



Sermon – 08/27/2023
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Verses Covered

Philippians 4:5 – 7

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to start this morning in Philippians chapter 4. Philippians 4, beginning in verse 5. And as you're turning there, if you're a guest in the room, welcome home. We're thrilled to have you here, especially to our college students. After your first week of class, if you get up on Sunday on your own and you're here, that's a sign that the Lord is doing something in your heart. And we want to fuel that as you step into our space. And I just want you to know that in addition to the worship us right after we're done, if you'll head out these doors over to our Family Life Center gym, that's where we have our college gathering, our 180 Gathering where you're going to connect with other students and go deeper with relationships with them and into God's word. And I want to encourage you to check that out after our service is over today. Now, if you weren't here with us last week, you missed a big moment in the life of our church. We announced the launch of our NEXT Initiative. And what is that? What's it all about? Well, over the next two years, we believe the Lord is leading us as a church to take intentional steps as we head to our 100th anniversary in 2025. And that means that we're challenging our church to take a step forward to raise \$5 million over and above our normal giving to fuel our ministry tomorrow. To take our facilities to the next level, to take our mission to the next generation, to take our story into the next century. And if you haven't had the chance to grab one, you'll notice that on the way in, we have brochures still available at all the entryways. Pick one up. It'll walk you through those plans. Last week, we challenged people to grab a puzzle piece to remind them to pray about how God might be leading you to be a piece of the puzzle of what He's doing next. We also have more shirts available out in the lobby if you didn't pick one of those up as a gift to you. And as I've been thinking about our 100th anniversary, it's reminded me of something in the history of our church. Maybe you've been looking over at this display over here and wondering what was behind it. Let me satisfy your curiosity. So, right behind this covering, what you'll find is two pieces of stained glass. Does anybody recognize that glass who's been around here at Central long enough? This was the stained glass that was a part of our location on Coulter Drive. And these pieces of glass, they were installed back in the 60s or early 70s. I saw pictures of our 50th anniversary and I could see these pieces of glass in the windows. And as I was looking at these this week, you know what it got me thinking about? How many prayers in the life of our church have radiated off of windows just like these? How many prayers have sunk down deep into the foundation of a church after nearly 98 years? It's a glimpse of the light of the

Gospel that's going forward from this church into our community, into this broken world. And it's so fitting that we see this image here as we step into this morning's message. If you weren't with us last week, we told you that coming into this week, we're launching a sermon series called the Seven Marks of a Next Generation Christian. And what is a next generation Christian? Well, they're someone who is so committed to seeing the Gospel taken to the next generation that they're willing to lay down their own desires, their own preferences, their own needs in order to make Jesus known to those who are coming after them. And if we want to be that type of Christian, if we want to be that type of church, there are seven things that need to be true of us. And we're going to see the first one this morning when it comes to this passage from Philippians 4, starting in verse 5. The first mark of a next generation Christian is prayer. And I want you to know even now that after our message is done, during the response time, I want to invite many of you to come down to these steps right here at the front and turn this NEXT Initiative, this next season over to the Lord in prayer by praying corporately at the steps during that response time. And the reason for that is because we know that unless God moves in this new season in the life of our church, our labor is in vain. But there's hope for us here. There's guidance here in Philippians 4 that I don't want you to miss. So, let's pick up with this passage starting in verse 5 and we'll read down to verse 7. Here's what it says.

⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Now, how many of you, I'm curious by showing hands, have the Bible app downloaded on your phone? Anybody out there like me? Okay, if you didn't know this, the Bible app has been around for 15 years. There's been over 500 million people download that app. And every year, they do a report on the most highlighted Bible passages and verses in the entire Scripture according to the Bible app. And there are two that often show up year in and year out at the top of the list. One of them is Isaiah 41:10. Do not fear for I am with you. But the other one, it's not John 3:16. It's not some of the other familiar passages we see in Scripture. Instead, it's this passage right here in Philippians 4. Do not be anxious about anything. Now, why is it that a Bible verse about fear and a Bible verse about anxiety would be some of the most highlighted verses in all the Bible? It's because you and I know that in the quietness of our heart that fear is always lurking, that anxiety is always grappling with our hearts and with our minds. It's always seeking to lead us astray to overwhelm us with worry. We all feel the pressure of our problems. And the beauty of this passage in Philippians 4 this morning is it's going to show us the path to peace in the midst of our problems. And why is it that Paul is writing about this when he comes to the letter of Philippians to its end? And the reason is because the entire theme of this book, if you just had to boil it down to one idea, is that the Christian life should be a life of joy. Joy. And this his final instructions to the church before he closes things out. He could address anything he wanted to but he talks about anxiety. He speaks about fear. Why? Because anxiety is the enemy of joy. And if we can't find freedom, if we can't find peace, then we're going to miss the joy that God has designed for us in the Christian life. And I want you to know as we start our message this morning, you'll see in the seat back in front of you, one of these prayer bookmarks. Do you see it right there? Right in front of you. Grab one of those out because I'm going to us through this as we go. Share those with your neighbors while you're there and you'll see there are things on two sides of them. And you'll notice on one of those sides, there's the letters B E S T with four principles for prayer laid out that are at

the heart of this passage for us this morning. Because if we want to find the path to peace in the midst of our anxiety, what we're going to see this morning is that Paul is showing us four foundational principles for prayer that have to shape our life. And you'll notice the first one on that prayer bookmark that "B" is to believe God can do anything. Believe God can do anything. We notice that there at the end of verse 5. Look at the way it describes God there. It says, the Lord is at hand. And what he's reminding us of is that the way we find peace is not by focusing first on our circumstances but on our Savior. That we remember who God is. That we don't focus on the presence of our problems but the presence of our God in our life. He's at hand. We can believe that He can do anything because He is with us and He is for us. The way I've heard it put recently by a friend is we need to recognize the foundational reality that God can and God cares. Those are both bound up in this picture that the Lord is at hand. First, God cares. He can. He can do everything that we need. And how do we know God can? It's because of His power, of His majesty. Do you remember the way that Jesus opens the Lord's prayer back in Matthew 6? He says, "Our Father, who art in heaven." That's not to communicate God's distance but His dominion. It's not highlighting His absence but His authority in our life. That He has heavenly power to meet us in the midst of our earthly problems. He can. The Lord is at hand.

But it's not just a God can. It's also that he cares. Think about this picture of the Lord being at hand. It's like a loving parent who's near to their child who's providing for them, caring for them, often in ways they don't even recognize. It doesn't just speak about God's greatness but also His goodness. That He's for us. That He cares about even the smallest things in our life. And we can believe that God can do anything because He can and He cares. The Lord is at hand. It reminds me of a few years ago. I went white water rafting. Anybody ever done that before? I'm just curious if there's any other crazy people in the room. I'm not sure I'll do it again. It's kind of like a roller coaster except you have no harness and the seat that you're sitting on isn't designed for comfort. It's a little bit more like a trampoline that's ready to springboard you out of the float no matter what happens. And I remember when we were there, we had a guide with us and he had all of us get on the raft and we're sitting in the water and it's barely tethered to the shore and he's loading supplies in there. He's not in the boat. And while I'm sitting there, without him, I recognized if this one small tether breaks, we're launching down this thing and we're on our own. And I'm worried about the white water that's ahead but the moment that he stepped into the boat, my whole disposition changed. Why? It's because I believed that he could help us down the raging river. I believed that he had the experience, the power, the ability to take us where I would not have been confident I could go on my own. And when Paul speaks here of the fact that the Lord is at hand, that we're called to believe that He can do anything, how much more is that picture true for us? That we have a God who can and who cares. And no matter the white water of worry that's raging in our hearts today, we can turn to Him. We can trust in Him. We can sense His nearness and His goodness in our lives. That's why as we launch into this NEXT Initiative and we focus on prayer this week, I'm going to give you a few challenges along the way of things we want to specifically ask you to do this week.

So, the first one is that we want to challenge you at some point during this week to prayer walk your neighborhood or your apartment complex, your dorm room. And now, granted, if the weather's still over 100 degrees, I'll give you an exemption and let you prayer drive your neighborhood. If that's any more comfortable. Just take a few laps and don't be the creepy person driving really slow at a walking pace as you go. Now, why are we asking you to do that? Because part of our heart with NEXT is we want you to be front door missionaries. That when you step

out of the front door of where you live, everywhere around you is your mission field. And that starts with prayer. That as you go from place to place, you walk by the places where people live around you, you are embracing this reality. The Lord is at hand on my street. I believe that God can do anything with my neighbors. That is the design that Paul is reminding us of here in verse 5.

But there's a second prayer principle I want you to see on this bookmark. It's the E. Embrace your childlike identity. To embrace your child like identity. We'll see that at the start of verse 6. It says to us, do not be anxious about anything. And then it uses the phrase, but in everything. So, notice what happens here. Paul shifts his attention from God's authority to our anxiety. And what is anxiety? It almost feel like I don't need to explain it. It's just, it's just this overwhelming worry that comes at us. Maybe it's that lingering low-grade fear, that that first fear that wakes you up in the morning. It's that pressure you feel whenever you step into that space. Sometimes it comes upon us like those wildfires in Maui, sudden and and strong, and it leaves a scorched earth on our hearts and minds. We know what it's like to worry. We know what it's like to face fear. And even this morning, I want you to think about right now, what is that greatest anxiety in your life today? What's that deepest problem? Is it a financial fear that you're facing? Is it a setback that you experienced at the start of the semester? Keep that in mind here. You see, when you see that word in verse 6, anxiety, in the original language, it comes from a word that means division. It's this picture having a divided mind, of having a divided heart. That our hearts are restless, that our minds are uncertain. We have a fear of the future that can lead to an instability in our lives that causes us to turn inward in panic. And that's not new to us. It's been a common experience all the way back from the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were cast out after that sin. You can imagine them gripped by anxiety. You can sense it in Paul's letter to Philippians. Why is he addressing anxiety with them? It's because they're surrounded by a hostile Roman Empire that's seeking to destroy them. And I can imagine over the 100 years of our church through those decades that these stained glass windows were at the centerpiece of our congregation, we faced fears as a church. Just four years after we started in 1929 was the Great Depression. Just a decade later, World War II. Or you can fast forward to about 75 years into our founding with the collapse of bonfire in this community. There were moments of fear. There were moments of worry. But what we recognize is even in those seasons, God is putting us on a path to peace in the midst of our problems. And how does it happen? It happens through the second principle; by embracing our childlike identity. You see, you and I have two choices when anxiety hits our heart. We can either turn inward in panic or upward in prayer. And the only path to resist that inward pull of panic and instead to embrace that upward pull of prayer is to embrace that childlike identity that Paul is showing us here. And what we know is that every child is marked by two things that we need to embrace.

The first is that we need to embrace a child-like dependence. So, I remember when our kids were growing up, we had to teach them all sorts of things. But one of the things I didn't anticipate as a parent is that I would have to teach my children to ride an escalator on your own. You ever thought about that before? Normally, you're carrying em or you're walking up there with them. But there's a point where they've gotta learn to take that step and to get on that moving conveyor belt all by themselves. And I remember when our boys were young, when it was finally that time, they would walk up to the front of that escalator and they would just stare at it. It's moving and you and I know it's slow, it's safe; but for them, it's worrying, it's intimidating, it's uncertain. And they might reach, they might be ready to take a step. But what I found is as the line built up behind them, as

people try to patiently wait, there were times where while they were still learning, what needed to happen is that a loving father came and took him by the hands. And walk them onto that step and took them to a place upward that they were too afraid to go on their own. That's the picture of childlike dependence that Paul is painting for us here. That when the problems come, when we see the word of our worries right in front of us, that we have a loving Father who will take us by the hand. If we don't depend on ourselves but we depend on Him, he is that path to not be anxious about anything.

But it's not just a childlike dependence. The second thing that we need to embrace is a childlike boldness. And we see that boldness there in the middle of verse 6 where it says the word, but in everything. Everything. See, there's a danger when it comes to our prayer lives that we embrace a jelly roll approach to prayer. We only talk to God when we need a favor. But the picture here is that in everything, no matter what we encounter, no matter how big, how small, we look to God and we come to Him with boldness. He's saying, bring it all to Me. All of your deepest cares, all of your most basic needs. There is nothing that is too much for you to come to Me with boldness. And that's why I talk about a child like boldness. Because a child's not afraid to approach their parents about anything. They'll come to them with even the most simple of needs and with the greatest problems. Because they believe that their parent loves them and cares for them. And why can we know that we can go to God with that same kind of boldness? Well, listen to what 1 Peter 5:7 tells us about why it is we can trust God with our greatest needs. It says that we should cast all our anxieties on Him because He cares for you. As we said, God can and He cares. When we come to Him with boldness, He's not inconvenienced saying, "Really? Again?" He's not an administrator in heaven reluctantly giving out the minimum necessary to meet your needs. No. He's a loving Father that is the giver of all good gifts. And when we embrace our child-like identity, it shows up in a dependence and a boldness that this passage embodies. One of the challenges I want to give us this week as we step into this next few weeks in our NEXT series is that one of the best ways that we can exemplify childlike dependence in our own life is not just through prayer but fasting. Okay, so a few weeks from now on September 24th, that's going to be our Get in the Game Commitment Sunday where we're inviting our church to step up and to commit to how God is leading you to invest in our NEXT Initiative. And that means we got five weeks between now and that day. So, by my math, that means we've got about 100 meals to go till that moment. I'm always thinking about food. Let's be honest. So, here's my challenge to you. 5 weeks, 100 meals, would you be willing to give up one of those a week to fast in child-like dependence during this important season in the life of our church? And if you've got enough flexibility, I want to specifically challenge you to do that on Wednesdays at lunch time and allow that hunger for God to remind you that you have desires greater than meeting your own needs. You have desires to see His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven in your life and in this church and throughout our community. That's what it looks like to embrace this kind of a child-like identity.

But notice in the second half of verse 6, you'll see a third principle of prayer here in how Paul speaks to us. The third foundational prayer principle is to specify your request. To specify your request. And let's see how that looks here at the end of verse 6 when it tells us by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. See, what I know about the world around us and every person in this room and catching us by video is that we're all searching for peace. And the way we look for it often is by trying to change our circumstances or to change ourselves. But what this passage is showing us is that the path to peace is not through our

circumstances or ourselves but through our Savior. That He alone, when we come to Him in prayer, is that path to peace. And if you've been around our church long enough, when you've heard us talking about prayer, you will hear a phrase regularly repeated that we picked up from my friend Jed Coppinger and his great book on prayer, *21 Days to Child-like Prayer*. And that phrase is this, specificity leads to visibility. That when we pray with specificity, it creates an opportunity for the invisible God to become visible in our lives. And the picture that Paul is showing us here is a call to pray with specificity in several ways. So, you'll notice there in the middle of the verse that he's calling us first to specify our prayer request with desperation. So, look at those words. By prayer and supplication. If you like marking your Bible, circle that word supplication. Why? It's because that's an unfamiliar word to us but with a significant meaning. The idea of supplication is a prayer of desperation. It's one, the picture is of begging, pleading. There's a deep urgency to the moment. God, You gotta show up now or I'm not going to make it. That of desperation. When's the last time you've been that desperate in prayer? Because when I look at the Scripture, especially the book of Psalms, I see desperation all over the pages of Scripture. That we come to God with this sense of desperation, this supplication. And that's not just something I see in the Scripture, that's something I've experienced my own life. Let's just be honest this morning. A month ago, the end of August, as we were getting ready, at the end of July, as we were getting ready to launch this NEXT Initiative, I was totally overwhelmed. All the details, the deadlines, I was at the end of myself. I was in that moment of anxiety. God, can we do this? How are people going to embrace it? And it just so happened on the day of my deepest despair. We had a deacon meeting that night. Now, some pastors might dread a deacon meeting in that kind of setting. I was grateful for it. And the reason was because I knew I was surrounded by dozens of prayer warriors in our church. And I came to them and I said, "Guys, I'm feeling overwhelmed. I'm overcome by anxiety about what we're about to step into. Would you take this time to pray over me?" And they surrounded me. They laid hands on me. And it was like a turning point moment in my own heart. It was as if the anxiety was lifted in that time. It was as if that path to peace was renewed in my life. When we came together in that moment of desperation over a brother in need, it changed me from the inside out. That's the picture that Paul is giving here. This specifying of request with that same type of desperation.

But there's a second reality here about what it looks like to specify our prayers, not just with desperation but with delight. So look at the next phrase in the middle of verse 6. It says, with thanksgiving. And what is Paul saying that we should be thankful for? He's not just saying that we should be thankful when God answers our prayers. Of course, that's obvious. We should be thankful when He answers them. But the thanksgiving doesn't come with the answer to the prayer, it comes with the expression of the prayer. That when I voice it. I'm giving thanks because I know that I believe God can do anything and that I can trust that He's going to meet my needs. And what I found in my own life, and I'm sure you'll see in yours, is that anxiety and thanksgiving can't coexist in your heart. They're at war with one another. You're either going to give place for the pressure and the despair and the worry and in the uncertainty or you're going to give space to the joy and the thanksgiving and the delight that this is called us to. With thanksgiving, we offer those requests. But look how it goes on at the end of verse 6. He also tells us to specify our request with details. So, look at the details he's highlighting here at the end of verse 6. Let your request be made known to God. You see, there's a real danger in our lives that we fall into, what my friend Jed calls vague prayer syndrome. And the symptoms include, "Lord, bless my situation. Can you move, nourish this food to my body and my body to your service." You have these vague prayers that you would never actually know if God showed up to answer. And you pray them because

you're just doing it thoughtlessly. But the picture here that Paul is giving us is totally different. He says, pray with specificity bringing the details of your life to God. Make them known to Him. So, does that look like on a practical level? What that means is as you step into this new semester, college students, high school, and middle school students, elementary students, and you're facing that trial, make it known to God. Our legacy adults in this room, when you're walking with your children who for years have turned their back on God as prodigal sons or daughters, make it known to God. Make it known. He wants to hear from you. He wants to know the details of your desires. He wants to know the longing of your heart. Pray with that kind of specificity because when you do, your specificity gives the invisible God a chance to show up in a visible way in your life.

So, look back at this prayer bookmark with me. You'll notice on the bottom right below these four principles, we've left you 4 spaces to down specific prayer requests that we want to ask you to pray for over the life of this NEXT Initiative launch, over the next 5 to 7 weeks. And if you've got a pen nearby, I want to give you two. I'm going to ask you to pray for two as a church and then I'm going to leave two blank spaces for you to ask the Lord what He would ask you to fill in to pray with specificity during this season. So, the first one, I just want you to write down the words, my role, my role. Remember last week, we asked every one of you to grab one of these puzzle pieces and to begin praying to God to show you what piece of the puzzle He's calling you to be a part of as we launch NEXT. So, we want you to pray for clarity about your role. But then the second thing I want to ask you to write down there, and number two, is our goal. So, not just your role but our goal as a church. And as we talked about, we want to see the Lord raise \$5 million over and above our normal giving so that we can fuel the ministry and the mission as step into our 100th anniversary. And I don't want you to just pray about how you fit in but how all of us fit in towards that goal. And then with those two elements that we are all praying towards specifically, I want to invite you to even now be asking the Lord, what would You have me to write down here? What are You calling me to pray for over these next 5 to 7 weeks? Paul is showing us a model where we come to God and specify our request.

Which bring us to the last principle here in verse 7. You'll see it down in your bookmark in the T. It's to trust God to do what's best with your request. To trust God to do what's best with your request. See, Paul is showing us that we have two paths before us. Two ways we can live. And option number one is the option where our problems produce panic. But option number two is when our prayer produces peace. And he's going to show us the kind of peace that we can find in the midst of our problems here in verse 7. And what he's going to say is that when we pray, that may be the start of what we do to find that peace, it may not be all that it looks like but it is the foundation. It is the kindling. And when we start with prayer in the midst of our problems, it results in peace in a sequence that involves two steps. So, you'll notice in the first half of the verse, when we trust God to do what's best for us, our prayer leads to peace. So, notice how it says it there, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. So, what comes into your mind when you think about peace? Maybe it's a mountain top moment. Maybe it's the, for you parents who are raising young kids, it's a quiet, clean house. Wouldn't that be nice? An elusive piece, if you will. It could take many forms. What we think of about what peace looks like. But Scripture paints a different picture about the peace of God. That the peace of God doesn't come through the absence of problems but from the presence of God in the midst of our problems. It's not about what He takes away, it's about who is with us in the middle of the journey. In this type of peace that Paul is talking about here is a peace that comes in a way we can't fully understand or explain. That's why the middle of verse 7 there says, which surpasses all understanding. So, to borrow a

phrase from Texas A&M, from the outside looking in. You can't understand it. From the inside looking out, you can't explain it. That's the kind of peace that he provides for us. Peace in the midst of our hardships. Peace in the midst of that job loss. Peace in the midst of that broken relationship. Peace in the midst of that tension with the roommate. Peace in every area of our life. He's showing us that path to peace. And it comes through prayer. It almost seems too simple but I love the way the Scottish Minister Robert Murray McShane talks about this piece when he says, "If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies, yet distance makes no difference, He is praying for me." Wow! The presence of God. The prayers of God in your life are that path to peace. Paul shows us that the first step to freedom from our fear is when our prayers lead to peace. But notice the second part of it in the last half of the verse. It says, when we trust God to do what's best, our peace leads to our protection. Okay, so check out this protection there at the end of verse 7. He tells us that that peace will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. You see, Paul is using military imagery here. I mean, he's writing this letter to the Philippians from a Roman jail cell. He sees Roman soldiers outside him guarding that cage, guarding that jail cell. And he knew what it was like for enemies to surround the city and to besiege it. And what he is giving us this picture of here is that no matter how much worry, how much anxiety, how much fear comes to besiege our hearts, comes to exalt our minds, the peace of God will provide protection. It will guard us. It will deliver us from the enemy. It will free us from our fears. But even as we look at this, there are at least two things that we might overlook when we're processing what he's saying here. The first one is notice something about the end of this verse. It says, will guard our hearts and our minds. You see that word hearts and minds? Is it singular or plural? It's plural. Paul's just not talking to you and me. He's talking to us. That the praying church is a peaceful church that when the people of God pray, it doesn't just guard our hearts and minds individually. It guards our church. It brings us together, a one heart and of one mind.

But the other thing that you might overlook here, how do we find this peace that he promises? This peace that almost seems too good to be true. Because our temptation is to think that we won't ever find that peace that he promises until we see God show up and answer our prayers. But the reality, if you look at verse 7 closely, the peace comes not through the answering of our prayers but simply by expressing them. How could that be? We haven't seen them answered. We haven't seen that worry resolved. We haven't seen that fear taken off the table. How could we have peace when there is no answer? Well, it's because we know who we've offered that prayer to. We know that He can and He cares. And what that means for us is that when we step into prayer with God, we can leave that conversation without carrying our burdens because we know He's carrying them on our behalf. How do we know that? We know that we can experience the peace of God today because Jesus provided the peace from God yesterday. 2,000 years ago, a loving Father who can and who cares, loved this world so much that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to take on flesh, to live the sinless life that you and I couldn't live. To die the death that we deserved for our sin, for our guilt, for our shame. To be raised three days later, conquering satan's sin, and death, and to offer you and me, the forgiveness that we desire, the peace that we've been longing for. And the God of peace has offered us the peace of God by sacrificing His own Son. And we can trust that God can do anything with our request and to do what is best in our request today because He's already done something greater than that 2,000 years ago. The peace of God. Yeah, I don't want you to just process and to hear how it is that the peace of God can bring freedom from the problems of life. I want you to feel it and sense it. So, look with me again at this stained glass and here's what I know is that when the darkness of our worries sets in, it begins to dim our souls. We begin

to be blind to the light of God around us. It takes root in our heart in a way where we lose sight of God's work in our life. The darkness closes in to the doubts and the despair and the worry and the anxiety. And what can happen over time, our hearts grow dark. All we can focus on is what's next. And yet in the midst of the darkness of our doubts and despair and anxiety, this passage is showing us that prayer turns the light of the Gospel on in our hearts. We begin to see it surge in the midst of the darkness. We see it begin to press through in ways that we can't explain. And all of a sudden, that peace begins to return to our lives. And the light comes back on in our souls and it begins to radiate out the darkness in a way that lifts the darkness from the room of our hearts and shows us what it is that God is doing in our midst. And from this light that comes from the Gospel, that light radiates out into our lives, into our communities, and into our hearts so that we all, in one accord, can embrace what John 16 tells us. That in this world, we will have the trials but take heart because I have overcome the world. Will you pray with me?

And even as you bow your heads now, I want to create a space to pray for those of you that walked in here wrestling with anxiety or fear or hardship. If you're willing to just take a step with me this morning, I'm going to, I want to have you raise your hand right here in this moment so that I can pray over you specifically. Will you lift your hand up if you could use some prayer for the anxiety that you're facing in your life right now? Let me see those hands. Okay, let's go to God now in prayer as we seek His will for our lives.

Father in heaven, Lord, You are a good God who makes a way where it seems like there is no way. And I know for the men and women who raised their hands this morning that perhaps that's how they feel. They're not sure how they're going to make it. They're not sure how they're going to keep pressing on. It seems as if there's no way. But Lord, we're praying that You make a way for them in this time of hardship. And even in the midst of that challenge, will You give them a sense of peace that surpasses understanding? Will You guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus? Will You give our entire church that sense of peace and unity protection that You promise as we step into this next season? Lord, no matter what we face, we know that You are with us and You're for us. And we know that most of all because of what You've done for us in Your Son and that's why we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.