

# How the Gospel Helps Us Love One Another

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Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Thank you so much for that. Well, welcome. And for those of you that are guests, it's wonderful to have you with us this morning. If you are new here this morning, we are working through our way in the New Testament book of Colossians, and we're about halfway through.

And today we are in chapter three, as it was read to us this morning. Now, just to remind us briefly, the book of Colossians is written to a bunch of Christians in this town called Colossae. And the Christians there, many of them came to know Christ six or seven years earlier, and they are being told by the people around them that if they want to experience the fullness of life, if they really want to live life to the full, Jesus is good, but you need Jesus plus morality, Jesus plus religious observance. And so honor this day, do this thing, do that thing. And then you'll experience fullness of life. On the other hand, some of them are being told, if you want to experience the fullness of life, Jesus is good, but you must add to Jesus a bit of secular thinking, a bit of humanistic philosophy. And so Paul writes them to say, no, Jesus Christ is enough. Jesus and his death and his resurrection is what we need to experience the fullness of life.

And so to be a Christian, therefore, is to be someone whose life is fused into Christ, where his story becomes our story. And so his death on the cross becomes our death, our spiritual death, our old way of life dies, and his resurrection becomes our new spiritual life.

And all this because we are in Jesus. And so then last week, we looked at that passage, which is, therefore, since this is the case, because you've died with Christ and been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, where Christ is seated, set your hearts on things above.

[ 1 : 53 ] And then verse five says, put to death, therefore, all that is earthly in you. Okay. Now today, we are continuing the same flow of thought, I guess. And in some ways, today's passage is kind of part B to last week. And we're going to pick it up in verse nine. But there's three things we're going to see today. Three ways that the Christian church, God's people, is a unique community. Three things that distinguish the church from every other community in the world. Okay. We're going to see how the church, the gospel calls us to a unique gospel unity, a unique gospel language, and then a unique gospel commitment. Okay. So there we go. So let me pray for us. And then we're going to dive in. So let's pray together. Father, we come before your word because we want to hear you. We are not here to listen to the opinions of man. We're not here to have our ears tickled or to just listen to some interesting thoughts. We want to meet with the living God. And so we come before your word. God, we come before you in humility. We come before your word in humility, God. We want to take your word seriously because we take you seriously. God, won't you speak to us this morning? God, won't you restore something of the wonder and the majesty of Jesus in our hearts this morning as we look at your word, as we sing your word in our service today? God, we want to leave this place being more in awe of you, less in awe of ourselves. God, we pray this for ourselves. We pray this for every church in Hong Kong. We pray, Holy Spirit, come and anoint us this morning, anoint every Christian in Hong Kong. Come and fill us with your spirit, we pray. We pray these things in your name. Amen.

Amen. Okay. Three things, a unique gospel unity, a unique gospel language, a unique gospel commitment. First thing, a unique gospel unity. So verse 9, Paul writes this. He says, do not lie to one another, seeing you've put off the old self with its practices and you've put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Okay. So remember, he's saying because of who Christ is and because of who you are in Christ, the way that you view one another and treat one another and respond to one another is going to change. Remember in verse 8 last week, he says, do not slander, do not gossip, do not talk unwholesomely to one another. Because of who Christ is, the way we relate to one another changes. And then he says in verse 11,

for here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Scythian, barbarian, slave or free, for Christ is all and Christ is in all. I, Claire and I, as well as one or two others here, come from a nation which is known, infamously known for its historical practices of racial prejudice and discrimination. The very

South African word, local South African word, apartheid, is the word to segregate or to separate. And it's a word that's become famous around the world to describe racism and oppression by one ethnic group towards another. And until 25 years ago, in South Africa, racism, discrimination, oppression of one people group against another was not just accepted, it was enshrined in our legal framework. It was part of the national constitution. Until 25 years ago, it was illegal for someone like myself, a Caucasian man, to marry someone who is not Caucasian. In the language of South Africa, a white person to marry a non-white person. And so in South Africa, we used to have buses for white people and buses for non-white people. We had beaches for white people and beaches for non-white people. And we had swimming pools, schools, washrooms, churches for white people. And we had swimming pools, beaches, washrooms, schools, churches for white people. And we had to wear them for white people. And we had to wear them for white people. Now, thank God, since 1994, much of that has changed. The law has changed wonderfully.

All people are legally considered equal. Everyone is allowed to vote. And apartheid has ended. But as a nation, what we've discovered is that though the legal framework has changed, actually prejudice still lives deep in our hearts. You can change the law, but the heart takes a little bit longer to change. And so 25 years later, South Africa still today is grappling with the complexity and the polarizing issues of what does it mean to be a nation that is multicultural? What does it mean to be a rainbow nation, to live side by side with differences of background and culture and language and ethnicity and race? Now, if we're honest, South Africa in many ways is famous for its historic racial prejudice.

But as we look around the world, in almost every country of the world in which more than one ethnicity lives side by side, we find these similar struggles. These are not just peculiar to South Africa. Every country struggles with these things. And this was the challenge for the city of Colossae. You see, a century before Paul writes this letter, the town of Colossae, which is situated on a river, was a major trading port.

[ 7 : 34 ] And so the boats would come up the river, unload a lot of their cargo, and then the surrounding region would all flock to Colossae to buy their wares and to trade. And so Colossae became a very cosmopolitan town. There were people from all over, various towns and backgrounds and ethnicities. Everyone came to Colossae because of the trade. And so you had migrant workers that would come and work, earn some money, and send money back home. And because of this, there was differences. People were treated differently.

Well, Epaphras, that we learned about in chapter one, he hears the gospel in Ephesus, goes back to Colossae, and he starts telling everyone he knows about the wonder of Jesus, the fact that Christ has died on the cross. And people are getting changed. God breaks into their lives. He changes them by the power of the Holy Spirit. They come followers of Jesus. But the gospel does not discriminate.

And so all sorts of different cultures and ethnicities are coming to know Jesus in the town of Colossae. And this church is marked by this strange, uncommon unity. You see, when God saves a bunch of people, God wants to put something of his diversity on display. And so Jesus doesn't save people and then say, there's a church for the artists. There's a church for those that love lattes. And there's a church for the finance people. And there's the church for the liberal arts.

Now, God fuses his people together as a rich community, but they are diverse. And so this is what was happening in the town in Colossae. And so look at some of the diversity that's in this town. Look at verse 11. It says, in this church, there were religious and theological barriers that had been broken down. It talks about the circumcised and the uncircumcised. So within those that were historically Jewish and had come to Christ, there's two groups of people. Those that are circumcised and those that are not circumcised. In other words, those that are really committed, those that are not so committed. The conservative and the liberals. But here they are in church together, worshiping together, shoulder by shoulder. Here in this church, you have cultural divisions that are broken down. You have Jews and Gentiles. Now, these days it's a little different. But in this day, a Jew and Gentile wouldn't even cross each other's door to go in and have a meal with one another. There's no ways they would have dinner together at all. That was forbidden. Culturally,

you'd never intermingle with someone, a Jew and a Gentile together. You wouldn't do business together. Here in the church, there is both

[ 10 : 12 ] Jew and Gentile. Not just doing business, not just having a meal, but standing next to each other, taking communion together, calling one another brother and sister in Christ. And notice the socioeconomic divisions that are broken down. They are slaves and free. Imagine you are a slave. You go to church with your master. And there in church, you're worshiping together, standing next to each other, arms raised, singing songs of worship and devotion. Those that have a lot and those that don't have a lot.

But here in this church is this incredible uncommon unity. You know, Aristotle said, slaves are no better than tools, just like tools are inanimate slaves. That's how the culture viewed it.

But not in the church. In the church here, both the slaves and slave owners, slaves and free, could come together, united under one name and worship together. Incredible community.

And then look at the last segregation. It says, here in this church is barbarians and Scythians. Now, who are the barbarians and the Scythians? Well, in this part of the world, up north, was an area where the barbarians came from. And they were Greeks, but they spoke with quite a strange kind of tongue or accent or dialect. And so the refined, the educated Greeks listened to them and thought, these guys don't even know how to talk properly. When they talk, it just sounds like they're going blah, blah, blah. And so they called them the blah, blah, blarians. They're saying, these guys are idiots. They can't even talk properly, man. And someone needs to give them an education.

That's how they viewed them in that day and age. And what about the Scythians? Well, the Scythians were a group of barbarians, but they were even a lower class of barbarians. The Scythians were considered just wild beasts. They were thugs. In fact, Josephus, who's a historian, said the Scythians are little better than wild animals, right? Think Nunfairin, all right? So if you're a Scythian, it's like that's how people consider you. You don't have any brains. You're just a thug. In fact, they used to employ them as bouncers when people got out of hand, riot police in the old world, right? Friends, here in this church, in the town of Colossae, where there's all this division and segregation going on, here in the church, you have Jew and Gentile. Here you have circumcised and uncircumcised. Here you have slave and free. Here you have barbarian and Scythians. Here you have educated Greek and sophisticated elites, worshipping shoulder to shoulder with uneducated low-cost

[ 12 : 58 ] Scythians, so to speak. Here in this church, you have Harvard professors, educated professors, and those who never finished elementary school. Here you have millionaire businessmen and migrant workers, and they're standing together, worshipping Christ, taking communion together, kneeling on the floor, confessing their sins one to another because of the gospel message.

And Paul writes and he says, here, look what he says in verse 11, here in the church, not out there. Out there, you would never see these groups of people interacting. You go to a restaurant and you have one group over there, another group over there, no chance these people are going to interact together. Out there, you're never going to find this unity. But here, here in the church, something's different. Here in the church, another story is unfolding. It's a new community is emerging. Now, why is this? Why is it that this church in Colossae, hundreds, thousands of years ago, could experience this uncommon unity? Well, a couple of things. Firstly, because of everything Colossians has been telling us, right? Because Colossians says that if you are in Christ, your old life, your old identity, the things by which the world defines you, where you live, how much you earn, your background, what language you speak, your ethnicity, your culture, those things by which the world says you are esteemed or you are not esteemed, has died to Christ. That's no longer your identity.

Your identity is now that you are in Jesus. Christ is in you and you are in Christ. Friends, if you are here this morning and you are a foreign domestic helper, I know that sometimes society can put you in a box because of maybe your language or your culture or where you come from or what the government says about you or what your visa status is. Society might say, this is who you are. Friends, if you're a follower of Jesus, the Bible says that's not who you are. You are in Christ and Christ is in you and your identity is found in him and not in any of those things. But friends, if you are here this morning and you are a billionaire, society will tell you that where you live and how much you earn and who you interact with defines you. That's who you are. And I want to say that's not true you are. That's not true as well. If you are in Christ, who you are is defined by the fact that

you are in Christ and Christ is in you. And so this gospel produces this radical, unique, out of this world unity that people from every culture and every language and every ethnicity and every socioeconomic background can come together and find unity in the church. There's another reason Paul says, look what he says in verse 11. He says, because, so here there's no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, for, second reason, Christ is all. In other words,

Christ is all important. In other words, what Paul is saying, here in the church there are lots of things that are important. There are lots of things that you value and you like and you esteem, but Christ is over all those things. And because we are in Christ and Christ is in us, those, Christ trumps over all those important things. You see friends, because Jesus is at the center of the gospel, the moment Jesus becomes of secondary importance to us, the other things that are more important will be the things that divide us and drive a wedge in between us. Okay? So take, for example, something that's very good but should remain secondary. Your culture, your ethnicity. Is culture a good thing? Of course it is.

[16:50] All right? It's a wonderful thing. We should celebrate our culture. But if culture becomes more important than Christ, if culture is over all, well then culture will be the means by which we separate and divide and get into our groups, those that are like us and those that we are like.

What about theology and what the Bible teaches? Is theology important? Absolutely. We want to be a church that loves the Bible. But if what I believe, if my theological convictions are more important to me than Jesus, when I meet someone that has a different view to me, I'm going to use that as a tool to divide and separate and alienate them. What about social justice? Is that a good thing? Of course it is.

But if that becomes more important than Jesus, that'll be a means to which we separate and divide one another. And so Paul writes and says, because Christ is all, all important, these good things actually find their place, but they don't divide us. So three reasons why the church has this unique unity. Firstly, because of the gospel, because we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Secondly, because Christ is all important. But thirdly, look what he says, Christ is all and Christ is in all. So the last few weeks we've been talking about how if you're a follower of Jesus, you are in Christ, in him. That's true. But also this verse is that Christ is in you. And when Christ comes and makes his home in somebody, when you say, Jesus, have your way into my life, Jesus has no degrees of his presence. He's not, you know, more in me and less in you or more in you and less in someone else. If Christ is in you, Christ is in you. And what that means is that when the church separates or segregates, if I turn my back on another follower of Jesus, because they're from a different culture, or I don't understand their language, or they maybe think differently to me, in a way there's an element of me turning my back, not just on them, but on Christ in them. And so Paul says, because Christ is in you, here there's no divisions, no separations. Now in one sense, this is true of every human being, right? Genesis 1 tells us that every human being is made in the image of God, loved by God, equal dignity and value and respect, no matter whether you're male or female, Chinese, white, black, wherever you come from, Filipino, Indonesian, Brazilian, because you're made in the image of God, we're all equal. In fact, the Bible even says that because we are made in the image of God, every life is sacred, even if it's only one day old in the womb, even if the mother and father haven't discovered it, every life is sacred in the life of God. And so what this means is even people as a church may not agree with, maybe people from a different religion, people don't love Jesus, we can still honor them, we still value them, still respect them, because they're made in the image of God. But then the Colossians tells us that in addition to that, your fellow brother, your fellow follower of Christ, your brother, your fellow sister sitting next to you, not only has the image of God written on their DNA, they have the life of Christ living in their hearts. And that reason, God says, gives us reason to unify. The church is this unique community because of an uncommon, unique gospel unity.

Going back to South Africa, in the 1970s, in the height of apartheid, okay, so I'm told, I wasn't born yet, but in the 1970s, South Africa was burning. Graham, you can probably tell us, right?

[20:28] Graham, what was it like being a university student there, okay? South Africa is on fire. I mean, there was animosity, people were making petrol bombs at home, it was absolutely strife. The tension was in the air, nobody was trusting anybody, nobody liked anybody, people were looking down and hated each other across the racial spectrums. It was an absolute melting pot of anger. And in the middle of this, a black South African Anglican minister called Desmond Tutu writes a

letter to the white prime minister of South Africa called B.J. Forster, and this is what he writes. He says, I'm writing to you, sir, as one Christian to another. For through our common baptism, we have been made members of and are united in the body of our dear Lord Jesus. This Jesus Christ, whatever we may have done, has broken down all that separates us irrelevantly, such as race, gender, culture, status. In this Jesus Christ, you and I are forever bound together.

As one redeemed humanity, black and white together. I can just imagine this man receiving this letter from another man that he considered less than human, a man that he considered definitely not as equal, and being told, I've got news for you. You and I are bound together, forever. One common humanity, black and white together, because of Jesus. Friends, that's what the gospel is. The gospel takes people that are very unlike us from different cultures, different ethnicities, different backgrounds, different socioeconomic statuses, different everything, and says, because of Jesus, you're one new humanity. You know, in many senses, I am a white male South African. In many senses, I have more in common with a Filipino female foreign domestic helper than I do with other white South African males that don't know Jesus, because there's something in our heart that is connected. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. The gospel causes this uncommon, unique unity because of Jesus. Secondly, a unique gospel language. Now, when you hear about this vision of a radical gospel unity, this diversity of people worshiping together side by side, we may think that is just dreamland stuff, okay? That doesn't really happen. That is completely unrealistic. And the truth is that you're probably right. It doesn't happen very often. Now, why doesn't this happen? Why is this unity amidst diversity so uncommon? And the reason is because it's messy. It's complicated. It's uncomfortable, right? There's a lot of room for misunderstanding and miscommunicating. You think you're saying one thing and someone from a different culture hears something completely different and there's a lot of room for misunderstanding, right?

And so the question is, when you have these diverse groups of people and cultures and ethnicities, what language should you speak together to eradicate the miscommunication?

How do you, what language should you speak that helps you understand one another? Even in a church like ours, what language should we speak in our church? Well, Paul tells us, he says, speak the language of humility. Speak the language of patience. Speak the language of kindness. Speak the language of love.

Look what he says in verse 12. He has put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bear with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, just as Christ has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. And above all of these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. You see, friends, when the church is multicultural and diverse, there's going to be times when it's uncomfortable. There's going to be times when there's miscommunication. And when that happens, what do we do? Do we say, well, I can't do this anymore. I'm going to go find a South African church. I'm going to go find something else. No, no, no.

[ 24 : 59 ] We dabble down and we get better at communicating the language of love. You see, what's going to stop us from running away from the complexity of diversity? Well, look at the list that Paul gives. Paul gives a whole bunch of character conducts, right, or behaviors. But every one of these behaviors is the exact way that God has treated us. So for instance, he says, put on compassionate hearts.

Or think of how God describes himself in Exodus 34. He says, the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and merciful one, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Or think of how Paul says, treat one another with kindness. Well, in Hosea 11, God says, I led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love. I became to them as one who eases their pain. I bent down and I fed them.

Or I think of how Paul says, treat one another with humility. I think of Philippians 2. How it talks about Jesus, the Son of God, humbled himself like a servant and came not to be served, but to serve. Every one of these characteristics, Paul is saying this, treat one another the way that God has treated you. In other words, preach the gospel to yourself. Preach the gospel to yourself. And Paul actually says this exact thing, or maybe before we get there, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote this. He said, the person who loves their idea of community, their dream of community, will destroy community. But the person who loves those around them will find himself creating community. You see what Paul's saying? The way to get this unity and community in the church is not just by having a post in the front that says, we believe in community, right? It's not just by writing that on your

mission statement, we believe in community. Actually, it's by being committed to the idea of loving one another around us. And the overflow of that is that we will form community.

So we don't just write that on our mission statement or say, this is what we believe in. Forget that. Just love and serve one another the way that Christ has loved and served us. And the overflow, the fruit of that will be this amazing gospel community. And Paul says that exact thing in verse 13. He says here, bear with one another. And in fact, if someone has a complaint with someone, forgive them, just as Jesus Christ the Lord forgave you. Friends, I've been around the church a long time in various churches. When someone does something that irritates me or lets me down, someone maybe treats me unfairly, let's just say, what am I tempted to do? I'll tell you what I'm tempted to do. I'm tempted to feel sorry for myself.

[ 27 : 44 ] I'm tempted to have the conversation in my head a hundred times and play it over and over and over just to justify to myself why I am right and they are wrong. I'm tempted to project all sorts of motives onto them and say, well, this is what I'm sure they were thinking when they said that.

I'm tempted to feel sorry for myself and I'm tempted to feel entitled to being treated better than that. But there is a better way. There's a better way. And that's to remind myself of how Christ treated me when I sent him to the cross. And he said, I'll take your sins. I'll forgive you.

And then to offer that same grace and kindness to those around us. Friends, this gospel unity, which the church and Colossians experience with sophisticated elites and uneducated others, this wasn't some social experiment. This wasn't some liberal arts studies or project.

This was reality as the people of God decided to treat one another the way that Christ had treated them. As they preached the gospel to themselves, as they said, we're all sinners. You and me alike. I'm a sinner in need of grace. You're a sinner in need of grace. Let's forgive one another. As they preached the gospel to their own heart, to create this incredible gospel unity. I spoke about Dietrich Bonhoeffer earlier. He was one of the greatest Christian kind of thinkers and theologians in the 1930s and 40s at the time of the world war. He was a German man. And he wrote that when Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die. But Dietrich Bonhoeffer lived out that maxim because 10 years later, he was arrested by the Nazis in Germany for treason. And a few weeks before the end of the war, 9th of April, 1945, he's taken out of his prison cell with some others into the woods and he's executed, you know, just shot execution style, just before the end of the war. But Dietrich Bonhoeffer was writing before that, obviously, a time when everyone was very suspicious of everyone else.

[ 29 : 47 ] It's the time the Nazis are rising in Germany. You don't know who to trust, who's a spy, who's with you, who's against you. Everyone is very suspicious of everyone else. And suspicion has a way of breaking down community, right? But Bonhoeffer was committed to community. And so he recognized that community, while formed on the basis of Christ and his grace that brought community together, he realized that we need to preach the gospel to ourselves. And so this is what he writes. He says, if my sinfulness appears to me to be in any way smaller or less detestable in comparison to the sins of others, in other words, if I look down at others and think their sin is worse than mine, I'm still not recognizing my sin at all. How can I then possibly serve another person with humility if I seriously regard their sinfulness as worse than my own? You see what he's saying?

He's saying the way to maintain this unity in the midst of diversity is to remember my own sinfulness, to remember what Christ has done for me, to remember how Christ forgave me and therefore to forgive one another's, to preach the gospel to myself. Friends, I can promise you this. There are going to be times as a church when we let one another down. There are going to be times when we disappoint one another or we say something to one another or we don't say something.

There are going to be times when we hurt one another. In those times, can we remember the gospel? Can we remember what Jesus did for us? Can we preach the gospel to our own hearts and maintain this uncommon unity because of this unique gospel language? Firstly, a unique gospel unity.

Secondly, a unique gospel language. Thirdly, a unique gospel commitment. We're almost done. Paul is urging this community to preach the gospel to themselves, right? Now, the problem is when you do that, you're in danger or we are in danger of becoming individualistic and isolated. And what I mean by that is this. I know that for myself, and I guess I'm not the only one, that sometimes in order to avoid conflict or in order to avoid difficulty, I kind of speak this Christianese language to

myself, right?

[ 32 : 08 ] So, for instance, someone lets me down, or I think there's miscommunication or we've misunderstood someone. What do I say to myself? I say, Kevin, you're also a sinner. Just don't be so judgmental, okay? And then it happens again, and I say, I read in Colossians that I must put on patience, and I say, Kevin, just be patient with them, right? And then there's some other misunderstanding, because I'm a very misunderstanding kind of person, okay? And I read here that I must put on love, and so I say, Kevin, just be loving. Just don't go and talk to them about it. Just put on love.

And then I read here I must put on kindness, and so what happens? I start avoiding people, and I avoid conflict, and I don't talk through things because I just pretend that I'm being a very nice Christian by doing all these Christian things, but actually I'm avoiding the situation. Does that make sense, okay? So what does Paul tell us to do here? Well, before we get to what Paul tells us, this is exactly what Friedrich Nietzsche said. Remember he said about Christianity, he said, Christians are just weak. They don't know how to deal with the realities of life, and so Christians invent these religious words to cover over their weakness. He said, you're weak, and you don't know how to deal with things, so you just make up these words. For instance, instead of weakness, you talk about goodness. Instead of cowardice, you talk about humility. Instead of saying that you're too weak to take revenge, you talk about forgiving one another, okay? But friends, actually, that's not the gospel response at all. That's not what we do when we love our neighbors. That's the path we committed to when we commit to the path of self-preservation or the path of loving myself, the path of least resistance. And so what does Paul tell these Christians to do? He tells them to not only preach the gospel to themselves, they must do that, but also to gospelize one another.

Now, I know there's no such word as gospelize. Okay, we made it up in the office this week. But he's saying, don't just preach the gospel. Don't just gospelize your own heart. Gospelize one another. In other words, help one another understand the gospel. And so how does he say to do that? Well, look what he says. He says in verse 16, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Let the gospel, the word about Jesus, let who Christ is and what he's done on the cross dwell in you, reside in you, live deep in your heart. Let it dwell in you richly. And then he says, by teaching and admonishing or warning one another in all wisdom, okay? Now, that phrase, teach and warn one another in all wisdom. Graham preached about that three weeks ago. Do you remember? In chapter one, Paul writes this and he says, him we proclaim, Jesus we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom. So what's he saying? He says, we've gone all over the world from Jerusalem to Rome to Spain to Colossae to Ephesus. Him we proclaim, telling everyone about the wonder of Jesus, about Christ dying on the cross, warning everyone and teaching everyone about the problem of sin and the dangers of sin and telling everyone about the majesty of Jesus. So Paul says, we've gone all over the known world telling people about Jesus. And now he uses the exact same phrase, not for out there, not just for here in my own heart, but for here. And so Paul says, we preach the gospel out there. We preach the gospel to our own hearts, but we also gospelize one another, warning everyone, teaching everyone about the wonder of Jesus in all wisdom.

[ 35 : 45 ] Again, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says this, nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons one another in their sin. And nothing can be more compassionate or kind than the admonishments which calls another Christian in your community back from the path of destruction. Friends, when the gospel gets inside of us as a community, it unites us and it brings people from all sorts of different backgrounds and cultures together. When the gospel gets inside of us as a community, it makes us humble and less judgmental. It helps us to forgive one another, be kind to one another. But it also, when the gospel gets inside of us, it helps us to gospelize one another, to come alongside each other and to help each other grow in our walk with Jesus. And how do we do this? Well, strangely, Paul says, not by sitting in lectures, not even by sitting in Bible studies. We do this, he says, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. You see, there's something so important about the worship service when we come together on a Sunday. We don't just sing songs because we like singing. We don't just sing songs because we like to be entertained or because we like Jeremy's voice, as beautiful as it is. The reason we sing is because as we sing the gospel, as we take communion together, as we pray together, as we greet one another, we're worshiping God, but we are also massaging the gospel into one another. As I stand in church and I've had a rough week, I'm feeling down, I'm feeling discouraged, and I see

my brothers and sisters, hands raised, worshiping Christ. As I see and take in communion, saying Christ's body broken for us. As we worship together as a family, it builds my faith. It gospelizes my own heart. Let me close with this. Brett McCracken wrote this amazing book, and he says this, the church was never meant to be a cultural, comfortable, social club that affirms people in their idolatry and helps them along a journey to discover their best life now. No, the church was always meant to be a counter-cultural, a set-apart community embodying a radically different vision for human flourishing by gathering together to pray, sing, and break bread together.

Friends, the Christian community isn't just about finding solidarity in the fact that we're all sinners. It's finding solidarity in the fact that Christ has called us to become more like him, to gospelize one another as we seek to honor and glorify him. Friends, when the gospel gets inside of us, because of who Jesus is and what he did on the cross, Christ takes individuals from every background and culture and tongue and nationality, and he unites them together as one common brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ. Not only that, Jesus humbles us, and he changes our hearts, and he equips us to speak the language of love and kindness and grace and forgiveness to one another. But not only that, Christ doesn't leave us there. He calls us to love and serve one another, to apply the scandalous message of the gospel and Christ-likeness to one another, helping each other to grow and become more like Jesus, who we love and serve. Friends, this is what the church is. This is what the gospel does.

Let us be a church in which the word of Christ dwells deeply in our heart, and doing all this for the glory of Christ and his name. Let's pray together. Will you close your eyes with me as we pray? Fathers, we consider your word this morning. We are both encouraged and challenged. We are encouraged that you, God, you do what we couldn't do, God.

God, where the world is divided and separated, looking down upon one another, judging one another, you, God, by your gospel, bring us together. God, you give us a means to love and serve one another.

[ 39 : 45 ] You give us a way, Father God, to see people that are so different from ourselves as brothers and sisters. God, I pray won't you help us as a church to get the gospel deep into our hearts.

God, make us a church, Lord God, that really loves and serves one another, as you, Christ, have loved and served us. God, won't you make Watermark a picture of heaven on earth? May it be in Hong Kong as it is in heaven, because you, God, are getting your gospel deeper into our hearts. Lord, we pray that we will be a church in which the word of Christ dwells deeply within us. We pray these things in your powerful name.

Amen. Amen.