

# These Lives are Precious

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Preacher: Pastor Scott Johnson

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

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

[ 2 : 41 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. the bulletin I want to highlight a few things that are new this week first is DJ has put out a call for some support for the Thursday night dinners at Niagara Falls so that's explained in here very well especially the specific things he's looking for but if you have any questions feel free to talk to DJ DJ sits back there DJ you want to wave your hand for a second if you don't know DJ so that way you can actually talk to him if you have further questions also Sandy who leads our feeding hope has a couple of things in here they are looking for donations as well in addition she's also leading the collection of diapers and wipes for some of the city churches that were hurt during the blizzard and also one of our sister churches was especially damaged because they had some pipes burst and had a lot of physical damage it also cost them a lot of the resources in their food pantry and so they are looking for support as they restock those shelves and that's also explained in here so we want to lift up Lincoln Memorial in their ongoing ministry so Sandy you want to raise your hand too so if you don't know Sandy talk to her if you have further questions about that so all that having been said let us open our hearts as we prepare to go to God together in worship so today we are beginning a new series if you look at the cover of your bulletin you'll see that that series is called

God's Holding Your Life God's Holding Your Life now we've been through a lot in our area over the past year right not 2023 2022 a lot over the past year and as we think about entering a new time a new season a new space we want to hold on to these messages of assurance and our anchor as we go through these series is going to be the Psalms because you experience all of the emotions in the Psalms but what you also hear regularly in the Psalms are themes of hope and assurance so whether we are screaming oh no oh yeah or hallelujah or please help whatever we are thinking right now we can find that expressed in the Psalms and so written over a time when the nation of Israel was moving from isolation they were in exile there was a time of kingdom all of that was happening but the poetry of the Psalms will accompany us in this series and remind us that through it all we can trust that God is indeed holding our lives now today we're going to be focusing on

Psalm 72 now we don't live in a land that was ruled by kings as the hearers of this Psalm did but nevertheless the petitions of this Psalm for justice deliverance and defense of the poor and oppressed and peace for all people is an underlying theme of our faith we're reminded that a just society is one that proclaims that lives are precious and worthy of protection so as we remember that our lives are precious and all lives are precious that God is holding our lives you are held tenderly by God that said let us come together in prayer holy and just God you have shown us what is right and good open us this day to a vision of the world made all right so that we might follow your ways and know the peace of your reign on earth as it is in heaven we praise you for your steadfast presence open our lives together in our lives amen let's ready to praise God and good morning to everyone online this week as we move into a celebration of one of our American heroes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr this quote from one of his sermons kind of dovetails with what Pastor Scott is talking about with all of our lives being precious all of our lives can be great and the quote goes like this everybody can be great because anybody can serve you don't have to have a college degree to serve you don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve you only need a heart full of peace and grace a soul generated by love so we're going to open this morning with two songs one a hymn that we're going to sing about God and I want to give you a little grammar lesson because someone very intelligently said to me one

Saturday night it's nice to know what we're singing about so for some of you that might not know the word sucker sucker speedy it means speedy relief to bring relief and then we're going to move into a song that we're going to sing to God came to my rescue so I'm going to invite you to stand if you're able to sing to God hail to the Lord's anointed great David's greater son hail in the time appointed his reign on earth begun he comes to break to take away to take away to

God to He comes with suckers bleeding to those who suffer wrong to help And may the weak be strong To give them songs for sighing Their darkness turned to light His souls condemned and dying Are precious in His sight He shall come down my showers Upon the fruitful earth Love, joy, and hope like flowers Spring in His path to birth Before Him on the mountains

[ 9 : 23 ] Shall peace the herald go And righteousness in mountains From hill to valley flow To Him shall prayer unceasing And daily vows ascend His kingdom still increasing A kingdom without end The time of time shall never His covenant renew His name shall stand forever That name to us is love The love of è xo I feel like you're in love

I'm falling on my knees in worship Giving all I am to seek your face Lord, all I am is yours My whole life I've placed in your hands God of mercy humbled I bow down In your presence at your throne

I called, you answered And you came to my rescue and I I wanna be where you are My whole life I've placed in your hands God of mercy humbled I bow down In your presence at your throne I called, you answered

And you came to my rescue and I I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are I wanna be where you are Thank you sa munch

Feel my life Be lifted high in our worlds Be lifted high in our love Be lifted high I called you answered And you came to my rescue and I I want to be where you are You may be seated.

[ 14 : 37 ] So we have the added joy of a baptism this morning. So let's open our hearts as we prepare to celebrate this sacrament. Come on up here guys and let's welcome our sister in faith.

Hi Adrian. Hi Adrian.

I better go get you a mic.

Everybody can fit. I'm sure we'll make it work. Okay. I just got to get over here for a second. Good morning.

Everybody should be that excited about it. All right. All right. So as we come together this is always an important time. And know that this involves all of us.

[ 15 : 50 ] And of course this involves God as God is a participant in what we do. Not just simply blessing it or standing by. God is an active participant in what we do. So let's ready our hearts as we come to this moment.

Amen. Amen. Brothers and sisters in Christ. Through the sacrament of baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy church which is not simply the here and now but it is into whatever body of Christ or into whatever church and faith community we find ourselves in.

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

Today we come together as Evelyn's family, God parents and friends to celebrate in the sacrament of holy baptism. Gracious God, every child is a miracle of love and today we thank you for the miracle of Evelyn.

Hold her in the gentleness of your hands and her family in the bonds of patient love. May this little girl grow in the way of faith and grow to be close to you, close to her grandparents, God parents, family and forever close to her mother and father.

[ 17 : 02 ] Let her be aware of your tender care and your righteous calling in her life. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen. Amen. So Kevin, Bridget and Evelyn have an amazing support system.

And those of you present, the godparents, the grandparents, everyone, make up such an incredible support for this family. Each of you has prayed for, supported, comforted and encouraged Kevin and Bridget as they became parents.

You have loved them through all the hope, the anxiety and of course the little sleep and all the times of celebration. That journey will forever be a part of your story as Evelyn's very special family and friends.

So I'm speaking directly to you who are invested in this little girl. As her grandparents, godparents, family and friends, do you promise to surround them with love, inspire them with faith and support Kevin and Bridget as they raise Evelyn?

Will you pray for their marriage, their parenting and their family? If you will do whatever you can to support this awesome calling, will you say yes? Now let's offer this prayer for each and every one who loves this little girl so much.

[ 18 : 17 ] Heavenly Father, you have given Evelyn to this family and to so many friends. We thank you for this little girl. Lord, please bless everyone with enthusiasm for each relationship.

Bless us with patience as Kevin and Bridget parent Evelyn. Have loving patience with Evelyn always. Bless us with stories of faith.

Let us share you and your love with her that she might grow to know you through those who love her. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. So now we come to the important stuff.

So as each of you stand here, I'm going to ask the four of you to answer these questions because she's not old enough to say them yet herself, right? Unless you want to say something. You want to say something? Okay.

All right. So your own personal faith has a profound effect on the way you live and raise your children. We gathered here honored to participate in this Holy Sacrament that is today and forever.

[ 19 : 18 ] So on behalf of the whole Christian church, do you come with your whole hearts before God, your family, your children, and these witnesses? And do you promise to reject all that is evil in this world?

If so, say we do. Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist all that is evil, all injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

If so, say we do. Do you confess your belief in God the Creator, Jesus Christ as God's Son, our Savior, and to the best of your ability to put your trust in God's grace and promise to be faithful to God?

If so, say we do. Will you, as Evelyn's parents and God parents, nurture her in Christ's Holy Church that by your teaching and your example, she may be guided to the point in her life whereby she accepts God's grace for herself, professes her faith openly, and agrees to live a Christian life?

If so, say we will. We will. Will you, members and friends of the Pendleton Center United Methodist Church, make every attempt to be faithful to the faith in God? Make every attempt to support Kevin, Bridget, and Evelyn in providing a Christian upbringing for this little girl.

[ 20 : 35 ] When she's here, in church, in childcare, or just running around, will you help her to learn about God, the Bible, and to learn how welcome she is in Christ's Holy Church? If so, then say we will.

We will. Let's pray together. Eternal Father, you have always brought forth water for your people. You have created the world and the waters that nourish us.

You sent the living water through Christ and your spirit. Pour out your Holy Spirit to bless this water and to Evelyn, who will be baptized with it. Clothe her in righteousness throughout her entire life.

That this day, being claimed by you as a part of this household of faith, she will be marked forever with the sign of eternal life. All praise to you, Eternal Father, through your Son, Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever.

Amen. Ready for the fun part? Okay, come on. Yes, I know, right? We're gonna fly. I know. Yes, I know. She right there, right? I know. She right there, right?

[ 21 : 42 ] I know. Okay. We'll do our best to make this quick. All right? What name is given this child? Evelyn. Evelyn Caroly. I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Yay! I know, right? You see Grandma over there with the camera. I know. Let us walk away. We'll do our best to make this quick. All right? What name is given this child? Evelyn Caroly. I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us welcome our sister together. Yes, it's all for you. Yay! And, of course, we have her certificate here and a Bible for her.

Thank you. And so it's always a joy to have these moments. Come on down here so Bob can do his thing. Awesome. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Awesome. Thank you.

[ 22 : 59 ] Awesome. Thank you.

So there are so many ways in which we express our love for God. And when we come together in a part of these moments when we see love for God made real in these ways that just reminds us.

One of the other ways we celebrate our love for God is by the things we do, how we share what God has shared with us. So we invite you to think of the spirit moving in you, experience the spirit moving in you, as you prepare to share your gifts with people. So we know that there are so many missions out there, so many places of need. Give generously as the spirit moves in your heart today.

We're going to let the words of this one speak for themselves. This song is called God of this City.

You're the God of this city. You're the king of these people. You're the Lord of this nation.

[ 24 : 26 ] You are. You're the light in this darkness. You're the hope to the hopeless. You're the peace to the restless.

You are. You are. There is no one like our God. There is no one like our God.

There is no one like you, God. Greater things have yet to come. Greater things are still to be done in this city.

You're the Lord of creation. The creator of all things. You're the king of all things.

You are. You're the strength of all things. You are. You're the strength of the weakness. You're the love to the broken. You're the joy in the sadness. You are.

[ 25 : 57 ] You are. I have. My God of the parameters. You are. You are. You are. You are. You are. You are. I mean, our Lord of ■■■■ santji. My God of yor kapFFA bald■... My God of yore... There is no one like our God. There is no one like our God. There is no one like you, God. God There is no one like you, God Greater things are yet to come Greater things are still to be done in this city Glory shines towards the Lord Praise for you and love for you in this city Greater things are yet to come Greater things are still to be done in this city Greater things are still to be done in this city

Greater things are yet to come Greater things are still to be done in this city Greater things are still to be done in this city Greater things are still to be done in this city Greater things are still where having 1967■rah There is no one like our God There is no one like you, God Thank you, God.

Thank you, God.

Thank you, God.

Thank you. Take your seats. Thank you, God. So we come now to our conversation with God today, a time where we pray together. And, of course, during this time, for those who have some things that they would like to share, some joys that we want to be church family together with in your time of praise, as well as some heavy burdens that you might want to lay down so that the Scripture teaches us that we should share in each other's burdens, bear one another's burdens.

[ 29 : 39 ] So that way we can be church family together. Does someone have a joy or concern they'd like to lift up this morning? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

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

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

Thank you. That's awesome. So, Becky was sharing that she has a friend who is coming to the end of his earthly life, and he's struggling to accept that. So she would like him covered in prayer as well as angel wings, our intergenerational ministry did some wonderful work in building bags that are going to be given to homeless people.

So that's a joy she would like to share. Others? Okay.

[ 30 : 51 ] Okay, so we have a prayer for a young girl who is being hospitalized with fluid on her spine and has mobility issues. So we want to keep her covered in prayer as well. Go ahead.

Sorry, I didn't hear you. Okay, so we have a joy and we're going to pretend it's not a concern. Because we are lifting up the youth retreat this weekend.

And so we want to be in celebration for everything that is happening in the lives of our young people. And, of course, pray that God moves in their hearts mightily. What else can we lift up today?

All right. There you go. So we got college students who have some of whom are still at home.

Some are getting ready to start new semesters. And so Kelly's lifting up having Jack here, but he just left. And, of course, Katie is with us this morning. So we want to lift up everybody who is going through that.

[ 32 : 00 ] I'm going through that myself right now. So that said, what else can we lift up today? All right, then. Let's open our hearts, go to God together in prayer.

Loving and eternal God, we give you thanks for the ability to gather. For the joy that is flowing in this place right now. For the ways in which we know your spirit is at work and alive. We thank you for touching each and every one of us.

That we might know that you are indeed who you always promised us you would be. We come together today full of praise for the ways in which you are at work.

Because we have known you. We have known you in these different ways. The way you come to us as Savior. Because we know we are not able to save ourselves.

And so we give you thanks for Jesus Christ. The one who takes away the sins of the world. We give you thanks for the spirit that burns in each of us.

[ 33 : 00 ] For the spirit that lets us know we are united. Not only to you, but to one another. Because the spirit is in all places at all times. And we are thankful for his presence here.

Lord, we also come knowing that there is so much in our individual lives. That sometimes we look past. Those small joys. Those small day-to-day things that are sometimes so easy to take for granted.

So in those smiles of friends. In those bright and shining eyes we may see in a stranger. In those kind words that come. In those opportunities to serve and share love or tell the story.

Lord, we are grateful for the ways in which you make yourself known. In the ways we move through life. Lord God, we also have so many things to lift up. The ways in which young people are discovering you.

The young people in our church family having this opportunity this weekend. And people all around the world who are coming to understand the truth of who you are. Lord, we are also walking through life with some things that are concerns.

[ 34 : 06 ] Some things that are heavy on our hearts. And we hear of those who are ill and hospitalized. We hear of those who are grieving. We hear of those who are facing significant challenges and problems.

And they need your guidance. Lord God, we have those who are facing seemingly insurmountable situations. But we know that whether the valley is deep.

Whether the mountain is high. Whether the way is dark. You are with us in the midst of our storms. You are in the midst of our trials and challenges.

You will see us through. Help us to look to you at all times. When it seems too big for our hands. We know that nothing is too big for you.

When it feels like we are alone in the midst of a situation. We know we are never alone because you are with us. And Lord, let us always remember. That you have called us to be part of your body.

[ 35 : 08 ] Part of the body of Christ. So let us follow the example of the one we celebrate today. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Whether we see him in the face of friends. Or whether we see him in great people who lead us. As the one who shared that prophetic vision in 1963. The one who made such a difference in our world.

Calling us to be better than we were living. Helping us to remember the better parts of ourselves. And the true nature of our faith. To walk in love. But to never forget those who are unseen and oppressed.

To work for a world of beloved community. Lord God, we give you thanks. For those who tell us the truth and lead the way. Help us to follow their blessed example.

In Jesus' most holy name we pray and ask today. Amen. Good morning.

[ 36 : 23 ] Our scripture this morning is from the book of Psalms. Chapter 72. Verses 1-7. And 10-14. And then from Luke. Chapter 22.

Verses 25-27. Endow the king with your justice. O God, the royal son with your righteousness. May he judge your people in righteousness.

Your afflicted ones with justice. May the mountains bring prosperity to the people. The hills the fruit of righteousness. May he defend the afflicted among the people. And save the children of the needy.

May he crush the oppressor. May he endure as long as the sun. As long as the moon. Through all generations. May he be like rain falling on a mown field.

Like showers watering the earth. In his days. May the righteous flourish. And prosperity abound. Till the moon is no more. May the kings of Tarshish. And of distant shores.

[ 37 : 21 ] Bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba. And Sheba. Present him gifts. May all kings bow down to him. And all nations serve him. For he will deliver the needy who cry out.

The afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak. And the needy. And save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence.

For precious is their blood in his sight. And then from the book of Luke. Jesus said to them. The kings of the Gentiles lorded over them.

And those who exercise authority over them. Call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead. The greatest among you should be like the youngest.

And the one who rules. Like the one who serves. For who is greater? The one who is at the table? Or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table?

[ 38 : 19 ] But I am among you as the one who serves. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Friends let's come to this moment in prayer.

Almighty and gracious God. We give you thanks for moving among us. And our hearts are open Lord. As we have sung to you. Sung your praises. As we have heard your word. And drunk it in.

And as we have prayed. And reached out for you. With our very spirits. So Lord move among us now. Move among us powerfully and mightily. But gently and tenderly. As only you can.

Give each of us what you know we need. So that we might go forward. Go forward and bless your holy name. And bear fruit. That lifts you high. In Jesus name we pray and ask.

Amen. Now before I get started though. I need someone to come up here and help me. Can someone come up here and give me a hand please? Seriously. That was a real thing.

[ 39 : 25 ] All right. I only need one. I got a lot of volunteers now. Thank you. All right Dan. Yep. Come on up here. All right. Real simple task. I just need you to hold that. Okay. And I'll tell you in a minute.

Just hold that. Gotcha. All right. So. So. So. We are entering this new place today. And you remember last week we talked a little bit about kings. You heard me say in the greeting.

We were talking about that we don't live in a land ruled by kings. Right? And this thing about living in a land that's ruled a particular way is a bit of a challenge for us.

Is it not? Because most of us not having a lot of optimism, not having a lot of confidence in a lot of folks who are leaders.

Right? I mean when you look at say opinion polls or favorability polls, most of our elected leaders not doing so well. Right?

[ 40 : 21 ] I mean if somebody asked you what you felt about congress, I bet we'd get a whole lot of things said. Not a lot of it. That would probably be popular. Right? Let me take that back.

It'd probably be popular, just not favorable. Okay? And when we think about leaders in other places like say maybe where you work. Or sometimes in the church.

We just have this thing where it feels like our leaders don't seem to be doing what they're supposed to be doing. We look around our world and it feels like we're not seeing the fruit that we would hope for from folk who hold these positions.

Now the danger in that is that we can fall into this really cynical place. We can start to be frustrated. We can start to be hard. We can sort of callous over our hearts. And that is not where most of us want to be.

And it's hard if we find ourselves in that place. Because we've probably all experienced a moment or two when those sorts of feelings were creeping up. And let's just say our behavior didn't exactly look like Jesus when it did.

[ 41 : 26 ] Right? Now here's why we're talking about that. Because with that reality among us. With so much of that sort of frustration and anxiety out here in the world.

Sometimes we actually forget. We have a king like that. We just tend to be more worried about some of the other leaders who aren't like that.

And when we get that back in our heads. When that sinks back in.

It starts to change who we are. It starts to help us go to a very different place. And let me give you an idea of what I'm talking about.

Now you heard Jan read this. But I want you to hear it again. Because sometimes we forget the job description. You alright?

[ 42 : 31 ] I'm good. Okay. Okay. Just checking in. Alright. So. Endow the king with your justice, O God.

The royal son with your righteousness. May he judge your people in righteousness. Your afflicted ones with justice. May the mountains bring prosperity to the people.

The hills the fruits of righteousness. May he defend the afflicted among the people. And save the children of the needy. May he crush the oppressor.

May he endure as long as the sun. As long as the moon. Through all the generations. May he be like rain falling on a mown field.

Like showers watering the earth. In his days may the righteous flourish. And prosperity abound. Till the moon is no more.



[ 43 : 35 ] That sound like a lot of the leaders you know? Probably not. Probably sounds like a few. But probably not a lot of them.

Now the reason why I wanted us to hear that. Is I want us to remember what I just said a few seconds ago. Don't forget. We have a king who does this. We have a king who does this.

We just don't often keep him at the forefront of our minds around these ideas. And if you have forgotten. I want to remind you about what's on the front of your bulletin.

I want to remind you about the series in which we are entering. Which is called God is Holding Your Life. God is Holding Your Life.

And see and this is where Dan comes in. Right? Because I asked him to hold this thing. This is a little squishy ball that my daughter got. Right? And so she's holding it. Right? But see the thing is.

[ 44 : 36 ] When we think of holding something. You know we do it. We just kind of grab it and we have it in our hand. Right? And so if you like give somebody say like you ladies give your say hold my purse.

Right? Or it's something and you just grab it and you kind of hold it. But I want you to hear something very carefully. That when we think about how God holds our lives.

Dan if I told you to hold that like it was fragile. How would you be holding it? Okay? If I told you to hold it like it was precious. How would you hold it? Right?

See? You wouldn't be kind of doing. I just got it in my hand. Kind of playing around with a little bit. Dan. Right. See that's what I mean. That's exactly what I mean. But see that's our nature. Right? That's our nature.

And that's why I appreciate Dan being willing to come up here and do that. Because it is. It's our nature. Right? But here's the thing I want you to hear. That thing about precious. That thing about fragile.

[ 45 : 31 ] That thing about valuable. When you think about God holding your life. That's how he's holding you. He's not grabbing you like you're a purse.

He's not just shoving you in his pocket. And he's not just pitching you up and down while he's preoccupied with something else. He holds you tenderly. You are his focus.

You are his priority. And he does not take his eye off you. Thanks Dan. You can go sit back now. Let that sink in though.

That you are held that tenderly. That you are held with that degree of attentiveness. That you are held with that degree of care.

By God. Because that's easy for us to forget. Right? Especially when we're going through stuff.

[ 46 : 35 ] We completely don't feel that way. Because when we're going through stuff. We're like. Well if God was holding me like this. This probably wouldn't be happening. That if God had his eye on me.

Then why is stuff sucking so bad right now? But you realize that one does not actually cancel out the other. See that's where the thinking of the world and human nature kick back in.

We think that if God loves us. Then this sort of stuff shouldn't be happening to us. But that's just not how it works. It'd be nice if it worked differently.

But that's just not how it works. And when we remember. That we are held that tenderly. When we remember when we are held that carefully.

That even though. We are one of currently. More than seven billion. That God has not forgotten. That God hasn't lost you in the crowd.

- [ 47 : 41 ] And yes. You are still. Right here. For God. And see the thing about that.
- Is as we just. We're clicking in our brains. Right. All the stuff we've been through collectively. Going all the way back to the mass shooting in May.
- Dealing with two. What were supposed to be storms of the century. This whole thing that traumatized the city even further. As we watch Damar on the field. Other incidents that have happened to us individually.
- In our lives. And yet it's tough to think. Well you know. I don't get how I'm held this tenderly. When I'm dealing with all this.
- How do we get through that. How do we break out of that. Tell me how to make that feel real. The challenge for us.
- [ 48 : 42 ] Is that. The fact is. We're looking for something that feels different. When in fact. That doesn't change where we are. Right. Because for example.
- Those of us who have the. Joy of parenting. Right. And I mean that semi-sarcastically. Those of us who have the joy of parenting. If. Your kid.
- Has done something that you know. Is not okay. Or you've seen your kid. Have an accident. And you can run. And pick him up and hold him.
- And say I'm here. Here. But if. That cut that they have still hurts. They're still going to cry. Even though. They're your focus.
- And you're holding. And see that's the thing. That we kind of got to. Get our heads in. Sort of different space around.
- [ 49 : 42 ] Because what we want to do. Is have God sort of poof it all away. Right. And it would be great. If that happened. But as you've heard me say. That's just not how it works.
- Now. Having named that. If we are in fact. In this place. If we are in fact.
- Held this way. And the fact that we know. We are held this way. And bad stuff still happens to us. But peace is. We often forget. That being held this way.
- And knowing that we are this focus of God. Is that the good stuff. Still happens too. It's just that when the bad stuff is happening. We tend to put that in the rear view. Or it tends just not to be where our brains go.
- Because if the good stuff happens. We're just kind of thinking. Oh that's the way it's supposed to work. And we forget the good stuff. Is an act of God too. And that is no less a reflection of being here.
- [ 50 : 45 ] Than the fact that bad stuff happens while we're here too. How do we. Just not stay stuck. Focused on the fact that we just want it to be different all the time.
- That we don't want the bad things to keep happening. Well let's remember something that we heard. Because when we hear this description of our leaders.
- Right. When we think about our kings. When we think about those who do this. And when we think about our one true king. Remember what Jesus said. You heard Jan read it today. Where Jesus is teaching the disciples.
- It's on the night in which he's betrayed. And he's telling them. He says look guys. You know that earthly kings. Will lord their authority over people. They get very self-centered.
- They get tripped on power. Right. And that is what happens. Remember last week. We were talking about Herod. Herod the great. Right. Cared so much about where he sat.
- [ 51 : 44 ] That he called himself the great. Right. And the thing about it is. You remember a couple of details. I shared with you about Herod the great. That any threat to him. He was not hesitant to put down with murder.

Straight up murder. He killed three of his own sons. Because he thought they were trying to steal the throne from him. Killed a wife for the very same reason. And then remember the reason why we started talking about Herod.

Was because with it being epiphany. Or our celebration of epiphany last week. We talked about Herod killing babies in Bethlehem. Because he thought he would be able to kill Jesus.

The ultimate threat to his throne. That's who he was. Now. Having said all that. Isn't it a relief.

To know. That our king. Operates in a completely different way. Earthly kings will lord it over people.

[ 52 : 45 ]    Serve me. Give me. Do this for me. But you hear what Jesus is. I am among you. As one. Who serves. I am here to help.

You. That doesn't make me any less the king. But I. Am worried about you. I will take on your problems.

I will meet your needs. I will hold you. In the very palm. Of my hand. Changes everything.

When you remember in that place. Changes everything. When you recognize that. That. Is the almighty king of the universe. Saying those words. About how he wants to be in relationship with you.

But. That cynicism. That frustration. That anxiety. All of that still creeps back in. And again. You're saying. Well. That sounds great pastor. I get it.

[ 53 : 52 ]    But that just doesn't sound like the real world to me. Because real people. With real power. Tend to act in bad ways. And we still deal with all of that.

But I want you all to think about something. When we. Follow this king. He's pretty clear. About what he hopes for. From us.

There really isn't a whole lot of question. He shows us. That he holds us here. But he says. So. You know. Because you're here. Because you want to be here.

Because. You say. Well. I want some of what you are offering God. And I'm so amazed. That you hold me like this. This is great. But the problem is.

Is that sometimes. We want to sit here. And just do the receiving part. And we forget. What he says. Rides along with the receiving part. Because what he tells us to do. Is to then.

[ 54 : 51 ]    Take that. Understanding. To the world. Like he did. Take that love. That we so easily. Receive.

And then share it with others. So. Because here's. Where those two things come together. That cynicism. That leadership. That's not good. And that sense of frustration.

With the way the world works. And this whole sense of who Jesus is to us. And what we are claiming. See if we don't bridge that chasm. That's part of our problem. Right?

Because. We who understand Jesus. We who have claimed Jesus. We who are doing our best to follow Jesus the right way. The critical piece is. If we are the ones who fall into that cynicism.

If we are the ones who reflect that anxiety. If we are the ones who keep putting those sorts of things out in the world. In addition to the rest of the world. Well. If we're not going to be different.

[ 55 : 51 ]    Than the rest of the world. Why are we surprised. That our world is how it is. Hear that again.

If we. Who know who Jesus is. We who have experienced. Who Jesus is. We who know what Jesus is about. If we're not going to be different than everybody else.

Why are we surprised. That the world looks the way it does. Because we heard the John description.

Take care of the afflicted. Release the oppressed. That your presence should feel like rain on newly mown field.

That the world should be better. Because we were there. It shouldn't feel the same. Who do we believe the difference makers are?

[ 56 : 54 ] Because the people who don't believe. The people who don't understand. Don't at least have the framework. We not only have the framework. We know the truth.

Why do we know the truth? Because we know what it feels like. To have been loved this way. We understand that. And because we know that.

Because we've had that. Will we just hoard it. And hold it this way. That sounds like exactly what we were saying. Is the problem. That we have to put that back into the world.

That we have to be the difference makers. Because that's how the world has changed. You see friends. When we think about how this works.

Right. On this day especially. When we look to leaders who are difference makers. Well let's talk about that great American hero. Martin Luther King. Most of us have these images of him.

[ 58 : 04 ] That are not false. I mean they're true things. The challenge is that we've kind of frozen. Martin Luther King in moments in time. Of course the most powerful one. Of being him giving the I have a dream speech.

In 1963. That was a transformative moment. In American history. We were captivated by it. He cast a vision. That inspired millions.

And still does. Sometimes we freeze him. Writing the letter in the Birmingham jail. Talking about the urgency of now. Why we can't wait for justice.

And he's speaking these things. Justice for the afflicted. Justice for the oppressed. He's talking about this. What most of us forget.

As I said. We talk about those two obvious moments. We see him linked in arms. Or holding hands. Walking across the Selma Bridge. But in 1968. Before he was shot.

[ 59 : 01 ] Remember 1963. 1968. 1968. In 1968. Before he was shot. Martin Luther King was one of the most hated men in America. That was a poll.

People took that poll. He was one of the most hated people in America. Why was he one of the most hated people in America? It's because people on both sides of the issues he was caring about were mad at him.

Now if you were a racist. If you were a person who still wanted to believe in segregation. That's a de facto you're not going to like the guy. But he was also speaking against some of the things happening in society.

He talked about the Vietnam War. He talked about poverty. He talked about the need for real economic transformation. And there were people who even liked him when he was on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

That didn't like him when he was saying those things. Then there were those. Who said if we want to make this social change. If we want things to be better. Then you can't be walking across the street just holding hands with people.

[ 60 : 04 ] We need to be a little more bold. We need to be a little more physical. If you get what I'm saying. That this holding hands and talking about love is not going to make the changes we need.

And he was catching it from every end. But see that's the thing about real leadership. Because he held on to his principles even in the face of that.

He knew what he was about. And he kept doing what he knew needed to be done with integrity. And holding on to those principles of love and nonviolence. Even when everybody was pushing him from every angle.

That's the kind of leaders we're talking about. Those are the kind of leaders we're hoping for. But they are rare.

They are rare. Now few leaders will qualify in Martin Luther King status. So let's be a little more realistic about that. But we can all be people of Jesus.

[ 61 : 09 ] We can all lead from principle of love. We can all work for the real beloved community. We can all love our neighbors in the way our king said do.

In whatever way he calls us to do that. Because when you hear the title of this message. These lives are precious.

These lives are precious. Sometimes we hear that title. And we may have locked it in on thinking. Well God's talking about me. That's true. You are precious to God.

We spent a whole lot of the sermon talking about that. But the problem that some of us forget. Is while that's true. Don't forget the other part.

So is everybody else. So is everybody else. Every single child of God.

[ 62 : 15 ] Sits right here. Every single child of God. Is loved with that same tenderness.

Is loved with that same focus. Is loved with the same energy. The blood of the cross is no less for anybody else than it was for you.

And our call then. Is to make sure that we live up to that. That we be the people of God. Who help this world.

Not fall into those traps of cynicism. Not fall into that calloused. Self-centered place. But that we live love. The way we have known love.

That. Is how the world has changed. That. Is the vision. That Jesus has. We can be that dream. We are in fact called.

[ 63 : 17 ] To be that dream. May it be so. Amen. Loving and gracious God. Thank you for the call. And the challenge that it is.

Thank you for showing us. In so many ways. Over so many of our days. How precious our lives truly are. Thank you for showing us. That there are those who live that way.

Who love that way. And who lead that way. Let us celebrate the fact. That there are leaders like that among us. Let us listen for the truth of that voice.

Let us also remember that your voice stirring inside us. Calls us to be that leader. In the ways in which you call us to be. We may not transform a nation.

But we may in fact transform the part of our world in which you have planted us. Because we lead with love. Because we lead with that kind of integrity. Because we work to build the beloved community that you have inspired.

[ 64 : 19 ] Lord God you are with us. And you have shown us the way. We have a king who does not lord over us simply in power. But one who gathers us.

Holds us. In love. Let us listen to his voice. Let us listen to his commands. And let us walk in his ways.

In his most holy name we pray. Amen. Amen. One of the ways in which Jesus showed us that love.

Was by giving us the gift that is the sacrament of communion. That all are welcome to participate in the sacrament. That you don't need to have been a member. You don't need to have been baptized.

All are welcome at Christ's table. Because it is Christ's table. Not our own. And Christ opens the table to all. Let's open our hearts and participate in this moment together.

[ 65 : 28 ] The Lord be with you. And also be with you. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. Give thanks to the Lord our God.

His right and good and joyful thing. Always and everywhere to give thanks to you. Almighty God the creator of heaven and earth. Before the mountains were brought forth and you formed the earth.

You from everlasting to everlasting are God. You created light out of darkness and brought forth life on earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity. Made covenant to be our sovereign God. And spoke to us through your prophets.

And so with all your people on earth. And all the company of heaven. We praise your name and join in their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord. God of power and might.

[ 66 : 26 ] 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. You have sent him to preach baptism to the poor. Baptism, I'm sorry, excuse me.

You set at liberty those who are oppressed. And to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church.

Delivered us from slavery to sin and death. And made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit. And on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread.

He gave thanks to you. He broke the bread. And gave it to his disciples. And said, take and eat. This is my body, which is given for you.

[ 67 : 27 ] Do this in remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup. He gave thanks to you. And he gave it to his disciples.

And he said, drink from this. All of you. This is my blood. Sign of the new covenant. Which is poured out for you and for many. For the forgiveness of sin.

Every time that you drink it. Do so 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 has risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on all gathered here. And on these gifts of bread and cup.

[ 68 : 23 ] Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ. That we may be for the world the body of Christ. Redeemed by his blood. By your spirit make us one with Christ. One with each other and one in ministry to all the world.

Until Christ comes in final victory. And we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your son Jesus Christ. With the Holy Spirit in your holy church. All honor and glory is yours.

Almighty God. Now and forever. And now with the confidence of redeemed children of God. Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. 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.

[ 69 : 23 ] And the power. And the glory forever and ever. Amen. With those who are serving today please come forward.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

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

[ 71 : 52 ] We ask you to use the center aisle, come to the front. A server will hand you a piece of bread. You then move to the cup, dip that bread in the cup, and receive both elements together. Then you exit by the sides.

We also have a prayer station over here if you'd like to offer a prayer, or you can return to your seat. Know that there is gluten-free station, which will be on this side of the sanctuary, if that is your need or your preference.

You can also receive prepackaged elements if that is your preference as well. As we've said, the table is open. This is a matter of God's grace, not our personal worth. So we invite you to come as the Spirit beckons.

Let us receive God's free gift. God's grace.

Friends, God's grace. We'll should be over this. We'll call you from front of the villa. Let us receive God's grace or closed. Let us receive God's grace from heaven.

[ 73 : 07 ] Amen. Thank you so much for me to give your special Goes-für-cida pulled bar. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 75 : 40 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 78 : 10 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 80 : 40 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 83 : 10 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.