



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Psalms 97:1-12

"Dangerous But Good"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth. And good morning. We are doing another Psalm this week; Psalm 97. So I'm going to read through it as we normally do, then we'll have a word of prayer. You'll notice, by the way, some of the similarities between this Psalm and the things we spoke about last week in Psalm 96. So, Psalm 97;

<sup>1</sup> The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;

Let the many islands be glad.

<sup>2</sup> Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;

Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of His throne.

<sup>3</sup> Fire goes before Him

And burns up His adversaries round about.

<sup>4</sup> His lightnings lit up the world;

The earth saw and trembled.

<sup>5</sup> The mountains melted like wax in the presence of the LORD,

At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

<sup>6</sup> The heavens declare His righteousness,

And all the peoples have seen His glory.

<sup>7</sup> Let those be ashamed who serve graven images,

Who boast themselves of idols;

Worship Him, all you gods.

<sup>8</sup> Zion heard *this* and was glad,  
And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced  
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth;  
You are exalted far above all gods.

<sup>10</sup> Hate evil, you who love the LORD,  
Who preserves the soul of His godly ones;  
He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

<sup>11</sup> Light is sown *like seed* for the righteous  
And gladness for the upright in heart.

<sup>12</sup> Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones,  
And give thanks to His holy name.

Psalm 97 1-12

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and bless our time of study in it and worship together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, again we thank you for this opportunity on this Lord's day to be together, to do what we've done—to sing hymns of praise to You and now read a great hymn of praise from the Old Testament, Psalm 97. And then have time for the rest of the hour to reflect upon it—to think about the things that the psalmist wrote. And Lord, what great things he wrote. What he wrote is true. What he wrote is that You are the ruler of all things, You are presently in control of everything; and the great hope that we have is the Lord is coming. That's the hope that Your people have had from the very beginning. The day will come when Your Son will enter again into this world and establish righteous rule over the entire earth.

So we have that great hope. And hope is to motivate us to live actively, faithfully in the meantime; looking forward to that great day. So help us to do that, Lord. Help us to understand the significance of the things that the psalmist said and what they meant when he wrote them and what they mean for us today and what our hope is and how we're to

live in light of it. So may the Spirit of God teach us and motivate us, galvanize us to live lives of faithful service to You in this very dark world in which we live; a world that has been dark from the day that Adam took that fruit.

But it will be changed when the second Adam—the last Adam—comes again to bring righteousness. We thank You for that. That's our hope. It's grounded in the cross. It's grounded in what Christ did. So, Lord, build us up in that faith.

And bless us materially, Lord. We have needs. We're still in this crisis, this pandemic. And we pray that You keep us safe. You control everything. There's no germ or virus in the air that You can't protect us from. You know all of them. You're in control of everything. So we pray Your blessing upon us. But we pray particularly for some of our members that have health that's been compromised and may be vulnerable to this. And I pray that You'd strengthen them; keep them healthy, keep us all wise and bless us, Lord. And bless our government as it continues to manage this issue.

And I pray that You would give wisdom to those that You've appointed to rule over us. And we pray for our nation. We pray that You bless it. These are difficult times, times of unrest. And I pray that You bring order to this country and that You would bless it. And to pray that really ultimately is to pray that the Gospel will spread. So make us lights in the midst of this dark generation, and I pray that You would use our time together to further that in our lives personally. Give us direction and strength. And may the Spirit of God sanctify us and make us more like Christ to Your Honor and Glory. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

In Romans 11:22, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Behold then the kindness and severity of God." That sounds like a contradiction. "Kind" and "severe". Loving and harsh. But both are true and reveal the fullness of His character which should produce fear of the Lord. CS Lewis gave an illustration of that in his book, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* where one of the children learns that Aslan, the ruler of Narnia, is a lion. It's one of the girls, and she was surprised by that and nervous. So she asked, "Is he safe?" "Safe? Who said anything about safe? Of course, he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king."

That fits the description of the Lord in Psalm 97. He is the king of the world; the ruler of the universe; the cosmos, which is like a mere speck of dust to Him. He is described as surrounded by “clouds and thick darkness”. He lights up the world with flashes of lightning, makes the earth “tremble” and “melts mountains”. He's not a safe God. But He also rules in righteousness; preserves and delivers His saints; He gives them gladness. He is good. He's the king.

That's Psalm 97, which is divided into four sections of three verses each. The first two are about the King. The second two are about the King's saints.

In Verses 1-3 is the revelation of God's goodness and severity.

In Verses 4-6 is the demonstration, examples, of His goodness and severity.

In Verses 7-9 is the effect of that revelation on mankind—on the unbeliever and on the saint and the believer as well.

And then in Verses 10-12 is the exhortation to God's saints to respond to this great revelation; to “hate evil” and to “be glad in the Lord”.

No name is attached to the Psalm, not in the Hebrew Bible. But in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the name of David is given. He's identified as the author of the Psalm and there's no reason not to accept that.

If there is an historical reason for the writing of the Psalm, it's not stated either. It may be a great battle that David won in which the Lord overthrew his enemies and did so in a very spectacular, supernatural way—a demonstration of His great power. David's description of the Lord is taken from earlier theophanies, (which are appearances of God), like the one at Sinai in Exodus 19:16 when the mountain was covered in thick darkness; a thick cloud with thunder and lightning. The scene of the Psalm is the battlefield. So it may be based on a historical event. It most likely is. Still, while it may be historic it's mainly prophetic. A prophecy of the Lord's coming into the world to defeat the wicked. That can only happen because Who the Lord is.

And the first verse of the Psalm states that clearly; states His identity—Who He is. And the fact is, from what we see here, He is able to do the things that are promised in this Psalm that have been revealed here, the promises here, because of Who He is. —He's the king. And the way He's described is, "The Lord reigns". He is king of the world and

He's coming to rule it. That's the theme of the Psalm, and that has been the hope of God's people through the ages. That is reason to celebrate. That's what David encourages. "...let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad."

It is a universal invitation for the world to receive its king. The "islands" represented here, or described here, represent the far-flung parts of the earth beyond the horizon of the sea. Derek Kidner called them, "The remote, innumerable outposts of mankind." What is shown in this, and other Psalms, is the universal kingdom that God will establish. And David understood this. David was not provincial, narrow-minded in his thinking. He had a wide view of God's plan and purpose. The Lord had given him a large kingdom. In 2 Samuel 7:8-11, the Lord reminded David that He had cut off all of his enemies to establish his kingdom. And it was a wide kingdom. In the next chapter, in 2 Samuel 8, there's a record of the victories over the surrounding nations that had been given to David.

David's conquest expanded Israel's kingdom from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates River. It was a large empire, but even that was limited to just a region of the Middle East. David looked beyond that to a worldwide kingdom to come; one that the Lord would establish that would include all the nations—even the islands, those distant outposts of humanity. He had a far-reaching vision of God's rule because he knew Scripture. This didn't come in a vacuum. He knew the Word of God. He understood the Abrahamic promise given in Genesis 12:1-3 in which God's promises include blessing for the nations as well as the nation; for the Gentiles as well as for Israel.

But David could have confidence in that covenant God made with Abraham and the promises that are part of it because of the truth stated here in Verse 1, "The Lord reigns" —He is sovereign. And that implies a whole range of Divine attributes: God's omnipotence, God's omniscience, and His immutability to just name three. He is powerful—all-powerful. If He were not all-powerful, if He were not omnipotent, He could not control all events; which He must be able to do in order to fulfill His promises. So He's all-powerful. If He did not know everything—if He were not omniscient —He would be surprised and frustrated by events. So He knows all things.

If He could change—if He were not immutable—He would be undependable. But of course, He cannot change, cannot be frustrated. His plan is certain. He controls all the

events of life and governs history completely. That is a glorious truth. In fact, it is a liberating truth. He is sovereign and free; self-existent, not dependent upon anyone or anything. And that assures us that faith in Him will always be rewarded. We can rest in Him.

So David begins his Psalm with instruction for the earth—all the earth—to rejoice. This was a call of the Gospel. Rejoice in the king. Receive the king. This is good news for all the nations. They would be liberated. And the reason for joy is given in Verse 2, His reign is righteous. “Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of His throne.” Now that's a description of God's throne room which is not actually a room but the vast universe. In fact, it is beyond the universe. He said in Isaiah 66:1, "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool." The heavens, the universe, the cosmos is His throne. He's really beyond that. God is omnipresent. He is in everything, everywhere in every atom, in every inch of this vast, vast universe.

But He's beyond that. He's not only omnipresent, He's immense. He's beyond the universe. We cannot contain the Lord. He rules in awesome majesty. I don't know what other word to use in this case than ‘Awesome’. It's a word that I think is probably well overused and as a result of that, has lost much of its force. But it's the right word here. The description here is probably taken from Exodus 19:16-19 when Mount Sinai smoked and quaked, and the people trembled in fear. No man can see God and live. So He must be hidden.

And yet, He revealed Himself. He revealed Himself there at Sinai with the giving of the Law. He has revealed Himself through history, through the prophets and apostles. And the revelation that is especially relevant to this Psalm is His righteousness and justice. He rules well. He is good. He is righteous. Right in character; perfect. John wrote in 1 John 1:5, "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." He is truth and righteousness without flaw or imperfection. And so, He acts with justice. He acts with fairness. He is the perfect king. That's reason for joy. That's reason for all of the nations to rejoice because the thrones of men have been largely tyrannical. Of all the places in the world where we would expect to find a righteous king, where we would expect to see godly rulers, it was Israel.

But Isaiah, in Chapter 3, gives this Word from the Lord where the Lord condemns the leaders of His land; condemns the leaders of Judah in Jerusalem.

He says they fed themselves well but crush His people and “grind the face of the poor.”

What a graphic picture of cruelty. Grinding the face of the poor. But how much truer that is of the nations. The Gentiles who dwell in darkness without divine revelation. So much of history is the story of dictators who, by conquest and oppression, rule over people without justice. Ancient and modern history are filled with such things. And yet, this King—the King of kings, the Lord God—will rule on the earth with perfection, with justice and mercy. That's reason for joy.

But also, for fear. Verse 3 gives the reason for that, because presently in His Providence He deals with those who oppose Him, “Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries...” That is His nature. That's His character It applies to us. The author of Hebrew said as much when he wrote in Chapter 12, "...our God is a consuming fire"(vs29). which warns us against taking the Lord lightly or a relationship with Him casually. There's nothing more serious in our life than our relationship with the Lord God. The author of Hebrews gives us counsel that "...we show gratitude by offering to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe." (Heb 12:28). Joy and awe go together. In fact, the more we know Him, the more we understand His character and His deeds, the more we will reverence Him with humble and godly fear.

The next section of verses is a demonstration of what David has revealed about the Lord, in a show of the Lord's power and majesty, ‘His justice and mercy’, His goodness and severity. Verses 4-6, "His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory." One commentator called this portion of the Psalm, "A mosaic of the earlier literature." Meaning, David has used the accounts of the theophanies, the appearances of the Lord, throughout the history of Israel like that on Mount Sinai—to describe what he witnessed on the battlefield. The victory was so spectacular that he drew upon other great events where the Lord showed His magnificent

power in various ways in order to describe what had occurred in that battle that the Lord won for the nation.

Now if that is what David was celebrating in his Psalm, it shows God's goodness to David in giving victory and His severity to his enemies in dealing out defeat. He is a 'fire' to the unrighteous—not safe. But even if we understand this in a more general sense of God's display of power in nature, (which I suppose we could take it in that sense), it still reveals that the whole earth is under His government; His rule; His authority. There is no escape from the Lord. He rules over all, which makes it urgent for the nations to submit; to rejoice; to receive Him as King.

And in the next section, the third stanza of verses, David gives the effect of this revelation on both God's friends and foes. It brings rejoicing to Zion but shame to the enemies. Verse 7, "Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him all you gods." Now, I'm reading from the New American Standard Bible, which translates the verbs in that verse as imperatives or commands; "be ashamed"; "worship". But they could also be indicatives, which simply states a fact. Both had the same form as the forms of these verbs. I'm taking them as indicative. I think the psalmist is stating the consequence of God's victory on the battlefield. The translation would be, "All who serve images are put to shame; who make their boast in worthless idols." All the gods prostrated themselves to Him -- to the Lord.

In Verse 9, David wrote, "For you are the LORD of hosts over all the earth. You are exalted far above all gods." Now, that doesn't assume the actual existence of the 'gods'. Neither David nor any writer of the Bible believed in polytheism—that there are many gods; or even henotheism—which is, there's one god that is preeminent over all the gods. They didn't believe any of that. They're monotheist; they believed in one God. In the previous Psalm, what we saw last week in Psalm 96:5, David wrote, "...all the gods of the peoples are idols..." In other words, 'They are meaningless. They're just sticks and stones.' Robert Altar, who is a Jewish scholar and has recently published his translation of the Old Testament with some commentary, translated this "They are un-god—not real." The faithful in Israel believed in only one God; the LORD —Yahweh.

But the mention here of the “gods” has led modern scholars to conclude that the Psalm is based on the imagery or the ideas of a Baal myth that was already old in David's day and believed by the pagans. David would've been very familiar with all of those myths. Well, in those old myths Baal would march out from his holy mountain as a warrior, shaking up nature, defeat all rivals and then return to his home victorious.

It's possible that David had that in mind, that David is writing with that as the background; and writing it though as a polemic; as an argument or an attack on paganism by turning their myth against them—using it to say, "You believe in something that's foolish. The gods you believe in are defeated by the Lord God. He is God." Their defeat on the battlefield proved that. It resulted in the shame of these pagan armies and the proof that their gods are ‘un-gods’. He pictures their idols, or their false gods, submitting to the Lord, bowing to the only real God.

And that, by implication, is what the enemy should do. That should be their response. Heed the counsel of Verse 1; recognize that, “The Lord reigns”, and rejoice. Rejoice in Him. Believe in Him. Follow Him. That's what all of this is, teaching; that's the force of this Psalm. That's the implied exhortation here. By the revelation of God, that's the result that should be produced.

But it doesn't always do that, doesn't always have that result of bringing people to recognize the folly of their unbelief and looking to the Lord and falling down before Him and worshipping Him. Sometimes it has the opposite effect. I think it was Spurgeon who said, "The same sun which melts wax, hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins." And this revelation caused God's people to rejoice.

Verse 8. "Zion heard *this* and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments, O Lord." Verse 9, "For You are the Lord Most High over all the earth;" And that reminds us again of the vision or the scope of this Psalm. It is all the earth. It is worldwide. Again, this is not only a Psalm based on a historical event, it is also prophetic in its intent. James Boise wrote, "Whatever the immediate historical reference might be, the only complete fulfillment of this vision must be the eventual return of Jesus Christ and the reign of Jesus in the Millennial Kingdom at the end of this age."

And descriptions of “the day of the Lord” in the prophets and the Gospels are very similar to the display given here in Verses 4 and 5, “Lightnings” flashing; the earth “trembling” and “melting.” That day is coming. Dr. Boise wrote, “Only then will perfect justice come to this earth. There is no such thing as perfect justice now.”

That's true. So what do we do? Well, we continue on in this fallen world fighting the good fight in the spiritual battle that is always going on around us. And we fight it in the everyday, mundane ways of life. We get up in the morning to be where we're supposed to be, doing what we're supposed to be doing. We daily live to the Glory of God by being responsible citizens of this land and of heaven of which we are citizens. We lead a quiet life. We work. We attend to our own business, managing our own homes, training our children, providing for ourselves and helping those in need. That's Ephesians Chapter 4:28. That's 1 Thessalonians 4:11. That's the basic Christian life. It's a daily life. It may seem routine, but if we cannot be faithful in the basic, simple things of life we will be failures in the great opportunities of faith. This is how the apostles instruct us to live. Glorifying God in the rudimentary, regular things of life. That is the right way to live. That is the way, over time, that gets the attention of the world. People value a responsible, consistent, trustworthy life. That's the life we're to live.

But it's not a simple life. It can't be. We are living in the spiritual battle. We are living in an invisible war that is constant all around us. A spiritual conflict that is just as real as a hot war. But very subtle with influences that constantly exert pressure on us to conform in almost imperceptible ways. That's the battle, what Paul warns of, in Romans 12:1-2. After 11 chapters of doctrine, he gives the exhortation, “Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world.”

Now, that's David's exhortation in the final stanza of the Psalm in which he encourages the saints to hold on until victory comes. But it's not an exhortation to hold on with a kind of grim resignation. Just the opposite. It is two exhortations. The first in Verse 10, which is very direct, “Hate evil, you who love the LORD”. And the second in Verse 12, “Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones.” So we're to be happy warriors.

Still, we're to be determined warriors for Christ in the church. And that is made very clear in the first command, "Hate evil." That sounds militant, and it is. It's a militant Psalm that we're studying; one written after a great military victory over some enemy—the Moabites or the Ammonites or some idolatrous people. The world view of David's day was idolatry. Everyone accepted it. A Psalm like this was something very unusual. The world accepted without debate that there are many gods and they affect everything. It's almost like pantheism: There are the gods of the harvest, the gods of the rain—gods for everything. The gods of El and Baal and Anat and many, many others; whole pantheons of false gods; figments of man's twisted imagination. David opposed that without compromise. He reminded this defeated people of how demolished they were and how ridiculous they appeared for trusting in such a foolish idea.

He wasn't gloating; He was enlightening. He was showing them the right way. He began with the basic Gospel, "The Lord Reigns. Let the earth rejoice." He's telling them to do that, to repent; turn from idols which are 'un-gods' and trust in and rejoice in the one true God: the LORD; Yahweh; Jehovah.

Still, he makes it clear and gives evidence of it that their ideas are empty, false, and destructive. He made no compromise with error—unlike his son, Solomon, who ended compromising with the idols. That's how powerful the enemy is. That's how powerful 'the spirit of the age' is; that Solomon, the wisest man in the world, the wisest man of history, could be taken in and fall to the subtleties of the world view of his day.

No, it's a powerful enemy that we face and why we must be vigilant in our opposition to error today. It's not Baal or Moloch or Jupiter that we deal with today. It's other things. It's other gods, other false religions, materialism, humanism—which really are every bit a religion as Hinduism and Islam and any of the others. That's 'the spirit of the age', the *Zeitgeist*, that has a subtle, powerful, constant influence upon us. But there's no room for compromise. Alexander Pope was no believer. But he wrote an insightful rhyme or poem—a set of verses. You've probably heard it. I've read it before. But it's this; "Vice is a monster of so frightful mean, (*meaning, as appearance*), as to be hated, needs but to be seen. Yet seem to oft familiar with her face we first endure; then pity; then embrace." That's true. That's an observation of general wisdom; proverbial wisdom. It is so easy to become comfortable with sin; to become accepting of it. Especially when

it is so common and so openly accepted. But Pope's warning is just that—it's a warning. It doesn't have the solution. The lure of the forbidden has a power that draws us to look again and make our peace with evil. We need grace to overcome that. We need sovereign grace. And it is obtained in only one place, in only person; and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is those who love the Lord who will resist conformity.

And they will do it because they love the Lord. When we love Him, we love who He is. And we love what is pleasing to Him and what is right to Him. We cannot love the Lord and love evil. And we cannot hate evil by making ourselves hate it.

We hate it because we love Him. In fact, it is by knowing Him and filling our minds with Him; who He is and what He has done, what He has taught, that the attraction of evil, of sin is displaced by the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is power in knowing Him. That takes effort on our part because we know Him by knowing His Word. We know Him by knowing the Scriptures. That's fundamental to the vital, actual relationship that we sustain with the Lord. Those who love the Lord entered into a personal relationship with Him through faith. We are joined to Him, and His life is joined to us. It's a supernatural life, as I often say. But we cultivate that relationship and that life within us through the knowledge of the Word of God—through the Bible.

And it's that simple, and it's that demanding. Sinclair Ferguson wrote in his book, *Devoted to God*, "There's no immediate pathway to getting to know God's Word intimately. There's no quick fix. We can only do this the old-fashioned way; by reading it often and learning it well. The remedy," he said, "is soaking ourselves frequently in God's Word." That's true. 'So let's get after it!', that would be the implication.

Now, to this exhortation— "To hate evil, to stand firm against the tide of the world and the spirit of the age", —David adds these encouraging words in the rest of Verse 10 and Verse 11, The Lord whom we love "...preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. Light is sown *like seed* for the righteous And gladness for the upright in heart." The Lord is with us. We know that by faith, but that's the promise of the Word of God. He never sends us out to fight His battles that He is not with us and helping us; and more, enabling us to do well. He "preserves" us, (I think is better translated, "He guards us"). 'He *guards* the souls or the lives of His faithful.' The Lord promises to watch over us and defend us. So we are able to live by

faith, not compromise, but stand for the truth for the Gospel. We're able to do that because, as I said, it's a supernatural life that we live.

“Warn the rebels of the danger of their way and direct them in the way of life, which is in Christ and faith in Him.” —That's the Gospel. That's what we're to be doing—living and giving.

And we do it in love. Not in anger. We do it in love. We are counseled to do that by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:15. We're not to be taken in by and fooled by men, or by the craftiness of the evil one, or by the spirit of this age. But we are to speak the truth in love. That's how we are to deal with the world around us; speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in Christ. —That's Paul's counsel.

And the promise is, the Lord will light our path. I think that's an interesting, beautiful way of putting it in Verse 11. "Light is sown *like seed* for the righteous.", gives the picture of the LORD like a farmer casting out seed before his path as he goes to sow it throughout the field. And as we walk by faith, the Lord sows light before us. He lights our path as we walk in obedience to Him. He directs our way and fills us with gladness.

So David gives the final exhortation in Verse 12, "Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, And give thanks to His holy name." The Psalm that began with rejoicing, ends with rejoicing. Be thankful because the LORD is always there guarding us, lighting our way, and delivering us. And be glad because not only is He presently blessing us, He's coming again. —And He'll win the victory. He is literally coming again—physically on the clouds—in all His Glory to defeat decisively the wicked and set up His Kingdom and righteousness over all the earth. We are “more than conquerors”, as Paul said, regardless of the difficulties of life, (and we go through hard and challenging times), nevertheless the end will come. And it will be triumphant for us, and we will be rewarded for our faithfulness.

So hold on and do more. Fight the good fight. The Lord is with us. That is His goodness, His kindness. He is kind and good to us in abundance; kind and good to those who love Him—to His godly ones.

But there is also His severity. "Behold, then," Paul said, "the kindness and severity of God." (Rom 11:29). He's severe with the ungodly. He's patient with them.

This is the day of His patience. But He will deal with sinners; and He will deal with them justly in His time. Ignoring that, dismissing the Lord, is foolish. The Lord is good. God is love. —But for the unbeliever, the rebellious, those who think they can live life their way, —He's dangerous.

David began with an invitation to the world at-large; "The Lord reigns. Let the earth rejoice." 'Lay down your weapons,' he's saying. Abandon your idols. Come to Christ in whom is life eternal. He died for the likes of you. He died for sinners, taking their sins upon Himself and undergoing the full punishment of them. Now all one must do is believe in Him. All one can do is believe, is receive the gift of life through faith alone; and the Lord God promises to receive everyone who does that.

May God help you to do that if you've not believed in Him. And you who have—I hope it's everyone here—rest in the great truth; that He reigns now, and He's going to rule upon the earth in the days to come. So may God keep us faithful and active and fighting the good fight of faith.

We're going to close in a word of prayer and prepare ourselves for the Lord's Supper, following the prayer. So I'm going to pray for that as well as pray the Lord blessing on us for our time together in this hour. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us. We're reminded of Your greatness. We're reminded of Your sovereignty—the sovereignty of the Triune God. We look around, and it's a dark age in which we live. There's unrest. There's injustice. And yet, it's always been that way. There's really nothing unusual essentially in the time we're living from other times. This is a fallen world. But you've placed us here to be lights in the midst of it—and I pray that we will do that: We will be Your ambassadors; we will represent You; we will live and give the Gospel in our word and deed; and we will be faithful, stand faithful, through difficult times to the end. So bless us, Lord, with that.

We have much grace abounding to us. —It's your goodness and kindness to us. And we have that based upon the work of Your Son—what He did for us in our place

when He came the first time as a servant; not as a king but as one who served His people, gave His life a ransom for many. And through that death, He obtained life for us.

Father, as we now turn our attention to this Lord's Supper, may we remember that it is given in order for us to remember what He did for us, and we need to remember that weekly. And as we remember it, Father, prepare us for the day and the week before us that we would live lives of service for You and we would bring glory to You in all that we do. We pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen

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