

# Gospel Shaped Church

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] The scripture reading comes from Colossians chapter 3 verses 12 to 17. Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

And above all this put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

And be thankful, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. This is the word of God.

Before I do that pastoral prayer and we kind of look at this passage, I just want to say a massive thank you to you as a congregation.

[ 1 : 2 7 ] Fiona and I and Etienne have just been so blessed by able to take some time away. As you can see, we've had a little bit of transition in our family.

And during this time, we've been able to really spend a lot of time together as a family, and particularly even in the UK. Some of you know my dad had a stroke back in August, and we were able to really spend a lot of time with him.

And just the physios who are looking after him just said, your timing of coming has just been absolutely miraculous, because it was the perfect time to come. And as I was looking at my dad, who basically, it was like having two kind of babies in the house.

I don't know if you know about strokes, but my dad's been stripped of everything. He can almost, he's learning how to walk again. He's learning how to dress himself again. He's learning how to go to the toilet by himself.

And yet in the midst of all of this, he said to me something just that really, really struck me. He said, you know, I've been stripped of everything. You know, when you're 76 years old, you've got a lot of life behind you.

[ 2 : 3 7 ] And to be kind of back like a baby, it's very humbling. But he said, I've been stripped of everything. But in this place, I realize that when you have nothing left, Jesus is all that you need.

And as we kind of think about all that's going on at the moment, I want us to pray just in the light of that and to just ask God to come and be with us and to work in our city.

So would you come and pray with me, the pastoral prayer? And don't just listen to me praying. Let's just pray this together and I'll lead you. So please bow your heads and let's pray.

Father, we live in what seem to be very troubled times. A lot of fear. A lot of suspicion. A lot of division. A lot of criticism.

And yet this is the world that you came in. Your son, Jesus Christ, came. And you said and you called a group of people, your disciples, a messy bunch of people.

[ 3 : 55 ] And you said, my peace I give to you. I don't give as the world gives. I give as I give. And Father, you gave Jesus to be our prince of peace.

We pray, Lord, that you would draw near to us today as your people in all our anxieties, in all our uncertainties, in all our failures. Bring us your peace.

Because if we have you, then we have everything that we need, Lord. Lord, you're our refuge in the storm. You're a firm foundation. You're an anchor that is never swayed.

Forgive us, Father, where we have put our hopes on shifting sands. We have so much from you, and yet we feel that our life is more in the gifts you've given us than in you, ourself.

We look to our stuff that we have, the plans that we have, the certainties that we have, that you tell us that our life is in you. Help us to believe that, Lord.

[ 4 : 57 ] Help us to go deeper in our hearts, Lord. Because you are rock solid. Teach us to trust you, the one who's the never failing rock of ages.

Drive the gospel deeper into our hearts. So that even if everything is stripped away from us and our city and all these other things, if we have you, we have everything that we need. Lord, we just completely pray for Wuhan and for all those who are affected there by the virus.

We pray for our brothers and sisters, particularly in that province. Lord, I pray that you would be their confidence at this time, that they would know that their lives are utterly in your hands and they are immortal until you decide it is their time to go.

May they mirror your sacrificial love for the people there by not running away from people, but running towards them with your love. Protect them, we pray, and even in this terrible situation, would you use it for good?

Would you draw people to yourself through this? We pray for the medical workers. We pray for the government officials. We pray that you protect them. You give them wisdom. You give them grace.

[ 6 : 09 ] You keep their hearts from fear. Just give them wisdom to know how to treat patients and how to deal with the situation wisely, Lord. And we pray, Lord, against fear just further dividing our society.

Prince of peace, would you come? And Lord, we also want to pray, I want to pray for India too at this time, Lord. It just, there's a country with so much beauty but so much darkness, Lord.

Just even this last week with the hostage taking of 20 children, the beating of a man's wife to death, the persecution of believers, the protests of a religious freedom, we just pray for our partners in the church in Delhi, for Akshay and Shruti there.

We just pray, would you give their church boldness and confidence to witness to you in the midst of all of this situation. Use them to release many from darkness into your light.

And Father, finally, we just want to pray also for the students here. Lord, even in the disruption of their classes and kids not being able to go to school, we pray in the midst of this turmoil that they would just have, again, this courage and this confidence that even when it feels like there's so little time and there's so much pressure on, that they can know that you've got this one.

[ 7 : 38 ] That their life, their grades, their future is utterly in your hands and they can trust you. Thank you that you are our Prince of Peace.

You are our Rock of Ages. In Jesus' name. Amen. Great. So if you have your bulletin open, we're going to be looking through at this passage.

And we're really following on from the series that we've started, the Watermark Essentials. And if you haven't been here, like me, you can listen back to some of the previous sermons.

And we're going through the three core values that we have as a church, which are... Very good. Okay. A few of you. Okay.

The rest of you can just look on the banner and cheat. But what, as Kevin said earlier, there is a virus which is infecting us.

[ 8 : 42 ] There's a virus which is destroying and devastating relationships, communities, individuals' lives throughout this city. And it's a virus which is more significant than the coronavirus.

And that is sin. And as Kevin said earlier, sin is not just what the Bible says, sin is not just doing bad stuff. It's a heart that wants to go our own way, wants to rely on ourselves, wants to live life in our timing, in our way, in the way that we think things should happen and rejects the way God has designed us and called us into relationship with himself.

And we've seen over the last few weeks that in the gospel message, the gospel message is not good advice to try and self-cure yourself because the disease is too deadly for your little bit of moral improvement to fix you.

But the gospel is this good news that Jesus Christ, he lived the life that you and I couldn't live free from this virus. And he died the death that you and I should have died so that we could have this restored, healed relationship with him and with each other.

And as we believe and trust in this gospel message in Christ, that gospel then is not just the entrance point into the community of faith, it's also the power to transform our lives.

[ 10 : 18 ] And that's what we've been looking at. And the power to make us more and more like Jesus. And so I want to show today, we've been looking at gospel, how that gospel message then flows into our life as a church in the community.

So I'm going to look at three things, okay? It's a classic sermon with three points. So you're not going to be too confused. The first one, a chosen people formed by the gospel, a messy people, a sinful people changed by the gospel, and then a word-filled people speaking the gospel.

Okay? So have your passage open and we're going to have a look through. So a chosen people. Just some background.

The book of Colossians is written by Paul to a small house church in a place in Turkey, which some of us have been very close to, called Colossae. And this church is probably a mix of Jews and non-Jews, Gentiles, in the midst of the pagan Roman Empire.

And Paul has spent three chapters, as Kevin said last week, telling the Colossians that Jesus is so much better than all the philosophies that are going around.

[ 11 : 31 ] These were philosophies which told you if you just rely on yourself, if you just get a bit of self-improvement, you can make your life a better you. And they had these things that if you're keeping the rules, then you're kind of in, in the in crowd.

And if you're breaking the rules, then you're out. And the Jews had certain rules, like don't eat pork, circumcise, keep the Sabbath. And the non-Jews had certain rules, like eat pork, don't restrict my diet, like don't impose on my freedom, worship all these other gods, don't kind of restrict yourself down to one.

The Jewish people had a license to performance of everything that they wanted to do through the rules. Some people wanted to do everything breaking the rules. And the clash of cultures and rules often resulted in division and separation.

But Paul has been saying that now in the gospel, Jesus who's the supreme Lord of all creation, he's the ruler and sustainer of everything, through his death, he has brought together these people who are totally divided, and he's brought them together in one radically different community.

Not based on a performance to a whole lot of rules, not based on a license to sin and do whatever you want, but based on the gospel, and this is what we call church. So, if I were to ask you, what is church?

[ 13 : 07 ] What would you normally say? Anyone? Sorry. You're whispering very loudly. Sorry?

A community of believers? Where you get baptized? Yes. We have all kinds of definitions of church.

Some of us think it's a building, some of us actually think it's a meeting place. Many of us will say, oh, it's a community of believers, but functionally, we treat it as something different. But, here's Paul's definition of church, or one of his.

He says, verse 12, put on then, as God's chosen people, holy and beloved, or dearly loved.

God's chosen people, holy and beloved. And what he's doing, he's taking a title from the Old Testament for Israel. People who were chosen out of many nations to know and be in this covenant relationship with the living God.

[ 14 : 18 ] They had to be given his word and his promises, and then to live, they were called to then live a distinctive lifestyle among the nations, so that other people would know that he truly is God. And what he does, what Paul does, is he takes this same title, and now he says to this little group of believers in Turkey, and he says, just as God chose Israel to be his special people, so God has chosen you.

He's chosen you to be his people. You know, when I was growing up, and I'm sure you do this in Hong Kong as well, but we used to play football in the playground.

And so whenever we'd start playing football, people would pick teams. And you know, there was always one kid who was left at the end who nobody wanted because he was useless at football.

And everyone would be going, oh, you have him. You have him. No, no, I don't want him. You have him. And the thing is, what God comes along, and he says, you are like that kid.

That kid is you and me. Because your performance really doesn't stand up to anything. But I'll have you. I'll have you for my team.

[ 15 : 36 ] Not based on anything that you have done. Not based on anything of how great you are, but based on something of how great I am.

And how great my love is for you. You know, the Israelites, in the book of Deuteronomy, God says to them, I didn't choose you because you're more numerous, because you are amazing.

I chose you because I loved you. I chose you because I loved you to show my power and my glory to people around. Which means this.

Church is not my idea or your idea. It's God's idea. And church is not just a place you go to. It's an identity. It's a people you belong to.

Jesus didn't save us to go to a meeting once a week. Did you know that? He saved us to be part of his people. random selfish individuals brought together to be his family for his glory.

[ 16 : 42 ] It's his choice. His initiative. And it's not just an identity initiated by God. He then says, your chosen people, holy.

Do you know what holy means? Holy means set apart for God. Belonging to him. We're his. You know, in the Old Testament, there's Moses. When he sees this burning bush, he comes and approaches the burning bush.

And God says to him, take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground. Why is it holy? It's holy because God's presence is there.

It's reserved for God. If you are a Christian, you and I are reserved for God. Did you know that? His church is reserved for God.

That is an incredible privilege. You know, when I married my wife, I became set apart for her. I'm hers and she's mine. Now the thing is, that cannot just be an idea in my head.

[ 17 : 52 ] That shapes me. I can no longer do everything I could do when I was single. If I try, things won't go well. Because I've got a new identity.

I'm not my own, Paul says. I was bought at a price. Which when we're talking about church, means this. If we're holy to God, it means this is God's church.

It's not my church. It's not Kevin's church. It's not the elder's church. It's his church. Which means something even more uncomfortable.

It means, if this is truly his church, then there should always be something in church which will make you uncomfortable. Do you know why? Because if everything's comfortable for a sinful person like me, I've probably made it into my church, not God's church.

Right? Because I want it the way I want it, not the way God wants it. And so like, we come along on a Sunday morning and we go, I wonder if the sermon's gonna be good today.

[ 19 : 01 ] Or you're in your CG and you're like, I just don't click with my CG leader. I think I'd like to go and join another CG. Rather than going, God, this is about you.

So how can I worship you and serve you and love the people around me? How can I love even these people I don't always get on with? Well, because we're holy people.

We belong to him. We're his. We're chosen. And also, thirdly, he says here, we're beloved. We're dearly loved. Do you know Jesus loves this church?

Oscar knows it. Just look around you, okay? Look around you at the motley crew that is around you right now and say to the person next to you, God says you are part of his chosen, holy, dearly loved people.

And, God says you are part of your kingdom. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen. He's chosen.

[ 20 : 15 ] Now, I know somebody, I know somebody who is considering donating their kidney for their brother to save his life because even though the operation is very dangerous and could have consequences for him, he loves his brother that much that he's willing to do it.

Do you know, Jesus didn't just give a kidney for us, for his church. He gave his life for us. That's how much he loves and delights in the church.

And he doesn't delight in it just worldwide, although that's true. He delights in a specific individual church. Regardless of your sin, regardless of your past, regardless of anything you have done before, his love is upon us if you are a believer in him.

He died so that the person sitting next to you could be sitting next to you here right now because he wanted them in this church. Did you know that? You might not want them in this church.

You might be wishing they were in another church, but Jesus wanted them here. And it's his church. It's not our church. And so the question is, if I love Jesus, I'm called to love those he loves.

[ 21 : 38 ] So do I love them? Do I see them as his family? How does the gospel help us to become better lovers of those God loves?

Let's have a look at that. We said the gospel is what creates this community. We're chosen, we're holy, we're dearly loved. We're people from many, many different backgrounds. And second point, we're sinful people changed by the gospel.

You know, Kevin said last week that it's easy for people to believe we become a Christian through just believing this gospel message and then we kind of move on to like a whole load of working hard spiritual practices, pray hard, do a lot of good moral behavior.

And it's very easy in the same way to do that. When we join the church, we come to join the church through believing the gospel and then we think that actually we kind of carry on as church through being very moral and good and behaving well.

That's why some non-believers have said to me, I don't want to come to church because I'm not good enough. You ever had people say that? Do you know, church should be the very place that messed up people feel most welcome.

[ 22 : 51 ] Right? Why? Well, let's have a look at this. Paul knows this. He says, verse 12, put on then as God's chosen, holy and beloved. Put on. You know, when you get up in the morning, you're going to look in your wardrobe and you decide what you're going to wear.

Right? You have to put something on. What Paul is saying is, every morning, you have to decide what are you going to put on, what attitude you're going to dress yourself in.

Am I going to dress myself in what Christ has done for my identity in the gospel or just in my own selfish ways? So he says, put on then, what does he say you've got to put on?

Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive.

If you have a look at that list of qualities, how many of you would like to have those qualities in your relationships? Okay, good number. Well, just think about it.

[ 23 : 57 ] Why do you need to have compassionate hearts? Because people that you come into, even today, are more broken than you realize.

Why do you need kindness? Because there's going to be a whole lot of times when you're tempted to be harsh and judgmental. Why do you need meekness? Because you're going to be tempted to try and push your own way forward all the time.

Paul says, bear with one another in love. That means be in the long haul with people. Don't just tolerate them. Keep persevering in loving them. Don't back out. Now, why do you need to command someone to bear with people?

Because sometimes people can be unbearable, right? Especially Christians. Right? You see, living out what God has called us to is hard work.

It's messy because we're a bunch of sinners. And if you put one sinner and another sinner together in the same room, it's like putting stones together. And you rub them long enough, what do you get?

[ 25 : 05 ] Sparks or fireworks, right? Right? And in one sense, what Paul knows is the reality that actually, if you are in church long enough, there will be conflict.

There will be times it rubs up against you. And if you never have conflict in your CGs, your community groups, then that's a clear sign to you that you're simply either not close enough to each other or not honest enough with each other.

because at Watermark, we've really tried to build a stronger sense of community. And I don't know about you, but community is such a blessing to us.

Like, while we've been away, just guys have been amazing. But there is a danger for us, and the danger is that we surround ourselves with people we like and people who are like us, and we call it Christian community.

Church the way we want it. You know, you go to community lunch, and who do you sit with? You just sit with the people who are just like you. But you have to think what Paul is saying.

[ 26 : 10 ] Has that displayed the gospel where Jew and non-Jew, where rich and poor, where single and married are brought together in Jesus? I might want to put to you that maybe that isn't gospel created community.

Sometimes we may be creating our own community, and just avoiding the rub, the awkwardness, the challenge of Christ-centered community.

Because we're a bunch of sinners. But, God's chosen people, if I left you with that, that would just depress you. But God's chosen people are his means to take the gospel deeper into your heart.

Tim Keller, and I know we've said this a number of times, so I think it's just helpful, summarizes the gospel as you're more sinful than you dare believe, and you're more loved than you dare hope. Right?

The gospel tells us that we're sinners. You need a grace. But actually, I think in practice, most of us don't really think we're that sinful. Or, we actually don't really believe that other people in the church are that sinful until you experience it.

[ 27 : 24 ] until you experience something of the difference of them. And it brings out your own sin. And sometimes, it's not even their own sin, it's sometimes the fact that they're just different from you.

But you see, your heart gets exposed. You know, I don't think I'm that judgmental. But I was once asked to usher at a wedding of some Nigerian Christian friends of a friend who had very little money.

And so I agreed to help out. And so the wedding was 11, I arrived at 10, there was no one. 10.15, 10.30, 10.45, 10.50, no one turned up.

About 10.50, the groom arrived. And then, there was kind of this slow trickle of people suddenly started arriving. About 11.15, things started kicking off a little bit. So I decided to go down five minutes down the road to the reception venue just to see what was going on.

I walked into the hall. There was nothing. There were tables just kind of up at the side and there was no one. And I thought, man, the reception's starting in like an hour.

[ 28 : 30 ] And so I just started taking down the tables, putting up the tables and started putting them out. And then at about 12 o'clock, some ladies came in. And they came in with food and they came in with some tablecloths.

And I thought, great, now they're going to kind of come and help. So they put everything down on the table and then they started doing their hair for the next half an hour. And so I'm taking everything.

There's 150 people at this. I'm taking all the cutlery around. I'm putting it all up on there. And people are going, okay, they're coming in like five minutes. And I'm rushing to and from.

And I ask one of them, hey, could you help me? And she kind of takes down one plate, puts one plate down and carries on doing her hair. And while I'm doing this, I get to the end of it and finally I just put down the last kind of set, the last table and then the bride and groom and the other people walked in.

And here I am like collapsed on the floor and everyone else is happy. But I was furious. Someone said to me, oh, thank you very much for helping.

- [ 29 : 33 ] And I'm like, that's not what I need. And you see, in my heart, I was judging and I'm just being honest, I was judging every Nigerian at that point. But let me tell you, in what seemed to me as a British guy, disorganization and just cultural difference, for me was actually a gospel moment because it started exposing something in my own heart.
- Because when people don't perform up to the expectations you have, maybe they're good, maybe they're bad expectations, when someone even sins against you, and it wasn't really sin against me, even then, doesn't their sin or their difference start provoking your own?
- And you slide off what Kevin called that gospel horse that he talked about last week, where you slide either into performance or into license. When you go into performance, you just start judging people and condemning them for their behavior, don't you?
- Telling everyone else about them. or then we slide the other way, justifying the reason why I'm angry because it's righteous anger.
- Don't we? And when we're doing that, what happens in that moment, I'm pressing what I call a gospel delete button. Because at that moment, if I allow those things to carry on in my heart, what happens is my spiritual veins begin to harden.
- [ 31 : 11 ] My love for Jesus gets infected by that sin virus. And what happens is it begins to destroy not only my joy in Christ, but it also destroys the community around.
- And Paul here says, if any of you has a complaint, what do you do? Forgive one another. And he knows this is really hard.
- So what he says, he says it again. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Because when we get offended, when anger happens, when complaining arises in my heart and I allow it to fester, do you know that reveals to me that I've lost sight of the gospel?
- people. But Paul says, forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. How did the Lord forgive me? When I was at my best or when I was at my worst? Right? And if we don't get this, have a look at this whole list.
- [ 32 : 19 ] Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiveness. Do you know that every single one of those are the characteristics of how God in Christ has treated us?
- I mean, let me just take like one verse which shows you this. Romans 2 verse 4. Do you presume, this is Paul talking, on the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?
- I wonder, do you know the kindness of God towards you? Do you know the patience of God towards you?
- Before he chose you, he knew how impatient you could be. He knew how unkind you could be. He knew that you can be unbearable at times.
- And if you're married and you don't believe me, just ask your spouse. What? God, God, in his great mercy, because he's rich in love and compassion, he still died to bring people like you and me, he still chose you and me to be part of his family.
- [ 33 : 40 ] So when we're impatient, when we're unkind, when we won't forgive, it's a sign that we've lost sight of the immense nature of his kindness and patience and forgiveness towards us.
- Let me just make that personal. Some of you here have had issues with people in the church, maybe even your family, maybe your spouses.
- Some of you have had needs which you felt were unmet. Some of you have felt that people just were judgmental or too harsh or they didn't care enough. There were things which was left said or that you wish had been said, things that were unsaid that you wish hadn't been said.



And what God wants to bring to you is first of all, he wants to bring the gospel of his kindness to you. He wants to tell you first of all that his arms are open wide for you.

And in these moments what he's trying to do is he wants you to run to him, to be honest with him, to allow him to come and expose your heart and as you preach the promises of God that you are chosen by him, dearly loved by him, he begins to expose you so that you begin to see that as you dwell on his glory of his forgiveness and grace, it begins to melt your heart.

[ 35 : 18 ] Because it's only as I see that I'm more sinful than I dare believe and yet I'm more loved than I could ever possibly imagine that I can begin to extend that to other people who I think are far more sinful than I dare believe but are also far more loved than I could ever possibly imagine.

And as we do that it teaches us not to wash our hands of people but to show grace, kindness, compassion, persistent grace to people.

You know, there's never been a person who when there's been a conflict or an issue who has run away from that or withdrawn from that and withdrawn from community who has ever fallen more in love with Jesus because of that decision.

And there has never been a person who experiences the pain of community and yet runs to Jesus in the midst of it in desperation seeking him who through that experience as they've allowed the gospel to deepen their heart go in their hearts and lead them to seek to love others who has not gone deeper in the gospel and has not seen the love of Jesus more beautiful than they realized it was before.

Because you know if you have a conflict with someone and you work through it what happens to that relationship? Doesn't it go deeper? Doesn't it go deeper? And so this is what God wants to do with us in community.

[ 37 : 00 ] He wants to both take his love deeper into us through each other through our messiness to show you his grace in multi-color and then to share that with each other.

But how does that not lead us to what we called license to sin before? Like you know someone comes to you and says hey I didn't tell you I wasn't turning up to help with kids ministry today because I thought you could learn patience.

Don't go there okay? That's not the gospel. But we come to the how do we stop just sliding into well you just got to forgive people and let them let them off everything.

How do we stop that becoming licensed to sin? The third thing the final thing we're not just a chosen holy dearly loved people we're not just a sinful people that God wants to change through even the rub of each other we're also people who speak the gospel to each other.

Let me ask you what's the difference between doing Airbnb and dwelling in a place? You can answer. Sorry.

[ 38 : 13 ] Yeah one's permanent the other one's temporary. Airbnb you're there for one, two, three days maybe a week but you dwell in the place you unpack your bags you settle in you're just camped out there.

It's home. Here's what Paul says in verse 16. Let the word of Christ Airbnb in you. Doesn't say that.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. What is he saying? He's saying this church Airbnb is like okay God's word Sunday and then maybe I'll do midweek once you know once or twice.

No he's saying no no no it's got to dwell so that your community is so camped out in God's words that it's filling your WhatsApp that it's filling your prayers that it's filling your community life together. It cannot be Sunday Airbnb only.

How does it dwell with us? He says through teaching admonishing and singing. That's why we sing together so that Christ may dwell in our hearts.

[ 39 : 30 ] Who does he say the word of Christ should dwell in? you. You there is plural. So he's not talking to the pastor of Colossian Watermark Church.

Who is he talking saying it's the responsibility of mine to help the gospel be taught and admonished? Whose responsibility is that? After me say mine.

Mine. whose responsibility is it? Okay. Good. It's my responsibility. Why is it all of our responsibilities?

Because I have a gospel delete button and so do you. Every day it resets again and again. Sin is this virus is deceitful because every single day I am tempted to forget the mercies the patience the kindness of God to me.

You've got work deadlines and a boss who is breathing fire and you're tempted to fear and believe that your boss determines your life. You look over your peers how their kids are doing and you're tempted to feel like oh I'm behind my kids are behind I've got to prove myself we've got to somehow do something to catch up.

[ 40 : 58 ] It doesn't matter how long you've been a Christian today tomorrow and every day this week there's going to be moments which are going to come and the gospel in those moments flies out of the window and fear flies in unforgiveness flies in anger flies in insecurity flies in unforgiveness flies in and the heart can begin to harden and you know what I lose joy I lose peace I lose confidence in Christ and what do I need I need a group of people a chosen holy dearly loved group of people who are going to come to me and remind me of the incredible kindness and grace and patience of God himself who come to me and bring the gospel to bear saying Chris don't fear doesn't matter what people say about you your identity is secure you're chosen you're holy you're dearly loved so don't let Satan walk all over you this week rise up overcome in him because in

Christ you are more than a conqueror because he has done everything for you don't we need that so let me ask you who are you doing that with who are you encouraging in the gospel daily things I'm just really encouraging our community I just see that happening in just so many different ways and I want to encourage us as a church just to keep going with that do you know who you are called to gospel to bring the gospel to bear are you doing it because our brothers and sisters we need it it's the only way this community can flourish but let me finish with there's one of those things that it says the word of Christ dwells in us which is maybe a little more challenging Paul says admonish one another do you know what to admonish means it means to correct to bring someone back to the right path you know some people think Christians should be nice to each other we think that niceness is like a like a

Christian virtue I'm British the British invented niceness that's why we say sorry all the time only Canadians say sorry more and yet niceness is not a fruit of the spirit love joy peace patience niceness it's not there because sometimes niceness can actually mask our lack of love for our brothers and sisters and I'm guilty of this as anyone you know Fiona and I we try and involve other people in our lives and and one of the things that has happened in the past is people are involved in their lives they see Fiona and myself fighting and I'm generally trying to hide it away Fiona's like out and proud like no we're we're gonna do it if we're gonna do it do it in front of everyone which is good I mean because I remember one partway through one fight and you know

I'd gone off and you know we separated and and one of the people who was who was with us came up to me and said hey Chris you know I've just noticed that sometimes you struggle with really listening and trying to understand Fiona's perspective I think you should actually stop thinking about yourself and start trying to think about your wife here obviously my response was filled with kind of thank you every defensive bone in my body was kind of raised but you know that person loved me because that person loved me enough to not let the sin virus harden my heart and break into my relationship with my wife and as I went away and thought about it I realized she had loved me more than all the people who stayed silent about my sin and that caused me to turn back to

Jesus and say God forgive me and as I saw that I'm more sinful than I realized I also realized but God still loves me he still accepts me and as I could go and apologize to my wife do you see the gospel had begun to go work deeper in my heart and actually work deeper into our relationship you see you see that's it he agrees you see this is what it is to be church some of us here we need to repent of our niceness we need to repent that we've not allowed the gospel to give us courage in a loving relationship and I'm not talking about being harsh I'm talking about being kind but we need to have people that love us enough to bear with us and forgive us to keep sharing the gospel with us to admonish one another without it being harsh without it being judgmental and this is the community that Jesus died for that is more precious than a thousand of the greatest sermons you could ever listen to this is the church

[ 46 : 47 ] Jesus died for a sinful messy bunch of people but who through his power and his power alone can begin to change and we are instruments in each other's lives to enable that to happen and Jesus gets the glory because nobody's going to look at us and say wow you're amazing but they'll look at him and say Jesus it says here whatever you do in word or do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the father through him that's what church is about the glory of God through a broken messy people like us let's just pray actually on the screen there's a few questions here and I want you to think about these questions in the light of the grace of God

I want you to take just a minute to allow God just to speak to your heart do you see the immensity of what Christ has done to bring you into his people and do you see how he wants to use you and he wants to work in his people and I want to give you just a minute to just do business with God right now some of you have unforgiveness in your hearts God wants you to run to him today not to let that go another day where you just kind of put that off and brush it under the carpet some of you have got hurts some of you realize you'd be more wrapped up in yourself than really thinking about anybody else some of you just feel there have been things in church which have hurt you and just wonder whether

God really loves you through because you've seen his people hurt you but actually God wants to bring healing to you today spend time with him right now to you Amen.

Father, I just want to thank you. That you would actually choose to choose us.

Thank you for your love. Because without it, Lord, we would just be lost in. And bitterness and harshness and judgmentalism.

[ 50 : 43 ] A whole load of things which just tear people apart. But because of what you have done. Because of your great love for us.

We are not consumed, but you bring us the power to change. The power to live life. With a new perspective.

I pray, Father, for those of us who actually struggle with what it really means to be this people. We struggle with the people in our community groups.

We struggle with things not being the way we want them to be. I pray, come and minister. And show, Lord, that you are everything that we need.

I pray for those of us, Lord, who are sometimes cowardly. When we see things in other people's lives, we either respond with harshness or respond with silence.

[ 51 : 52 ] But I pray, teach us to know how to love with such great compassion. That we have such great boldness. Because we have such a great savior.

That our identity is not at stake. When we come and share just how to point each other back to you. Make us a people who are willing to be courageous with the gospel.

Give us your power. Work in this church, Father, that your name might be glorified. Thank you for your goodness. In Jesus' name.

Amen.