



Sermon – 02/05/2023
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered

Genesis 19:23 – 38

Genesis 13:13

Luke 17:28 – 30

2 Peter 2:6 - 9

Ruth 1:4

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me to Genesis chapter 19 as we wrestle with the reality that we have a living hope in Jesus Christ. And if you're a first time guest with us, welcome home. We love coming to God's word and we've got a special opportunity. This Sunday we're recognizing our Central Sports Ministry. Central Sports Sunday. Maybe you know some of the worship team wearing those. You'll see some of our kids, our volunteers, around the church. We've just got this amazing sports discipleship program that is serving our community in tremendous ways. And we get the opportunity to celebrate that at the end of the service today. I also want you to know that at the conclusion of the message, during our response time, we're going to be partaking of the Lord's Supper. So, if you haven't already gotten your elements, during that response song, I want to encourage you to make your way to the table and to grab those so that we can respond to God's word in that way.

Now we're coming back to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. And just like last week, I want to offer a content warning to the parents that are in the room. There's going to be a lot of difficult subjects here, but we'll do our best to handle them in age-appropriate ways. But as you look at the text, if you feel as if that may not be something your child is ready for at this point in their development, we've got amazing opportunities in our Kid's Ministry that can serve them during the worship service. It'd be real easy to slip out during the prayer time in just a moment if that fits your situation.

Now, when we think about the Bible, what are the biggest sins in the Bible? So, maybe your mind goes to David and Bathsheba or Judas betraying Jesus. But when we look at the book of Genesis, we see some of the biggest sins in Scripture right here. Whether it's Adam and Eve with the forbidden fruit in the Garden. Or maybe it's the sin surrounding Noah that causes God's judgment. Or that Tower of Babel that was struck down, the people in their pride. But perhaps there is no more well-known sin in Scripture than what we find here with that of Sodom and Gomorrah. This

sin, this turning from God, and the judgment that comes as a result of it. You see, last week, we spent our time thinking about the patience of God. How before He brings judgment, He, in His patience, He bears with us in our sin. He offers us rescue before it's too late. But this morning, we're going to turn our attention from the patience of God to the judgment of God. We're going to come face to face with this text where God holds humanity accountable for its sin. And it's one of those hard passages in the Bible. Because we look at it and we know God is love. So how do we make sense of judgment? Or we might look at this and say, "See, the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath and that's totally different than what we see in the life of Jesus in the New Testament. How do we make sense of this?" Or we look around us in a culture where people say we should have no judgment. That you should live your truth. That love is love and all of these different things that seem to work against inviting people in to following a God that holds us accountable for the way we live. And yet what we'll find in this story of the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is it brings us face to face with our sin. It brings us face to face with the accountability each one of us will encounter. And as a result of that, when we get a better understanding of God's judgment, He gives us a better understanding of ourselves. Where we stand and how we should live in light of it. That's why I want to pick up the passage beginning down in verse 23 of Genesis 19. So let's see how the text says it to us.

²³The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. ²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. ²⁵And he overthrew these cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. ²⁶But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. ²⁷And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

Will you pray with me?

Father, as we come to this text, we're reminded of the reality that it is appointed from man to die and then comes judgment. That every one of us will stand before You one day and You will hold us accountable for the way we lived our lives. You will hold us accountable for the ways that we've fallen short. And I pray that as we come face to face with this truth today, that we would not turn inward in a greater and deeper dependence on ourselves, but we would turn upward in a greater dependence on Christ, on His shed blood. Knowing that He is our only hope in this world and in the life to come. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Alright, so if you only had a few minutes to gather up your most important possessions and to escape your home before it was destroyed, what would you grab? Maybe it's those valuable items, jewelry, maybe it's those heirlooms that were passed down from your great-grandmother. Maybe it was that beloved pet of yours that you want to make sure is safe. Meanwhile, maybe some of you might be hoping some of the pets get left behind at your house. What would that be for you? See, John and Jan Pascoe had that exact decision to make back in 2017. They live up in Santa Rosa, California just north of San Francisco. And their lives had been surrounded by wildfires. But there's never been one this close. You see, they're retirees that spent decades in this region.

And as the flames began to approach their house, their daughter pleaded with them, “Mom and Dad, it’s getting too close. You’ve got to leave.” So in that moment, they went around the house and gathered heirlooms and gathered valuables. They loaded up the family pet and they got in both of their cars. By the time they tried to head out of their neighborhood, the entire subdivision surrounding them was engulfed in flames. They were overwhelmed by darkness. And what they knew is that there was only one way and only one way out of their subdivision. And if they didn’t get to that exit point, before the fire did, there would be no way of escape. And as they rounded the bend heading towards that exit, they were dismayed to see that the fire got there first. What would you do in a moment like that? The fire raging all around you, no means of escape, and in their dismay, they realized, if we’re not going to make it, we might as well go back to our own home and die in our own house. Can you imagine the fear, the uncertainty, the dismay that you would experience in that moment? You’d be undone. There’s no means of escape. And it’s about the closest modern parallel we could experience in our day and age to what the people of Sodom and Gomorrah might have encountered in this moment. When all of a sudden a rain of fire and sulfur comes down from the heavens. They begin to experience this fire raging all around them. They’re hemmed in on every side. Perhaps they’re grabbing valuables to try to flee the city. And there’s no means of escape. There’s a sense of desperation, of dismay, coming face to face with their own mortality.

See, what Genesis 19 does for each one of us is that as we watched the judgment that Sodom faces, it brings us face to face with the judgment that you and I will face. That one day every one of us will face the judgment of God if we’re left to ourselves. But see, this is not the first time that Genesis has told us about the judgment of God. You remember back in Genesis 6 in Noah’s day, the people are overwhelming the world with sin and God brings a judgment upon them. And how does He do it? The first time it’s by flood. This time it’s by fire. And what we’re going to see this morning as we work our way through the end of Genesis chapter 19, is that as we see this punishment come upon the people, it brings us to a greater recognition of two things. The judgment of God for our sin and the hope of God for our future. So let’s start back in the portion of the text that we’ve already ready beginning in verse 23 and look at the judgment of God for our sin. Because one of the things we’ll notice as we look our way through the entire Bible is that the story of Sodom is one of the most familiar passages in the Scripture. It’s not just known here in Genesis. It keeps showing up over and over again. Moses points back to it later on in the Old Testament. The prophets point back to it when they’re writing about the coming of future judgment. Jesus Himself speaks about it. They’re not afraid to talk about the judgment of God. They know that’s at the heart of what’s going on here and they use it as a reminder that all of us will encounter it. And so the thing we need to be wrestling with is if the Bible is so comfortable talking about the judgment of God, then why aren’t we? What makes this so difficult? Why do we kind of cringe a little bit when we open a text like this? I think at least one of the reasons why that is the case is because of the fact that we have trouble reconciling who God is with what He’s doing here. We know that Scripture tells us that God is love, God is just, God is righteous, God is holy. But the Bible never says God is wrath. That’s not an attribute of God. It’s an action of God. You see, the judgment of God, the wrath of God, takes place when a holy God in His righteousness justly holds a sinful people accountable for their rebellion. And that’s what’s taking place here. God brings this judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And as we see it unfolding, there are several dimensions of His judgment I want you to notice back here in the text.

So look back with me at verse 24. You'll first see that the judgment of God is consistent. In other words, it's consistent with His character. The text tells us in verse 24,

²⁴Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven,

The text is unmistakable that God is just and righteous in this moment. This is consistent with His character to bring judgment upon the people. And why is He bringing judgment? Well, remember what Genesis 13:13 says about these people. You'll see it on the screen. It says in Genesis 13:13,

¹³Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

So it's right for God to bring a judgment and accountability for that sin. And that's why when you look back at verse 24 at the beginning, who is it that brings the judgment? It tells us that the Lord rained these things down. He is active in His accountability. He's like a loving father who in his home sees his kids living in rebellion to them who doesn't outsource that discipline to someone else but comes alongside them and holds them accountable himself. But you'll notice in addition to this a second dimension of the judgment of God. It's that it's comprehensive. It's comprehensive in its scope. So notice what it says there in verse 25.

²⁵And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

So you'll see the way it talks about it here. There's nothing left. All the people are destroyed. All the city is destroyed. All the fields around it is destroyed. Nothing escapes the wrath of God for the sin of Sodom. It's comprehensive in its nature. Why? It's because if a holy God is going to maintain His holiness, then He can't even allow a hint of sin to remain. I mean, think about it. I've got a friend of mine who's going through cancer treatment right now. And imagine if he went to the doctor and the doctor said, "Hey, we're going to do your scans, we're going to size it up, we're going to come up with a plan." And they looked at all of it and he meets with him and says, "Here's our treatment plan. We're going to go in and we're going to do surgery to pull out all of the cancer we can easily get to. But there's portions of it that are hard to reach and might create some danger for you. So I think what we've just decided, I know this is a little unorthodox, but we just decided, you know what, we're going to leave it. We're going to let it stay. Hope for the best." How many of you would continue treatment with that doctor? No. Because what we know and what, more importantly, that doctor knows is that if you want to maintain that life, if you want to preserve the purity of that body, it's not enough to just address some of the cancer, you've got to go after all of it. How much more so is that true with a holy God and the cancer of our sin? It's comprehensive. It's total. And that's what the text is showing us. And it goes on there to help us also see a third dimension of God's judgment. It's that the judgment of God is certain. So as I've mentioned, this text is commonly cited throughout the Bible. And I just wanted to call your attention to a few passages in the New Testament beginning first in Luke 17. And when Jesus is speaking here of the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, He's building that on top of what He has already been saying about Noah and the flood. And He's showing us how the judgment that took place then is pointing ahead to the certainty of judgment for every one of us. So notice what it says on the screens. Luke 17 beginning in verse 28.

²⁸Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot – they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. ²⁹but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all

Listen to this. Verse 30.

³⁰so it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

Do you see the certainty in Jesus' voice? He doesn't say, "So it might be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." He says, "So it will be." He says, "Make no mistake. In the same way that Sodom and Gomorrah faced the judgment of God, we too are headed towards a certain judgment." Well, look down at 2 Peter beginning in chapter 2 in verse 6. And if you turn over there in your Bible, just hold your spot there because we're going to come back to 2 Peter 2 in just a minute. And notice the way that Peter talks about this moment. He says in 2 Peter 2:6,

⁶by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example for what is going to happen to the ungodly;

Again, notice the certainty that's here. He doesn't say at the end of the verse, as an example for what might happen to the ungodly. What does he say? He says, this is an example for what will happen to the ungodly. There is a certainty in God's judgment. In other words, the fumes of Sodom are a foretaste of the judgment every one of us will experience outside of Christ. Every sin we've committed. All the guilt that weighs us down. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death. A payment must be made for that. And Sodom is showing us a glimpse of our future. That if we walk into the presence of God to stand accountable for our lives on our own, we will face a similar fate. There's a reason that the Bible says that our God is a consuming fire.

But if you look back in our passage in Genesis 19, what you'll notice is that in addition to these three dimensions of the judgment of God we see here, we also can observe two different ways that people react to God's judgment in the text. The first one you'll notice in verse 26 comes from the life of Lot's wife. You see, some people react to the judgment of God with contempt. We see that contempt there, Genesis 19:26, it says:

²⁶But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

So, remember, the angels commanded them, "Flee the city and don't look back." And she actively disobeys them. As she is being delivered by God, she turns and looks back to the city. And symbolically, what it shows us is a contempt towards God, even in His deliverance. A hostility to the new life that she is being called to live. She longs to go back to the city. She's looking back because she's savoring her past, she's savoring her sin, she desires to return to it. And what the text is showing us is that for those of us who desire deliverance, there is no turning back. This would have been especially important for Moses in the day he was writing it. He's writing it to the people of Israel after the Exodus when they're in the wilderness waiting to enter into the promised land. And over and over and over again we can hear Israel grumble against God saying, "I wish we could go back to Egypt." There's this longing for them to return to the pleasures of their past. And what we need to recognize this morning, is you and I might be pulled in that exact same direction. Where we long like Lot's wife to return to the pleasures of our past. We savor

our sin instead of savoring our salvation in Jesus. We look at God's deliverance. We see the path He's taking us on and rather than look ahead, fixing our eyes on Jesus, we look to the past, longing to return to the forbidden fruit that brought us to that need of deliverance in the first place. But there's another way that someone responds here in the passage. We see it in verses 27 and 28. It's through the story of Abraham. And what we find here is that he doesn't react with contempt. He, instead, reacts to the judgment of God with compassion. So, notice what it says in verse 27.

²⁷And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.

²⁸And he looked down towards Sodom and Gomorrah and toward the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.

So what happens? He returns to the mountaintop where he met with God. And he looks down over the valley. And in that moment, he sees the judgment of God. So, think about it. Both Lot's wife and Abraham are looking at Sodom and seeing the judgment of God. So why is she condemned and he is not? It seems from the text that the difference is the heart behind it. One of contempt rather than one of compassion. Or to think of it this way, she is looking back towards her past. It's as if he is looking down towards his future. She looks at that judgment from her perspective. Abraham is looking down as if it is from God's perspective. He sees the justice of God in it. He sees what is right. And in that moment, he doesn't respond in a haughty way, but in a humble way. It's as if he's recognizing, but for the grace of God go I. If it wasn't for His covenant promise, I would deserve that exact same judgment. And for those of you in the room who are believers, who are longing to live with God on mission, this is the kind of moment that should fuel us in our relentless commitment to tell others about Jesus. Just last night, our family was heading up to the A&M Basketball game and before the game began, we stopped by a restaurant to eat a quick meal. And as we were clearing our trash, I happen to walk by two college students sitting alone at a table. And I couldn't help but notice as I was walking by that one of them was sharing the Gospel with the other. Think about it. On a Saturday night as a college student, you'd be doing anything. You'd be out having fun. You could be spending time with friends. But this guy, whose name I don't even know, was pouring himself out with an urgency to make the Gospel known because he knew that his friend needed Jesus. He knew a judgment is still to come. That's the kind of urgency we need. That's the way that Central should be living on mission right here in this community. But even in the midst of this judgment, we also need to see the rescue that God offers. That's why I wanted you to hold your finger back in 2 Peter, chapter 2 if you've got your Bible. Because we see that in this text is one of the clearest pictures of the Gospel in the book of Genesis. This is how 2 Peter 2, beginning in verse 7, speaks about this moment to us. It says,

⁷and if God rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked
⁸(for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); ⁹then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

In other words, what Peter is showing us is that the same pattern we see here in Genesis 19 is still true today. That God not only is right and just in holding us accountable for our sins, but as he says here in verse 9, if he can deliver righteous Lot from the judgement, He can do it for you and me. And how does that happen? The text tells us that that wrath of God, that judgment of God

that we deserved was instead poured out on Jesus for us. That as He's nailed to that tree bearing the curse of sin, paying the penalty for that shame and that guilt that you and I deserve, He is making a way for us to be delivered from the judgment of God just like Lot. And if you've never experienced that this morning, He's inviting you into that relationship. He's inviting you to turn away and not look back anymore like Lot's wife did and instead fix your eyes on Jesus for salvation. You see, there's a judgment of God for our sin in this passage.

What we'll notice now as we pick back up in verse 29 is there's also a hope from God for our future. So follow along with me back in the text. It begins again in verse 29 and let's read it down to the end of the chapter. It says,

²⁹So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived. ³⁰Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. ³¹And the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. ³²Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." ³³So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁴The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." ³⁵So they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁶Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. ³⁷The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day.

It almost feels wrong just reading a passage like that. But put yourself in the shoes of Lot's daughters. They've lost it all. I mean, think about it. They were sitting there in the house and they overheard their dad offering them up to the marauding masses to have their way with them. Their future husbands listened to Lot plead with them to leave the city. And we saw last week they laughed and they turned away from God's deliverance. They've been forced out of their home. They lost all their possessions. Their future husbands are gone. And all that's left of this tribe, this family that used to be so massive it needed its own place to live is the two of them and their dad cowering in a cave. Can you sense the desperation? Can you taste the fear and uncertainty that they would have in this moment? And so what we find here in the text is probably the lowest moment in all of Genesis. What do they do? In their desperation, they know there's no hope of preserving offspring. There's no hope of a future for the family apart from Lot. And so they take turns one night after the other getting him so drunk he passes out and doesn't know what takes place. And get this. They do the same thing to him that they were probably horrified to hear when he offered for those masses to do to them. He's violated. He's exploited. And the text tells us here that both of them become pregnant from the situation. And you're just reading the text and you're like, "Why is this in here? What difference does it make?" It tells us that out of these two children, one name Moab, come the Moabites. The other, Ben-ammi, come the Ammonites. And we know as we read the Old Testament these two tribes show up in rivalry against Israel.

They rebel. They resist. In other words, this fleeting moment of sinful passion where the people who should be following God take matters into their own hands, brings years of pain.

But why is this text here? Why does Moses record this? Well, for one, it's bringing us face to face with the same kind of fears that drove them to this moment. If you'll look back in verse 30, you find that both Lot and his daughters, they respond not in faith but fear. So Lot is gripped by fear of man as we see in verse 30. It says,

³⁰Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters.

Can you see the fear of man there? Remember, he was the one pleading with the angel, "Don't send me to the hills, let me go to this little city and I'll be safe." But then he shows up to the city and says, "That's not for us." We don't know what he was afraid of. But he flees into this cave driven by a fear of man. And coming right behind that what we find in his daughters down at the end of verse 31 is they are driven by a fear of the future. That's why it says there,

there is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of all the earth.

There's an anxiety, a fear, of the future that grips their hearts. I mean, think about it. These women had just watched God deliver them from judgment. He had saved them in their past, but they couldn't trust Him with their future. Maybe some of us wrestling with that same fear, that same anxiety today. God, we've seen You show up in the past, but we don't know if we can trust You in the future. In other words, this text brings us face to face with our fear. But there may be some of you sitting here as we work our way towards the end of this text and you're saying, "Hey Phillip, where's the hope here?" I mean, after all I said for this segment, it's a picture to us of the hope of God for our future. And if you don't know how your whole Bible fits together, you might miss it. If you'll look back with me now in verse 29 we see the hope of God's promise. So it says there,

²⁹So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

Now are there any of you that are prone to forgetting things around the house? Maybe misplaced some keys or some shoes. I see some people nudging a neighbor as if they're the one prone to forget. Well, when we hear it say here, God remembered Abraham, it's not like He's a forgetful God that all of a sudden goes, "That's where the keys are." This is not an issue of His memory, but His mission. God remembers the promise. He remembers the covenant. He remembers His commitment. And even in the midst of the judgment, there is hope here. Because God is remembering His covenant promise to Abraham. But there's an even deeper source of hope than that. It's not just the hope we see in God's promise but also the hope we see in God's Messiah. So notice with me one last thing right here in the verse. In verse 37, look back at the name of this child.

³⁷The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day.

You may be wondering to yourself, what does this have to do with Jesus? I mean the Moabites resisted Israel over and over again. How does that fit at all with the Bible's picture of a coming Messiah? But what we would find when we look ahead to the book of Ruth is that one day God would raise up a woman named Ruth. And what Ruth 1:4 tells us is that Lot's son Moab begins a people that eventually gives birth to a woman named Ruth. Ruth 1:4 says,

⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other was Ruth.

So here comes this woman Ruth, a Moabite, a descendant of this illicit encounter between the people in this passage. And what we find here in Ruth's story is a reversal of the story of Lot's daughters. Because what we know from the book of Ruth is that this Moabite woman comes together with a man named Boaz in marriage. And they have a child who has a child who has a child. And their great grandson, King David. If you were to fast forward to the book of Matthew and read the genealogy that begins Matthew's story of Christmas, you will see this Moabite woman highlighted and celebrated right there in Matthew 1 in verses 5 and 6 where it tells us that Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth the Moabite. Just think about this. That in the darkness of this cave, in the darkness of this sin, that God was using this, even the awful sin of Lot's daughters to bring forth a son. In other words, the cave of their deception was pointing ahead to the tomb of Jesus' resurrection. That's the kind of God we follow. That's the kind of hope we have. But it is not the kind of hope that John and Jan Pascoe felt in that moment as they realized that the fires had hemmed them in in their town. You see, they decided to head back to their home to die at least in a familiar place. And it was as they were returning to their house that John had an idea. He remembered that a neighbor down the street from them had a pool in their back yard. And so the two of them left everything behind. They raced toward that pool as quickly as they could. And before the fires around them could reach it, they plunged themselves in the water. They covered themselves with shirts so that when they would come up out of the water to breathe it would protect them from the fiery debris falling all around them. And for the next 6 hours, the two of them clung together, capturing a breath, plunging themselves back under the water, coming up for breath, plunging themselves into the water, watching the fires go by until at last it was safe for them to exit. They had escaped the fires of judgment around them. And even though everything in their world was destroyed, they had found life. And how did they find it? When the fires of judgment were closing in upon them, what did they do? They plunged themselves in to living water. And that living water was the source of their salvation. Genesis 19 is bringing us to that same truth this morning. That all of us face that fire of judgment. All of us are headed towards the judgment of God. And it is only if we plunge ourselves into the living waters of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we might find salvation.

Which is exactly why it's fitting that we turn our attention as we close towards the Lord's Supper. Because in the Lord's Supper, we see through the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus a picture of the judgment of God that falls upon Him. A picture of the living water that is offered to each one of us. And so just as we do each month, we get to celebrate this family meal together. And as we prepare to take from the table, as you head there, you'll notice that some of the fresh bread is covered by a black cloth. If the first person there would just remove that so that people can grab that. And as you take that bread and that cup, we want you to know that this family meal is for you. If you know Jesus, if you're walking with Him as a baptized believer faithfully, this is

our celebration of the deliverance that we have in Jesus. So as we turn our hearts to pray, as we ready our hearts to respond, let's also prepare to make our way to the Lord's table.

Will you pray with me now?

Father in heaven, we know that apart from You we can do nothing. And that includes that apart from You we cannot stand before the fire of Your judgment. Our hearts are pierced this morning knowing that we deserve that condemnation. We deserve the penalty that we have earned through the sin that caused us to turn away from You. But in Your mercy, God, You have opened a way of escape through Your Son. And I pray that we would be a people of that deliverance who cling to the gift of the Gospel You've given us in Jesus and who shared that Gospel faithfully with the lost and dying world around us before that judgment faces each one of us. And may this taking of the Lord's Supper turn our hearts towards that reality now. We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.