

Matthew chapter 16.

It's good to see that some of you have moved your way from the right side to the left side, changing it up with a brand new year, making friends or enemies one way or the other.

But it's good that we're here together.

Matthew chapter 16, we're going to be reading verses 13 to 20.

Matthew 16, verse 13.

Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And they said, some say John the Baptist.

Others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

He said to them, But who do you say that I am?

Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And I tell you,

You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Heavenly Father, thank you for this time that we can meet together with your people and open your word.

Lord, I know that there are many of us going through many different things right now.

Lord, some of us have experienced loss these past couple weeks.

Some of us have been surprised by unexpected hardship and trials.

And Lord, some of us have been surprised by great blessings and exciting news.

And Lord, some of us are just ready for a new year.

And Lord, we just ask that as we open your word today, that you, who know each of us intimately, would speak to us, that you would feed us with what we need, and that you would meet us where we're at.

Lord, we're thankful for your church.

We're thankful for the good gifts that you have given us for our good and your glory.

And Lord, we ask that you would be glorified as you grow and mature us here today.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Glad to be back with you.

It's down in warm and sunny Lynchburg, Virginia, moving my dad from New Jersey, just retired.

And it was nice to be with family.

It was also nice to leave family and come back to meet you all.

and worship with you all today.

I really do miss when we're not with you.

We love being here and worshiping with you and opening God's word with you today and every day.

So glad to be back.

We're going to be talking, starting a new series, a four-week series on really, you know, every January we come back to the basics and we take a look at one aspect of church life

together and zoom in on it.

We usually try to address some things that don't come up in the scriptures frequently, but that are kind of crucial and key to our life together as a church.

So this year, we voted in, or last year, I guess, 2025,

We voted in some constitutional changes as well as a new vision statement.

So I want to preach through the vision statement.

The vision statement has three points and we're not going to address any of those three today.

We'll look at those more next week and in the next three weeks.

Today I just want to lay some groundwork and discuss and look at what the church is, who's behind the church, and why you should care about the church.

And when I say the church, yes, I mean all believers everywhere.

We'll look at this in a second.

But really, the church doesn't exist apart from local churches.

So you can hear LBC when I say the church.

That's fine because that's the manifestation of the church that you're a part of here.

There are other manifestations of the church throughout the world, but this is the one that you're currently attending because you're here listening and that you're a part of.

So you can plug in LBC here.

We'll talk a little bit more about the universal church and how we ought to think about that as well.

So new year, new resolutions.

It's a good time.

You know, with the changing of the calendar and putting up a new calendar, we've got a pretty lame calendar right now.

I'm hoping my wife buys a new one.

It's like this tiny little thing.

We had a nice, big, ornate calendar, and now we've got a little frou-frou one.

I don't know.

Don't know where it came from.

But as you flip the calendar, it's a good... I got to stick to the script this morning.

Otherwise, this is going to take a long time.

It's good to consider your priorities, right?

And over the next few weeks, really what we're going to look at with this vision statement is our priorities as a church, LBC's priorities, and really our top priority.

But before we do that, I thought today would be good to take some time to consider God's priorities.

Before we set our priorities...

we ought to take some time to consider and try to know what God values and what he prioritizes.

By his grace, we don't need to wonder at what his priorities are.

He's been revealing himself from the beginning of time, and he's preserved himself and his priorities for us in his word.

A little side plug, we're starting a new

Sunday school class downstairs, Old Testament overview, headed up by Pastor Drew.

I will be chipping in once a month and Trav will be chipping in once a month as well.

But Pastor Drew has already put in way more work into this Sunday school class than I anticipated and it's wonderful.

So I can't speak highly enough about it.

You should come join us and we'll find out about promises made and God's priorities throughout the Old Testament.

But anyways, God does show us in the Old Testament and the New Testament, he shows us who he is, what he loves, what he prioritizes.

However, also in the Old Testament there and in the New Testament, if God's word has showed us anything about ourselves, he's shown us that we human beings and even God's people are really good at assuming that we know what God wants.

and deceiving ourselves into doing some really horrible things in God's name.

So while God reveals his priorities and reveals himself to us, they're easy to miss because of our sin nature, right?

They're easy to miss because we've got some things that we want, some selfish desires that we want that kind of blind us to who God is and what he wants for us.

Our hearts from birth have been hardened by sin,

We don't naturally want what God wants.

We need to be transformed from the inside out by the renewing of our minds.

So Paul tells us in Romans 12 to be transformed through the renewing of your minds.

So we want to look at, examine, think about God's priorities.

We need to grow in our understanding of God's heart and his mind.

And we ought to be, even if we've already seen these things before, we need to be frequently reminded of what God loves and prioritizes us.

because it doesn't come naturally to us.

No matter how well or thoroughly we know these things, we need regular reminders.

I need regular reminders of what's important to God, what he loves, and what he wants for us.

So this morning, as we set up the three-part vision statement coming up, we'll see, though, as a foundation that Christ loves and is building his church through local, biblically-ordered congregations, right?

Christ loves and is building his church through local biblically ordered congregations.

So we just, again, want to see who's behind the church, what a church is.

That's going to be the boring part, but you really need to pay attention to that because I don't think we think very well or clearly about what a church is, what constitutes a church.

And then lastly, why you should care.

All right, so first, who's behind the church?

This is the passage that we read today.

We're going to jump around a little bit, but this passage, Matthew 16, makes it very clear who's behind the church.

Jesus says, I will build my church.

I just want to break down that statement and slowly move through that statement so we don't miss the profound reality that Jesus is communicating.

So we're going to break down that simple statement into four points here.

I, and I want to just, as we look at this short little statement that Jesus makes, right?

I will build my church.

I just want to make an affirmation and a denial about each part of the statement.

First, I, we deny, we deny that the church can be truly built on any person, personality, or group of people other than Christ.

That we can't build a church on a person, a personality,
or a group of people.

Someone with charisma may draw a crowd, and by God's grace, he may do something through those who seek to accumulate attention and influence for themselves.

But that charisma is not building anything of eternal value.

If there's anything of eternal value being built there or here, it's because God is building it.

We cannot build in and of ourselves anything of eternal value.

We also deny that any program or strategy or music style or special events or hip atmosphere and vibes or traditional atmosphere and vibes, for that matter, can truly build the church.

These things, again, may draw a crowd and will need to be carefully considered.

We don't want to just throw those things out or be inconsiderate of those felt needs.

and they may be carefully considered, especially in the light of faithfulness and outreach, but they cannot and they do not build the church, nor do they ultimately hinder the building of the church because they don't build the church in the first place.

So we deny that the church is built on programs.

We deny that the church is built on a personality or a person or a group of people, but we affirm that Christ himself builds his church.

He builds it by dying on the cross to pay for his people's sins.

But he also is building it day in and day out through the Holy Spirit, doing the miracle of new birth in people, from transferring people from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

He's building his church one person at a time.

Christ is the one building his church, not a mere man.

So we can take it to the bank when he says, I will build.

He says, I will build.

So we deny that God, when he sets himself to a task, will fail in his mission to make for himself a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

He will not fail.

We affirm that all of God's purposes succeed and that there is no one who can deny him what he sets out to accomplish.

Psalm 115 tells us, why should the nation say, where is their God?

Our God is in the heavens.

He does all that he pleases.

Psalm 135, five to six.

For I know that the Lord is great and that our Lord is above all gods.

Whatever the Lord pleases, he does in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the deeps.

What that's saying is there's nothing that God wants to do that he doesn't do.

There's nothing that God desires that he does not enact.

And there's nothing that he desires that anyone is withholding from him.

He does all that he pleases and whatever he pleases, he does.

God will build the church.

He will not fail.

The church will continue to advance until all of his purposes for her are accomplished.

So who's behind the church?

Again, I will build my.

We deny that the church is my church.

We deny that this church is your church or any pastor's church or the elder's church or the financial team's church.

And we affirm that the church belongs to Christ and that he has given stewardship of her in its local form to believers in a certain governance structure.

So there is stewardship under shepherding that God has granted to groups of believers.

We'll look at that in a second.

But ultimately, the church belongs to Christ and he is her bride.

Lastly, church, right?

I will build my church.

We deny that Jesus has promised to build other beneficial institutions.

Jesus didn't promise to build his homeless shelter or his pregnancy center or his Christian school or the town council or an after-school program, but he promised to build his church.

Even within the structure of the church, he didn't promise to build the Iwana program or Upwards or a Bible study or the worship team.

These are all non-essentials, right?

They're good things, not saying that we shouldn't put effort and resources into these things, but they are non-essentials and we ought to hold them as such.

We do affirm that Christ has promised to build his church.

His church is the institution that Christ established and promised to build and sustain.

And as we said, he will not fail in his promise.

So what is it?

We're talking about this.

Very important.

Jesus is behind it.

God is behind it.

It cannot fail and will continue on until she's victorious in her mission, right?

In the goal that he's sent her out to do.

So what is it?

How ought we to think about a church?

And I think this is where we need to spend a little time just thinking accurately and pointedly.

I'm just going to use five points because I don't think I could write them better.

by Jonathan Lehman, who writes for Nine Marks.

He's a pastor, used to be a pastor in D.C.

I don't know where he's pastoring right now.

But he has five points that mark a local church and what make a local church a functioning congregation, right?

So one's kind of just a general definition of church, but then points two to four, if you're doing that as a group of believers, like presto, you're a church, right?

So

These four points are essential to being a local, biblically faithful congregation.

So the first one, though, is pretty obvious.

A church is a group of Christians.

Again, it's true, we can talk about the church as all born-again believers or Christians that have ever lived, and the New Testament does talk about the church in that way, especially when the New Testament is describing what Christ did for the church.

He laid down his life for his bride, the church universal, all believers everywhere.

He's the cornerstone on which the house or the universal church, all believers everywhere, are built.

However,

we don't see in the New Testament that individuals are referred to as the church solo.

We always see true born-again believers operating within a defined group as believers.

So when he refers to churches, or when you get down to the nitty-gritty and concrete flesh-and-blood people,

we see that the church is referred to as groups, defined groups of people.

This is why Paul writes letters to specific groups of believers, like the church of Philippi or Galatia.

And in the book of Revelation, we see that John, the angel through John, gives addresses given to specific groups of believers, again, laid out by region, Laodicea or Smyrna.

We could go on for a long time, and we will, I think, possibly in the summer.

We do, in our membership class, talk about this a deal more because membership is the way that we have chosen to define our group.

We have multiple churches in our region, so how do we define who belongs to this church and what constitutes this church?

We do it through membership classes.

So our membership class lays this out in a little more detail.

And I think we're all going to do our membership class in the summer because really it's more about the church and what is a church and how does it function more so than just the nitty gritty of membership.

Anyways, that's an aside.

We'd see as a representation throughout the New Testament that there are defined groups of people.

They know who's there and who's not, right?

Who belongs to that local group or body of believers?

So first off, a church is a group of Christians, right?

It's a group of Christians.

Both words are important.

A defined group and also Christians, right?

That there are people who have professed faith in Jesus and have been, as far as we can tell, regenerate, born again, right?

But also, a local church is defined as a regular gathering.

You know, we see an explicit command in the New Testament to gather on a regular basis.

Hebrews 10, 24 to 25 says, And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Also, the vast majority, I couldn't find a percentage via Google AI, but maybe I should just do this as a project so we can get that information out there.

The vast majority of the commands in the New Testament are interpersonal.

They involve other people.

Yeah, there's some stuff between you and God that are given specifically to your relationship with God.

But the commands that involve how we interact with one another, especially how we interact with other believers, far outnumber the commands that we're given for our relationship or our walk with God.

How we interact with one another and live with one another says a great deal about where we're at in our relationship and in our walk with God.

We need a space to do that, right?

So a regular gathering, meeting together is that space to do that.

And there's some specific things that we're told to do when we gather together.

We looked at those last year in particular, some of the things that we're commanded to do when we gather together, especially on the Lord's Day as a regular meeting together.

But all these things aid a local church in the main task of a congregation-wide exercise of affirmation and oversight.

Now, this affirmation and oversight, this is our main task.

That task has a main goal.

We'll get to that in a second, so just stick with me.

But the main thing that we're to do as a church is to affirm and oversee.

A local church's main responsibility is to affirm or deny someone's claim to follow Christ and to provide oversight in maintaining pure doctrine and spiritual growth in the life of the believer.

Affirmation is given on the basis, again, we dive real deep in the membership class into this, but affirmation is given on the basis of a verbal confession, like Peter gave,

right?

That you were Christ, son of the living God.

And then Jesus says, blessed, I give you the keys to heaven to bind and loose on earth as it's bound and loosed in heaven.

And it's also based on whether or not your life is producing consistent fruit with that claim.

So I claim that Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

Well, is your life producing fruit that's consistent or, you know,

Is there fruit of the Spirit, positive fruit of the Spirit, or is there fruit of a lack of regeneration of, you know, just sinful fruit that you're refusing to repent of as well?

Matthew 18 talks about, you know, we talk about the Matthew 18 principle, where if your brother sins against you, you're to go to him and go with somebody else.

And then lastly, it says, bring him before the church, the congregation.

if he refuses to repent.

And then Jesus uses that same phrase, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Same phrase that he used in talking about Peter's confession after he talks about the congregation denying that person's, or not being able to confirm

that person's salvation based on the lack of repentance, the lack of positive fruit there in their life.

So that's what we're talking about when it's affirmation and oversight.

And we all need help.

We all need help.

Can't do it solo.

Holding to truth and applying truth to our hearts and lives.

We're all on our own and given to wander and stray.

This is why I believe a plurality of elders is important.

If it's just one man, that's to hold the line and toe the line or to set direction and set course.

It's really easy in your office by yourself to get weird and wonky and off the course that's laid out before us.

This is why we need each other.

This is why we need

other spirit-indwelled believers to help us hold the line, but also to help us see our blind spots and where God's truth needs to be applied

to our lives, affirmation and oversight.

When I use those words, they sound kind of scary, right?

And you may jump to the conclusion that affirmation and oversight is a job only for the elders, that the elders are like judging everyone's profession of faith, that they're judging their lives and doctrine.

And it's true, there's a little bit of truth to it, that it's the elders' responsibility to take the initiative in those things, right, to ensure that they're happening,

When they're not, right, to make sure and just like it's a husband's responsibility to take the initiative in the relationship when he feels like things are going off the rails, right?

It's the elder's responsibility to make sure that this affirmation and oversight

It's happening.

But what we need to see in these next couple weeks, three weeks, is that most fundamentally, it's the word of God that is the judge, right?

And that affirms and oversees our growth, right?

Affirms our confession and oversees our growth.

And that affirmation and oversight that's done within the body is fundamentally, most fundamentally, a congregational responsibility, right?

Yes, the elders are to kind of move the congregation to action and are to help maintain that ball rolling, but that ultimately the judge is the word of God and that affirmation and oversight, that authority is,

is given to the congregation.

Jonathan Lehman kind of paints a picture here of what this looks like week to week.

He says, the gathering is also where our king enacts his rule through preaching, the ordinances and discipline.

The gospel sermon explains the law of our nation.

It declares the name of our king and explains the sacrifice he made to become our king.

It teaches us of his ways and confronts us in our disobedience, and it assures us of his imminent return.

So affirmation and oversight, they're not an end in themselves, right?

They're not an end in themselves.

Rather, they serve, and hopefully what you heard in that quote, is that they serve the purpose of officially representing Christ

and his rule on earth.

This is the purpose of why we were left here as a local congregation, as a local church, why God doesn't zap us to heaven, right?

We are to show, shine his light, demonstrate his glory, preach the gospel, right?

And be a light in a dark place and demonstrate what it looks like for Christ to rule here on earth.

You can think of the church as an embassy, right?

And our main job is to the best of our ability

ensure that those who claim to follow Christ and who claim to be that light on behalf of God actually are and they actually do that.

And that, you know, we're all maturing in our walk with Christ and representing him, hopefully in a better way.

day to day.

And it's the church's responsibility, right?

Again, led by the elders, but the church, our congregational responsibility to ensure that we're all doing that, right?

That we're all growing and walking with the Lord and representing Christ in a way that would please him and that he would want to be represented by.

Again, we do this primarily through the preaching of
of the word and the ordinances.

So this, if you're talking about like, I got a group of Christians, that means regularly, is there, you know, like concretely, is there something we got to do to actually be a church in God's eyes?

Yes, preach the word and minister the ordinances.

The ordinances would be baptism and communion, right?

So preaching the word, administering the ordinances, and I would add within that, within at least an attempt at biblical governance structure, right?

So you got to have some kind of organizational structure that hopefully you're trying to model after the New Testament.

But what's really important, preaching of the word, ministering of the ordinances.

We've already mentioned.

how preaching and the word do this, right?

And we're gonna spend the next three weeks basically zooming in on that.

How does the preaching of the word and the word of God shape our life together and how does it help us reflect and image Christ to the world around us?

But the ordinances also play a crucial role in our representation of Christ.

You can think of baptism as like putting on the kingdom's uniform, right?

You know, you got the army uniform, you're putting on the armor, you're putting on the uniform, and declaring that I'm with Christ and his people.

And communion is a regular waving of the flag and a regular identification of and with God's people.

It's a regular affirmation that I'm with Jesus, I'm with his church, I'm with his people.

And this is why I believe it's important to fence the tables.

and reserve communion for believers only, and why some churches would even reserve communion for members only, or people that they have already affirmed their profession and are regularly meeting with and have a more intimate relationship with to affirm their salvation and that their ongoing growth in Christ.

Communion is not a dispersal of saving grace.

It's not a giving of salvific, justifying grace.

We're not denying people and fencing the table salvation.

That's a Catholic teaching that came later.

I'm not going to go back into the history of that.

If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved.

You are saved.

Communion is an affirmation of that salvation and an identification with God's people.

So when we make it an attempt to fence the table, it's a regular, again, identification of who God's people are and who represents Jesus.

The church exists as a local group of Christians who are regularly meeting together to practice affirmation and oversight by the word of God and the ordinances.

If you're gonna define what a local group of believers is, that's like a small, condensed version.

There's a lot of systematic theology that goes into that.

Like I said, that I don't have time, nor do I think you all have the energy and will to work through right now.

But we got to at least have that out on the table, right?

That a local church isn't nothing.

That it's actually the way that the universal church is imaged and is concretely here in this world.

So why should we love the church, right?

After we just worked through that kind of academic definition, right?

of the church.

And the reason we work through it is so that when we talk about the church, I think when we get burned by people and we get hurt by people and people step on our toes, it's really easy to just kind of move to this abstract space, right?

I serve God, you know, like, and so if nobody recognizes what's going on, I serve God.

Well, yes, but also, if you really love and serve God, you're also serving his people, right?

He's called you to serve concrete people, and you can't just ignore or move past concrete people to kind of serve an abstract idea, you know?

And I think we do that with church sometimes, right?

Like,

Nobody was my friend, or I put myself out there, and they misused me, what I was giving them, my time, my energy, my love, and my affection.

And therefore, I'm just going to kind of tighten things up a little bit.

I'm not going to get as involved with other people.

And we're just going to kind of define church as this big universal thing that's out there that doesn't really have faces or a defined concrete person or defined group so that I can kind of continue to maintain this walk with God, but I don't actually have to do the hard relational interpersonal stuff.

That's a pretty hard way to put it and to hear it.

but often I think that's what's going on in our hearts.

Why should we love this group of people right here is what I'm trying to say.

Why should we love each other and the church that people died for?

Well, first, Christ loved the church.

Ephesians 5, 25 to 27 says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Christ gave himself up for his church, and he cleanses her with the word to present her, you, the people sitting next to you, in splendor as a radiant and holy bride.

From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride,

With his own blood, he bought her, and for her life, he died.

Why should you love the church?

Why should I love the church?

Because you've been loved like that.

And deep down, I know that you and I want to love like that.

And I submit to you this morning that to love like Christ, you must love what Christ loves and what Christ will love.

You see, in Revelation 19, six to nine,

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder crying out, hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exalt and give him the glory for the marriage of the lamb has come and his bride, that's the church, has made herself ready.

It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

As I was working through my sermon this morning, those couple lines really jumped out to me.

I grew up as a pastor's kid.

My dad just retired.

I shared that with you earlier.

From 35 years at the same church.

When you're at the same church that long...

you know, bad stuff happens, right?

People hurt your feelings, hurt you pretty badly.

I saw some of it.

My dad shielded me from a lot of it.

Other people, and I'm sure we hurt people.

You know, I was just with my family for a while.

I know we're not perfect, you know?

And there's a lot of hurt to go around there.

And this was just a beautiful, beautiful reminder, right?

He granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

He chooses to highlight and keep our righteous deeds and to burn up and to throw away all of our unrighteousness.

Yes, right now you're clothed in Christ's righteousness, and when God looks at you, he sees Jesus' perfect life, if your faith and hope is in Jesus.

He sees Jesus' righteousness, but there's a day that we're going to stand with Christ, clothed in our righteous deeds that he purchased for us and that he gave to us.

He said it was granted to her, so it's not something we earn, right?

It was granted to her to clothe herself with fine linen, and that's the righteous deeds of the saints.

And that is a beautiful, beautiful picture.

Because even the people that I had the biggest problem with, right?

At my dad's church, that kind of hurt us the worst.

They're going to be standing next to me.

And you, you know, you won't know who they are, but whatever.

Be standing next to me.

Beautiful.

Beautiful.

right?

Beautiful.

As ugly as they were at that time, that's all going to be gone, and they'll be clothed in the beautiful good deeds that have been granted to them to do by the Lord.

My kids, Lord willing, right?

The people that I love, they had a long time in the car with them recently, and I'm sure they

They would say some not beautiful things about me in that car ride as well.

We'll be clothed, you know, and just standing beautifully before the Lord.

That's an incredible thought.

You know, I can't wait to see you all that way.

And I hope this comes to mind, you know, when we send each other annoying emails or we step on each other's toes or we're like, why can't you just get over that?

You know, I hope that this comes to mind, that one day,

will be standing next to each other, worshiping the Lord, beautiful, radiant, without spot, and in splendor.

And the angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And he said to me, these are the true words of God, meaning they won't fail, right?

They're not gonna, they won't pass away.

They will come to fruition.

Christ loves us.

and is building his church through local, biblically-ordered congregations.

It's real.

It's concrete.

It's right here, even though it doesn't look like it.

Nobody here is pretending that LBC is without spot or wrinkle yet.

It hurts sometimes.

It costs Jesus' life.

That splendor and radiance that we're about to experience, it costs Jesus' life, but it's worth loving and investing in.

Christ will build his church.

She cannot fail.

And she has the hope, not just for you and me, but for every nation.

So let's keep our priorities straight this 2026 and love what God loves.

I'm going to call the men forward as we participate in communion together today.

But before we do, let's bow our heads in prayer.

Heavenly Father, open our eyes to see and help us to feel the weight

of the love with which you have loved us and sending your son, Jesus, to give his life for us, to lay his life down, to present us holy and blameless before you.

And Lord, would you motivate us?

Would you, motivate seems like a cheap word, Lord.

Would you move us to lay our desires down, to lay ourselves down for one another, to present our brothers and sisters holy and blameless before you and to walk with one another

through a broken and sinful world, a painful world, with our eyes fixed on you, knowing that you will one day have us standing side by side, spotless, blameless, clothed in fine linen and splendor, worshiping you with our husband, Jesus Christ.

Lord, we just ask that as we remind ourselves of this today, as we take the bread and the cup, Lord, that you would stir our hearts to that end.

Pray all this in Jesus' name.