

# Memorial Day 2021

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Date: 30 May 2021

Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Thank you.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning, church. Good morning. The peace of the risen Christ be with you. And also with you.

It is indeed a joy to be worshiping together here in the house of the Lord and online. My name is Scott. I'm part of the pastoral team here, and it is my joy to welcome you this morning. As you are in the sanctuary, we want to remind everyone that when you are seated, you are free to take your mask off, whether you are fully vaccinated or not.

[ 2 : 5 9 ]     So feel free to do so as you are in your places here. But of course, we have our new rules in place. There's information about that on your seat. It is a special Sunday in the life of the church.

We celebrate Trinity Sunday today, time where we take time, pause, and appreciate our God who is three in one and one in three. It is also called Peace with Justice Sunday, time where we ensure that we are living the peace of God in the world by ensuring that there is justice for all our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

It is, of course, also a special Sunday in the life of our country because we are celebrating Memorial Day. Those who pay the ultimate sacrifice so that we might be able to live in freedom.

So there is a lot on our minds, a lot on our hearts this morning. And so we prepare to open our hearts, give appreciation and worship to God for all of it. Amen. So I want us to think about our worship time because as everyone who has ever had an encounter with God will pause for a time and ask a particular question, which is, how can this be?

Everyone who's encountered God asks that question in their own way at some point. How can this be? And in our scripture today, we are going to hear that question quite literally.

[ 4 : 1 8 ]     How can this be? Nicodemus, who was the leading teacher during Jesus' time, found himself amazed and overwhelmed by what he was discovering about God from Jesus.

And sometimes we will wrestle with that question as we try to make sense of what God is doing. We want God to fit in our ways of understanding things.

But the truth is that's just not going to happen. Because God is infinite and we are not. God is all powerful and we are not.

And while we may want to understand God fully, the truth is we are blessed to know God as we do. So I want that to sit with you for a while as we enter into a time of prayer.

Lord, you are great. Lord, you are great. You are too great for our minds to process. Yet you still choose to show us so much. Lord, you are good.

[ 5 : 1 9 ]     Despite our wandering, fighting, and questioning, you still show us love and grace. Gracious God, help us receive all you are willing to teach and give with gladness.

Help us learn that we don't need to know everything about you to know you. Let us lead with love like you do. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty.

[ 6 : 46 ] God in three persons, blessed Trinity. Holy, holy, holy, all the saints adore thee.

Casting down their golden crowns around the glass of sea.

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee. Wrench word and heart and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy, holy. Oh, the darkness light thee.

Though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see. Only thou art holy.

[ 8 : 08 ] There is none beside thee. Perfect in power and love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy. Lord God almighty. All my words shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.

Holy, holy, holy. Merciful and mighty.

God in three persons, blessed Trinity. Amen.

You may be seated. Good morning.

[ 9 : 22 ] It is good to be together. It is good to be together in ways that we hope people feel safe and excited about being in worship together.

This is one of those weekends when we celebrate family. We celebrate those who have given their lives so that the rest of us can live freely.

This is the weekend that is the beginning of summer. And I think Kelly said last week, you can start wearing white pants now. And she's modeling, so go for it.

I happen to be different. I believe you can wear white pants whenever you want to. So, that's just how I operate. It is our time of our offering and I think it's one of those times to be thoughtful about how people have given.

How people have given themselves. How people have given themselves. How people have given themselves in service. How people have given themselves to answer a call to protection or however that might unfold.

[ 10 : 33 ] And that might be the military. That might be in our police forces. That might be in a variety of places. It is about those who died in service to our country.

And I would invite us to also remember those who have protected us. Especially in this past two years. Medical people and all the people who give so that we might live.

It's also a time when as we have people returning to church in a new and different way. To invite people to be mindful that we as a church are solely dependent on you as a congregation.

Whether you're here in person or you're watching us online. To help to support the financial life and ministry and support of this congregation.

So, we are always grateful for those people who run things like fish fries and all of that. And also those who give of their own ability.

[ 11 : 40 ] We give our hands and our feet. We give our voices. We give our volunteer time as God calls us to do so. So, may this be a time of blessing.

Of generosity. And of a time of saying, God, I give you me. That's all I have. That's really at the end all I have.

God, I give you me. God, I give you me. So, let us sit and be with the music in this attitude of celebration. Even the sparrow Still, I give you.

God, I give you me. God, I give you me. God, I give you me. its head so why would I let worry steal my breath even the roses you have clothed in brilliant red still I'm the one you love more than this you give me everything you give me everything you give me everything I need even the oceans push and pull at your command and you can still my heart with your hand you tell the seasons when it's time for them when it's time for them to turn so I will trust you even when it hurts to say you give you give me to a you give me you give me everything you give me everything

I need you Show the stars You give me everything, You give me everything I need.

[ 14 : 41 ] When I can't see, You lead me. When I can't hear, You show me. When I can't stand, You carry me.

When I am lost, You will find me. When I am weak, You are mighty. You are everything I need. You give me everything, You give me everything, You give me everything, You give me everything I need.

You give me everything, You give me everything, You give me everything, You give me everything I need.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 16 : 15 ] Oh, wonderful God, we come before you sometimes wondering, do we have what we need? So as the song fills our spirits, may it fill our trust and our confidence in you and give us eyes to see all that you have given us so that we may give ourselves in service, in witness, in love, and generosity.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 17 : 55 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. invite us to this time prayer Oh Lord may we take a breath may we feel both the quiet and the energy come fount of life and source of healing come bearer of wisdom and strength three in one God we will never understand come into this time of worship into our homes into wherever we are sit with us this while and all the while because we need you wrap us in your reassuring grace this day as we wrestle with who you are and how do you reach out to us in this mysterious triune three-in-one holy God in community this weekend oh God we remember those who paid the highest price to help ensure the rights and liberties the rest of us enjoy and can at times all too often take for granted come into the homes of those who look at photographs and grieve come and be with those who have been to the walls in Washington DC or here or there or everywhere and they find the names of people they are forever bound to in family in friendship and in faith you have taught us through your scriptures not to forget in Romans we remember all the heroes of the faith because you want us to be inspired and may we be inspired by all of those who have gone before us whether we visit them in a cemetery or they are represented for our country Lord help us to keep those people we cherish always in our hearts and their strength and their dedication as a model for our lives oh Lord it's hard when we struggle and we know that people in our congregation and our communities are hard when we struggle and we know that people in our congregation and our community are hard when we struggle to them in our congregation so thank you for that we are we are hard to help us as we are struggle with health, with joy, with the lack of comfort and companionship, with a sense of being lost. May those who feel empowered by you, by you as creator, you as savior in Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit, find ways to share the comfort and the strength we have.

With those who have forgotten or just can't seem to reach it right this minute. Help us to be strengthened as a congregation as we continue on this journey of figuring out yet again who we are in this next chapter of life and ministry.

We pray for safety and health, for joy, for faces seen and unseen. Fill our hearts with a sense of love and even contentment.

For you have given us all we need. And if we believe that, oh Lord, there is so little that we might grasp for, wrestle for.

It does give us so much peace and we are so human that we are so not there all the time.

[ 22 : 19 ] So lift us, fill us and guide us. Because we are on a journey, every one of us, and some of us might be on the back side of the start line and some of us might be racing around the bases.

Love us all and may we love all. Truly, truly, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. piano, piano, Claro clash, piano, moving in of 2015.

When He abges microf and Then brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

[ 23 : 42 ] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

[ 24 : 55 ] That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear it sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be?

Jesus answered him, Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

And as Moses lifted up the servant in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

[ 26 : 00 ] For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Let's pray together.

Loving God, we are so grateful for the gift that is this morning. And as we come, we have sung your praises, we have prayed together, and we have heard your word.

And now with our hearts open, Lord, we pray that you would plant a seed in us, a seed that will grow and bear fruit for the honor and glory of your name.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen. So, I'm assuming I'm not alone in that I love a good mystery to solve.

[ 27 : 11 ] Yes? Some fellow out here with me? See, I love to watch a good murder mystery movie or a good whodunit, figure out what's going on. And sometimes my wife and I will sit together, and we kind of have this friendly competition of figuring out who's going to get the right person first.

And it's a great way to just engage your brain and figure stuff out. See, I'm one of those folks who I like to solve hard problems. And I'm betting I got some more folks out there who like to do the same, whether it's crossword puzzles, Scrabble, however you choose to engage your brain, you like to figure those things out, right?

See, because we're thinking people, human beings tend to love to engage their brains. And that's a good thing because, you know, as we said, with attention spans moving so fast as they are, one of the things is that we get bored so quick.

We like to keep our brains locked in. In fact, that's one of the reasons why I enjoy being United Methodist, because United Methodist faith does engage your brain.

You know, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, put forward some really great explanations and some really hard ideas, helped us understand God in some good ways, like the concept of provenient grace, for example.

[ 28 : 24 ] The idea that we think differently about how God moves before you before you even understand God is at work in your life. And he was able to explain that in ways that we had not always seen before, John Wesley.

And so we talk about these types of things as well as other ways that God is at work. It's a great thing to be able to engage your brain around these types of things. Now, I say that because one of the challenges, if you're a thinking person, is not to fall into the other side of that trap, which is overthinking.

I bet I'm not the only person who deals with overthinking too, right? Because I can agonize for like a half hour over the right sentence in an email. Because we can get into these places where we just simply parallelize ourselves by thinking about things too much.

On the one hand, you want to be thoughtful. But on the other hand, you don't want to overthink. It's a tough balance to try and strike sometimes. Because we have that challenge not only in multiple facets of our lives, but we can also fall into that with our faith.

And if we fall into that with our faith, we can really get ourselves into some problems because we end up in a particular place I don't think God wants us to be.

[ 29 : 48 ] Now, if you're an overthinker, you probably don't want to go anywhere near an idea like the Holy Trinity. Because that is one of the most complex ideas to try and break down and conceive in any philosophical puzzle.

When you think of this idea of God as creator, father, redeemer, son, sustainer, spirit, and how all of that comes together, how they can be distinct persons in yet one entity that is God, you can wrestle.

And people with much better educations and much more time than me have tried to figure this out. Because I haven't gotten there yet. That said, it is important that we do something but not be overwhelmed by it.

Because we don't want to just brush it off, but we also don't want to be paralyzed by it. And that's one of the eternal dilemmas I think we face as disciples.

How do we continue to grow? How do we wrestle with questions that naturally emerge as we walk through life and not be stuck and not overthink but continue to actually flourish and learn and grow and take the journey?

[ 31 : 24 ] That's why I think this story we encounter today, this walk with Nicodemus, is a good example of how we can do this. Because Nicodemus in some ways models what we hope happens.

So let's go into the story and let's talk about what we see, right? So we're in the Gospel of John and we know that John is introducing us to some pretty big ideas.

And so pretty early on in Jesus' work, according to John, we encounter Nicodemus. Now it's interesting because Nicodemus doesn't show up in other places. He only shows up in John.

And so we get introduced to this Pharisee, someone who carries a lot of weight because in the very first verse of the chapter, John tells us that there's a Pharisee who's a member of the ruling council who comes to Jesus by night, which can have certain layers to it because, A, he may not just want to be seen talking to the radical rabbi, but light and dark are themes in the Gospel of John.

And when people are in the dark, it means exactly the way we use it. People tend to be in the dark. So he may not understand what's going on and we kind of get that from the conversation that emerges.

[ 32 : 47 ] So Nicodemus shows up. Wherever they are, however they're talking, he has this conversation with Jesus and he addresses him as rabbi, which is kind of a thing.

He says, We know that you are a teacher who has come from God because no one could perform the signs that you are doing if God were not with him. So something's going on.

You know, when we encounter this story, when we've read it before, we may not have appreciated what is actually happening with Nicodemus. Because remember what we just heard.

He's a teacher of Israel. He's a member of the Jewish ruling council. And here comes this Jesus. Someone who's kind of upsetting the way of things.

But Nicodemus knows in his own mind, something must be going on. Something must be happening. And he's so compelled by whatever's happening in his spirit that he says, I got to have a conversation with this guy.

[ 33 : 54 ] I got to talk to him. Now that's why I said many of us get this. Because there's times when we don't understand what God is doing, but we know God is doing something. Right?

When we just simply know that God is at work, we can't really deny that fact. We're not clear on it. We're not sure about it, but we know God is up to something in our circumstances, in our space, in our lives.

And we want to get to understand. We want it to make sense. We want to know what God is doing. So Nicodemus, with all he has at stake, goes and finds Jesus.

And this is what he leads with. We know you're a teacher who has come from God. Because nobody could do what you're doing if God wasn't with you.

That's a big statement when you consider Nicodemus' context. So Jesus being Jesus knows that he's stuck.

[ 34 : 58 ] He knows that something's going on. And what he does is he invites him further. He's like, you're not there yet. You need to keep coming, Nicodemus. You need to keep coming. So Jesus says this.

Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. So if you're Nicodemus, you're kind of going, wait a minute, what?

Here I am. I led with this nice compliment. I'm trying to get this figured out. I'm hoping we're going to have this dialogue.

And your thing to me is I have to be born again. And he's not hearing the invitation. He's not hearing the idea of you're close.

But you got to come further. You got to come further. So Nicodemus is kind of stuck.

[ 36 : 04 ] So he asks a question because he wants to know, but he's not quite there. How can someone be born again? How can someone be born again when they're old?

Surely they can't just enter a second time into their mother's womb. Hmm? Jesus is like, hmm. There's a little sarcasm in that.

You can tell. A little sarcasm in there, but there's also a legitimate question because he doesn't know what he means. Right? He really doesn't get it. So there's a little edge on it, but he clearly doesn't get what Jesus means.

So, Jesus says, okay, look, unless you are born of water and the spirit, you can't really see the kingdom.

Born of water and the spirit. That water and the spirit line has thrown biblical interpreters into a bit of a quandary because that can mean a few different things. But what's key for us this morning is this idea of being born of the spirit.

[ 37 : 19 ] Because Nicodemus is trying. So God is already at work. God is already at work around him and he can see that and God is clearly already at work in him or else he couldn't see it. That's Jesus' point.

But, you have to surrender to it. You got to give yourself all the way over to it. And he's not quite there yet. And Jesus is trying to bring him on.

He's trying to bring him on. And Nicodemus is just not there. He's not there. And so he explains. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

Flesh gives birth to flesh. Spirit gives birth to spirit. The wind blows wherever it pleases.

You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. Jesus is trying to get Nicodemus to understand that God moves in ways we don't control.

[ 38 : 27 ] The spirit is going to do things that you don't quite get. The spirit is going to blow wherever it's going to blow. The spirit is going to move however the spirit is going to move.

And things are going to happen that don't make sense to you. You are going to find things going on that you didn't predict, that you don't control, and you simply are going to have to accept.

Now this is not registering with Nicodemus. Nicodemus had apprenticed. He'd read, he'd studied, and now he has taken those lessons and he has taught.

And he says, this is the way it works. That's what he understands. This is the way it works. And I have gotten to this place in my life understanding that this is the way it works.

That's why this idea of a spirit that's blowing wherever it wants is not registering with me. This idea of some hick from the north country coming to the big city and then the blind see.

[ 39 : 38 ] Five thousand are fed. The sinful are redeemed. People's lives are changed. All because of this carpenter from up north.

That is not how it works. I don't understand that. Or, how can this be?

How can this be? I didn't read that. I haven't seen that. How does this work?

Because that's what God does in the world. And as we said during the greeting today, anybody who's had an encounter with God has a moment where they're going to ask a question like that.

In other words, God is doing something in life who has completely turned your understanding of things upside down. That's not the way I understood it. That's not the way it's supposed to work.

[ 40 : 38 ] That's not what I learned in Sunday school. And yet, clearly God must be with you or else these things couldn't be happening. And now, Jesus tries to tell you.

And our challenge becomes, how can this be? How can this be? So Jesus reminds us.

Just as he reminds Nicodemus. Because he looks Nicodemus in the face and he reminds him of something that's a little humbling. You are Israel's teacher and you don't understand this.

You mean to tell me you've been going to church all these years and you don't get this. Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know.

We testify to what we have seen, but still, you do not accept our testimony. If we have told you of earthly things and you don't believe, how will you understand if I start to tell you what's really going on in heaven?

[ 42 : 02 ] Because nobody understands what's really going on in heaven except the person who's been there already. That would be me. But if you can't accept what I've already told you, how are you ready to handle what more is coming?

We wrestle, right church? We wrestle with it. And even if we like figuring out hard things, sometimes when God lays the next hard thing in front of us, it's not as much fun.



Because those questions challenge us in ways we don't want to be challenged. Those questions take what should be easy or take us out of places that are comfortable and say, there is still more for you to do.

There is still more for you to get. There is still more for you to understand. And on the one hand, that's a great adventure. That's a great journey. And on the other hand, it's frustrating. On the other hand, it's confusing.

And you can fall into this trap of saying, I can't handle this. Can't I just show up and say, I don't want it to be this hard.

[ 43 : 21 ] I don't want it to have to wrestle with it. God wants us to engage us. God wants us to engage us. God wants us to engage us. God wants us to just simply walk around thoughtlessly.

God wants us to engage us. God wants us to grow. God wants us to understand more today than we understood yesterday. God wants us to be better today than we were yesterday.

That is the hope. That's what it means to follow. That's what it means to grow in sanctification. God wants us to be better than we are. The hard part for us, though, is when the question becomes so much where we actually do paralyze ourselves, we overthink.

We get to this place where we start to wrestle. And these are not just the intellectual questions. And we might say, well, I don't wrestle with questions like that, but I'm willing to bet that folks wrestle with questions like, did God really forgive me for that?

Can God really fix this? Am I really redeemed? Does the Spirit really work in me?

[ 44 : 53 ] Overthink. Overthink. See, the hard part for us is when those questions start to wrestle, we start to get caught, we start to freeze.

And if we can't take the next faithful step, if we can't simply receive, that's when we start to run into problems.

Because sometimes we have to simply receive. Sometimes we have to simply receive. Here's what I mean. When we start to think about these things this way, if you spend your time agonizing, like I used that example from the email, eventually that email has got to get sent.

And usually the person who gets it won't appreciate the fact that I spent a half hour agonizing over that sentence. They're just glad they finally got the answer to the question they asked me. You can't let yourself be paralyzed by thinking about it.

And in this story, Nicodemus is overwhelmed. It's too much. It's way outside his comfort zone.

[ 46 : 14 ] It's way outside his understanding. But Jesus gives him what he needs. The same way Jesus will give us what we need. because after all of that mind-blowing stuff, Jesus simply says this.

God so loved the world that God's one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

for God didn't send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through it. Now we've heard that before.

And if we wanted to wrestle with all those big complicated theological concepts, we could do that. but there comes this sense. God loves the world.

Which includes you, by the way. God loves the world. God loves the world so much that in spite of the way the world treats God, God said, I'm going to give you a way to be with me and have life abundantly both now and into eternity.

[ 47 : 46 ] What you have to do is understand what Jesus is teaching you. What Jesus is telling you. And accept what Jesus has done for you. Because remember, Jesus isn't here to help you fail.

Jesus is actually here to help you. And all that complicated stuff kind of melts away when you just hear that.

Amen? All that big stuff that's intellectually engaging. But when you break it down there, it's like, okay, that I can get. That I can receive.

That's what we need to hear. And sometimes when the questions will freeze you, sometimes a simple statement like that can unfreeze you.

You see, that passage we had in Romans today tells us something very simple in the middle of it. Because it talks about this idea that you may think this is big and hard and complicated, but remember what God is trying to do.

[ 48 : 55 ] You feel outside of God's love, understand that through Jesus you are welcomed back into God's love. You've been adopted, in other words. Adoption was a concept that people of the world then would have gotten.

That you may feel outside, but you're all the way in now. That's what God is trying to do. Get that, hear that, receive that, and simply take it.

And sometimes that's what we have to do. We can't fall into the trap of thinking so much, thinking so hard that we think ourselves out of what God is trying to do for us.

See, here's the thing. I have a sweet tooth. I'm a big believer in my sweet tooth. I'm kind of beholden to my sweet tooth.

Jen will tell you that. The problem with my sweet tooth is sometimes it lets me do things that I shouldn't do. Now, what that means in a practical sense is that if someone puts a wonderful dessert in front of me, I have this brain.

[ 50 : 07 ] And this brain will tell you all the reasons. That's probably not a really good idea. You can think about what it will do to your cholesterol. You can think about what it will do to your dental health.

You can think about all those sorts of things. But then, there's the part of me that will take a full-on header into that plate. Because it was joyfully given and it will be joyfully appreciated.

I want you to hear that for whatever that is for you. Because you can think about big complicated ideas like Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

God, three in one. Because we see all personas of the Trinity in this story, in fact. But here's what's going on. Is that you sit here and wrestle with this idea of maybe I'm not worthy.

You sit here and wrestle with, God, I've done it again. I've disappointed you. You sit here and wrestle with these ideas. I don't feel like I'm where I'm supposed to be. That I have this crisis in life and I need something and God is moving too slow.

[ 51 : 16 ] When God has simply walked up to you and said, for all you're going through, just have this. just have this.

And the question is, will you think yourself out of that? Will you talk yourself out of what is freely given that answers all of your questions, that takes care of all of your needs?

or can you simply receive what God has done? How God has been able to create you, form you, love you before you even understood yourself.

How God was able to save you from your own sin and show you the truths of how God wanted things to work in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Have you been able to simply receive the presence and the gift of the Holy Spirit both in you and around you, working in your world, sustaining you, empowering you, and gifting you for what God wants you to do?

Simply receive. Don't overthink. Because God loves you so much that God gave God's only son.

[ 52 : 49 ] That if you would say yes to him, you would have eternal life, abundant life, here and now and well into eternity.

Remember, God did not send Jesus to make things hard for you, but that you would be saved, you would be renewed, and you would be with him forever.

Simply receive. Don't overthink. Amen and amen. Almighty and gracious God, we thank you that for all that you are, that you are bigger and more vast than universe, that you are more sophisticated and amazing than all of the complexities we ever discovered.

And yet you have chosen to make yourself known in ways that we can understand. We thank you for the gift of the one who saves, the gift of the one who walks with us, the gift of the one who teaches and leads us still.

We thank you for the gift of the one who indwells in us, the one who empowers us, the one who sets us on fire with love for you, the one who gives us gifts to go out and share with the world, the one who moves before us, walks beside us, and stays behind us, the one who makes all things possible.

[ 54 : 36 ] Lord God, we do not understand it, but we don't need to understand it to receive it. We remember, Lord, that your command was not to understand.

Your command was to love. Let our hearts overflow with love. Let us lead with love. let us always stay in love that we might be your people and not be caught, not be caught in our own thoughts, not be caught by the enemy from being able to move forward in the ways that you would call us forward.

This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. This, so much like the word of God, is a mystery beyond our understanding.

This is a symbol. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strength, your mind. God so loved the world that he sent his only son that we might be saved.

The Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

[ 56 : 24 ] 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 always, and spoke to us through your prophets, who look for that day when justice shall roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

When nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. So with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join in 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, blessed is your son, Jesus Christ.

[ 57 : 30 ] 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, to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, ate with sinners, and by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, God gave birth to the church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit.

At his ascension, you exalted him to sit and reign with you at your right hand. On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took the bread.

And friends, it was the bread that was already on the table. It wasn't all pretty and covered with a napkin. And he gave God thanks for it and broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you.

Eat this in remembrance of me. And then he took the cup after the supper was over. The cup that was already there.

[ 58 : 55 ] And he gave thanks to you and he gave it to his disciples and said, drink from this all of you, all of you, every one of you. This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this as often as you can in remembrance of me. And so in remembrance of those mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving.

We offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim once again the mystery of faith. Christ has died.

Christ has risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and the 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.

[ 60 : 13 ] Through your Son, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

And now let us pray the prayer that truly unites us as we say together, 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 bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. you take off the side with the bread, the body of Christ broken for you and for all.

[ 61 : 22 ] And the cup, blood of Christ was shed for you and for all. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. take me towards stairs and buffet heart and lift the heart andboro amen.

And sing with us and worship our mighty God, Father, and Holy Spirit. Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul.

Worship His holy name. Sing like never before, O my soul.

I'll worship Your holy name. Sing like never before, O my soul.

On comes the peace anew. They are coming. It's time to sing Your song again.

[ 63 : 07 ] Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me. I need to sing Your kingdom.

Amen. Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul.

Worship His holy name. Sing like never before, O my soul.

Sing like never before, O my soul. I'll worship Your holy name. Sing like never before, O my soul.

Your rich in love and your soul to anchor. Your name is great and your heart is kind.

[ 64 : 13 ] For all Your holy name. For all Your goodness I will be unsaving. Ten thousand reasons for, O my soul. Ten thousand reasons for, O my heart, dear.

I will find. I will find. Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul. Bless the Lord, O my soul. O my soul.

Worship His holy name. Sing like never before, O my soul. Sing like never before, O my soul.

Peace and love. Sing like never before, O my soul. I will worship Your holy name. I will all your soul.

I will worship Your holy name. And on that day when my strength is failing, The end was near when my time had stopped.

[ 65 : 17 ] Still my soul will sing your praise on me Ten thousand years in me forevermore  
Forevermore Bless the Lord, O my soul O my soul Worship His holy name Bring my  
power before O my soul I'll worship Your holy name Bless the Lord, O my soul O my soul  
Worship His holy name

Sing like ever before O my soul I'll worship Your holy name I'll worship Your holy name  
Lord, I'll worship Your holy name Sing like ever before O my soul O my soul I'll worship  
Your holy name I'll worship Your holy name I'll worship Your holy name I'll worship Your  
holy name

Amen It's an amazing thing to be engaged with God to have your brain turned on and to be working all the time.

But remember, God is not an intellectual puzzle to be solved. God is your God to be loved. Hold that. Remember that.

Lead with that and live in that. Now in the name of God, our creator and king, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our savior, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, our counselor and our sustainer, may God bless us now as we leave to love and serve God and all God's children.

[ 68 : 17 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.