one wobbly leg in front of the other hoping to finish in time. Five yards before the finish line, she collapses again. She doesn't have the strength or the time. The crowd is yelling at her. They all know that it's really close because there's a great big clock up top. On hands and knees, she crawls over the line in order to finish in two hours, 44 minutes and 57 seconds. Made it by three seconds, but she endured, and she finished.

It really points an amazing picture that you see in our text today. That is that life is really hard, and sometimes you simply need to make advancement. Sometimes that advancement is in a dead sprint, and sometimes it's one length of a hand and a knee moving forward one at a time, but the important thing is to advance. You see, I know in a room this big, in a church like Providence, in fact, rooms small and churches unlike Providence, it's amazing that people find ourselves, every single one of us, you're either in stride or you're struggling today. There are people within our church family, within this week, who have fallen in love, and therefore everything is fine. Everything is working well. There's hope. There's victory. They're encouraged. There's some people here who have, for the first time in their life, had the courage to share their faith or their story with somebody else.

They felt God's confirmation. There's been people this week who have told their story to somebody else, share the gospel, and their friend or family member trusted Christ, and so they're on cloud nine. I heard today that there's two people within our church who recently, within the last two weeks, found out that their cancer is in remission. You see, these kinds of things, they make us run faster. There's some people in the room, they're just ready to run. Things are encouraged and hopeful, and that may be you. Thank God if it is because there's also some people who are staggering. There's some people here who aren't in love. They're feeling lonely. There's some people who want a baby, and they've not been able to have a baby. There's some people who haven't gotten a great diagnosis of being in remission. They found out recently that they have cancer. There's loss, and there's a feeling of anxiety. This is life. It's difficult.

What I want to do right before we read this amazing texts where Paul simply pleads with us the importance of continuing to run to the end, I want to pray for us that God would give us strength, so if you would... Father in heaven, I pray for your grace in each of our lives. In particular, I pray for those that are struggling today, maybe who are staggering and who are, whether spiritually or emotionally or physically, some way just cramping up. I pray, Father, that you would give them endurance, that you would use this time in your word to give them hope. I pray, Father, that as we open up your word that you would give us grace to help us to understand what we read, that you would help us to see how it's pertinent to our life even though it was written so long ago. I pray that you would give us courage to apply it to our life. We look to you in faith. Would you do us good by your Spirit and through your word? We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

I would love for you to look with me. We're in the third chapter of a book called Philippians in the Bible. If you have one, turn there with me. If you don't, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. As I say each week, if you don't have one at home of your own, take that home as a gift. We would love for you to have your own. This book is written by Paul. It's written to a church in a city called Philippi, and it's amazing. He's in prison. He's in prison because of his faith. What's amazing is he's writing this letter out of his appreciation for their support of him, and he keeps talking about how joyfully he is and how much he's rejoicing and how much he wants them to rejoice. He's teaching us within this letter an amazing lesson in life. That is that our happiness and joy, although they sometimes feel similar, is they have a totally different source.

We've looked at this over the last two months. The word happiness comes from an old English word happ, which means happening or circumstance. When we have good circumstances, it's natural to be happy, and when they're bad, it's natural to be unhappy. Yet, joy is not tied to our circumstances. Joy is tied in being near Jesus. When you have a relationship with Jesus, you can even get a cancer diagnosis, and you can still know a measure of joy because your joy is in the Lord. There's a measure of hope. There's a measure of peace that's accompanied by being near Jesus who is full of joy. Paul, when he gets to chapter three, he's already talked about the fact that he wants to know Christ even more than he does, and yet he's not quite there yet. He knows he's not there yet. He looks at his life, and he sees inconsistencies, just like you and me. He sees failures, just like you and me. He wants to encourage them, and in doing so he encourages us. Let's read it.

It says in verse 12, “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do. Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their belly. They glory in their shame with mind set on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

Now, anytime you run, you need a finish line. Everybody knows that. When I ran track, my coach would relentlessly take us before every track meet, and he would take us, and he would show us the actual tape that we would cross if we finished first place. They all look different. Some of them were blue, and some of them were red and, some of them were white, but he wanted us to see what the finish line looked like, and this is exactly what Paul does for us. In verse 20 and 21, before he tells us how to run, he says, “Let me tell you what you’re running for.” Not to earn, but because this is available. This is real. You’re going to experience this, and so it’s going to create within you a seriousness in the way that you live your life. He says the first thing you can look forward to is heaven in verse 20.

He says it’s real. It’s a place. It’s a home. It’s the home for everyone who trusts Christ on this earth. He says it’s a reality, and we’re running towards that end, but not only heaven. He says, there’s a Savior. We’re awaiting a Savior from there, and he tells us who that Savior is. It’s interesting that he doesn’t use first and last name. He uses three different names of the same person. He says the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, when sin came into the world, God said, “One day I’m going to send a very important person who is going to rescue you and redeem you and bring you back into a relationship with God, with me.” He was the Messiah, the promised one. That word, Messiah, it means Christ in Greek. The idea here is this, is that when anytime in the new Testament the word Christ is tied to the name Jesus, what they’re saying is this person named Jesus, he is the promised one of old.

He’s the one that we were supposed to be looking for. He’s the Christ, and the Christ was supposed to suffer. That’s exactly what Jesus means. Jesus means Savior. In other words, when the angel came, he said, “Look, you shall name him Jesus.” Why? “For he shall save his people from their sins.” How did he do that? He lived without sin, and yet he went to a cross where he died on that cross to pay for our sin. He was buried in a grave, and then he rose from the dead. The Bible says that when he rose from the dead, God the Father gave God the Son, that’s Jesus Christ, the name above all names, and he became Lord. He became the Lord, and his name was Jesus, and he was the Christ. I want you to know that he’s real, and he’s the King of heaven, and he’s coming.

Not only that, there's one other word I want you to see that's the finish line, is the word transform. You see it? He says, "And when he comes, he will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body." Just imagine how beautiful and amazing this is going to be to have a body right now that is so familiar with aches and pains and sickness and sin and temptation and apathy to be totally resistant to sickness, totally resistant to apathy, completely resistant to strife with other people, to temptation. You see, CS Lewis looked at all of this reality of heaven and where we now live, and you know what he said? He says, "There is a kind of joy that makes one serious." In other words, that if you recognize that there is something out there that is so special and that is so amazing, it's so valuable, and there's a way that you can live your life in order to maximize that joy, you become very serious in the way that you live your life.

You become serious in the way that you treat other people. You become serious in the way that you seek to respond and live in a relationship with Jesus, who's coming for you. What Paul does in our text is he simply says this. He goes if this is the reward, if this is what's coming, if this is the finish tape, then how should we run? Joy motivates several things. The first is this, it motivates us to run with perseverance. He says to us, he goes, "You know what guys, not that I've already been made perfect. I've not obtained it. I've not made it my own." Why does he say this? Well, right before for that in verse nine, what he says is this. He says, "Jesus made me righteous at the start." This is a beautiful thing. We looked at this last week, is that when we trust Jesus Christ, it says that we then become found in him, and his righteous record is credited to our unrighteous, imperfect record, and so God the Father only sees the righteousness of Jesus in us.

His position in Christ is totally righteous with God. At the end of the journey, he says, "You know what, and Jesus is going to transform me so that my practice throughout all eternity once I get to heaven will be like my position. I'll be righteous," but there's this gap between trusting Jesus and being made righteous in my position in Christ and going to heaven where my practice of righteousness becomes something that happens every moment of every single day. Right in the middle, I am righteous before God, and yet I am still in a body that he calls lowly, that's susceptible to temptation, and susceptible to insecurity, and susceptible to failure and even sin. He says, "This is the reality, guys. I've been at this for 30 years, and I still haven't made it. I haven't obtained it. I've not been made perfect. I've not made it yet, but I'm pressing on."

He says, "I press on to make it my own," and then he uses a really important word. It's the word because, "because Christ Jesus has made me his own." You see, there's an enormous difference, had that said in order for Christ to make me his own. In other words, our pressing on is not a wage that we pay to get in the family. It's what we do because we're in the family. It's the natural result of it. It's interesting. This word press, in the Greek, is actually found in one other place, and it's verse six. In verse six, he says, "As for zeal, I was a persecutor of the church," and the word persecutor is the exact same word as the word I press on towards the goal. In other words, he was pressing on the church. He was persecuting the church.

What does that mean? It means this. You know, with all of the energy that I exerted in order to inflict pain upon the church, now I exert that same amount of energy in order to serve the church. All that energy that I once used in order to earn a place in God's family, I now see that I had it wrong and now, but I still exert that energy, but now it's to grow from a place in God's family. All that energy that I once sought to hate Jesus and to hate the church, now I want to know Jesus, and I want to serve the church. In other words, what he's saying is there's this perpetual need for advancement in the Christian life, us pressing forward with the energy that we once used in other things that were so trivial, we push it towards things that are eternal.

This is what Peter said. He said, "Look, his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." As a result of God making all that available to us, how then should we live? He says, "Well, then make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control is steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love." Now some people can look at that and go, "Okay. I need to master faith, and then I'll move on to virtue. Once I take care of virtue, then I'll move on to the next thing." This is not a sequence. This is an example of perseverance in advancement. The very last thing up there is love. If we had to actually master and have complete perfect faith in order to get to the next one, we would never get to love, but Jesus says, "By love is the world going to know that you're my followers."

What he's talking about is advancement. Think about your life for a second. Is there any book of the Bible you've not read? You say, "Well, I've never read any of the Bible." All right, well, pick one. There's 66 of them. Pick one and read it. That's advancement. Any area of your life where you look and you say, "You know what? I'm weak in this area," he says, well, set your sights on that area in order to grow. You know, it's fascinating. Really, what he's saying is this. He's saying, "You know what? I know Christ, but I want to know more. I know parts of the Bible, but I want to know more the Bible. I know what it's like to forgive people, but I want to know what it's like to forgive people even more. I want to advance." Let me ask you, what do you need to advance in? What do you need? Think of your life. What do you need to advance in?

You see, we have to run until the race is over. One of my favorite stories that I read recently was in 1983, 150 athletes gathered in Sydney, Australia to run an ultramarathon to Melbourne, which is 543 miles to run. As these world-class athletes gathered at the starting line, a 61-year-old potato farmer in overalls and work boots asked for a race number. His name was Cliff Young. They thought it was a joke. He put his teeth back in because he had dentures. He said after the race, "I can't run with them because they move too much when I'm running" and so he had them in his pocket. He put them in, and he said, "I'm serious. I want to run," and so they gave him number 64, and off he ran. The gun went off and, all of a sudden, he began what he called is a shuffle. In five days and 14 hours and four minutes later, Cliff Young crossed the finish line, 10 hours in front of second place.

You see, everybody's strategy in the race was to run 18 hours and then sleep six, but nobody told Cliff, and so he ran five days and 14 hours without any sleep until he finished. When they asked him afterwards, "Why did you do that?" He said, "Well, you run until the race is over," and this is what Paul is saying. We persevere until the race is over. Let's advance in our relationship with Jesus Christ. In response to God's grace, advance. What's a book you need to read? Who do you need to pray for? There's places in the world right now who have never heard of Christ. Would you be willing to sign up for a mission team in order to go and tell them? The mission is not over yet. We have to continue to advance.

The second thing is that joy motivates, is it motivates us to run with concentration, with tremendous concentration. He says, "Look, I haven't made it. I haven't been perfected. I've not finished this thing, but one thing I do." Now, aren't you glad that he didn't say, "But 16 things I do"? It's interesting. You look through the pages of scripture, and there's so many examples where they said, "God, there is one thing. There's one thing I ask." David prayed in Psalm 27, "Just one thing. If you give me one thing, and that's just to spend time in your presence." Nehemiah, he went to the city of Jerusalem because it needed a wall rebuilt. He went for one thing. When his enemies got there and they started to distract him, they say, "Hey, why don't you come up and have a meeting?"

They said, "No, I can't be about those things because I'm about one thing, and that is this wall needs to be rebuilt." Jesus looked at Martha, who was all mad at Mary because Mary was sitting listening to Jesus, and Martha was cooking, and she was mad cause her sister wasn't helping her. Jesus looks at Martha and says, "You're troubled about many things, but there is one thing that is necessary." Now, what happens if you lose focus? I'm going to show you a video right now what happens when you lose focus. There's an athlete here. He's almost to finish in first place. He gets distracted, and he starts thinking that the crowd is more important than the finish line, so watch this.

Video: Take my word for it. There's a moral to this story.

Yeah, it looked like a coronation for Tanguy Pepiot, how he's getting the crowd. He wants the crowd to cheer his performance, and at the end he gets pipped. He gets pipped by Meron Simon of Washington, and you just can't do this kind of stuff, Louis.

You can't. You see his face and you know. No one has to say anything. They don't have to explain it to him. He'll never make that mistake again.

Brian Frost: He'll never make that mistake again. Right? That assumes that he has another race to run, but, you know what, when you stand before Christ, you will not have another race to run. There's only one. You get one shot on this earth and so do I. Let me urge you to run with concentration. You see, future joy, the joy that makes us so serious, it leads us to concentrate.

That's why he says, "I press on towards the goal," and I've talked to you about a word. It's a word in grammar, and I know most of you don't care about it. You don't even like to hear about it. It's the word participle, but it's a really important form of speech. A participle, it's simply, it's a verb that helps you get a more important verb done. They're usually in the form of I-N-G words. If you notice what he says, "I press on," and then he tells us how to press on, by forgetting certain things and straining towards what's ahead.

In other words, you cannot concentrate on the finish line unless you forget about certain things in your life, forgetting what lies behind. You see, you and I, we simply can not run straight while looking backwards. You know, we all have a past, and your past is real. You've made mistakes. Maybe somebody has hurt you deeply. It's real, but I want you to know something. It's not sovereign. It's not omnipotent. When he says forgetting what lies behind, he's not saying that you have the capacity. You don't. You and I don't forget things in our past that they happen. What he's saying is this, is that you don't have to let your yesterday determine your tomorrow, that Jesus is sovereign, and he's more powerful. His grace is more powerful than sin and even sin that is done to you.

I want you to know that if you're here and you've gone through something, and you can't find relief from your past, and you need help, we, as a pastoral team, we want to be able to help you, to pray with you and for you because this is the first day of the rest of your life. There is only one true King. There's only one true sovereign King, and it's not yesterday. His name is Jesus, and it's available for you, and he's available for me, so we have to be forgetting certain things, and we also have to be straining forward to what lies ahead. Let me encourage you to fix your eyes on heaven. He urges us. He says, "I press on," and he strings together what we call a Pauline sentence, which means it's a run on. He just keeps stacking up words. It's hard to even know exactly what he means.

Most people who study theology, they're like, "I think this means heaven." He says, "I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." What is all that? Everyone goes, "That's heaven. That's what heaven is." You see, it's fascinating to me that for the longest time if you won a race, they'd wrap a plant around your head. Everyone would clap, and they'd go, "Hey, nice plant," and they'd go back to their life. Right? It was a perishable wreath. It was something that was there, and then it would dry out, and it would die. Paul says in 1 Corinthians nine, he says, "We don't run for things that are perishable but things that are imperishable." He says we're actually running for heaven. We're actually running not to earn it but because it's there and because he's made us ready for it. I urge you to stay concentrated.

Third, joy motivates us to run with other believers. Look what he says in verse 15, 16, and 17. It's fascinating. In verse 15 he says, "Look, let those of us," those of us means you're in the church. You are a Christian, but we don't all agree on certain things. He says, "Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you." There's a lot people who aren't quite sure exactly what he means there. What thing are they not agreeing on?

In context, it must be this. Some people, even though they're Christians, they're tired of running. They're tired of cramping up, and so they said, "You know what? I want to stop racing, and I just want to become a spectator in the stands. I still believe in Christ is going let it all work out. He's coming for me or one day I'm going to die, but, I mean, I'm already sealed. You know, I'm forgiven, and so I'm good to go. I'm just going to chill, and God's going to take me home."

I think that's what he means. This is what he says. He goes, "Look, those of us who are mature in the Lord know that we've not attained it, and so we need to keep running with perseverance and concentration, but even if you think otherwise," when you want to sit up in the stands eating Cheetos in your stretchy pants, that's how you want to spend the rest of your life. He says, "Look, you know what?" He goes, "That's okay, and this is why it's okay." He says, "Because God has the power to work up in those stands. I don't need to convince you. God can do that." He says, "I'll tell you what. Wherever we don't agree, let's just both make an agreement to live up to what we've already attained."

Then he tells them something that's fascinating. He says, "I want to encourage you to imitate me." Now, some people look at that and go, "What an arrogant man, imitate me," but he's already said, "Look, I've not made it. I've not been perfected. I've not obtained it." What's he saying? He's not raising himself up. Actually what he's doing is he's saying, "Look, why don't you come down from the stands and run with me?" Then he opens up the net. He opens the circle, and he says, "You know what? You don't have to just look at me." He says, "Look at those within your own midst right there. I'm in a prison in Rome, and you are in Philippi, and there are people in Philippi who are worth following, worth listening to, so look at some of them. Observe how they're living their life. Ask them how they're living their life. Look at the older people within the church who have raised this race a little bit longer and learn from them. Ask one of them to be your mentor."

It's fascinating that he says, "Keep your eyes on those who walk according to this way." You see, he didn't design us to run alone. You see this in all different spheres of life. I just read a story this week about a herd of elephants over in Africa that had gotten so big that the game warden chose, for whatever reason, I don't know why they did this, to actually take the life of the oldest bulls, cut the herd in half, and then with half of the herd, they relocated them to a totally different place. It was interesting what they found, was that the herd that they took into a new environment without the oldest bulls, you know what happened to them? They started to get all aggressive. They started saying, "You know what? Hey, there's rhinos here, but I don't like rhinos here," so they killed the rhinos. All of a sudden, these wardens, they drove up in their Jeep, and the elephant starts chasing because they're following the young bulls.

They said, "What should we do now? We've already killed off all the old bulls." They said, "Well, maybe family lines won't matter. Let's go get some old grizzly bulls from another herd and bring them in." You know what happened? They brought them in, and all of a sudden everybody got in line. This isn't true just in the animal kingdom. It's also true in God's kingdom.

You know, Paul most likely is somewhere in his upper 50s or 60s at this point in time. You know, there's a lot of people in this room who are continuing to run their race so well in their 60s and 70s and 80s and 90s. In fact, if you're 60 years old and over, would you just raise your hand? Just raise your hand. Look at all these hands. Raise them up high. You got to be proud of it. Come on now. Yeah, be proud of that, exactly.

Now, all of you who are clapping, I want to encourage you to do something. With a piece of paper, find one of them and go up to them and say, "What's one or two things you've learned in life?" and write it down. You keep doing this over time, and this is what will happen. Whether you learn it from them or you wait until you're 60, you'll find that the things you learned in life are the same things that they would have told you. You see, there's a lot of people here within this church who are older, and they defer to the younger because they know that the next generation is the future of the church. They're humble enough in order to serve the next generation.

For those of us who are the next generation and the generations who are younger than me, let me remind you of something. Just because they defer, it doesn't mean that they're not the wisest of the bunch. They're worth listening to and following you. For those of you who are older, I am so grateful for you. Even in the failures of your life and the way that who you are, you're still leaning on grace, we just commend you this morning. Let me encourage you to attempt to connect with others. Every single one of us, we need people beside us and behind us and in front of us. It's interesting. You know, as I finish my 30th year as a believer, I'm never more convinced now this truth and that is this. If you want to run fast, you run alone, but if you want to run a long way, you've got to run with friends.

I know it can be hard to find community in particular in a large place where it seems like everyone else has already found it, but I promise if you find people, if you're in isolation right now, and if you find somebody in your life or several people, friends, who can hold you accountable, who can pray for you, who know your name, you know their name, I promise you it's worth the discomfort to pursue that. Then, the last thing I want you to see before we had the opportunity to see two baptisms this morning is this, is that joy motivates us to run with devotion. You see, these people lived in Philippi, but they were found in Jesus Christ. That's what we told in Philippians chapter one. They were in Christ and in Philippi. Well, let me tell you something. Our location is not Philippi. We live in Raleigh.

For those of us who are in Jesus Christ, our citizenship is in heaven, [politimua 00:33:02]. It's where we get the word politic, our association. In other words, when we think about politics, what we're thinking about is this. It's a social system that we say, "You know what? If the world was like this, it would be a better place." While we're on this earth, we have different ideas, which is why we have different political affiliations, but what he's saying here, the word citizenship actually means political affiliation. It's literally where is your loyalty. Whose value system, whose social system do you think is best for you and everyone in the world? What he says here is we're not Democrats and Republicans. Those of us who are in Christ, our primary loyalty is our citizenship in heaven, and heaven has a constitution, and it is right here. It is not going to change.

This determines how we live. This determines who we love. This determines who we vote for. This determines everything in our life, including what we pray about. You remember what Jesus, how he told us to pray. It says, "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." You know what that means? It means that when we think about heaven and we think about earth, we prefer... Let me say it this way. We would prefer righteousness to visit the earth before we hope that golf would be in heaven. Our loyalty, our devotion is there. You know what's interesting about citizenship? If you apply for one, you get a passport, and there's an interesting thing in a passport. We don't usually read it because it looks boring. In verse five there's some really fine print that makes this stuff legal, and this is what one of the sentences, "It is unlawful for any person other than the original lawful recipient to use this passport."

That means we can't share. You have to have one, and I have to have one if we're going to travel somewhere. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, he gives us a passport. It has our name and has our picture, but you can't transfer it from one person to another. Everybody has to receive one from the proper authorities, and the proper authority of heaven is Jesus himself, which why in John chapter one verse 12 he says, "To all who did receive him and who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, citizens of heaven." I encourage you to trust Christ and eagerly await his coming. If you have never received Christ, we urge you to do that this morning by admitting your need, by placing your faith in Jesus, and confessing him as Lord of your life. I urge you to run.

I'm going to pray for us, and then when I'm done praying, you can look over at the baptism. There's two people who want to tell you that they're citizens of heaven because they believed in Christ. Father in heaven, we love you, and we thank you for your amazing grace in our life. We thank you for what you have done. I pray for those who are contemplating their own life and how they're living and what they're concentrating on, and if they're advancing where their loyalty lies, I pray, Father, that you, by your mercy and through your kindness, that you would remind them that even though this is a tempting place, where people who are enemies of the cross constantly distract, that you are sovereign overall. We delight to sing to you. We delight to serve. We delight to observe and celebrate baptism now, and we pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.



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