

How Do We Know We're Forgiven?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 May 2017

Preacher: Pastor Sherry Mahar

- [0 : 00] Good morning. 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. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- This is the day that the Lord has made.
- Hi, we're the Pendletones. First time visitors, please pick up your welcome bag at the connection site in the back of the sanctuary or at our welcome and information desk.
- Everyone, please write your name on our friendship card. Fill in your address to receive the newsletter or update your information. On the back, you can put prayer concerns, blessings, or notes to the staff and place in the offering plate.
- [1 : 26] Enjoy the service! Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Church this morning, just a couple of announcements. I just passed out a couple of clipboards. And so when you receive the clipboard, they go from the front to the back.
- So just pass them on back. The first one is for the Niagara Falls community dinner that we serve every Thursday night to the community. And we're bringing in all sorts of folks with that. It's a great ministry.
- And it's an opportunity for you to donate food and to offer some service in providing help with that meal. The other thing is for the chicken barbecue.
- The youth are putting on a chicken barbecue. And they are in need of some donations for that. And that supports the youth mission trip. I also want to know announcement wise that next weekend, next Saturday, there's going to be a hymn sing as the Saturday worship service.
- So if you really like the old hymns, come on out to that. And next Sunday is Music Appreciation Day. And so we'll be having all of our different choirs doing lots of extra music for our worship service.
- [2 : 29] So I just want to give you a heads up on that sort of thing. So welcome to our new hours. And these hours will be all the way through Labor Day, 9 and 1045. And I welcome you again to Pendleton Center United Methodist Church.
- Let's pray. Gracious and loving Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to gather together to praise your name. May everything we say and do be a blessing to you.
- And may we experience your peace and your presence as we draw closer to you. Fill us up, Lord, to overflowing that your grace may abound. In Jesus's name we pray.
- Amen. I'd like to invite you all to stand if you're able as we sing together Battle Hymn of the Republic. My eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.
- He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword.
- [3 : 43] His truth is marching on. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat. He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat.

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer him. Be jubilant, my feet. Our God is marching on. Glory, glory, hallelujah.

Glory, glory, hallelujah. Glory, glory, hallelujah. Glory, glory, hallelujah. Glory, glory, hallelujah.

Glory, glory, hallelujah. His truth is marching on.

[4 : 55] In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the sea. With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me.

As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free. While God is marching on.

Glory, glory, hallelujah. Glory, glory, hallelujah.

Glory, glory, hallelujah. His truth is marching on.

Amen. Please greet one another with the peace of the spirit. I'd like to invite any of the kids to come on up.

[6 : 08] Any kids want to come up? Come on, guys. Good morning. Good morning. This is a church.

This is, what is it? A bib. How many of you wear a bib? You used to. Why did you wear a bib? So you didn't know how to eat, and so it spilled everywhere.

It made lots of messes, and so you wore a bib to kind of keep yourself all clean, right? Do you ever make a mess now? Yeah? Even though you don't wear a bib?

What's up with that? Why don't you wear a bib all the time? Because we're not babies anymore. So after a while, we learn how to be not quite so messy, right?

And so what happens when we do make a mess then? We clean it up. So if our clothes get all dirty because we spilled something on ourselves, we wash our clothes, right?

[7 : 16] Yeah, the same thing happens with God. When we make a mess in our lives by doing something that we shouldn't, how many of us have ever done something we shouldn't? Yeah. And it's messy.

It's not a good thing. And that means that we need to get clean. And so you know what? We go to God and we say, will you wash me clean? And do you think God forgives us and does that for us?

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And so we start off with a bib that keeps us clean and then we move on from there and we learn more and more and more how to keep ourselves clean. But every time we make a mess, if we ask to be clean, God will do that for us.

Amen? Amen. So remember that. Would any of you like to share what you're thankful for this morning? My parents. My sister.

My dogs. Me. My mom and dad. Anyone else? No? Okay, let's pray. God, we thank you for your love and we thank you for forgiveness and we thank you for always being there to make us clean and caring about us and forgiving us in all things.

[8 : 34] We thank you for being made into your image as your children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. You guys can all go off to Sunday school.

Isn't it a blessing to have all of our children coming forward, being blessed and coming up in the Lord? You know, throughout the year, at different times of the year, we celebrate those people in various ways who defend our country, who maintain our freedom for us and the right that we have in this nation to gather together in assemblies of all kinds to worship God the way we prefer to worship God.

It is such a blessing. On Memorial Day, we remember those people in the Lord? We remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the preservation of our freedom.

On Memorial Day, we celebrate the lives and the sacrifice of those people and those families who have died, as the song said, to make us free and to preserve our freedom.

We are grateful for their sacrifice. And I'm just going to ask for us, as we are giving thanks for them and for what they have done for us, that we would just bow our heads for a moment and take a moment of silence to remember them.

[10 : 05] Lord, we are so grateful.

So grateful for the men and women who have sacrificed everything so that we can gather here freely and without fear before you today.

We ask that you would be with them, bless their families, and help us always to have great respect for the work that they have done and for what they have offered.

It is the same as your son offered us in his death for our sin. And we just ask in Jesus' name that they be blessed.

Amen. Amen. As we continue in our worship and our thanksgiving to God, let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings before him. Amen. Amen.

[11 : 44] Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Praise Him above the heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

[14 : 12] Amen. Amen. Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day. And that we have the freedom to gather together and worship you, that we may offer our gifts to you.

You have blessed us so abundantly. We just offer this token back for the work of your kingdom, Lord God.

We pray in Jesus' name, Lord God, that you would bless all the gifts that you have given us and teach us to offer them back to you in the measure that you have called us to return them to.

We ask, Lord God, that you would put it in our hearts to sacrifice for your kingdom the way that you have called us to.

That we would offer our lives that they may be used by you in the way you have ordained. In Jesus' name we pray.

[15 : 18] Amen. Amen. Please be seated. And as we enter into our time of prayer, I would ask that you would pray for the church this week.

Our annual conference is going to be meeting from Wednesday evening through Saturday, including things like ordaining new pastors, bringing them up to being elders, and commissioning people who are going into for elder orders or deacons' orders.

And we're going to be making a lot of decisions that impact our annual conference of the United Methodist Church this week. We covet your prayers that you would keep us lifted up so that we would do God's will, setting aside what we think maybe ought to happen for the good of the whole church as God sees the whole church should be run and ordered.

So please pray for us. All of your pastors are going, and we have a number of lay people who are going as well in various capacities. So we would ask that you pray for us while we're doing the work and the business of the church.

And along with that, we have Teresa Zimmerman, who's recovering from surgery. We want to keep her and her family in our prayers. Lori Gondek, who is experiencing some health concerns.

[16 : 40] Dick Anderson is improving. He's in rehab. Things are going along for him. Ron Marconi, who many of you know, he and his wife were here for many years as part of this church.

He suffered a heart attack this past week, and we want to keep him and Karen in our prayers. Ernie Rose had a stroke in his eye and has lost the sight in his one eye, and we're not sure exactly what's going to happen with that.

So if you pray for Ernie. And Lynn Elberson and her family, we want to keep them in our prayers as her brother has passed this recently. With these concerns and those that are on your hearts, you are welcome to join me in prayer from your seats or at the rail.

Please, let's turn to the Lord in prayer. Gracious Heavenly Father, You love us with an everlasting love, and You care for us, unlike anyone in our lives can care for us.

It is so great and so wonderful. We don't deserve any of it, Lord. And yet, You offer it to us. Your care, Your love, Your grace, Your mercy.

[18 : 08] We are grateful. We ask, Lord God, that You would move on behalf of those brothers and sisters we have in Christ who are sick and infirm, who are in need of a healing touch from You, and we ask that You would touch them and make them whole, as only You can do.

You know what they need in their spirits, in their souls, and in their bodies. We just ask that You would pour it out, Lord. Help them to be whole.

Lord, we pray for those who are grieving losses, and we just ask that You would touch them with compassion, envelop them with Your peace.

Make them well able, Lord God, to continue on in this life, knowing that they have the hope of salvation in Christ Jesus, knowing that You died for our sins, so that we can be with Him.

Give them hope, Lord God. Lord, we pray in Jesus' name also, that You would give us, each and every one of us, the ability to stand for what is right.

[19 : 33] That we would seek You with our whole hearts, and look to You for wisdom. Not to the things of this world, not to the things that the culture, the society would tell us are the right things to do, and the right ways to be.

not to a culture that would tell us that those things that are wrong are right, and expect us to believe it and live by it.

But Lord, we pray that You would teach us Your ways. That You would be our source of knowing what is true and what is right, what we are to believe.

Lord, guide us by Your Holy Spirit, knowing how we should be in this world. Help us to be a shining example of Your great love and glory.

Help us, Lord, as Your church, to be the witness for Christ that You have called us to be, wherever it is that we go.

[20 : 49] Lord, help us to open our hearts to You so that You can transform us. Lord, if there is anything in us that is not the way that You would have us to be, show it to us and transform us so that we can be more like Jesus.

That's our heart's desire, Lord. We hear it in Your Word. We sing it in songs of praise. Lord, if there is anything in your heart, we agree to it in prayer.

When we make our confession, when we speak forth what we believe in the creeds, when we call ourselves Christ followers, help us, Lord, to truly be that, not merely to claim it, but to actually live the life of faith that You have called us to.

Lord God, we pray that You would be with Pastor Sherry this morning as she delivers the message You have given her for us this day. Let it be a blessing to her, Lord God, and let it be a blessing to us.

And Lord, we pray that all of our worship would be a blessing to You this day. That is why we came. And we pray that we will go forth from this place made new in You and strong to stand for what You have called us to stand for.

[22 : 38] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we hear from the Word of the Lord? Good morning.

Our scripture reading this morning is from the book of Colossians, chapter 1, verses 19 through 23. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Christ and through Him to reconcile Himself all things.

Whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight without blemish and free from accusation. If you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.

This is the gospel that you heard, and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. This is the word of the Lord.

[24 : 09] So, we have peanuts here. Christ is the answer. What's the question? As Christians, Christ is the answer.

And we're in the middle of this sermon series about questions. If you could ask God one question, what would it be? And we collected a bunch of these questions, and the one that I'll be addressing today that came up quite frequently was, how do I know if I'm forgiven?

Or how do I know that I'm saved? How do I know? And on the one hand, the answer is really quite simple, almost so simple that people don't really accept it.

And yet, at the same time, it's huge. It's all of eternity. It's all of Scripture. Everything in Scripture points to it. So, you know, you start Googling, what does Scripture say about salvation?

And where do you even start? I mean, it's just, that's what it's about. And so, when I'm trying to figure out how to do this, I thought I'd start at the beginning, at the very, very beginning.

[25 : 23] God created humanity in God's image. And we were in relationship with God. And then with sin, when sin entered in, we became alienated.

Just as it's said in the Scripture, we became alienated from God as our sin turned our back on God and we went in the opposite direction. And there was a separation, a big chasm in between us and God.

And God longed for us to be in relationship, but that sin kept us, by our choosing to be turned away, kept us apart. It says in the Scripture today, once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior, that's what sin does.

Sin makes us an enemy in our minds. It changes our hearts in evil ways so that we are no longer in relationship with God. We're supposed to be talking about an Old Testament character.

And for this week, I thought we'd talk about King Manasseh. King Manasseh was the son of King Hezekiah. When we did the kings with the youth, the way it would work is we'd have good king, bad king, good king, bad king.

[26 : 38] And every time there was a good king, all of Israel would be good. Then all of a sudden we'd have a bad king and all of Israel would be bad. And the youth were like, well, don't they get it by now?

I mean, really, good king, bad king. And I said, well, that's kind of the point. It's the same way in our own lives that we keep going back and forth and back and forth and back and forth until we choose to really stay in that same direction.

And so we'd have King Manasseh who was raised by Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a good king. He changed Israel back to worshiping God and everything was going swell.

And when he died, he left Manasseh in charge. And Manasseh was 12 years old. How many think that leaving a 12-year-old in charge of the country is a good idea?

No, it didn't go well. In fact, Manasseh, the name itself means forgetting. And Manasseh chose to forget everything his father had taught him about God.

[27 : 38] In fact, Manasseh became evil in his heart. And he did such horrible, evil things. He set up altars in the temple and statues in the temple and brought the country to be worshiping foreign gods so much so that he was worshiping gods that required sacrifice of innocent blood and he even sacrificed his own children.

It says that Jerusalem was filled with the blood of innocent people and that it had gotten so bad that the people had been so depraved at that point that they were worse than the Canaanites that had been driven out before they arrived.

It was bad. And God sent them, sent Manasseh and the entire country, prophets, saying, God's not cool with this. You better change.

This is not good. God says, turn around. Stop it, stop it, stop it. And Manasseh, of course, didn't listen because he had a hardened heart because all that sin makes our heart hard. And Manasseh kept it up and kept it up and he even went and killed all of the prophets.

In fact, Jewish rabbinic tradition says that he killed Isaiah in a really gruesome way that I will not share. It was bad, really bad.

[28 : 56] And God finally had had enough. And he took the Assyrian army and they went down and they captured King Manasseh. And they bound him in chains and they put a hook through his nose and through his lips and they dragged him off to prison through the hook in his nose.

That's where his sin led him. And he sat in prison, humiliated, a broken man. You see, our sin causes us to become broken.

It causes us to be separate from God. It causes us to have a hardened heart. And God will allow us to keep going that way, keep going farther and farther away until we finally get the gist that we're broken and we are sinners in need of God's grace.

God will let us make a mess out of our lives if we choose to do that. But the entire time, God is sending convenient grace. And convenient grace is the grace that God sends ahead because God loves us so much.

And so God is constantly reaching out for us, reaching out to us, saying, come, come to me, draw close to me. I love you. I want to be in relationship with you.

[30 : 12] Please turn around and be with me. I want this again. I want to be in relationship. But then we have to actually make a choice.

See, Jesus was sent into the world as our Savior, as God incarnate, God with us, as a perfect picture of who God is.

You want to know who God is? Read about Jesus. It'll show you exactly who God is, what God's character is. And God then, as Jesus the Christ, was on a cross, and his blood was shed as he took on all the sins of the world, sacrificing for us, dying a horrible, humiliating death on a cross for us.

And it is a perfect, holy, and very real picture of what our sin does to God each and every time.

When Jesus was resurrected, he still had holes in his hands. Our sin causes pain. And when Jesus was resurrected, he showed us, there is hope.

[31 : 28] There is new life. Come to me. And I will give you new life. But you know, we have to actually respond. God is offering this free gift.

We have the free gift of provenient grace with God saying, come to me. And then God is offering the free gift of justification where we get to be cleansed and stand before God as a new creature, holy in his sight, in relationship again with God.

But we actually have to make that choice. We have to, first of all, recognize we're a sinner. That we are messed up and we need God's grace.

And then we have to actually turn to God for that so that our sin, which is keeping us separate, and we instead turn around. It's called repenting and we move closer.

And it's right at that point when we decide to choose, to change with a sincere, repentant heart, longing for God, and we turn around, that's when justification happens.

[32 : 38] That's when we experience justifying grace. That's when we're forgiven. That's when we're saved. That's when it happens. In verse 19 through 20, for God was pleased to have all his fullness, the completion, the fulfillment, dwell in Christ and through Christ to reconcile, to bring back into relationship all of us to God by making peace through Jesus' blood shed on the cross.

but we all have dirty laundry. How many of us have laundry to do? We were talking about all these different advice things and laundry was my topic.

I don't like doing laundry. God bless my husband who when going to, working full-time and going to school full-time, he said he'd take over laundry. Yes. So we have laundry, piles and piles of laundry and just like we have sin in our lives, we have dirty laundry.

As we wear things, we spill things. Even just being human, you know, what happens if we continue to wear our clothes every single day, even if we don't spill anything on it, is it going to have to be washed after a while?

Just being human after a while, it's going to stink. It's going to be bad. And so we end up having to do laundry and so how do we know when we have to do laundry?

[34 : 11] Well, there's a couple different ways we do that. First of all, we could end up saying that it stinks. I'm catching a scent and it's not a good one.

Okay? Same thing with our lives. If we're looking at our lives and it's stinky, we need God. if we end up looking and there's a huge pile and there's a huge pile and it's growing and it's growing and it's growing and it's all dirty, messed up.

We got to look at our lives and say, I better take care of that. It's piling up. Or if we come to our closet and we say, you know what? I got nothing to wear.

There's nothing left of me. We got to come to God. And so we get clean and we use some detergent, kind of like the blood of Jesus Christ washing us clean and we learn how to do this thing of living in Christ so that we know that we're not going to put this white stuff with that red stuff because what's going to happen?

It's going to be pink. Yeah. And when we end up spilling stuff all over ourselves because we're no longer wearing bibs, what do we do? We got to address that stain.

[35 : 30] What happens when you get a stain? How do you have to clean it? Yeah, you got to work on it and you know what? You got to do it as soon as possible. As soon as you know that you made a mess, you clean it up as soon as possible.

Otherwise, that stain gets stuck in there and it becomes harder and harder and harder to get rid of. The same thing with our lives. When we make a stain in our life, we got to work on it.

Soon as we recognize it, as soon as the Holy Spirit draws our attention to it and says, you know what? This part, you got to work on that. That's when we got to go and start working on the stains in our lives.

And so we can all wear clean clothes of righteousness. So the steps of grace are provenient grace where we confess and we repent and we cooperate with that so that we experience justifying grace and some scriptures.

I mean, there's a thousand scriptures about this, but I wanted to share a couple. Romans 10, 9 through 10 says, if you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[36 : 35] For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. And the classic one, John 3, 16 and 17, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. So then how do we know?

I mean, really, if you really get down to what the question is, the question is more like, how do I know it worked? I mean, I said the words. I said the little prayer.

I walked down the aisle. How do I know it worked? The answer is in verse 23. We are reconciled and free from accusation and then there's this scary, scary word.

If. If. If. See, what was the condition of our heart when we did that? Were we ready to change?

[37 : 52] Were we really ready to turn around? If. We continue in our faith. If we remain established and firm.

If we do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. If. See, there's another part of grace. Once we experience the justifying grace, there's a sanctifying grace that we participate in as we are filled with the Holy Spirit and we walk closer and closer and closer to God.

And we should be going closer and closer and closer to God. It's not a thing where we do it because we have to. It's because we want to.

See, the great love that we experience when we turn, if we do this with a sincere heart, is the love that draws us closer. It's the love that draws us desiring God, desiring to be in love.

And so, how do we do that? Jesus said that the two top commandments, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

[39 : 15] Now, I don't know if any of you picked up this thing when you came in. There's a thing talking about, you know, where you are in your faith journey. But the thing is, when you're looking at this, we have to put it in perspective.

You can do all these things all day long, but you know what? You doing this does not buy you salvation. We do not do this because we are going to earn our salvation.

That's works righteousness and that's not a thing. Okay? Because that means that we're in control and God owes us and that's not a thing. But we do this because we love God.

We do this as an expression of our love of God. And so, I suppose it was about 10 years ago, I don't know if you've ever noticed the pattern in the church of the sermon series.

Every fall, we do a sermon series about commitment. Saying, you know, hey, time to get back into it. You went through summer. Come on, guys. Get back into it.

[40 : 16] Make a deeper commitment. Draw closer to God every fall. And it was about 10 years ago that we actually did it through a survey. And we had everybody mark down with the HSMS, Heart, Soul, Mind, Strength, where they were on the chart.

You know, were they a seeker? Were they a follower? Were they, you know, where are you? And when we looked at the surveys, a really huge number said, I am at the very lowest level.

Very lowest level. And my first impression of that was, cool. That means we're doing our job. That means that we are out there in the world and inviting people in and we have people in our midst that God is reaching with convenient grace and they're drawing closer.

Cool. But then I was heartbroken to see that the next question, and so, what are you gonna do?

How are you gonna move? How are you gonna draw closer to God? Now that you see where you are, what are you gonna do? and they said, nothing.

[41 : 26] Nothing. Heartbreaking. Because what that means is that there's no desire. There's no love.

Because you know, if you're in a relationship, if you're in a relationship, you desire to draw closer. You desire to draw more and more in love. You desire to do something for them and with them and you want to be there.

You want to draw close. And far too many people said, nothing. And so we have to check our hearts, you know.

Galatians 5, 1 through 7 says, it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Freedom. We're free to do, make this choice. Stand firm then.

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ. You've fallen away from grace. Meaning if you're trying to earn your salvation so that you can do all these things so that you somehow by God, you've fallen away from grace.

[42 : 28] But the only thing that counts, again, Galatians 5, the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

love. And so our response to the justifying grace is that we are filled with love and it draws us closer and closer and closer in love with God, in love with God's people.

We should desire. And so we have to check our hearts. King Manasseh is sitting in prison and he's humiliated and he actually comes to recognize that he is a sinner and needs grace.

And if you have one of the Bibles with the Apocrypha in it, in 1 Ezra 9, there's actually a prayer of Manasseh written. But King Manasseh confesses his sin and recognizes he does not deserve to be forgiven in any way, shape, or form.

He does not deserve it at all. But he ends his entire prayer by saying, in me, you'll show how kind you are. Although I'm not worthy, you'll save me according to your great mercy.

[43 : 35] I will praise you continuously all the day of my life. And then he went and he was actually restored back to being a king.

And when he was restored, he didn't just say, okay, that's it, I'm done. All right, I got back what I wanted. He made decisions and he changed and he took down all of the false idols.

He changed and put the temple back in order and he started working on changing the country back around to worshiping God and only God. He changed. See, the question is, if you look back at your life, would you say you're different?

Would you say that the love of Jesus Christ has changed you? It should. I mean, it's not saying that we're perfect. Lord knows no one's perfect.

In fact, if anyone says they're perfect, they're sinning by pride and they're back at the beginning. Okay, so we're not perfect. We are forgiven and that forgiveness draws us closer and as we draw closer, we become more and more in the likeness of Christ.

[44 : 45] Are we different? If people were to look at our lives, would they say, I know that God dwells in them by how they live? Jesus said in Matthew 7, 6, by their fruits, you'll know them.

So, how are your fruits? Can we see the love of God in it? So, James 2 says, what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds, can such faith save them?

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, you have faith and I have deeds.

Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe there is one God? Good. But even the demons believe that and they shudder.

It's not an intellectual exercise to believe in God. It's a life-changing exercise. And so, far too often when we're doing our dirty laundry and we have all this dirty laundry piling up, people want cheap grace.

[45 : 58] Cheap grace meaning I want to be forgiven and I don't want to do anything about it. I actually had a girl in college and she, her parents went away for a long time, like a month or something, and they never taught her how to do laundry.

And they made the mistake of giving her a credit card. And so, instead of doing laundry, every time she had dirty clothes, she went out and bought more. And so, a couple times a week she was going to the store and buying new underwear and buying new socks and buying new stuff.

And in the meantime, dirty laundry is piling up and piling up and piling up. And that's far too often the case with Christians and their grace.

They want it to be cheap grace. They want to look good on the outside. You know, I'm not going to deal with any of that stuff. I'm going to let it pile up. And I'm going to look like I have clean clothes on because I do.

You know, I'm just going to try and rotate it out. But the reality is that our lives, in our lives, we got a big, messy, stinky pile of clothes that is just growing and growing and growing.

[47 : 07] At some point, we have to deal with it. But too often, we say we love God and we don't. There's a Peanuts cartoon that I think shows this. Dear sweetheart, I think of you day and night and night and day.

You are more precious to me than anything in the world. Supper time. Oh, there it goes. Just throw it all away. Yeah, I love God so much.

Well, unless there's something better going on. We do that a lot, actually. You know, what do we do? How do we know? What keeps us from doing it?

Well, typically, I've found that the thing that keeps us from actually continuing in our faith journey is that we also create idols just like King Manasseh did.

And our biggest idol is our self. Our self. And we are shallow. We think that it's all about me instead of all about God. The other reason, sometimes, we just feel unworthy and we're not accepting God's love or promise.

[48 : 15] Or perhaps, we're just feeling too guilty and we don't want to believe in the power of the Holy Spirit and accept the power of the Holy Spirit to change us. So I thought I'd share my story and I'll try to do it quickly.

See, my grandparents lived in West Virginia and they were in the hills of West Virginia, like Appalachia, West Virginia.

They had a mountain in their backyard and when you get there, you'd drive these curvy mountain roads with a mountain on this side and a cliff on the other side and I swear no guardrail. Room for one and a half cars.

Absolutely terrifying. I got sick every time we went there. And it was a different world. When I, my grandparents were Southern Baptists and they're right across the creek there was a church there and when I would go there, everything was about God.

Everything. I mean, it was, they had a Jesus mindset. They thought about God. They talked about God. Even when we, the occasional conversation about a soap opera or cute boys came up, it was still kind of centered around God.

[49 : 21] God was there. And as a little girl, I remember going there and I don't know if it was a planned thing or, or if it's just that they had a lot of revivals but I swear every single time I was there there was a revival going on.

And it was fire and brimstone which should have probably scared the pants off of me but I was drawn to God. And at seven years old I said, I want God. This is cool.

I want God. And my grandmother was thrilled. I wanted to be baptized and my grandmother said, yeah, that's great. And my father said, you know, she's only seven. I, I just think she should wait until she figures it out.

Now every time I would go and we'd visit at, at my grandparents down there, we would visit with my cousins, my cousins Jeannie and Joni and we would actually do Bible time together.

I mean, our fun time was creating forts and doing Bible clubs. I mean, this was what we did. It was a different world. You know, when I would come home, my mother would drop me off at Sunday school but God was just kind of like apart.

[50 : 23] In fact, in my own mind, I think I believed that God was living in West Virginia because that's when I experienced God. And so, throughout the years, we would do all this stuff with God and at 13 years old, I finally was baptized along with my cousin Joni.

And life goes on and a few years later, I get a phone call from home and my cousin Joni had been in a car wreck.

It had been raining, curvy roads, she lost control and she was in the hospital. And my first thought was, yeah, but she's a Christian so of course she's going to be okay.

I'll say my little prayer. God's going to do what I want because God owes me because I'm a Christian. Right? God does everything we ask for, right? What we want.

And I didn't really think much about it. I just assumed she'd be okay. And she wasn't. She died. 18 years old, she died.

[51 : 35] And so, because I had a very shallow faith and I wasn't deeply rooted and firmly established, I turned my back on God.

So, get it. God, this wasn't fair, this wasn't right. And I walked away from my faith. And I continued in a shallow journey where I kept feeling God nudging me with his provenient grace but I was just so shallow I wasn't understanding.

So, I was also feeling very alone because as I distanced myself from God, I felt that God didn't love me. That Joni died because God didn't love me.

It's a very selfish, shallow response but it's where I was. But I didn't feel loved by God at all. And I felt guilty.

Incredibly guilty because I had known that my cousin had been driving erratically as a teenager. And although I had talked to her about it, I never did tell her parents.

[52 : 53] And so, I carried the guilt of her death with me forever. And so, years go on and I'm making some really bad choices. I am not living the way God would want me to live at all.

But God's still working on me and when I finally got engaged to be married, I come home and I'm looking for a church. Now, truth be told, I'm still a real shallow, shallow Christian if that.

Because the only reason I was looking for a church is because I wanted the picture-perfect wedding. Because, you know, if you're going to get married, you've got to have a pastor, right? That's the way the pictures look. And so, I went to church and I found God again.

God touched my heart and I got to the point where I attended every single week and I would go to Bible study and that was my pick-me-up and I delved into Scripture and I went from having a shallow faith to a deep faith.

I went from being guilty to forgiven. I went from being alone to feeling embraced and I went from being shallow to going deep and I was fed.

[54 : 02] Heart, soul, mind, strength, fed. And as we become more and more fed, as I became more and more fed, you recognize that you are enough, that God loves you just as you are and I was able then to take my ministry and begin to feed.

I know my story is a lot different than most in all the details but I have a suspicion that people have experienced things much like it.

I mean, maybe you've never accepted grace in your heart and I pray that you will stop a hardened heart, open your heart up to God and maybe you're thinking that I'm just too guilty and I couldn't possibly be forgiven but there's no sin that's unforgivable come to God and experience forgiveness and maybe you're feeling alone and distant but I tell you God is there and reaching out to you and if you're feeling distance it's you who moved.

Turn around. Go closer. Grow closer. And maybe you're just recognizing boy, I've been having a really shallow faith and I've been thinking that God is all about me and I pray that you will open up your heart and be filled with God's love and draw closer to God because you love him.

In John 6 Jesus declared I am the bread of life and whoever comes to me will never go hungry. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Whoever comes to me I will never drive away for my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life.

[55 : 42] So God is calling us to come to the one who forgives, to the one who saves, to the one who loves us just as we are. I'd like to invite you all to stand if you're able as we come to our God in prayer and worship.

worship.

Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blood, to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come.

I come, just as I am, O tossed about, with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

[57 : 55] Just as I am for wretched blind, sight riches, healing of the mind, yea, all I need be to find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

God is leading us, leading us to the cross, the cross where we recognize the pain that our sin has caused, and recognize that there is forgiveness available to us.

Draw closer to God, closer to the cross. Savior, I come, quiet my soul.

Remember, redemption's here, where your blood was filled, For my ransom.

Everything I once had dear, I count it all, that's all.

- [59 : 42] Lead me to the cross where your love bore out. Bring me to my knees, Lord, I lay me down.
 Rid me of myself, I belong to you. Oh, lead me, lead me to the cross.
 You were as I, tempted and tried.
 You were as I, tempted and tried. You were as I, tempted and tried. Fleshfully, a Lord, you came flesh for my sin and death.
 Now your risen. Everything I once held dear, I count it all as loss.
- [61 : 03] Lead me to the cross where your love bore out. Bring me to my knees, Lord, I lay me down.
 Rid me of myself, I belong to you. Oh, lead me, lead me to the cross.
 To your heart, to your heart.
 Lead me to your heart. Lead me to your heart.
 Lead me to the cross, where you'll love for now. Bring me to my knees, Lord, I lay me down.
- [62 : 15] Rid me of myself, I belong to you. Lead me to the cross, where you'll love for now.
 Bring me to my knees, Lord, I lay me down. Rid me of myself, I belong to you.
 Oh, lead me, lead me to the cross.
 As we come to the cross, we surrender ourselves, the idol of ourselves. And we stand and we raise our hands in awe of the one who died for each and every one of us.
 Resource to lokalled! The reason we stand is theadlich.
- [63 : 26] Moves is breaker, a Uzun. in hook out is Jacob's lover. Lis només es laz m. Yang desmarrau. Wero severer als jeg har af!!! You stood before creation, eternity in your hand.
 You told the earth into motion, my soul now to stand. You stood before my failure, and carried the cross for my shame.
 I stood before your shoulders, my soul now to stand.
 So what can I say? And what can I do?
 But I'll put this heart all high, completely to you. So I'll walk upon salvation, your spirit alive in me.
- [65 : 06] My life to declare, your promise, my soul now to stand. So what can I say?
 And what can I do? I'll put this heart all high, completely to you.
 I'll stand with all my tears, surrender.
 In awe of the one who gave it all. I'll stand with all my tears, surrender.
 All I am is yours. All I am is yours. All I am is yours. All I am is yours.
- [66 : 22] All I am is yours. All I am is yours. All I am is yours.
 All I am is yours. All I am is yours.
 All I am is yours.
 All I am is yours. I love you. week and clear out our dirty laundry. We have an opportunity every single week to make sure that our clothes are clean. And so I invite you this day to have a change of heart and come to God confessing and repenting.
 Won't you pray with me? Dear Lord, I'm a sinner and I need your grace. Please forgive me for the sins I confess.

[67 : 37] Thank you for your forgiveness.

Thank you for your mercy. I love you, Lord. And I commit my life to you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Hear the good news. Jesus died on a cross for our sins while we were still sinners.

God's love is that big, that great. God loves each and every one of us. And so in the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Glory to God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Just as I am, thou wilt receive Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve Because thy promise I believe O Lamb of God, I come, I come Just as I am, thy love undone

[69 : 44] Have broken every barrier down Now to be thy, yes, thy alone O Lamb of God, I come, I come Amen. Amen.

Amen. We come before the Lord because the Lord invites us. We are invited to be part of the great salvation that he has brought to each and every one of us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He died for our sins. He rose victorious over sin and death. And he ascended into heaven.

That is a hope of eternal life for us. He has gone to prepare a place for us. Today we celebrate that ascension.

You know, Jesus had to return to send the Spirit. We have the Spirit. We have the Spirit of God in us. And we receive that Spirit anew every time we ask.

[71 : 07] It's not just a one-time thing. Every time we ask, God will pour God's Spirit into us so that we can be the people he's called us to be.

We come to the table because Jesus invites us to partake in his death, his resurrection, and hope to go to glory and be with him one day.

Amen. Everyone is welcome at the table. If you love God, if you repent of your sin, if you seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are welcome to come and partake of all God has for you.

Nothing is held back. You don't have to be a member of this church or of any church. If today God has put it on your heart to say, just as I am, Lord, will you take me?

You can know that the answer is yes. He will receive you. And you may receive from him. Come have supper with Jesus at the table.

[72 : 19] The Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

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

You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, and set before us the way of life.

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

Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

[73 : 25] Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

By your great mercy, we have been born anew. To a living hope through the resurrection of your son from the dead. And to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

Once we were no people, but now we are your people, declaring your wonderful deeds in Christ, who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always in the power of your word and Holy Spirit. On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread.

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

[74 : 42] Do this in remembrance of me. Do this in remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup. He gave you thanks and praise and gave it to his disciples.

He said, drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of my blood. The blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many. For the forgiveness of sin.

Do this as often as you drink it. In remembrance of me. On the day you raised him from the dead, he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread.

And in the power of your Holy Spirit, your church has continued in the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup. 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.

[75 : 54] Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here. And on these gifts of bread and wine, make them be for us the body and blood of Christ. That we may be for the world, the body of Christ redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ. One with each other and one in ministry to all the world. Until Christ comes in final victory. And we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever.

Amen. Shall we pray together, knowing that we are dearly loved children of God? The prayer Jesus taught us.

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

[76 : 58] Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Will those who are serving this morning, please come forward. Amen.

Lord, God, we be together with you. Amen. Amen. Amen. We do that.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

[78 : 49] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[81 : 19] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[83 : 49] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

And so I can say without a shadow of a doubt, how do I know? I know. It's a blessed assurance that I just know deep in my soul because my heart is changed. And I pray that for you too.

I pray that you'll have that blessed assurance. And let's stand together and worship God, our blessed assurance that Jesus has loved us and forgiven us and given us a place. Jesus is my God, Jesus is my God.

[86 : 21] This is my story, this is my story, this is my story. This is my story, this is my story. This is my story, this is my story.

This is my story. This is my story. This is my Savior, this is my Savior, this is my Savior, all the day love. Perfect submission, all the day love. Perfect submission, all is at rest.

I am my Savior, I am happy and blessed. Watching and waiting, looking above.

Filled with His goodness, lost in His love. This is my story, this is my song.

Praising my Savior, all the day love. This is my story, this is my song. This is my story, this is my song.

[87 : 47] Praising my Savior, all the day love. Out knowing that you are loved, that you are forgiven.

May your heart be changed, that you may grow closer in likeness to Christ. May people see God in you this day and all days. Amen.