

Good morning.

Today's scripture reading is from Psalm 135.

Praise the Lord.

Praise the name of the Lord.

Give praise, O servants of the Lord, who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.

Praise the Lord for the Lord is good.

Sing to his name for it is pleasant.

For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his own possession.

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.

He who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.

he who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast, who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants, who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings, Sion, king of the Amorites, Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel.

Your name, O Lord, endures forever.

your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.

For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

They have mouths but do not speak.

They have eyes but do not see.

They have ears but do not hear.

Nor is there any breath in their mouths.

Those who make them become like them.

So do all who trust in them.

O house of Israel, bless the Lord.

O house of Aaron, bless the Lord.

O house of Levi, bless the Lord.

You who fear the Lord, bless the Lord.

Blessed be the Lord from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord.

I talk pretty loudly.

We've had the honor of teaching Sunday school for the kids over the summer.

And the past few weeks, we've been hearing what Pastor Nate has been preaching about, all the songs.

And we just wanted to share a little bit about what the kids have been focusing on.

The past few weeks, it's been a little redundant hearing praise God, praise God, praise God.

But that must mean it's pretty important to the Lord that we give him the glory and praise.

And so that's something we really wanted to try and focus on with these kids, that we can praise God in every single moment of our lives, good or bad.

So we just wanted to share a little bit about what the kids were praising God for this morning.

So I'll provide you with a couple on your side.

So we got family, Jesus, and food.

Of course, food's important.

Family, animals, friends, school, for will, and love.

and for family.

For football, I don't know who that was, but I should have talked to his parents.

Family, friends, school, Jesus.

Rainbows, motorized vehicles, animals, family, Jesus, food, pink lemonade, yes, trees, oceans, friends, and of course Christ.

So we just wanted to share this with you because the kids really are a part of this church.

And we want them to know that just how much we appreciate their hard work.

When we teach them, they are learning everything that you are too.

And it was such an honor for us to teach them because we love being able to plant the seed and that they're actually understanding it.

So we just want to thank the kids for doing such a great job in Sunday school and paying attention every week.

And just really learning what it means to be a follower of Christ and just thanking God for every single thing in your life, good or bad, even through the hard moments, we can always find a way to praise God.

Thank you.

Thank you, Jason and Jenna.

And thank you, kids.

That leads us well into the Word this morning.

So let's pray and ask for the Lord's help one more time.

Heavenly Father, thank you for our brothers and sisters, even the little ones.

Lord, we ask that you would stir our hearts, that you would help us to see Christ today.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

So during COVID, when everything was shut down, there wasn't a whole lot to do.

So I took up playing, well, I had been playing it a little bit beforehand, but really took a deep dive into playing a cell phone game where you had to like go to certain locations to achieve certain goals and things like that.

and travel around uh and he a lot of times he had to like meet up with other people that were also playing that game to achieve those goals and nobody was doing anything during covid so you know it kind of blew up right so we were meeting at the park in our cars you know talking to each other through the windows you know achieving all kinds of goals it was it was lots of fun so i got to know this group for a little bit my kids were playing with me they'd come along

And I got to know the group pretty well.

And I was slated to preach one Sunday.

And this was towards the tail end of all the distancing and all that stuff.

And I invited them all.

I was like, hey, I'm preaching Sunday.

If you want to come, if you're curious, I'd be glad to have you.

And I got talking to this one guy, Eric, who was kind of the ringleader of everything.

And, you know, he was like, you know, I was like, do you think he'll come?

And he's like, no, I'm, you know, I won't be there.

And I was like, oh, how come?

He was like, well, you know, you go to church and you read your Bible and you sing together, you know, Sunday morning.

And he's like, and I have sex with my girlfriend.

We worship our gods in our own way.

And it was a very, you know, clear moment.

It was one of those moments where I don't think I could have said it any better than he did.

At that time, we all kind of knew where we stood.

And I think that clarity comes

And that clarity came in that moment because deep down we know that we are what we worship, right?

That what we do, what we say, who we are is ultimately tied to what we worship and desire most.

It was interesting that, you know, that he used that word worship in that sentence as we talked about what we were going to do that Sunday.

So this song here, Psalm 135, the psalm and song, is a song of praise and worship, but it's also a battle cry, a victory battle cry.

It caps off the songs of ascent, which were the songs that were sung as the Jews

yearly or annually would make their way up the mountain to Jerusalem and to the temple, right?

The temple's on top of the temple mount.

And so they're ascending up the hill to the temple.

And there would be a spot on that ascent, on those steps and on that path where they would pause, whatever group they were in as they were going up.

would pause and sing and recite that one Psalm.

Psalm 135 caps that.

So it's not, you won't see in the title that it's titled Psalm of Ascent, but you can tell just from the beginning that we've arrived in the temple, right?

So praise the Lord, right?

The servants of the Lord who stand in the house of the Lord.

So that wasn't just the Levites and the priests at the time.

It was, we've made it to the top.

We've made it to the temple.

And this is the song of victory that we're singing about the Lord, praising him.

So Psalm 135, you know, it's a song of Yahweh's victory over his enemies.

And I think, you know, we'll see that as we move through the Psalm, but there's kind of layers to the Psalm, right?

And there's another layer to the Psalm that I think is very relevant to us today.

And it's that the Psalmist is telling us that our gods shape us, right?

Either for our good and eternal joy or for our destruction,
and misery.

Our gods shape us.

So we're going to see that in the context of praise and praising God, as opposed to worshiping and praising idols.

And we'll just kind of break this psalm down this way, that we're to praise the Lord because he creates his people.

We're to praise the Lord because he's not created by his people.

And we're to praise the Lord because he is our joy.

He creates his people, he's not created by his people, and he's our joy.

So first thing that we see in the Psalm is that the Lord, we praise the Lord because he creates his people.

We're going to skip verses one to three.

We'll come back to that a little later.

Let's look at verse four.

For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself.

So we're just told to praise the Lord, right?

For or because the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself.

Israel as his own possession.

So again, after opening the Psalm with a call to praise, the psalmist begins giving reasons for why the Lord should be praised.

The first reason being that God has chosen a people for himself.

So the first reason that we're to praise God is because he's chosen a people for himself.

Israel here didn't do anything to deserve God's favor and mercy.

He chose Jacob for himself, Israel as his own possession.

Rather, God's freely showing them, Israel, his people, his grace, as he made them his people.

And he chose to give them grace, mercy, and blessing.

And so it is with us.

Paul tells us the exact same thing in Ephesians 1, 3-4.

He says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

Listen, God's people, you and I, have done nothing to deserve God's grace and favor.

He has given it to us freely, and he has made us, the church,

His people, he's done it.

Not us, we didn't make ourselves, God made us his people.

Which is great news, good news, right?

Because God works for his people.

Again, the first thing the Psalmist does as he reminds us that God works for his people or that he creates his people is that he also works for his people.

And as he's showing us that God works for his people, the Psalmist shows us that God's supreme power is over everything and everyone, right?

So he's building a case for why and how God works for his people.

Kind of point one, God has supreme power over everyone and everything.

Look at verses five to seven.

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 depths.

He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.

So at first glance, you know, verses six and seven, if we're just making some observations here, verse six and seven have a lot of natural language, right?

Things that are found and found in nature.

And so we see that God is sovereign.

He's in control of nature, which he is.

But verse five indicates that what the psalmist is really driving at is that God is supreme over all the other gods.

So people at that time, and even through Greek and Roman mythology, believe that their gods live in the heavens or in the deep seas and that they wield lightning and wind as weapons.

And the psalmist is saying that none of these creatures

quote unquote gods have any bearing on what Yahweh does, right?

Yahweh is doing whatever he pleases in his creation.

Jim Hamilton puts it this way.

These places are not the preserve or the living place of Baal or Zeus, Yam or Poseidon, Sheol or Hades.

Yahweh is the Lord and none of the deities that lay claim to domains in Yahweh's creation have any power over what belongs to him.

So Yahweh does whatever he pleases.

And all of the seven-year-old boys in the room respond with a, oh yeah, we'll prove it, right?

You say you can do whatever you please, well, we'll prove it.

So the psalmist continues, right?

He hears the seven-year-old's objections and he continues, oops, sorry, we're going back here, in verses eight to 12.

He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast, who in your midst, O Egypt, set signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants, who struck down many nations and killed many mighty kings, Sion, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to his people, Israel.

God saved his people and brought them home to their rest.

It was God who worked for his people, God who saved his people,

and brought them home to the promised land to their rest.

God flexed, and cruel Pharaoh, who thought he was on top of the world, couldn't protect his people or even his animals.

God spoke through Moses, and Pharaoh couldn't keep a group of slaves captive.

The kingdoms of Canaan for years lived in defiance of Yahweh, sacrificing their children to the god Molech.

They were known for cruelty and bloodshed.

God had had enough of them and took their land back, took his land back from them that they had defiled, and he gave it to his people.

God will not be mocked.

This is the point of this list here.

God will not be mocked.

He will completely and utterly defeat his enemies and save his people and bring them home to their rest, just as he has in the past.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that we're not home yet.

Just as the Israelites look to the promised land, to the rest, we're looking ahead to heaven, to the new Jerusalem.

So we praise the Lord because he creates his people, you know, creates his people and works for them, but not only because of that, but also because he is not created by his people.

The Psalmist points out and shows us that idols, that's not true of idols, right?

That idols are made of people.

Look at verse 13.

"Your name, O Lord, endures forever.

"Your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.

"For the Lord will vindicate his people "and have compassion on his servants.

"The idols of the nations are silver and gold, "the work of human hands."

They have mouths, but do not speak.

They have eyes, but do not see.

They have ears, but do not hear.

Nor is there any breath in their mouths.

Those who make them become like them.

So do all who trust in them.

So after reminding us that Yahweh has taken down real flesh and blood world leaders, even world superpowers like Egypt, the Psalmist shines a light on the fact that the gods of these nations are not real deities, right?

They were unable to protect their people because they're not real.

They're made by human hands.

They have no senses.

Now I've seen some impressive idols, went to Bangkok and Thailand, saw Wah Po, you can look it up, huge reclining Buddha, it's massive.

But guess what?

Wah Po's still there, right?

If we go to Bangkok, he's gonna be in the same position

hasn't moved it's because he's not real right he doesn't have uh working eyes or hands or he's there is no life in him so why is the psalmist taking so much time at this point in the psalm to trash talk these other gods like why not just they're not real why even spend time with them why not why not just keep talking about how great yahweh is how great god is well there's another level to the psalm so we're now what like level three

So we have level one, two, three.

There's another level to the psalm because verse 14 is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 32, 36, where Moses is predicting that Israel will turn to the Lord from idols.

So we've got the whole Pentateuch concluding here in Deuteronomy 32.

And so we've got all the events of getting the 10 commandments, the golden calf, wandering in the desert.

And they're about to go into the promised land and a bunch of stuff that I skipped over in between.

And they're about to go into the promised land.

And Deuteronomy is when Moses is giving the law a second time.

Deuteronomy just means two, Deuteronomy law, right?

So there's a second giving of the law.

And after Moses gives the law a second time, reminds them of God's law, God's rules, who he is.

He's like, and by the way, you're not gonna keep it, right?

You're not gonna keep it.

You're gonna turn to idols and it's gonna be really bad.

He tells them that God will give them over after they've turned to idols, that God will give them over to cruel nations that will take them back into captivity and slavery, even though God's freed them once.

But he also tells them that they will repent, that because of God's mercy, grace and mercy, they will repent.

And so that these cruel nations that took them into captivity don't get puffed up and proud, God will return Israel back from captivity to demonstrate that it wasn't these idols that won the day.

This is still Deuteronomy 32.

I'm just giving you a summary.

He's gonna bring them back to prove that it wasn't these idols from these cruel nations that won the day,

but rather it was God who was disciplining his people.

So I want everybody to know these idols didn't get one over on me.

I was working on my people, disciplining my people to bring them back to me.

And then after giving that big summary, Moses says, for the Lord will vindicate his people.

This is Deuteronomy 32, 36 to 39.

For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees that their power is gone and there is none remaining bond or free.

Then he will say, where is their gods?

So he's saying, once Israel has learned their lesson, then I will work.

I will come back and work on their behalf.

And then he will say, where are there or where are the nation's gods?

The rock in which they took refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering.

Let them rise up and help you.

Let them be your protection.

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God beside me.

I kill and I make alive.

I wound and I heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

The main point to God's people here, including Deuteronomy, and if you take Psalm 135 as a whole, is that why would you go back to idols?

When you have the living God who is here saving you, working for you, don't go back to idols.

The psalmist tells us why we return to idols.

So not only does he paint this wonderful picture of the Lord, this glorious, victorious picture of the Lord, and then paints this really bleak picture and realistic picture of how worthless idols are, he also tells us why we turn back to idols when it makes absolutely no logical sense to turn back to idols.

And it's because idols make people like themselves.

Again, one more time, look at verses 15 to 18.

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

They have mouths but do not speak, they have eyes but do not see, they have ears but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths.

Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them.

You see, you and I were made to worship the one true God.

He alone is worthy of our praise and he alone can bear the weight of our hearts, deepest desires and needs.

So only God can bear the weight of our worship and this deep need and desire that he's built within us.

Sin, the sin we're all born with, has blinded us and dulled our senses to the worth and majesty of God.

That's what the psalmist is talking about here in these verses.

So where God should be sitting on the throne of our hearts and our lives, we've placed something else.

David Foster Wallace, who is an author, an unbelieving author, gave a pretty famous commencement address in 2005 to Kenyon College.

In it, he said, everybody worships.

The only choice we get is what to worship.

And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of God to worship is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive.

If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough.

Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure, you will always feel ugly.

Worship power and you will end up feeling weak and afraid and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear.

Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you'll end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.

Look, the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they are evil or sinful, I would disagree there, I would say they are evil and sinful, but it's that they're unconscious.

They are default settings.

I would agree with that as well.

Our idols don't make us like them in that if you worship money, you'll become rich.

That's how we think that they're going to make us like them.

Worshiping money or fame or comfort or beauty is as stupid as worshiping a lump of gold and silver.

And it continues to make us as stupid as a lump of gold or silver.

The prophet Isaiah puts it very vividly this way.

He says, he takes a part of it and warms himself.

So he's talking about, he goes through this whole thing about how this guy grows a tree, plants it, grows up, he waits years for it to get big enough, and then he cuts it down.

And he says, he takes a part of it and warms himself.

He kindles a fire and bakes bread.

Also, he makes a god and worships it.

He makes it an idol and falls down before it.

Half of it he burns in the fire, over the half he eats meat.

He roasts it and is satisfied.

Also, he warms himself and says,

Aha!

I am warm.

I have seen the fire.

And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it.

He prays to it and says, Deliver me, for you are my God.

They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes so that they cannot see, and their hearts so that they cannot understand.

No one considers.

nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, half of it I burned in the fire.

Also, I baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten, and shall I make the rest of it an abomination?

Shall I fall down before a block of wood?

He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, is there not a lie in my right hand?

That last part is the root of idolatry.

You and I may not fall down before a piece of wood, but we have things that we offer our lives to, our time, our energy, our attention, our affections.

And this root, this heart condition is the same.

Let me read it one more time.

Shall I fall down before a block of wood?

He feeds on ashes.

A deluded heart has led him astray and he cannot deliver himself or save.

Is there not a lie at my right hand?

Excuse me.

We are born with deluded hearts and eyes that are blinded to the glory of God.

John Calvin puts it this way.

He says, man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols.

The mind begets idols and the hand gives it birth.

We need God to, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians, remove the veil and show us God's glory and then to every day worship him because he is our joy and I would add our only hope.

we see that God is good.

The psalmist roots our praise and our worship in the fact that God is good.

Again, the psalm begins and ends with calls to praise Yahweh.

But here at the beginning of the psalm, if we flip back to the first couple of verses of the psalm, excuse me, thank you.

Somebody saw that I was dying.

Looks like we have a tissue up here too.

You guys are just too good to me.

I don't know what happened.

Hopefully I can get it back.

All right.

Back to the beginning of the psalm.

We see that the psalmist gives us three reasons.

We already looked at one of them.

But the first reason here is that God is good.

The first reason is that God is good.

If you look at verse 3, praise the Lord for the Lord is good.

Sing to him for it is pleasant.

Or sing to his name for it is pleasant.

God is love.

God is justice, compassion, beauty, strength, mercy, righteousness, and all of the things that our hearts desire and long for.

But perhaps more importantly than any one of those things is that God is all of those things at once in the right proportion, right?

The idols of our hearts are very rarely purely bad things.

We usually want and desire good things.

It's not wrong to desire financial security or to resist the breakdown of our bodies or to desire to be in a loving relationship with other people.

Where these things go wrong is when we love them and we desire them disproportionately.

When we love one virtue at the expense of another, or another way to put it, when we desire one of them more than God.

When we desire to be loved or we desire security more than God.

God is good.

God is holy.

Meaning that he lives simply.

All of his mercy is just.

All of his righteousness is compassion.

All of his discipline is love.

He's never out of proportion.

He's never more one than the other.

So when we worship God, we become like him in his goodness and in his holiness.

We live within the design and the proportions we were made to live in, which means that it's pleasant or it's a pleasure to praise him.

Praise his name for it is pleasant.

Almost like a throwaway line, but it's actually massive.

It's not a duty.

It's not a bear.

It's not something that we have to do grudgingly, but it's pleasant and pleasurable to praise the Lord.

The psalmist throughout the psalm, especially here, is calling us to compare God to the alternatives.

Right here, the psalmist wants us to consider what a pleasure it is

to worship the Lord who saves his people and restores them and brings them home.

It is a joy to praise this God who works for his people, as opposed to Molech, who demands that people burn their children.

Hamilton puts it this way.

He says, God's people are summoned to praise him in his house because of the goodness of his character makes his name pleasant.

Whereas a name like Molech became synonymous with child sacrifice.

The connotations of the name Yahweh are as positive as Molech's are evil.

The name of Yahweh results in psalms of praise, whereas other names call to mind only grief and pain.

So let me ask you this morning, where does what you worship lead?

Where does what you worship leave?

What do your gods call to mind?

The things that you're working for, you're sacrificing your time, your money for.

If you're not sure what your gods are, take a look at your checkbook.

Take a look at your calendar.

What are you giving your life and your resources to?

Some of our cultural idols and their grotesque results are just right there.

On the surface, you know, we have the worship of bodily autonomy and personal freedom, which still calls to mind the killing of children, specifically unborn children.

The worship of personal freedom and autonomy has led to the hatred and mutilation of our own bodies, especially even we see this, you know, being encouraged in kids and minors.

The worship of money and material things drives us to hatred, to hate either those who have more than we do or to despise those that have less than we do by using them for our own gain.

I mean, we could go on, right?

But the point of the Psalm isn't to dwell on our idols.

The point of the Psalm is to praise the Lord because he, unlike these idols, creates his people.

He's not created by his people and he is our joy.

And it's important to remember, I mean, it's throughout the Psalm, but especially the verses

Sorry, just lost my place there.

Verses 15 to 18, we remember that our gods shape us, right?

Our gods shape us either for our good and eternal joy or for our destruction and misery.

So listen, if you don't worship the one true God this morning, ask him to open your eyes to see his glory, to see how superior he is to the other things that you desire and have given your life to.

As Foster Wallace said, we all worship

The only choice we get is to what we worship, what we're going to put on the throne of our life.

Paul says that we can turn to the Lord and ask.

He says in 2 Corinthians 3, 14-18, But their minds are hardened, for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.

Only through Christ are our eyes opened.

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

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

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

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 the Spirit.

Only through Christ is the veil removed.

Only on the cross, when we see Christ hanging on the cross, buried, risen again, up in heaven, mediating on behalf of his people, when we see that God sent him to be our substitution, to be our propitiation, to take the wrath,

that we deserve.

When we see the beauty of what Christ has done, that's when the glory of the Lord, right, removes the veil and we're able to finally behold a God who works for his people, who loves his people, and not a God like the ones that we've been serving that take and take and take and take until we're done, right, until we're spent.

Turn to that God.

If you can't see, ask, right?

He says, when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Ask him to remove the veil and to show you his glory, just as Moses asked him.

Christ said, you know, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.

Seek him, ask, ask him to show you his glory.

Only through Christ, right, is the veil removed and the glory of God revealed and our idols exposed.

So we look at Christ in the gospels, we ask the Lord for help to see.

But you'll notice here that he talks about, and Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians here, the initial removing of that veil, but then also day to day, right?

From one degree of glory to the next, as we gaze upon the beauty of Christ, are we transformed into the same image?

So that means that for believers, worship in all of its forms

is warfare, right?

We're not made like our gods or what we worship instantaneously in this life, right?

You don't become the greediest person in the world overnight, right?

It's daily setting up this idol of money, success, security, affirmation, whatever, right?

In front of you day after day and bowing before it day after day that you are transformed into this hideous, dumb thing that the psalmist describes.

And Paul says the reverse is true for us as well, that as we behold the glory of the Lord, it's one degree of glory to the next in this life.

Worship, reading the scriptures, prayer, singing, all of these are part of the battle to behold the glory of the Lord.

This is why it's so hideous, right?

To just have a reading plan and check the box and read your Bible half asleep in the morning.

Whenever you got to read the Bible, that's fine.

But you ought to begin that time and view that time as worship and as a battle for the throne of your life.

And ultimately the outcome of who you will be one day because it's who you worship that morning and it's who you find admirable and desirable that morning that's ultimately going to change you that day.

And it's one step, one degree at a time.

And it's only by God's grace and power, right, that we don't have to let those idols, that indwelling sin, and those desires that just seem to come naturally to us in our sin nature, that it's by God's grace that we don't have to let them sit on the throne of our life, that we can fix our eyes on Jesus.

And listen, we all need help to do this.

Nobody can do this alone.

I've said this a number of times.

Sunday morning isn't enough.

Once a week, Jesus being lifted up to you and exalted by you is not enough.

Jesus needs to be lifted up every day on your own, but you're gonna need help.

You're gonna need other brothers and sisters alongside of you

more often than an hour and a half on Sunday morning to help lift up Christ in your eyes and exalt him, especially when he doesn't seem good, when he doesn't seem fair, when he doesn't seem like he's beautiful and glorious.

You need brothers and sisters to come alongside of you and remind you, right?

To remind you of how good and gracious he is to preach the gospel, the good news of Jesus to you.

Again, this fight and struggle isn't legalism.

It's the fight and the struggle to behold.

Ultimately, it's God who does the revealing and showing us how great and wonderful he is.

Your name, O Lord, endures forever.

Your renown, O Lord, throughout all ages.

For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.

We trust that as we turn to him and we look to him,

as our victorious king, that he will reveal and show us his glory and his majesty in a life-transforming way.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, Lord, may you never shrink in our eyes.

Lord, may you never become small.

And Lord, we know there are things all around us

both our indwelling sin and spiritual forces around us that are seeking to magnify themselves more than you in our hearts.

So Lord, you've called us to participate with the work that you're already doing in our life.

Lord, you've called us to wage war against our sin

and against those spiritual forces that would shrink you and diminish you in our sight.

And so, Lord, we pick up the tools that you've given us.

We pick up your word.

We pick up our right standing with you so that we can come to you in prayer.

Lord, we pick up the fellowship of the spirit that we have with our brothers and sisters.

Lord, and we worship you.

We worship you and we fight, again, those sinful desires and indwelling sin that's in our hearts.

Lord, our struggle is not because you are small.

It's not because there's some flaw in your beauty and in your holiness.

But Lord, our struggle is because we've become too far like the idols that we've worshiped for so long.

So Lord, give us eyes, give us ears, give us breath and life afresh and anew to see you in your glory and in your majesty.

And Lord, would that overflow into words and acts of praise.

We pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.