

# God Our Covenant Lord

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[ 0 : 00 ] So today, our scripture reading comes from the book of Psalm, Psalm 50. You can follow along the screen. The screen has the scripture or your own Bible.

A Psalm of Asaph. The mighty one, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

Our God comes, he does not keep silence. Before him is a devouring fire. Around him, a mighty tempest. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth that he may judge his people.

Gather to me my faithful ones who made a covenant with me by sacrifice. The heavens declare his righteousness for God himself is judged.

Hear all my people and I will speak. Oh Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God.

[ 1 : 06 ] Not for your sacrifice do I rebuke you. Your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your foes.

For every beast of the forest is mine. The cattle on the thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills and all that moves in the field is mine.

If I were hungry, I would not tell you. For the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of the bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

And perform your vows to the most high. And call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify me.

But to the wicked, God says, What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenants on your lips? For you hate discipline and you cast my words behind you.

[ 2 : 08 ] If you see a thief, you are pleased with him. And you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free reign for evil. And your tongue frames deceit.

You sit and speak against your brother. You slander your own mother's son. These things you have done and I have been silent. You thought that I was one like yourself.

But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. Mark this then, you who forgot God. Lest I tear you apart and there be none to deliver.

The one who offers thanksgiving as he sacrificed glorifies me. To one who orders his way rightly, I will show the salvation of God. This is the word of God.

Amen. Great. Well, very good morning also from me.

[ 3 : 11 ] If you don't know me, my name is Niels. I'm part of the staff team. And it's my privilege to bring God's word. It's great that so I prayed. Why don't we all pray together now as we listen to God's word?

Our Father, thank you we can come to you. Thank you that we know you. That you are our God. That we are your people.

We have a relationship with you. We pray that we would learn more about that. Learn more about what you are like. How we can relate to you. Please speak to each of our hearts. Challenge us.

Encourage us. Make us hear by your spirit what we need to hear.

To your glory and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen. Great. Now, I don't know what you think of giving presents.

It's a nice tradition. You know, Christmas or someone's birthday. You give someone a present. But the thing that I always struggle with is what shall I give? So here is one of my favorite examples.

[ 4 : 11 ] Early on in our marriage, we were living in the UK. And yeah, EJ does most of the cooking because I can't cook and she's wonderful. And she really said she really wanted to have a wok.

You know a wok, right? This great pan for stir fries. And she said she really wanted that. So it was her birthday coming up. So I gave her a wok. Isn't that a great thing?

Now, to me, that seems like the normal thing. But no, she was very offended, right? Do you only care about my cooking? Now, I don't know what you guys think, right? So I've mentioned this example to some people.

Some of the men think, yeah, totally. That's normal. And the women all, how dare you, right? What's the point of this example? You know, it is very hard to know how to relate to someone if they're different from you, right?

This is something maybe about men and women or East and West. You know, what should I give to someone who's very different from me? I don't know, right? Because, yeah, I'm not them.

[ 5 : 11 ] They need to actually tell me. So EJ told me what she thought, and I haven't given her a walk since, right? That's the thing. We need to know. They need to tell us.

I mean, it's a silly example, right? But we can relate to this. But how much more than when it comes to God, right? You know, we're Christians. We know God. But actually, God is very, very different from us, right?

He is divine, and we are human, right? And he is eternal, and we are not. And he is omnipotent and all-knowing, and, you know, we are not.

And how do you relate to such a God? What does he want? Actually, we can't just guess, right? Maybe we try to guess, but then we may get it wrong, just like I got it wrong. No, actually, what if God just tells us what he's like?

What if he tells us how to relate to him? And in a way, that is so great about this series, right? We're in the Psalms, and this is about the character of God. We're getting to know God, and that is not just some information out there.

[ 6 : 13 ] You know, the wonderful thing about getting to know God is that we can relate to him, right? We can be his people. And that is especially where this Psalm also is helpful, because it is, you know, God talking to his people about how to relate rightly to him.

And that's what we are going to learn about. Although, as you can see, it's not quite just sitting down on a date, right? This is the Lord God Almighty, and so, yeah, he is calling us to account, calling his people to account.

What do we see in this Psalm? Well, yeah, this great vision of God just showing up and talking to his people. And, yeah, and it's awesome, right? It even starts with this pile of names, the Mighty One, God, the Lord, speaks and summons the earth.

This is the God, right? He is God, the Mighty One, the Lord of the whole universe, but also, you know, the covenant God of Israel. He is here, and he's summoning the whole earth from east to west to come together.

He's majestic, and, you know, before him is a devouring fire. There, around him, a mighty tempest. It almost reminds you of Mount Sinai, right? If you remember, the Israelites came out of Egypt, and God met them on the mountain with clouds and thunder and all his majesty, and the people, whoa, this is God, right?

[ 7 : 39 ] And that is how we should feel here. It communicates who he is, right? Because we need to know him if we want to relate rightly to him. And we've seen in many Psalms that, you know, God is a judge, and we think of him judging the world.

But actually, he's gathering here. Who is he judging here? It's not the world, right? Verse 4, he calls to the heavens above and to the earth that he may judge his people.

Now, judging here is not condemning. It is calling to account. It's kind of, hey, guys, how is our relationship? Because who are these people? Well, they are his covenant people, right?

Verse 5, gather to me my faithful ones who made a covenant with me by sacrifice. You know, there is a God, but as Christians, and also back then, as Jews, he's not just a kind of a vague God out there with whom we have some kind of vague relationship, like some person you see on the street or something, right?

We have a relationship. We are in a covenant, in a formal commitment. That's what they had done, right? Getting circumcised. And, you know, we are one of God's people.

[ 8 : 48 ] And as Christians, you get baptized, you're committing, right, to God. You're, you know, you're in a formal, committed relationship, if I could put it like that. And with commitment comes accountability, that they keep their part of the relationship.

I think the psalm originally, maybe it was some part of some kind of renewal ceremony, right? You do that sometimes with a covenant. We have a membership here at Watermark, and we have

members meetings, and usually we discuss some of our commitments, okay, right? This is what it's like to be a member. And we remind ourselves, oh, yeah. And maybe this psalm was used for the people. Oh, yeah, this is what it's like to relate to God. And, yeah, so probably it was spoken by some priests, but the way it's worded here, it's very much, okay, this is not just a guy speaking, right?

This is God himself. God does not keep silence. He speaks and summons the earth. Hear, my people, I will speak. Israel, I will testify against you.

God's the judge of his people. And so maybe it feels a bit like a performance review, right? Maybe at work, once a year, you have this performance review, and you're not just sitting down with someone from HR.

[10:03] This is the CEO of the billion-dollar company who lets you know what he is like and what he expects and what he thinks of your work and those kind of things. But it's good.

It's good to know because it's good to know what our God is like. So, again, we can relate to him. And he addresses two groups, probably one a subset of the other, and talks about, yeah, some ways that they are going wrong.

And there are especially religious things, right? Because that is what it's like to relate to God. It's kind of a religion. It's actually helpful. Maybe you're here, you're not a Christian, and you think, you know, Christianity is a religion, and then this is what I think about it.

Actually, this tells you a bit about what God thinks about religion. That's very helpful. But let's look. What does God want from his people? And the first thing he says, what he really wants is dependence.

God wants dependence, that we depend on him. And he starts talking about their sacrifices. He complains about their sacrifices. Now, in some places of the Bible, they're not offering sacrifices.

[11:10] That's a problem. But here, it's almost, there's too many of them, right? Verse 8, not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you. Your burnt offerings are continually before me.

I will not accept the bull from your house or goats from your fields. All these sacrifices. Now, of course, God has commanded sacrifices. It's not a bad thing. But, of course, what's their heart behind it?

Why are they doing this? And it seemed that their problem was that they actually thought God needed these. That they were doing God a favor. That he was hungry and he needs sacrifices. That's what he says in verse 12. If I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you. Verse 13, do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Do you think I need this? Because that is what a lot of people think, right?

That is the world they lived in. I mean, it's even now the world, right? Here in Hong Kong, we have the Hungry Ghost Festival. What's the Hungry Ghost Festival? Yeah, you put out food for the spirits so that they don't mess up your life.

[12:15] Because they're hungry. They need something from you. And actually, back then, that was what the world around them believed. I think my favorite example, something called the Epic of Gilgamesh, which is kind of Babylonian literature from around the same time, Babylonian myths.

And actually, they have a story just like the flood. You know, the flood in the Bible? That's not just in the Bible. Actually, in lots of places in the world, they have a myth about a great flood.

It seems to be a real thing. It's just that the story is very different. And what happens here? Well, the gods, actually, it's not about people's sin. It's just humans are too noisy. And so all the gods, they really hate the noise.

So they decide to wipe out humanity with a flood. And, yeah, the thing that they do, how does someone get saved? So one of the gods likes some of the humans and warns them, hey, there's a flood coming.

Please build a boat. But what happens? Here are the gods, and they do this in the flood, and they wipe out humanity. And what do they realize? No more sacrifices.

[13:23] Because they eat sacrifices. They need sacrifices. And so they all go hungry, and all the gods are starving because humanity is gone, and no one is offering a sacrifice anymore. And it's so pathetic, right?

And then, finally, the flood is gone, and this guy, who they didn't know about, steps off the ark, and he offers a sacrifice. And all the gods, ooh, yeah. And, like, flies, they circle around.

It's such a silly story. But that is what people believed. Gods need sacrifices. And so, you know, that's why we give sacrifices, to get the gods on our side, to kind of give us what we need. Yeah, so we give them what they need, and then they give us what we need. Isn't that a great deal? Well, God says, I'm not like that. That's pagan, right?

I am the creator. I don't get hungry. Verses 10 to 12. For every beast of the forest is mine. The cattle on a thousand hills.

[14:23] I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I wouldn't tell you. For the world and all its fullness are mine. You know, everything is mine.

I've made it all. So, I don't need you. I don't need your sacrifices. I mean, it is obvious, right? If God is the creator. So, then for all eternity, he didn't have sacrifices.

And for all eternity, he was perfectly happy. He didn't spend eternity starving. Right? God doesn't need sacrifices. If you can create a universe out of nothing, you don't need anything.

Right? I mean, if I could create stuff out of nothing, I wouldn't need money. I wouldn't need shopping or cooking. Right? I could just... Right? God doesn't need anything. He made everything. He owns everything. Even when you give God a bull, you're just giving him what is his anyway. Right? Because he made it. It's a bit like Christmas. I mean, it's really nice.

[15:19] The children, they want to give me a Christmas present. It's really lovely. But in a way, I pay for it. Right? Because I give them an allowance and then they use that to give me my Christmas present.

And it's really sweet. But I'm not really getting anything. Right? And that's the same thing with God. You know, when you offer anything to God, you know, it's his anyway because he made it. Everything you have comes from him. And so, yeah. Yeah. He doesn't need you. Instead, God says, it's the other way around.

You need me. We need God. We are dependent on him. Look at verses 14 and 15. This is what God really wants. Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and perform your vows to the Most High. God wants thanksgiving. Now, what is the point of thanksgiving? It's a response. Right? It's God giving you everything you need and you saying, wow, thank you. Thanksgiving is a response.

[16:21] Right? It's not what we do for God. It's a response to what he's done for us. Same with vows. Vows are, again, a response that people did at the time. Right? So, you're going on a journey. God, if you bring me safely home, I will build an altar.

Those kind of things. Right? But it's a... And so, well, God says, well, perform your vows. You know, I've done this for you. Now, do what you said. Right? It's, again, a response to what God has done. Looking back, what God has done. And the next part, looking forward. Verse 15. Call upon me in the day of trouble. Well, that is, again, how we need God.

Right? When we're in trouble and we can't solve it, we ask God for help. It's about us needing him. And then what will God do? Well, I will deliver you.

I will rescue you. And you will glorify me in response. Because we can't get out of it ourselves. All these things is about our dependence on God. And we give thanks for what he gives us.

[17:19] We respond to what he gives us. We ask him to give us things. Because we need him. And he doesn't need us. That's the thing here. And it's not about God having a savior complex.

That he needs to be needed. That he needs words of affirmation or something. This is just reality. This is us knowing who we are. That he is God.

And we are his creatures. We are dependent on him. That is so basic, fundamental, you know, to knowing God.

That, you know, we need him. And he doesn't need us. And, yeah, is that our hearts? I mean, how can we be like this? It's easy to see sacrifices.

And we think of this worship service here. It was a good question from then. Why did we come here? I mean, some people, they come here because they think, you know, God needs this.

[18:14] God, you know, he needs our praise. And we all stand up. And we clap. And he feels kind of appreciated. God doesn't need us. Instead, in a way, we almost come for ourselves.

God has done all these things for us. And we want to give thanks. We want to praise. It's just our response. And coming here to receive, right? To receive God's life-giving truth. Or come for each other to, you know, to, because we need each other.

But God doesn't need us. We don't come to offer him something that he lacks. We come here to receive and to respond in praise and thanksgiving, right?

There's a lot of response here. Thanksgiving, glorify me. But that's why we come. And to pray, to call for help. Of course, we wouldn't say that we come here because we think God needs us. But so often our hearts think that, right? You know, you read your Bible and you come to church and you give money. And you think, okay, I've done my thing for God. And now I've given God what he needs.

[ 19 : 18 ] And now he's happy with me. Or even just being a Christian, right? God loves us so much. You know, he's so desperate for a relationship with us that we almost do him a favor by being a Christian.

No, God doesn't need us, you know? He really loves us. But that's only because he is love. You know, he's like this overflowing fountain of love who just loves and loves. But it's not because he needs us. You know, God spent all eternity without you and he was perfectly happy. You know, the Father's got the Son and the Spirit. I don't think you have much to add to that. God doesn't need you, but he loves you anyway because he is love. I mean, how do we know if we're doing that? I think one good way is basically when we think it's like a deal, right? We give God what he wants and then he, well, we expect him to give us what we want, right? So we give him our church attendance and our Bible reading and our prayers.

[ 20 : 20 ] And then he gives us a good life, right? He gives us good exam results and a good job and a beautiful spouse and all those things, right? That is our deal.

And then what if God doesn't? Do we feel grumpy? Do we feel that, hey, God, I've scratched your back. Now you need to scratch mine. That's sometimes how we think, right? You know, if things don't go your way, how do you respond and why?

If you think God owes you something, then no, no, he's the creator. We don't owe him anything. I mean, he's wonderful. He's our good and gracious king. He doesn't owe us anything.

Now we need to cultivate dependence. Actually, always see ourselves. We are so indebted to God. You know, thanksgiving. That was this old kind of thing, count your blessings.

Isn't it a really good exercise to just make a list of all the things God has done for you? And just give thanks for each one of them. And think about what if I didn't have this in my life? All these things, the spiritual blessings, material blessings, family, just everything in your life.

[ 21 : 27 ] And just keep writing. Write a hundred things until you are really deeply thankful and you really think, wow, God, you do everything. I do nothing. And that is such a good exercise.

Or call on me in a day of trouble. Let's be prayerful, right? That is such a great way to depend. God asked us here, come to me with your trouble. I mean, I am very independent.

I want to solve all my problems myself. I do not want to bother people. God says, bother me. Okay? Come to me with your trouble because you need me. And I want to help you.

And this coming Thursday is our monthly prayer meeting. Let's go and pray. Let's ask God's help in the day of trouble. That is what we need, right?

If we think we don't need to pray, do we think we can do it ourselves? That we don't need God? That we do God a favor by, you know, running the church for him? No. We need his help. Let's pray.

[ 22 : 24 ] But then there's this second group. And that's another religious error. And God says here in verses, yeah, 16 to 23, he wants authenticity.

Because he then takes a, the psalm takes a bit of a terrifying turn, right? Verse 16, but to the wicked, God says. And you hear the wicked and you think of the people out there, right?

From Psalm 11 and those kind of things. But these are people who are not out there. What does God say? What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips?

So these are people who claim to be God's people. They claim to be in relationship with God. That, hey, we were part of the covenant community. But they have no place for God's word. Verse 17, for you hate discipline and you cast my words behind you.

Hey, you're dismissing everything I say. And that leads, of course, to a life of sin, right? Verses 18 to 20. If you see a thief, you're pleased with him.

[ 23 : 29 ] You keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free reign for evil and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother, your slander, your own mother's son.

Here are some of the Ten Commandments, right? Adultery, stealing, false witness. These are people, yeah, they say all the right things. And yet, look at their life. Look at how they live.

Look at what they say, right? The deceit, the slander, the gossip, all those things. They had no problems with it. But we hate it, right?

We hate hypocrisy. We really hate it when people, they are so fake. They are one thing in church and something else than at home. Here, they are wonderful people. And at home, they're terrible. And maybe you're here. You're not a Christian. That's something that puts you off, right? You see so many religious people who are hypocrites. It's good to know God thinks the same thing. God thinks hypocrisy is terrible.

[ 24 : 28 ] Or is it even hypocrisy? I'm not even sure. I mean, why do these people do it? Verse 21. These things you have done, and I have been silent. You thought that I was like yourself.

I was one like yourself. You know, you thought I was just like you. You'd live like this. Because partly because, you know, God didn't do anything, right? He didn't send a lightning bolt. He didn't, you know, say something.

And so they thought, well, clearly all this sin is okay. I don't think they really thought that God liked sinning. Probably just he doesn't care. And maybe that's kind of religion, right?

What God really wants is our prayers. What he really wants is that we come to church. And he doesn't really care about the rest of our life, right? And that's what they wanted.

Maybe that's what God wanted, right? I just want some religion to feel good. And God wants us to do some religion. And he feels good. And then the rest of our life doesn't matter.

[ 25 : 28 ] Now, how wrong they were, right? God, he doesn't care about their religion. He doesn't need that. He doesn't need their sacrifices. What he wants is their hearts. What he wants is their whole life for him, all right?

Authenticity. That their religion is not just a religious thing, but it's something real. Something their whole life. And, yeah, he says, yeah, you thought I've been silent.

And you thought I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. I know what you're doing. He knows and sees everything. He knows that our faith here, whether it's the same the rest of our lives.

And then there's a severe warning, right? Verse 22, mark this then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart and there be none to deliver. Tearing you apart if you, yeah, you know, think of a lion.

You see them chilling, sunbathing, and they look very nice and fluffy until the gazelle comes and they pounce, right? And there's none to deliver. That's the imagery here.

[ 26 : 36 ] Tearing you apart with none to deliver. Just to say that this is a gracious warning, right? God hasn't done that yet. He's warning them. He's telling them to repent. Just like in a performance review.

If you're not doing well, they don't fire you straight away. They just say, hey, you need to change this. That is what he's calling them to. He's calling them to change. So, how should we respond? I mean, certainly, it's good to look at our lives. How authentic are we, right? How seriously do we take God's word and what he says? Not just on Sundays, but, you know, back at work, back at home?

I think for most of us here, yeah, we're, I don't think there's many real fakes here. You know, we, I mean, from what I know, we were a good church, right? People who really tried to live for God.

But then again, what is the standard? I mean, I know in my life, yeah, I'm doing my best. But to be honest, often enough, I cast God's word behind my back, right?

[ 27 : 36 ] I know what he wants me to do, and still, I don't want to do it, right? I need to have things to repent of when I see this. Now, if we're honest, if we really picture ourselves before this God, and we know what he thinks of our lives and what he wants, actually, our response would be Psalm 51, the next Psalm.

I mean, most of us, we have our favorite Psalms, right? There's Psalms that we know. Maybe you didn't know Psalm 50. Most of us know Psalm 51, David's confession. And, you know, it's not an accident that those two are next to each other.

The Psalms, they're in a certain order. And, you know, what is your response when you read Psalm 51, verse 1? Have mercy on me, O God.

According to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Now, here's David.

And he was circumcised. And he went to the temple. And he did his sacrifices. And he was a man after God's heart. And he was the best king Israel ever had. But ultimately, he didn't match up,

right?

[ 28 : 50 ] Ultimately, he fell into sin and committed adultery. And, yeah, before this holy God, he confesses his sin. That is, yeah, that is where we should be.

With God ready to tear us apart. And it sounds like a terrible place to be. And yet, in God's plan, it's the right place to be.

Why is it the right place to be? To see our sin. Why is it good to know that you're a helpless sinner? Well, it brings us back to that second point of dependence.

What was the problem? We think we're independent. The problem is that we are creatures. But actually, we think we don't need God, right? We think we can live without him.

We think we can do God a favor. God wants us to be back, you know, in relationship with him. And that means being dependent. And when we see our sin, when we see our needs, when we see that we face a judgment that we can't do anything about, that's when we will cry out in our trouble for help.

[ 30 : 03 ] That is when we will pray. That is when we will see our needs, right? That is the thing. When we see that we have nothing to offer to God, that all our righteous acts are just filthy rags, when we have nothing to offer.

That is actually, that's the right heart attitude. And that is what God wants. You know, we think of God creating and saving as two different things.

Actually, creation and salvation are exactly the same. Why? Well, creation is all God's work. And we do nothing because we didn't exist. Salvation is the same thing.

When God does everything, we do nothing because we are just helpless, total sinners. And when we realize that, yeah, that is when we will depend on God.

That is, and that is where we should be. It doesn't mean that sin doesn't matter. Of course it does. You know, God needs a perfect sacrifice. But he did that himself, right? When Jesus came down and died for us on the cross for our sins.

[ 31 : 04 ] But, but he took care of it, right? That's what he said on the quote behind me, right? The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve. Jesus didn't come because he needed us.

He didn't come so that we could serve him. No, he came to serve us. He came to do the work that we couldn't do. Because we needed it. And so, again, this brings us to how we should live, right? As Christians, we live out of dependence. We live, well, verse 15, right? Verse 14 and 15. Call upon me in a day of trouble.

I will deliver you and you will glorify me. Isn't that the Christian life? That we saw our needs, we saw our sin. And we cried out for help. And we saw Jesus on the cross.

And we're delivered. Isn't that the gospel? And doesn't that make you want to respond with a sacrifice? Yeah, with thanksgiving. With vowing to live for Jesus because all he did for us.

[ 32 : 05 ] Every day of our lives. And, you know, if you say you're a Christian, what is the thing that really motivates you? What is the thing that gets you out of bed to pray? What is the thing that motivates you to come here?

I mean, it's good to live God's way. And it's good to want to do something for God. But ultimately, the thing that should drive us, right, it's the gospel. It is that we were in such desperate need.

And Jesus did everything. And we depend only on him. That is what brings you to church. That's what gets you out of bed. Out of thankfulness.

Out of response. Of thanksgiving. Right? And not just with others present, but our whole life, right? Every moment we realize we need Jesus.

And the only way we can be with God is through Jesus. Every moment we remember. We totally only depend on him. Isn't that what we need?

[ 33 : 01 ] Isn't that what we need to realize? Right? How much he has done. And that we can do nothing. That should be our hard attitude. And if you don't feel that yet, you know, again, spend time reflecting.

You know, see God as he is here. See your life. See your sin. And the only thing that you can offer to God is basically your sin, right? And that will just condemn you.

No. If we really see the gospel, that will change us. That will motivate us. And so as we relate to God, as we want to know God, as we want to relate to him, this is the heart of it.

Dependence. Dependence on Jesus. Dependence on his sacrifice. Dependence on everything. Dependence on everything. So why don't we pray for that? Or actually, here's a few questions.

Maybe think of that as we give you a minute to reflect and then we go into prayer. And just think, do you feel your life is marked by dependence and authenticity? Is there anything you need to repent of?

[ 34 : 02 ] And then how does the gospel help you relate rightly to God? So let's think about that for a minute. And then we'll pray together. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we totally depend on you. You're the creator. We are your creatures. We have nothing that doesn't come from you. There's nothing that we have that we did not receive from you, our gracious, generous God.

Particularly, we confess our sin. We confess that without Jesus we could not stand before you. But with you there is forgiveness. With you there is forgiveness in your great son and his love on the cross.

Lord, help us to live out of that. Would it change us? Would it transform us? Would it melt our hearts in thankfulness and make us want to live for you? Lord, for each of us, would this be a reality deep in our hearts?

[ 36 : 16 ] You know how we're often busy and often cold and often just go through the motions. But so deep inside, we want to have a heart of thankfulness for everything you've done.

So please do that work in us by your spirit. Only you can change us. We depend on you even to respond to you in the right way. Everything comes from you. And we thank you.

Amen.