

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Meaning(Less)

PART

5

TITLE

Looking Above The Thorns

SCRIPTURE

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7



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What! Can I get a tow?

Sure, what's your location?

Where did my money go? Nevermind.

So you don't need a tow?

Well, it's great to see you Providence family once again, through a screen, but I hope you've had a great week and I hope that you've had a really good weekend. Those of you who are new with us, guests, welcome. We're thrilled that you have joined us and I pray this time will be encouraging to you as it is to our church family. I want to say happy Father's Day. What a significant day every year that we have to remember the significance of fathers, these men in our life who teach and who protect and who provide, who forgive, who bring good and sacrifice to us. I know that these days, Mother's Day and Father's Day, they sort of have with them various emotions. And sometimes those emotions, all depending on the person and the time of our life, those emotions tend to collide.

For many of us, there's really sweet memories of our father. And for some, there's really sour memories of our father. I know that there are many who want to be a father and who are not. I know that there are many who have lost a father. I know that there are many of us who are so grateful for the father that we had or that we have. And I just want you to know, dads, you make life better. It's just how it is. You're loved. We are thankful. We are thankful for every investment that you make, for every prayer that you have prayed. We thank you for every toy that you have fixed and for every hour that you have worked. For every lesson that you have taught, for the words of encouragement, for the ways that you have provided and protected your family, we say thank you, and I want to pray for you now. So if you would, let's bow, let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we love you. We thank you for being the ultimate Father. God, the one who gives us a model to follow of how to care for others and how to teach others and how to protect and provide for others. You are the perfect Father. We thank you for your love for us. And we thank you, Father, that in your grace, that you placed us in this world with a father. And we confess to you, in particular those who are fathers, God on behalf of them, I confess Father that we are imperfect in every way when it comes to our parenting. But we thank you for the grace that you give to us. We thank you for the grace that we can give to each other. And I pray God that you would strengthen the resolve and the courage of men around the world and even in our church family to invest today in being a faithful father.

Even for those who feel this day is simply a reminder of their imperfections and some of their deepest regrets, I pray that today that you would remind them of the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. And that because of that hope, then we can make an investment. We can plant a seed today, even in our adult children, even if it's simply to pray for them, to call them, to write them, to care. And so I pray Father that you would bless fathers

in our church family and around the world. You know, God, the evil that exists in the world and you know that you have endowed fathers with the seed of courage to be able to stand up for what is right. And so I pray father that you would give resolve and courage to do just that.

We thank you for your word and we thank you for Solomon. Thank you that even in his confusion and when he was so perplexed in life, we thank you Father that he lived the life that we could learn from. And as we open up a book that he wrote, Ecclesiastes, God I pray that you would speak to us through weakness and even in the various distractions in our homes, in our living rooms with our children, with our technologies, I pray Father that you would draw our attention. Help us to be incredibly curious about what you have said. God, I pray that you would take our curiosity and that you would create convictions within our heart of how to live. And so we need your help. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Well, if you have with your Bible there in your home, I want to ask you to turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter five. I know that most of you know this, but there are still many people in the world who believe that pastors wear capes. And I'm here to just tell you that they don't, that every weakness and every area of sin and brokenness and fallenness that is common to all human beings, that every pastor that you know in your life also deals and struggles with those same things. And so that said, I want to share with you something that has happened several times in my life and that is that I have found myself at times in what I would call a spiritual desert.

Now, sometimes we use sort of that idea and sometimes I've even used maybe even this picture to describe what it feels like when you're depressed. And that's not what I mean this morning. What I mean here this morning is this, is that those moments in life when you look out or when you look within your own heart or when you look at a mirror and you see brokenness all around and it causes such a frustration, in fact sometimes that disappointment that you're seeing in your life or in the world is so intense that it seems like it consumes the theology in my own mind, meaning the things that I know are true about God that we find within his word, but sometimes those disappointments are so intense that they also seem to consume the hope in my heart, my resolve and my belief of what God says he can do and what he has done, that will he do it today.

And sometimes what this does is it leaves me in a place that it leaves many of us, I believe, and that is at a place of frustration and sometimes even anger towards God. That knowing God is good and knowing he's holy and righteous and sovereign and knowing what he desires, that integrity would prevail and that justice would be done and peace would be found. Sometimes in my own weakness when I see those things not happening before me, knowing that he has the power to carry them out, sometimes I become frustrated, deeply frustrated, and my guess is I'm not alone. And so what I want to ask is this, is what do we do in those moments?

What do you do in those moments in particular when someone comes to you and they're in that same place and you give them the information, you have advice for them that actually comes from the word of God that actually helps them. And yet in that moment, your advice to someone else may not have enormous power in your own life. You may be actually seeking to carry out the very advice you would give to somebody else of how to get out of the desert. And yet it seems to have no power in your own life. What do you do?

Well, this is where Ecclesiastes is at. This is where Solomon is at. When we get to chapter five, if you remember, this was written by Solomon. He's the King of Israel, and this is a man who is born into privilege and God then blessed him immensely. And yet in spite of the blessings of his life, the Bible tells us that Solomon walked away from God. His heart was turned away from God and he went in search of meaning in the world, meaning that could only be found in a relationship with God. And what he tells us in his story and what he tells us in Ecclesiastes is that instead of meaning, he only found pain. He found what is a canopy of thorns. Of course we know this, from the book of Genesis, is that when we sinned against God, the Bible says to us, it says that God came and it says that he gave curses to the earth. And one of those curses he says is that thorns and thistles would literally cover the earth.

In other words, thorns and thistles, they're sharp things. They're broken realities. They're problems in the world that we're not going to be able to get away from. And so last week, Solomon, in that text that we looked at, he exposed four thorns, four broken realities that he saw with his eyes in the world in his day that we still see in our day. And before he expands upon his list of broken realities in verse eight of chapter five, he gives us these first seven verses and in the first seven verses of Ecclesiastes chapter five, Solomon pauses long enough to tell us how do we respond when disappointment in the world causes us to be frustrated with God.

And the first piece of advice that he has for us is to draw near to God. And I realize that that may feel counterintuitive, that when we're frustrated with somebody, when we're angry with somebody, oftentimes what we want to do is leave the room. We want to walk away from that person. We want to distance ourselves from the cause of our frustration. And yet what he tells us in verse one is that we need to draw near to God. Look what it says in verse one. He says, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God." Guard your steps, look at your feet, look at where you're walking. And this is why. The direction of our feet typically determines the direction of our lives. If we are looking down and our feet are facing this relationship, well, we're pursuing that relationship. Or if our feet are facing this spiritual discipline or this job or this work or this hobby, well, those are the things that we tend to do with the rest of our body, with the rest of our life. And so he tells us to pay attention to our feet, our steps.

And notice where he tells us that we need to be moving. He says, "When you go to the house of God." Now, we need to define what this is. In Solomon's day, the house of God was the temple that he actually organized its construction. He had 153,000 laborers to build this temple over a seven-year period of time. And the house of God was the temple. And at the temple, there was certain things that happened there. I think the

first thing is it was a place. It was a real place. It had an actual geographic location. But even more than geography, it was the place of meeting between God and man. That God in all of his grace, he said, "I'm going to be here," and you can draw near to this place, to the house of God and you can be near God himself.

At the temple there were also priests. Priests simply their job was to bring people to God. And so when people would come, there would be people at the house of God to teach the people, and to teach the people to pray and teach the people of how do you interact with God. They would pray for the people and care for the people. What's interesting is that in the house of God, it was God himself who gave instructions to the priest on how to help people connect and relate to God. And there was another thing that took place at the house of God. It's the word propitiation. Now, we don't use that word very often in our day and age, but it's meaning is so profound and it literally lays throughout all of scripture. The word means in our place.

In other words, that because of our sin, God's wrath was directed towards us. And yet there was a substitutionary sacrifice that took our place and that in our place received the wrath of God so that we wouldn't have to. In other words, this temple, this house of God, it was a place to be with God. It was a place where other people could help us be with God. And it was a place that would help us be free of our shame and guilt. So if you're new to all of this, this may be the first time you've ever heard the Bible being taught, and you hear this word sacrifice or temple or propitiation or priest, and you think, I don't really know what that means; what Solomon was speaking about is there's a reality in the world and it's this, is the God, because he loves us, has set up a meeting place that you can be with him. And he has placed other individuals who know what it's like to be fallen and yet who have received instructions on how to help you to be near God.

And God has also provided a way for all of the shame and all of the guilt that fills our heart, for it to go away. And Solomon tells us, he says, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God." And so this is what I think is so important. We should ask ourselves, we should be looking down at our feet when we're frustrated with God and we should be asking, are my feet pointing here? Are my feet still facing a place where I can be with God and people who can help me relate to God, and a place in truths to where the guilt and the shame within my heart that they can be removed? And so ask yourself today, are my feet facing God? See, the fact is that when we get confused, in particular when we're frustrated with God, the first thing that happens is we tend to remove our heart.

Matthew chapter 15 verse eight, Jesus says, "This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me." In other words, the journey when we begin frustration with God, typically we still continue to tune in. We still continue to participate. We still may even continue to sing with our mouth. And yet our heart is a million miles away. But if we continue on our frustration, sometimes what happens is people actually turn their feet. They start saying things like or thinking things like, "You know what? My devotion to God has not yielded the life of ease and pleasure and purpose and hope that I intended that it would, that I expected that it would. And so I'm walking."

And what Solomon is simply starting with is this. Don't disengage. Don't disengage from the Lord. Let me encourage us Providence with this application, okay? Let's keep facing God when we are confused. Do not believe the lie that punishing God with your absence is going to serve you. It will only punish you. Keep your feet pointing to God. And yet, notice the words he says, guard your steps. The word guard means keep watch over. In other words, there's not only a direction that we should be caring about that our feet is facing this place where our guilt can be removed, but when he says guard your steps, he's also talking about the manner in which we walk towards that place.

You see, we know this in life, that the more honor is bound up in the one that we are approaching, the more it should affect our steps. So let's just say that you live in England and you are given the opportunity to draw near to the Queen of England. You get to be there. You're going to be able to see her. Well, the fact is that this is simply a woman, she's created in the image of God but she's been endowed with honorable distinctions as the queen. And because that's true, people approach her differently than they may approach another person who is not royalty. And this is what he's saying to us, you understand. When he says guard your steps when you go to the house of God he's saying this, is that God's honor should affect the way in which we draw near to him.

You see, in our culture, in particular here in America, we have set aside so many honorable distinctions such as women and parents and the elderly. There was a time in our culture when a woman walked into the room and the men in that room would stand, recognizing that there was an honorable distinction within the woman. There was a time when children, they recognized a God-given authority in their parents, they recognized an honorable distinction that they are different than other adults, they're different than other big people. I need to honor them in a special kind of way. You look around the world today and it's marked, in particular in our culture, by disobedience to parents.

There was a day when younger people look at older people and they saw honorable distinction of somebody who's lived their life and they have so much wisdom to be able to give to others. And yet they're relegated to a place of dishonor. You look around the world today and people with authority: leaders, public servants, law enforcement officers, judges, spiritual leaders, political leaders, they're all just normal people like the rest of us and yet they carry a special weight upon them. But in our culture, we've sought to remove honorable distinctions. Solomon is simply warning us not to forget that there is honorable distinction in God himself. And so, even though we may be frustrated, and even though we may be angry, and even though we may be confused, is that his honors should affect the way in which we draw near to him.

And so, how do we draw near with care? Well, the second thing that he teaches us is that we should draw near to God ready to listen. To draw near ready to listen. Isn't it interesting that when we are frustrated with God, the most natural thing to do is feel like I need to pray so that I can vent so that I can speak. And yet the Bible says the first thing you should do when you come into the presence of God is listen, is listen. Maybe he needs to speak first. In fact, I want to show you that maybe is really not there.

Look what he says. To finish out verse one he says, “To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools for they do not know what they are doing.” Now, I want you to notice that through the words better than, he’s actually making a comparison. And so we say, what is he comparing? Well, he’s saying that to draw near to listen is better than what he calls a sacrifice of fools. So if we want to know what a sacrifice of fools is, then he gives us the hint and it’s this, is that when it’s compared to listening, the sacrifice of fools means to be speaking when we should be listening. And just so that we recognize that this is not a morally neutral thing when we speak before listening to God, he says, “I want you to remember that doing so is evil.” That the sacrifice of fools is not just the behavior, it’s the behavior that we will later need to confess as sin because God considers it evil.

You see, we probably need an example. What is a sacrifice of fools? Well, it’s speaking out of turn. It’s speaking when we should be listening. When I think of that, the first story in the Bible that I thought about was Peter and the transfiguration. You see here, now, the fact is I’ve never found a artistic rendering of that event that I ever look at and think, now that’s a great picture of that event, probably because it’s beyond human ability to be able to actually draw or to paint. But what took place is this, is that Jesus Christ, in humanity form, he took Peter, James and John up on a mountain by themselves. And suddenly when they get to the top, all of the deity and all of the glory that was bound up in Jesus underneath the earth suit of his body suddenly broke forth. And it says that his clothes and his face and his very being became white as light and as bright as the sun.

And suddenly it says that two other people came from heaven, Moses and Elijah, two of the Old Testament heroes. And so what we have here is we have three individuals in glory, and then we have three normal people just like you and just like me. And what’s remarkable about this moment is that in this moment, Peter, whichever one of these is Peter, he actually had the conscious thought, “I have something to say that would contribute to this moment.” And so he speaks and he says, “Jesus, I have a great idea. There’s three of you and there’s three of us. Why don’t you commission us to build three tents? We can get some bunk beds. It’ll be one of us for one of you. We’ll just stay up on this mountain. It will be wonderful.”

And suddenly the Bible says that there was a voice from heaven, from God the Father, who said, “Listen to my beloved son. This is whom I am well pleased.” Then he says this. He says, “Listen to him.” Because this is who he is. This is not simply a affirmation of God’s pleasure in his son, Jesus Christ. He was also a divine rebuke that says, “Peter, do you really think now is the time to talk? Should you not be listening?” You see, before we offer anything to God, we should listen to God’s word to learn what to bring.

In 1st Samuel chapter 15 verse 22, we find one of these famous passages. It’s used a few different times in the Bible to talk about how do we come to the Lord? And this is what he says. He says, “Behold, to obey is better than the sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” It’s always spoken in the context to where you have a people who understand that God tells them to bring a sacrifice, an animal, who can atone for their own sin anytime they come. And so these people, all of a sudden they just begin, their heart is far from God but they continue with the ritual. And so what’s happening is these people is they’re living an outright rebellion

throughout the rest of the week. They're living in outright sin and immorality and idolatry. And yet they say, "You know what? The God that we worship, he likes an animal. And so I'm going to bring an animal." And God comes to them and he says, "Listen, behold, to obey me is better."

And so we need to understand what these words mean. The word obey and the word listen, this is what they mean. The word obey actually means, is to listen with the intent to obey. And so sometimes we think, oh, he'd simply wants us to obey. Well, that's exactly what they were doing. At some point in time, they were told that God says, "When you come to the temple, you bring a sacrifice." And so they said, "Well, we'll obey." But there's more than this. This is what he means. This idea of obedience, it actually begins by listening with the intent to obey. It's almost as if you're sitting there and you stand up and God's speaking and you're getting ready to go. "You just tell me exactly what you want me to do, and I'm going to go do it right now. You want me to do that and then you want me to that and then that. So those three things, right? Got it. Okay. I'm going to do them right now." That's what it means to obey.

But then notice also what he says. The word listen here, it also, it's not just listen, it's to pay attention. It means to lean in. In other words, when God speaks what it means is this, is that we get as close to him as possible. We're trying to pay attention to every single word, trying to understand how every single word and instruction is tied together with who he is and what he loves. We're trying to understand why the instruction is so important to him. And then all of a sudden when it's time and we understand, we say, "I'm going to go do exactly what it is that you told me to do." God says this is exactly what he wants.

You see, this is God we're talking about. We don't come to him on our terms when we're ready in the manner that we think that he would appreciate. No, we come on his terms. And the Bible says to enter heaven, John 14 says that we must trust Jesus Christ as our savior. Before taking the Lord's supper, 1st Corinthians 11 says that we must first examine our heart and confess our sin. We're told that before we offer any gift to the Lord or to his church, Matthew chapter five tells us that we must first go and reconcile broken relationships.

You see, we don't get to come on our terms. When we're frustrated, we have to listen to what he says. And so let me encourage us as a church family, let's come to God with an open Bible. You see, this is the order. God speaks, we listen with the intent to obey. And yet when we're frustrated, sometimes we want to vent our soul. And so let me encourage you with this. When you come to the Lord frustrated, and he wants you to come, he wants you to come, I would simply encourage you to read his word before you vent your soul to avoid the sacrifice of fools. To be totally honest with you, I had to do it this week. I literally came to God this week and I said, "God, I need your help right now. Otherwise, I think I'm going to sin. I'm going to sin. The very text that I'm about to preach." And I knew what I was going to... I wanted to break this this week. I wanted to talk instead of listen.

And so I said, “God, I have to practice this myself. And so I need your help not to sin, I am angry right now. I am angry. I know that you stand guard before me and behind me. And yet you know that I feel like you have left me exposed.” I want to accuse you but I won’t. And so what I’m going to do is simply read the psalms today as my prayer to you. I didn’t even know where to go. And so I just went to Psalm 1 and I started reading Psalm 1 out loud to the Lord to say, God, let it be. Let it be in my life. Let it be. And then I went to Psalm 2 and Psalm 3. What is amazing was this, is the very power of the word of God reminding me of his authority and his sovereignty and his rule and his righteousness.

It began to resolve, at least temper the anger and the frustration in my heart, to help me to see that I don’t see all things the way that he sees them. And so let me encourage you to come to God with an open Bible. He goes on, the third thing he teaches us. He says, “Draw near to God being careful with your words.” Oh, there is a time to speak. He knows, he calls us to come to him and pray. And so he knows that there’s a time to talk, but Solomon teaches us here that we need to speak in a very specific way. Notice what he says in verse two, he says, “Be not rash with your mouth nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on the earth. Therefore, let your words be few.”

I recently read this week that we should vent our anger at God because he already knows what we’re thinking. Don’t forget who we’re talking about here. Just think, those of you who are parents, this is Father’s Day. Just think fathers, is that what you would teach your kids to do to you when they look at you with disgust? We have three sons and sometimes I look and I can just see from their facial expression in that moment that they look at me in that moment with anger and disgust, as I’m less than a human being. Sometimes that’s what it feels like. I would never tell them in that moment, “Go ahead and tell me everything that’s coursing through your mind right now. Let me have it. Vent at me.” Why? Because the words would contribute even more damage.

So let me just remind you of this, that God is not our verbal punching bag. Oh, you can say anything you want to him, but just like everything else in the world, we will answer and we will stand before God. And don’t forget, this is one who loves you like no one else. You see, there’s no emphasis on grace. There’s no emphasis on being a friend of God that happens when we trust in Jesus Christ that justifies our maligning of his character. We can look to Job. Just consider the person of Job in the Bible. If you’re unfamiliar with Job, this is a man who’s done nothing wrong. God even knows it. And yet calamity befalls him. His friends come to him and they said, “Man, there’s no way this much calamity falls upon a human being unless you have violated God in the worst of ways. And so what have you done?” And they began accusing him. And he’s like, “I didn’t do anything wrong.”

There's this sequence where they keep after him saying, "What did you do wrong? What did you do wrong?" And finally he gets so burdened that he vents and part of his vent was his frustration with the Lord. In chapter 23 verses three and four, he says, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him." And that him is God. "That I might come even to his seat," that means his throne room. "I'm going to come right before God, and what am I going to do? I'm going to lay my case before him. I'm going to say, 'You've been unfair.'"

And so in this case, God actually responds. And God responds by asking Job 77 questions, none of which he could answer, all of which proved that he was fighting out of his weight class. And so verse three, Solomon explains this and he says, "Look," he says, "For a dream comes with much business and a fool's voice with many words." In other words, just as dreams feature lots of empty movement, so a fool's mouth vents lots of empty words. He goes on in verse four through six. And he says, "When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?"

You see, when we hear God's word spoken to us or when we read God's word, it's appropriate for us to respond with commitments to obey. Every year we have a Missions Festival here at Providence where we consider the people around the world who have never heard the gospel. The Bible teaches us that we need to respond. And so we encourage you, all of us at Providence, to respond, that all of us have some way that we can contribute. What he's simply saying here is this, is that we need to be careful before we fill that card out. And not only that, but how many of us in moments of crisis in our life have tried to broker a deal with God. Suddenly like, "God, I really got myself into a bad place but if you'll get me out of this, I promise I will, whatever, read the Bible, go on a mission trip." And then suddenly the pressure is released and we step back from our vow. Such things, it says, notice, it says that make God angry.

Now, there's one question that I want to answer that a lot of people ask and that is... particularly when they read these passages and it speaks about vows we've made. What about vows that we made when we were acting in folly? Maybe even the vow itself was sinful. Does God still expect for us to repay or to fulfill a vow that we made when the vow would actually lead us to sin? We actually see one of these in Acts chapter 23. This is where a group of people have actually made a vow with God and each other never to eat another meal until they murder Paul. Does God expect for us to fulfill that vow? Well, the answer I believe is no, because of the grace of God he intends that we confess the folly of our vow, that we repent that we made that vow and that we move forward in obedience to his will.

You've probably heard somebody in your life say something like, "I swear to God I will never love another man." Maybe spoken in heartache. Times pass. I would encourage those of you who have said something like that to repent of the vow, confess it as sin. God clearly wants you to love humanity, including men, and God may bring somebody into your life who is a man who he has called you to love.

And so let's carefully express our highs and lows to God. Oh, he loves to hear our prayers. That's why he fills heaven with the aroma of them. He wants us to come when we're mixed up and frustrated. But he tells us to remember that he's in heaven and we're on earth. So let's choose our words carefully.

The last thing I want you to see is the last verse there, is that as we're supposed to draw near to God with reverend fear, notice what he says in verse seven. He says, "For when dreams increase and words grow many, there's vanity. But God is the one you must fear." You see, unlike lots of words and dreams, God is both real and consequential. But unlike every other fearful thing in the world that we are taught to run from in order to avoid risk of injury, the only way to avoid the risk of God's wrath is to run to him and not away from him.

You see, God is holy and just, but he's also a God of love. And so what God did was he sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to this earth. And he lived without sending it. He went to the cross and he was the propitiation. He stood in between and he died in our place. You see, Jesus Christ is the just and the justifier. He is just and he is holy and yet he's also the only remedy that God has provided. You run anywhere else except his provision and you run directly into the brunt of his wrath where there is injury forevermore.

You see, when Jesus died on his cross, it says that in that temple there was a curtain that separated the holiest places from just the holy places. This is where God and his glory resided. It says that curtain was torn in two giving access. Hebrews chapter 10, we're going to finish here, in verse 19. Notice what he says. "Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain," that is through his flesh, "And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith."

Now, I want you to notice that the Old Testament temple that we read about in verse one, the house of God, that house of God was actually intended to point everybody to Jesus Christ. You remember that it was a place, it had priests and there was propitiation. But notice what he says, in Jesus Christ there's a place, there's a meeting place in Jesus Christ and by Jesus Christ where we get to be with God. And not only that, but he is the great high priest. He is the one who teaches us. He's the one who prays for us. He's the one who takes us by the hand and says, "Let me lead you to God."

And not only that, but he is the propitiation by his blood and by his flesh. His body and his blood was sacrificed so that you and so that I could have a relationship with him. And so I urge you today to come to Christ in faith and trust him as your own, the savior of your life. Admit that you need him. Place your belief and your faith in him and confess him as Lord, and the Bible says that he will draw you in, forgive you of your sin, give you eternal life and adopt you into his family. So let me pray now.

Father, I pray for those who are considering trusting you. I asked Father that even in this moment, God, that you would lead them to be absolutely convinced that what your word in the Bible teaches is absolutely true that apart from Jesus Christ, we have no hope in this world or the next. And for those who are considering, God, I pray right now that you would lead them to pray to you or to pray God that they see their need, that they admit they cannot save themselves. Would you lead them to pray a prayer of belief in Jesus Christ. They confess him as Lord.

God I pray that you would work in their lives and in ours. For those who are listening who are frustrated with God, angry with God, who see all kinds of brokenness in the world and are terribly disappointed about it. I pray Father by your grace and by your mercy in our life, would you use what they have heard today, what we have heard today to help us to draw near to see you. To be careful to listen, to be careful of what we say, to remember that in you there is such honorable distinction that it should change the way that we approach. We thank you for your kindness to us. And we pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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