

Born For A Purpose

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Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. I'd like to invite any kids that want to come up as we sing our call to worship, This is the Day That the Lord Has Made. Any kids want to come up and help us sing that?

This is the day This is the day That the Lord has made 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 Morning We're the Fish Fry Salad Crew A welcome gift is available for new visitors And can be picked up at the connection site in the back of the sanctuary following worship Fill out your friendship card too Get on the mailing list Sign up for activities List any prayer of concern And any notes for the staff Welcome to the Baptist Center Church

And we do welcome you to church this morning It's that time of year So we actually have three opportunities to sign up for ministry this morning One is our Seder meal This reenactment of the Lord's Supper It's not an actual meal But a symbolic meal And we do that Holy Thursday And if you want to help and contribute to that you can Also Pastor Sherry is looking for men Men to be disciples It's not really a hard job Men to be disciples For the Seder meal It's not a real hard thing to do But she really needs a few men for that If you can help with that And our Easter egg hunt is coming up If you'd like to help out with that And then the last one Our fish fries And yes We're still doing fish fries Last Friday we sold every piece of food we had We had 630 dinners And we appreciate everybody Coming out to help with that effort Tonight if you'd like to come back For some more music and worship

Our gathering will be meeting at 630 And if you have an interest in our youth mission trip They're going to have a meeting on Thursday At 7 o'clock here at the church Let's turn to the Lord in prayer Shall we?

Dear God there are so many things That we come here to share with you Bless us and be with us And help us to open our hearts up To what you want to share with us Touch us Lord Help us to experience the wonderful blessing of God In Jesus name we pray Amen What are they?

[2 : 5 3] They're ducks Yes You ever hear the story of the ugly duckling? Yeah There's a little duck Who was born into a pond With a bunch of other ducks in the spring And they were all swimming around But this duck was a little big It was a little awkward And the other ducks picked on him They said he was ugly They said he wasn't made right That he was too big And he was too awkward And they'd pick at him And peck at him And it hurt It hurt his feelings And it hurt him So he went and hid away in the bushes Because he didn't want to be hurt By all the other birds Well in the spring The ducks grow pretty quickly And the little ducklings Became actual ducks And they were swimming around the pond And the ugly duckling Was still hiding in the bushes But he decided one day That he should go out And try swimming again So he went out in the pond And started swimming But he looked at his reflection And he wasn't a duck anymore He wasn't a duckling He wasn't even a duck He found out He was a beautiful swan

And all the other birds Talked about the beautiful bird The most beautiful bird In the whole pond Who is actually the one That they call the ugly duckling See the truth is Sometimes when We're little people Say things about us And do things to us And pick on us They shouldn't do that, right?

No, that's not right But honestly Even people that are little Will change when they grow And they might turn out To be the most beautiful The most successful The best person God is something special For everybody And everybody's really beautiful If we do what God wants us to do God is going to smile on us And make our lives Build with a lot of great wonders Okay?

So let's be like the ugly duckling And just stay faithful And God will do something special With your life What are you guys thankful for this morning? You want to share something? Raise your hand My mom and dad My hamster My mom and Sophie My mom and dad My mom and dad Friends and family My mom My friends and family My brother My mom and dad Okay, Lord Lord, we are thankful For our parents Our family Our brothers Our sisters All the good things in life We are thankful Especially that you make us Something beautiful Bless us always In Jesus' name Amen Our children Amen Our mission moment this morning is something that is quite special to our church.

I had somebody ask us when they were putting the bulletins together, what is the Joshua connection that's listed on the bulletin this morning? We're the Joshua connection. We're in ministry to the world in many different places, but the specific ministry that we're taking up an offering for this morning is to change a small part of the world, particularly over in Niagara Falls.

[5 : 56] Along with our sister church, First United Methodist, we help to feed people every week. Somewhere between 80 and 100 people a week we feed as a church. We also bring vacation Bible school and children's programs to the kids.

We have a mission house where people come from around the country to stay and do work and help with people in Niagara Falls. We take things that you would cast away, household items and appliances and furniture, and we give them to people who need it but couldn't afford it.

So through your efforts and what you do in partnering with this ministry, we change a little corner of the world. If you'd like to give an extra gift to that, we do put it into the offering envelope for your encouraged giving.

As we give all our gifts to God, our tithes, our offerings, our blessings, let's remember all that we're thankful for. Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day and for the honor of gathering together to worship you.

Lord God, we ask in Jesus' name that you would bless this offering and bless the ministries, especially this morning, that are given by Joshua Ministry. We ask in Jesus' name that you draw many to salvation in Jesus Christ through these ministries and give us wisdom to know how to best use all of the gifts that you have poured out into our lives.

[7 : 14] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. And at this time, I would like to call forward all those who are being welcomed into church for membership and their sponsors as well.

All of those who are coming up, please come join us up in front. Brothers in Christ, brothers and sisters in Christ, the sacrament of baptism, we are initiated into Christ's holy church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God's gift offered to us without price.

And we do present for membership this morning Debbie Parise, Michelle A. Leon, Lori Tracy, Dan Sweet, Mary Rico, Vince Piazza, Chanel DeGesery, and Pam Tavernier.

And as we turn to our church membership, let's join in confessing our faith as found in the Nicene Creed. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

[8 : 40] We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human.

For our sake, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death, and was buried. On the third day, he rose again, in accordance with the scriptures.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory, to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

[9 : 53] We believe in the Holy, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism, for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. These questions are for our newest members, but we invite all our members, to reaffirm their vows, as we are going to do them responsibly this morning.

You acknowledge your need for grace, and Jesus Christ as your Savior. I acknowledge I am a sinner, in need of God's grace. I reject the power of evil.

Repent and accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. Will you serve Jesus Christ as your Lord? I will serve Jesus Christ as my Lord, through the ministries of the Pentate Center, and worship weekly, and all possible.

I will be... I will be... I will be... I will be... I will be... I will be... I will be... I will be... I will be... Will you serve Jesus Christ by serving others?

[11 : 11] I will be... I will be... I will be... I will... Do dire... I will be... I will be... I will serve on your Savior. I will... I will... Stand... ...

And... I will... I will...

I will... I'm going to have the candidates, as their names are called, come forward for a prayer. Deborah Parice. Debra Priest, may the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Michelle Elion. May the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Lori Tracy. Lori, may the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 21] And may you be entered into the preparatory membership of our church, that God might bless you through her ministries, to have Christ as your Savior. Amen. Daniel Sweet.

Daniel, may the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Mary Rico. Mary Rico. Mary, may the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Vincent Piazza. Vincent, may the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen. Dejezre. Dejezre. Chanel dejezre. Dejezre. Dejezre. Sorry about that, Chanel.

[13 : 37] Do the best they can. Chanel dejezre. May the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.

And Pam Tavenier. And may the Holy Spirit work within you, that having been born by the water and the Spirit, you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

Amen. And now shall we greet our newest members into the family of God. And we will have a reception with cake after service, so we do invite you to come and greet them a little bit more personally after service.

Thank you. What a blessing it is to welcome new folks into the body of Christ and into our body here, this wonderful fellowship at Pendleton Center Church.

Please do come and join us for cake and to greet our new members when we finish the service. We also have a couple of prayer concerns, along with all of the joys that we bring here this morning.

[14 : 48] Patricia Cook passed away this week, and her husband Frank and daughter Andrea are in need of our prayers, as well as all of their family and friends.

And we have a number of people in the congregation who are dealing with all different kinds of health issues, and we particularly want to remember this morning to pray for Carolyn Chet Dombrowski and for all of those who are listed in your little good news and as in need of prayer.

So these prayers and the ones that are on your heart as well, let's turn to our Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, what a blessing it is to be able to come before you, knowing that you are the one who hears and answers our prayer.

You are the God of all creation. Lord, there are so many needs that are on our hearts this morning. There are many who are sick and infirm, Lord God, who are in need of a healing touch from you, whether it be in their spirits or their souls or their bodies.

We ask that you would touch them. Touch them by your grace and your mercy and bring health and healing to them. Lord God, be with their caregivers, those medical professionals and family members and friends who are looking after them, tending to their needs.

[16 : 33] Give them wisdom. Give them hearts of compassion. Father, we pray for those who are grieving losses of all kinds.

of all kinds of things we hear about. Especially losses of loved ones, Lord God, but there are many ways that loss can affect our lives. We just pray for your Holy Spirit to bring comfort and grace and peace.

Lord God, there are all kinds of things we hear about in the news, in our neighborhoods, in our nation, in the wider world.

People causing harm to one another. People causing unrest. People being destructive. You are a God.

He was a God of creation. God of creativity. You desire for us to participate with you in this.

[17 : 41] And we just ask that you would give us hearts to pray. To pray for all of the injustices. To pray for all of those who need to know you and to know your peace and your love.

Lord God, we just ask in Jesus' name that as we hear your word spoken, that it would wash us, cleanse and transform us.

Bring to mind those areas of our own lives that are in the way of us being able to share your love wherever we go. Help us to be your shining light.

We pray that you would anoint Pastor Tom to deliver the message that you have given him for us this day. Let it be a blessing to him and to us. Lord God, we pray that all of our worship this morning blesses you.

Now, Lord, we just take a moment to lift up those people and those situations that are touching our lives that you put on our hearts to lift up before you.

[19 : 00] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Wells' Nun, eyeballs to lift it up before you. Amen. Amen. Amen. isel We thank you for hearing and answering our prayers.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Good morning. Today's reading is from the book of Romans 15, lines 14 through 21.

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge, and confident to instruct one another. I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey. God, by what I have said and done, by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit, so from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

[20 : 39] It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written, those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Somebody come to church last night, they didn't know who won the game. Yeah. They found out. Go Bills!

That's actually my alma mater. I want the Bulls to win. The sun will come out tomorrow. Bet your bottom dollar that next year will be better for the Bulls.

Lose Sabres! Yeah! All right! One more loss. Eight more, and we get a top draft pick. Yeah! It's very confusing. It's very confusing.

We want the Bulls to win, we want the Sabres to lose, so that they can win in the... What's the point of life? We're running a race where we seem to be in a competition for so many things.

[21 : 44] Where are we headed in life? We've been in the book of Romans now for a couple of months, working our way through it. The beginning of Romans talks about our faith, and understanding what our beliefs are, that we believe that through grace of Jesus Christ, through His forgiving love, we find our salvation.

And then it talked about how we should live as Christians in this world. And now it comes to the end of the book. This is our last sermon on Romans. After Easter, we're going to be talking about the seven deadly sins in Gilligan's Island.

You didn't know those two were the same, did you? Yeah. And how we can live better in community. But what Paul's talking about right now is we need to go out there with our faith. It's not just about what we do for us, but what we do with our lives.

We run the race that God has set. Paul talks about it in the book of Philippians, he wrote, where he says this, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

I work to win the prize that God has established. We've also been looking at friends of Paul, people that you may or may not have heard of.

[22 : 56] In the last chapter of Romans, Paul actually mentions two of them, Adronicus and Juniot, who he says are outstanding among the apostles. How many of you heard of Adronicus and Juniot?

Yeah, that's what I thought. The truth is they're outstanding, they're amazing, they're incredible, and nobody's ever heard of them. They ran the race. They did what God wanted.

But were they what they needed to be for us to know that? Outstanding amongst the apostles. How do we succeed in our life? How do we become outstanding?

First, we have to answer our call to faith. Believe in Christ and you will be saved. Trust in his grace. But then we need to live our lives in such a way that we actually demonstrate God changing us.

Verse 14, Paul says to them, I'm convinced, brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge, and competent to instruct one another. That's what we should be wanting to hear, is that somebody will look at our lives and say, there's somebody who's full of the knowledge of God.

[24 : 01] There's somebody who's competent. There's somebody who's living a life as an example for others of goodness. When I first decided to be a pastor and felt that God was calling me to it, I went home and I shared that calling with my wife, and she said, you're not good enough to be a pastor.

You know, the worst part is she was right. Now, nobody really is perfect. Nobody is really, in any way, completely without fault. But what she was talking about is, I was living in a way that was obviously not in line with the example that needed to be set for somebody who would lead a faith community.

I had work to do. First thing we need to do is look at our lives after we accept Christ and decide whether we need to make changes, whether there's things we have to do differently.

Paul says, I've written to you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again. Sometimes we need people who remind us. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves.

I've had people say, well, I've read the Bible. Good, read it again and again and again and again because I find every time I read it, not only am I reminded of what I'm supposed to be, but I learned something new and something different.

[25 : 15] We need to live our lives in such a way that we are an example and run the race in such a way that people will want to run with us. We need to be called to faith.

We need to answer the call to faithful living and righteous living. We also, and this is the point of this particular passage, we need to answer the call for our purpose. Specifically, what are you going to do with the life that God has given to you?

What kind of race are you running? And are you running the right race? Are you going the right way? It's like the guy who catches the football and gets all turned around and runs towards the wrong goal, right?

It's not just running the race, it's running the right race, going in the right direction. We don't want to stand before God at that judgment seat day and have him say to you, yeah, you ran hard.

Yes, you worked on your faith. Yes, you had a good strong faith, but you went completely the wrong way. You used your life for the wrong race.

[26 : 23] In this passage, Paul talks about his own call. He says, I've been called to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

He saw his role as bringing Christ to people who had never heard about Jesus and teaching them how to be better people, going to those who had never heard, starting churches where no one else had started a church, doing ministries that other people didn't do.

God calls us to a specific purpose too. God gives each of us a ministry specific to what we are designed to be. He wrote on your life a spiritual DNA before you were even born.

He had a ministry, a mission, a purpose that he designed just specifically for you. Once in a while, I'll say to people, you know, there's going to come a day when I'm going to leave and you're going to get a normal pastor.

Well, I'm kind of joking about that, but I'm not entirely joking about that. The truth is, is every pastor has a different sense of what they specifically are called to do. As a pastor, I've always seen that my ministry is primarily in two directions.

[27 : 43] One is to find the lost sheep. The people who were a part of a church, the people who went to church at some point in their life, and maybe they got hurt, or maybe they drifted away, or maybe they got confused, or whatever it is, they've been gone for a while.

And I see it as a great part of my ministry to bring those kind of folk back into God's kingdom. Many of you are like that, been away from God for a long time. Not that you didn't believe in God, not that you didn't have any sense of God, but you just were walking in the wrong direction, running the wrong race.

The second thing that God called me to do specifically is to take those wonderful, fantastic people who've been coming to church all their lives, but haven't got a clue why, and tell them.

Believe it or not, there's many people that go to church every single week, week after week after week, and when they get to a certain point in their life, they really don't know what they were going there for, what they were learning.

And my job is to somehow bring them to the incredible, amazing grace that God can give to us. That's my ministry. It's not every pastor's ministry.

[28 : 49] Not everybody is called to that. We're all called to a specific, particular, peculiar type of ministry. Not just us, but the church itself is called to be something unique for God.

And also, specifically called to a geography. Most people don't realize that. Paul says that he's preached the gospel from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum.

You all know where Illyricum is, right? You've all been there, visited that on your trips and such, right? Most of you probably have no idea where Illyricum is. But Paul was called to go there. And in the Bible, people are called to go somewhere.

Abraham was called to go to Palestine. Moses was called to go down to Egypt. Egypt. Paul was called to go to Rome. Jesus said, I must go up to Jerusalem. Believe it or not, as people, we're called to a specific geography.

Many of you have heard this story, but I'll share it again anyways. About 15 years ago, I was in the prime of my career. I was 43 years old, which meant I had years ahead of me.

[29 : 57] But I had experience, and I had grown two strong ministries. So I was perfectly primed, and my daughter was graduating college, so it was time for me to move to the land of eternal prosperity, to the place where everyone smiles all the time, and there's never any problems, and the sun shines year-round.

The Carolinas. Where you could go and open up a church, and they would just flood in the doors by the thousands, and someone like me obviously could go there and have an amazing career.

My wife and I were seriously considering moving. So I went further south. I went all the way to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Down in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, I found myself a little motel room close to the beach, some cheap little place where I could sleep at night, and I spent the better part of over a week walking the beach.

Now, one of the things about the beach is with all that noise from the surf, you don't hear very much. And when you look out at the ocean, and there aren't very many people around, you don't see very much. And little by little, the distractions of the world can melt away.

It's like the wilderness in the Bible, a place where you don't have all these distractions. When I was in the motel room, I spent most of my time praying or reading the Bible. It's an amazing experience to take a week away with God.

[31 : 21] And believe it or not, God will speak to you, and you can hear it. God will speak to you if you will listen. And God was answering my prayers in a lot of different areas.

I also was answering from other directions. I went to a church while I was down there, and I heard a pastor get up and say that he had come from Las Vegas. You know, Las Vegas, 15 years ago, was the fastest growing city in the nation, right?

Everybody was moving to Las Vegas. And yet God told him, don't start a church in Las Vegas. I want you to go to Fort Lauderdale. Well, he got in his car, and he drove to Fort Lauderdale, and there were churches on every single corner.

And he said, God, you don't really. You kind of got it mistaken. Las Vegas. God said, Fort Lauderdale. He's now the pastor of a church with 25,000 to 30,000 people attending his church in Fort Lauderdale, where they didn't need a church.

But God knew where he needed to be. Now, as for me, as I'm walking the beach and I'm hearing these stories, God made it very clear. Go back to Western New York. Go back to where it's cold.

[32 : 28] Go back to the land of 10,000 snowflakes. And live the ministry that I called you to. I don't need you in the South. I don't want you in the South.

I've got plenty of people here. You need to go back where you belong. And stay there. And so here I am. Like it or not, you've been stuck with me for a lot of years since then.

And it wasn't my idea. It was really God's idea. God locates us and sends us and calls us, not just to a specific ministry, but to a specific location to do that ministry.

God will share with us what we need to know if we will listen. Andronicus and Junia, Paul's friends, were called to go to Rome. They were also called to go to prison.

They were also called to leave their hometown. They were also called to be faithful. And they followed God's purpose, his unique purpose for their life. And we as a church have a unique purpose, spiritually designed for this congregation and the people who are sent here and gifted in a specific way, if we'll live it out.

[33 : 39] Everywhere I've ever served as a pastor, including here, I've had people say to me, why can't we be like the bigger church up the road? And my answer is very simple. If we're going to be like the bigger church up the road, we should just go join the bigger church up the road.

Amen? I mean, what is the point of being like them? They're doing it better than us. Why would we want to go there? We are uniquely designed and called and populated by God to reach our tribe, our folk, the folk who are like us and aren't like the other folk.

I don't know what that makes us. A little off the bubble, maybe. But certainly it makes us the family of God that was intended to be in this place, doing what God wants us to do.

Copying someone else with your life or copying someone else as a church is not what God expects us to do. God wants us to run the race that he has set out for us.

One of the greatest of theologians, anyways, of the last century, a fellow by the name of Karl Barth. I read him one point in time. I wish I would have read him when I first went to college. My very first paper in college, I couldn't understand why I got a C minus.

[34 : 53] After all, I had 85 quotes in the paper. If you know anything about college papers, 85 quotes means you've read a lot of stuff but you don't know anything. Karl Barth was asked, why don't you quote a lot of people in your books?

He says, I don't quote people, they quote me. I kind of like that. I thought that fit. After I read that quote, I stopped putting very many quotes in my paper. Oh, yeah, just if you're going to college, you need to understand.

Yes, you need to put some citations that you've read the books. You've got to show that you understand what other people have said. But you need to put it together in such a way that you're doing something unique and amazing and creative of your own accord.

Anybody can parent what somebody else said. Go to Wikipedia or whatever and you get somebody else's idea. Nobody wants to see that. They want to see what God uniquely created, designed, put together in your life and that you could make happen.

God calls us to a specific purpose, a unique ministry. And then God gives us the power, gives us the power that will change lives and change history.

[36 : 04] In verse 19 of this passage, Paul says that he has done this by the power of signs and wonders and through the power of the Spirit of God.

God is still doing miracles. God is still making amazing things happen. We have people in this world that somehow feel that God stopped doing that a couple thousand years ago.

He hasn't. I've seen people physically, miraculously healed. The doctors can't explain it. I've seen people's lives completely transformed to going in the wrong direction, all messed up, nobody thought they would ever get anywhere with their life and turned around and amazingly changed by the power of God.

I've seen two dogs go and heal a marriage. That's a miracle. I've seen God use things we wouldn't think could possibly make something happen, accomplish things we didn't believe were possible.

God still does miracles. Lynn Grossbeck was driving home from her parents a little bit ago. when her car veered off the road and ended up in Spanish Fort Creek River and she died on impact.

[37 : 20] The next day a fisherman found her car half submerged in the water and called the authorities. When the four officers that arrived at the scene got there, three of them heard the faint sound of a woman calling for help.

And so, hearing this voice, they rushed out into the river and used all their strength and ability to turn this car over and save the person whose voice they heard.

But they found that Lynn was already gone. Coroner said 14 hours earlier she had died. But in the back seat of the car, in the car seat, was Lily Grossbeck, 18 months old, hanging upside down for 14 hours in freezing temperatures with nothing but one of those little onesies on.

No food, nothing to drink, with a freezing, frigid river running through the car underneath her while she hangs upside down.

They could never figure out where that woman's voice came from. But little Lily is recovering well now, they say. And her father said, it's a miracle.

[38 : 37] She was needed for sure somewhere else. God does miracles. They can't figure out where that voice came from.

I know where that voice came from. We can not only experience miracles, we can proclaim them and we can accept them and receive them because God is still doing them.

God will do them in your life if you're running His race. Now the miracles are not for us to have a wonderful easy life, they're to glorify God.

In John, he healed a blind man and he said this was done for the glory of God. Lazarus was raised not so that Lazarus could come back from the dead, but it says so that God could be glorified by this.

See, we live a life for health, wealth, and happiness. That's what the Constitution says is our constitutional rights to pursue health, wealth, and happiness and we think it is the absolute main purpose, the race we're supposed to run.

[39 : 38] In fact, many people can go to church simply so that they can be improved and your life can be improved by attending a church. We can not only make your spiritual life better, you can get advice and you can get ideas and you can get examples of how your life can be improved in many different ways.

We don't come to church for ourselves. The purpose of coming to worship is completely the opposite. It's to remind us who we're not and remind us whose we are.

We come for God. The miracles are to glorify God and if we want to see miracle power happen in our lives, we have to be willing to live for what God wants regardless of what that might mean for our own personal circumstances.

Paul in chapter 5 of Romans says this. He says this. Not only this, he says, well, he said it real quick there.

He says, but I rejoice. I rejoice in sufferings. We rejoice in our sufferings. How many of you like to suffer? How many of you celebrate when you're hurting and suffering and struggling?

[40 : 48] No, we don't. We try to hide from suffering. We try to pretend it won't happen. We live our lives to avoid it.

And maybe we need to live our lives to pursue what God wants and not necessarily what everybody else says we should want to do. I know what suffering is. I'll tell you, though, that the greatest pains I feel in my body come from when I was 17 years old playing high school sports.

Did you see this guy who quit the NFL after one year? He retired after one year. I've got to give the guy credit. He made \$750,000 in one year. And he heard Darryl Telly's story and said, I'm not going to do that to myself.

All right? We run the race. We compete for the competition. We will ruin our bodies so that we can win the prize that the world has set out in front of us.

But in the end, what have we accomplished? I'm not against sports. I like sports. I learned a lot from sports. Back when I was in sports, the coach would say, go back in there even if you're hurt.

[41 : 54] That's why I got hurt more. Some things aren't worth the suffering. But if we're suffering to fix what God wants to fix in this world, to accomplish what God wants to accomplish in this world, He will give us the power, the miracle power, to overcome even suffering.

I have people ask me usually on a weekly basis. I get notes. I get letters. I get questions. Why do I suffer? Why am I not more successful? Why doesn't my life work out?

Why am I lonely? Why do I have pain? Why do I have problems? Why does God allow this to happen? Now, the problem is we're running the wrong race.

We're running a race that's designed on the idea that it's all about our comfort, all about our happiness, when really it's all about God's glory. This is how that passage in Romans continues in chapter 5.

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who've been helped the next one. That's Romans 8. We'll get there. It's not their fault. I added some stuff for them. Not only so, but that one doesn't want to stay up, I'm telling you, man.

[43 : 05] That one is like a flash drive here. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces and perseverance produces and character produces hope.

And hope will not disappoint us because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who He's given to us. And so God gives us the power to overcome the suffering, overcome the disappointment, overcome the struggles.

We're called to live in the power of God, but we also have to do that with courage. And there's where part of our failing is. We're afraid. We're afraid. And so we don't go out to do what God calls us to.

And I can understand that. We're afraid of failure. The greatest courage is to do what God wants even if no one appreciates it. Even if no one applauds it.

Even if no one rewards it in this life. Even if no one recognizes it. There's a reason why I picked Andronicus and Junia.

[44 : 11] If you noticed, and you probably didn't in that verse I put up there, they listed her as Junius. In some Bibles, she's not Junia anymore.

They've added an S to her name. They did it about the 12th or 13th century. Do you know why? Because it says that she was outstanding among the apostles.

And the people in the 12th or 13th century got worried about this. That would imply that a woman, a woman, if you could imagine, such a scandalous thing, may have been a leader in the church when the church began.

And Paul himself was calling a woman an apostle. We've got to do something about this. So they added an S to her name and took away her womanhood so that they could continue their troubled existence.

There is no name Junius, by the way. Just to add to their scandal, there's no such name. It never existed in antiquity. There is no Junius. They just made it up because they couldn't handle the scandal of something they couldn't understand because God had done it and not them.

[45 : 32] Can you imagine having everything you've worked for, in fact, even the essence of who you are, removed? Oh, I know some of you are going to say there couldn't have been any women apostles.

There couldn't have been any women leaders in the church. So you're going to have to explain Priscilla and you're going to have to explain Mary Magdalene. You're going to have to explain Mary, the mother of God. You're going to have to explain Joanna and you're going to have to explain Junia because as we look back originally, she was a woman, an outstanding woman.

Among the apostles, God can make amazing things happen that we think is impossible because we all know that all the apostles were men, right?

Well, no, we really don't. We really don't. I know some of you are saying, oh my gosh, you just messed with the Bible. What else is wrong in there? I'm going to tell you, this book has been examined by more people over the last few centuries than any other book that's ever been written.

We know where they change things and they haven't changed very many things so when they do, we can look and go, what you doing? And put it back.

[46 : 44] Which is why these wonderful modern translations they give us have so much value. We fear failure. We fear obscurity.

We fear lack of recognition. We fear that other people won't accept what we have to say because we'll challenge their preconceived ideas of what they've said must be, even if it's for hundreds of years.

But God calls us to live a different way and run a different race with a different goal and a different purpose that will transform a child that struggles to do what every other child does, that has a problem accomplishing what we just assumed to be normal tasks.

You couldn't possibly appreciate what those parents were thinking, that their child, maybe for the first time in his life, was going to win the award, was going to win the race, was going to be considered a winner, somebody who was validated by the whole world around them.

And when he stumbled and he fell, their hearts were ripped apart. And yet, someone came and picked him up.

[47 : 59] Now, I've seen this video in a couple different forms. The difficulty about this story is it's always a group of people who are emotionally challenged or mentally challenged or physically challenged.

I never see a race where you've got healthy, normal, regular folk who are running the race and the guy out front falls down and the person in second place stops and everybody picks him up and carries him across the finish line.

I've never seen the NASCAR race where the guy crashes into the wall and the race stops and everybody gets out of their cars and goes and loads the guy whose car crashed into the winner's car and they cross the finish line together.

What's the matter with the people we call normal? What's the matter with us? Maybe we're running the wrong race.

Maybe we're after the wrong cries. Matthew said, don't be worried about the one that can kill your body. Worry about the one that can destroy your body and your soul in hell.

[49 : 06] Nobody wants to win the trophy for best sportsmanship but that's the one God's applauding. That's the one God cares about. And so Paul says this in Timothy, I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will award me that day and not only to me but to also to all who have longed for his appearing, for all who trust in him, for all who are not afraid, for all who ignore what our culture says.

Don't worry about what other people live in a way in which we know if God is for us as Paul says in Romans, there is nothing that can stand against us. Don't be afraid to live for God and his purpose.

It can transform not just the living, it can change the world. God can change it and fix it all.

we just turn those problems over to him. So let's pray, shall we? Dear God in heaven, I have sinned. I failed to do everything that you wanted me.

[50 : 43] I run the wrong race. I get confused. I listen to the wrong voices. I worry about the wrong things.

I'm broken. Heal me, Lord. Take away my sins. Guide me. Turn me into what you want me to be.

That I might truly live. In Jesus' name we pray. Amazing good news. Jesus can change all the brokenness and turn it around completely.

In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Glory to God. Our God calls us.

Our God calls us to seek and understand the mystery of our becoming gods and God being ours.

[51 : 49] When we come to the table, we begin to understand all that God has done for us that we could not have done it for ourselves. There's nothing we could do.

But God has done it all for us. And God invites us to join with him at the table to receive all that he has for us.

To be blessed so that we can be a blessing wherever we go. God calls you to the table this morning. And you are welcome.

If you love God, if you 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.

Whether you've been a Christian for as long as you can remember or you're brand new and just walked through the doors for the first time today or whether you've been away for a while and today is the day that God called you home, you are welcome at the table.

[53 : 08] So come and share in the wonderful mystery. You are God's. 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.

In love, you made us for yourself and when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, your love remained steadfast.

You bid your faithful people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the Easter feast that renewed by your word and sacraments and fervent in prayer and works of justice and mercy.

We may come to the fullness of grace that you have prepared for those who love you. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

[54 : 18] 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, whom you sent in the fullness of time to redeem the world.

He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in our likeness. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

He took upon himself our sin and death and offered himself a perfect sacrifice for the sin of the whole world. 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, and on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread and he gave thanks to you.

And he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, Eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[55 : 45] And when the supper was over, he took the cup and gave you thanks and praise and gave it to his disciples and 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. Amen. Shall we pray with the confidence of children of God the prayer Jesus taught us?

[57 : 13] 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. Pretty cool, huh? First place in a 5K. It's not mine.

I'd have to borrow a ribbon like this. You know, the ones I have from high school, I don't even have them. Well, that's partly because I didn't care too much about them, but partly because I was second string and third violin and backup to everybody along the line, you know?

just didn't really accomplish much. In many ways, I was just an ugly duckling looking for where I belong.

[58 : 21] But you know, if we do what God calls us to do and we become what God created us to be, we're going to blossom into, well, a better looking duck anyways, and maybe a beautiful swan.

May God bless you. May God just fill up your heart. Shh, shh. May you may God just fill up your heart with his wonder.

May God take you from this place and give you a purpose. May God give you miracle living. May God make things happen with your life that would seem impossible to every one of us.

And regardless of what the world does with that legacy, may God bless you for all eternity. Go in his peace and his grace today and always. Amen. You Come in