

6/7/20 - John 3:22-36 - "Faith, Obedience, and Beethoven"

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[0 : 00] Please join me in the reading of God's Word. John 3, verse 22. It says, After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them, and he was baptizing.

John also was baptizing in Anan, near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized, for John had not yet been put in prison.

Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.

Jesus answered. John answered, sorry. John answered, A person cannot receive even one thing unless it has been given from heaven. You yourselves bore witness, bear witness, bear me witness, I'm sorry, that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

[1 : 27] He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way.

He who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, and he gives the spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not believe, does not obey the Son, shall not see life. But the wrath of God remains on him.

This is God's Word. Please join me in prayer. Father, help us today.

[2 : 29] We are unworthy to be given the gift of your grace. Let a ray of light penetrate from your Word into our hearts and give us confidence.

All of us, give me confidence in the power of your Gospel. Grant me clarity in communicating and proclaiming the truths of your Word.

Father, edify your church through this work. To God alone be the glory. We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

I am nothing. You are nothing. But Beethoven is everything. Now, before you put me in a straitjacket and put me in a little padded room, let me explain some context and where those words came from.

These are the words of an Italian conductor of the late 1800s. His name is Arturo Toscanini. And he spoke these words after a grand performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

- [3 : 47] He spoke these words as the crowd stood up from their seats, gave a long extended standing ovation, clapping and cheering.
- And it was long. And it was long. And Toscanini, facing the crowd, turned around to his orchestra. And he spoke those words. I am nothing.
- You are nothing. But Beethoven is everything. These words brought together Toscanini's perspective of music.
- His attitude. Knowing that he is simply just repeating somebody else's work and labor and time. Similar words have appeared and occurred in Scripture by the Apostle Paul as he addressed the very divided church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, where this church was being called out for their immaturity.
- They were dividing over ranks and favorites and spiritual gifts and who does this and who does that. And Paul rebukes them, essentially, because they were also playing ranks and favorites of who they were following and who their theologians were.
- [5 : 06] And he says, quote, For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, I follow Paul, and another says, I follow Apollos, are you not being merely human?
- What then is Apollos? What is Paul? You are servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.
- So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. Today, in our passage, we arrive in the narrative of the next dialogue and the next scene, we'll call it, in the book of John, where it goes from John, Nicodemus, and Jesus being the late night inquirer that we've been speaking about the past two weeks.
- And now we're going into a later time. And we find John the Baptist back into the narrative today, as we just read. And John the Baptist and Jesus are baptizing in the Judean countryside.
- We will spend a great amount of time observing John the Baptist's attitude in this passage. Because at this point, Jesus is becoming very, very popular.
- [6 : 32] John the Baptist had the kind of attitude that we will observe today, similar to that of Arturo Toscanini, and that of the Apostle Paul, and many other unmentioned saints of old that have gone before.
- And my aim today in the message is to persuade you through this text, a humble disposition truly is the life of a Christian.
- And that we ought to live out Christ-centered obedience. I'm going to refer to that as Christ-centric obedience. Christ-centered obedience marked by Christ-centric faith.
- Only once we do this, we will fall short of giving adequate glory and honor and praise to God as He intended for us on this earth. And so how I'm going to do this today, I want to present the message in three different sections.
- Not because I'm a typical Baptist preacher, I like to do things in threes when I do a message, but the text is naturally kind of laid out into three different sections. So I want to draw upon John's words here and his structure.
- [7 : 41] But I want to look at section one, titled, Pulling the Heartstrings of Pride. Pulling the Heartstrings of Pride in verse 22.
- The chapter reads, the verse reads here in verse 22, After this, Jesus and His disciples went into the Judean countryside, and He remained there with them and was baptizing.
- Verse 23 and 24 continue, John also was baptizing at Anan, near Selim, because water was plentiful there and people were coming and being baptized, for John had not yet been put in prison.

So something important right there, I'm going to take a real quick pause. Right here, we see something important. That you have John and you have Jesus doing essentially the same exact thing.

They're doing the same thing. They're baptizing. Full immersion, same word, there's no hidden things under the text. Plain and simple, they're doing the same thing.

[8 : 44] There's no distinction. However, as the verse continues, we see some rising action in this narrative. In verse 25, it says, Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.

So a little side conversation going on in this story. You know that saying often in households? We're not fighting, we're just having a conversation.

Or we're not fighting, we're just discussing. All the while, people are yelling at each other. Or it's almost like you're waiting for a lamp to go flying across the room and hit somebody in the head.

But this is how some people communicate. Well, we see here a similar discussion for all you passive aggressives. We see a discussion.

A word known as zesis. It means debate, dispute, controversy. It's not merely a discussion here. This is a disagreement or an argument about something important.

[9 : 51] But the basis of this argument is that between John's disciples and a Jew. And the argument was over purification. Now obviously, within its context, like I said, they're doing essentially the same thing.

John and Jesus. So what is there to discuss, right? They're both doing the same thing. It's a baptism of repentance. Why is there a discussion?

Well, let's see. Because John's disciples in this passage, as it goes to verse 26, John's disciples return to John. Probably a little irritated. Probably a little bit convinced from that previous debate with this Jew.

Maybe the outcome of that debate. But observe the substance of their words here in verse 26. It says, And they, the disciples, came back to John, came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all are going to him.

John and Jesus doing the same thing. But all are going to Jesus. These disciples come back to John, obviously, giving him an honorary title, Rabbi, meaning teacher in the Hebrew.

[11 : 15] Obviously, in this scene, they may be questioning John's methods. They see everyone going to Jesus. John used to be the man. He used to be the popular one.

And now everybody is going to Jesus, the one he bore witness to. John, what are you doing? Listen, our ministry is going down. Questioning his methods, maybe his strategy of ministry.

Because look, look, John, look over there as the disciples would call. Look, everyone, all are going to Jesus. And in verse 26, I want to make something plain and simple. The word all.

This constitutes a full extent, quantity, complete, each and every. Literally, all means all, and that's all that all means.

All means all, and that's all that all means. All are going to him. So it appears that John's ministry is similar to that little corner shop that all of a sudden they decide to build a Walmart next to.

[12 : 18] All of a sudden, we're losing business, John. What's going on here? It appears that John's ministry is losing steam and relevancy. It's like that little Italian shop that gets put next to a newly built, we'll call it fake Italian, olive garden.

It's just fake Italian food. We're losing steam. This is crucial in John the Baptist ministry. This is a crucial moment, church.

He could either fall for the pressure of compromise to submit to his desires of his flesh, or he can submit, continue to submit towards obedience towards God.

So let's see how John does in this passage in section 2, where we see John's steadfast conviction in verse 27.

John answered, John answered, A person cannot receive even one thing unless it has been given. It is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.

[13 : 31] Just take a pause there, real quick, because verse 27 here, John affirms his steadfast conviction of submission, not to his flesh, maybe to change his methods and his strategies, but he affirms his steadfast conviction to be obedient to the Lord's will in his life.

John's ministry was not his own. As he says in verse 27, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from the Father. From heaven.

What would be, probably irritate the living daylight out of us here, John had contentment. Something when we see all the people flocking over to this other guy, where we used to be the guy, right?

It would irritate most of us. But he had contentment because his perception was heavenly focused. John's conviction rested upon obedience to God's leading, even if it meant that his popularity would decrease.

His steadfast focus would be apparent. Isn't this quite a timely reminder for us today in the church? In a culture that leeches on the pragmatism, seems like there's always a subtle church war going on between this church and that church.

[15 : 01] You know, this church seems a little bit more entertained. They have more lights. Man, they have fog machines. It fills room. It's like, woo, we're going. Yeah, we're hopping in that church. Man, they, I don't know. Maybe we'll go try that place a little bit.

You know, the culture leeches on the pragmatism. You know, hop into a new Ford. Really? Like, you don't need a new car. Your car's fine. Just a new and better thing to keep your attention, to keep your interests entertained.

This is something known as theotainment. It's coined as theotainment. And where John could have maybe been convinced by his disciples, his concerned disciples after this, like, well, we got to change our strategies.

He could have leeches on to some theotainment. And maybe he'll give some little gift baskets for the guests to come in. And maybe they'll come back. Or maybe he'll, he'll have some giveaways. Maybe he'll drive his, his motorcycle up on to, to the stage.

Maybe he'll bring his jet ski out onto the Judean countryside. Maybe this will get more people because everyone's going to Jesus. What do we got to do? John's attitude and perspective of his loyalties was sure and steadfast.

[16 : 10] It didn't move an inch. The influence of the world, church, did not reshape John's theology of God. But instead, the influence of God reshaped John's theology of the world.

It was flipped backwards. Likewise, church, this world has itching ears. This world has flighty instincts. We ought not to fall into the pressure of trying to make the gospel look appealing.

To maybe sand down the edges. Like, do we really want to tell people that they're a sinner? Well, yeah. Because what's the point in Jesus' blood being poured out? What's the purpose of repentance?

You don't want to sand the edges of the gospel. In order to have the good news, right? We got to know the bad news. All right? The truth is, the gospel will be appealing to those who have ears of faith to hear.

We don't need to season it. The gospel doesn't need seasoning. As Charles Spurgeon put it, the gospel is like a caged lion. All we need to do is let it out. And so John goes on to say, in verse 29, that his delight in this ministry opportunity is a deep-seated joy.

[17 : 23] He loved seeing all going to that other place. He loved it. And he referred it to a relationship between a bridegroom and his best man.

In verse 29, it continues, the one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice.

Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete. Now, verse 29, obviously, the bridegroom, you know, public service, that's Jesus.

This is Jesus. The bridegroom is referred to Jesus in light of Old Testament background, in all these big pages that are sometimes confusing to us. It refers to Jesus, the coming Messiah, as the bride of Yahweh, in Isaiah 62, Jeremiah 2, and Hosea 2.

And John the Baptist was suggesting that Jesus is Israel's awaited King Messiah, in his first sentence. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom.

[18 : 31] The one who has the bride, who has the people coming to him, is the bridegroom. It's not me. It's that guy who's drawing all the people. Get it? And then, obviously, the bride imagery is used within all these pages here, of the ones that we sometimes understand a little bit more easily.

The bride is imagery of, further applied to the church in New Testament theology. We see that in 2 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5, and Revelation 21.

And so, obviously, the friend of the bridegroom, who hears his voice, is obviously the best man in that wedding.

Where John was actually making himself, depicting himself in this illustration of being the best man. Standing ready to do the bridegroom's bidding at his own wedding.

And then, obviously, the bride is the world, those who are coming to Jesus. So, imagine what John, stepping back here for a minute, imagine what John is attempting to express in this passage to his disciples.

[19 : 39] The emotions of experiencing the opportunity to be part in the uniting of the bride and the bridegroom. This passage mentions that he rejoices greatly in watching this union take place.

That the actual words, I'm not going to act like I'm smarter, smarter or anything like that. But these words here are really interesting. Rejoices greatly. Any theologians watching the live streamer here today, look up those two words, because one's a verb, one's a noun.

And what he's trying to explain here is something important. That this is great joy. Like, we can't even put into our human words the joy that John has when he sees what is concerning to John's disciples of everyone going over there rather than here.

John has great joy, inexpressible joy, deep-seated gratitude, joy to watch the unity, to watch the Messiah fulfill his duty on this earth.

And John shared the same joy in seeing the ministry of Jesus begin to launch. And not only that, the success that all are going to Jesus, not John.

[21 : 01] It didn't mean John was doing something wrong. John wasn't doing anything wrong. John was doing just as God intended. And John shared the blessing of God's calling in his life.

And it was not about numbers. It was about obedience. Okay? Why is this so hard for us at times to be happy in the success of others?

Church. Why is it so hard sometimes to be inexpressibly joyful at the success of others? Something within us pulls at our pride, I believe.

Similar to John's disciples, where I want a little spotlight. I want, what about me? They're getting great success. What about me?

What about us? Maybe if I fabricate some, like, good Facebook posts and get some good likes and clicks or get this tweet in there and man, it just gets retweeted.

[22 : 09] I make the right hashtags and boom! There we are on the map in recognition. Maybe if we get a whole bunch of people to follow us.

Or if I do this or do that. Maybe I'll get that spotlight. This is a deadly compromise game of comparison. You can't compare yourself to the success of other fellow believers.

Maybe somebody's a little bit more smarter than you are and more biblically literate than you are. That doesn't mean that something's wrong with you. If you see somebody out evangelizing, preaching the gospel, people are coming, that baptism, there's water everywhere, it's splashing, and man, all because this guy's doing his thing.

It doesn't mean that you're doing something wrong. Don't fall for the deadly comparison game, which tugs at the desires of our flesh and those who find themselves submitting to the desires of the flesh actually reveal where their loyalties lay.

It's not in a heavenly focused, but rather a fleshly focus, a human sense focus. Life has a time and a season for everything.

[23 : 29] You know that passage in Ecclesiastes. And if we could just keep our minds fixated upon submission and obedience to the Father, we will find peace.

We will find all the recognition that we need knowing that the fruit is completely up to God. All we need to focus on is our submission and obedience to the Father's will.

For John, we should see a Christocentric attitude, theological term for Christ-centered attitude. Something that says, no matter the cost, no matter the fruit, no matter the lack, no matter the abundance, no matter what the portion the Lord desires to give me, all glory, honor, and praise goes to God alone, the one whom I have the deepest joy of serving.

Glory to God. No matter the cost, notice that this says, it actually gives you a little insight of what's to come, for John had not yet been put in prison.

John, there's a cost that comes to this discipleship. No matter the cost, no matter the fruit, no matter the lack, no matter the gain, no matter what is going on in your life, all you need to do is be encouraged by submitting and being obedient to God the Father.

[24 : 55] Let God work out the fruits. Which brings us to my particular life verse, and I guess that's a thing, it's like a 90s thing. Your life verse, you know, you post it on your wall and it's like you get a tattoo and stuff.

I guess, I don't have a tattoo of this. Maybe I should get that. Tattoos are allowed right? Yeah. No? David says no.

I stand corrected. Chapter and verse after the service today. But this is my life verse.

This is, in such few words, something that rings so true into conviction and encouragement. In verse 30, in chapter 3, he must increase, but I must decrease.

This is literally the tipping point of this narrative. It was all rising action. What's John going to do? His disciples are a little bit irritated coming back to him and John responds and the tip of this narrative points to this verse that pivots on us.

[26 : 06] He must increase, but I must decrease. six words in the group, seven words in our translation that have such a relationship between conviction and encouragement.

This single verse can instantly deflate the slightest bit of our pride and reorient our attitudes of submission.

Truly, this is the attitude of humility, church. to increase. He must increase, that he must grow to become more significant and more important, conceived as becoming physically larger and to decrease, but we must decrease to make us lower, to make us inferior.

We're not the guy. He's the guy. To become less significant or important, conceived of as being physically smaller, decrease.

This means, church, that the superiority of Christ must encapsulate our priorities, making inferior anything that does not broadcast the name of Jesus Christ, the agenda of Jesus Christ, and the motives of Jesus Christ.

[27 : 23] Okay? The Christian life is a Christocentric life. Christ-centered life. I want to assume as we kind of think about today, as we move to our culture today, I want us all to assume that each and every person in this room, each and every person in this room runs a ministry.

Your own ministry, sometimes that is in the workplace, sometimes that is at home. It better be at home. It could be maybe your relationship with your neighbor.

It could be a whole plethora of things. It could be an actual ministry, like the ministry of the Word or ministry of children's ministry. We all have a ministry, church or secular.

So I want us to assume that and grasp that, church. I want that to be in our minds of conviction as we continue because you do have a ministry.

If you are in Christ, you are called to use that ministry to make Jesus' name big. Okay? Everything you do in that ministry is to proclaim the name of Jesus.

[28 : 51] And we should be encouraged because the size of your ministry or church doesn't matter. Only the size of your message.

What are you doing with the name of Jesus? A message which either amplifies Jesus or minimizes Jesus. Amplifies our flesh and makes us feel good. Man, thanks Brent for ten steps of feeling good today.

Or we can go to the gospel and either be convicted, humbled, encouraged, whatever the Lord's word desires to do on that day to grow us and to mature us.

And this Christocentric attitude is a life, in life, in our lives, in our ministries, is the means and the ends.

That it encapsulates everything in our ministry and in our lives. It's the means and the ends in and itself. It's not a tactic that you use to get more kids done in the children's ministry or get some more people filling the seats.

[29 : 59] It's not a tactic, church. It's not a tactic to grow your church, your ministry, your wallet, or your personal fame. Or insert whatever modern day vice you desire to insert in there.

Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end of all time. may he equally be the beginning and the end of the focus of our ministries in life.

I want to talk about for a minute something known in the financial realm of return on investment and know you can keep your wallet closed. It's not that type of talk.

it's not your ministry or your harvest. That's what I want to focus on. It's not your ministry or your harvest. This attitude of obedience also is underlined in the attitude of faith regardless of the outcome.

Okay? I want to hit on that because it's important in this passage as we go to the end of it. For instance, whatever the quantity of harvest due to our efforts and our laboring within the means of Jesus Christ's name in our obedience and submission to Jesus Christ, no matter the harvest due to our efforts, it's completely and solely up to him.

[31 : 22] Now, there is natural sense if you're not seeing fruit produced, obviously something might be wrong. If you're doing something and you're just like, okay, I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing, but if there is no fruit produced, there might be something wrong.

This is the gauge. The word of God is the gauge of how you're actually doing in prayer and being focused on what the Lord's leading. But if you are doing something right, if you are performing in your ministry by submitting and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ, the harvest is due to his effort.

Through our efforts, it's completely solely up to him. So you can trust him. I can trust him.

But can we really? I want to think about that because can we trust him with that fruit that is produced? So if we increase our study time in the word of God and decrease our study time of probably Fox or News, choose your side, I don't know, but whatever you do, will there be fruit produced?

Yes, there will be fruit produced. If we increase our evangelism out on the streets and decrease our Netflix vegetation, will there be fruit produced?

[32 : 49] Yes. If we increase charitable giving to ministries and decrease your fast food binges, maybe go to Chipotle one less time and give the money back to the Lord, there will be fruit produced.

Yes, there will be. However, church, if your motives are set upon what you're going to get, the return on your investment and it's contingent upon what you get, your faith is going to be revealed as an absolute facade.

You're not serving the Lord, you're serving yourself. God's God's God's ministry and focus at all or the least bit.

So let the same be true in our lives as we remain humble and steadfast in obedience to God. We have to reorient and refocus church constantly.

And John gives us three last, we'll call them punches in the face. I imagined a boxer in this passage as I'm, you know, I think of crazy things sometimes in my study time and I just imagined that right hook, that left hook in just a final uppercut.

[34 : 10] It's the image of a boxer, of some rich content which drives his ministry as we come to the last section. And I want us to feel these punches as it punched me right in the face this week.

In the section three, last section today, Christocentric obedience and faith. In verse 31 through 36. Verse 31 is the first landed punch.

He says, John, he who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

Man, this right hook, right, landed right in our face, is the supremacy of Christ. Serving the Lord for earthly gain is void of heavenly value.

If you're serving your flesh, it has no value in heaven. And it continues in verse 32 and 34. With the next punch, he bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony.

[35 : 22] whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

The next hook in this scene is the testimony of Christ, that the fruit belongs to God alone. It is his harvest after all.

Whoever receives in this passage, it's not up to you, it's not up to your methods or your means, you just need to stay focused on obedience and submission to God's will. And our efforts are not a popularity contest.

And then the final blow that drives his attitude and humility is in verse 35 and 36. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

Whoever believes, in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. That final uppercut is the authority of Christ.

[36 : 34] Jesus Christ is God's beloved Son. There is no one else coming. It was his one and only Son. And Jesus is equal in power with God the Father.

And Jesus ends his uppercut with two words that jump off the page. of believe and obey. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life.

Right hook, the supremacy of Christ. Left hook, the testimony of Christ. Uppercut, knocked out, the authority of Christ. Christocentric obedience and submission to the Father.

Father, let's look at those two words that jump off the page in that final blow. Believe and obey. Just yesterday, I was swimming with my kids.

And, you know, crazy as they are. And I started looking around the deck, the pool deck. And, you know, you see those footprints all walking around, you know, they're with Levi, heaven Levi.

[37 : 44] I mean, they're all over the place. That's my three-year-old. But, it started to get me thinking, because it's one thing to believe, and another thing to obey.

Okay? And it started to make me think. Now, don't call me crazy yet. Give me a chance. This passage made me think of the imprints that obedience makes in our lives.

Similar to, similar in my mind, to the footprints that are made when we get right out of the pool. You can tell the beginning, you can tell where it's going, by the footprints.

These footprints depict, number one, that someone was wet. For my kids, they were very wet, and they were going all over the place. It depicts that somebody is wet.

Number two, it also says that somebody was going somewhere. Okay? How many of us, upon believing in Christ, we take our steps right out of that baptismal, dripping wet, and we take our steps out of that baptismal, with each imprint making marks of our faith.

[38 : 59] But they don't leave any further than the chairs that we see in front of us. Think about it. The footprints that follow us out of our baptismal, thinking about that initial belief that we have in Jesus Christ, that original expression of faith, should not simply just lead back to our seats each and every week.

However, that is important, but it shouldn't be the only place those footprints leave. But rather, they should lead right out the doors, they should lead right down the streets, they should lead over to your neighbor's house, they should lead somewhere, dripping wet, faith.

That baptism expresses that faith. And think about it. If those imprints of those feet, after getting out of the baptismal, are marks of an imprint of ongoing faith, how do they keep going?

It is that stride, that motivation of obedience, that when you're walking out, you have a focus, you have a mission in your relationships, when you're conducting ministry within this church, or at your workplace, or even in your own home, or in your neighbor's home, that you see not just footprints that lead to chairs, but these footprints are these impressions of faith.

You can look back and see faith, faith, faith, continued by an ongoing stride of obedience to God the Father. God.

[40 : 40] We walk humbly in obedience to God, and let Him deal with the fruit. Your focus has to be your obedience, which is broadcast by the imprint of faith.

And let the portion of your ministry, let the return of your ministry be put into perspective that it's His anyway. Church, we're in a battle of our flesh daily, and there is something within all of us which cries out for the glory at times.

It's within our human nature. There's something within us which cries out for me. And giving into that not only compromises those steps of faith, but it also steals the glory from God, and quite an offense that is.

John put it simple, church. I want to leave you with this. John put it simple. He must increase, but I must decrease.

Tuscanini put it simple. I am nothing. You are nothing. Paul put it simple. What is Paul? What is Apollos?

[41 : 56] Who are we anyhow? We're servants. May our lives be marked by the same humble attitude in this church. Youngstown Metro, everyone gathered here, I implore you to make Jesus Christ big and central in all that we do in our lives.

Please join me in prayer as we go into a section of just reflecting on this message and incorporate singing.

Let's pray. Amen. Father Almighty, empower your people to tell the gospel story, to recount your wondrous deeds, which shine light on the glorious and holy character that you have.

Lord Jesus, empower your people to announce the good news that you have brought to earth the life that is in heaven, that you have sacrificed yourself to sinners, that you have been raised from the dead and exalted as Lord over all creation.

And finally, Holy Spirit, empower us to live in light of the gospel, declaring this truth with our words and our actions, and embodying this truth through our actions, all of our deeds and actions in this world.

[43 : 30] Give us your love for others. Help us to love one another in a world that is so divided. Give us love for you and love for one another.

We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.