

Good morning.

I'm going to be reading from 2 Corinthians 3, verse 12, to 2 Corinthians 4, verse 6.

It is found in the Pew Bibles on page 1156.

Therefore, having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech.

and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.

But their minds were hardened, for until this very day, at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies,
over their heart.

But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in the mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord the Spirit."

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we receive mercy, we do not lose heart.

But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing."

in whose case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

For God who said, light shall shine out of darkness, is the one who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

All Jesus Pastor Drew, who made some really nice graphic art for it.

The good news is we have use for it elsewhere on the website and out in the foyer.

You'll see that coming soon.

But yeah, there is an outline within the bulletin.

So if you pull out your bulletin, you'll see an outline there.

And I'll read the quotations a little more slowly this morning so that we can digest them.

There are a couple...

longer quotes, but I think if I take my time with them, we'll be able to wrap our minds around them.

Last week, we're working through our vision statement, new vision statement for the next, for the foreseeable future.

And last year, or last week, we saw that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, right?

So,

Priority number one for members of LBC is to put yourself in a position to hear the word, right?

To hear the word taught, to hear it communicated, to hear it shared amongst ourselves.

We'll look at that a little bit more next week when we talk about how we can help one another hear the word.

But faith comes by hearing, right?

And hearing by the word of Christ.

Faith is what we're really after, a hope and trust in God.

So today we're going to talk a little bit more.

We're going to look at what kind of hearing produces faith.

Not all hearing produces faith.

But you can't have faith without hearing, but you can't have hearing without faith.

So what kind of hearing do we need to have in order to produce faith?

And then what does that faith look like?

We've chosen the word hope to help describe all that's going on there.

And you'll see why I think by the time we get to the end of the sermon.

These couple sermons are probably the most important sermons I'm going to preach here in a long time.

These are foundational concepts for the Christian life and the Christian walk.

This is how we come to know Christ for the first time, but also how we come to know him more and more each day as we walk with him and how we come to know him together in community as we live together.

So hopefully that's enough to have you locked in and dialed in.

It also means that we're talking about some pretty big stuff, some deep concepts, some larger concepts, and I'll do my best to present them simply, but they're also going to be unpacked over time, right, as we preach through the word week in and week out.

Let's just ask for the Lord's help this morning, and we'll dive into this passage and look at how we grow and how we

continue to walk in faith with our Lord and Savior.

Heavenly Father, I do ask that you would open our eyes to see your beauty and your glory.

Lord, as we heard from the book of Job this morning in Sunday school, Lord, we've heard with our ears, but we need to see with our eyes your majesty and your glory.

Would you give us understanding, not just in our heads,

but in our hearts and deep down in our souls as well.

Lord, would you help us to behold your beauty and your majesty, maybe for the first time this morning, but new and fresh ways for those of us that have already put our hope and faith in you.

We thank you for this opportunity to open your word together, to consider what you have for us together.

Lord, we're thankful that you didn't leave us on an island up to our own wits and cleverness, Lord, but you've given us each other and dwelt by the Holy Spirit to help us know you and walk with you.

Pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

Why is it that we're really good at seeing other people's flaws and faults, but really struggle to see our own?

Have you ever noticed this?

I remember having, when I was first married, within that first year,

having just a delightful conversation with another couple.

I thought it was great, you know, we were having a good talk.

And then as the other couple was walking away, my wife said to me, and they're out of earshot, you know, she said to me, you talked way too much in that conversation.

They were trying to get away, you know, like 10 minutes ago and you just wouldn't let them.

And I, blissfully unaware, you know, just thought it was wonderful.

We all struggle to see ourselves clearly, don't we?

I mean, pride is one of the most insidious sins because you really don't know that you're doing it when you're doing it.

It kind of blinds you.

That's the nature of pride.

It blinds you to itself.

And we all have these little quirks, faux pas, but even worse, sins that we struggle to see clearly.

Paul shows us in our passage today that we need help to expose our flaws,

and even though there's hope to transform them from the inside out.

And what we need to help expose them and transform them from the inside out is beauty that we can trust, right?

Beauty that we can trust.

As we behold the glory of the Lord, this is how he explains it here in 2 Corinthians.

As we behold the glory of the Lord, we're moved to trust his character, believe his promises, and obey his commands, right?

So as we see God's glory and we see his majesty, we're moved to trust his character,

believe his promises, and obey his commands.

And that order is important.

All right, so Paul in this passage is addressing kind of a twofold problem.

In 2 Corinthians at the end of chapter three, I'm picking up at the end of a problem that he's addressing, and then he's relating the first problem to a second problem that he's beginning to talk about at the beginning of chapter four.

The main problem is that people in general, and we'll look at two categories of people here in a second, can't see God's glory.

Let's look at chapter 3, verses 14.

He sums it up this way in this verse.

But their minds were hardened.

So he's talking about Israel here.

Their minds were hardened for to this day, when they read the Old Covenant or the Old Testament, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away.

They're reading the word.

They're hearing the word like we talked about last week.

But they're not understanding it.

They can't see it.

They can't comprehend it.

Why can't they see God's glory?

Why can't unbelievers, that's the group that Paul addresses there in chapter four, see and comprehend?

and know God's glory when it's shared, when it's proclaimed right in front of them.

Well, Paul gives three reasons in this passage.

There may be more, and I think you can argue that there are more throughout scripture, but he gives three reasons in this passage.

First is right there in verse 14, but their minds were hardened.

For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted.

They're talking about when Moses came down from the mountain, his face was glowing with the glory of God because he was in God's presence.

And they had to put a veil over his face because it was too much for the people.

They couldn't look at him, right?

Even if a reflection of God's glory was too much for the people, so they had to veil it.

And he's saying that same veil, when they read Moses' writings, right, is still there.

They can't see the glory of God anymore.

They can't behold it.

Why not?

And he says there, because of their hardness of mind.

So again, Paul's addressing the problem of why some people are exposed to the word of God, God's promises.

They're even exposed to God's active work among his people.

We see that in Hebrews 6, right?

Some people are a part of the community of God.

and they experience some of the benefits of being a part of the community of God, and yet they still don't believe.

Well, all right, so chapter three at the end here, 12 to 18, and it was really answering and asking the question, how could Israel have the law?

How could they have the prophets?

How could they have the presence of God among them for so long?

and still not believe?

How could there still be unbelievers among them?

And to this day, how could they have Moses' written word and still not believe?

And then chapter four, one to six is saying, how could some people hear the gospel, the gospel of Jesus and what he's accomplished on the cross, proclaim clearly and not see God's glory in it?

The answer to the why question, so why, why can they see it but not believe, is threefold.

Again, the first leg,

is that they're hardened, right?

Their minds are hardened.

So as they read the word, and for Israel, the Old Covenant or the Old Testament, they don't understand rightly, right?

They're not understanding rightly because of this hardness of mind.

Paul's even saying that they can't understand, right?

That they have the spiritual IQ of a rock here, a hardened mind.

If you're a believer here this morning, you've seen this in other people.

And maybe you can look back at your conversion experience and see it in your old self, right?

Friends that don't understand why you would give up certain lifestyles.

Or family members that can't quite understand why you won't accept, affirm, and celebrate some of their life choices or lifestyle choices.

Or folks that can, maybe you've talked with someone who can look at a loving God giving his only son, who sacrifices himself willingly as a gift for his people, and the only thing that they can understand it as is cosmic child abuse.

Their minds are hardened, Paul says.

They can't understand the gospel, the good news, the glory of God rightly as it's proclaimed as they hear it.

But he says in verse 15 that it's not just their minds.

So he goes from 14 to 15.

Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts.

So we see here that the problem is not just an intellectual problem.

This inability here to understand has really nothing to do with actual IQ or intellectual ability.

The essentials of the gospel, the glory of God, can be seen and understood by a child.

right?

It's not complicated.

It's not rocket science.

Rather, the hardness of heart here, or the hardness of mind, is tied to the heart.

Specifically, this idea or this concept of a veiled heart.

Unbelievers not only can't understand what the word is saying, but they can't feel what they ought to feel about the truth.

So I can't

quite comprehend and see God's glory in this message, but I also don't feel the way that this, I ought to feel about this.

It's like standing before the Grand Canyon and going, meh, and walking away, right?

Without beholding the glory and the beauty of the Grand Canyon.

They can't, they won't trust it or believe it because they don't want to, right?

So this is something, Paul's saying can't, and this inability is a real inability to

It's right to say unbelievers can't understand and can't trust, but it's a willful inability, right?

The problem is in the will.

John puts it this way in John 8, 42 to 44.

Jesus said to them, he's talking to the Pharisees, if God were your father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here.

I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.

Why do you not understand what I say?

So he poses the question, why do you not understand what I say?

It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.

You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

Well, you can guess how that went over with the Pharisees there.

But Jesus tells the Pharisees very clearly that they don't understand what he's saying because they can't bear to hear his words.

They don't want to hear his words.

They're subconsciously, willfully refusing to hear his words.

Jesus says that they refuse to hear because they share a sinful nature with their father, the devil, right?

They're of their father, the devil.

So they have this sinful nature that has them locked in this, like, eyes clenched shut, right?

And, you know, fingers in their ears, like my kids do sometimes when they refuse to hear what I'm saying to them, right?

Eyes closed, fingers in the ears.

I won't hear.

And Paul says that because of the state of our hearts and our sharing a nature with our father, the devil, we can't hear, right?

We can't hear, we can't feel the way we ought to.

Paul puts it this way at the end of our passage here in chapter four, verses three to four.

In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

Sorry, who is the image of God?

So we willfully refuse to see and understand, but also the devil and his evil spiritual forces that the Bible teaches very clearly are real, even though in our very scientific and materialistic world today, that's kind of a weird thing to say, it feels like.

Devil's real, right?

Evil spiritual forces are real, and they're actively working to keep people from understanding the gospel and understanding the glory of God

as it's proclaimed through his word.

They're cooperating, we should note, with our sinful flesh.

So it's not like the devil's doing something to people that they don't want him to do.

He's cooperating with their sinful flesh to keep us from rightfully seeing and loving and trusting God, even as he shows us and displays his glory through the proclamation of the gospel, which further emphasizes our need for divine intervention.

We talked about it last week.

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

We need God's creative word, spoken word, his powerful creative word.

spoken into our hearts, right, and lives so that we can be born again and have new life in us and turn to him in hope.

We need the Lord's help to trust and understand.

So this is a pretty bleak situation, right, that Paul paints here.

This is a really difficult question to answer, a bleak situation, but what's the solution?

He doesn't leave us there.

You know, as we hear from God, it sounds like that this is just going to be bouncing off a concrete mind,

and a veiled heart, but is there any hope?

And of course, Paul's offering hope here, even as he addresses the question.

Look again at chapter three, verse 16, where we have the beginning of the solution.

He says, but when one turns to the Lord...

the veil is removed.

So the difference here between a hardened mind, a veiled heart, and a blinded mind, the difference between that and freedom, freedom to understand the truth, freedom to see and love the beauty that was first described here in 316, is turning to the Lord, right?

That's the pivot point that takes us from

From blindness, hardness, to seeing and loving the true beauty of the Lord.

This is the same concept as repentance, right?

Repentance is turning from one thing to another, 180 degree turn.

I'm going down one way and I'm making an about face and I'm going the exact opposite way.

Turning from whatever, you know, so he says, I'm turning to the Lord.

It means I'm turning from what I'm trusting to give my life meaning and significance right now, and I'm turning to the Lord.

When you turn to someone for help, right, if you're like me and you get in over your head, mechanically with your car.

I usually turn to Dan Strickland, right?

Or I turn to someone for help.

I don't quite know what I'm doing right now.

What I'm doing in this situation isn't working.

I need to turn from what I'm doing right here to someone else to give me a hand in the situation.

So turning to the Lord is what we do, right?

That's what it looks like in our life.

I turn from doing this stuff, trusting this to the Lord and trusting him.

But Paul brings us a little bit deeper in this passage and kind of pulls back the curtain so we can see what God is doing as we turn to the Lord.

Look at chapter four, verse six.

It says, for God who said, let light shine out.

Let's get it right.

Verse five, for what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God who said, let light shine out of darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So we turn to the Lord, but we find out also that God has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ.

The sovereign creator God, who at the very beginning said, let there be light, back in Genesis, and there was light, is still shining, saying, let there be light in hearts and minds today.

The light that shines, so the light that he's talking about here, he calls the knowledge of the glory of Christ light.

This light that shines in hearts and minds is the glory of God, not in a subjective way.

So he's not just saying, think of some good thoughts, think some happy thoughts, some positive things.

There's an objective, real glory in the face of Jesus, and God takes that light that's in the face of Jesus and shines it into our hearts.

Plato, if you've ever had to read him in high school or college or for philosophy class,

He's got this illustration, this very famous illustration of the cave where all of us down here are just kind of groping around in the cave and every now and then you get a philosopher who holds up a torch and lets us see what we're groping around in.

What Paul's saying,

that Jesus came and took a mirror outside the mouth of the cave and shined the sun into the cave and lit it up for us, right?

That's what happens when God shines the light of the glory of God in your hearts.

You see who God is and the world that he made much more clearly.

So there's, again, real glory in Jesus in the good news of what he's done for us.

God removes the veil.

He overcomes our hard hearts and minds.

And we're free to behold his glory.

We're free to see him in all of his beauty and majesty.

This is what John calls in John 3 being born again, right?

It's a new birth.

And with that new birth comes freedom to see God's glory rightly and

And that glory clearly moves us to respond in certain ways.

All right, so God shines the light of Jesus's glory in our hearts.

That's how we're born again, right?

That's how we come to know him.

That's how we turn to the Lord.

We once saw God as repulsive, couldn't understand him, didn't want anything to do with him.

And then the next day or over time, it happens differently for all of us.

Right now we love him and we find him attractive and we want to build our life on him like we just sang.

Like what's the difference?

God's shown the light of his glory in the face of Jesus, the knowledge of the glory of Christ into our hearts.

that produces a certain responses.

And Paul gives three here, right?

Three responses that it produces in people.

First, in 3.16, again, we already talked about it.

It produces a trust in God's character that causes us to turn to him.

Let me just read that verse one more time.

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed, right?

When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Listen, there's a way of coming to church.

There's a way of reading the word.

There's a way of being around God's people without actually turning to the Lord in trust and acceptance.

Without actually turning to him.

in reliance and acceptance.

We may read the word, but we read the word really trusting our own moral judgment, our own understanding about how the world works.

It's like, I'll judge what this says by my own experience.

I'll judge it by my own upbringing.

I'll judge it by what I've come to know over my many years here on earth.

Or we may come to church

But we come to church kind of turned inward, right, to have a felt need met, right?

I need affirmation from others, so I come to church, right?

I come to get social influence or a little bit.

I just need a little more control over my circumstances.

Maybe if I sprinkle a little God on what I've got going on, then I'll have a little better handle on my life and what's going on around me.

But when God shines the light of his glory, right, in our hearts, when we turn to him and we see him,

and say, you know, that's who I want, right?

That's who I've always wanted.

So when I come to church and I hear the word being preached, even if the preacher is a little boring, because I want to hear it, right?

And I want to be there because that's how I get the more of him.

Or I want to be with his people, even if they're a little weird.

And even if they step on my toes and listen, both are true.

Like we all know it.

And if you don't know the weird one, it's you, right?

No, I'm just kidding, right?

It's...

There's a lot of people here that I would not know or necessarily be associated with other than the fact that we're believers in Jesus Christ and we're a part of his body here.

That's a great thing.

We're going to step on each other's toes sometimes, but I will put up with that.

And I want to be there because they love him too and because he loves them.

And I want more of him.

We talked about this a few weeks ago, loving the church, because Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it.

So when we see God's glory and we turn to God in admiration and trust, that leads us to believing his promises.

So we turn to the Lord in trust.

When he removes the veil, we see him, we admire him, we turn to him in trust, and that causes us to believe what he says, believe his promises.

Look at chapter four, verse six again.

Reading a lot of the same verses, but they're important.

It's important for us to hear them again.

Let light shine out of darkness.

For God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

What is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God?

Well, in context, it's that which makes God's glory believable, attractive, and receivable.

Paul's talking about receiving Christ, turning to the Lord,

The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is that, whatever about God that makes him receivable and attractive.

Christian philosophers have often talked about three transcendentals, three things that kind of transcend everything that's good, right?

Or everything that's, that transcend all other things.

And the three transcendentals, maybe you've heard this before, are the good, the true, and the beautiful.

So that which is good is also true and beautiful.

And that which is beautiful is also good and true.

And they share these common aesthetics.

This light is an understanding, the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ, is an understanding, it's a sense of the goodness and the truth and the beauty of God.

When we see and we trust God, God's goodness,

and truth and beauty, when we see his glory and we trust him, we believe and trust his word as well, right?

When we see God as good and true and beautiful, we begin to trust his word as good and true and beautiful as well.

Because if God's good, true and beautiful, then so are his promises and his commands and his plans and his agenda for my life.

So we see God's glory, right?

And that goodness, that we see his goodness, his truth,

in his beauty, and we see that expressed in his promises and his commands.

And there's only one response then to his promises and commands, and that's to obey them, right?

To obey them and to follow him.

Look at verse 18 of chapter 3.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord, who is spirit.

So this transformation that he's talking about, from one degree of glory to the next, goes much deeper than our actions.

It goes all the way down to our heart, to our will, to our soul.

It goes down to the very core of who we are.

But that change works its way out from the inside.

It's a change from the inside out, but it definitely works its way from the inside out into our actions.

So that we look more and more like Christ.

And notice the passive verb here.

Are being transformed.

Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image.

You don't transform yourself.

You can't transform yourself.

You will never change yourself.

Not truly.

You can over time, you know...

cover some stuff up, you can paste some of the fruit of the Spirit on for a time, but eventually the real you will come out.

You and I need to be transformed from the inside out.

So what this means practically for both your individual life but also our life together is that the work that we need to do, the effort that we need to put forth day in and day out is not behavior modification.

Not first and foremost.

There's a little bit of room for behavior modification just saying, I don't want to do that anymore because it's bad.

and I need to try not to do that.

There is some effort that needs to be put that way, but that's not what needs to be done first, and that's not the top priority.

What we need to do day in and day out is to fix our eyes on Jesus.

The battle that we need to fight every day and the work we need to do every day is to behold the glory of the Lord.

The way that we are transformed is by beholding the glory of the Lord, finding him beautiful and true and good every morning so that when we see him in his beauty, in his truth, in his goodness, we're transformed into his image one degree of glory at a time.

Again, we need to see, the fight that we need to fight is to see his goodness and his truth and his beauty in every aspect of life.

and see how his truth and beauty and goodness apply to every area of our life.

As we behold that glory, we'll be transformed.

I've given this illustration before.

I'll give it again because it's an important one.

Like Steph Curry got a very specific way of dribbling the ball, specific way of shooting.

He's got his own form and stuff.

After Steph Curry got really good and popular, you'll notice in Upwards and stuff like that, you've got a bunch of little kids out there dribbling like Steph Curry or trying to shoot like Steph Curry.

They got a similar form, similar follow-through.

For me, it was Tim Duncan.

Loved Tim Duncan.

Just loved the way he could hit the bank shot almost every time.

His footwork, he was solid.

One of the best players, probably most underrated players in the NBA.

Loved watching him.

And guess what?

I mimicked my game after him.

I watched him play, you know, and this was before the internet, so I couldn't like always get on the YouTubes and watch him move all the time.

But I watched him as much as I could, and I mimicked my game after him.

And you'll notice this, like with a son and his father, or a little daughter and her mother, they'll watch their dad, and before you know it, they got like the same hitch in their step, or whatever.

They say things a certain way, just like their dad.

We're wired this way.

God made us this way.

We become who we admire.

We see somebody or something that we see as good and beautiful and right, and then we mold ourselves to that, even subconsciously.

But this is much deeper than that.

We're wired that way, and that's how we work.

But we're also told that the Lord is doing this work through the Spirit.

The Lord, who is Spirit, is transforming us from the inside out.

And that's working with the way that we're wired.

That's working with the way that we're made to function.

We see goodness.

We see beauty.

We want to be like it.

And God helps us.

He's doing that work in us as we behold the beauty of Christ.

Again, not all at once.

Maybe you've heard bits and pieces of this before.

Maybe you've heard this stuff before.

And you're like, yeah, heard that about five years ago.

Don't feel like I've transformed a whole lot in five years.

There's seasons, right?

There's ups and downs where when we grow more than others, it's not all at once.

From one degree of glory to the next.

But I can guarantee you, if you fix your eyes on Jesus, you make the fight every day about beholding his glory, his promise here is that you will be transformed.

You will be transformed from one degree of glory to the next.

As we behold the glory of God, we're moved to trust his character, we're moved to believe his promises and obey his commands.

So again, this means that the fight, we fight sin, we battle every day, fighting for joy and beholding the glory of God.

George Mueller ran an orphanage, gave his life to running an orphanage in Germany, I believe.

And did it through prayer.

Never asked for a donation.

Just prayed when they needed stuff.

Stuff would pop up.

He led a crazy life.

You have to read his biography sometime and a lot of his own writings.

This is something from, I believe, his journal.

But this is his own writings about his experience in life.

He said this.

The point is this.

I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord.

The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord or how I might glorify the Lord, but how I might get my soul into a happy state and how my inner man might be nourished.

For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted.

I might seek to benefit believers.

I might seek to relieve the distressed.

I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world.

And yet, not being happy in the Lord and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Do you have a sin problem?

Do you have a lying problem?

Do you have a gossiping problem, an anger problem, a pornography problem, an anxiety problem?

The most important thing you must do, that we all must do every day in these struggles, is to fix our eyes on Jesus and to seek him in his word

and in prayer until you behold his glory, right?

And you see that joyful vision of his glory and beauty in what he's done for you.

It's not the only thing we do, right?

There's other practical things that that leads us to.

But that's the first thing we do in that fight.

We're not just modifying behavior.

We're being transformed from the inside out.

And Newsflash, if you haven't tried this, you need help.

We all need help in this fight and in this battle to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and to behold his glory.

Because sometimes, no matter how much I read, no matter how much I pray, I can't see it.

I'm really struggling to see it in a new and fresh way.

That's why God gives us other believers.

That's why God gives us his people.

Listen, small groups are an opportunity to help each other to see

how God's truth and goodness touches our lives at every level where we're at right now.

The goal with small groups is not more information, right?

The goal with small groups is not necessarily a brand new Bible study or just downloading more information into you.

The goal of small groups is to hear where you're at

And then to also help take what we've already heard together here in the sermon or in Sunday school and to help apply that to where you're at, to help shine that light of the glory of Jesus in the gospel from the word to where you're at in life.

We need, you know, and small groups is just a structured way to do that.

Structure is not always the best way to do it, but it's a starting point.

It's a launching point.

We really need friends, right?

We really need friends who know us and who we know to help us behold the glory of God.

And it's easier said than done, I know, right?

And especially for us guys as we get older, right?

It's harder to maintain relationships, close relationships as family, life, just kind of pull us away.

You're not alone in that if you feel that way, especially as a guy.

But put the effort forward, right?

Be the friend that you want to receive.

Invite somebody out.

and we're going to take steps here this next year to help add a little structure to that as well and hopefully help you find a friend and someone to talk to about the Lord with.

But you've got to find someone who you can be open with and who will be open with you and will help shine the light of the glory of God in the gospel into your life and vice versa.

This is what we need, right?

This is what...

true hearing is like.

It's not just hearing magical words that are recited on a page, but it's actually seeing and beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus as the gospel is proclaimed.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I just pray right now, even as we've opened your word today, that you would shine the light

of your glory in the face of Jesus into our hearts as we sing this last song.

And Lord, I pray that you would help us as a people to step out of our comfort zone, to sacrifice of our time and energy, even emotional energy, to be involved in one another's lives.

And Lord, I pray that you would give each of us at least one friend who can help shine the light of your glory into our hearts and work what we hear deep down into our hearts so that we hope and trust in you.

Lord, we all hit points in our life where we need a hand.

We need a hand remembering your goodness.

We need a hand recalling the beauty and the glory that we once saw when we first turned to you.

And Lord, I pray that you would help us to look to be used by you in that way.

And Lord, that you would even today, that you would provide someone for anyone in this room who might be in that situation.

Lord, give us eyes to see, give us ears to hear.

You are beautiful beyond comprehension.

You're too marvelous for words.

Lord, there is none like you.

And Lord, we want to see you and behold your beauty.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.