

The Gift of Church in the End Times

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[0 : 0 0] The scripture for today comes from Ephesians chapter 2. Starting in verse 11, we read, Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances.

That he might create in himself one new man in place of the two. So making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

[1 : 2 6] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the spirit. This is the word of God. Hey, can I pray for us before we start?

God, we come before you this morning. And what an incredible joy to come together as your people to hear you speak, Lord. Father, we pray that your Holy Spirit would be among us right now.

That your words would edify your church, would draw your people to you, God. Father, we pray for your Holy Spirit to come and open our hearts to receive you, Lord. So that as we leave, we can leave with a bigger picture of who you are, God.

And also a deeper appreciation of the greatest gift that you have given us in the church. So, Father, we pray, come, be glorified, be lifted up this time.

[2 : 4 5] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. As most of you know, I studied in a boys' boarding school. It was all boys, all boarding school.

And like any other school, your status, your popularity, and even your identity is very closely related to which group you belong to.

You know, maybe you belong to the sporty group, the popular group, the chess freaks, the gym freaks. I don't know which group you guys belong to. And you can guess which group I belong to.

But here's the thing, right? There's something very peculiar about humans that we draw our identity, our value status, the way we think, and a lot of our values from the group that we belong to.

There's a saying that goes, show me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are. And we all have groups in our lives, right? Maybe in our colleges, universities, our daily life, our friend circles.

[3 : 47] And all of these groups, in many ways, shapes who we are. Or we shape the group that we belong to. Now, in the midst of all these groups that we have in our lives, where does church belong?

How much church shapes our lives and our values? And in among all this group, where does the church fit in? Is it one of those groups that is just one of the many groups in our lives?

Or is church one of that group that shapes every other groups, that shapes all of our lives and our thinking, our value, and our identity? For a few weeks now, we've been going through this series called The Wonderful Work of God.

And basically what we've been doing is we've been tracing this one storyline of God through the whole Bible. And it's an incredible thing that we hold, right?

There's like about 40 authors written over a gap of thousands of years. And yet, there's one storyline that flows from Genesis all the way to the end to Revelation.

[4 : 52] And that's what we're trying to follow along to see this thread, this story that is being weaved throughout the whole Bible. And there are many ways to approach this thought. And one of the ways we've been approaching it is with this idea of the kingdom.

Now, what is a kingdom? It's basically God's people living in God's place under God's rule and blessing. There's three things, right?

God's people in God's place living under God's rule and blessing. Now, for a kingdom, we need all of these three things, right? When you're a part of a kingdom, you're automatically, you're part of God's people.

If you're, we need a place for us to enjoy this kingdom, for the blessings to be enjoyed. And obviously in a kingdom, there is a king whose authority is respected. Because there is no kingdom if the kingship is rejected, if the authority is rejected.

And naturally, as you live in a kingdom, you enjoy the blessings that flow from the king. In the same way, when a nation lives under a very good government, the people enjoy the blessing, enjoy prosperity and peace.

[5 : 59] So what is a kingdom? God's people living in God's place under God's rule and blessing. And this is a storyline. This is a theme that you'll find all the way through the Bible.

Think about the beginning, the Genesis, who are God's people? God creates Adam and Eve, places them in the garden of Eden, God's place and where they live. An incredible blessing with one rule, do not eat from the fruit.

And as they enjoy the blessing, what does sin do? Sin breaks all of those three things, right? As they reject God's authority, as they reject who God is saying, I will be God, not you.

They are cast out of God's place. They are banished from the garden of Eden. The God's place is gone. They're no longer God's people. And throughout the Bible, what you see is God restoring this kingdom through his covenantal promise.

He's telling the people, I am going to bring you guys back to this kingdom that was originally created. Where God is going to bring them to be his people again in his place, the promised land, to live under his law, his rule, to enjoy his blessing.

[7 : 02] And the pinnacle of that and the highest point of that we see under King David and King Solomon. It was the biggest time in the time of Israel. But naturally what happens is people continuously reject God as king over and over again.

And in many ways that is what sin is, isn't it? Sin is not just lying and murdering and gossiping. Sin is at the core of it, the rejection of God as king.

It's a heart that rejects God saying, God, I don't want you to be God, but I will be God. And soon because of that throughout history, what we find is eventually they lose the promised land.

They're again exiled into enemy's hand and everything seems hopeless. But you see, God keeps his promise. God is faithful throughout history.

God's faithful over and over again. And he brings this people back from exile. But now the covenantal promise is opening up. It's saying, it's pointing towards the future to a king, a savior that's going to come and bring this incredible kingdom.

[8 : 12] And eventually, after about 400 years, Christ Jesus enters in, in Matthew. And he starts his ministry in Matthew saying, repent, turn back, for the kingdom of God is in hand.

And you can see this storyline of the kingdom throughout the Bible. And as Jesus comes through his death and resurrection, he deals with the cause that was tearing us away from God.

The cause, the heart that was rejecting God, he deals with that, that heart. He deals, and basically he fulfills this promise in Ezekiel 36, where he's where God promises to give a new heart to pour out his spirit in us.

And as we were looking last week, as Jesus returns to heaven, he comes, he dies, he resurrects, and he returns to heaven. He gives us this mission, right? Do you guys remember the mission to bring this incredible good news to the world?

And in his incredible grace, he's drawing people from all nations, different backgrounds, cultures to himself. As he gives his people this mission to share the gospel, to share the good news of salvation in Christ alone.

[9 : 23] And so here we find ourselves between the first coming of Christ and leaving to heaven and between Jesus coming.

So we're in this gap. And in other words, we're actually in the last days, aren't we? We are in those days where we are closer to Jesus coming than we were yesterday.

We are living in the last days. And we have a mission, the gospel. But then at the same time, Jesus does something before he leaves. Well, what he has always been doing.

What Jesus does is he establishes something with himself being the cornerstone. And one thing he leaves behind is the church. So here we are in today's idea, our big idea.

So in this big picture of the kingdom of God, so in this big storyline, what is this church? What role does the church play? Is church just another group for us to attend, to be a part of?

[10 : 25] Or is church has a bigger purpose than we ever think of? Has a bigger value than all the other groups in our lives? And prayerfully, by the end of today, we will see that the church is God's incredible gift in this last days.

So let us begin with the first question. What is the church? Now, I mean, it's not a very hard question, right? You walk onto the street, you ask anyone, what is the church?

And they'll give you an answer. Okay, it's a place where Christians gather, pray, sing songs. Or is a building that Christians go in every Sunday and attend church and, you know, spend about two and a half hours.

Or if you're from a traditional church, six hours. That's where I used to go. And that's the church. But here, let me raise a thought for us this morning.

Maybe the question is not exactly what is the church. Maybe the question we should be asking is, who is the church? Now, what do I mean by that?

[11 : 26] Let's look, open up God's word and see. So follow with me along today's scripture, Ephesians 2. Let's open up Ephesians 2 again. So Paul here is writing to this place called Ephesus, which is a mixed people of former Jews and Gentiles.

What I mean by Gentiles? People basically that were not Jewish. So in a sense, all of us who are not Jewish. So let's look at verse 11 and 12. He says in verse 11 and 12, What is Paul saying here?

He's speaking to us Gentiles and he's telling us, hey, remember at one time you were separated from God. You had no hope. You were not a part of God's people. You were away from the promise without God in this world.

Away from the kingdom, not God's people. Away from his rule and blessing. And basically, that is what sin does, isn't it? It separates us from God.

It separates us from the one who created us. It separates us from the source of life, peace, hope. And that is what sin does. It makes us stand in opposition of God, in rebellion of God.

[12 : 57] It takes us away from who we were meant to be. So that's who we were. Away from God, not God's people. So what does Jesus do? Let's read on in verse 13. So verse 13 says, he continues, But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were far off, once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Verse 14, for himself is our peace. In other words, he brings this reconciliation. He brings one wholeness. You who have been both one and has been broken down in his flesh, the dividing wall of hostility.

Jesus, in Christ Jesus, this hostility is broken down. Verse 16, why? So that we might be reconciled back to God in one body through the cross, again, killing the hostility.

Verse 17, he came and preached peace, wholeness to you who were far off. In some words, all of us. And peace to those who were near.

And verse 19, so that you are no longer strangers and aliens. But now you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Do you see what Paul is saying here?

[14 : 08] What Paul is saying here is, in Christ Jesus, that's the key word, in Christ Jesus only, people who are far off, people who are in rebellion, separated from God, are being brought in, are being drawn in.

In Christ Jesus, peace is being made, hostility is being killed, reconciliation is being made between God and man. And he's bringing this individual people into himself, into a group, to be his people.

Remember, kingdom, God is bringing this people to be his people. I mean, think about 1 Peter 2, 9 and 10, where Peter tells them, you are a chosen race.

He's talking to people who are coming to Christ. You are a chosen race, a holy nation. And verse 10, he says, hey, once you were not a people, but now you're a people of God.

Do you see this incredible theme? Even after Jesus leaves, he's drawing his people, this people, individual people that are being saved, to be God's people.

[15 : 14] The word church is just a Greek word that's translated from, that's Ecclesia, a Greek word, which basically means an assembly or a called out assembly.

So whenever we talk about church, we're not really talking about a building or a service. What we are talking about is an assembly of people that were once strangers and aliens in rebellion, far away from God.

People that are away from source of life and are dead in sin are being brought back to life to be God's people in Christ Jesus.

It's an assembly of this kind of people. That is what a church is. By the same time, if you remember in the Old Testament, we had a major problem, right?

What was the major problem in the Old Testament? It was the people were continuously rejecting God over and over and over again. Because the problem was the heart, a heart that continuously rejected God, a heart that was broken by sin.

[16 : 23] In other words, they were just dead. And in many ways, that's how the Bible describes people in sin, that they were dead in transgressions and sin.

And here's a question. What can a dead person do to save himself? Nothing much, right? He's pretty much dead. There's nothing he can do. And that's how sin or sinner is described, as dead.

So, that was one of the biggest problems in the Old Testament. The rejection of God continuously over and over again. But you see, in Christ Jesus, what he does is, as he draws his people in, as he draws God's people into himself, he's not only making them his people, but at the same time, he's changing their hearts, the problem, to come to be under God's rule.

Now, how does he do that? How does God change people's heart? Think about Ezekiel 36 again. What is the promise in Ezekiel in the Old Testament that comes alive in Christ Jesus? He says, I will give you a new heart.

And I will put a new spirit in you. And I will remove your stubborn heart and give you an obedient heart. I will put my spirit in you. I will enable you to live by my laws.

[17 : 39] And you will obey my rules. I mean, think of the promise in Joel 2. In the last days, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. So what does Jesus do? He does what he does.

He pours out his spirit, his Holy Spirit on this people that enables them to come under God's rule, to surrender their lives, all of their lives, not just on one day, but continuously daily.

So going back to our question, who is the church? Well, it's those that have been saved through Christ, in Christ, that are being brought to be God's people, on whom the God's spirit is being poured out, that enables them to surrender their life daily and every day, in their every walk of their lives.

And that is who the church is. A group of people surrendering their life to the true king of all creation. Now, I want us to notice one thing.

What the church is, or who the church is, is not those people that come to Sunday over and over again. Who the church is, not those people that give their 100% attendance throughout the year.

[18 : 53] You see, this is not like some club where you get membership by showing up almost 10 times, where you get membership by showing up continuously and consistently. Which is why when a kid or a youth is born into a Christian family, he does not automatically become a Christian.

Church is not just another club where you become a member by yourself. And that's something for all of us to consider this morning.

Is what makes us a Christian our attendance, or is it the truth that in Christ Jesus, we are saved to be his people with his Holy Spirit that enables us to surrender every day, all of our lives.

But on the other side of that, what that also means is that regardless of who you are, what jobs you do, where you are in the social or economic or whatever, whether you are rich or poor or medium, wherever you are, when Christ, in Christ Jesus, when he makes you a people, you come with the same status as anyone else in the church.

That's something Jeremy was talking about. Hey, if you come to Christ, you're all the same. In part of the same family of God. Think of Galatians chapter 3, where Paul says, There's no more Jews or Gentiles, neither slave nor free men, but everyone is one in Christ Jesus.

[20 : 24] Whether you have become Christian recently, or whether you've been Christian your whole life, in Christ Jesus, you're part of the same family of God.

There is no one who is bigger than anyone in this church, apart from your height. That's it. So that means you can come to church, look around you, and see people, and see and know that you all, we all have been saved by faith, through grace alone, through God's grace alone, not by anything any one of us did, not by being an incredible person, but now we stand before God as his sons and daughters, being his people.

Is that something that you see when you look around? A fellow brother and a fellow sister in Christ Jesus. A family that's joined, not by blood, but by the blood of Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus.

And that's something we miss a lot, right? Because our culture has become so individualistic. Everything is so individual. Everything is so personal. It's about how you feel, or what your opinion is.

And sometimes Christianity can be that too. How you get saved, or how you grow. And it is true, there is an individual side to Christianity. By the same time, you see, you don't just get saved.

[21 : 50] What happens is, when you get saved, you get saved into a family. I mean, look at verse 19 in today's passage. It says, So then you are no longer strangers, aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God.

I mean, think of Ephesians. You were predestined to be adopted, to be sons and daughters in Christ. So in other words, one of the ways that God's people are described is those people that are being adopted to be sons and daughters in the family of God.

So if you are being adopted, if you are being adopted into a family, then you better expect to find some brothers and sisters in the dining table. Because if you are a part of a family, there will be brothers and sisters around you.

So in many sense, when you get saved, you get saved into a family. into a church. Which is why community is not just a great idea for a church.

Which is why community is not just a good strategy. A community is what a church is. It's a community of fellow believers, fellow brothers and sisters, a family brought together in Christ Jesus.

[23 : 05] So that's who the church is. An assembly of people that are saved by God in Christ Jesus, brought back to be his, God's people, that have been given the Holy Spirit that enables them to surrender their life daily, every part of their lives.

People that are brought and saved into a family to be sons and daughters of the God, of the true King of all creation. So that's who the church is. Which is great.

Now here's another question for us. So what's so special about our, so what's so special about this people? What's so special about this group of people coming together and worshiping God and being a family?

And actually I think that takes us back to the first question we were thinking about. So then what is the church? What is the church doing in this last days?

What is the purpose of the church? What is the function of the church? What is in this last days, what is the church doing or supposed to be doing in this last days?

[24 : 11] Which leads us to our final thought for today. Which is, what is the church? Now here's a question for us to think about. After Jesus died, went back to heaven and in this last days, in what way has the world changed?

In this last days, where do we see God working as you look around? Well, the answer is, it's definitely in the life of a Christian, right?

It's how an individual, through the Holy Spirit, through an incredible miracle, through the free gift of God and grace, is being saved and transformed. That is one place where you see God working actively in the world as individuals, as Christians are being saved.

By the same time, when the church gathers, that is the place where this work of God is being amplified, is being just pushed into a bigger picture.

Now what do I mean by that? So let's go back to our passage today again. Look at verse 19 to 22. Ephesians 2 again, 19 to 20. So what does Paul say? So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, okay?

[25 : 33] But you are fellow citizens with the saints and the members of the household of God, built on the foundation of apostles and prophets. Christ himself is the cornerstone of the church, okay? In whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Now what does Paul mean by temple? In simple words, temple is where the presence of God is. Temple is where God dwells. Isn't that incredible?

As the church gathers, that's where God's dwelling place is being built. Now look at verse 22 also. Paul continues, In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Now in other parts of the Bible, we do know that God's presence is given to every individual. By the same time, when the people of God gathers in a church, when people of God gathers, that presence is amplified.

That's what Paul is saying. As you're being built together, as you're gathering, it's turning into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit. Now think about it. As we gather, this is becoming a dwelling place of God.

[26 : 47] This is becoming a dwelling place of the true king of all universe. Now what is an essence of a kingdom? What is something that a kingdom needs for it to be a kingdom?

We need the king, right? Without a king, there is no kingdom. Wherever the king dwells, that's where the kingdom is. Now think about it. See, in other words, when the church gathers, and as it's becoming a dwelling place for the king, slowly, the church is becoming a place where we start to experience God's kingdom, God's rule, God's blessing.

I mean, think about how does a person come to Christ? It's, except in a very rare case, extreme rare case, a person comes to Christ in a community through the sharing of a gospel or through being impacted by another person.

That's how any person comes to Christ. I mean, think about this. Where does a Christian grow into maturity? Where does a supernatural work happens in a Christian's life as they grow and surrender their life?

It's in a community. It's a place where God's word is being taught and preached, where disciple is happening, when one-on-one Bible reading is happening, where everyone's praying for each other, where everyone's loving and giving sacrificially to each other and people maturing to be more like Christ.

[28 : 11] I mean, of course, there is an individual side to it like devotions and quiet time, but even those things are encouraged in a community. Where do you see and witness a person being transformed to be more like Christ?

It's in a church. Or where do you see God working in another person's life in incredible miracle, miraculous way? It's in a community. which is why testimonies are so beautiful.

It tells us of each of us how good God is, of how incredibly powerful he's working in each other's life. Testimonies are powerful, which could be one conversation for all of us to have after church to ask each other, hey, what's your testimony?

How did you come to Christ? Or what is God doing in your life right now? It's an incredible question to ask each other. So you see, church is a place where you get to start experiencing the kingdom of God.

But it's not just that, right? It's not just the place where you experience God's kingdom, but from the outside, from the world, from the point of view of the world, it is also the place where the kingdom of God is being seen.

[29 : 26] Think about this. In the Old Testament, the church, sorry, the nation of Israel, they were meant to be a light to the Gentiles, to other nations. They were meant to be a nation for other nations to look at so that they can see what it meant to be God's people and for other nations to be drawn into God.

And in the same way, the church is still the same. For the world to see the church and see what it means to be part of God's kingdom. For the world to look at the church and see what it means to be under God's rule and blessing.

I mean, think of John 17 where Jesus prays for the future believers. In other words, Jesus prays for us where he says, I in them, you in me, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you send me and love them even as you love me.

Jesus is saying, I pray that these people would come together as one in perfect unity. Why? So that the world can see that Jesus is a true God and that Jesus has loved his people. So that the world can see the love of Christ in the church and they can be drawn into the church, into Christ, in the gospel.

Isn't that an incredible thing to be part of this church? For the world to see the kingdom, for the world to see the gospel being lived out in a community as God's people.

[30 : 49] But you might say, and people might say, hey, Alan, in history and even in present times, we have actually seen church doing terrible, terrible things.

We have heard of abuses, failures on leaders and people. The church is not exactly done really well. And we have seen few churches do that.

Or maybe you'll say, when I look around, I don't really see the kingdom happening anywhere. Well, let's look at God's word again. Look at verse 22.

What does Paul say? He says, in him, you are also being built together into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit. You see, we are being built together.

We're not done and finished. We're being built. In other words, in many ways, the church does not fully display the kingdom of God.

[31 : 52] There is brokenness and there is still the effect of sin. If you remember, last week, we were talking about how Jesus deals with the cause of sin, a heart that is broken, but the effects of sin still remains.

There's still brokenness. And what we see in a church, what the world sees in a church, is almost like a shadow or a glimpse of what the kingdom of God looks like. And when I say that, I don't mean what they see is a fake.

What I am saying is that what they see is almost like a trailer or a demo. It is the real thing. But at the same time, it's still a glimpse of what the kingdom of God is like.

It's the here and not yet idea. You see, people are being healed. People are being transformed in the church. People are finding hope and rest. And at the same time, people are being transformed and surrendering their lives through the Holy Spirit in a miraculous way.

But at the same time, we are still being built together. We're still being built. It's like those construction signs, right? I think we should have one of those signs outside our church which says, work in progress.

[32 : 57] Boom. Hey, we're still working, guys. We're still working on each other and ourselves. And it's one of the reasons why we do confession and assurance a few minutes ago.

It's why we do repentance. It's not just something we do once in a Sunday like Jeremy was saying. It is our lifestyle because we are broken. It is a lifestyle of a Christian to repent, continuously to come back to God and say we need Him.

And through repentance and confession as we become more and more like Christ, it is our lifestyle. And this is actually really precious. You see, this repentance, this brokenness, it's actually really precious.

Do you know why? It's precious because it does not only show the world what the kingdom of God is like, but at the same time, it also points people to this future kingdom that is coming in Christ Jesus.

You see, it just, the church does not only give a glimpse of what it means to be God's people living under His rule and blessing, but it also shows the world, actually points the world to the future, to the perfect kingdom that Jesus is bringing with Him in His second coming.

[34 : 11] The church points the world to the coming of Christ where the presence of sin is no more, where the effects of sin is no more, where there is no more pain, no more suffering, when there is perfect unity with our King and our God, when there is a community, when heaven comes down and there is joy and peace and final, the true rest.

the church points the world to that kingdom at the same time. You see, the church is almost like a billboard, a signboard telling the world, hey, there is a kingdom that is coming.

Yes, we are broken. Yes, we are repenting, but our hope lies not in this world, but our hope lies in that kingdom when Jesus returns and bring this perfect kingdom, when this sin and brokenness is no more, when sin and suffering is no more.

And we do that not just by preaching and teaching, we do that by living in such a way that shows the world our hope and our security and our trust is in the eternal life that comes with Jesus.

How do we live our lives? Do we live our lives invested in this world or do we live our lives invested in the one that is coming later? a life that is more real, a life that is so much more real than what you see around right now, a kingdom that is more real, a peace that is so much more permanent, a healing of bodies and our hearts that is more real than anything this world can provide.

[35 : 45] Think of Matthew 5, verse 14, where Jesus tells his people, you are the light of the world, you are the city set on the hill, that cannot be hidden.

You see, the church is not something that's hidden. We are set up on a hill to be a light for the world, to see Christ, to see this kingdom that's coming. So what is a church?

It's a place where the kingdom of God is experienced by the same time seen by the world, pointing the world to the ultimate kingdom that comes with Christ Jesus.

So brothers and sisters in Christ, what is the church to you? What is the church to you this morning? Is it just another group that you attend or just another group that's part of your life?

Or is it that one group, a community that shapes all of your life? Do we approach church as a place where we just come to consume and give our attendance? Or is it a place where we come to experience the kingdom of God by growing together, loving sacrificially, pouring our lives to one another, considering each other better than ourselves?

[36 : 59] That's Philippians 2, right? Do we look at a church as a place where the world is looking into to see the kingdom of God? Do we see the church as a place where the world is looking to see the gospel being lived out, to seeing the gospel being, to come alive within a community?

You see, one of the best, well, I would not say the best, arguably, but it is one of the best evangelistic thing we can do is to come together as a church for the world to see the gospel come alive in the group of people, in God's people.

And if you are here for the first time or if you are exploring faith, here's an invitation to you to be one of God's people, to come be part of God's people, to come back to whom you belong to, where you will find life, where you find hope, where you find rest, especially in a place like Hong Kong where it's so busy.

It's not just work, it's not just life, rest from just thousands of problems in life, relational problems, family problems, all sorts of problems.

Jesus promises rest, come and find rest in Him. Here's an invitation for you to come and find joy and peace like nowhere else you can find on this earth, to find eternal life, to find purpose.

[38 : 23] In Christ Jesus, you are called to be part of His family, to be called sons and daughters of the true King. And for all of us to come and love the church, to come and see the church as what it truly is, to come with gratitude that this is an assembly of people being saved, being built together, experiencing God's kingdom, showing the God's kingdom to the world.

You know, a few weeks back we had a meeting where we were talking about, hey, how do you come to church on a Sunday morning? Do we just rush in or do we actually come with prayers? Praying to God, praying to Holy Spirit, saying, God, who can I encourage this morning?

Who can I pray for this morning? Whom can I pour out in my life this morning too? How do we come to church? How do we look at church? And the big idea is this, come, love the church, come with gratefulness for the church, come and be part of the church because this is where the kingdom of God is experienced and at the same time seen by the world, pointing the world to the true and real kingdom that's coming in Christ Jesus.

Hey, can I pray for us right now? As the band comes up, let me just lead us in prayer. Father, we come before you and what an incredible gift that you have given us in church, Lord.

And Father, we realize that we become part of the church not by being good people, not by doing good works, but completely by, through you, Jesus Christ, through your grace, free gift, you call us into your family to be sons and daughters of the God most high.

[40 : 10] Father, thank you that we get to experience your grace and your kingdom as we gather as your people. And Father, we pray this morning, God, that you would build this church to be a church that displays your kingdom, that whenever people come in, that they would experience your goodness and your kingdom.

And as the world looks into this church, that they would see the goodness of God, that they would see your gospel being come alive. God, we thank you that you call us to be your people.