

You guys can be seated. Thank you guys for leading us into worship this morning, especially love that reminder. I'm no longer a slave to fear. I'm a child of God called by his love. There's a character in the Old Testament, hear a story in numbers.

His guy. This guy's name is Korah. Now, not like Cora, the girl's name, but Cora K O R A H. And Korah. Korah believed that because we were all God's children, He's not wrong. That he could usurp the authority of God's chosen leader.

And the chosen leader was Moses. Moses and Aaron were the leaders of God's people at that time. God had appointed them for that role. And. And Korah said, I don't want anyone telling me what to do.

And so he and a couple of his buddies sort of formed this uprising, and they came against God's authority. And God said, listen, you need to decide whose side you're going to be on, because I. If you're part of Korah's team, I'm going to. I want to deal with Korah. So you need to distance yourself from Korah.

And if you're not part of Korah's team, God ultimately judged Korah. He put that rebellion to a violent end. And if you read the story in numbers, God opened up the earth, and Korah and all his compatriots sort of got swallowed up by it. But interestingly enough, Korah's sons didn't join their dad. They left their father's tent.

They remained faithful to God. And so because they abandoned their father's tent, God gave them responsibility over his tent, the tabernacle. At the time, Korah's descendants would go on to be gatekeepers and caretakers of the tabernacle first, and then later the temple that would be built in Jerusalem. And in addition to being caretakers and gatekeepers for the temple, they also wrote some songs. And you can find these songs in the book of Psalms.

Psalms is that book right in the middle of your Bible. And there's all these songs. We think about David as the psalm writer, but there were many psalm writers. And. And Korah's sons, called the sons of Korah, wrote about 11 of these.

I call them the first boy band. One of the psalms that they wrote is Psalm 84. And Psalm 84, verse 10, says this. A day in your courts, O Lord, is better than a thousand. Elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. Like, oh, wow, that's a pretty biographical verse right there, isn't it? Another psalm they wrote is Psalm 48, and I've got this one up here. I think we're going to stand and we're just going to read. This is a portion of this psalm.

It's not the psalm in its entirety, but let's stand and let's read

this together. Psalm 48, a song, a Psalm of the sons of Korah. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise in the city of our God and His holy mountain, Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the heights of Zaphon, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King. Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled, filled with righteousness. You can be seated. That verse nine is the one that I want to throw a special attention to. And the sons of Korah write this.

Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love. In the last several years, I have time and time again been taken aback about how deeply God has allowed me to love three young men he's put under my career, three hearing men he has trusted me with. And in pondering my love for them, I'm taken time and time and time again back to pondering and meditating on God's love for me. It's amazing how that works, isn't it? Now Jesus said all of scripture can be condensed into this simple, simple phrase.

Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Do you remember when he said that? And why is this important to Jesus? Because behind that is this truth that we cannot escape when we read through Scripture. The simple reality, the major truth, the big truth of God's word is God loves us.

The reason God created the world is to love us. The reason he set apart a people to be a special people, his own people, he called them, and is to demonstrate how God's love works. The reason he sent his son is because he loves us. Jesus died on the cross because God loves us. He calls us into his family now because he loves us.

And he brings us into this new life because he loves us. So when I think about how God has been present, protecting, providing for me, I cannot help but be overwhelmed like the sons of Korah with were with God's love for us. When they went into worship there in that temple, the loving kindness and the faithful goodness of God overwhelmed them. Within your temple, God, we meditate on your unfailing love. So this morning, like the sons of Korah, I'm going to invite you to meditate on God's love this morning.

And I'm going to do it by simply reading through scripture. So there's no sermon per se, it's just God's word. And I'll give a little bit of context periodically just to keep us on track. On your seats are some of the verses that I'm going to be reading through. If you want to follow along, you can.

But I'm also going to invite you just to. Just to. Just to listen. I've asked Bo to create some artwork. He's an amazing artist when he uses AI, and those will be.

If you're a visual learner, that might be helpful for you just to kind of keep track. But really this is a different sort of experience this morning. So just get comfortable. Close your eyes. If one verse attaches to your brain and you meditate on that one verse, that is absolutely fine.

If in the course of thinking about God's love, you become so restful that you. That you doze off for a little bit, that is fine as well. People, if someone besides you start snoring, don't hit them. Just nudge them gently so that they, they. They quit snoring and not aren't distraction, but those that rest is a gift from God too.

A gift of his love. So we're going to begin with prayer. Holy Spirit, may the focus this morning not be on my words, but on your words, as you encourage us and teach us from your words how you love us and how you faithfully provide, protect and lead us in your love. In Jesus name. Amen.

Romans 8:38. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Our Lord.

John writes this. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. So God created mankind in his own image, male and female. He created them, and God blessed them.

And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. God so loved the world.

The Lord God commanded the man, you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her. And he ate it.

The Lord God said to the servant, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. And he will crush your head and you will strike his heel to the woman. I will make your pains and childbearing very severe. With painful labor you will give birth to children, to Adam. He said, cursed is the ground because of you.

But then the Lord God made made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Isaiah writes this. I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation, and he has arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.

Can we meditate on Abraham? The Lord said to Abraham, get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation. I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I'll bless those who bless you.

I'll curse him who curses you. In you. All the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Lamentation says this, the Lord is my portion, therefore I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.

Remember Joseph, whose brother sold him into slavery. Genesis 39 reminds us, the Lord was with Joseph. The Lord was with Joseph, so that he prospered in the house of his Egyptian master.

But when his master heard the lie his wife told him, he burned with anger and put him in prison.

But while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him. The Lord was with him.

The Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. And at the end he says to his brothers, you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

And lamentation seems to echo this. I called on your name, Lord, from the depths of the pit. You came near when I called you. And you said, do not fear you, Lord, took up my case, you redeemed my life.

Lets think about Moses. The Lord came down in the cloud and passed in front of Moses, proclaiming the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish. Repent then and turn to God, so that Your sins may be wiped out. That times of refreshing may come from the Lord. And when I think about refreshing, I think of David, of course, who wrote, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He brings me to green pastures.

He leads me to still waters. He refreshes my soul.

I love the Lord, David said, for he heard my voice, he heard my cry for mercy. The cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave came over me. I was overcome by distress and sorrow. But I called on the name of the Lord.

Lord, save me. And the Lord is gracious and righteous, and our God is full of compassion. And yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me. I will fear no evil.

The prophet Habakkuk wrote this. Though the fig tree does not bud, there are no grapes on the vines. Though the olive crop fails completely and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God, my Savior, because the sovereign Lord is my strength, and he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and he enables me to tread on the heights.

Jeremiah writes this. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to captivity in Babylon.

He says, When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. And then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord. I have loved you with an everlasting love, and I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

Peter writes this. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. God so loves this world.

Which brings us to Isaiah. Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign. A virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. God is with us.

Luke tells it this way. The angel answered Mary, the Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. And all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said to the prophet. The virgin

will conceive and give birth to a son. They will call him Immanuel, which means God with us.

One of my favorite verses. John 3:17. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.

Isaiah. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. And we know this verse. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit which gives life, has set you free from the law of sin and death.

And that spirit you receive does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again. Rather, the spirit you received brought about your adoption to sons. I'm no longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God. And by him we cry, Abba.

Father.

So give joyful thanks to the Father who's qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble. I think of Joseph, or hardship, or persecution or famine. Remember Habakkuk or nakedness, or danger or sword.

No, no. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son. That whosoever believes in Him, Jesus shall not perish, but shall have what everlasting life.

Ah. I heard a voice, John writes. A loud voice from the throne, saying, look, God's dwelling place is now among the people. Immanuel, God is with us. And he will dwell with them.

And they will be his people. And God himself will be with them and be their God. And he will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning. Or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

And he who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new. And I go back to lamentations. What a beautiful book. Because of the Lord's great love, we have not been consumed. For his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning. New every morning. Great is your faithful love. Amen. As we prepare for a time of communion, I want to go back to the sons of Korah.

The place that they entered into, the place of their meditation was. Was a tent at first and then a stone building. Today, both of those places no longer exists. The temple has been destroyed. The tabernacle has been lost to history.

Neither has been rebuilt. But that doesn't matter, because in Corinthians, Paul writes this. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. So instead of having to go to any particular place, instead of having to fly to Jerusalem to meditate on God's love, we simply can stop and be still and know that he is God. We can pause and rest and reflect on God's faithful love to us.

And that's what we're going to do now.

His love has been poured out on us.

His love has filled us up. And now, because we belong to him and we are part of his kingdom of light, God's love is pouring through us to the world around us. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. And now we, his adopted sons and daughters, have the privilege, like Korah's faithful sons, to point others to the love of God so that his praise and righteousness extend to the ends of the earth. Let's pray.

Father, this morning we have reflected on your love for us. And your love is not expressed just in words. You don't just tell us you love us, but as we look at how time and time and time and time again, you have demonstrated your love by being present, by being proactive, by being the provider, the provision for not just these saints of old, but in our own lives as well. You have demonstrated your faithfulness to us. We, like the sons of Korah, meditate on your love.

Father, as we take the cup and we take the bread. These emblems, these symbols and signs, these signifiers of how you have loved us by giving us Jesus, who has taken us by his death on the cross from the kingdom of darkness and brought us in to the kingdom of light, we give you thanks that we also are the sons and daughters of God, no longer slaves, but children of the most High. Because of your wonderful, gracious, amazing love and we give thanks in Jesus, through Jesus, by Jesus, Amen.

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