

Get Up and Go: #morelife

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Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[0 : 0 0] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Good morning, church.

Amen. It is a joy to be with you. And welcome to all our friends who are worshipping online as well. May the joy and peace of the risen Christ be with you. My name is Scott.

I'm one of the pastors here at Pendleton Center United Methodist Church. And it's a joy to be in worship together. I want to start with a few announcements before we get into our worship time. A couple of things that are new this week we want to highlight.

[1 : 4 3] We talked last week about the donation of eggs to Feeding Hope. So if you are in a position to do that, please offer some eggs up for their next meal as they'll be feeding homeless people downtown.

And so Sandy will be looking for those donations if you have them. Also, our mission team is collecting winter clothes. And if you're able to donate a coat or some other warm gear, please do that.

Get that to DJ as you are able. New things, as I said, are a collection of diapers and wipes. That's been one of the supplies that people have been looking for in the wake of the blizzard.

So if you are able to donate some diapers or wipes or other infant care materials, Sandy is going to be collecting those as well. So feel free to bring those in as you are able. And also, Grief Share will be starting this coming Thursday.

So if you know someone who is in a time of bereavement, could be recent, could have been a while ago. But those sessions are very powerful. They're going to be going straight through for 13 weeks.

[2 : 4 5] And so if you know someone who is interested, you can see Pastor Jennifer for more information about the Grief Share group. Also, our Tough Stuff Bible Study, Asking Those Hard Questions, is also meeting on this Thursday.

And so if you want to be a part of those deeper dives into Scripture about some controversial issues, then join us on this Thursday at 7 as we will be having another one of those conversations.

So now, let's ready our hearts as we come into our time of praising God together. So you know we've been walking through this series called Angels Among Us. And where we are this week, because this week will be our final week in this series, is that Christ has come into the world.

And in more practical terms, especially as we talk about today's reading, that means that Mary and Joseph are now living with a small child in the city of Bethlehem. Now, maybe Joseph had gotten used to angels and God sending him messages by now, but it also could have been a while.

And so he thought maybe those times were behind him. But what we're celebrating today is Epiphany. And so if you're Joseph and you see these strangers show up with all these gifts, could be another sign that God is still at work in a mysterious way.

[4 : 01] And then Joseph gets another message from an angel. Jesus is barely a toddler at this point, and he's already in trouble with the Roman Empire.

He's the savior of humankind, and now he becomes a refugee. He's forced from his home by oppression and violence. So what does this story tell us about how God is working with us now?

We're going to lean in and trust that God is still sending those messages and that we do not need to be afraid. Know that there are angels among us.

There are messages of life coming from a choir on high. Don't just look up for the way God works. It's to plant more life right here on earth, just like it was at Jesus' birth.

There are angels among us bringing life on earth. Do not be afraid. Let's pray together. Holy living God, blessed Jesus, guiding spirit.

[5 : 06] Grant us openness to hear your message. Grant us courage to hear your message in the world.

Create the heart of the devil, and the message of the devil. And with the angel messengers above us, among us, and within us, we sing together.

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

I can feel His mighty power and His grace. I can hear the brush of angels' wings.

I sing glory on each face. Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

[6 : 17] Good morning, everyone. Good morning to everyone online. God sends His angels. He also sent a star to help those wise men gather and meet baby Jesus, maybe as a toddler.

We don't know how long their journey was. But they came to worship. So we're going to open this morning with We Three Kings. And here I am to worship. I invite you to stand if you're able. We Three Kings USA EST So we bells We'll Richardson Oh Star of Wonder Star of Light Star with Royal Beauty Bright Westward leading, still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light For a king on Bethlehem's plain

All I bring to crown him again King forever, ceasing never Honor us all to reign Frankincense to offer have I Pinks and souls a deity nigh Prayer and praising, oysters raising Worshipping God on high Oh, star of wonder, star of light Star with royal beauty bright Westward leading, still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light Word is mine, its bitter perfume Breeds the life of gathering bloom

Star wings dying, bleeding, dying Shielding the stone-filled tomb Glory us now, behold him, arise He in God and sacrifice Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia Sounds through the earth and skies Oh, star of wonder, star of light Star with royal beauty bright Master leading, still proceeding Guide us to thy perfect light Lord of the world, used to have found me to die Lord of the world, used to have found me to darkness

Open my eyes, let me see Lord of the world, used to have found me to darkness Open my eyes, let me see Open my eyes, let me see Beauty that made his heart adore you Hope of a life spent with you So here I am to worship Here I am to bow down Here I am to say that you're my God You're altogether lovely Altogether worthy Altogether wonderful to me King of all ways

[10 : 48] So highly exalted Glorious in heaven above All for you came to the earth you created All for those sake we came for So here I am to worship So here I am to worship Here I am to bow down Here I am to say that you're my God You're altogether lovely Altogether worthy Altogether wonderful to me And I'll never know how much it comes To see my sin for God that cross I'll never know how much it comes

To see my sin for God that cross Here I am to worship Here I am to worship Here I am to bow down Here I am to say that you're my God You're altogether lovely Altogether worthy Altogether wonderful to me Here I am to worship Here I am to worship Here I am to worship Here I am to worship You may be seated Good morning. I'm Jennifer. I'm one of the pastors here and it's very nice to see you all today.

Each week we're invited to worship God through our gifts, our tithes, and our offerings. In addition, this week we also have a mission moment where we have the opportunity to help be God's hands in the world.

Community Missions was founded in 1925 and it provides a unique blend of services to address the needs of our community right here in Niagara. In general, they serve a vulnerable population of individuals who have been underserved, marginalized, overlooked, and challenged through various circumstances.

So we invite you to worship God and give generously through your gifts, your tithes, and your service. We have seen His star Rising in the night We have seen His star Rising in the night

[14 : 22] Followed it to find the King Who came to bring the ray of light Underneath His beams He has born tonight He has born tonight And we'll worship Him We'll worship Him We'll worship Him We'll worship Him This night Though we've traveled far To our journey's road We have found the greatest hope So the world won't be the same So the world won't be the same again We have seen His star We have seen the light And we'll worship Him We'll worship Him We'll worship Him We'll worship Him This night

Every bang This night In its regrIND adversity Anybody We have seen His star We have seen the light And we'll worship Him We'll praise the newborn King of King We'll worship Him We'll praise Him with the gifts we pray We'll worship Him We'll worship Him

This night This night We will worship, worship Him We will worship, worship Him We will worship Him We will worship Him Thank you We will worship Him This night We will worship Him God, we thank you for the gifts and the blessings that you bestow upon us each and every day.

We thank you especially for the gift of your Son to bring your light and your love into the world. We humbly give back some of what you give us.

In your name we pray. Amen. Thank you. So we come to a time of sharing our joys and concerns and raising them up to God.

[18 : 18] Does anybody have any joys or concerns that they'd like to lift up today? I'd like to keep the Joseph family in our prayers. They had a fire a week before Christmas while they're going to be out of their house for at least a year.

So I think that they're going through. Just keep that in mind. So if you didn't hear that, the Joseph family had a fire before Christmas, and they will be out of their home for at least a year. So we want to make sure that we keep them in our prayers.

Anna. So Wendy, Anna's aunt is going to have surgery.

So we want to make sure we keep her in our prayers. One of my former teacher friends, her 13-year-old son was just diagnosed with leukemia and is undergoing chemotherapy for at least three years.

Okay. So there's a 13-year-old diagnosed with leukemia and is undergoing treatment for at least the next three years. Okay.

[19 : 22] Let us go to God and join our hands and pray our hearts. God, we lift up those that we've named and those names that are in our hearts.

Please watch over each and every person that we've named and those who are here and watching us online. We ask for those who are having surgery this week that you guide their teams, their medical teams, and the right procedures so that they can be strong and find hope and love.

And we ask for those prayers for those who are struggling, whether it be physically or mentally. Help us to be your hand in the world.

Help us to show them your light and your love. God, Buffalo has been struggling a lot these past couple months. May you help unite us.

May you help us show your love to those who need it. May we always be that welcoming hand to those who need your love and your word in this world.

[20 : 39] We ask that you pray for our leaders, our military men and women who were not able to be home with their families, for those who might be traveling this week.

We lift it all up to you. In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

Good morning. The reading today is from Matthew, the second chapter, verses 1 through 23.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, where is the one, excuse me, where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?

We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

[21 : 58] In Bethlehem in Judea, they replied, for this is what the prophet has written. But you, Bethlehem in the land of Judea, are by no means least among the rulers of Judea, for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.

Then Herod called the magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, go and search carefully for the child.

As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him. After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

After having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.

[23 : 12] Get up, he said, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet, that out of Egypt I called my son.

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious. And he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity, who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled. A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping in great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. For those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.

[24 : 27] So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archilus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Friends, let's pray together.

Almighty and gracious God, we are indeed overwhelmed by grace, overwhelmed by love, and grateful for your presence as you move among us now. So Lord, with our hearts open, we pray that you would put that seed in each of us that we need, one that will grow and bear fruit for the honor and the glory of your name.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. So, it's that time of year, and I know that many of you are probably not resolution people, right?

[25 : 50] Some of you may be, but it's the eighth. For those of you that are resolution people, how you doing with that? They tend not to last that long, right?

Well, the reason why I'm bringing that up is because when we start thinking about changes in our lives, we start talking about taking big steps and doing the things we know we need to do, looking to get better in life, that the series we've been a part of, the series we've been on, actually helps us do that.

And today, as we come to the final week of this series called Angels Among Us, it has a profound message about how we include God in that process. And so we want to stay focused on that particular piece.

So if you're looking for something, if you're hoping to take a step, that this message in this series has something to say to you. So I hope that you'll be able to hold on to that until we get to the end.

Now, of course, you've gathered from all our conversation to this point that we're celebrating Epiphany, and technically we're a little behind on the church calendar because of the blizzard.

[26 : 59] But as we stay with Epiphany, there's a lot that we have about this particular interaction with Christ that we've learned in our years growing up that actually, you know, it's good, it's comforting, we're used to it.

It's not exactly scriptural, though. And sometimes we've got to unlearn some of that stuff. But as we walk through this story that's very familiar to us, that image of three kings coming to visit the infant Jesus, as we walk through this story, what I want you to pay attention to is, as we said, how God works to help his people stay on the path he wants them on.

Let me say that again. Pay attention to this reading and see how often and the number of different ways that God works to keep his people on the path he wants them on.

Okay? So, you heard Renee read verses 1 to 23 of Matthew chapter 2. That's actually the entirety of the chapter. Now, the Epiphany story, the wise men, is the first part.

There's two other big chunks in the chapter. You probably figured that out listening to it. There's the visit of the Magi. Then, there is what we call the slaughter of the innocents, where Herod kills the babies.

[28 : 24] Then, it's the return, the flight, and the return. So, Joseph and Mary go to Egypt and then they return to Israel. So, three big chunks in the chapter. Okay?

And, what I want you to catch is that in every single one of these episodes, you see God doing what we said. that God works to keep his people on the path God wants them on.

Okay? So, let's start with the beginning. So, we have Joseph and Mary and they're in Bethlehem as a result of the census. Jesus has been born and so they decided to stay.

Now, as we said, we got to unlearn some of this stuff because what Matthew tells us is that Magi from the east came. He does not tell us how many. so that three thing is not exactly right.

That actually comes up because of the song. Right? That when we start talking about the three kings and people attach the three to them because of the gifts. Because of the three gifts.

[29 : 25] So, that's where that kind of comes from but we actually don't know how many there were. The other piece is that Magi weren't kings. They were more like priests and astronomers and astrologers because we know that part of the story.

Right? We have seen his star. And that's kind of what they did. They watched for signs in the heavens. They looked for other things and that's the key. But here's what I want us to pay attention to which are two things.

First, God literally moved in the heavens. Right? So, there are different people who have studied this and they talked about different astronomical things that that star could have been.

but the key here for all of us, right? And for them is that when they detected this movement of God, when they saw this sign, they responded to it.

And the challenge for each of us is that God does something extraordinary. They recognized it as God doing something extraordinary extraordinary.

[30 : 36] And they responded to it. How do we live in those moments? Right?

Because what happened with these guys is that when they recognized that God had done something extraordinary, they literally committed to a journey that would take them months across the desert.

Because it would have taken them months if we're right about where they were from. That it would have taken them two, maybe three months to get from where we estimate they were from to Jerusalem across the desert.

When you recognize a message from God, how committed are you? Because it's easy for us to say, God, please tell me what to do.

God tells you what to do. And you're like, wait a minute, I didn't know I was going to have to do that. But see, that's part of what we're talking about today, right?

[31 : 41] Because we talk about these changes we want to make. We talk about the things we hope that would happen in our lives. We want God to give us direction. And then when that direction comes, you kind of see the challenge.

Yes? But note, that's one. God moved in the heavens and offered his people direction.

So then, they get to Jerusalem, they have their interaction with Herod, but also, as we keep reading in the chapter, one of the things we see is that Matthew tells us that the star, when they left the king, the star led them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

That's two. So, I mean, really, they were taking a shot in the dark here, right? We know that he's out here somewhere, and we're just going to follow this star.

But you see God actually giving them the help they need. We're not exactly sure what that looked like, but the star literally showed them where to go.

[32 : 52] So that's two. God offering his people real direction about where he wants them to be. So they show up.

They give the gifts. And so there's this moment between the family and the wise men. Then we see something else start to happen. Because then we see this thing where the Magi are warned in a dream.

Right? So they give the gifts, and as it says in verse 12, and having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they return to their country by another route.

It's three. God shows up and tells them, you can't trust this guy. We're going to talk a little bit more about Herod, because Herod is a bad dude.

I mean, really a bad dude. Okay? And it's really important that we name that, because Herod is kind of why so much goes wrong.

[34 : 02] If you're looking for the villain of the story, he's not hard to find. Okay? But, our point here is staying with the fact that God tells these people, and let's not forget a few things about the Magi, they were not God followers in the way the nation of Israel followed God.

they believed in other things. However, they recognized the hand of God. And so, God comes to them and tells them, don't go back to him. So, we got three now, working in the lives of people who aren't, you know, super sanctified, people who aren't super faithful, but God is still working with them.

So, for some of us who were thinking that, well, you know, God wouldn't talk to me because I don't go to church. God wouldn't talk to me because I've messed up. God wouldn't talk to me because I'm outside of the circle.

Well, he talked to them more than once. There's a place for everybody. You are seen, and don't ever forget that.

Next, we have Joseph getting warned in a dream. So, that's four. As you heard me say during the opening, that Joseph, maybe it had been a while and he had thought, well, maybe God is done with that sort of thing.

[35 : 22] Right? Or maybe he was getting these kind of things all the time and we just don't have them in the scripture record. But the key here is that God is still very much working with him about how to take care of the infant Jesus.

So, we've got four now because the angel of God shows up in another dream for Joseph and says, you've got to go. You've got to go now because this is real.

And Joseph has remained faithful. You know, when we tell this story, sometimes we gloss over it partly because it's very unpleasant, but also partly because we just see this sentence and we kind of forget what that really means.

Some of you may have seen this on TV recently, but I think this particular commercial helps us capture a similar sense of what Joseph and Mary were really facing.

Adrienne. there was a mother and a father who had a son. They lived in a small village and didn't have much money, but they were happy.

[36 : 37] One day, they heard the head of their country was sending soldiers to their town because he thought they were part of an insurrection. The young family decided to flee.

They grabbed only what they could carry and ran. They hiked for days, wondering if soldiers might still be following them. They were scared, hungry, and exhausted, but they were far away from the atrocities taking place, in Bethlehem.

That's all Mary and Joseph wanted, a safe place to call home. He Gets Us is a church movement started by some leaders that are across different denominations, and their goal is to help reach some unchurched people through commercials like that.

You've probably seen them. This has been playing for about a month on TV, and so if you're interested in that, you can look up He Gets Us online, and they'll talk some more about how to contribute to the movement. Now, getting back to our story, what you get in there, as I said, is sometimes we gloss through this, and we don't pay attention to what's really going on.

So you heard me say that Herod is a bad dude. To understand Herod the Great, you have to recognize that he killed three of his own sons because he thought there were threats to his throne. He killed a wife, too. So he was that lethal.

[38 : 09] He was that murderous. Now, the idea that he would kill anyone who was a threat to his rule is not really in question. I mean, the atrocity of killing infants, you know, babies under two years old, is really hard for us to digest.

But it's not beyond the pale, given what we know historically about this guy. And to understand how real that atrocity is, you know, that's why I said, you know, that video kind of helps us get that.

Because Joseph and Mary were facing very real danger. Very real danger. And so they leave and go all the way to Egypt. And to put that into perspective, that's not a short trip, and it, too, is across a desert.

But the key here is that God works in the life of his people to keep them on the path he wants them on.

So even facing that danger, God took care of the family. Not only did he take care of them in that way, he took care of them in the gifts from the wise men. Remember what one of the gifts was.

[39 : 23] So they at least had some means to start with. Because one of the gifts was gold. So that's God at work. So after they're gone for a while, we're not exactly sure how long they were in Egypt.

But after they're gone for a while, again, Joseph is told via a message and a dream, it's time to go back. The people who wanted to kill the child have died.

So, if you're keeping score, we're now on number five. God at work in the lives of his people. They get back to the Holy Land.

And so who's now ruling in that place is a man named Archelaus. That's actually Herod the Great's son. Archelaus was later deposed because he was too brutal. Hear that.

He was later deposed by Rome because he was too brutal. So, that's another history lesson. We don't need that. But that being said, did you catch at the end where Joseph, as he's returning, he's told again, don't stay here.

[40 : 38] He's told again in a dream, don't stay here. And that's why they go back to Nazareth. And not only does that take care of the safety of the family, it also fulfills earlier prophecy that he would be called a Nazarene.

God at work in the live of his people. See, often we kind of miss this part of the story.

And what we want to focus on, what I'm hoping you hear today, church, is this idea that if you are wondering what's next for you, if you're hoping to make some changes, if you're wondering, how do I take a step forward, or how do I deal with this question, or how do I deal with this crisis, listen to what we just heard about a God who sees all, knows all, has so much at work in our lives.

And so, what this series has been teaching us, one of the things that emerges out of it, if you're in that particular place, I want you to think about these three things as you move forward.

First, trust that God has a plan, and God's plans are always good. That God has a plan, and God's plans are always good.

[42 : 07] So, if you're like Mary, this young girl from this small town, nobody paying attention to, but seen by God, beloved of God, and you get told, well, here's what's about to happen.

You feel invisible, but Almighty God says to you, I've got a place for you and a plan for you. Trust me. So, whatever you are dealing with, whatever it feels like, whatever you're going through, if you can hang on to the idea that God has a plan, and that God is good, and God's plans are good, then, that can help deal with whatever's in front of you.

Next, when you start remembering that God has a plan, and that God's plans are good, the other thing you have to remember is that God will take care of you when it gets hard.

Now, hear that, and hear that well, because it doesn't say it won't get hard. That's what a lot of us want. We don't want it to get hard.

We really wish it wouldn't be as hard as it gets sometimes, and we're like, God, if you're in this, why is it so dang hard? But the problem is that that's not what God promised us.

[43 : 38] God didn't promise us it wouldn't get hard. What God said was, I'll be with you when it is. And we can see that in the stories. Every single one of the people in the story deals with heart.

Mary deals with heart because she knows nobody's going to believe her. She makes a choice to go visit Elizabeth, which wasn't a popular choice, but God took care of her by sending her to Elizabeth.

Joseph. It looks like his fiancée has cheated on him. How's he going to deal with this? But then, after receiving the message from God, he understands that there's a role to play.

And he hangs on to that. And he says, I'll be faithful. But then, he now is part of the heart. Because everybody thinks he's broken the law. And he's got to deal with this. the magi.

They see the message in the sky. And they're like, well, if we're going to do what we do, that means we've got to cross this desert. We have this interaction with this crazy, murderous king.

[44 : 50] And realize that he wants to use us so he can kill the new one. But, God is with him in the midst of all of the difficulty.

So, whatever you're facing, whatever your challenge is, whatever's on your heart to do, when you feel that stirring in your spirit, trust that God is good, that God has a plan, and that God will be with you when it gets hard, because it will.

The other piece is that God has this way of doing something we really don't like. And here's what I mean.

That God tells us what God wants us to know. God doesn't tell us what we want to know. God tells us what God wants us to know.

That's an important distinction because we want to know the long game. We want to know how it's all going to play out. We want to know exactly how it's supposed to work, when it's supposed to work, and how it's supposed to play out.

[45 : 59] But God tells you what God wants you to know. In other words, so you're Joseph. Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for what's conceived in her is the Holy Spirit.

Okay. That whole thing about moving to Egypt, that wasn't in there. That whole thing about going to Bethlehem, that wasn't in there.

Just what God wanted him to know at the time. When you see the later messages, take the child, go to Egypt. Not how long you're going to be there, not how to get there, not where you're going to live, just what God needed him to know.

Okay. It would be nice, wouldn't it, if we got a little more information. would be nice if God threw in a little more of those details.

But that's just not how it seems to play out. But here's the thing, if you remember what we said before, that trust that God has a plan. Trust that God and God's plans are always good.

[47 : 20] Trust that God will be with you when it starts to get hard. hard. So when God says, hey, I need you to turn right right now, if you can hold on to the first two, then turning right becomes a little easier.

Because you know that God has a plan, and God is good, and God is with you in the midst of your difficulty. The hard part for us is to be lovingly obedient in the midst of it all.

That's hard. We're not going to sit here and pretend that's not hard. Because if it were easy to do, then we would not even need a whole lot of this, right?

But the reality of our struggle is, just like when we start thinking about those New Year's resolutions and promises, the challenge that we deal with is we know that there's stuff we hope for. We know that there are things we could take a step in.

There are things we'd like to see different and better about our life. But if those things were easy to do, they'd already be done. We get that. How do we then move into those hard spaces?

[48 : 35] How then do we move into those places that will make a difference for us? You see, the problem that many of us really struggle with is this idea of we know what we want and we spend most of our energy trying to tell God to do that as opposed to the things we were just talking about, which is God telling us what God's plan is and taking our place in it.

So much of our energy goes into convincing God to do what we want rather than listening to God's plan. and so much of our struggle comes with that inconsistency, comes with that mist.

But, if you've been listening over these weeks, what you've heard is the simple truth of how God remains at work in the life of his people.

That we saw it in what Mary went through. we saw it in what Joseph went through. We saw it in the Magi story today. And, we see it in Jesus' life and in the life of all of the rest of our biblical heroes as well.

Our problem, our hope, our next step, if you will, is to hold on to that reality. You see, friends, this idea of there being angels among us is real.

[50 : 08] angels. Now, whether those are angels that come to us in the big divine way, however you imagine angels in your head, in big glowing white robes and big wings and that sort of thing, whether that's what you need to see, or whether it's the kind words of a stranger, maybe it's in the help of a friend, it's in love.

Maybe it's just simply a comforting message that comes across a song on the radio. But the critical lesson is to trust that all of it is a reflection of God at work in your life.

All of it. things like that. And if we listen to those messages, if we stay open to those messages, if we sincerely desire to walk the path that God has laid out for us, then we have to look for those messages.

We have to be open for those messages. And oftentimes, as I said before, we spend all our time telling God what to do instead of actually watching what God is doing.

Make that shift. And if you really want things to change for the better, watch that. That's how angels are among us.

[51 : 38] And how you can be an angel for someone else. And how your life changes for the better. Amen. And amen. loving and gracious God, thank you for the ways in which you continually show up.

Thank you for the ways in which you continue to work in our lives. Whether it's in the movement of the stars. Whether it's in a dream that we have that is profound.

Whether it is in the voice of a friend or an act of kindness by another. Lord God, we know that you love us so far beyond our capacity to understand and infinitely beyond anything we have deserved.

But Lord God, in the midst of it all, in our selfishness and in our limits, sometimes we close that out. We lock onto our own hopes and our own desires.

Or sometimes we just simply get so busy we're not paying attention to you at all. Lord God, move in us. Move among us. Whether it's in the angels that you send or whether it's in the way the spirit moves in the lives of other people.

[52 : 51] But Lord God, we would receive anything you would give because we know that you have a plan. And your plan and you are good.

Let us listen for your direction so that we can walk on the path and be closest to you. that is our truest heart's desire.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. The table of Christ is open to all.

This is his table. Everyone is welcome to partake. The Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is a right and good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you.

[54 : 00] Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth. Before the mountains were brought forth or you had formed the earth from everlasting to everlasting, you alone are God.

You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on the earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. hearts. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ, in whom you have revealed yourself, our light and our salvation. You sent a star to guide wise men to where Christ was born.

[55 : 10] And in your signs and witness in every age and throughout the world, you have led your people from far places to his light. Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.

To set at liberty those who are oppressed and to announce that the time would come come when you would save your people. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said, take and eat. This is my body, which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said, drink from this all of you.

This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. And so in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

[56 : 38] Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit in all those gathered here, and on these gifts of the bread and cup.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood. By your spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

through your son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

And now as the children of God, we pray the prayer that we were taught. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day, our daily Lord. And we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not to temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[57 : 49] Thanks. And the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. We invite those who are serving to come forward, please.

Thank you. Amen.

Amen. Christ's table is open.

We invite you to come through the center aisle, receive a piece of the bread, dip it in the juice, and then go out the side aisles. We have gluten-free over here available if you so choose for that.

And we also have prepackaged elements. So please come as you feel led and receive the blessing of Christ. Amen.

[60 : 12] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[62 : 42] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[65 : 12] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[67 : 42] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[70 : 12] Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you.