

Scripture reading this morning also comes from Romans 10, verses 14 through 17.

How then can they call on him they have not believed in?

And how can they believe without hearing about him?

And how can they hear without a preacher?

And how can they preach unless they are sent?

As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

but not all obeyed the gospel.

For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our message?

So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

Thank you.

We do need this morning to

Behold the glory of our King, Jesus.

And as we've sung, it's the Holy Spirit that opens our eyes to help us see Christ, who softens our hearts to receive him.

But God also uses people and individuals to help us and aid us in that too.

And I really appreciate the worship team and the tech guys who put in time and effort to help lead us and serve us as we worship the Lord together.

One of the commitments that I made going into pastoring at the youth group level and the

tried to maintain it even here as a senior pastor, is to trust the Lord by not sacrificing individuals and their good for my perceived need or maybe a felt need by the congregation within the church.

So if it came between a program and

or certain style of worship or whatever, uh, and an individual's spiritual good and the good of their family, we're going to prioritize the individual's spiritual good and the good of their family and trust the Lord to, uh, meet the need, uh, congregationally as well.

And, uh, we're just hit a season here with the worship team where we've got some folks that, uh, have family situations and, um,

just, uh, situations that they're in and need to step back for a little bit.

And we said, that's fine, right?

That's, that's totally fine.

You tell us, uh, where you're at, what you and your family need.

Uh, and we're, we're happy to help, uh, help you in those situations as we, as we can.

And we'll trust that the Lord will, uh, continue to lead us in worship and to speak to our hearts and stir our hearts to give him glory and praise.

And, uh, when we met for a prayer meeting last Sunday, uh,

Drew led us acapella in some songs that maybe a few of us haven't sung in a little while.

And you all sang out wonderfully.

I mean, it was beautiful.

I haven't sung acapella like that in a while and had such a full backing of people behind us.

And I really enjoyed that.

And even today with a kind of a stripped down worship team.

hearing you all sing, especially the songs we know really well, was just really encouraging to me and very worshipful, and I trust pleasing to the Lord this morning.

So thank you, Drew and Jenna, leading us today, and really appreciate it.

And I appreciate the rest of the members of the worship team.

And again, it's the Lord who's leading us.

Jesus is our worship leader, right?

He leads us before God shows us who he is, and we trust that he'll continue to lead us as his people in worship.

We're going to look at our vision statement a little bit more today, but more importantly, we're going to look at God's word and what he has to say for us and the vision he has for us.

Let's pray and ask for his help again this morning.

Heavenly Father, as we consider what it means to be a part of your church and a part of your people, we ask that you would open our eyes to see your glory, that you would open our eyes to see

what your church is, what you've made her to be, and who we are as members of it, and that you would help us to discern what we need to do and who we need to be and the identity that we need to lean into as a result of those things.

And we just pray that you do this by the Spirit's help.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

So last week we saw that Christ loves his church.

That was the main point, the main thrust.

Jesus loves his church, and he demonstrated that by laying himself down for her.

present us holy and blameless before the Lord.

And we become a part of that church by confessing, like Peter did in Matthew 16, that Jesus is Christ, or he is Lord Messiah, and he's our Savior and Lord.

And then that seed of faith that's expressed in that confession is watered and it produces fruit through the Holy Spirit, through the word, and the local church that is marked by the fruit of the Spirit

and the Word.

So the question we want to answer over the next three weeks and the question that we wanted to answer with the vision statement that we adopted at our last annual meeting and that will be posted out in our foyer for us to remember week in and week out is how do we, how do you and I, live in community with a local church so that we're loving the church like Christ loves the church and that we're, you and I, growing and producing fruit

so that we're experiencing that washing and renewal that Paul talks about in Ephesians that Christ purchased for us.

Another way to think about this is we want to answer the question, like, what's my role?

How do I fit in at LBC?

How do I experience the riches that Christ died to give his church, practically speaking, here at LBC?

Well, I've tried to keep it simple so that

if you find yourself in a dry place or you've lost your way, that we can help you get back on track with your walk with God, in particular, in community with his people.

So the way we've kept it simple is three H's.

You know me, three points, and try to alliterate.

So our alliteration is hear, hope, help.

All right, hear, hope, help.

Today we're gonna look at hear.

And what we mean by hear is that faith sprouts and grows by the hearing of the gospel in God's word.

Therefore, priority one for members of LBC is to receive God's word as it is preached from the pulpit, taught in the classroom, and shared in community.

All right, faith sprouts and grows by

By the hearing of the gospel and God's word, therefore priority one is to receive God's word as it's preached, taught, and shared in community.

To see this today and how this affects kind of our life together, we need to hear the word.

We also, as an organization, need to preach the word.

And also, individually, we need to receive the word.

So let's look at hearing.

This...

This vision statement, these things that we're to do, as they should, are rooted in what things are.

So if we root what we do, a method, in a false understanding of what things are, we're gonna get bad results.

Another way to think about this is if I take an owner's manual from a toaster,

and I try to operate my vehicle by that owner's manual, things are not gonna go well, right?

If I have no knowledge of how a car works, and I'm looking at an owner's manual for a toaster, and I got these methods for caring for my toaster,

Caring for my car is not going to work really well, right?

Our methods have to match what reality, like what things are and how, like a proper understanding of who we are and what we've been called to do.

So we need to understand what faith is, right?

A true belief in God and a true faith.

change from the inside out that produces a walk with him.

We've got to understand what that is before we start coming up with methods on how to encourage it and produce it.

So Paul tells us pretty clearly here in Romans 10, 14 to 17.

I'm going to read it one more time, even though Pastor Drew read it for us already.

Paul tells us that this method or these instructions for the church are rooted in what faith is.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed and

First thing,

that we want to do and our first responsibility when things especially go off the rails or if you're just not sure, like, what do I do here?

You hear the word.

You come and hear the word because the nature of faith is such that it grows and it's fostered and produced when we hear the gospel.

The main thing we need to see from this passage here is that the dire necessity of preaching and proclaiming the word is

the good news is rooted in the nature of faith that it's produced by hearing.

Faith is such that it comes by hearing, and not just hearing anything, but specifically hearing the word of Christ, the gospel.

Faith doesn't come to us through a religious ritual or experience.

Faith doesn't come by watching a beautiful sunset.

Faith doesn't come to us by a deeply moving melody.

Faith can't be passed down genetically from our parents.

Faith comes by hearing the gospel.

And when we hear the beautiful news of Christ's redeeming work and it sparks hope and trust in us, maybe for the first time, it will also do that again and again as we walk with Christ together.

And we hear the gospel, and we preach the gospel to ourselves, and we hear the gospel preached by other people.

And this is an out-of-character for God.

So this idea of something being produced by the word of God or the word of Christ, not new to God, it is actually quite in line with God's character.

Because God, all throughout his word, creates through speaking.

So God brought the world into existence in Genesis 1 through speaking.

Genesis 1-3 says...

And God said, let there be light, and there was light.

And the refrain of that first chapter is, and God said, and God said, and God said.

Right, over and over again.

And these great and wonderful creatures and creation comes into existence.

God spoke to Abraham.

and called him out from among the nations, and he created from Abraham a people for his own possession.

Then we find out in the New Testament that this powerful word that God spoke in creation into being with, and that through whom he called out his people, is actually a person.

John 1, one to three tells us, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

And then we're told in Hebrews that God is still speaking through his son, right?

He's still speaking that word through his son.

Hebrews 1, 1-2, long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Through the word of Christ, God is creating faith in dead, cold hearts like yours and mine and bringing many to life in his son.

Paul tells us in Ephesians that we were dead in our trespasses and sins until God made us alive with him.

Much like Jesus spoke and called Lazarus out of the grave with a word, God calls us from the spiritual grave by the word of Christ.

So it's no surprise that one of the main things that the church is called to do is to preach the word, right?

It's by God's powerful, creative word, not creative in like, oh, he's so original, but creative in the fact that he actually creates things.

Things happen when he speaks.

By his powerful, creative word, he brings faith into being just like he brought the world into being.

Therefore, it's imperative that his church preach the word, that his church proclaim the word, the good news of Christ.

Paul gives this solemn charge in 2 Timothy 4, 1-5.

I'm going to have you turn there.

We're going to turn to two other passages.

If you turn to the right a few pages, you'll find 1 and 2 Timothy.

If you get to the maps, you've gone too far.

Go back to the left a little bit.

If somebody's using a Bible in the chairs and you got a page number, you can shout it out.

If not, we'll just let it ride.

Chapter numbers are the big numbers.

Verse numbers are the small numbers.

In case you're new, no shame.

All right, 2 Timothy 4, 1 to 5.

This is Paul writing to Pastor Timothy.

It says, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from the

listening to the truth, and wander off into myths.

As for you, always be sober-minded, enduring suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

So Paul's giving final instructions.

Paul's in prison, he's about to die.

and he's giving instructions to the next generation of pastors, specifically Timothy, who was a young pastor, beginning his ministry, and was going to be really the one carrying the torch, one of the ones carrying the torch in this next generation of the church.

And here we have laid out very clearly Paul's, who's inspired by the Holy Spirit, so God's greatest desire for pastors, that the thing that we ought to be primarily giving ourselves to preaching the word.

I mean, his charge to Timothy could not be more solemn.

He's basically saying, this is priority one of utmost importance.

Look at it, verse one.

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.

There's no more important events and people in history or in church history

then the things that, and the people that Paul listed here, and he says, I charge you by all of this, right?

Being accountable to Christ, who's going to judge the living and the dead, and who's going to appear in his powerful kingdom, the fulfillment of his kingdom in the end, preach the word.

And he's not telling him to just come up here and give some cold lecture, right?

He says, reprove, rebuke,

Exhort, do the work of an evangelist.

This is top priority.

This is the thing that he says is going to fulfill Timothy's ministry, preaching the word.

He says, what will fulfill your ministry is faithful, patient, enduring preaching of the word.

Getting up, preaching it in season and out of season, getting up every week and explain it.

Well, we'll talk about what preaching is in a second, but giving the word to people.

Now you might say,

Well, of course, right?

This is, we've heard this before.

Everybody believes this.

All churches do this, right?

Sadly, that's not the case.

And I'm just trying to be clear here.

If I get hit by a bus tomorrow, part of this vision statement and what we're trying to accomplish is if I get hit by a bus tomorrow, you need to know who to bring in to fill the pulpit week in and week out.

So let me just be really clear about what preaching the word is and what it's not.

Everybody streams their services these days, so we don't really have to guess at what's going on.

And most of us do so proudly, right, sharing what's going on in our four walls every Sunday.

And it seems like in a lot of cases, we evangelicals are more interested in speaking topically about things that people would be interested in with some verses sprinkled over it.

This is not always bad.

I'm actually doing it today.

We're talking about preaching and hearing the word today.

Not always bad, but it is problematic for a number of reasons that we'll get into in a second.

What's even worse is that sometimes what we're really interested in is sharing our own thoughts or our own insights on what we think people need to hear.

We'll give our thoughts some authority by claiming that God gave it to us or to share with you all or that God told us something in our quiet time that we would like to share with you all.

And that's possible.

Maybe he did, but maybe he didn't.

And you often will relate a story in the Bible kind of vaguely with something like, you know, there was this time that Jesus met with a blind man and he said something like such and such.

And we'll just kind of speak very vaguely and generally about what the Bible has to say.

That's not preaching the word.

There might be a time to share something that's been moving you, and there might be a time to share with others something that you believe God is laying on your heart with others.

That's fine, but that's not preaching, and it's specifically not preaching the Word.

Paul didn't tell Timothy that he better have a unique, quote-unquote, anointed connection to God that nobody else has in the congregation today.

and then to present his own wisdom and insight into what people need to hear.

He doesn't say that.

He says, preach the word.

Very simply, it's not complicated, but I understand why this happens.

I understand why this happens, and Paul understands why this happens, because he talks about the constant pressure

for something more and something different and something unique and relevant could be the word.

But he gives us the danger here in verses 3 and 4.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

The tendency...

the pull for the preacher is going to be to want to tell the people what they want to hear.

If I'm up here preaching what I think the people need,

The pressures of leadership, the pain of rejection, the desire to be affirmed and liked will begin to blur the line.

Will begin.

It's not about if.

It's about when.

It will begin to blur the line between what the people need to hear and what the people want to hear.

And before you know it, you're preaching stuff from the pulpit that doesn't look anything like what we find in Scripture.

So preach the word.

That's what he says.

Preach the word.

Keep it simple.

God does his powerful work of creation through the word.

Like we're not talking about stick to the Bible and preach the word because that's how we keep the tradition, right?

And that's how we keep to the old ways.

No, we preach the word because God's word is what does the beautiful, creative, powerful work of renewing hearts, right?

That transforming us from the inside out, making us new creations, not my grand wisdom.

I'm not smarter than this book or the God behind this book.

You don't need to hear my wisdom.

You need to hear from the Word.

So what is preaching then?

If it's so important and God's creative work comes through the Word, why don't we just get up here and read it?

Start Genesis 1-1 and instead of

me talking up here we'll just read the word and God will do his creative work well God doesn't do his work through ritualistically through just hearing sounds that are linked together in a certain order alright so this is not magic it's not some kind of woo woo spiritual spell that's cast over you by reading words in a certain order there has to be understanding look at me and Maya or I'll read it for you here

Preaching is basically just reading and explaining because hearing, there's an implied sense of understanding when Paul talks about hearing in Romans.

Nehemiah 5-8 says this, and I'll see if I can get through these names.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it, all the people stood.

All right, so everybody's coming back from exile.

They've all been banished to different countries, and they're all coming back from exile here.

And they're rebuilding the wall and they're starting to worship God the way they were supposed to be worshiping God.

And Ezra's like, you know, my people haven't had the scriptures in exile.

They weren't allowed to have them.

They weren't allowed to take them with them in most cases.

And so they don't know what God said.

They don't know how God's instructed us to worship.

They need to know.

So he gathers everybody together and he gets the book out and he opens it as all the people stood.

And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, amen, amen, lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord and their faces to the ground.

And Yeshua, Benai, Sherbiah, Jamin, Aqab, Shabbatai, Hodiah, Messiah, Kelita, Ezariah, Josabath, Hanan, Peliah, and the Levites, very specific people, that's why I read the names, right?

Real people, helped the people to understand the law while the people remained in their places.

They read from the book, from the law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense so that the people understood the readings.

It's not complicated here.

They read the book, they gave the sense, so that the people understood.

The priests read, they gave the sense, the people understood.

That's preaching in its essence.

Read the book, give the sense so that the people understand.

Hopefully you understand.

Tell me if you're not understanding.

I'll do better or do my best to do better at giving the sense week in and week out.

Constructive feedback is fine.

Good feedback is good too.

I'd like to hear the things that you enjoyed, but constructive feedback is welcome as well.

So we hear the word proclaimed, we hear the word explained, and then it's our responsibility here to receive the word.

As we understand, we also have a responsibility to receive it.

And there's a couple ways that we're told in Scripture to receive the word.

We'll look at one, and then we'll kind of bounce off the top of the second, because that's actually next week.

All right, so the first one we see is with active discernment in Acts 17, 10 to 12.

How do we receive the word as it's being preached?

One of the ways we're to receive it is with active discernment.

The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.

And when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue.

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica.

They received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Many of them therefore believed and with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

So ladies, this is for you too, working hard to understand the word.

and receive it, not just a male job, even though I believe Paul, and we'll look at this maybe in the spring here, reserves the office of elder and teacher, preacher for men.

What we want to receive on a regular basis is the word of God, because the word of God has the creative power, right, of regeneration and making us into new creations.

We want to receive the word of God.

And so we ought to carefully consider how godly people who love and respect the word apply and interpret the scriptures.

So we're looking at other people who love the word

and who approach the word similarly to we do.

We're looking at how they understand it, right?

How they read it and how they apply it.

And we ought to, as we're doing this, reject anything that is contrary to scripture, right?

That we ought to, as we look at how somebody is explaining scripture and interpreting scripture,

We want to keep what's true to the Scriptures and reject anything that's contrary.

So that means the church, all of us, you, are personally accountable to God for who you follow and what you believe, and that within that, we all have a responsibility to hold each other, even our teachers and our preachers, accountable to the Scriptures.

The Scripture is our ultimate authority.

This means also that we have the responsibility to grow in our ability to read and understand the scriptures for ourselves.

Each of us, you, have a responsibility to grow

in your ability to read and understand the Scriptures for yourselves.

So just a quick question.

Are you reading the Word outside of church?

Are you in the Word, reading, looking to understand what the original author, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is communicating through the Word of God?

This also means that our biblical education curriculum here, Sunday school, as we just look to study the Word together,

also should include some teaching on how to study the Bible for yourself, right?

So that you are able to read the Bible with understanding and grow in that as you walk with the Lord.

We also trust that as our elders are up here preaching and teaching in Sunday school and doing their best, doing our best to carefully handle the word, that you will, over time, pick up on how to read it for yourself.

As we read it and explain it to you, that you will pick up on how the Bible ought to be read and understood, how to do that for yourself.

So we listen, we receive the word with active discernment, and James tells us with humble action.

So if you go to the right one more time, one more time.

I don't know if I said left last time.

Did I say that?

I've been getting my rights and lefts mixed up recently.

Comes with old age, I guess.

I'm almost 40.

James... 40's coming.

James 1, 16 to 25...

This is an incredible passage.

Wish we had more time to spend in it.

Let you do that on your own for now.

James 1, 16 to 25.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

One of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

but be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror, for he looks at himself and goes away at once, forgets what he's like.

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doings.

James says that God brings us forth by the word of truth,

which is consistent with what Paul is teaching us in Romans 10 and what we've seen in these other passages.

That's God's sovereign creative power at work through his word to give us spiritual life.

But James also says that we have a responsibility to receive with meekness the implanted word by responding correctly and obediently to what we see.

And this kind of seems to happen on the front end and on the back end of receiving that implanted word.

So we'll talk about this more next week.

This is not cold duty or rigid obedience.

Rather, it's hope and trust and it's ongoing.

I think James is not just talking about salvation here.

I think he's talking about the word that's already been implanted.

Salvation and justification has already happened.

He's talking about this process of receiving that implanted word and being transformed from one degree of glory to the next, as Paul shares with us in 2 Corinthians.

So again, next week we'll see that this is not cold.

It's not rigid obedience.

We're not just called to do the right things because it's the right thing to do.

Rather, what we're actually supposed to put effort into is hope.

and trust in the Lord that produces that kind of fruit and obedience.

But with that said, that hope and that trust still requires effort and resolve, right?

It's hard to truly hear and receive the word sometimes.

It's hard to look in the mirror when we know that we're not going to like what we see.

But we have grace, right?

And we have hope that we don't have to be that way anymore.

And we have joy and we have power in the gospel to try and to keep trying to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and to be conformed to do his image.

That's the daily battle spoiler alert for next week.

That's what we as believers are to put effort into first and foremost every week.

is keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and to keep him in his proper place in our life.

The other sins and the other struggles and battles are secondary to that and often take care of themselves when we fight that battle correctly.

In other words, it's okay not to be okay.

It's not okay to stay there, right?

That's how we ought to view the Christian life.

I can come to the Lord and receive grace and mercy.

It's okay not to be okay.

but there is a required effort and a required resolve to continue to take the next step of sanctification and growth here in this life.

All right, we're getting too far into next week.

So what?

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, or faith sprouts and grows by the hearing of the gospel and God's word.

Therefore, priority one for us here, for members of LBC, is to receive God's word as it's preached, as it's taught,

and as it's shared.

So really, practically speaking, quick, I mean, the most obvious application ought to be, you got to be here, right?

You got to be here, come to Sunday school, come to the services, hear the word preached and taught.

Same for our kids, right?

Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of Christ.

If we want our kids to walk in faith, let's expose them to as much of that teaching and preaching and folks that are older than them, that love them, that will speak the word of Christ into their life.

You know, we tend to view preaching and teaching as like one of the things that the church does.

And I can kind of pick and choose, you know, how to be involved in it.

It's essential, right?

It's essential for our growth.

It's what made you a believer, right?

It's what called you out of darkness and into life, the preaching of the word.

And it's what's going to get you home.

And it's what's going to make you and conform you into Christ's image.

So you need to be here.

And again...

Being with God's people, with real flesh and blood people that he has redeemed in a room with them, there's no substitute for that, right?

We can listen to podcasts.

We can listen to other teachers and preachers online.

But being with people that know you, who are known by you and who know you in the context of the preaching of the word, that's what we're commanded to do.

And I think that we're missing some of the power of God's creative word when we don't do it his way.

All right, that was a little too much of a soapbox.

But if you're having trouble, and I recognize this is hard, right?

So, you know, it's a very simple thing, and I've said that a few times, but it's a simple thing that's difficult.

Like if you're having, maybe you're just not an auditory learner, and you're like, why did God make me this way?

If his primary means of communication is, you know, auditory,

I get it.

We're all going to struggle in different ways to receive the Word of God as it's preached and taught.

We do have other venues like Sunday school and one-on-one discipleship in small groups, we'll talk about that in a little bit, where you can get the Word of God worked in and explained in different ways, maybe some more visual ways or hands-on ways.

But as far as preaching goes, just talking about Sunday here, I would encourage you to get a journal Bible.

Or I've downloaded the Logos app, which costs a little money.

My brother-in-law had a free coupon, so I got hooked up with it.

Maybe somebody else does.

But the Logos app just has a bunch of different versions of the Bible.

And I can just kind of highlight part of the Bible and make a quick note.

And I'll jot down questions.

I'll jot down observations.

You don't need to recreate my outline.

Like,

That'll be available for you on the website.

You can go find the outline somewhere else.

I would encourage you to just interactively, as you're listening, jot down notes in the scriptures about how I, or whoever's up here, is explaining the text.

Does that make sense?

As I lay out the text for you, you should be actively thinking, what do I think this means?

And then what questions do I have?

And then as I answer them, maybe jot down that note too.

So I'll just put in questions, comments.

I'll underline stuff like repeated ideas or words as the preacher is preaching so that if I want to go back or when I come back the next year through my devotional reading, I'll have some of those notes that I already have given to me by whoever was explaining the text from the pulpit to help guide me as I read that the next time around.

So get a journal Bible, but like interact with the text itself as whoever's up here is explaining it.

And if they're not explaining the text and you're not getting many notes or questions down about the text, then you know we have a problem, right?

So also, when you are at a retreat, when you're here in church, when you are wherever you're at and you're hearing somebody preach the word,

especially if you're getting, I'm not going anywhere.

I feel like part of my job is to prepare this church and help this church be prepared for the day that the Lord draws me away for one reason or another, right?

Whoever's here,

Are they helping you understand what the text is saying?

Is that what they're doing?

Are they reading the book and giving you the sense of the text?

Are they helping you discern what the text is saying?

Are they helping you understand what the author of the text is trying to say?

That's the most important question.

The author of this book was inspired by the Holy Spirit to record it.

I'm not coming up with anything new.

I'm not coming up with anything more profound than what the Holy Spirit has recorded here for us.

He's called me to help interpret that for you and explain that to you and maybe help you apply that to your life.

But I'm not going beyond what the Scripture says, nor should anyone that stands in this pulpit.

There should also be a time, one last thing, should also be a time when the word is preached.

Sometimes when the word is taught, sometimes we'll run out of time like we did today in Sunday school.

But always when the word is preached, there ought to be a time when you put down your pen and you humbly receive the word, expecting to not walk away the same.

That's why I usually try to close, I could outline for you my conclusions and stuff like that, but I try to close with the title slide up there, encouraging you to just set the pen down for a minute and fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, see the glory of God, and then not walk away the same.

There ought to be a time that we receive the word

humbly, where we receive the word like a man looking in the mirror and trusting that we will act on and remember what we see and go away a little bit different.

May that be so today.

Let me pray and we're going to sing one more song.

Heavenly Father, you have spoken from the beginning.

and you have not been silent throughout history.

Lord, you have spoke through your word to your people and to anyone that will hear in the word.

So he who has ears to hear, let him hear, Lord, as we share your word here today.

Lord, we ask that you would give us increasingly ears to hear and eyes to see the great riches that you have given us in Christ as your word unfolds unto us.

And would you give us and strengthen our faith to trust in you and to hope in you to further and more firmly receive those things that you have already given us and the strength to just live in them and shine your glory out through them.

Lord, we just thank you again for the time we've spent in your word as your people.

We ask that you would receive all the glory and the honor for what we've said and done.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.