

Start Over: Focus

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[0 : 00] So some people are back from the holidays. Happy New Year. Well, that was sad. I might as well just say, how are we doing, instead of Happy New Year. Happy New Year, guys. Yeah, God has some great things in store for us this New Year.

I hope we believe that as we walk with Him and trust Him. You know, I love the New Year. I wanted to start off with some questions and resolutions, but I think we always do those things. But just one question.

Can I see a show of hands if anybody feels like they probably ate more than they should have eaten in the last week or so? Come on. The rest of you are lying, right?

So I need just the comfort of that because I just felt like, bleh. It was amazing food, but I felt like a blob. You know, I love the break. I got a chance to catch up on things that I don't normally do sometimes.

You know, I realize that I'm a parent and we have kids. You know, they're not in school anymore and you have to figure out what you're going to do with them for 24 hours, right? I've been just like, you know, you remember what parenting is like.

[1 : 05] And so we had some great time with our kids and I got to read some books. And as I've shared before, if you don't know me, my name is Tobin. I'm one of the pastors here. One of my big learning things throughout my life and one of my big struggles is parenting.

And I just feel like I've probably never had as many models as I needed to or the type of models that I needed to. And so I always felt like I'm in this massive deficit when it comes to parenting my kids and loving them.

And so I got to read books this break and read about parenting. One of my favorite authors I've been reading is a guy named Paul Tripp. And we've had him come speak and he did a parenting conference here.

And Tripp talks a lot about as a parent we look for teachable moments. You're always looking for teachable moments in your kids' lives. And teachable moments aren't necessarily things that you can produce.

They're just things that happen. And often teachable moments happen. Sometimes they're within the good and sometimes they're within the bad. But always teachable moments are these opportunities for us to show our kids God's grace and who God is and how amazing he is and how wonderful he is.

[2 : 11] And so I was looking for teachable moments this holiday. And we were playing some games. And all of a sudden I heard this bark, this dog bark outside of our apartment.

And so I went to the window and I saw there was this amazing, you know, my wife is going to kill me here when I start talking about these things. But there was this amazing, beautiful chocolate lab puppy that was running around on the podium below us.

And it was just, it's like one of your dream dogs, right? So it's beautiful. So I grabbed KK from the board game, our youngest, and we went down to play with the dog. And it was just, you know, just a little puppy and it was running around and licking us and all these things.

And after about 10 minutes of playing, KK, who's 8 years old, looks at me and she asked the question that only 8-year-olds can ask. She said, Dad, do you think there will be dogs in heaven? It's teachable moments, right? So in my mind as a pastor, I'm thinking teachable moments and what should I say? And I said, you know, well, I'm sure God will have amazing things in heaven. These amazing things are going to reflect his nature.

[3 : 16] They're going to reflect his character. They're going to reflect his creativity. They're going to reflect his beauty. And so I said to her, yeah, you know, I said all that to her because I wanted

this teachable moment to be theologically correct. And I said, you know, I hope so because dogs are just awesome.

And I hope God has dogs in heaven because they're just awesome. And so we kept playing with the puppy for a little while longer. And then, you know, then she asked the question that, you know, is going to come next. And she looks at me after about five minutes and she says, what about cats? Will cats be in heaven? And, you know, and so again, I'm thinking teachable moment, teachable moment, you know. So I'm thinking about all these theological things I just said to her. And I was going to say the exact same thing about God's wonder and his creation and his creativity.

And I looked at her and I said, nope. Cats are evil. Now, calm down now because I know that some of you, you know, are getting all fired up about this.

But, you know, I love cats and I love dogs and I grew up with both cats and dogs. But I realized at a really early age that cats and dogs, they're very different. They have very different perspectives on life.

[4 : 20] They have very different focuses. Cats and dogs use different pronouns. Cats and dogs have different theology. They see the world differently. I'm an example for a dog theology or a dog focus.

Dogs say things like this. If you love me and you feed me and you walk me and you take care of me, you must be God. That's dog theology.

Dogs say that. Dogs use pronouns like you and us and we. But cats, their theology is a little different. Cats say things like, if you love me and you feed me and you clean my litter box and you flip those things off my skin and you take care of me, I must be God.

Cats' favorite pronouns are I and me and mine. And they think very differently. You know, cats, when they look at God's word, they look at the Bible.

They see the Bible as a story and they see this story is about them. So everything they read is about them, David and Goliath. And they're David and they're beating the giant and all these things.

[5 : 25] And they see that in the middle of God's word that they're at the center of it. And cats use words like, you know, what's in it for me? And they come into churches and they say, what can I get out of this?

What does this have to offer for me? They use those type of things. Those are cat questions. But when dogs, they or people with a dog focus, they look at God's word. They see just the whole of God's word and they're just happy to be here.

I mean, they're just happy that they're included in God's plan. They see this as God's the hero. God's at the center. It's God who's doing everything. And it's all about God.

And it's not about them. And so dogs and cats have very different focuses. So the question is for us today, what's your focus?

Now, be honest. Are you a cat? Or are you a dog? Don't say what you want to be here, but just say what you think you are.

[6 : 24] Because I think that I struggle with both of these things. And there's sometimes I'm being a dog really well. And other times I'm being a cat. And so we wanted to look at this passage because we realized at the beginning of this year, we're going to struggle with focus.

We're going to struggle with our theology and who we are and the pronouns we use. We're going to struggle with how we see ourselves and how we see God, how we see God's word, how we fit within God's word. And so we started talking about this idea of start-overs and do-overs.

Because we realized that God gives his children an amazing amount of start-overs. And so I wanted to look at Psalms, Psalm 73.

It's one of these Psalms that I actually just studied recently with our elders. And it's one of these things that I continually go back to. It's a Psalm of this guy named Asaph. Now, Asaph didn't know anything about dog or cat theology, but he has a ton of things to teach us about just focus and vision and do-over.

And I think that, you know, as we look into this new year, Asaph, you know, he's 500 B.C., so he was 2,500 years ago. But when you read the Psalms and when you read them up on screen, what you realize is that the things that Asaph faced and struggled with are the same things that you and I struggle with today.

[7 : 42] They're the same emotions and the feelings and the confusion and just the unclarity. And so I want to look at Asaph's life in Psalm 73, and I want to look at a couple things.

I want to look at very briefly, and we're going to go to communion after this. So what we're going to do is we're going to look at what his problem was. We're going to look at what caused his problem, and how did he fix it or how did he heal himself.

So what his problem was, what caused his problem, and how did he fix it or heal himself, and then we're going to do communion. So you got it? Okay, so when we come to Psalms, they're very difficult to teach sometimes, and they're incredibly hard to understand because they're not necessarily this deep theological treatise like the book of Romans is.

And you realize that when these guys wrote these Psalms, some of them wrote them 1,500 years before Jesus was born, like Moses. And so they didn't even know about Christ.

They didn't even know about what God was going to do. They didn't see the cross. They didn't see the resurrection. They didn't understand grace like we understand it today. And so all they knew when they wrote the Psalms from 1,500 B.C. to about 500 B.C., all they knew is that somehow one day God is going to come back, and he's going to make everything right.

[8 : 56] I mean, that's all they knew. They didn't see the cross. They didn't see these things. And so when we come to Psalms, sometimes they can be incredibly challenging because the Psalms are meant to be mirrors.

The Psalms are meant to be mirrors of our lives and in our hearts and of our souls and of our emotions. And the Psalms are very honest and raw, and sometimes they just drive me crazy. Can I be honest with you? I mean, I think one of the reasons I believe the Bible is true is because of things like Psalms. Because if I were going to write a book about God and how amazing he is, I wouldn't add things in about doubts and struggles.

It would always be about heroes and victory, and we're all doing well, and we all get rich, and everything is good, like sometimes we hear in churches today. But when we read the Psalms, it's raw, and it's out of control, and it's pain, and it's suffering.

And there's a couple Psalms in here that they didn't even teach the young Hebrew boys because basically the guys are just saying, God, why don't you just destroy everybody? Because they're evil and wicked, and why aren't you kicking the butts out of all these people who are making my life difficult?

[10 : 06] And you read that, and you go, wow, if I was going to write a Bible, I wouldn't put that in there because that's too honest. It's too real.

It's too much how I feel. It's not how a good Christian should feel or think. When you come to the Psalms, you realize that the focus is always worship.

It's what we've been doing today. It's what we're doing right now. It's what you're doing in every second of your life. Worship basically means, in Hebrew, the word just means to bow before. It means to bend the knee.

It means to submit. It means to offer to whatever you're worshiping what they deserve for who they are and what they've done. The focus of the Psalms and of our life is worship.

It means to bow the knee and to offer whatever we're worshiping, what we think they deserve for who they are and what they've done. The object of worship in the Psalms, and I don't know what the object of worship is in your life.

[11 : 12] The object of worship in my life sometimes switches and changes because I am a cat sometimes and I'm a dog sometimes. But the object of worship in the Psalms is Yahweh.

It's God. It's the creator of all things. And so when we talk about worshiping God, in Hebrew, what it means is we come before the Lord, we bow down before him, and we give him what he deserves because of who he is and what he's done.

We come before the Lord, we bow down before him, and we give him what he deserves because of who he is and what he's done.

So here's a great question I've been asking myself a lot recently. If someone were to come in and watch me worshiping God, if someone were to follow me around and watch me worship the Lord, if they looked at how I used my time, if they looked at how I used my talents and my gifting, if they looked at how I used my money, if they looked at all these things I offered to God because of who he is and what he's done for me, what would they think about the God that I worship?

If they watched everything that I do and I give and who I am, and they looked at these things, and they realized that Tobin's worshiping, and he's giving to God what he thinks God deserves for who he is and what he's done, would they look at my worship and think, wow, he serves an amazing God.

[13:00] He serves an incredible God. He serves a sacrificial God. He serves the creator God. Or would they look at my wife and say, wow, his God is about that small.

His God is insignificant. Because as he worships, it's insignificant. As he gives, it's insignificant. As he serves, it's insignificant.

And what we see in the Psalms is a call to examine our lives and who we worship and how we worship. And what we have to understand is, as we grow in our understanding of God, who he is and what he's done for us, our worship always grows.

And if you're here and you've been a believer for a long time and your worship hasn't changed, what you do hasn't changed, what you think hasn't changed, what you give hasn't changed, then you have to ask the question, are you really worshipping the true God creator of the world?

Because the passages say that as we see him and as we understand more of him, our worship is just going to grow because our understanding of him is going to grow and our vision of grace is going to grow and our mercy is going to grow because God is awesome and we continue to grow as we worship and come before him.

[14:16] And so we come to this Psalm and it's Psalm 73 and it was written by Asaph and he's a very interesting man. We only know a few things about him. We know that he wrote 10 Psalms so he was very important because God entrusted him with God's word.

He was one of David's worship leaders. And so when you came to the tent of the meeting, because the temple wasn't built yet, Solomon builds a temple, remember? So Solomon builds a temple, David can't build it because he has blood on his hands.

So there's just this tent with the Ark of the Covenant inside of it and all of Israel gathers around it. And Asaph is one of these guys. He has this incredible privilege to call the Lord forward. The cloud of God falls on the tent of worship.

People fall down and they worship God and Asaph is there and he's worshipping God. But as he's doing that, he has some problems. And it's in your passage way.

And in verse one, he's basically, he starts the passage and he says, this is the truth. This is what I know of God. This is what I've been learning. This is true. This is real. You can bank on it. Surely God is good to Israel.

[15:18] So it's all the people because everybody is worshipping. So it's all the people of God are worshipping. And to those who have a pure heart, it doesn't mean perfect. When God says he wants you to have a pure heart, all it means is that you're real and you're pursuing him and you're honest and you confess and you repent.

So here's God. He's good to all the people and he's good to those who have a pure heart, to those who serve him. And then you get to verse two and three and it says this is his problem. You look in the passage and this is what he says.

He says my problem is this. My problem is I've lost my focus. In the Hebrew, it actually means that his vision has become cloudy. He's lost his focus and he's come close to stumbling, to falling.

So he's lost his focus. His vision has come close to cloudy and he's come close to stumbling. And in verse 13 and 14, it says that he's actually come close to giving up on God.

I don't know if you've ever been in that place, but Asaph, when he came and he worshiped and he saw things going on before him, he just wondered, is it all worth it? Is it really worth what we're doing here?

[16:25] Is it really worth worshipping God? Is it really worth coming before him? I mean, he had massive concerns. He had massive doubts. He wondered if God were real. If all this thing meant what it was supposed to mean.

And he shares this concern with us in a very intimate and personal way because he's struggling with should he give up on God. So here's a question I have for us.

Have any of you in here ever doubted? Have any of you in here ever wondered that God is real?

Have any of you in here ever had such deep and heavy concerns and burdens that you just wondered, should I just give up? I mean, is it worth working through all these things?

Have you ever been there? Well, I was amazing. God opened my eyes to Christ in this little amazing church in Montgomery, Alabama.

[17:35] I love the church. The people are amazing. We go back and it's just like I'm back at home. But one of the things that was hard for me at the church is no one ever talked about feelings. No one ever talked about doubt.

No one ever talked about concerns. No one ever talked about fear. As a Christian, you were never supposed to talk about those things. You were just supposed to hold those inside and your appearance was what was important. So no one ever talked about it in church.

But when I went outside of church, people talked about it all the time. They talked about doubts of God and existence and is he real and are church hypocrites and all these things. And I learned later that sometimes when we have these fears and these doubts and these concerns that we don't want to share these things, I learned that sometimes we do that because we're afraid that God's going to get angry at us.

We're afraid that God is not going to like us anymore. We're afraid that God's just going to give up on us. We're afraid that God's going to say, oh, you had a fear. That's terrible. You're out of here. You should never have fears. But I realized in my life as I did that, I was living like a cat.

I was living with this idea of performance. performance. And I didn't understand grace. I didn't understand that God came to me and he accepted me not because of my thoughts or my fears or my doubts, but he came to me because of Jesus Christ.

[18 : 56] And Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever and he never changes. And so I realized personally that it was really good to express my doubts and to express my fears and to express my concerns.

And I realized as a Christian that I actually didn't really grow in my faith until I expressed those and worked through those and talked to people about those, I realized for me personally one of the greatest factors of my spiritual growth was bringing my doubts before people and the Lord and asking them these questions like, so what about this and what about that and how do we justify these things and how does a good God allow this stuff to happen?

And you know, when we started Watermark, we said we wanted to be a church where people could come and they could have doubts. We wanted to be a church where people could come and they could ask questions they could have concerns they could have fears.

We wanted to be a church where people could come and you know, I think there's probably people in here that they don't know if God really exists right now. And I think there's probably some people in here right now who are wondering if God is really good, if following Christ is really worth it because it's been really hard and it's been really difficult.

I'm pretty sure there's probably people in here who are wondering if Christianity is true. I'm pretty sure there's some people in here who are wondering, do I even really believe what I'm saying? Because when I preach, sometimes I look at you and it looks like I'm pulling your teeth out.

[20 : 20] You're sitting there going, mmm, mmm, mmm, mmm, and I realize, okay, they're having a real hard time with this but I wonder why we don't ever talk about it, we don't ever address it and sometimes we just rest in our doubts and I've had friends, we've talked about doubts forever and often my friends just say, I don't want to really talk about it.

I'm just happy with my doubts but what I realized when I struggled with that was that that's really just a fear, isn't it? I don't want to bring my doubts out in the open because maybe people are going to answer my doubts.

Maybe God's going to answer my doubts, maybe God's going to answer all my fears and my concerns and my doubts and then I'm going to have to deal with God and I don't want to deal with God, I just want to deal with myself because I like being God but our prayer for us as a church is that we'd be a place where people could come and ask questions and seek the elders and leadership and community group leaders and your friends and share and share your doubts.

I mean it's okay to have doubts, just don't stay there. Don't stay in your doubts, examine your doubts, pull them out, look at what God's word says, look at what people around you say, see what God is speaking to you and deal with those and so Asaph comes and he has these incredible doubts and he just shares them.

The next thing you see here is what caused these doubts and that's verses 3 through 14 and basically what you see is that he loses his focus as he's leading worship and he looks out around them and he sees these things that he doesn't understand at all and you see what he sees, he sees these people who are living lifestyles that don't follow the Lord and they're prospering.

[21 : 57] Have you ever seen that in Hong Kong? He sees these people who could care less about God but they're wealthy and it just blows his mind. It blows his mind because he grew up thinking well if you love the Lord and you follow the Lord then everything's going to be good and God's going to prosper you and everybody's going to get a Rolex and your kids aren't ever going to die and your

life's going to be perfect and you're always going to get married and your wife's never going to leave you or your husband's never going to leave you and if you do all these things well God's going to bless you but Asaph looks around and he sees these things happening and he just cannot understand it because all these things are against everything that he learned and understood as his walk with the Lord.

I mean verse 11 says he actually sees people mocking God and they say well God is real yeah well yeah he's not real in my life and I'm doing okay so I don't really need him. You see how he describes the people in verses 4 through 12?

There's no pains in their death their bodies are fat they're not in trouble as other men nor have they been plagued like mankind pride is this necklace their garments are violence and it covers them their eyes bulge with fatness and their imagination is their heart and they just do whatever their heart wants to do and their imagination runs crazy they mock and they speak wickedly of oppression and they do whatever they want and they look at God and they just kind of laugh at him and you know what?

and as they do that people gather around them like an entourage and they encourage those things and they just say yeah that's great you're right let's do it let's get going on that's great and Asaph is leading worship and he's seeing all this happen and he's wondering God what are you doing? aren't you in control? don't you care? aren't you focusing on these things? and what gets worse is that he realizes in verse 13 that he actually envies them have you ever envied those people?

[24 : 06] he looks at what they have and he realizes that he doesn't have it he doesn't have a spouse he doesn't have the kids he doesn't have the family he doesn't have the money he doesn't have whatever they're mocking God with whatever he wants he envies it in his heart and he's basically saying have I served God in vain?

have I served God for nothing? and the envy actually points to this root struggle in his life and basically what he's saying is if I just had this if I just had this thing my life would be okay and everything would be okay and the struggle would go away what's that in your life?

what is it if I just had this I wouldn't struggle anymore? if I just had the life if I just had a job if I just had some true friends if I just had five minutes alone to myself in the bathroom without my kids running in if I just had three flats because you need more than one flat in Hong Kong right?

you gotta have three you gotta have two that rent and one you live in right? so if I just had those three flats everything was gonna be okay if I just had money if I just had a spouse if I just had kids maybe not that but if I had more money if I had a chocolate lab then everything would be okay and ASAP says that he realizes this envy comes in and this envy focuses on something and it's basically he starts to use different pronouns if you follow the pronouns in the passage it's amazing because at the beginning the first 14 verses he just says I I I me me me and he gets to this point where he sees God and God comes in and he says you you you you and at the end he says you and me you and me you and me so he goes from cat theology I I I me me me to you you you you you you and me you and me there's a flow here and you can see that he's struggling with it but he's struggling with these things and he's asking these questions and he asks the question that we all ask and the question is is God really good?

you ever ask that question? is God really good? I mean is God really in control? does God really want my best?

[26 : 42] I mean it's the very first question that was ever asked it was a question that was asked in the garden by Satan to Adam and Eve and it's the same question that the world and the devil keeps asking you and me and Jesus throughout our life and the question is is God really good?

but the question boils down to one question and the question is what's wrong with God? because of God we're really God everything would be okay because I'm walking with him I'm trusting him and so it's almost like this psalm starts off at this pinnacle and then he starts on this slippery slope and he just starts falling down into this cavern of I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I and then he hits verse 16 and something happens in verse 16 and then he goes back up the hill and so he ends up at the end in verse 28 where he started with verse 1 but he goes down and then he comes up and my question is what caused him to come up?

what causes you to come up? how do you get from I, I, I, me, me, me, I need, I need, I need to God? how do we change our focus?

and he says it really quickly here and really succinctly he basically says I came I, verse 17 I came into the sanctuary of God how does ASAP change his focus?

he says he came before the Lord I mean how does he go from what's wrong with God and why is everything a mess to what's wrong with me? why am I like I am?

[28 : 32] and the psalmist says he comes before the Lord now there wasn't a sanctuary back then, right? there was this big tent and so in Hebrew what it actually means is it means he came before God and he laid out all his concerns he came before God he laid out all his fears he came before God and he laid out all his doubts he expressed them he spoke them he was angry he spoke truthfully and honestly to God like so many of us cannot do because we're afraid of doing it but God wants us to do it he came before the Lord in his sanctuary and he prayed he came before the Lord in his sanctuary and he spent time with God in God's word he came before the Lord in his sanctuary and it means that he came into the community and fellowship of God's people and he spent time with them he came before the Lord he prayed he expressed his thoughts and he came before God's people all these four things I don't want to do I mean when I'm a cat and I'm in the middle of the junk those are the things

I least want to do what I want to do is I want to get by myself what I want to do is get away from God's people what I want to do is just stop talking to God because I'm angry with God but what Asaph does is he comes before the Lord in his sanctuary and he lays out all these things and what he does God shows him some things you see what God shows him the first thing he shows them is that those who aren't following God their end is a disaster all these people in verses 4 through 12 who are fat and they're rich in pride and they do whatever they want and they say where is God he says in the end their future is a disaster I mean he looks at their lives and he sees these things he doesn't see a struggle but what he realizes is that there's always going to be a struggle Solomon the wisest man who ever lived I put the passage in the very top of your bullet in Ecclesiastes and in that passage Solomon says that God has put eternity in our hearts and we will always struggle with that what the passage means in Hebrew is God has built heaven inside of you God has built a relationship with him inside your heart and until you have that working you're always going to be unhappy you're always going to be dissatisfied you're always going to be a cat you're always going to be selfish you're always going to be angry you're always going to be bitter you're always going to envy people because God made you for a relationship with him God made you for heaven and when ASAP looks at these people who don't have that what he realizes is that they're standing on a teeter-totter and their lives are on a precipice and ultimately what he says is a person's present condition is no indicator of their future condition I mean in our world we look at a person's present condition and then say they got it made and ASAP was struggling with that same thing but what he realizes is that the present condition is never a good indicator of your future condition it doesn't mean where you're going to end up it doesn't mean where those people are going to end up the next thing that God shows ASAP as he struggles is he sees the foolishness of his heart you read this?

I mean 22 and 23 are some of the most honest verses in scripture he comes before God he lays out his struggles he lays out his plans and he realizes that all of his doubts all of his fears all of his concerns when they're compared to God and his riches and his glory and who he is all of those things mean nothing he looks at all these things that he's angry about and all these things that he's working through and basically he realizes that he was just an animal he was just worried about himself he was just worried about his food and his clothing and his fornication and whatever else animals do he just worried about those things verse 23 is one of my favorite words it's nevertheless you can circle that you can go back home and think about that and ponder that because this is what it means it means no matter what's going on in your life no matter how you've done no matter where you are no matter what you're struggling with no matter where your sin is nevertheless God is pursuing you

God is seeking you God wants a relationship with you nevertheless no matter what's happened in the past no matter where you are no matter where your struggles are God is going after you and it doesn't just say that God is going after you he says that God if you're his child God is holding your hand did you know that no matter what's going on in your life no matter the struggles no matter the doubt no matter the fear no matter the concern God is there he's in your life he's holding on and he's taking care of you the last thing that Asaph saw as he looked at these things as he realized the fullness of God's mercy and grace in his life verse 24 it says that God protects his people he guards them and gives them his glory verse 25 means that God provides for us he cares for us he's always there even when it doesn't seem like it he's there verse 25 says

[34 : 04] God shares everything good with us he shares glory with us and finally in verse 28 he comes to this conclusion and you can circle good because it's a word that started him on his journey his journey was is God really good and now he says God is good and all I need is God and God is enough he had these concerns he had these doubts he had these fears he was envying he was jealous he thought other things were needed to fulfill his life and at the end of the Psalms he writes God is enough God is enough how about us is God enough for you if you just had God would that be enough the nearness of God beside you in this life is that enough they have to realize just as we need to realize as we head into the new year that you and I are going to struggle we're going to wonder is God enough we're going to try to fill our lives with a lot of different things we're going to say if I don't get this if I don't have this if I'm not happy

I'm not going to be fulfilled I'm not going to have enough and ASAP begs us to come before him to come before the Lord and lay those things out in front of God and allow God in his sanctuary to talk to you to speak to you to meet you and to show you that he's enough we're about to head into communion whenever we come to communion we ask the question is God enough that's what communion is about right communion is about taking the elements and the bread and the wine and it's about celebrating God's sufficiency and Jesus Christ's sufficiency in our life it's about saying he's enough even amongst the struggles even amongst the concerns even amongst the doubts even amongst the fears my prayer for us as a church and as individuals and brothers and sisters as we go into this new year is that we realize that we are going to face doubts we're going to be hit by a ton of concerns we're going to look around us and people's lives are going to be so much better than ours and we're going to want the things that we think are going to make their lives happy and the passage says if we move down that route we're going to fail because there's nothing there but emptiness hollowness deceit and brokenness my favorite passage in verse in this whole section here is this basically what we've read again in verse 23 what he says here and I don't know if you realize this he says Tobin you were walking in darkness you were an enemy to me you were acting like an animal you had doubts and you had fears and you had concerns and you were living like a cat and your pronouns were I

I I me me me me and still I held on to your hand still I would not let you go still my grace was in your life and I was covering you with my love my prayer is that we would understand that I'm going to ask the communion stewards to come up right now but I want you to think about this the passage says that God never lets go of his children's hands no matter what they're going through no matter their struggle no matter their doubt no matter their concerns there's only one person one child in all of history that God let go of their hand he let go of Jesus' hand why

Christ was nailed to the cross Christ's words were my God my God why have you forsaken me we come to communion today to worship the God who always holds our hand who forsook his son so that you and I would never have to be forsaken Christ forsook his son he let his son's hand go so that he would never have to let our hand go we go who