

# November 29, 2015

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Date: 29 November 2015

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[ 0 : 00 ]     Good morning. This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Any kids want to sing, they're welcome to come on down.

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

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

Hi, welcome to our church. I'm Mike Maciejewski. And I'm Julie. Please fill out your friendship card to get on the mailing list, to sign up for any activities, any prayers or concerns, and any notes you want to send to the staff.

And if you're new to our church, please be sure and pick up a gift that we have for you in the back of the church at the Connection site after worship. Thank you for coming today, and welcome to Pendleton Center Church.

[ 1 : 23 ]     And we are glad to have you here at church today. I want to mention a couple quick things. Today, hanging of the greens. We're going to decorate the church. We're going to have potluck dinners to bring a dish to pass, some things for the kids.

I even think Santa might be coming. Anyway, so that's going to be starting at 4.30 after the game, after the game. So come on and celebrate the victory here at Pendleton Church.

By the way, our ministry opportunity going around the sanctuary is for cookies. We need cookies for plays, cookies for cantatas, cookies for cookies, just because it's that time of year. So if you can bring some cookies, that would be well appreciated.

In fact, if you'd like to help out up at the Niagara Falls base, my wife has taken cookies and treats and things like that once a month when all the soldiers come in from around the state.

And they'll be in this weekend, so you could get those to her. Don't tell her I told you that, but you know, you could do that if you'd like. We do have some wonderful activities going on this time of year. Take a look in your little good news to see all the great things that are happening in our church.

[ 2 : 23 ]     Let's turn to the Lord in prayer, shall we? Dear God in heaven, there are many wonderful things in our lives, and yet you are the best. And we've come here, Lord, to be with you, to worship you, to experience you.

So take away all the distractions, all the thoughts of everything else we have going on, and fill us up with you, Lord, that we might experience the living God in this place. For it's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. And it is the beginning of the Advent season, so as we light our Advent candle this morning, hear these words from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 3, verses 3 through 16. John the Baptist went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, a voice of one calling in the wilderness, Prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked road shall become straight, the rough way smooth, and all people will see God's salvation. Judd said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?

[ 3 : 33 ] Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

What should we do then? the crowd asked. John answered, Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same. The people were waiting expectantly, and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.

John answered them all, I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I will come. The straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen. para cured e fimpere you with mercy.

Thank you, Lord. Amen.■■■■■, be here to God. Receptions, Damen la, be here to God.

[ 4 : 52 ] Be on Seymour. King of kings is drawing near, the Savior of the world is He.

Fling by the portals of your heart, make His on temples set apart.

For earthly years, for heavens and Lord, adored with grace and love and joy.

Redeemer, come with us and back our hearts to be Lord and wide.

Let us, my ears, the presence feel, Thy grace and love will not be made.

[ 5 : 50 ] Thy Holy Spirit, lead us on, O dear, our glorious call is called. Eternal praise, eternal faith, beyond them, Savior, to my name.

The Lord be with you. Take a moment, if you will, and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Spirit. I'd like to invite the kids to come up now if they'd like to.

Any kids want to come on up? I brought a fan because sometimes it gets a little hot in here.

But it doesn't work. I've been doing this and it doesn't work. It doesn't go round. I think it's broken. If I plugged it in, that would help?

Alright. Let's try. I've got to plug right here. Nope.

[ 7 : 03 ] Still broken. I have to turn it on. Oh. Sweet. That feels good.

Now it works, right? You know, that's just like things about God. We can go to church and we can do God's stuff. But we need to do more than that.

We actually need to turn on our faith by asking God to be in our hearts. Okay? When we turn on our faith and ask God to be in our hearts, all of a sudden, it's like a cool breeze comes into our lives.

Okay? So you want to do that because that's an important thing to do. That's what makes our faith go. What are you guys thankful for this morning? Anything you want to share? Raise your hand. Eric?

Family and Friends. Family and Friends.

[ 8 : 13 ] Family and Friends. Dad. My family.

Okay. Okay. Santa Claus. Okay. Lord, we are thankful for many, many good things in our lives.

Our families, our friends, Santa Claus, all the good things that happen in our lives. We're especially thankful for you. Always be with us. Bless us. Be in our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Okay. You guys can go out to church school. All the kids are welcome to go out to church school now. Amen. In your bulletins, you'll find a green card.

This is our opportunity that we do once a year. We encourage our congregation to make a commitment to God, a commitment with your prayers, with your presence, with your time, with your gifts, all the things that we need to examine.

[ 9 : 26 ] It's an opportunity for you to look at your life and decide what you want to do. If you'd like to present that to God in the offering, you put that into the offering plates today, or you can take it home and think about it.

It's important that at least once a year we consider these things, and the church helps us provide us an opportunity to do so, to make a commitment to God, because God has given to us so many great things.

We need to come to God and return what God has blessed us with. So this morning, as you make your commitments, we also return our thanksgiving with our morning tithes and our offerings.

We'll see you next time.

God bless you.

[ 10 : 59 ] God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 13 : 25 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

and we wait and we prepare for the Lord, for Jesus coming. And I know that you bring that joy and all of the joys that are in your hearts of all the blessings God has given.

You bring those, and we're going to take those before the Lord and give thanks to the Lord. We also have our concerns. I have one concern on our list this week.

[ 15 : 17 ] Irene Tate is going to be having surgery on December 16th, so we want to keep her in our prayers. But I know that each and every one in this room also has things in our hearts that we want to lift up to the Lord.

And so let's turn to the Lord who hears and answers our prayers. Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you so grateful.

So grateful that you are a God who is not afar off, watching us from beyond, as some people think.

You are not a distant God. You are a God who wants to be deeply and intimately related to us.

You come into this world and you touch our lives in all kinds of ways. We know that we can come to you.

[ 16 : 32 ] We are grateful. We are blessed. We are thankful for all of the joys that you have poured into our lives. The people and the circumstances that draw us closer to you, knowing that we are held in the palm of your hand.

God, you are so grateful. We are grateful that you are with us in times of joy and in times of trouble.

We lift up before you now all of those folks who are sick and infirm, whether it be ourselves or our families, our friends, neighbors.

We just pray that you would touch each and every one with the healing power that comes from your Holy Spirit.

We pray that they be made whole, each and every one, from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet, in their spirits, their souls and their bodies.

[ 17 : 50 ] God, we pray for those who are grieving losses of all kinds this day. This is such a difficult time of year. We pray for those who are grieving losses, the joy of entering into making all the preparations, beautiful, joyous holidays, but balanced out with sorrows, balanced out with grief.

We pray in Jesus' name that you would be a comfort to each and every one who is in need.

We pray, Lord, that each of us can be a voice of comfort, a touch of comfort, a look, a word of comfort to those who are in need.

transform us, Lord God, as we hear your word. Transform us as we sing and worship. Transform us as we pray.

Draw us close to you. Not just for ourselves. Not so that we can spend your blessings on ourselves.

[ 19 : 23 ] But so that we can be a blessing for others. So that we can share with others what Advent means.

Your joy and your grace and your mercy and your love and your peace coming into this world. Teach us to bring that to those who are in need.

to those who don't even know that they are waiting for Jesus as they wait. Bless Pastor Tom's message, Lord God.

Anoint him to deliver it by the power of your Holy Spirit that it touches hearts and lives and brings us to a place where we are new in you.

Bless all of our worship, Lord. Make it be a blessing to you.

[ 20 : 27 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Mount R■ in Advent Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning. The scripture this morning is Matthew 25, verses 1 through 13.

At that time, the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil and jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight, the cry rang out, here's the bridegroom, come out to meet him. Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, give us some of your oil, our lamps are going out.

[ 21 : 51 ] No, they replied, there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves. But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived.

The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet and the door was shut. Later, the others also came. Sir, sir, they said, open the door for us. But he replied, I tell you the truth, I don't know you.

Therefore, keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Amy.

We call this Advent season. This is the time of year when we're supposed to prepare for God's coming. John the Baptist, as we heard right in the beginning of the service, said, A voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.

Make the mountains low. Make the valleys high. Make the crooked roads straight. Like making a superhighway. Because the Bible says that that's what's going to happen.

[ 22 : 59 ] That at some point, God is going to start over. Some people think that when they die, they become some sort of spirit. Then God has us rest until the day when we all are going to live. With real bodies, not these things, because these things are kind of crummy.

We're going to get better ones. And even if it doesn't happen that way for us in our lifetime, we will meet our maker.

We all know that. And that could happen at any time. Are we ready? In the second verse of this parable, it says that there were five wise virgins and five foolish ones.

Typically, in the Bible, when they use the word wisdom, the Greek word is Sophia. Because, by the way, ladies, wisdom is a female trait, just in case you were wondering.

But in this particular case, it's not that word. It's actually a word more like, are you ready? Are you prepared? Have you done the work that needs to be done?

[ 24 : 01 ] Like being a boy scout. There were ten virgins. They all had lamps. They all had lamps. But five of them didn't have oil.

They all anticipated a wedding. The implication is, is that the wedding's going to happen that day. It's like you were told to be here for a church wedding and come at eight o'clock in the morning.

Be ready. Be prepared. They all fell asleep, waiting for the time. Because it took a lot longer than they expected. Can you imagine if you came at eight in the morning, and now it's noon.

And then it's two in the afternoon, and then it's six o'clock. It's now eight o'clock. You've been here for 12 hours waiting for this wedding, and it hasn't happened. What would you be like? You might do more than fall asleep.

Didn't come until midnight, the middle of the night when they didn't expect it. So they all lit up their lamps. The ones who had oil in their lamps, their lamps lit up and stayed lit.

[ 25 : 03 ] But the ones who didn't have oil, I suspect they lit up. Like if you were to light the wick on a lamp, and that was all. If you've ever done that, it does burn. But it burns quickly and flames out.

They turned to the ones with the oil, and they said, Give us some of your oil. And they said, We can't. We don't know if we'll have enough. After all, we had to wait all day here.

Maybe this is going to be a while. They just said he's coming. But they said that 16 hours ago. So they went out looking for oil, and they missed the moment.

They came to the party late, and they knocked on the door and said, Lord, Lord, let us in. And he said, I don't know you. I don't like this story.

It seems so unfair, doesn't it? Greedy virgins that won't share their oil with the other ones. A guy who's at the party and says, You're late, so you can't come in.

[ 26 : 03 ] Keep that in mind when you're late for a party next time. It would be interesting. People would be on time a little bit. People who seemed to do what they were supposed to do in so many ways. They were dressed.

They were ready. They were looking forward to it. They planned for it. They even brought their lambs. But it wasn't enough. When I was a teenager, I played football.

Now, when I was in ninth grade, I stood about one inch shorter than I am now. I went about 170 pounds. Now, that doesn't sound like much, but for a guy in ninth grade, I was huge.

Because most of the guys in ninth grade were about this big. So, you know where they put me on the football team? I was an offensive and defensive tackle. Because I was the big man.

These little guys would come up to play football against me, and I'd just throw them like ragdolls wherever I wanted to. The next year, I noticed I didn't start quite as much, because everybody grows a lot from ninth grade to tenth grade.

[ 27 : 09 ] And by the time I got to eleventh grade, they were like this big, hulking big guys with beards and stuff coming at me and tossing me around like I wasn't even there.

By the time I got to my senior year, I went into the coach, and I said, Coach, I noticed I really didn't play last year. Am I going to be playing this year? And he said, Probably not.

I said, Well, I'm quitting. I'm going to get a job, make some money. Better than wasting my time doing this. I was on the football team, but I didn't play football, and the reason was I was out of position.

I didn't realize it at the time, because I didn't know enough about it, but I felt like a linebacker. I got legs close to the ground. I got a big body, and I had a lot of upper body strength.

Man, those guys coming through the line, I would have tore them apart. But the problem is, I was in the wrong place. I was in the wrong place trying to do the wrong thing and accomplishing nothing.

[ 28 : 15 ] Now, we have ten virgins. Some of them are accepted in the party, and some are not.

They all had lamps. And the lamps in the story really represent religion, represent our organized faith. And they all had it.

They all had religion. But some, it was empty. John the Baptist says, repent. The kingdom of God is at hand.

They said, well, what should we do? What should we do? What do we need to do to inherit eternal life? We've been talking about that for three, four weeks. This is kind of a pivot sermon.

We're going to move on to, are you ready? Kingdom of God. Kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? It's just what it sounds like.

[ 29 : 13 ] It's a lot simpler than people think. The kingdom of God is where God is king. Where God's in charge. Where God decides what should be. How much of your life is under the control of God?

How much have you given to God? We've got a lot of people that see religion as part of their faith. Some people think that it's about those life events that we need to go through.

They come to church when they're hatched, matched, and dispatched. But God wants more than a piece of our lives. We sometimes see our faith as one section of a pie.

We've got this piece, and then we've got our work piece, and then we've got our play piece, and our family piece. We've got all these different pieces, and God is a part of it. And we give God that time. We give God that space in our lives.

But God wants more than that. God wants all our lives. And if we don't give them all our lives, we're playing out of position.

[ 30 : 20 ] Back in the times of Jesus, there was a group of people called the Pharisees. You can read about them in the Bible. And the Pharisees, these were people we'd call good people. They knew all the rules that God had set out in the book.

And they read them, and they followed them. These people were probably ethically better than most all of us. They did things the right way. They were good in terms of the way we see it.

They practiced their faith. They went to church. Back then it was called the temple or the synagogue. And they went regularly every week. They followed what God said.

And yet Jesus came and said to them, you make your followers twice as fit for hell as you are yourself. You're playing for the wrong team. You're so out of position, you've got it all wrong.

Because you are only seeing a piece of God. And only giving God a piece of your life. Churches are designed around the people's idea of God.

[ 31 : 27 ] I don't know if you've ever noticed, but most churches have really high ceilings. Have you ever wondered about that? We just like, you know, don't care about the price of gas and heating places and such.

Why do we have these high ceilings? High ceilings really have a purpose for our faith. When we walk into a sanctuary, we're supposed to go, wow, God is huge. See, that's what it's supposed to do.

That's why churches have high ceilings. That's why churches have this feel of being impressive. To remind us of God the Father who created all of heaven and earth.

Who is all powerful and holds the world in his hand. And you know what? Most of us can get our heads around that part of God. A lot of churches have a cross in them.

Because they want you to remember what Jesus did. And how Jesus died so that your sins could be forgiven. And they talk a lot about the forgiveness of God and our need to accept God's forgiveness.

[ 32 : 26 ] And that's important too. But there's a third part of God that we struggle with. We call him the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit wants to actually change our lives.

Wants to actually whisper in our heart and cause us to do things that would make us feel like we're not in control anymore. And that makes us scared. Because if there's one thing that we like as people, particularly Americans, we like to be in control.

So we tend to try and keep that part of God a little on the outside. In the book of Acts, Jesus said to his disciples, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

You'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth. What has caused people to transform their lives and go to the ends of the earth for God? It's not because they think God is big and great.

But honestly, it's not even because they feel their sins have been forgiven. It's because they've received the power of God that changes us, transforms us. Makes us into something different.

[ 33 : 37 ] Last week I introduced to you something called the Advent Conspiracy. What they say is we need to worship fully, spend less on gifts, give more to those people in need, and love everyone.

How do you worship fully? Is it by being able to stand up at the right time and sit down when you're supposed to? Or maybe you can sing on key as compared to off key?

Or maybe you know how to clap the right way? Or maybe you're dressed right or you're sitting in the right spot. What is it that causes us to fully worship God?

It's to open our hearts up and let God be our worship. And the odd part is, is in our world, because we have so much control, we resist that.

In other parts of the world, it's just like God do His thing. And suddenly there was with the angel of multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God in the highest.

[ 35 : 03 ] And He is for the Lord. Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God, glory to God in the highest.

And He is for the Lord. And He is for the Lord. And He is for the Lord.

And He is for the Lord. And He is for the Lord. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 37 : 25 ] Thank you. Do we have lamps that are full of the power of God? Like the virgins who had oil in their lamps, or do we have empty lamps that have no power at all?

Well, Romans chapter 8 says to us, those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God, they're God's people.

You see, the goal of religion is to control. To control people, to control movement, to control actions, to control ourselves.

In fact, in some ways it's to control God. The power of the Holy Spirit is to give control to God. To give control of God and fully worship, which is not about coming to hear an interesting sermon, which I know you get every week.

But it's to come and be touched by the living God. To have God in our hearts and in our lives and experience who and what He is, that's true worship.

[ 38 : 31 ] John talked about it in his gospel when he said, God is spirit. His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. It's not just about the knowledge, the truth of God, but it's also about the power of God.

Without it, we only have religion. Years ago when I was a young pastor, I had a person in our congregation, not here, a different church, you wouldn't know her.

And she was hurtful and mean and spiteful and nasty to people. She had all the appearances of a godly person, could quote the Bible inside and out, tried to live by the principles of it.

But most of the time, there seemed to be a twist to it where she was turning things around so that she could be in control and so she could hurt other people. I went to an old pastor who was a friend of mine and I said, I don't know what to do about this.

He said, well you need to pray for her that she'll get the love of Jesus in her heart. I said, how can you say that? How can you make that statement about somebody that they don't have the love of Jesus in their heart? He said, just look at what she does.

[ 39 : 45 ] How can somebody with God in them do that? We can have religion but not have God. We can even be followers of God but not be known by God.

The five virgins who didn't have oil in their lamps are the ones who had religion, the lamp, but didn't have the Holy Spirit, the oil.

Now today we'd have 15 virgins in our story because we'd like to have more but also because there's a different way we look at it now. We have a whole lot of people that say they're spiritual but they don't have any religion.



I want you to picture that. There are people who have the oil with no lamp. That's just a mess. At best it's a quick flame and it's gone.

It's all about the excitement but it's nothing to do with what we're supposed to be about. I could say I was on the football team but I didn't play football. What's the point of that?

[ 40 : 59 ] Religion, as I've said before, is the manger. That holds the Christ child. We're not worshipping. It's not more important than God. But without it the baby's flopping around in the mud.

God has given us religion to hold the vessel of our faith and to target it and to direct it in ways in which we can do so much more together we couldn't do separately.

Oil without a lamp has no purpose. Nothing to hold it together. Nothing to do. Paul says in Romans, I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship. Another piece of worship is to offer ourselves who and what we are to give of ourselves. Religion shouldn't be a harsh taskmaster but it also shouldn't be non-existent because eventually our faith falls apart if we even have faith to begin with.

People come to church. And we're all different when we come to church. We have different ways in which we approach our faith and express our faith.

[ 42 : 18 ] I read a story about a man who went into a church and he was watching the people pray and he noticed that next to each one of them he saw a vision of a little white bird.

He said some of them were real ugly. Some were beautiful. Some would just flap around the room in every which direction seemingly having no pattern just going here, there and everywhere else.

They were the people distracted and unable to keep their prayer focused on God. He said others looked like they were actually wrapped up in something. They couldn't hardly move. Bound by the cares and the worries of the world.

They couldn't even get off in flight at all. Some had broken wings. And they would try to fly but they couldn't get very far because they just didn't have a life filled with the healing power of God.

They were trying their best but they needed God to make it work. Then there were these ones he said that were beautiful. Absolutely gorgeous. The most perfect birds you'd ever seen.

[ 43 : 36 ] But they didn't move at all. They were the ones who had religion but had no faith. But he did notice some of the birds.

They weren't the prettiest ones usually. They weren't always the strongest looking ones. They struggled sometimes but little by little they would make their way up and out the roof and off to God.

What are we? If we were to look at our lives as prayer birds what would our birds look like? John in chapter 3 says to us I tell you the truth no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they're born by water and the spirit.

We need we need the church. We need the faith community to hold us together to keep us to our faith commitment. We need the church to give us a place to fulfill our purpose.

We need the church so we can learn about God. We need the church to carry our faith on to our children. We need the church. We need to be baptized by the water into the community of faith. But we need the fire of the Holy Spirit to power our lives.

[ 44 : 45 ] Worshipping fully is remembering whose we are and coming to God for God to do in us what only God can do. The problem with religion without the Holy Spirit is it's hurtful.

It's based on guilt and shame and rules. It's often boring. And it feels like somehow it's designed to constrict us.

And the problem with spirituality without religion is it has nothing to hold it together. It has no purpose. It goes nowhere. Are you ready?

John the Baptist said the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Are you ready? He said that we need to repent which means to turn in a different direction.

Go a different way. If the way we're going is not leading to what we need then we're going the wrong way. We need to turn it around. We need to change who and what we are. There's another character in this story and it's the one who says that the bridegroom is coming.

[ 45 : 54 ] It's not the bridegroom. It's somebody who announces it. Maybe it was an angel. Maybe it was a pastor. I've often thought about what's my role.

You know when I became a pastor at a fairly young age I had to decide which direction I would go in. What church would I belong to? What would be my primary focus of ministry?

I knew one thing I wanted to do is I wanted to reach people who didn't know about Jesus. I wanted to tell them about God and I wanted to tell them about what God could do in their lives. But the problem is when you become a pastor you talk to a bunch of people that already are Christians.

You spend most of your time talking to a whole room full of people who have already heard about Jesus. And so while I know from time to time I have the opportunity to speak to someone who's never heard about the gospel I realize that God had something else in mind for me.

And that was to preach to the Christians who are playing out of position. Because what I discovered is somehow in our churches particularly the United Methodist Church and churches like it we manage to get a whole lot of people who are religious.

[ 47 : 02 ] They came to church. They read the Bible. They tried to do their best. They even helped at fish fries and chicken barbecues and things like that. They knew about God.

But they didn't know God. They had never experienced the power the wonder the love of God in their hearts.

So that's why I preach about it because that's how I grew up. I knew about God. I actually had to go someplace else outside my church for somebody to tell me who God was and to introduce me.

There's only one sin in the Bible that's unforgivable. Anybody remember what it was? I talked about it a couple weeks ago. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit which means that you refuse to allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life.

You turn your back on the Holy Spirit and won't let God work. Why do we do that? Because we don't want to give up control. Because we want to be able to direct our lives and cause it to go where we think it ought to go because we believe we are smarter than God.

[ 48 : 18 ] and we know more than God about what our lives should be. God is gracious. He waited until the midnight hour. He'll wait until the very last moment with the hope that people will turn to Him.

He's been giving us time so that we have more and more opportunities. Some Christians say, wouldn't it be great if Jesus came back right away? I say, yeah, it'd be great but maybe he could wait just a few more months, a year.

I've got some people I want to talk to first because for some it's going to be too late. That worries me.

Are you ready today? Last night I was listening to music. Fly me to the moon and let me dance among the stars. Let me know what life is like on Jupiter or mine.

old songs. You know what I'm talking about? Old songs. And I'm sitting there listening to them and my wife said, why are you listening to that old music? I said, because when I listen to that old music everything seems to be okay.

[ 49 : 29 ] It transports me back to a time when I didn't have to worry about life. Mommy and daddy took care of that stuff. It wasn't my problem. Life was okay.

I just had to worry about my toys and a couple friendships and things like that but otherwise life was pretty easy and pretty good and I liked that. I kept listening to this music and it was time to go to bed so I turned the music off and my wife said, why'd you turn the music off?

Have you ever noticed how kids worship? You know, anybody here ever been here for vacation Bible school? What we do is we take all the pews out because pews make it hard to move and we fill this place up with about 300 kids and when they're singing to God they're jumping, they're dancing, they're shouting and they're loving God.

It's amazing how good we've become at losing what matters the most. We become adults and so we're too sophisticated for that.

We can't let go. We can't worship fully. We can't let God run our lives. There are many things that can hold you in life but I'm going to tell you Satan's greatest, greatest deception is that he takes people who should be following God and he causes them to follow religion instead and draws them away from heaven.

[ 51 : 02 ] Are you ready? Are you watching? Would God know you? Now this is the point where I'm supposed to tell a touching little story that pull at your heartstrings and cause you to feel just this amazing because see then I can manipulate you into thinking almost anything.

I know I never do that but you know that's what I'm supposed to do right now but if I were to do that the problem is I wouldn't be introducing you to the Holy Spirit of God. I'd be introducing you to an emotional feeling with Pastor Todd and you'd talk about it later today but I don't know if it would change you on that last day.

So I'll just tell you about a teenage boy who from time to time would have a girlfriend he'd break up with and his friends would ditch him and he felt alone but whenever he was alone in his bedroom he knew that he wasn't alone because God was with him.

God carried him through those empty moments and those lonely times. I'll tell you about a young fellow who was convinced he was going to marry a young lady.

They were going to get married and have a life together. They fit right together. They even went to church together and God told him not to marry her and he listened. Broke his heart but God gave him someone better who he's married to now because God knew better.

[ 52 : 32 ] I can tell you about a young man who would sometimes find himself waking up leaning against a car tire after drinking all night not knowing how he got there.

Drove the car to wherever because the power of that desire to get high and forget about life and forget about the world had taken hold of him like a demon.

How God gave him the power to break free of that. Or about a young man who thought he was on a career path headed for where everybody says you're supposed to be.

Success and promotions and having the whole world admire you. God sent him on a different path that gave him satisfaction not just for his life but for his soul and everything else.

I could just talk about the other day I was with a friend of mine she has cancer. That's a struggle that's just horrendous rips out your life.

[ 53 : 41 ] And we were talking about something I don't know what and somehow we came to the point where she said well I got up another day that's the whole point isn't it?

And I wanted to but I didn't because she's a good woman of faith and I know where her heart is and it wouldn't have been right to say to somebody who was feeling the victory of one more day of health as somebody facing cancer but I wanted to say no, no you know it's not.

You know it's not. The point is not getting up another day in this world but to rise up every day in the next world. And we do that by having the power of the Holy Spirit so I could tell you about all those things but I won't.

I'll just tell you that we all need Jesus. We all need God. We all need the Holy Spirit to transform our lives and to make us into what God designed us to be.

Every day every hour every opportunity we need to turn to God. Lord, I come Lord, I need you.

[ 55 : 11 ] I find my rest without you I fall apart You're the one You're the one that guides my heart Lord, I need you Oh, I need you Every hour I need you My one I want dear friends My righteousness Oh, God how I need you Where sin runs deep Your grace is born The grace is found It's where you are

Where you are Where you are Lord, I am free Holiness Is Christ in me Lord, I need you Oh, I need you Every hour Every hour I need you Every hour I need you My one dear friends My righteousness My righteousness Oh, God how I need you So teach my song to rise to you When temptation comes my way When I cannot stand I'll fall on you Jesus You're my hope And save Yeah

Lord, I need you Oh, I need you Every hour I need you My one dear friends My one dear friends My righteousness Oh, God how I need you My one dear friends My righteousness Oh, God how I need you Now I need you guitar solo

You are forever God of the ages God before time We are the labor You are eternal Love everlasting Reigning on high Holy, holy Lord God almighty Worthy is the Lamb Who would slain Highest praises Honor and glory Be unto your name

Be unto your name We are the broken You are the healer Jesus, redeemer Mighty, dear saint You are the love song We will sing We'll sing forever We'll sing forever Bowing before you Blessing your name Holy, holy Lord God Almighty Worthy in the Lamb who was saved Highest praise with honor and glory

[ 60 : 28 ] Be unto your name Be unto your name I long for your embrace Every single day You'll need to release your name Sing your name to praise Please show me Reveal yourself to me Because of your mercy I fall down on my knees

And I can feel your presence To your pain Suddenly I'm lost in your beauty God, I feel the wonder Of your plans Here in this moment I surrender to your Lord I am found on my Lord You call me And I know you let me know You are holy You are holy I fall down on my knees And I can feel your presence And I can feel your presence In the way And I know you let me know And I know you let me know I know you let me know

I know you let me know I know you let me know I know you let me know I know you let me know I am I know you let me know You let me know Finally I'm lost in your beauty God, I'm in the wonder of your touch Here in this moment I surrender to your love.

Please be seated. Jesus can forgive every sin you've ever made.

Jesus can take it away, and Jesus can remove it from your life forever. God the Father can create an entirely new world with no brokenness or pain that we look forward to coming to.

[ 63 : 57 ] But God wants to dwell in our hearts too. And it's not just about having our sins forgiven. It's not just about having something taken from us. It's about God pouring something into us as well.

Filling us up with his power and his wonder. So let's turn that all over to God, shall we?  
Dear God in heaven, I have sinned.

I've done things wrong. I've not lived the way I should. You know what I've done. You know what I've done.

So listen as I confess. From my heart to yours. And now, dear God, pour the Holy Spirit into the hearts of everyone gathered here.

Pour it down into the emptiness, Lord, where you've taken out all our brokenness. Pour it into the lives that used to have sin and now need you. Touch us, move us, fill us, bless us to live into this life and into the next.

[ 65 : 19 ] Where it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Jesus said, if we confess our sin and believe in our hearts, he will forgive us.

And we will not only find that forgiveness, but if we let him, God will pour himself into our hearts and into our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Glory to God. Amen. Here, O my God, I see thee face to face.

Here, O my God, I see thee face to the rest of me. Here, O my God, I see thee face to face to face to face to face to face. And all my feariness of my belief.

This is the hour of banquet and of song. This is the heavenly table spread for me.

[ 66 : 56 ] Here let me stand, each being still alive. Oh, Lord, I hope that you're sharing with me.

God invites us to this table. Everyone is welcome. Will you surrender this morning?

Will you surrender? Let God come in. Let God come into the places that we have trouble letting God into.

Let the Spirit fill us completely. Fill us to overflowing. That's what Jesus wanted for his disciples.

If we call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ, we come to this table expecting to receive, expecting God to work in us and change us.

[ 68 : 12 ] Amen? Everyone is welcome in the United Methodist Church. If you love God, earnestly repent of your sin and seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are welcome at this table this morning to receive all that God has for you.

Will you come this morning? Will you give your heart over to God and expect to receive?  
The Lord be with you.

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

You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.

You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets.

[ 69 : 28 ] And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son Jesus Christ, whom you sent in the fullness of time to be a light to the nations.

You scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts and have mercy on those who fear you from generation to generation. You put down the mighty from their thrones and exalt those of low degree.

You fill the hungry with good things. You fill the rich with good things. And the rich you send empty away. Your own son came among us as a servant to be Emmanuel, your presence with us.

He humbled himself in obedience to your will and freely accepted death on a cross. 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.

[ 70 : 50 ] And on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread and gave thanks to you. And he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples. And he said, take, eat.

This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup and he gave you thanks and praise, and he gave it to his disciples.

And he said, drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new covenant poured out for you, poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. 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.

[ 72 : 16 ] By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. Amen. Now shall we pray with the confidence of children of God.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen. 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.

[ 73 : 19 ] Amen. Will those serving please come forward? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The table of the Lord is where we come to meet with God himself, to take him into our lives, let him live with us.

Come and join us at the table, at the rail for prayers, for anointing, for healing, to light a candle. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord.

Come and join us with the Lord.

[ 76 : 23 ] Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord.

Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. How great is our God.

Sing with me. How great is our God. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord.

Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Lord. Come and join us with the Lord.

Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord.

[ 77 : 53 ] Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Come and join us with the Lord. Lord. Lord. God.

How great is our God. How great is our God. Come and join us with the Lord.

is our God. Name above all names, who will serve the all of praise.

And my heart will sing, how great is our God. How great is our God.

Sing with me, how great is our God. Oh, sing how great, how great is our God.

[ 79 : 12 ] How great, how great is our God. I know it doesn't come as a surprise to some of you that I'm out of control.

But I've been out of control for a long time. And the more and more I become out of control, the better off my life becomes. So long as I'm giving that control to God.

My life takes focus. My life takes purpose. It takes shape. It becomes real. And the promise of tomorrow becomes certain.

May God pour out his Holy Spirit on you today. May he bless you and fill you in such a way that you experience the wonder, the amazing touch of God himself. And may God go with you and carry you in this life and into the next.

May God bless you and Jesus be saved, ■■■ünite, allá either. You're six months. Do not forget it, but of course. Let me have a future time. Do not forget it. Give me that illustration when you're just and see the future.

[ 80 : 24 ] Have a wonderful Christmas. Great, see you soon. And on Sunday. Of course. aber Bundestag,