

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

February 23, 2020

SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Standing Firm

PART

4

TITLE

Contending For Our Heart

SCRIPTURE

Jude 1:17-25



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So we're all looking for a cause. We wake up every single day and we look for something to put our hands to and our heart to that's bigger and brighter than the sum of our days. And I want you to know that there is no cause that is worthier, that you're going to find on this earth, than to introduce people to Jesus Christ, and to grow them up to love and worship him.

I know that many in this room perhaps do not know who Christ is. Maybe you are here to learn just that. But what we find within the scriptures is that Jesus Christ is the eternal, everlasting son of God who created the heavens and the earth, and you and me. That he sustains all things by the power of his spoken word. We're told that Jesus Christ is the King of Heaven, who came to this earth, and when he came to this earth, he loved people, and he healed people, and he comforted people, and he taught people. In fact, he taught people every significant human question that we have ever asked. He taught about origin. He talked about purpose. He talked about destiny. He taught us about love and relationships, and marriage and family, and children and the elderly. He taught us about work. He taught us about responsibilities. He taught us about evil and suffering and the presence of both within the world.

And then Jesus Christ made a promise, a promise that he was going to walk to Jerusalem, and that there he would be condemned as a criminal, that he would be bound, and that he would be crucified on a cross in order to pay for my sin and yours. But he wouldn't stay dead. He'd be buried into a grave, and yet he would rise from the dead. And then Jesus, in all of his authority, did just as he promised. And now Jesus promises to forgive everyone who would place their faith and their trust in him and in him alone.

You see, there is no more worthy person, for Jesus is the King of all creation, and he will reign forever and ever. And the Bible tells us that the way that we live our life towards him and for that cause is to introduce people to Jesus Christ, and to grow them up to love and worship him. And the pathway to do this, we're told, is to connect to him, and then to grow up in him, and then to use the gifts that he has given to us in order to serve him and others, and then to go and to take the gospel, the good news that we can be forgiven of our sin, not only to our neighbors and to our coworkers and our family members, but also to nations and to people who have never once heard the name of Jesus Christ.

And this is the mission that we're about. This is the path that we're taking. And if you are new here at Providence or maybe you've been here many times and are wondering how you can engage, we want to ask you to walk with us. So let me pray.

Father in heaven, we look to you in faith and pray now that as we look once again at the Book of Jude and we read his final verses, we pray that you would give us the grace that is necessary to be interested, and curious, and focused, and then believing, and then have enough courage to apply what we find within your word to our life. Would you speak? Through weakness, I pray, Father, for those in the room who do not have a relationship with Christ, that this would be the day and even the hour that they place their faith and trust in Jesus. . I pray for those of us who call ourself Christians, who love you and who love Providence. I pray, father,

that you would protect us from the schemes of evil, that you would protect the support structure of our faith. We ask God that you would use your word to build us up in the most holy faith, and we pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.

So if you have a Bible, I would love for you to look with me at Jude. Jude has only one chapter, so let me say turn to Jude chapter one, and we're going to start in verse 17 in just a moment. We've been in this little book, it's a short book, obviously one chapter, for the last three weeks, and we're going to finish here this morning, but I want to give you just a brief synopsis of where we've been.

Jude was the brother of Jesus Christ. He was a skeptic of Jesus growing up. In fact, as Jesus began his public ministry, he began telling people that he was God, and he, along with his family, were so concerned and embarrassed about his claims to be God that they actually planned an intervention to drag him home, to stop shaming their family. But then Jesus continued to do his work in ministry. He went to the cross, and then he rose from the dead. And when Jesus rose from the dead, the Bible says that he appeared to over 500 living people. Among where his family. And when Jude saw the resurrected Christ, he placed his faith in Jesus Christ, and he began to live for the cause of making disciples in his name, to make sure that people around the world would have the ability and the opportunity to respond to the gospel of Jesus.

He was so committed to his cause that it wasn't long before he gave his life as a martyr for Jesus Christ, but before that day he wrote a letter, and in his letter he tells us what he wanted to write. In fact, what we have within the scriptures is actually a letter. It's inspired by God, but it's not even what Jude wanted to write. He tells us that, "I was eager to write about our common salvation," in verse three. That's what he wanted to write about. He said, "but I found it necessary to write appealing to you, to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." And then he tells us why. Why there was a shift. He says, "Because," or "For, certain people have crept in unnoticed."

You see, just like a plague of termites, false believers and false teachers had permeated the church. They began saying just enough truth to get into the doors to be trusted. And yet there they were, chewing on the support structures of people's faith, and the integrity of the church itself, and they were doing so unnoticed. And so God inclined the heart of Jude to courageously write a letter. Even though it was brief, it was severe. And in this letter, what he did is from verse five all the way to verse 16, he exposes who these false teachers and believers are. He gives us a test for us to be able to look at people and listen to people and read the words of people and wonder, and if we're wondering, he gives us basically a grid by which we can identify people who were false teachers and false believers. And then he comes to the end of his letter.

Now, up until this point, he's not actually asked anybody to do anything. There's been no instructions to the church. There's been no imperatives or no commands. And all of a sudden what we find here is a string of five imperative commands that he's going to pull together in order to do something very specific, and that is that he's going to tell the church how we can guard our heart. So he's going to take pieces of steel, hold them

up, and he's a going to shape them around our hearts so that you and so that I can be protected on an ongoing basis.

And so this is what he says. He says, "But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, 'In the last time, there will be scoffers following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in the most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life, and have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.' Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our savior, through Jesus Christ, our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time, and now and forever. Amen."

Now what he does here is he tells us how to behave, and so what must we do? The first thing I want you to see that God does is he commands. All these are imperatives, and so each of the verb I'm going to use in the point is a command. God commands us to remember the warnings of Jesus Christ. It's an imperative. An imperative is not a suggestion. He's not saying, "When you have time and you feel like it. When your heart is inclined to. When you're in the mood." He's saying, "This must be done in your life."

You see, there's many times when things that are given to us of old, almost like a stop sign that's been placed out on an old country road, and if we're not careful to protect it, will allow moss to grow over it to where we no longer see it. And so it is with the warnings of Jesus Christ that are packed within the pages of scripture. And Jude says, "I don't want you to forget these things. You must remember these things." You see, Christ warned the apostles of what was going to take place. Jesus said, "Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray." And then these apostles, including Peter, they warned the church with words like these. "There will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies."

And so the warnings that we find, and we find them in Paul's writings and Peter's writings, we find them in James' writings, we find them in John's writings, we find these writings where they're warning us of people out there that are risky, and the warnings cover really two very specific areas. One is outright denials, and the other is distortions. The distortions are actually denials. They just don't feel like it because they use vocabulary that's common and acceptable within the church.

Sometimes when it's a flat denial, it's pretty obvious. There's a man named James Tabor. He teaches at UNC Charlotte, and he believes and teaches that Christianity was concocted by the apostle Paul when Jesus died in an untimely death. He believed that Jesus was not the son of God. In fact, he believed that Jesus' dad was one of three of Mary's lovers who was a Roman soldier, that Jesus was not God, he was not born of a virgin, and he didn't rise from the dead, and that his disciples stole the body from the grave, buried him in a family plot, and didn't tell anyone.

Okay. Well, that's pretty easy to wonder if this guy is for us or against us. That's an outright denial. But then there's things that can actually be just as dangerous in the outworkings of our life, because there's simple distortions. And so there's a pastor in Seattle. His name is Casey Treat. Now, there's many of them, but I want to give you one example, and he stands at his conference, at his church, and he says this: "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." So all of a sudden we're like, "Oh, this guy believes in the Trinity. He believes that Jesus is God. He's one of us." And then he says, "The Father one time said to the Son and the Spirit, 'Let's make man, and let's make man an exact duplicate of us.' And that is what he has done. Friends, when God looks in the mirror, he sees me, and when I look in the mirror, I see God. So I am going to act like God."

So friends, what I'm saying is this, and what he's saying is when you read people's words, and when you listen and watch sermons, remember. Remember the words and predictions of Jesus and his disciples and do not let moss grow over these warnings, for these false teachers, we're told, are devoid of the Spirit. Devoid means "without." Romans chapter eight verse nine says that anyone without the Spirit of God is not in Christ. In other words, he's saying, "These people are lost. They don't have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. And as a result of that, their lostness reveals itself;" in, he says, in three different ways.

First, their words. He says, "They're scoffers. They're arrogant with their mouth, standing over the word of God instead of submitting to the word of God." Second, their lostness evidences itself in their deeds or their lives. He says they are ungodly. That means they are unlike God. God says, "I'm humble and they're proud." God says, "I'm holy, and they are given over to impurity and sensuality and debauchery." And the third way that lostness reveals itself is in the effect of their ministry. It says, "They cause divisions." The word "divisions" means "two visions." God comes with his word and he says, "I have a vision for your life." False teachers come and they say, "And I have a vision for your life that I've received from God." And some people within the church, they believe God, and some people within the church, they believe the false teachers. And what does that do? It causes two visions and a split down the middle. This is the effect of lost people. Well, it's not the only. There have been churches that have been split by people that aren't false teachers, and yet what he's saying here is we need to be so careful.

And so let me encourage each one of us to heed the warnings. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, the warnings tell us, the warnings of Jesus and the warnings of all of the apostles in the New Testament, they tell us that some of the voices that we hear today are speaking what is false. And ideas are so powerful. Ideas are like seeds. They're like seeds that are planted into our heart, and if we allow seeds to be planted in our heart, whatever they are, those seeds always have a corresponding harvest. If you plant true seeds, gospel seeds, biblical seeds within your heart, there will be a corresponding harvest of godliness, and if you plant what is false, there will be a corresponding harvest of falsehood. Guard the soil of your mind.

What I'm trying to say is this. When you read a book, and it's claiming to be a truth claim book, also open a Bible and have it right next to it. When you listen to a sermon, when you watch a sermon online, have a Bible that is open, and test and see, guard the soil of your mind. Let's be like the Bereans in Acts 17 verse 11. It says that these people received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so. You should have a Bible open right now and you should be able to trace the outline and the thoughts that I'm trying to communicate, and you should be able to see them within the pages and in the words on those pages of the Bible. And this is true of every teacher in your life.

And so he commands us to remember the warnings, but then he goes a step further and he commands us to keep ourselves in his love. You see it in verse 20. He says, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in the most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God." Keep yourself in the love of God. And this is an imperative. It's not a suggestion. This is a command. And the only way that I've ever been able to wrap my mind around this so that it's not confusing, because some of you, you may hear that and you think, "Wait a minute, does that mean that I could actually do something that would cause God to shut off his love towards me?" The answer is no.

Then what does it mean to keep oneself in the love of God? Well, many of us, you've heard this illustration before, many of us, you showered today. And if you didn't shower today, probably showered last night, and if not last night, hopefully yesterday, and if not yesterday, hopefully last week. And so we're all familiar with a shower, and most of us, what we did was we turned the water on didn't immediately stand under it. Now, the water is flowing, it's pouring, it's perpetually running out when it's on, and so it is with the love of God. And yet, unless you are standing underneath the water, you are not benefiting from any of its cleansing properties. You are not benefiting from its comfort. You're not benefiting from the water that is falling.

And so what he's really saying, when he says, "Keep yourself in the love of God," is this. It's, "Position yourself where the love of God is falling and then build your life there." Jesus said the same thing in John chapter 15 verse nine. He says, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love." The word "abide" has ties to the word "abode," which is a house. Literally, "Build your life where the love of God is falling to be able to enjoy its benefits."

There's so many people, just like the shower, they turn the water on, and then they wait while it gets warm, which is advisable, and they just wait, but they're not enjoying any of it. It's not doing anything other than running straight into the drain. And there's so many people right now in the world, even as believers in Jesus Christ, and the love of the Father is pouring out constantly, and because of unbelief, rebellion or a lack of repentance, we are standing outside of the benefit of that love, and that causes us as a people to be at risk. And Jude is trying to protect us as a people, because when we are experiencing the love of God, counterfeits lose their power. Functional saviors lose their power when you're overwhelmed by the love of the real savior.

Now, some people look at us and go, “Now, wait a minute, I thought we’ve been studying this book, and in verse one it says that we are loved by the Father and kept. And now it says I’m supposed to keep myself in a love. So which one is it? Are we kept by God who loves us, or do we keep ourselves in the love of God?” Yes, that’s the answer. The answer is yes, and this is how. Every time you see a command like this, an imperative, it’s something that we can naturally see. It’s something that when you look at somebody, like if I said, “Pray in the Spirit,” and if you began praying, we’d go, “Hey, that person’s praying,” and we would all recognize it. We could see it with our eyes.

But every time you read an imperative within the Bible, you’re also going to find something else. You’re going to find something else around it, and it’s called an indicative. An indicative indicates what God is doing that enables and provokes what he tells us to do. And so one is made possible because of the other, sort of like a building. We look at the building, and it’s visible, like loving is visible and praying is visible, and reading and sharing, and being hospitable, they’re visible things.

A building is visible. So think of a building like the imperative, and yet the building is built on top of a foundation, and if the foundation is there, then the building cannot go up. And so it is with us keeping ourselves in the love of God. You would not even be able, you would not even have a conscious idea to keep yourself in the love of God if God were not previously loving you and me. And so God in his grace, he tells us to keep ourselves in this water, and there’s a reason. Not only does it benefit us, but there is tremendous consequences to our relationship with him if we don’t.

Let me just show you one, in second Peter chapter one, verses three ... This is actually verses three, five and nine. I just kind of put them all together. In verse three it says, “His divine power has granted to us all things.” So God has, by his grace, he’s given us power to live. It even goes on and says, “for all life and godliness.” And then it gets down to verse five and it says this. “For this reason, because God has done this, because there is a foundation that we can build upon it,” he says, “for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and your virtue with knowledge, and your knowledge with self-control.” All of this supplementing is impossible if God had not began to work. But then what happens if we don’t supplement? He says, “for whoever lacks these qualities is so near-sighted that he’s blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.”

Now think about what he says. He says, “This person had former sins. They were cleansed.” This is past tense. He’s saying that this is a forgiven person. This is somebody who’s believing in Jesus Christ, who is a Christian in Jesus Christ, and yet for a prolonged period of time, they gave themselves to standing outside of the water, the flowing water of God’s love. And as a result of that, this is what happens, right? People, they have an experience early in life, they get saved, genuinely converted. They believe in Jesus Christ, they go to college, and all of a sudden it’s like, “Boom.” Eight, 10 years pass, and then all of a sudden they’ve been outside of the water so long they can’t even remember what it felt like to be in the water. And so they began asking the question, “Am I saved? Was I ever saved?”

He says that they are nearsighted, which means they could only see up close, but they can't see far away, and so they can't even remember what it feels like when their heart was filled with peace and joy, when God forgave them of all of their sin. You see, if we don't keep ourselves in his love, there will be effects in our relationship even if his love continues to pour.

And so how then do we keep ourselves in his love? Well, I've talked to you many times about this word called a participle. A participle looks like a verb, and it has an I-N-G on the end of it typically. A participle is simply how we get the verb done. And so here's the verb. "Keep yourself in the love of God." How? He tells us three things: Building yourself up in the most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus.

So let's make these the applications to the second point. Let's as a congregation build ourselves up in the word of God. We build ourselves up by mastering the content of the gospel, the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, and then rehearsing it to ourselves and to each other often. That's why when we come into this room, we sing the gospel, we sing about the truth, we talk about the truth, we read the truth. This is so important that we do so. Acts 20:32 says that, "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up." You see friends, listen, if there's no Bible in your life, then there is malnourishment in your life, and if there's malnourishment in your life, then there's no roots in your life. And if there are no roots in your life, you'll be easily toppled. You'll be easily deceived by people, because typically, false teachers are ridiculously full of charisma. They are charming and promising. They're as charming as they are deceitful.

So my question is this: Do you have a plan to read the Bible? It doesn't have to be a great plan, but it's good to have one. When you wake up in the morning tomorrow, do you have a plan that says, "This is where I'm at next"? If you do, go with it. Keep going. You're doing great. If not, we created a little plan here at Providence. It's not the plan, it's just a plan. It didn't drop ... We didn't find it under a rock. God didn't give it to us. It's the Bible just divided up into into little sections each day. That's all it is. The opportunity for you to have a plan, so that you can expose yourself frequently to the word of God.

Second, let's pray in the Spirit. We pray in the Spirit by coming to God in humility, asking for the Spirit's help in our life, giving our heart, our soul and our mind to our words and persisting until we pray. I tell you this again, I said this a few weeks ago. This is so important. There are times in your life when you need to pray until you pray. And what I mean by that is sometimes you do your work in prayer, and yet you do not leave at time of prayer with any peace within your heart. That's still a good thing. You still prayed, he still heard you. But there are times in our life when things get so heavy ... I know this has happened in my life many times. There's been times literally I've walked out the door and I said, "Tabitha, I'm going for a walk and it might be a while." And I go and I say, "God, I am not entering this house again until I feel a measure of your peace."

And I walk and I pray, and sometimes it feels for a long time, like I'm hitting the wall, and yet I'm pressing in, and I'm saying, "God, I need your help right now. I'm pouring all of my heart, my mind, my soul into the

words of adoration, and to thanksgiving and confession, petition.” I’m praying, but then it’s amazing what happens. You persist in seeking him, and he’s made a promise to every one of us, and it’s this. “You draw near to me, I promise I’ll draw near to you.” He’s never let me down. Pray until you pray. Are you praying? Third is wait. Let’s wait expectantly for Christ’s coming. You see, so interesting that what we wait for in life, it affects our waiting, doesn’t it? If there’s something that you really want, and you know it’s coming, and you’re waiting for it, it’s different than waiting for something that isn’t so important to you, which is why waiting four hours at the DMV for a driver’s license feels different than waiting nine months to hold a baby. It feels different because the prize at the end is more desirable.

Or friends, listen to me. One day, Jesus is going to return with mercy in his hand. In verse two it says, “May mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you.” Let me tell you something. What Jude is praying, one day we are going to see mercy multiplied, and how we’re going to see mercy multiplied is we’re going to see mercy personified, coming from the eastern sky, and he, in human flesh, he is coming back to this earth in order to claim his own and redeem us completely and fully. Mercy is fully coming, and this thought, what it does is it turns our waiting from passive waiting to active waiting.

Passive waiting says that, “I can sin while I wait, because he’s probably not going to come during this hour.” Active waiting says, “He may come. I hope he comes. I’m anticipating that he’s going to come,” and one of the great tragedies that we know simply from common sense is this: Is there will be believers who are standing outside of the love of God. They are Christians, they are believers, and yet they are not standing underneath the flow of his love, and when he comes, they will be right before a computer screen looking at pornography. There will be people who are committing the act of adultery at the same moment that Jesus Christ comes out of the sky, because they’re passively waiting.

And what Jude is saying is this: Be an active waiter. Actively waiting means that not only are we quickly repenting of sin, but it means that we are actively going and telling other people who have yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ so they too, they too can be forgiven, and they too can begin to wait for the mercy that is coming. And it is this active waiting that keeps us underneath the stream of the love of God.

And so let me encourage you to remember the warnings of Christ, and to keep yourself, all of ourselves in the love of God, and then we get to the last one. It’s beautiful. God commands us to contend for one another. He tells us to contend for the faith, and then to contend for our heart, and now he gets to the end, and he stacks up three different imperatives, and he says, “Now I need you to contend for people.”

In 2010, Scott Devor wrote in *Tabletalk Magazine* of his experience in college, when he went to college thinking that he was going to take the whole campus for Christ, and all of a sudden he was crushed under the weight, that onslaught of Christian skepticism and unbelief, and he began, his whole story is he begins to just doubt his faith, and yet he was so fearful of what other Christians might think that he told nobody.

Spurgeon said, "Man is not perfect, so he will be imperfect in faith." That means that you and I, if we're Christians and we're thinking, is that you're going to have a time while you're alive on this earth, and you're going to doubt. I remember there was a time that I stood in my kitchen, it was after the funeral of a little girl that I had prayed for for months and months that God would heal, and he didn't heal, and I looked at Tabitha and I said, "I do not believe that I'm ever going to be able to teach the church how to pray." I said, "I believe he's sovereign," but I was wavering. I was wavering. I had doubt. Could he hear? Did he hear?

And so what Jude does is he urges us to contend for one another, because life is hard. Life is supposed to be lived with one another, caring for one another. And so the first one, he says, "Have mercy on those who doubt." How do we do that? Well, first thing is we remember that we've received mercy, which keeps us from being self-righteous and keeps us from scolding people in their doubt.

Second I think we can do in helping people who doubt is we help them to see the difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is wavering. Unbelief is committed, resolute rejection. There's a difference there, and to help people see that. Now, they're both very, very serious. Romans 23 says that, "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." What that means is doubt a sin. It's not an unforgivable sin, but it is sin, so we shouldn't be boasting about our doubt or be proud of our doubt, but what it means is this, is that doubt is a sin that calls for empathetic believers who have gone through the same thing, and may be going through the same thing, to surround us and to help us.

I think we also help one another and show mercy to those who doubt by helping people to discern the nature of their doubt, because we don't all doubt in the same direction. Some people doubt when they look at the Bible and it says, "Wait, in this passage it says this, and over here ... I don't understand how those fit together." And so for those people, what we need to do is to try to help them see the difference in what's taking place and why it says what it says.

For some people it's moral. They say, "You know what? I feel like I was born with this inclination, and God's word says that it's wrong, and so I have a doubt of his goodness in my own behavior." And to those people, what I would encourage you to do is to take them to the cross, to say, "This is how good he is. This is the intentionality, that sin, it did distort our heart. It created impulses within us that are not healthy."

Then there's some people, when they look in the evil and the suffering in the world and they say, "How could a good God do this, let this happen?" And for them what I would encourage you to do is this, is to try to show them that when you cannot see the hand of God, you remind them of the heart of God. The heart of God that even took the evil within the world that we see with our own eyes, and he took that very evil, and he planned to use it in order to crush his own son so that we could be forgiven, so that we could be forgiven of all of our sin.

He then goes on and he says, “And save others by snatching them out of the fire.” Nowhere within the scriptures that I’m aware of does it say of Christians that they’re near the fire or in the fire, or need to be snatched from the fire. We’ve already been snatched from the fire, and so I believe he’s talking here about unbelievers, and probably a little bit more passive unbelievers. They don’t see their need. They don’t see their inability to save, and they do not see the fire of hell that awaits them. I believe that, because the last one is, “And to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment that’s stained by the flesh.” These are active unbelievers who need love and truth and warning, but their aggression and defilement demands that we do so with fear.

Now, it’s not hard to imagine that Jude was anticipating that his readers were in need of assurance, and so at the end he comes and he says now to him, “Who is able to keep you from stumbling,” he’s going to keep you. He says, don’t forget this, “and to present you blameless before his presence of his glory with great joy.” He’s talking there about being justified. That when we trust Christ, he takes away our sin and he gives us his righteousness. Did you know that one day ... He says, “He presents us blameless before his presence with great joy.” Did you know that one day, for those of you who are in Christ, he is going to proclaim all over heaven, “This man or this woman is totally innocent”? Great joy. He has the power to do that.

And so let me encourage you with two things. First, for those of you who are in the room who have yet to trust Christ, I urge you today to trust Christ and be saved. You do that by admitting that you cannot save yourself. You do that by placing your faith and trust in him, confessing him as Lord of all, and I know that some of you may not be quite ready to do that, but next week we’re going to start a seven-week series. I believe it’s going to help you. On the cross of Jesus, he spoke seven different sentences, seven different words, and each one of those words were actually uniquely designed to meet a human hunger and thirst, a need in our life. Over the next seven weeks leading up to Easter, we’re going to be able to see that Christ, even while he was in the midst of the worst suffering, he was thinking about our need and making provision for it by promises that he made even when he was suffering, and so I welcome you to it.

In fact, when you came in, you received a card, and I would encourage you not only to use that to remind yourself to be praying, but maybe even to invite somebody. You look at those words, you say, “Is there anybody in my life that I know that’s in need of one of these things?” I encourage you to invite them.

Then the last thing is this, is let’s care for people. Let’s care for people enough to engage. You know, there’s people in your family or maybe in your friend networks or in your life group or in this church that are in need of one another. I believe that every single person here, even in this room, is facing something that makes life really heavy. You may feeling right now the loss, you may be going through some enormous stress. You may have an enormous decision in front of you, and one way that we do this, that God tells us, he says, “Carry each other’s burdens.”

And so this is what I'll ask you to do. Would you stand with me? Would you go and stand up? We're going to be singing two songs, going to pray and then we're going to sing two songs, and during the first song, we're going to have leaders that are just going to be standing up here in front, and they're just ready to pray with you. You can just come. You don't have to say anything. It may be good to say your name, so they know who they're praying for, but if you would just be in need of somebody to say, "You know what? Right now, just in faith, it's not an affirmation that I'm a failure, it's an affirmation that I have enough faith that God's word tells me that I should come and be a part of the family, and let other brothers and sisters wrap their arms around me and pray," and I urge you and welcome you. If you could be comforted, we welcome you to come.

So let me pray. Father in heaven, we look to you in faith. As we sing and as we pray, God, we pray that you would do a work of ministry through your people to the body, and we look to you now, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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