

# May 1, 2016

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Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[ 0 : 00 ]     Good morning.

This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Or we could just like play some rock music. If any kids want to sing, they're welcome to command up.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day that the Lord has made.

The first one is for our dinners in Niagara Falls.

[ 1 : 45 ]     If you'd like to help with that, with food or signing up to actually come down and serve, we do that every week. Also, we have the 30-hour famine. The 30-hour famine is a time when the youth get sponsors to support them in fasting for 30 hours.

And that money goes toward World Vision, which feeds hungry children around the world. And so during the famine, we're looking for juice and gum, because that's all they're allowed to have. And then afterwards, we're going to have a big breakfast.

We're looking for some breakfast food to be donated as well. And I also did want to mention, end of the month, Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, we're going to have two services on Sunday.

That's 9 o'clock and 10.30. What time? 9 o'clock and 10.30. Somebody said other things. 9 o'clock and 10.30. And then we'll go back to our regular schedule after Labor Day.

Let's turn our souls and our hearts to the Lord in prayer, shall we? Dear God in heaven, we thank you this morning for bringing us into this place. And now we pray that you'll bring our hearts and our souls to you, that we might hear you, that we might experience you, that we might know you more completely in this place.

[ 2 : 49 ]     Words in Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen. If you're able, I'm going to stand as we sing together, asking what great things I know. Ask me what great things I know, that delights and stirs me so.

What the high reward I win, who's the name I glory in?

Jesus Christ the crucified. Who defeats my fiercest foes?

Who consoles my saddest woes? Who revives my fainting heart? Healing all its hidden smart.

Jesus Christ the crucified. Who is life in life to me?

[ 4 : 10 ]     Who the death of death will be? Who will place me on his right? In the countless course of life.

Jesus Christ the crucified. This is that great thing I know.

This delights and stirs me so. Faith in him who died to save. Him who triumphed for the great.

Jesus Christ the crucified. The Lord be with you. And also be with you. Take a moment if you will and greet your neighbor with the peace of the spirit.

And I'd like to invite the children to come on up.

[ 5 : 12 ] If any of the kids want to come join us, they're welcome to. The mic seems to be going in and out.

Any other kids want to come up and join us? Good morning. How are you all doing this morning?

Good. Have any of you ever seen this before? What do they call that? A smiley face. What's this?

What's the difference between the two? One of the things that you have to do? Yeah, but really the only difference on the picture is one's like this and the other one's like this, right?

It takes more bones to frown. It takes more bones to frown. I can believe that. It's not good to frown. It's bad for your health. So we should smile a lot more. Can you say pizza?

[ 6 : 10 ] Pizza. See what happens? You smile when you say pizza because you like pizza, right? Yeah. How about Christmas? Can you say Christmas? Pizza. Yeah, those are good things and fun.

How about Jesus? Jesus. That's even better, you see? Because if we have God with us, we're always going to be able to have a smile. Anytime we want it, even when we feel like we're hurting and things aren't going well and people are mean to us, all we've got to do is remember Jesus loves us and we'll smile.

Okay? What are you thankful for this morning? You want to share something? Raise your hand. My mom, Tim, Daddy, and Dexter. Everything. My cat. My sisters.

My family. My family. My cousins and friends. My hamster. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad.

My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad.

[ 7 : 10 ] My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. My dad. Help us to always think of you, Lord, and smile every day.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay, you guys can all go out to church school. All the kids are welcome to go out to church school now. As we continue in our worship, let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings before the Lord with rejoicing.

As I went down to the river to pray, studying about that good old way, and who shall wait?

The starry crown, good Lord, show me the way. As I went down to the river to pray, studying about that good old way, and who shall wait?

The starry crown, good Lord, show me the way. Oh, brother, let's go down, let's go down, come on down.

[ 9 : 02 ] Oh, brother, let's go down, down to the river to pray, down to the river to pray.

Shall we gather at the river, where bright angels be at God? With its crystal tide forever, flowing by the throne of God.

There we reach the shining river, lay we every burden down. Grace our spirits will deliver, and provide our hope and crown.

Chips will gather at the river, the beautiful, beautiful river. Gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of God.

So let's go shouting river to pray, The starry crown, good Lord, show us the way.

[ 10 : 26 ] So let's go shouting, till the bridge is shining river. Soon our world forgets we'll see, And soon our angry arms will savor, The little chains of me.

Yes, we'll gather at the river, Yes, we'll gather at the river, The beautiful, the beautiful river, Gather with the saints at the river, That flows by the throne of God, Down to the river to pray, Down to the river to pray, I went down to the river to pray.

There we reach the shining river, And flows by the throne of God.

Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, All the blessings from, Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, Dear Heavenly Father, We give you thanks and praise for this day, And for the opportunity to gather together and worship you.

We ask, Lord God, That you would bless this offering, Give us wisdom to know how to best use it for the furtherance of your kingdom, And make all of our worship to be a joy to you this day, As we offer it all up to you.

[ 12 : 39 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. To have a couple of families that have lost loved ones in the past week, And we want to make sure that we keep those families lifted up in our prayers.

The family of Constance Leo, Constance is Parise's sister, And Debbie Parise, Sister-in-law. And her funeral is on Saturday.

We want to keep that family in our prayers as they're experiencing that loss. And for the family of Norma Wittig. Norma passed away on Thursday. Calling hours will be today from 2 to 4 at Cruden and Cant in Lockport.

And the funeral is here at church at 10 o'clock tomorrow, Monday morning. And also, Friday night, Jim Shimwell passed away.

And we want to keep him in our prayers. He is Jackie Shimwell's husband. And Connie Pace's dad. So Dave and Connie are also all of their family.

[ 13 : 56 ] We know that we have a God who hears and answers prayer. Who comforts us in our time of sorrow. And rejoices with us in our times of joy. God is always with us.

And never leaves us. So let's take these concerns, And those that are on your hearts as well, And turn to the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, Thank you that you are not a God who is afar off, Just watching us from a distance.

But that you are the great God, Creator of heaven and earth, Of all of the universe, And everything that is in it. And that you Want to have a relationship with us.

That you desire to be with us in all things of this life. Lord, We are so grateful, Lord. And now we lift up to you, Lord, All of those Who are in need of healing.

We pray in Jesus' name, That you would touch them, In their spirits, In their souls, And in their bodies. That you would make them whole, Father, In Jesus' name.

[ 15 : 21 ] Lord God, We pray for those Who are grieving losses. We just ask, Father, In Jesus' name, That you come alongside them, That by your spirit, You be a bringer of comfort, And of peace.

That each and every one knows That they are held in the palm of your hand. That you will not leave them. Give them, Lord God, All of the memories of joy, And faithfulness, And love.

Hold them, Lord, In their times of grieving, And sorrow. Lord God, We pray for Your body, The body of Christ, That each and every one of us Would have words, Words of comfort, Would have words of blessing, Would have words of your love, And grace, And mercy, To share with all those You bring into our path.

We pray, Lord God, For all of those people Who don't know you. We are grateful That we have the hope Of salvation, Of eternal life with you.

Lord, We pray that you draw Many to yourself. We pray that you draw All of those Who don't know you, Who have never heard The name of Jesus.

[ 16 : 57 ] We pray that you Would draw to yourself All those who have heard, Who have known, But for whatever reason Have turned away Those whose Affection and passion For you Has grown colder, Lord.

We pray that we would have The words, That we would have A kind gesture, An encouraging look, To be able To call them back to you.

Help us to be your witness In this dark world, Lord God. We pray in Jesus' name That you would bless The worship this morning. That as we hear From your word And the testimony That will be coming And the message That Pastor Tom brings That you would give us Eyes to see And ears to hear And hearts and minds To understand and receive All that you have For us this day.

Strengthen us, Lord. Bring us peace. Make all of our worship To be pleasing to you. That is why we came, Lord.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Now, I'd like to invite Diana Fritz forward To offer a word Of testimony for us.

[ 18 : 25 ] Psalm 3011 tells us, You turned my wailing Into dancing, You removed my sackcloth, And you clothed me With joy.

Eleven years ago, I was a PTA mom With four children. I worked full-time nights As a nurse At Children's Hospital.

I was involved With the church. I taught worship dance. And I spent my vacations In Disney with my children. However, over the course Of six weeks, I went from being That person To being in a wheelchair.

I spent the next five years Only able to be out of bed One to two hours a day At most. I had three hip replacements And my bedroom Was a hospital bed That was set up In our living room.

I saw doctor after doctor And I had test after test And ultimately, I had a medication pump Implanted in my body That feeds medicine Into my spinal cord.

[ 19 : 57 ] And that's why I can walk today. Needless to say, Life changed drastically For myself and my family. I went from being the person That everybody depended on To being the person That had to depend On everybody else.

And I think probably The hardest part about it For me Was that everybody else's life Seemed to go on And my life Just stopped.

The idea of joy And suffering Was about the furthest thing From my mind. I was scared.

I was angry, Confused, Frustrated. And the most precious Form of worship That I knew Which was my dance Had been taken away from me.

Gradually, One by one, God sent people Into my life That not only Ministered to my Physical needs, But they spoke God's truth Into my life.

[ 21 : 10 ] Some of those people Are from this church. And that's why Myself and my family Are members here today. In the middle of my struggle, My sister-in-law Said to me, You know, Diana, I'm guessing That at some point In time, You told God That you were willing To allow him To do Whatever it took To make you The person That he needed you To be.

But how could I know That that meant That I would be Completely dependent On other people, Cut off socially, And unable to function In the life That I knew And loved.

And loved it. And loved it. Then one day I was speaking With my sister And basically I was telling her How sad I was That I could no longer dance.

You see, If there weren't Dancing in heaven Already, When Pastor Lisa And I get there, There would be. I just love to dance.

And as we were finishing up the conversation, my sister paused for a minute, and she said to me, Diana, you will dance again.

[ 22 : 33 ] And she said it in a way that was not only comforting, but I felt the Holy Spirit whisper to my heart, this is my promise for you.

Well, I could speak for days and not cover all of the blessings that God gave me in those five years. From my time in rehab, relearning how to walk, to my last surgery, God showed me that my life wasn't about all of those things that I did, but it was about whether or not I would be willing to allow his joy to show through my life in every circumstance.

You see, even in my hospital bed, in pain, not able to even get up and get a meal for myself, there were people watching.

My children were watching. My friends were watching. The people in the hospital bed next to me, they were watching.

Even the doctors and the nurses, they were watching me. What would they see? Would they see God's joy and promises shining through my life in these circumstances?

[ 23 : 58 ] Or would they see me defeated and angry because somehow life had dealt me a raw deal? If you don't remember anything that I say today, please hear this and remember it.

It does not matter what circumstance of life you are in, what stage of life you are in, what you are able to do physically or what you're not able to do.

God can and he will allow you to be a person that shows his joy in all circumstances and points people to the kingdom of heaven.

I started with the scripture, you turned my wailing into dancing and removed my sackcloth and you clothed me with joy. I'm here today not only to tell you about God's joy, but to minister to you and dance.

This weekend is the fulfillment of that promise that the Holy Spirit whispered to my heart 11 years ago as I spoke with my sister.

[ 25 : 21 ] God has literally turned my wailing into dancing and he's clothed me with joy. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

How beautiful the hands that served The wine and the bread And the sons of the earth  
How beautiful the feet that walked The long dusty roads And the hill to the cross How  
beautiful How beautiful How beautiful Is the body of Christ How beautiful

The heart that bled That took all my sin And bore it instead How beautiful The tender eyes  
Who choose to forgive And never despise How beautiful How beautiful How beautiful How  
beautiful Is the body of Christ And as he lay down his life We offer this sacrifice That we  
will live Will live

Just as he died Willing to pay the price Willing to pay the price How beautiful How  
beautiful How beautiful The radiant bride Wait amazing Who takes a chance The Welt  
Whoops How beautiful when humble hearts give the fruit of your life so that others may  
live.

[ 28 : 44 ] How beautiful, how beautiful, how beautiful is the body of Christ.

How beautiful the feet that rain, the song of good news and the love of the King.

How beautiful the hands that serve the white and the bread and the sons of the earth.

How beautiful, how beautiful, how beautiful is the body of Christ.

What a beautiful painting for you. Amen.

[ 30 : 32 ] What a blessing. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Good morning.

Today's reading is from Acts chapter 7, verses 53 through 60. You who have not received the law that was given through angels, but have not obeyed it.

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to the heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Look, he said, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. At this they covered their ears, and yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city, and began to stone him.

Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

[ 31 : 51 ] Then he fell on his knees and cried out, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. When he had said this, he fell asleep. This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Thanks be to God.

Thank you, Christy. You know, in life we can decide whether we're going to proclaim victory or defeat. Whether we're going to live into love or anger, forgiveness or hate, pain or joy.

Do we let the pain and the struggle and the disappointment and discouragement turn us into bitter, resentful, angry people? Or do we find a way in the midst of it to experience joy anyways?

Like Diana was talking about. Because we can see life as totally broken or totally fixed. Or most of us see it as kind of a walk between the two.

Ask Ollie. She's been through 90 years of life. Happy birthday, Ollie. Everybody say happy birthday, Ollie. We have this passage in the Bible where we've come to where Stephen, one of the people of God, decided to go and share the good news, the gospel.

[ 33 : 15 ] The good news because he wanted his friends, the people he was close to, the people he knew, to come to know the joy of the Lord that he had experienced. But the problem with sharing the gospel is we have to share a little bit about brokenness because until we realize that we're broken, that we have sinned, that we do things wrong, there is no way we'll come to understand our need to be forgiven by God.

So in any aspect of understanding God, we have to talk about conviction too. How we do things wrong that God needs to fix.

So Stephen said to them, you haven't even listened to what the scripture says. You don't obey the laws that God gave to you. And their response was, yeah, dude, we've got rocks.

And they picked up rocks. They picked up rocks to hurl at Stephen because he was trying to help them. And I understand that.

None of us like to have somebody point out our flaws. About a month ago, we were hanging drywall in the preschool wing. And I knew what the length of the walls were because we had measured it before we even began.

[ 34 : 32 ] And they were 97 inches. And I knew a sheet of drywall was 96 inches, which meant it would fit in there with just a little lift. But for some reason, I told the guys to cut two inches off it. And as the person was putting up the board, they're like, and I won't use the word, but what measured this board?

I felt because I was distracted by it. So... Yeah. Yeah. It was wrong. I was wrong.

I wish the biggest mistakes I ever made were the fact that sometimes I miscut a piece of drywall. Don't you? I wish it wasn't that people point out my real flaws.

When I do things that I don't even realize sometimes are wrong. Or when I do things that are wrong and I know are wrong. And when I let that sin, that brokenness, take my life and start guiding it in the wrong way.

It's hard. It's hard. It's hard for them to accept the criticism. It says they were filled with wrath. They were angry. When he pointed out their flaws.

[ 35 : 43 ] Because we don't like when people point out our flaws. And we don't like when we can't do the things that we want to do. It's not easy when you put a lot of your life into dancing and you can't move.

My mother was in a wheelchair. All my life. She loved to dance. She loved to dance. But she was stricken with polio. And she couldn't move.

She couldn't dance. It's not the way we think of her. It's hard. Because we want to believe that we should be blessed with everything. But we're not.

Because other people are blessed. How come we're not? Talking to somebody the other night. They're my age. And they were talking about how they play basketball. They play volleyball. All this and that. And I'm like, yeah, yeah, yeah.

If I did that, man, I'd have a broken body in one game. I'm just picturing me going up for the spike and coming down. That's it. Knees blown out. It's not fair.

[ 36 : 45 ] It's not fair. It's not fair. It's not fair. And so we listen to that voice. And we should be listening to a different voice.

Do we open our ears and open our hearts to the power that God wants to reveal to us? Stephen says, God has spoken to you through the scripture.

God has spoken to you through the angels. Do we listen? Do we listen to what God has to say to us?

In this passage, heaven itself was opened up to earth. God revealed his glory. But the only one who saw it was Stephen because nobody else was looking at that.

They were only looking at the anger, the frustration, and the difficulty that they were feeling. Sometimes God talks to us.

[ 37 : 42 ] Some people say they hear an actual voice speaking to him. Other people, like me, I tend to hear thoughts and feel experiences. Some people hear God in a dream. Others, like Diana, hear the voice of God from their sister, a person that God puts in our lives to say just the thing we need to hear.

When we're feeling broken and falling apart and life is tearing us up. And someone says, it's okay. You know, I don't use that phrase because it really is always okay.

I use that phrase because in the grand scheme of everything, so long as we have God, it's okay. Amen? Not because there's no brokenness, no pain, no difficulty, no struggle. But because in the midst of all of it, so long as we hear the voice of God, it will be okay.

If you feel attacked, like Stephen did, or disappointed, pray to God for his Holy Spirit. Because it said the Holy Spirit filled Stephen and it gave him the ability to react entirely different.

These are people who picked up, can you imagine? An angry coward is ready to throw rocks at you. How would you react? Stephen prayed to God.

[ 38 : 56 ] He received the Holy Spirit and he reacted not in the way we would think. Not in the way we would have expected. Because he turned to God.

That's why we come to worship, you know. We come to worship to remember whose we are and also to remember who we're not. Worship is about saying God is God. I'm not God.

You're not God. We're not as important as we think we are. We are not the center of the universe. We are not the concern of the whole world. And actually, fair would mean we'd all go to hell for what we've done.

That's fair. So anything above that is a gift from God. The people don't want to hear that. So they live in the hurt and the anger.

When the greatest power the Holy Spirit gives us is the power to overcome that self. That part of us that just needs to hear. That God loves us in spite of all we've done.

[ 39 : 57 ] And God has returned love for hurt and expects us to do the same thing. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Oh, some of us feel so persecuted.

But honestly, imagine if you were in the middle of Syria in a war zone and you were hearing those words as you were seeing your family killed and assaulted and attacked and your lives destroyed. Could you actually love them?

Would you honestly pray for them? I couldn't. But I could believe that the God in me could. That if I turned to God, that God would make it happen.

If we listen. But do we hear the voice of God? Or do we block it out? Because we don't want to hear it. It says that they went running at Stephen with their eyes. Get out loud.

But the guy's plugged up. Yeah, you hear a lot that way, don't we? You get the right message when you do that, right? Can you imagine? And yet that's exactly what we do.

[ 40 : 53 ] If we yell a little louder. If we make our point a little stronger. Maybe we'll win. The problem is, is the only thing we have any control over at all is our reaction.

And the only way we control our reaction is through the power of God. I know we feel stress. I know we all feel anxiety.

I know we all feel like sometimes things are just not going the way we thought they would. Because we have this expectation and this plan laid out that Facebook tells us works out beautifully for everybody but us.

Right? The truth of the matter is, is that our joy is not dependent on the condition of our life.

Joy is not dependent upon the job you have. Joy is not dependent upon the money you have or upon even your physical health. Joy is a condition of our soul. Joy is a condition of our soul.

[ 41 : 52 ] And if we focus our hearts into God, our soul will be healthy. And if not, we will never be healthy. Diana had to make a choice. She could focus on her problems.

And I know Diana. And I know this isn't her only problem. She had plenty of other stuff she was dealing with too. Just like you and me. Right? I wish it was just the pains in my body.

Don't you? And by the way, I felt pain all my life since I was 17. So if you feel a little pain once in a while, praise God. Because I feel it every day. Like a lot of people do.

You know, we all have these issues. Our families. We weep and cry over the problems and struggles they have. And the loss of watching people we love pass away.

Which I deal with death 10 times as much as any of you do. Unless there's a funeral director in the room. Then my apologies. What do we do?

[ 42 : 56 ] How do we react? They reacted by rushing toward the witness of God to try and destroy it. To drag it away. To kill it. To break it down. That doesn't lead to hell.

Anger stirs up all kinds of stuff inside us. It fires off all sorts of chemical reactions. We get the adrenaline pumping. We get all that. Those kind of things going through our body.

It's designed to give us the ability to fight when we're in danger. It's actually an animal part of us. You ever see animals when they feel threatened? What do they do? They try to make themselves big. Right?

You ever see a person when they get angry? We... You are good at it. That's what we do. Right? We try to puff us up. And that puffing up doesn't help us.



It hurts us. It hurts us physically. You know, studies have shown that if you live in anger and continue to dwell on grudges and hurt and pain, you will live 15 years less.

[ 43 : 57 ] Worse than smoking. Worse than smoking. We have to choose. How are we going to react to it? Because anger is only meant for fighting off wild animals out in the woods.

We don't have any of those to deal with usually. Right? And it's a work of Satan for the most part. This is what Ephesians tells us. In your anger, do not sin.

Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry. Boy, that's a real truth. Everyone should take that home with them. And don't give the devil a foothold.

Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, along with every form of malice.

Just get it out of your system. I was thinking I could make some money if I would build these concrete bunker type rooms. And what I would do is give people like safety glasses and gloves and such.

[ 45 : 01 ] And then I'd go to rummage sales and buy all the old dishes and glasses. And I'd charge you like 10 bucks for 15 minutes. Just smash them against the wall. I bet I could make some money doing that. Somebody go out and try it and see if it works.

Yell on the tree. It's not good for the trees, but it's good for you. Punch a pillow. And if you're mad at somebody, maybe you need to sit down and write them a letter. Write them an email.

And just say everything you're feeling. And then go back and reread it and edit it so it's just perfect. And then delete it. Throw it away. Don't send it.

We need to get it out of us. Because anger is destroying us. It's destroying our relationships. Something meant for survival has become a way of our culture.

In this passage, they introduce a man named Saul. We know him as Paul. He's named after the great king Saul. He was being groomed to be the leader of the nation. He'd gone to the finest Jewish schools.

[ 46 : 05 ] He'd gone to the finest Greek schools. And now he's visiting back in Jerusalem to make his connections. So that he can figure out how to become leader of the nation. And he's standing there and watching that.

And he's listening to these people. And he's thinking, man, I could ride this anger thing all the way to the White House. Oh, it's a little close to home, isn't it? Oh, I know.

You think I'm talking about the other party. They're all angry. Actually, they're all putting on a show that they're angry. You know why? Because they know they're getting to you.

I don't even know how angry any of them are. They're just trying to figure out the way to ride that carpet. And they figure it out. Everybody's mad. Everybody's angry.

Everybody's crazy angry. Read in the paper. This guy is riding down the road. And somebody cuts him off. So he takes a pop can, a full pop can, and throws it at the other car.

[ 47 : 02 ] Smart move, right? So the passenger in the other car takes out a gun and shoots the guy's car. Which one of these people did the right thing? Really?

You see, it's just waiting to explode. And not only will anger destroy you personally, but anger is going to destroy us as a culture. Because people are feeding off it.

And not in a healthy way. Not in a healthy way at all. In the Bible, it says God appeared on the mountain to Elijah. It said he could have appeared as a whirlwind.

Or an earthquake. Or a mighty fire. But instead he appeared as a still, small voice. You notice the difference? You've got to lean in and listen.

And take away the focus on all the other brokenness. Then you start to hear God. It's okay. It's okay.

[ 48 : 07 ] This angry culture is trying to tear apart God. It's a devil's tool designed to destroy the witness, especially of people who call themselves Christian.

What is the witness we share with the world? Your mission, should you choose to accept it. Good morning.

I want to welcome you to Pendleton Center, United Methodist Church. And the key word today is welcome. This is the entrance to the sanctuary area. You know, many wonderful things go on in there.

Things that we don't see. People are healed. Their hearts are healed. They feel the spirit. They rejoice at blessings they have in their lives.

So unless someone feels comfortable, they may not come back to our sanctuary. And they might not feel these wonderful things that God has placed upon them.

[ 49 : 27 ] I want you to do a favor for me this morning. Turn to the person next to you. Smile. And say welcome. Now.

Do it now. Don't be shy. Now didn't that make you feel good? And I'm sure the person you were passing readings on to. It made them feel good. Enjoy the worship service.

May the spirit fulfill you and make you feel welcome. God bless. Thank you, Kathleen. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is simply to try it.

Smile. It's hard. Diana said people are watching her. And they do watch. People who don't follow Christ but are wondering about this thing that they hear about want to know if it really has the power to overcome your brokenness.

If you really can get through the struggles and the difficulties and the pains and the hurts of life. They want to know if you really have something that they don't have and that they need.

[ 50 : 35 ] They want to see it in your life. People used to tell me that my mother was an incredible witness. I never really understood that. Because, you know, to me, she was just my mother.

She was always in a wheelchair. She had these crutches that she could whack us with. You know? I really never thought anything of it. But when she'd come into church, people would say to see her walking into the church with those crutches.

Just inspired them to get through whatever pain they had. And, you know, my mother couldn't dance like you and I. But she taught us kids how to do chair dancing.

You know? You just kind of wrinkle around like this even though your legs can't move. And my father, who was a consummate dancer, would sometimes pick her up in his arms and carry her as they danced together.

What a witness. She never got to dance. She did not have a healing in any sense as Diane did. But she danced. She danced through the struggle and smiled in spite of the pain and the problems she had.

[ 51 : 46 ] And every day she would exercise a leg that didn't work. Until the day she died. With the hope that one day it would start to work.

Life is not always easy. It's hard. But the people living in darkness have seen a great light. You know, it says in heaven, we aren't going to need the sunshine.

We aren't going to need the moon. Because God himself will be our light. And the light that God is talking about is a light we can bring into this world, into the dark lives, into the brokenness, into the pain, in the struggle, the suffering, the anger.

And it can change people, change the lives of people, change the world. Anybody here ever hear of those games they played in the Colosseum back in the Roman days?

The reason they had those games is because they had a bunch of unemployed people in Rome. You may not know that. They had to actually feed them and entertain them. And they didn't have cable TV or the internet.

[ 52 : 52 ] So they created these games where these guys would go into this arena and try to kill each other. These were well-armed, well-trained fighters. Well, they at one point decided that they were kind of wasting all their good fighters doing this.

So they said, let's throw some Christians in there. We don't like them anyways. We kind of get rid of these people we don't want around our culture. We'll just toss them in there for a while. So they'd throw the Christians in the arena.

And these guys would come out and they're gladiator warrior stuff. And they'd come up to the Christian and the Christian would just stand there. Say, God loves you. And the gladiator would kill them.

And the people in the stands were like, well, that's not fun. That's not even interesting. In fact, it's kind of sick. They simply stopped coming to the games.

Because they realized that if you don't feed your anger, you can overcome it. Proverbs says, a gentle answer turns back wrath.

[ 53 : 59 ] Remember when we used to call men gentlemen? A gentle answer turns back wrath. When my brother used to beat on me as a kid and I went yelling and screaming or crying or complaining to my father, he'd smile.

I finally learned that if I smiled, he didn't know what to do with that. At first, it got him even madder. Like that heaping coals on their head thing in the Bible, you know? And then finally, he just said, it's not worth it.

Stop beating on me. What a concept. He stopped beating on me. Stephen tried. He realized he had pushed these people beyond where they could go.

And talking about Jesus and their killing Jesus. So he started to talk about the Son of Man. In other words, he was trying to figure out a way to say, it's okay. It's okay. And calm him down. It's okay. Unfortunately, they were past it.

Like we sometimes get past it, don't we? Where somebody's saying it's okay, we want to say, no, it's not. Don't tell me it's okay. You're not walking in my shoes. Well, I've been there.

[ 55 : 04 ] I've been upset. I've been angry. I've been hurt. I've been defeated. I've been felt like my whole world is falling apart. And I want to just pop somebody. You know what they say that you should do is count to ten.

Ten. But I'm going to tell you, count to nine. I'm going to take one off for you, okay? But I want you to count in a special way. I want you to count fruit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Do you see how you start to go, oh. You see, it's not about counting numbers. Numbers aren't going to help you. God will help you. The fruit of the Holy Spirit and the power that is in those words of God.

Anger. Anger, we express it because we're afraid. Anger, we express it because we're disappointed. Because we see what we don't have and we're discouraged. Because life seems not fair. Anger is just us expressing in many ways our fear.

How do we face it? How would you face death if some people were picking up rocks and going to throw them at you?

[ 56 : 16 ] The amazing part of this passage is Stephen. Stephen, who's facing down death. And in the midst of it, he decides to pray.

He tries to Jesus. He says, Lord, don't hold this sin against them. How do you react?

How do you react? Maybe you've never faced something like Diana. Maybe you've faced worse. Maybe you're facing some other struggle.

How do you react? It's a witness to God. And it's a redemption of your soul. Or the destruction of your life.

Stephen decided to react with grace. It's not easy. When my mother died, and I've told you this story, she was out in front of our cottage, which was on a hill.

[ 57 : 18 ] And the neighbors were talking to her. And all of a sudden, they said she just took off down the hill. They said they tried to chase after her, but they couldn't catch her. And she hit the turn and tried to make the turn and crashed and fell.

And so there she's laying in the street, and the neighbors all gathered around her. And they called me on the phone and said, what should we do? Call 911. You know?

And I'm trying to figure out if my mother's got some scrapes and bruises or if she's a real problem here. But we got in the car anyways because, you know, right? Just the right thing to do. And as we're riding out, they said, the ambulance hasn't come yet.

It's been like 20 minutes to half an hour. Where are these guys? You know, put your beard on. Go get my mother. Right? Well, they finally came.

So the neighbors called and said that she was at the hospital. And when I got to the hospital, there were two neighbors there. And they said, these are the two, by the way, that were with her when she was out in the street and were feeling incredible guilt like they did something wrong because they let my mother die.

[ 58 : 25 ] They didn't know that at the time. They just knew she went in an accident. I walked in the hospital, and the doctor says, I need to talk to you. Your mother didn't make it. I'm like, she fell. What do you mean she didn't make it?

He said, well, she had a heart attack in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. What she didn't get to was early because they didn't get there as soon as they fell.

So the next day, my family's gathering together, and a couple of my siblings are like, we're going to sue them. We're going to sue the maker of that cart. We're going to sue the hospital. We're going to sue the ambulance people.

We're going to sue somebody. I was thankful they didn't want to sue my neighbors because my neighbors were the ones feeling most at fault. Somehow they felt it was their fault that she died.

I said, what's that going to do? What's it going to do? Is it going to bring our mom back? Is it going to somehow set us up for life?

[ 59 : 25 ] What do you think you're really going to get anyways? He'll get our piece of it, right? All it does is kill us inside. I know life's been unfair.

Life's been difficult. Life's been hard. We want to strike out at it. Brother of Jesus named James said these words.

He said, brothers and sisters, take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. Because human anger doesn't produce the righteousness that God desires.

Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. I hear people talking about righteous anger.

The Bible doesn't have those phrases together anywhere. Nowhere in the Bible does it say righteous anger about anyone. And the only time it even alludes to it, the kind of people who have righteous anger, the only one that it ever says are okay doing that, are God.

[ 60 : 31 ] Not you. Not me. Because we don't know how to be righteous in our anger. We strike out at everybody we think has done something bad to us. When in reality, we're as much a part of the problem as we are the solution.

I got this time. It says WWJD. Anybody know what that means? What would Jesus do? We gave those out to teenagers like 20 years ago to try and get them to behave in life.

You know, that's what we thought would help them by having these little WWJD things on their bracelets. Like that was going to transform everything. Hopefully it helped some of you. But the real question is, what did Jesus do?

Oh, I know he turned over some tables in the temple. But I don't remember him like often a few people. When they were attacking him, I don't remember him calling down the angels and torching the city or anything.

You? I remember that he quietly went to the cross. And he died. And while he was hanging there, he said, you know, Father, forgive them.

[ 61 : 36 ] They don't know what they're doing. Stephen said, Lord, don't hold this sin against them. We have this feeling like somehow life has treated us bad.

Life is a mixed bag. There's good, there's bad. I've told you that before. There's a glimpse into heaven and a glimpse into hell. And we all go through it. Every one of us goes through it. And half the stresses you're feeling you have caused yourself, if you really look at it.

And some of the pain and anger we feel is just the beast that Satan is trying to get us stoked up about.

John said this. Remember this? I shared it three weeks in a row, part of it. No, this isn't it. This is a different thing. Sorry. I change things from Saturday to Sunday.

And every once in a while I mess up. Just letting you know in case you were wondering. Yes, I messed up. You can say that after services. Let's try this one again. John. Jesus said, now is your time of grief.

[ 62 : 38 ] But I will see you again and you will rejoice. And no one will take away your joy. No one can take away your joy. In that day you'll no longer ask me anything.

Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.

A day is coming when all we will have is joy. All we will have is hope. All we will have is love. God himself will dwell with us and wipe every tear from our eye. And take away all the pain.

And he will make our joy complete. And anything you ask for, God himself will give to you. And we can have a taste of that this day too. If we choose.

Jesus died to overcome sin. And anger. And hurt. And pain. And to give us a life of joy. To turn our wailing into dancing.

[ 63 : 40 ] And clothe us with joy. Because the Bible says the joy of the Lord is my strength.

You know the truth is we need to live in the joy. We need to live in the hope. We need to live like Jesus. We say the prayer. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Live by the platinum rule. Do unto others as you would have God. Do unto you. And live into the joy. Paul when he was facing prison. Had more troubles than most of us could ever imagine.

He said rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say. Anybody know the word? Nice. Nice. Man you're really fired up this morning aren't you? Wow.

That was resounding. I gotta tell you. Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say. Rejoice. That's better. That's better.

[ 64 : 41 ] But there's a lot of you. So you know. You should be able to do better than that. God intends for us to have joy. That's our strength.

That's our hope. That's our possibility. Rejoice in the Lord always. And again you say. Rejoice. Amen.

Amen. Father. Glenagogues. Over all the earth.

You will rain on high. Every mountain stream. Every sunset sky. But my one request. Lord my only aim.

Is that you reign in me again. Lord reign in me. Pray in your power over all my dreams In my darkest hour You are the Lord of all I am So won't you pray in me again?

[ 65 : 51 ] Oh, for every thought, oh, for every word May my life reflect the beauty of my love You mean more to me than any earthly dream So won't you pray in me again?

Lord, pray in me, pray in your power over all my dreams In my darkest hour You are the Lord of all I am So won't you pray in me again?

Lord, pray in me, pray in your power Over all my dreams In my darkest hour You are the Lord of all I am So won't you pray in me again?

Say hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah That is just praise God Praise God, hallelujah It's amazing Your love is amazing Scanty and unchanging Your love is a mountain Turn to be my feet Your love is a mystery Your love is a mystery How you gently lift me When I am surrounded Your love carries me Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Your love makes me sing Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah

Hallelujah Hallelujah Your love makes me sing Your love is surprising I can feel it rising All the joy that's growing Deep inside of me Every time I see you All your goodness All your goodness Shines through I can feel this God's home Rising up in me Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Your love makes me sing Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Your love makes me sing Hallelujah Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, your love makes me sing.

[ 68 : 41 ] Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, your love makes me sing.

Will you pray with me? Dear God in heaven, I have sinned. Forgive my sins, Lord. Help me not to sin anymore.

And help me to forgive those who sinned against me. Take away the brokenness and the pain and fill you with joy.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. God wants to love you even though you've hurt him. And God wants you to be loving to even those who've offended you.

In the midst of our brokenness, we show what Christians really are. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

[ 69 : 48 ] Glory to God. Glory to God. Really, that's how you say glory to God. Ready? Glory to God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Bye.

HyiBt. that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me placing my hands the wonderful plea that shall unclasp and set me free silently now I wait for thee ready my God my will to see open my eyes illumining secret divine open my ears that I may hear voices of truth thou hast said is clear and while the wind not swallow my ear everything falls and still disappear silently now I wait for thee ready my God my will to see open my ears in the world in me spirit divine open my mouth and let me bear let me know what to do everywhere open my heart and let me prepare open my children thus to share silently now

I wait for thee ready my God my will to see open my heart amen amen amen amen it is a joyful thing to be able to come into the presence of God and to know that God invites us to rejoice with him you know God rejoices over you with singing do you know that God wants you to come and receive from him all that God has for you so we come to the table we come to the table and receive from God everyone is welcome if you love God earnestly repent of your sin and seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ you are welcome at the table this morning so come and receive all that God has for you you don't have to be a member of the church you don't have to have been coming for a certain length of time you are welcome if you are seeking God to come to the table and receive from him 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 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 brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey and set before us the way of life 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 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 and he gave thanks to you he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples he said take 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 and he gave you thanks and praise and he gave it to his disciples he said drink from this all of you this is the cup of my blood the blood of the new covenant poured out for you poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin do this as often as 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

Christ has died Christ is 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 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 father now and forever amen now shall we pray together with the confidence of disciples of Jesus Christ and with great joy the prayer he taught us 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 will those who are serving this morning please come forward thank you thank you thank you thank you

[ 77 : 22 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 79 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 82 : 22 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 84 : 52 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.