



Praying Together for Justice

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open to Psalm 82. It’s good to be together around God’s Word. Before we dive into the Word today, we’re going to spend some concentrated time in prayer. I want us to pray for a particular group within our church. This was not planned, but the government shutdown lasting until January 20th was obviously not planned either. I know there are many people across our church who are directly affected by that shutdown with a variety of different challenges.

I just want you to know if you are in that position that we are your family and you are not alone in that. I want us to pray for you. We have different avenues set up on all of our campuses for helping individuals and families when we face particular critical needs—starting with the people you know best in the church and asking for help. This is what the church does. So please don’t be afraid or hesitant to go to brothers and sisters in Christ—the group you’re a part of or to one of your pastors—just to say, “Hey, we’re struggling in this way.” That is always available when we walk through particular needs, but especially for those who are walking through this right now.

So if you would be willing, in just a moment, I’m going to ask you to stand if you or your family are currently being directly affected by the government shutdown; if this is affecting your work ability and/or your paycheck in some way. I’m realizing that doesn’t affect everyone in the same way. Some are obviously more critically affected than others. You might think, “Well, I don’t know if I should stand. It’s not affecting me as bad as it is this person over here.” I would say regardless, if this is affecting your work ability and/or your paycheck directly in some way, then I want to ask individuals and families to stand so we have an opportunity to gather around and pray specifically for you. Now let’s all stand and if you’re near one of these folks, just gather around and put a hand on their shoulder. I want to lead us in prayer for these brothers and sisters.

O God, we praise You for being a refuge and strength, an ever-present help in the midst of whatever happens in this world. We are thankful, O God, that when a government shuts down that You as our God never shut down. You are always on Your throne, always ruling, always reigning. We can be sure of that tomorrow, next year, ten trillion years from now You will still be reigning. You are the constant King and we put all our trust in You.

So we pray on behalf of these whose work and/or paycheck is affected by the current struggles in our country. We pray for relief from those struggles. We pray for wisdom, grace, unity for the leaders of

our country to come to conclusions to restore our government. God, we pray for Your common grace in them. God, we pray for Your provision for these brothers and sisters specifically. I don't presume to know the different challenges that are represented in this room, but You do. So we pray for Your physical provision, Your financial provision, emotional provision, in every needed way, O God, please show Yourself as the Provider of those in need.

I was reading in Proverbs this week, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run to it and are safe." So we praise You for Your strength. We pray that You would show it on behalf of Your people and through Your people. Help us be the church to one another at all times, particularly in this circumstance. We pray that You would make us sensitive to people all across our city who are walking through these struggles right now, who may not know Christ and may not have a church family. God, we pray that You would use us as salt and light, that we would be a demonstration of Your love and Your care for others in our city as we walk through this time.

We want Your name to be hallowed across Washington, DC. We pray that You would use us as a church in the way we care for one another and the way we care for those around us in the middle of this to cause Your name to be known as good, gracious, loving and glorious. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

We're actually going to be spending a good bit of time today during our gathering in prayer. So thank you to those of you who were part of our all-night prayer a couple weeks ago. It was awesome and I look forward to doing similar things in the days ahead, as well as in our worship gatherings. I want us to grow in praying, not just in our worship gatherings, but in our personal lives.

We talked a couple weeks ago about the most important thing in your life not being your spouse. It's not your children. It's not your job. It's not your finances. It's not your health. The most important thing in your life is your personal intimacy with God. Everything flows from that. Husbands, the greatest need your wife has from you is your personal intimacy with God. Wives, vice versa. Parents, more than your kids need you to put food on the table this week, more than they need you to take them to school or to this sport or that activity, they need your personal intimacy with God. The most important thing in all our lives is our personal intimacy with God.

I want to grow in this way in my own life through prayer and help shepherd us toward that end individually and together. So we're going to do something a little different today. We're going to spend concentrated time not just studying the Word but praying the Word. We talked at the recent prayer gathering about John 15:7 making this clear: "*If you abide in Me,*" Jesus said, "*and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you.*" So in that sense, the key to prayer is letting God's Word drive our praying.

We're going to let Psalm 82 drive us to pray, particularly in light of injustice around us in the world. Psalm 82 is a prayer for justice and mercy in the middle of injustice and evil. This last week was

the March for Life in our city. My family and I were down there with over 100,000 others. Our church hosted a conference Wednesday night through Friday about what it means to be pro-life for all.

Also, tomorrow is Martin Luther King Jr. Day, when we pause as a country to remember the dignity of every life, regardless of color or background. We recognize the need for racial harmony and unity in our country, particularly in light of our past ways, which carry into our present, as much as we would like it not to be so.. Also this week, Open Doors—whom we have partnered together with in supporting the persecuted church around the world—was in town this last week. Their president and a variety of persecuted brothers and sisters from different places released the “Open Doors World Watch List,” which is basically a list of the countries where persecution is the most fierce.

When we were planning this Sunday, we said, “In light of what’s going on in our world— injustice, evil, sin—we should set aside some time to pray.” I want to read Psalm 82 and let it lead us to pray. We’ll go through our outline, but we want to leave as much time as possible to talk about the Word, then do it. The Bible says in Psalm 82:

*God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
2 “How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked?
3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”
5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
6 I said, “You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
7 nevertheless, like men you shall die,
and fall like any prince.”
8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for you shall inherit all the nations!*

Let me briefly show you in this Psalm Who God is and what we do in response to Who God is in a world of injustice. That’s the background behind this Psalm.

Who God is

Let’s look at three attributes of God. Our God, the God we’ve gathered to worship today, is the sovereign King over all. One of the things that makes this Psalm difficult to understand is confusion over the little-g gods and who they are in this passage. There are two main possibilities. Some believe that’s a reference to demons and evil spirits. Others believe these gods are human judges and rulers in the world

who are promoting injustice. In John 10, Jesus actually quotes from Psalm 82, referring to the judges of Israel as the ones whom God called little-g gods here. They were leaders God put in place to represent His justice in the world.

Regardless of how you understand that, though, the point is clear that there is one God and He reigns over everyone and everything—over all men, all women, all rulers, all leaders, all judges in the world, all principalities and powers, including the devil and demons who influence men, women, rulers and leaders. God reigns over all of them. He's the sovereign King over all.

The second attribute of God is He's the good Judge of all. The gods referenced in verse two who were judges in the world were not good. They were unjust, oppressing the weak and fatherless, not maintaining the rights of the afflicted and the destitute and giving the weak over into the hands of the wicked. As a result, all the foundations of the earth were shaken (verse 5). This is huge.

When the justice of God is not reflected in the judges , rulers , leaders , presidents , prime ministers and politicians of this world, the result is a shaking of the earth's foundations and a spreading of evil. That's what happens when sinful leaders turn away from the good Judge over all. God help us. May we be warned as a church, in our country and in this world that it is never good to turn away from the good Judge over all. The fabric and foundation of lives, families and nations crumble and the effects are devastating when we turn away from the good Judge over all. It's particularly devastating for the poor and the weak, the needy and the afflicted, the fatherless and the destitute. Injustice abounds when we rebel against the good Judge over all.

Thankfully I have a third attribute. God is also the merciful Savior for all. We see in this Psalm a picture of God's mercy in a world of injustice. He loves the weak and the fatherless. He cares for the afflicted and the destitute. He rescues the weak and the needy. So when judges, rulers and leaders don't rule, lead and judge according to the good judgment , rule and leadership of God, the result is a lost world that is walking about in darkness, with no foundation to stand on. In the middle of that world, God is merciful and desires to bring rescue , deliverance and justice.

What we must do

In the last verse, the psalmist prays, "*Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!*" This is what we must do. When we see Who God is, what do we do in a world of injustice, abortion , racism , persecution and all kinds of other evils and injustices? We plead for God's justice to reign. We pray. That's what the psalmist does: "*Arise, O God, judge the earth.*" We ask God to show His good judgment to stop injustice and to show His justice.

Then the psalmist prays in the second half of verse eight: "*For you shall inherit all the nations!*" We plead for God's justice to reign and anticipate the arrival of God's Kingdom. This is exactly what we saw two weeks ago when we were looking at Matthew 6. Jesus taught us to pray, "*Our Father in heaven,*

hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your [just] will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We ask God to judge, anticipating Him to come and ultimately establish a new heaven and a new earth where evil and injustice will one day be no more, but where the goodness and justice of our God will reign forever.

This is what we ask God for, this is what we anticipate, then the third thing we do is share God’s gospel with all in need. We don’t just sit back and wring our hands in pious concern while we pray in relative comfort. We work. Micah 6:8 says we are to do justice—all the things we see in this passage—for the fatherless, the weak, the afflicted and the destitute. We want to share the good news of God’s grace and show the effects of God’s love.

See the gospel in this Psalm? If you’re not a Christian, or if you’re exploring Christianity as a visitor, this is the core message of Christianity. Each one of us in our sin against God are weak, needy, afflicted and destitute. Really, each of us are wicked and destined to die, to go through eternity separated from God. But the good news of the Bible is that God in His mercy has not left us alone. He has come to us. He has pursued us in the Person of Jesus Who has died on a cross for our sins so that through faith in Him anyone anywhere can be rescued from sin and delivered from eternal death to have eternal life.

This is the gospel and it’s the greatest news in a world of injustice , sin and evil. In light of God’s merciful salvation for us in Christ, we now live to spread the good news of that gospel to others who are in need. We work for justice in the world as we proclaim the good news of the just and merciful God Who will save all who trust in Him.

That is a quick summary of Psalm 82 and it leads to how we pray. This is where I want to lead us to pray Psalm 82 during the remainder of our time in light of abortion, racism and persecution.

Pray in light of abortion

We’ll start with abortion, what I would say is arguably the injustice that poses the most clear and present physical danger to the most people in our world on a daily basis. Around the world, over 42 million abortions occur every year. That’s over 100,000 every single day. I didn’t even know how to fathom that when I looked in the faces of my four kids as I was praying over them last night when they were getting ready for bed.

I trust we realize over 50 million of these children have been aborted in our country since we made it legal, since we said in 1973 that it was just in our eyes to take a child’s life through abortion. So we need to plead for God’s justice to reign and His mercy to be made known. I’m going to give you some specific ways to pray in light of abortion.

First, let’s pray for the protection of unborn children and the prevention of abortions being considered right now. Last year when we walked through Psalm 139 and were talking about abortion, there was a family I was talking to after the service. They were about to have an abortion, but because of

God's Word that very day, they decided not to. That child is alive today as a result. So let's pray God would do that kind of work in unsuspecting ways—not just in our midst, but in places all across this city and our country.

Let's also pray for hope and help for mothers with unwanted pregnancies. I want to pause and tell you a brief story.

During this week last year, we as a church donated an ultrasound machine to the local Assist Pregnancy Center. I want you to hear from the leader of that particular pregnancy center. Watch this with me.

Video: I'm Leanna. I'm the Executive Director here at Assist Pregnancy Center and I have the privilege of serving with a small group of staff and approximately 60 volunteers in providing the medical and educational resources, counseling and mentoring of Assist Pregnancy Center. A couple months ago I was visiting with some of the staff at McLean about some of the needs that our ministry anticipates for the coming year. I mentioned off-hand that we knew we needed to replace our ultrasound machine.

I didn't think much more of that, but some of the team at McLean had remembered. Then as the church was thinking about how they could strategically partner with a life-affirming ministry like Assist, they decided to gift the ministry with funds to help us purchase a brand new ultrasound machine. Ultrasound is so important for the ministry of the center, because it's how we're able to equip and empower women with information about their pregnancy so they can see and understand fetal development and what's going on in their body during pregnancy. That information often helps women understand that they're carrying a real life—a baby—and it can empower them to make a choice for life. So the fact that McLean wanted to come alongside Assist and empower this ministry with this new resource has been an incredible display of God's kindness and provision in this work. We're so delighted to have a brand-new machine that will allow us to communicate those truths about Who God is as the Author and Designer of life and that each individual life is precious.

Back in January, during recognition of Sanctity of Human Life Month, Pastor Platt preached about the hope of the gospel for all those who have considered or been impacted by abortion. Then the church announced this gift of funds for the ultrasound machine. We're so grateful for McLean's partnership. We want to thank the congregation for desiring to see lives in our community saved and to see fewer children aborted.

We know that approximately 6,000 abortions occur in northern Virginia annually. Those are children whose lives are lost; those are women and men whose lives are never the same. Our heart's desire is to be present and supportive to those individuals as they're making life-impacting decisions. We're so grateful to partner with McLean in that work.

David: We actually received an email from Leanna this week that said, “Just this past week we got word that two different women, both pregnant with twins and who had ultrasounds recently at the Center, have changed their minds. They were planning on having abortions, but instead they chose to give life to their children. Both were profoundly impacted by seeing their developing babies on the ultrasound machine and then having the opportunity to talk over their decisions with a caring mentor.”

So let’s pray for hope and help for mothers with unwanted pregnancies. Let’s also pray for care and provision for children without homes. We want to be there for moms who do have their children but are not able to care for them. That’s already happening through the foster care system in northern Virginia, in the District and in Maryland. We have a whole ministry that’s focused on that. If you want more information along those lines, you can talk with any of our pastors.

Let’s also pray for forgiveness and healing for those who have had abortions or who have supported abortions. We know there are many women across our church and elsewhere who have had or who have supported abortions.

Finally, let’s pray for the end of abortion in our country and in other countries around the world. I was talking with a husband and wife from Ireland this last week at the conference. The laws still protect children there in Ireland, but there’s a lot of work going on to stop that. Let’s pray that Ireland is able to keep those laws and pray that abortion would end.

We’re going to pray in just a moment. I’m going to invite us to start praying out loud at the same time, all of us, thousands of voices across Washington being lifted to God at the same time. While visiting the church in South Korea, I was particularly encouraged and challenged by many brothers and sisters who said, “Yes, that’s how we pray all the time.” In some ways it’s kind of new for us here.

Just to be clear—this is not a whisper prayer time. Picture it like we’re singing. We don’t whisper our songs. We sing loud, so we’re going to pray loud. We’re going to cry out to God and I know He’s pleased with the sound of thousands of voices across Washington right now crying out to Him, believing that when we pray, it matters and He hears us.

I’m aware for those of you who are not followers of Christ, this might be a little awkward. I’m trying to put myself in your shoes and here’s what I would encourage you to do. Just observe people during this time who really believe there’s one true God Who, when we speak to Him, He hears us. He answers when we ask according to His Word and our prayers actually affect the way He works in the world. It’s an awesome thought and we have the privilege of being part of praying to God—it matters.

We’re going to pray in all these ways in light of abortion, then I’m going to invite Julie Mad-Bondo to join me up here. Julie is from the Central African Republic and her husband Cyrus is one of our pastors. Last year at this time, Julie shared that she had had an abortion. She shared some of the journey she walked through after that and now she is working for life in the inner city and in different places around the world. God’s grace is all over our sister.

After we've all prayed out loud for a couple minutes, then Julie will start to pray and that will be the time when we'll bring it to a close. She will represent all of us at that point, so join her in your heart with what she is praying. Right now, let's bow our heads and cry out to God in light of abortion around us.

Julie: Merciful Father, God of justice, God of love, we bow our hearts before You, remembering the unborn. Father God, we come here, we look good, we smell good, but deep down inside, I represent many, many women in this room and outside these doors who have committed this sin—such a huge sin against You of having an abortion. But You have forgiven me and set me free. Father, I pray that the women in the sound of my voice would know that there is forgiveness for them and that You can set them free.

Father, I pray for the women today who are contemplating abortion. Reach their hearts. Touch their hearts. I thank You for what You're going to do. I thank You for our pastor who is speaking out about this issue of abortion. Thank You, thank You, thank You. May Your justice reign. Father, forgive us as a nation, as a people, here in the United States and around the world. We beg for Your forgiveness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pray in light of racism

Thank you, Julie. So now, we're going to pray to God, the sovereign King of all, the Judge of all, the merciful Savior for all, in light of racism. I know we would like to think it's past us, but I was preaching in Atlanta this last week and had a conversation with a pastor who, less than ten years ago, was removed from his church in rural Georgia because he was willing to let an African-American family join the church. He told me that the lay leaders in the church told him, "If this family tries to join, it will cause too much division. If you think differently, then you should start to look elsewhere for a place to pastor."

There are extremes like that, but there is also the reality that Sundays in churches are one of the most segregated times in our country—where 95% of white Americans attend predominately white churches and 90% of African-Americans attend predominately black churches. I'm so thankful for God's grace through more than a hundred different nations and even many more ethnicities who are together in our church. I praise God for the lack of a majority ethnicity over at Montgomery County right now, and almost no majority ethnicity here at Tysons—and our other campuses are growing in that regard as well.

Let's pray together for the realization of and repentance for personal prejudice, that God would open each of our eyes to any blind spots we might have. Pray that instead of our pride rising up that humility would be the first thing that comes to our minds and hearts on this issue.

Let's pray for increasing harmony and unity across ethnicities in the church and in our country.

Let's pray for mercy for those who suffer oppression because of their ethnicity, both here and around the world.

Let's pray for leaders to have wisdom and courage in combating unjust systems, structures, principles or practices.

And let's pray for the ultimate end of ethnic discrimination.

We're going to pray now in the same way across this room and in other campuses, then after a couple moments, Art Dean is going to lead us in prayer. Art has been a faithful member here at McLean Bible Church for 13 years and a faithful usher every week. Most people who walk in don't know they're walking past and getting a bulletin from a Two-star Major General who served 31 years in the army, who has been in combat from Vietnam to Desert Storm. He has received numerous awards, including the U.S. Army Distinguished Service Medal twice. Before all that, this brother was born into a family of ten kids in the segregated South. He grew up in all black schools. He wasn't able to use white drinking fountains or restrooms in his home town. He was telling me before the service about driving past the white high school to go to his black high school, where they met in a wood building and put their own coal on for heat in the building. He said their gymnasium was a dirt floor, not the nice gyms we're used to. The bathrooms were outside with no running water.

He's lived through racism in all sorts of ways, but by God's grace, he came to Christ as a child. He had a precious mom who made him go to church. Art went on to do all the things I just mentioned, and more to the point, his home town in the South eventually brought him back to give him a key to the city.

So after we've prayed in light of racism here and around the world, then you'll hear Art praying and he'll close this time together. So let's go before God right now and pray in light of racism.

Art: Let us pray, please. Dear Father, on this very special Martin Luther King Day weekend, we come to You. First of all, Father, we want to say thank You for Your love, for Your Son Jesus. Thank You for all the things You've done for us. Thank You so much for what You did on the cross and how You made a way for each of us who believe to live with You forever and ever.

Now, Father, we want to thank You also for Your example in this area of racial harmony, because You saw no color. You saw no ethnic background. You taught us by example, but unfortunately sin has prevented us from following it. I want to thank You for what You did for me as a young boy growing up in a segregated environment. I had a mother, grandmother and grandfathers who loved You and taught us that two wrongs don't make a right. They also taught us that it was important for us to forgive and move forward.

As we have grown in society, we have lost that kind of love and forgiveness. But You have placed in my life the ability to do my very best to work with everyone based on their ability. As Dr. King

said, “Let’s judge people based on their character.” I ask You to continue to bless and guide us. We need a country built on equal justice for all. Regardless of their station in life, regardless of what they look like, we want everybody to be treated the same.

So Father, use this church to be an example, to be a beacon in this lost world. Help us show our friends in the Greater Washington area, around the United States and even around the world how You can cause us to live together in harmony, appreciating each other and treating each other with dignity. We would ask that You do this for us collectively and individually, then we will forever be careful to praise You and give You the glory as You give us those kinds of lives to be an example. We ask this and we give these praises in Jesus’ name. Amen.

David: Thank you, brother.

Pray for persecuted believers and their persecutors

The last thing we’re going to pray is in light of persecution, but first I’m going to invite a few folks up here whom I mentioned were in town this week. Dr. David Curry, who is president of Open Doors, and then a couple folks who live in areas of the world that are experiencing persecution. As they’re coming up, I would ask that you not take any photos of them. There’s one sister in Christ who’s here who’s not going to be on stage because that would put her at risk.

Dr. Curry has brought them and is hosting them here. This is Daniel and Daniel. I think you can remember their names—picture Daniel, the Old Testament prophet who prayed without fear. There are all kinds of ways you can pray specifically for them by name. Daniel #1 is from northern Iraq and Daniel #2 is from northern Nigeria.

Daniel #1, we hear about ISIS, but please share with us the effects of ISIS even now in northern Iraq, particularly on those who claim the name of Jesus?

Daniel #1: Well, first, on August 6, 2014, ISIS started to invade all the Christian cities and villages in Mosul, especially in the Nineveh Plains. In just one night, more than 120,000 Christians fled from their homes and towns, looking for peaceful places to live. At that time, the church there did not have the capacity to take care of all those people, but many churches became shelters for them. My church was one of those shelters, hosting over 1,600 people, including over 375 children. They were in very difficult circumstances, living in tents and caravans for over three years.

You have heard on the news that ISIS has been defeated, but I think ISIS exists in two forms. First, it’s a military force and that has been defeated. There are no longer people wearing the black uniforms. Even though they’ve been defeated militarily, mentally they still exist. Today ISIS lives on as an ideology and is present within a huge population, especially in those people who lived under their control for over three years.

Today we can see this when we return and our neighbors consider us to be second-class citizens, so living beside them is very dangerous for Christians. Also, when the Christians returned to their homes, most of their churches were burned and their houses were destroyed.

I really want to ask you now to stay in solidarity with us. We need your prayers for peace to be achieved in my country. We also need prayers that the Christians would be given hope to stay in Iraq and to rebuild it, as salt and light in that country.

David: Thank you for that, Daniel. Now for a very different picture, but strangely similar in some ways, tell us about northern Nigeria.

Daniel #2: My name is Daniel and am from the northern part of Nigeria. Nigeria has a total of 36 states, including Abuja, the capital. Northern Nigeria has a total of 19 states. We have two groups in northern Nigeria who were terrorizing the church. In one place the church was completely on fire. The Boko Haram is a group whose goal is stopping anything that has to do with Western education and they believe the source of Western education is the church. Because they want to stop anything that has to do with Western education, they believe they need to silence and completely destroy the presence of Christianity in northern Nigeria.

The second group is the Fulani Herdsmen. This group is terrorizing the north-central part of Nigeria. What they normally do is attack late in the evening or in the middle of the night when Christians are sleeping. You just hear the sound of rifles from all four corners of the village. Then they set the houses ablaze, killing, maiming and destroying life. Many women have been killed, even pregnant women, and many children, youth and even the most elderly are also killed. They want to eliminate everyone.

This is briefly what has been happening. As Open Doors has reported, Nigeria is #12 on the list of countries that are persecuted, because thousands upon thousands of Christians have been killed. This started right before the election riot in 2011, and these activities are continually going on through today. The government will say they have brought an end to this, but I tell you, that's not true. They're still going on and people are dying, not because we have done anything evil, but because we have chosen to side with Christ.

David: Thank you. Villages in northern Nigeria are being attacked today. I remember Hebrews 13:3, which is a direct command to every follower of Christ in this room: *“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated”*—implying “as though you were mistreated with them” —*“since you also are in the body.”* Are our brothers and sisters around the world in your prayers on a continual basis? We are in the body with them. They are our family and we pray for

them. We do not turn a deaf ear to our persecuted brothers and sisters in the world. We cannot just go on in the freedom we have—which we praise God for—and not remember them.

As we were talking earlier, Dr. Curry said, “The only real way to stop persecution is to stop proclaiming Christ.” But that’s not an option for our brothers and sisters around the world. So how do we pray? We pray for persecuted believers, that they would hold fast to God’s love for them and the hope God gives to them. We pray that the Holy Spirit would strengthen them and their families. We pray for their boldness in sharing the gospel amidst persecution. That’s what the early church prayed in Acts 4:29, *“And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.”*

We should also pray for their persecutors, that they would see Christ in the saints they are persecuting and be saved. In the next few minutes, let’s just cry out to God to do a Saul-like work in some persecutor today and bring somebody who’s persecuting Christians to faith in Christ and turn them into a proclaimer of the grace of God in the gospel? Let’s pray, believing that God hears and that He has the power to answer right now. Pray that they would see Christ in the saints they’re persecuting and that they would be brought to justice.

So right now I’m inviting us to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world, then Daniel from Nigeria is going to close this time in prayer.

Daniel #2: In Jesus’ name we pray. Father, we thank You. The Word teaches us in the book of Hebrews that our struggle against sin has not led us to the point of shedding our own blood for our sin. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world and gave His life, and indeed, according to the book of Isaiah, by His wounds we are healed. Father help us, that this healing would be complete in our lives. I believe we are to go on living. Cause us to live in a way that brings glory to Your name.

If we are to go on living, help us to live so that the propagation of Your gospel, against all odds and by whatever means, cannot be deterred. You said we should preach in season, when people want to hear it, and out of season, when people hate it. Many Christians in 50 countries of the world are hurting, not because they have done something evil, but because they have decided to stand by You.

Lord, we pray for whatever is needed for Your gospel to continue to be propagated. I desire that You’ll touch the hearts of the people seated here. Though they are not facing personal persecution, yet they are part of the one family of God. The Bible says You have destroyed the wall that divides and have made one solid wall, that today in Christ we are one. So, Father, help them to identify with us, , help them to also be sure to stand firm in their faith until we meet to part no more with You. Thank You, Father. We believe You continue to protect us, even as we continue to propagate Your good news, because that is the only thing You have left for us, and nothing more beside that. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

David: Amen. Thank you, brother.

So why do we pray like this? Why do we set aside time in a worship gathering like this just to pray? It's because of these issues of injustice and obviously so many others. We know the answer is not ultimately political. Yes, we want to be wise on that level regarding these issues and others. But our answer is ultimately found in God. We pray to God. Our hope is found in God and in the gospel. We know that ultimately injustice will not come to an end until Jesus comes back. So our consummate prayer is Revelation 22:20, "*Come, Lord Jesus!*" Come quickly!

God, may it be so. Help us in our day to work for justice, to show Your mercy, and to proclaim Your gospel. Help us to work with our eyes set on the sky, looking forward to the day when You shall return. Persecution will not have the last word, racism will not have the last word, , abortion will not have the last word. Sin , injustice , evil and death will not have the last word. Jesus, You will have the last word. You are our hope, You are our King and we praise You. We pray that You would use us. Make us the church You desire us to be in this day, until that day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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