

We are going to finish up our study on the book of Hebrews. This is week 20. We've just been preaching through, kind of line by line, this book. So if this is your first time with us here this morning, you get to hear the ending first. And so, it's kind of like reading the last chapter. And so, if you have your Bibles, flip over to chapter 13. Now, the first time I read through Hebrews chapter 13, it has the feel of a man trying to have a two hour conversation on a cell phone, whose batteries are running out. He's kind of hurried, he's all over the map. He basically...I mean this is how it flows. He says, "Hey, be hospitable to strangers...and visit those who are in prison...and guard your marriage...and don't love money...and watch out for the tabernacle...and it should be grace alone...and so let's go outside the camp with Jesus..." I mean, it is all over the map. It's got that feel of trying to do too much too soon or what I honestly thought of when I first read it was if I was dying and on my death bed and it came out of nowhere and my daughter came in, how much I would try to unpack on her very quickly. "Watch out for boys...." You know, just try to quickly unpack on her before I gave way to death or the second life. And that's kind of the feel this text has. It's very quick. But studying it a little bit more and digging into it, here's what it's going to try to address. It's going to try to address how you and I, as believers in Jesus, should relate to those outside of faith, and also how we relate to those inside of our faith. And so, it's going to kind of separate our lives out into two relationships: relationships with those outside of Jesus and relationships with those inside. So, those outside of the covenant community and those inside the covenant community, and that's what it's going to address. And so, here's what we're going to do. We're just going to walk through this thing line by line, and we're going to stop and talk about it until we're done. We're going to do all of 13. Alright, let's go.

The first batch of Scripture deals with our relationships outside of the covenant community, those who believe in Jesus. And the first verse is going to get me into one of my big areas of passion. So, here we go, "*Let love of the brethren continue.*" So, we do have this responsibility to love one another. This word "brethren" is the word "brother." We have been adopted by God, through Christ as co-heirs, that's what the Scriptures say, so you and I are brothers and sisters in Christ. So, this first little line does say there's a responsibility between you and I to do life together. But then, look at the next verse, because he just says in passing to get to what he wants to say. Here's what he wants to say in verse 2, "*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*" Okay, he's going to say, "In terms of our relationship with those outside of the Christian community that we should show hospitality. This is the idea of having people into our homes who are outside of the covenant community.

Since I have been here, three years now, I have appealed, pleaded and mocked the fear-mongers among Evangelicals that would treat those outside of Christ as having the sin disease that we can catch like the flu. And so, it's always this idea of, "Hey, you had better not hang out with somebody who likes the taste of beer or your kids are going to drink a lot of beer, listen to Metallica and kill you at 2:00 in the morning. Now, you don't want that, do you?" "No! No, I don't want that." "Don't hang out with people who like beer then." And it's that kind of fear-mongering. Let's do this. Let's go more modern. "You had better not watch 'The Da Vinci Code.' Because if you watch 'The Da Vinci Code,' you might buy into some of what it's saying, and then you might spin off and get lost." But I tell you that our next door neighbor, Brian Linqvist and his wife, Chandra, was in the last service, and our first conversation ever was about "The Da Vinci Code." It ain't no threat to me. "All things are mine," according to Scripture, because I am of Christ and Christ is of God. So, that's not a threat to me. The truth is we have no fear from questioning. In fact, we should embrace it. We shouldn't boycott; we should have gone, "Yes! A movie about Christ." So, it's perverted and off? Yes, it is. Does it give us a viable point of communication for those outside of Christ? Well, absolutely. Boycotting and stuff. Give me a break. Alright, so this is the attitude of so many Evangelicals. "Come out of them...be separate...don't mingle with them."

Now, the funny thing about that is the Scriptures here are teaching the exact opposite. They're saying, "Hey, you ought to have them over for dinner." So, so many of us have had pounded into our head that it's this "us vs. them" mentality, and Jesus says, "You ought to cook them something." You ought to invite them into your house and cook them food. And not pickled beets, you kill the fatted calf. Alright, you have them in for dinner. Okay, let's do it this way. Because I'm going to plead with you, because we have got to change our thinking or we're doomed. The church in North America is in an unbelievably sharp decline right now. Fifty churches a week closing their door or the last time. In the next 12-20 years, one third of all American churches will cease to exist. Are you tracking with me?

Now, there are two types of ministry that's occurring, specifically in the Bible Belt. The first kind and the major kind is called "Attractional Ministry." And what this is, is, "Let's build big buildings and big gymnasiums and big coffee houses, and we'll attract the world in with our resources." And I'm not saying there's something wrong with that, I'm saying it's the main style in the Bible Belt. And it's attractionally based. The idea is, "Let's build a double-decker basketball court, and then we'll do intramural sports. And as lost people come in to play basketball, we'll share the gospel with them." And that's a way of ministry. It's called "Attraction-based Ministry." Now, although there's nothing wrong with that, it is not our philosophy here. And most of you are looking around going, "No, it is not." We believe in "Incarnational Ministry." And let me try to define that. We believe that you are Christ in the flesh now. We believe that ministry takes place in your neighborhood because you have not been called as a disciple, you have been called as a missionary. The end goal of discipleship is mission. If it terminates on itself, it terminates on nothing. And I think, if you've been around church long at all, you have met the guy who is right in doctrine and wrong in heart. It does not terminate on itself. It produces missionaries or it is not producing disciples. I mean, this is our call. Our call is to be in the world. You are missionaries unto your neighborhood, unto your business, wherever you are. Incarnational Ministry: you're there. And listen, we are never going to spend \$20 million to build some attraction based amusement park. Because here's our fervent belief. You should not play basketball up here; you should play at "Lifetime Fitness." That's where you should play ball. Because that's where Christ has you, and that's your mission field. It is. I am not building you a coffee house. There's 4 billion Starbucks' in a 9 mile radius. Pick one! Go to that one every day. Learn your barrista's name, know their life, be able to pray for them. This is Incarnational Ministry. I'm not building your kids a rock wall. There's a great gym near the airport, a rock climbing gym. Take them there. They'll meet people outside of the covenant community. Show hospitality. Engage the world around you. Show hospitality to strangers. Now, this requires an initiative on our part, because strangers don't just come and knock on your door. "(Knock, knock, knock) Cook me dinner." I would say don't let that guy in. That's the guy you probably shouldn't let in. It requires some initiative on your part. Because it's awkward and scary. But I'm telling you what, don't build a back porch, build a front porch. Be out front. Know your neighbors. It's why Christ put you here, Acts 17.

It's also why so many of us are bored out of our minds. Because we never actually engaged the mission, the whole purpose for which we're here. Listen, the church is one of the few organizations in the world that does not exist to meet the needs of it's members. It doesn't. And I know we've been taught the exact opposite of that. The church, according to Ephesians 3:10, is a tool in the hand of God to let known His manifest wisdom to the world. We are a missional agency, that's all we are. God wants to show His wisdom to the world, He used you and me to do it. And listen to me, here's why your personal preference has to die. Because we are not here to cater to you, we are here on mission. Like, let me give you an example. If I was the pastor of a church in Potosi, Texas, which is right outside of Abilene. If I'm in Potosi, the style of worship is very, very different. It might even have a banjo in it...or a steel guitar. Now, let me be really honest with you. I am of the personal belief and

and preference that country music is a part of the fall of mankind and will only be redeemed when Christ has returned. That is my personal preference and belief. Okay, that's just where I line up. But in the end, this is not about my preference. It's not. It's not about my preference. It's about the context in which I find my life happening. Now, we have nine covenant members on the ground in Asia. If one of them came up to me and said, "I'll go to Asia and do the missions, but here's the deal. I'm not eating their food and I'm not learning their language and I'm not dressing how they dress." I go, "Guess what. You're not going. Because somewhere along the line, you think this thing is about you. It's unforgivable. You're not going." In the same way, I'm overwhelmed at how many of us go, "If it's not like this and it's not like this and it's not like this, I'm not in." To join a church that will cater to your needs but is not on mission is impossibly dangerous and destructive. I just want to be honest with you. To join a church that would cater to your needs as Christians, to cater to that, "be careful out there," to cater to that fear-mongering, "Let's build our own stuff, because if we're in their stuff, we could catch it like the flu," well listen, you're always going to have a broken sense of what this thing is all about. We're on mission, man. That's what it is. You've got Jesus here going, "Hey, you need to have them at your house, not avoid them, not tell them how wrong they are. No, have them in your home. Show hospitality to strangers."

Okay, look at this second thing. By the way, let me say this to you. On a lot of these things, we've tried to build out, as a church, a model of what this looks like. Like, here at the Village, we have a connecting team. In fact, you saw Sarah Durant get up here and do the announcements. She's not on staff here. She just is a lay person, and she is a part of that connecting team that works hard at taking strangers and connecting them to the body in such a way that they can really learn the fullness of Christ. If you're looking for a place of service here and you don't really know how to plug-in, you don't really know where you fit, there's a blurb in your bulletin that says that team needs more help if you're good at that. Now, there are people people, and there are non-people people. If you're going, "No," you're not a people person. So, there are people people and non-people people, and I'm telling you, if you got that thing where you're a ease with people, this is a great viable place for you to serve here at the Village. You can help connect strangers.

The second thing, verse 3, "*Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.*" Okay, so line one is this, "For believers in Christ, you have a responsibility to the world outside of you in two regards. Number one, you are to be incarnational in ministry. You are to be the hands and feet and the life of Christ in your neighborhood, at work. You are to have those outside of our faith into your home. You are on mission here in Lewisville, Flower Mound, Highland Village, Denton, Plano, wherever you're from. That's where you're on mission." He says, "On top of that, you cannot cannot cannot turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the oppressed and ill-treated in your society." And if you'll remember in Matthew 25, Jesus tells the story of basically Judgment Day, and He separates out men and women. And to one group, He says, "Listen, I was thirsty, and you didn't give Me anything to drink. I was hungry, and you didn't feed Me. I was naked, and you didn't clothe Me. I needed shelter, and you would provide none for Me. I was in prison, and you would not visit Me." And they freak out. They go, "When did we see You?" Anybody remember His answer? "What you did to the least of these, you did unto Me." In the same way, we must be on mission. In the same way, we must embrace incarnational ministry. We cannot ignore those who are oppressed and ill-treated. Now, let me tell you why this is a hard sell in suburbia. Because we don't see a lot of poverty in suburbia. I mean, you just really don't. I mean, how many people do you know that are really poor? I mean, we think really poor, as in they only have two cars, that they don't have a television in their bathroom. "Oh, that's...bless their hearts. What do they do when they get dressed?" We don't really have a grasp on poverty. But here's something I have taught here historically and I will continue to teach, suburbia has a biblical responsibility to the city. They do.

When we left them, whether it was your fathers or whether it was you, when we left them, we did not leave our responsibility behind. Cities shape culture. Let me tell you how. The 67 year old executive of MTV does not set popular culture. The 22 year old college graduate who he hires and lives in those cities does set culture. We have a responsibility. Let me work it this way. Less than 25 minutes from here, hope wanes and poverty crushes. Our primary responsibility is not Asia, though we spend a massive amount of money there. It is not Guatemala, although we work closely with an orphanage there, built it, built roofs on it. Our responsibility is not primarily those places. Our mission field is here, now, D/FW area.

So hear me on this. This summer, we have partnered with a church...I just passionately believe in partnering with churches. Para-church organizations started to exist when the church started failing at doing their job. We have partnered with a church downtown in the ghetto of ghettos, and we are going to partner with them all summer long. We're going to send people, we're going to send money, they have purchased a Minyard's that we are going to build out as their sanctuary. We are going to pour finances and resources into ghetto Dallas so that it might be rebuilt and restored in the name of Christ. And we can do that because we haven't built you a gym. Now, listen to this. Home group leaders, you already got information on this. If you want to go help, listen, if you got any kind of skill set whatsoever, from computers to being able to paint to real construction. I mean, we got some real construction things that need to happen down there. I know they're building a job training thing down there, where they teach computer stuff. No matter where you're skilled, we could use your help. It is a massive, massive, massive project. And we have the ability to give back of what God gave us and literally see the face of a community transform. Or, we can let it terminate on self. Scriptures say within the confines of a lost world, the Christian's responsibility is to show hospitality to the stranger and to give to the oppressed.

Now, he's going to kind of move off from her and give us two dangers that we need to watch out for as we live life. Look at verse 4, "*Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed (sex) is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*" And I'll explain that. It sounds really, really harsh, but I want to explain just the practical way this thing works out. Now what he says here is, "Okay, life in the world, loving on the stranger, giving back to the oppressed, you must guard and contend for the health of your marriage." The funny thing, he's going to get into marriage and money, which to this day, are still the two killers of men. He's going to say, "Marriage is difficult. Contend for it. Fight for it." If you've been here a long time, it's that "ahava" peace. I mean do you...I know you do. There is an unbelievable amount of power in a man who passionately works to love his wife deeply and be faithful to her. I mean, you let that guy speak up in a crowd of other men, and they'll disparately long to talk with him. You let a man go, "Ball and chain? Please. More like wings." I mean, you let a guy say that in front of a bunch of men, that is a strange, strange view of marriage. We are almost at 60% of all marriages collapsing. That is, I'm speaking within the Evangelical community. Okay? You must contend, you must fight for your marriage. It is the primary shadow that teaches the love, mercy and pursuit of Jesus Christ. And this "judgment" thing is just saying that where you don't contend for your marriage and it explodes, there is deep pain. Listen, I know we have a lot of divorced men and women in here. That's why I love grace so much, right. But he's saying, "Listen, pain always comes with this." Now, I'm not talking about in the sense of abuse or things like that. Where marriage isn't fought for, isn't contended for, it isn't worked at, it isn't given to, there's heartbreak and suffering.

And then, he's going to lead into the next one. So, we've got to guard our marriages, and then verse 5, "*Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, now will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say,*

"The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?" Now, I have heard this text preached very poorly. It's always kind of used to make rich people feel guilty for being rich, usually followed by a plate. "You shouldn't have all that...we should." It's kind of this weird twist on things. Let me be really honest with you. Wealth is not wrong, the desire for it is. We do not strive after money; we do all things for the glory of God, which means we are the perfect worker. It means that we are not playing solitaire, you are not (for you 35 and under) working your Myspace wallpaper. You are working. You are a picture of what they want for their company on whole. And if wealth comes, praise God. But we do not strive after it. We are content with where we are. And a general, universal truth of life is if you are not content now, you never will be. If you think that getting out of your 800 square feet and getting into 8,000 square feet is going to make you happy, you're wrong. If you're going, "Oh, if I just didn't have this '72 Datsun Maxima that's primer down the right side and backfires when I'm in a school zone causing kids to hit the ground and crawl under bushes," and if you think that if you just had a better car, a nicer car and more trinkets on your car that you'll finally be happy, you're wrong. You know how I know it? Because I would bank that the car you're driving now is nicer than the car you drove 10 years ago and you're no more happy. You're no happier just because you're in that vehicle. No, we're content now. If we work hard now. If wealth comes, it comes. We do not strive after money. It's not our strive. And we definitely don't strive after it at the expense of our family, our character or our integrity.

Can I speak to you as a former college minister? I've done that for the majority of my career. I've been a pastor for 3 years. Before that, I did college ministry. Let me be very honest with you. I never met the kid who got to college his freshman year without a car who seemed to be bitter and resentful for that. But I met a plethora of pretty young girls with very expensive cars that seemed to have monumental issues. Do not sacrifice your children to buy them trinkets. Are you hearing me here? Do not neglect them by getting them stuff they don't need at the cost of what they do need, the security and the safety of a father and mother who are there and who care. Alright, we don't strive after money. It's not an enemy of ours, we just don't strive after it. That's not what we work for.

Now, from there, we're going to move on to relationships inside the body, inside the covenant community of Christ. Now, he's just going to start off in verse 7, *"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith."* So, he says then, "Let's move into the covenant community now. And now within the church, there are leaders. And I want you to remember those leaders of old who led you to Jesus, watch their life, imitate their faith and know how to run this race correctly." Now, I know in a church like ours, where the majority of us do not have this great legacy of faith. For whatever reason, God has drawn a lot of injured, beat up people, a lot of people who don't have that father figure or mother figure that showed them how to live this thing correctly. So, my fervent hope and prayer for you and I is since we have not been given that, we will become that, so that whoever is next behind us will say, "Oh, I remember him. I remember her." And so, since so many of us don't have that, I pray that we will contend to become that.

And then you want to hear something funny? I read no fewer than 14 sermons on Hebrews 13, and not one of those pastors touched verse 17. But I will. Here we go, *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account."* Okay, let me be really honest with you. You cannot separate this verse. This sentence has to stay together, alright. Here's what I would say. As those who are not pastors, never follow a man who does not understand that he will give an account for you. Never follow a pastor who is not painfully aware that one day after he quits breathing, he will stand in front of Jesus and give an account for how he lead, treated and spent his life on the bride. If that piece is not there, that man is leading you toward a house called his ego, and he

will build the church based on how he looks rather than what's best for the body. But where you do have a man who will submit to Christ, who will pray, plead, not shirk the hard things and will lead by example, Scripture says follow him.

And he's going to tell you why, *“Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”* I mean, I just want to be really honest, we are a blessed place. I think it has a lot to do with how fast we've grown. So, we can change things all the time and the majority of you don't know. Nobody here can really say, *“That's how we've always done it!”* Because you've been here like six months. I mean, we can change things all the time. There seems to be very few sacred cows here. And when we do spot them, we try to beat them to death almost immediately. We don't want them. This thing always has to be changing, contextualizing. The reason you have four different gospels written to four different audiences is because the gospel has to be contextualized into a culture. This thing always has to be changing, this thing always has to be transforming. The message doesn't, because Jesus does not change. But how it's taught, how it's lived out, how it's worked into a culture does change. We're a place that has been blessed, but I can promise you this, I meet a lot of young pastors who are just getting killed right now. And listen, all of it's not lay peoples' fault. A lot of it's their fault. They're trying to turn too fast. They're trying to do too much. Some of them are trying to do their own personal preference. You know, you've got a guy in the backwoods of Arkansas trying to lead out with an electric guitar and his favorite pastor's a guy in Seattle. You're like, *“You're in Arkansas. You don't reach people in Arkansas like you do in downtown Seattle, alright.”* I know this goes both ways. But the text says, *“Remember your former leaders, and honor your current ones, if they're submitting to Me.”*

Alright, let's get back to reading. I love verse 9 because so much of this book has been around verse 9-12. *“Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”* Here's what he's warning against. He's going to say, *“Honor you leaders,”* and then he's going to follow that up with, *“Grace alone. Grace alone.”* He then moves on to say, be nervous and be worried about those who would preach and teach an external religiosity that does not have it's root in the heart. So, he's saying here, *“Hey, be careful, be warned about these people who say 'It's about eating this and drinking this and not eating this and not drinking this.’”* He is attacking this check-list spirituality that says *“Do all these things and you're in.”* And the thing I love about this text is he goes, *“Hey, look at the people who do it that way. Do you really want to be them?”* That's what he says here. He says, *“Did it really benefit them? Look at these people who say, 'You do it this way, this way, this way, this way...Don't do this, this, this, this, this.' I mean, do you look at them and go 'Hmm. That's living life. That's the fullness of God on earth.’”* He's going, *“No, look at them.”* It's really what he says. He points them and says, *“Is that really what you want to be? Is that what you're after? No, grace alone.”* And then he goes back into the tabernacle and basically teaches that the sin offering, the priests would eat all of the other sacrifices except the sin offering. And the sin offering would be taken outside of the tabernacle and burned. And in the same way, Jesus died outside of the city, outside of the camp. And what he's saying here is basically that the priest didn't bring you this salvation, Christ and Christ alone did. Your was not brought to you by the decision of men who would bring about a new law, but by Jesus who went outside the camp and died.

Alright, so outside of the church, incarnational ministry, hospitality, a care for the oppressed and poor, guarding our marriages, watching what our deep loves are. Inside the church, honor your leaders if

they submit to God and grace alone. Be weary of any teaching that adds anything to the cross. And now, he's going to go on to the next thing, *“So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.”* So basically, Paul's saying here, “You gotta live this out man. I'm not telling you to do something I'm not doing. I live this out.” Verse 19, *“And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.”* The key to this next part, the third thing we should do inside the church is in verse 13 & 14. *“So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.”* This goes back to hospitality and the mission. You and I are not home. And he says, “since we do not have a lasting city, let's go outside the camp bearing the reproach of Christ so that some might be saved. Let me try to put it this way. Contextually, Jesus is never going to be cool. It's one of the errors of the emerging church model. They think that church can be cool. It can't be. It wasn't meant to be. The Scriptures would say it like this, “To those who are being saved, Christ is the aroma of life, but to those who are perishing, it is the stench of death.” Which means that, on a whole, people don't like to be told to repent. Have you ever met the guy who liked that? I'm saved and I don't even like it, alright. “You need to repent.” “You need to get out of my face.” And then I come back later and go, “You're right. I'm sorry. Thank you for getting in my face.” But Jesus said, “I've sent you, I've sent you on mission. And what I've sent you to do is declare these two things: repentance and the forgiveness of sins. And to those who are perishing, whose eyes and ears are veiled, that will be unbelievably offensive, but to those who are being saved, to those whom the veil will be lifted, it's life.”

Okay, I'll give his conclusion. In our small group homework and worksheet, I made this verse the verse to memorize this week because I love 20 & 21, specifically 21. *“Now the God of peace,...”* I love that. I mean, simply put, all of us, Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, were created with eternity in our hearts, which is why we're insatiable, which is why no matter how much junk you get, no matter how much sex you have, how much money you acquire, how successful you become, late at night you are haunted by you. Because nothing temporal can fill the hole of eternity. May the God of peace, may the God who can finally bring peace to that, may the God of peace *“...who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep...”* Two things here. When God brings Jesus back from the dead, He brings you with Him. And this isn't talking about a literal death in our sense as much as it is about God pulling us from existence into life. Because the true reality of so many is they exist and never live. And the God of peace moves us out of existence and into life by the great Shepherd of the sheep. This made so much more sense in the 1st Century than it does for most of us since most of us don't spend much time around sheep. From what I've read...I've never been around them, I don't like animals like that. They freak me out, you know. I'm a city guy. I've heard that they're really dumb animals, man. If you put them on a hill, they'll eat all the grass on the hill, and they'll just sit there until they eat their own excrement and die. They have to be led, they have to be walked. In fact, some of them are so hard headed that a shepherd sometimes will break their legs and then carry them so that that sheep learns not to stray too far from the flock... **[recording interrupted]** ...may the great Shepherd, you have not been abandoned here, Christ is leading, guiding, protecting even through sorrow.

Verse 21, *“...equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight.”* Okay, so follow me, because I could preach a whole message on just this. Jesus is pleased with not just the final product, He is pleased with the process. Are you tracking with me on that? Because

that is the greatest news in the world, that right now in all my hardship and struggle and difficulty and doubt, Christ is working in me His great pleasure. It is not a future version of me that Christ is pleased with. It is me, now, struggling, stumbling, confused, trying to figure it out, and God goes, "I love this part." It's the artist, right? The artist sees what nobody else can. Don't they? I mean, they've got this blank canvas, and they start stroking paint onto that thing and they're already in love with that canvas. We just see some red, a little blue. They love the process. Be encouraged. He loves the process. You are not a disappointment to Him. So you blew it this week, okay. That's going to be part of the process. Some of you, your sin is owning you right now and you're going to get laid bare in front of a public group of people and it's going to be the most embarrassing and horrific thing that's ever occurred and it might just be the one thing that finally heals you. The process, He loves the process. Now, I'm only talking to believers here, and to you right now, He is working in you His great pleasure. Man, that makes me love Him, that I don't have this father that I can never please. No, He's pleased. He's pleased.

Let's pray, "You're so good, and I love You so much and I want You to be loved, Father. But I don't think that happens by not unpacking the fullness of You. I think that happens by really showing You as You've revealed yourself in Scriptures. And so, I thank You for these things. I want so badly for us to be that place, Father, that welcomes the stranger into this building, into our lives, into our homes. I want You to seer, to burn, to brand in the deep places of our heart that we are missionaries right now. I mean, we've got trips going all over the world. We had a group leave yesterday for Asia, a group leaving for Guatemala next week, a group that left for Romania on Friday. I mean, I know we're going all over the world to love on the oppressed and the beat down and to provide anything from schools to free dental work to even building a nursing home in Asia right now in partnership with the communist government, which I chuckle at. But, although that's an extension of what You're doing here, You've called us here primarily. I mean, this is where we live and work. We are missionaries in this culture. And I pray we would get that. And I pray that we wouldn't be a place that terminates and spends our wealth on us. And I don't know what to do about the space issue, Father, but I know You're going to bring us wisdom and clarity on it. Because I don't want to go and build some 2,000 seat auditorium. I just don't want to do it. And if you throw it in our lap, okay, but I do not want to build some lavish...I don't want to join the arms race here in Dallas. I just don't want to do it. Maybe that's what You have for us, but You're going to have to help my heart. I want us to get that there are beat up, oppressed, ill-treated, impoverished people who aren't there because they're lazy and that You have given us wealth and we owe them. Another wildly unpopular idea. Help us. And I pray that You would strengthen our marriages. That would be a priority for us as a church. And I pray that You would loosen our grip in striving for cash. It is a fleeting god that rarely satisfies except for the moment. And I pray, Father, that brotherly love here would continue. And I thank You for the way our staff and the men and women who work so hard here are honored and loved. I thank You that my story is not that we are hard pressed and beat up but that we are loved and encouraged. And I pray, Father, that we might come outside the camp and that we might spend our lives on the great call. And Father, I pray that You would protect this place and You would protect me and that we might always be a place that preaches grace alone and that You would quickly discipline any group here who would try to carry us back to the Law and make this thing about some external rule that needs to be followed, that we would not become the religious gestapo and police, but that we would trust Your revealing power, call sin "sin" and let grace cover us all. I dream about this text being a reality here. I long for it, ache for it. Help us. Send us the right pieces of the puzzle to make it happen. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."