

Greenwood Baptist Church
Brian Bond
October 11, 2026
Compassion and Empathy
Psalm 103:13-14

All right. How's everybody doing today? Man, we're excited you're here. We appreciate you joining us for worship today. And for those of you who are in our overflow rooms, we appreciate you. And for those who are joining us online, thank you for coming. In the last year or two, our online family has just continued to grow, so that now there are more people who watch us online than are in any single service. There's somewhere between five hundred and a thousand that join us every week, and we appreciate them coming. I know of them as far south as Australia. And then there's people in Canada, which we call them people up north. So we're glad they're here too. I know some of them may even be here today, but man, we count you as family and we appreciate you joining us. This is your church. And thank you. And those of you who came in person today, we appreciate you as well.

Today we're going to talk about compassion and empathy. But before I do that, I want to talk about something that's going on this evening. Ty Hirs, he's our minister to middle school students and to young adults. We are going to be ordaining him for the gospel ministry this evening, and that is something that we take very seriously. We don't do that very often. That's something I believe that has to be proven out over the course of not weeks and not months, but years. And we've had the opportunity to watch Ty over years, and we believe that God has set him apart for the ministry. What we do tonight is we'll pray over him. There'll be a council that will meet with him before. We'll ask him questions. They won't all be easy. And then we, as a church, our ordained people will lay hands on him and we will set him aside for the gospel ministry. That's a real meaningful time. If you'd like to be here, that's at six o'clock this evening, right here in this room. We'd love for you to come and be a part of that. It's a huge part of his life and of the life of our church, and so we're excited about that.

Compassion and empathy. All of us have different levels of it. Some of us are more naturally empathetic, more naturally compassionate. Usually we think of women as being a little more empathetic, but sometimes it's not that way. And as men, sometimes some men are very compassionate and some men not quite so much. That's not honestly something that came to me naturally, but there are things that really do move me to compassion and to empathy. And as I get older, the easier it is to move me. I can watch a puppy commercial and get a tear in my eye now. But anyway, some of y'all are like, "Well, it ain't happening to me." Just wait. Just wait.

But compassion and empathy are part of God's character. So we're going to start out reading in Psalm 103, and I'm going to read verses 13 and 14. If you'd please stand in honor of the reading of God's word. **"The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust."** Thank you.

You may be seated.

There are two things that it talks about there. Is it God being compassionate? And then also it talks about he knows, he understands who we are and that we are frail. God created man and woman. He put them in the Garden of Eden and he said, “Look, all these things are yours, except don’t do this one thing.” I don’t know about you, but there’s times I wonder, why would God even put a tree in the garden that they weren’t supposed to eat from? Because God has always, and has, and always will — he wants us to choose to love him. He doesn’t force us. He didn’t put people down there and make them into machines where, you know, it’s time for worshiping God. I mean, he gave us a choice from the beginning. And even though man chose to sin against God, God gave him a way back and gave him promises of a Savior that was to come. And later on, Jesus came.

So God knew before he created man that man was going to fail, because he realized that we’re weak and he knew that he had to give us a will and a choice. He gave that to them in the Garden of Eden, and we still have it today. God doesn’t make you serve him. God doesn’t make you love him, but he offers it to you. He is compassionate toward his children, and that’s something that we can all rejoice in. That’s part of his character.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: **“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”** That’s one of the joys eventually of having gone through times that are difficult, times of suffering. Every single one of you, there’s some circumstance that you can sit down beside someone and say, “Man, I know what you’re going through.” But even if you can’t say that, maybe you don’t know, you can still say, “I know the one who can give you comfort. I know where the answers are.”

That’s one of the ways that God uses those difficult times in our life, so that we at some point can comfort someone else. That can be a bittersweet thing, but it is a part of God’s plan. As you go through life and you experience more, there are more things that you can sit down by someone and say, “Hey, I understand what it’s like.” But even when you can’t, we say, “I know someone who does.” And we can point people to Jesus.

God gives us these experiences, or allows us to go through them. And one of the ways that he works it for good — it doesn’t mean those things are good, but it says in Romans 8:28 that God works all things to good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose. That’s one of the beauties of going through difficult times: knowing that at some point, God’s going to be able to use that to bless someone else. That God can take our heartache, our hardship, our afflictions, and use them to bless someone down the road. That’s compassion and that’s empathy.

And not only that. I could see people saying, “Well, I mean, what does God understand about what it’s like to be human? He’s God. Whatever he says happens.” He said, “Let there be light,”

and boom, there was light. So all God has to do is think it or say it, and there it is. So how could God understand what it's like to go through life and be tempted and to experience? Well, guess what? God sent his only Son. In Hebrews 4:15-16: **"This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."**

Even in life, when you are looking for someone, when you're going through an experience in life, you want to know that you're going to somebody that understands what that's like. And so most times we seek out somebody. As a matter of fact, somebody comes up and says, "Hey, I know somebody that went through that. You should talk to them." We want to seek out people that understand what our situation is like.

And guess what? Jesus came and lived that. He came down here. He was born in a stable. He went through being a toddler. He went through being a child. He went through being a teenager. He knows what being a teenager is like. He knows what it's like to have family. He had brothers and sisters. He knows what it's like to live in a community. He lived in a little town. He knows what it's like to make a living by the sweat of his brow. He was a carpenter. He did that until he was thirty years old. He just lived life. As a matter of fact, when he began his ministry, the people in his hometown were like, "What? Isn't this Joseph the carpenter's son?" All they had seen was a guy living life, just living a regular life. And he lived it just as we do. Without special privileges, he laid those things aside. He became like we are.

And now, when we go before the throne room, we're going before someone who knows what it's like to be tempted, who knows what it's like to face life's struggles, who knows what it's like to be around a grieving widow or somebody that's experienced loss, or just the hardships that go with living life on this earth. He knows what it's like. And so for that reason, the Bible says, for that reason we can go boldly into the throne room of our gracious God. **"There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most."**

There's all kinds of other religions that are out there. Satan's a great counterfeiter. And what does he do? He comes up with fake versions. But even Satan, and he is the prince of liars, he could not come up with anything that even remotely touches God becoming flesh and just living amongst us and experiencing life like we experience. All of those other religions, they have one thing in common: you can be like God, you can be a god. But none of them have as the focal point that God becomes like us and lives on this earth. It is the only one, because even the greatest liar, the prince of liars, can't come up with a lie that even approaches the truth of what Jesus did and who Jesus is. He became just like us.

And when he began his ministry, the Bible tells us in Matthew 9:36-38, **"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."** When Jesus saw all these people, he saw confusion. He saw people that wanted to do right, didn't know how. He saw people that wanted to learn how to live life, but

didn't know how. He saw people that wanted to be closer to God, but didn't know how.

And that's the same world that we look at. When you see people that are living life and they say, "Oh, this is how you live it. You do this and you do that," and man, those are a hundred percent against God's word — they're confused. They don't know what the truth is. And as a result, they're helpless.

I even talked to somebody after the first service about some situations in their family. And you know what? When people are confused and people are helpless, there's one of two things that happen. One thing they do is they get mad. Now, I'm going to use this as an example. I'm going to use myself. My wife's up in Colorado on the mission trip, so she would testify to this too. Back when we were first married and we would go somewhere, we had this thing — listen to me, kids — it's called an atlas. See, I was born back in the 1900s, back when life was tough. We didn't have where you just told your phone, "Hey, tell me how to get to such and such." You got a book full of maps. And those maps, there'd be tiny little roads, and sometimes you'd have to take a tiny little road. And it wouldn't tell you, "Hey, it's four miles from this." You'd have to look, and there's what they call a little thing on there that would say, "This is the distances." And somebody says, "How far is it from this place to the next?" About three inches. You had no idea how far that was. None.

And so you immediately start looking. You're tense. And then there comes a point where you realize somewhere along the way you've either made the wrong turn or you didn't make the turn you were supposed to. And now you have no idea where you are. And your wife has sensed this. And so she asks you. And what do you do as someone who is confused now and lost and helpless? You don't go, "You know what, honey, I think I've missed a turn. I could really use your help." You know what you do? You just defend your lostness. "I know where I'm going. Just leave me alone. Get off me." You get mad. How many — come on, man. I know there's some other y'all that were born back in the 1900s too. See, nowadays you just put it in a phone. Now the big argument is whose phone are you going to put it on. "I don't like that map. I'd rather use mine."

When you get lost and you're confused and you're helpless, anger is one of the responses. And then there's this other thing that we do when we're going down the wrong path and we're going, "Man, this is rough." You know what we want to do? We want to bring other people in with us. People that are in a dark place in life, they want to drag people right along with them, because they don't want to be lonely. And sometimes they get mad at people that know the truth. They get mad when somebody points out, "Hey, you missed that turn." "I did it on purpose." That's what we do.

Jesus looked at them and he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless. And we have to understand that some of the people that are the angriest in this world, that say the most hurtful things about Christians or about people that we care about — they're confused and they're helpless. They don't know where they're going. All they know is they want to bring other

people with them.

And then Jesus says something to his disciples that I think is really interesting. He looks and he has compassion on all these people. And you know what he says to them? He says, **“The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”** Do you know, Jesus was praying for us in that moment? He was saying, pray that God would send workers into the field. Guess what? That’s what we are as believers in Christ. We’re the workers in the field amongst those who are confused and helpless. And we’re supposed to live with them and love them and care for them. It says clearly it was the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.

So we’re going to talk about this compassion and empathy thing. We’re also going to talk about the limits. But part of what we have to understand is that we’re called to be like Jesus. Jesus saw beyond some of the hateful things, some of the difficult things. Do you realize when Jesus was on the cross, they were taunting him. They were crying out to him, “Hey, if you really are the Son of God, why don’t you come down from there?” Now, if that had been me, and I knew that I was going to be with my heavenly Father before long and I was going to have all power given unto me, I’d be like, “I’m taking names. All you do is you’re going to get a lightning bolt at some point.” But you know what Jesus did? He said, “Father, forgive them, because they don’t know what they’re doing.” And sometimes we spend more time getting angry with the confused and helpless instead of looking on them with compassion as Jesus did. But that’s what we’re called to do.

Romans 8:29: **“For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”** That’s us. We’re supposed to be like Jesus. And that’s a process that’s going to take our whole lives, and it ain’t going to be finished until we see him face to face. But one of the ways that we do that is by loving like Jesus loved, having compassion like he had, and seeing people’s confusion even in their anger, and recognizing they don’t know what they’re doing. They’re confused and they’re helpless.

Romans 12:14-16: **“Bless those who persecute you. Don’t curse them; pray that God will bless them.”** It’s hard enough not to just go back at somebody that’s saying something hateful to you, isn’t it? But Jesus goes beyond that. He says, “Look, somebody persecutes you, don’t curse them.” That’s our first inclination. Somebody says something mean and hateful to us, boom, we want to go right back. And I guarantee everybody in this room — somebody says something mean and hateful at you and you weren’t prepared for it, and you spent days afterwards thinking about the perfect thing you could have said right then. Y’all just admit it. I know. I’ve heard people tell me that. Not that I’ve ever done it. No, I do that too.

And you know what Jesus said? He said don’t curse them back. And don’t sit around for days afterwards thinking about the perfect thing you could have said. You know what he says to do? Pray that God will bless them. That’s a hard thing, ain’t it? That’s one of the ways that God has

shown me when I've had to go through those periods of forgiving somebody that wronged me or wronged my family: I would start praying for them. And sometimes it was a struggle just to do that. I'd be like, "All right, God, don't kill them today." I mean, that might be the best I could get out. But when I came to that point where I could pray, "God, bless them," and I could pray specifically about ways for God to bless them, and I meant it from my heart — that's when I knew that I'd released it.

Now, I'm not saying it'd be the same for you. And it didn't happen to me overnight or over a week or over a month. Sometimes it took a long time to get there, but that's when I knew. And you know what? That's when I felt the most free, because I'd been released from it, because I'd let go of it. Because it's easy to say, "Those people that persecute you, they're all up on you all the time — don't curse them. Pray that God will bless them." Sometimes just the "don't curse them" part is the hard part. And then you get past that, and it says, "Now pray." All right, I'm praying for them. And now it's "pray that God will bless them." God calls us to do that.

Then he talks a little bit about empathy. **"Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other."** We're called to be compassionate and empathetic with the people that we're around. And that can be hard.

It says in Colossians 3:12-13: **"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."** Not "you might," not "if you want to," not "hey, if you think this would be a good idea" — you must.

The basis for our forgiveness of other people is what we have been forgiven from. It's always that. Make allowance for each other's faults. There's a tendency, and it's hard. This happens in marriages a lot. Sometimes you just get focused on what the other person isn't doing, or is doing that you don't like. And you get so focused on that, you become blind to all the good things. That can happen with people you work with. It can happen with your friends. When you allow their faults to become your focus, you don't see them with love anymore. You only see the fault. And that's not love. Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. We're called to live that way.

Now, here's the other part of this. We are to live with compassion. We are to live with empathy. And empathy sometimes is something you develop as time goes on. Maybe it's something that comes naturally to you. But if you're not careful, if you take empathy or compassion across certain lines, it not only is not compassionate anymore, it becomes harmful. And we're going to talk about that a little bit too, because there are lines that you cannot cross.

Matthew 10:32-39: **"Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven."** So guess what? Your relationship with God is

supposed to be public. Now, that doesn't mean that you've got to go out and wear nothing but — you know, if you like wearing Christian t-shirts, that's cool, but there's no law that says you've got to have some kind of label on you all the time so everybody knows, or that every time you walk into a room, "Hey, y'all, I'm a Christian." But it should be public.

One of the ways that starts is by a public profession of faith. That's baptism. As a matter of fact, we're going to baptize seven at the end of this service. Isn't that awesome? That's seven lives that have been changed by Jesus. And they're making a public profession of that faith, of what God's already done in their lives, by being baptized publicly. That is a beautiful thing to see and to be a part of. And I hope and pray that it is a blessed time for those who are being baptized today, because I know it blesses me. It encourages me. And I hope it does you too.

That's how we're supposed to live. Our allegiance to Christ is supposed to be public. We're to acknowledge him publicly here on earth. We're not called to go out through life and just be secret agent Christian dude. There's nowhere in the Bible that says that we're supposed to do that. We're supposed to live like we know Jesus.

Then he says — and this is the hard part, because this is what this brings, and this is one of the reasons why people are like, "Man, I try to keep this to myself," because the next part goes right along with acknowledging him publicly. He says, **"Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!"**

See, the moment that you publicly come to know Jesus and you publicly profess it, there's a sword between you and people who don't know Christ. And what that means — it doesn't mean you grab a sword. It doesn't mean that at all. It means there's going to be conflict. When you come to know Christ and you have friends that you've been living with and y'all have been following a different path, and now you've come to faith in Jesus and you've made that public, guess what? You have a responsibility to live that publicly. And it's going to bring conflict with people that you did things with, some of which you can no longer do. And guess what? People don't generally like that. They want you to come back.

I even was talking to someone recently, and their whole family — whenever they have a family get-together, there's drinking to the point of drunkenness all the time. And she doesn't do that because she's a believer. And the rest of the family doesn't like that. And they'll say, "Oh, well, the Bible says don't judge." Well, it's not your job to judge whether people know Christ or not, but it is your job to hold to the word of God. And the word of God declares drunkenness is a sin, period. And so to just say that is not judging them, it's speaking the truth. Now, you can say it different ways, and you could say it wrong. You can say the right thing and say it wrong. But saying it in love is not judging.

But here's the thing: some of those other people are believers too, and yet they're living against God's word, and they're resentful, because when she pulls away from it and refuses to participate, it shines a light on it. And guess what? That's part of following Jesus. It ain't the easy part, because they're your friends, or they're your family, they're people that you know, people that you want to impress, maybe, whatever it is. But when you've got to take a stand and say, "Nope, I can't do that, because I'm following Jesus," there is conflict.

The next thing he says is this: **"If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it."**

Now, here's why this matters. If you've publicly professed to know Jesus and you're following him, it's going to cause conflict. And some of you are like, "Well, man, it'd be easier just to make up some other reason. I'll tell them the doctor told me I had to quit." You can come up with all kinds of excuses and reasons. But if you choose to compromise — "Well, I've always done this with my friends" — here's the problem with it. You've now led them down the wrong direction and on the wrong path.

"Well, wait a minute. They were already doing that. How am I leading them on it?" Because if you proclaim to know Jesus, guess what you're saying? I know — not that you are — I know who is the way, the truth, and the life. And when you choose a different way other than what God's given us through his word, you're leading people in the wrong direction.

In John 14:4-7, Jesus tells his disciples, **"You know the way to where I am going."** **"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"** Thomas gets kind of a bad rap as being the doubter. But Thomas was one of those people that was like, "Well, hold on." He was willing to ask a question when something was confusing. He said, "We don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?" **Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"**

And see, here's the problem. When you say you belong to Jesus and then you choose the ways of the world, it may be less conflict and it may be easier in the moment. But now you have nothing to offer. Because when you try to say, "Well, let me tell you about Jesus" — why are you telling me about Jesus? You live the same way we do. You do the same things we do. There's no difference between you and us. They're not going to listen to you.

Jesus said, "I am the way. I am the truth, and I am the life." You know what else he said about truth? **"You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** It's important to live in truth. And even though you may empathize, even though you may understand — "I get why they're

that way. I understand why they do that, because I used to do it too, and so I totally understand it” — if you want them to know the way to be set free, you have to stand on the side of truth. And if you cross over, you compromise your ability to tell them.

And here’s the thing about that sword. That sword that divides you in that relationship, it’s dividing you into two things: those who know Christ and are going to be forever in heaven with him, and those who don’t and are going to spend eternity in hell. So let me ask you something. What’s really loving your friends — to go along with them so that there’s not a conflict on a Friday night, or to hang on to the truth and to hang on to the right way of living, in the hopes that someday they too may come to know Jesus and go to heaven along with you? Sometimes you’ve got to choose. Always choose to stand on the side of truth.

It doesn’t mean that we do it harshly. We don’t say, “I’m not doing that because y’all are going to hell.” You say, “You know what? Jesus set me free. He forgave me of my sins. I belong to him now. And this is the way I live. And if you’re ever interested, I can tell you about it too.” Maybe in that moment you’ll have an opportunity. But here’s the deal: if you go along and you live just like they live, but you try to tell them, “I know a different way” — really? Then how come you ain’t living it? You know what it means to follow Jesus? Then how come you’re not doing it? You want to tell me how to follow Jesus, but you’re not. And let me tell you something: they know. They’ll know. **“No one can come to the Father except through me.”** We have to stand on the side of truth.

Now, there’s another line that we can’t cross when it comes to empathy and compassion. God sent us; we’re workers in the harvest. We can’t sacrifice our family. It says in 1 Timothy 5:8, **“But those who won’t care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers.”**

I can have all kinds of compassion for — “Hey, I’d like to help these people. I know they need food.” But here’s what I’m not going to do. I’m not going to take the food that I have out of the mouths of my family, my kids, and give it to someone else. That’s not all right. Now, I may lead them and say, “Hey, we’re going to sacrifice. We’re not going to go out this meal. We’re going to have something at home, and we’re going to take that money.” It’s okay to teach them sacrifice, but it’s not okay for me to sacrifice them. There might be people that are homeless that I want to help, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to open up my door and bring four or five of them home, knowing they could be dangerous and harmful to my family. You’ve got to take care of your family, and you protect them and you provide for them. That’s your first responsibility. You have empathy and compassion, but don’t sacrifice your family for your empathy and compassion.

We also have to do that as a country. God talked a lot in the Old Testament about: do not compromise by bringing others into your world, allowing them to marry into your people, into your families, because they’re going to bring their false gods, and it’s going to affect you. And you know what? “Oh, no, we can do that. That ain’t no big deal.” And so they intermarried, and you know what? Before long they were worshiping idols. The kids and the grandkids and the

great-grandkids of a nation that God had delivered from Egypt, from the most powerful country in the world at the time, were now worshiping false gods in the land that God gave them.

Let me tell you something. None of us are strong enough to make compromises in our everyday lives and allow truth to just go by the wayside and continue to follow God with our whole heart. We can't. Jesus said, if you ain't willing to choose me over your friends, over your family, over your comfort, you're not worthy of me. Take up your cross daily, and recognize that doesn't mean that they're all going to appreciate it. But we've got to love anyway. And we love, first of all, by holding fast to the truth. You see, you live it first. You live it first.

Here's the thing I've found through the years: there'll be one person, and the rest of them may make fun of them, may turn on them, may do whatever, because they refuse to go down that path. But when the path they're going down leads them into a wreck in life, that's the first person they're going to — the one they know. "Hey, you're different. What do I do now?" But if you ain't different, they're not coming to you, because what do you have to offer them?

Now, that's the tension. That's where the tension comes in: about being compassionate, about being empathetic, but not going past that point where compassion and empathy become destructive. Because when you choose to put aside the truth of God's word, just because you care about somebody and you may even love them, you've got a lot of compassion for them — you're now part of a destructive force in their life, because you're reinforcing the lies of the enemy and you're living against the truth that Jesus gave you.

And there's a lot of tension there, because we don't like awkward moments. We don't like getting crossways with our friends. We don't like when things are bad in our family. Is anybody comfortable when there's a conflict in the family and everybody's gone to their own room and they're not talking? Who sits back and goes, "Man, this is nice. I like this. Just a couple more slammed doors and it'll be perfect"? Nobody says that. Nobody wants that. But sometimes that's what happens. And we've got to be willing to stand for Jesus if you want to be one of the workers in the harvest. True compassion and true love and true empathy is wanting more than anything for them to know Jesus and to follow him. It's not to have the lack of conflict. So live a life that is worthy of the calling you were given, to follow Jesus.

Would you bow your heads and close your eyes, please? What an amazing thing that God sent his own Son. I've been saved for decades now, and I've never gotten over what Jesus has done for me. And I know you haven't either.

If you're here today and you don't have a relationship with Jesus, I want you to know there is hope and there is an invitation for you. And that is that you too can come to Christ. You can know that your sins are forgiven. You can know that you're in right relationship with God. And you can know that you will be with him forever in heaven.

Here are the three simple things you have to do to receive that. Number one, you've got to admit that you're a sinner and ask forgiveness of your sins. Turn away from them. The wages of sin is

death. Sin is a serious thing. But the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus. It is a free gift. The second thing you've got to do is believe in Jesus. He wasn't a man; he was God who became man. God became flesh and dwelt among us. He died on the cross for your sins and for mine, and then he rose on the third day. You've got to believe in Jesus. The third thing, and this is part of what we've been talking about, is you've got to confess him as your Lord. That means you're going to live his way. That's how you become a light on a hill. That's how you become a worker in the harvest. That's how you become the one who can show the way to those who need to know Jesus.

It says in Romans 10:9-10, **"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."** If you would like to know that those things are true for you, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to lead anyone who would like, in a prayer of salvation. These aren't magic words, but if it reflects what you believe in your heart, you can be saved. You can be forgiven. You can be set free. Anyone who sins is a slave to sin, but you can be set free from sin through Jesus.

So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to pray this prayer. You can repeat it after me. Just pray it in your heart. God will hear you. But if you'd like to know that your sins are forgiven, that you're right with God, you pray this with me right now.

"Dear Father in heaven, thank you for loving me, and thank you for Jesus. God, I know I'm a sinner. Forgive me of my sins. Come into my heart and my life and cleanse me. I believe Jesus is your Son. I believe you died on the cross for my sins. And I believe you rose on the third day. So today I trust Jesus as my Savior, and I confess him as my Lord."

Now, without anybody looking around — if you prayed that today, I want you to know we would love to just talk with you about it. It's important that you tell someone, and we'd love to hear from you about it. There's a couple of ways on the screen. There's a QR code. There's a number you can text. Those are also found in your bulletin. You can find them on our website, greenwood.church. And if you contact us, we'll get in touch with you and we'll set up a time to talk, whether it's on the phone or in person. We'd love to just answer any questions, to encourage you in your new faith, and to talk to you about the next steps in following Jesus. It doesn't mean you joined the church. We're not going to put you on a list. We just love to encourage new believers, and we'd love to encourage you.

If you prayed that, here's the other thing I'm going to ask. I'm not going to draw any attention to you. I'm not going to ask you to stand up or anything like that. But I'd love to just pray for you. If you prayed that prayer today and you meant it, would you just look up at me right now and keep looking until I see you, so that I can pray for you? If you prayed that prayer today, look up at me right now. Okay. Yes, ma'am. I see you. Thank you. Yes, ma'am. I see you too. Thank you. All right. Okay? Yes, sir. I'm going to pray for you right now.

Dear heavenly Father, I lift up these that have made a decision today to follow you. Lord, I pray you'd just continue to speak to them. Father, I pray you'd help them find the right church, whether that's here or somewhere else. May they find a place where the word of God is taught. And Lord, we just thank you for allowing us to be a part of their journey to you. Lord, I pray for blessings upon them and upon their household. Pray, God, as they go and share their new faith with those who do not know you, that there will be an opportunity for them to invite them to church or to tell them about you. Father, I pray you'd use this to bring others. And Father, we thank you for what you've done in our lives and the way you've used us, Lord, to bring others to you. We pray and we ask these things in Jesus' name.