

Dual Citizens

Anthony Kim

Yesterday marked a providential milestone in this part of the world which was a 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence two and a half centuries. The grand scope of eternity though two and a half century is a mere vapor. A mere vapor. Yet we want to look at in the history what human governance if it's done at least in part according to God's word. There is celebration. There is what we see of God's enduring common grace.

As we pass this celebration, the air around us is rather thick with noise. You can scroll through the news or scroll through social media and you will recognize, if you haven't already, two dominant competing narratives. On one hand, you'll hear a narrative of triumphalism. That is when you blur the line between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world, which leaves a feeling of superiority, robs a person of humility, and paves the way of severe disillusionment. On the other hand, you will hear a narrative of cynicism, often resulting from unmet expectations, repeated disappointments, bitterness which concludes in the individual that God's promises won't tangibly apply to their everyday reality which leaves a feeling of meaninglessness. So one you have severe disillusionment and then secondly you have a feeling of meaninglessness just absolute void empty without God.

But as a people of God we do not get our instructions on how to live from these narratives. Both options make the exact same theological error which is this. They treat human history as the ultimate reality. As the ultimate reality and as Christians, we do not look at history through the lens of morality, from human reasoning, culture or our own desires. You primarily look at history through the lens of the Bible and the redemptive history of Jesus Christ. Which is the central theme in scripture from cover to cover which is the unfolding narrative of Jesus Christ throughout the Bible.

So to help us navigate through this moment in time, this pivotal moment in our lives, I want to look at what the Lord Jesus taught in ordering our loves because this is an issue with prioritizing our loves. So, if you will go ahead and turn with me to Matthew chapter 22. Matthew chapter 22. And from here, we're going to read what the Lord Jesus teaches us about ordering our loves. Matthew chapter 22, beginning in verse 37.

And if you will please stand out of respect for God's word and follow along silently as I read from this passage. These are the words of Jesus. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. You may be seated.

Here we see the Lord Jesus ordering our loves by placing God first. The believer's love for self and others is rightly oriented preventing the soul from becoming disordered. You see, as soon as you don't put God first, your life is already disordered. So God using the text, he prioritizes us to put him first, preventing the soul from becoming disorder. Prioritizing lesser things which can easily fill that void with the material. The temporal whether it's wealth or whether it's you and what you want to achieve in your life or your own pleasures will easily fill that void and it will always create destruction.

You see loving the gift more than the giver is the issue at heart here. You can read of what happens when you live a life of disorder. The Lord Jesus said this in a prior passage, the parable of the rich fool. We see this in Luke 12:16-21. You can read that in your own time. But what the Lord Jesus calls to our attention here is a fool. And he defines what a fool is because he loved his material wealth, the gift, more than God, the giver. His love was completely disordered, prioritizing temporal comfort over eternal reality set before him. He had no idea that there was eternal things awaiting for him. Instead, he focused on the material things. Then we look at the great banquet found in Luke 14:15-24. The Lord Jesus gives this parable and he shares while the fields and work and marriage are good things. He doesn't say anything wrong about those things. He points out that these guests at this great banquet place them above the king's invitation. The Lord Jesus uses this to show how prioritizing good earthly gifts over God become actually sin in one's life.

And so here we must let the gospel, the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ settle in our hearts as believers. We know it doesn't end with this understanding. It ends with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ helps us to understand through this understanding. By understanding the gospel first, you will then understand the context of these two parables that you cannot reorder your own broken loves through your own human willpower. Your human willpower always default to the lesser of which is you denying God and rebelling against God and then ultimately turning away from him into everlasting punishment. And so, you cannot simply wake up tomorrow morning and said, I'm going to do what the Lord Jesus says in these parables. I'm not going to be the fool. I'm not going to be denying the king's invitation. You can try to do that, but you won't resolve it. You won't resolve it because inwardly you revert to your own willpower. You don't want to depend on God. You don't want to depend upon him. So what is moralism? What is moralism that tells you to fix your disordered loves? Meaning that if you look the parables through your own lens, this is what happens. Moralism sets in. What can you do about this? Here's

what it is. It tells you you fix your disordered loves. You do it. You do something about it. What the gospel tells you is the exact opposite. It tells you that only when your heart rests in the finished work of the cross of an unchangeable savior. You change but he doesn't.

The Lord Jesus Christ when you come to him with the finished work of the cross. Here's what happens. Your vertical relationship with God has been restored. He is the only one that can reconcile you to God. He is our mediator. And then what does he do? He sets in order our horizontal lives. He now helps us align ourselves to his will and how we should prioritize our horizontal relationships. And that's not by your own willpower is it? But by Christ's strength, his power, his love. His ordered love. His ordered love. That's the only way that the Lord Jesus wants us to understand. We must come to the understanding. That's the only way that to change our disorder of our loves is to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal savior and lord. He showed us the greatest love. It was when he went to the cross and he shed his own precious blood for us. He didn't just do it out of words. No, he came down voluntarily. At the heart of love is it must be voluntary. You cannot force love. You cannot do that with your relationship with God nor with anyone else because God designed us to know what love is. And if you try to fill that emptiness with some kind of other loves without God, you will have a life of destruction. You are allowing it for yourselves. So you have no one to blame. But thank God Jesus took the blame. He took the blame. You don't have to take the blame. He comes ahead of you and he said just come to me. I will create order in your life by first connecting us to the sovereign God who has ultimate control over your life and your eternity and then sovereignly works out your relationships with your life. Whether you're married with your spouse, the kind of love that Christ showed when he laid down his life, representing his life for the church. That we are as husbands to lay down our lives for our wives, for our spouse. And we see the ordering of our children and that we would discipline and admonish them unto the Lord. We point them to Christ. We point them to Christ. We show them that his love requires times of discipline to show us our waveredness and we can't trust in ourselves because we will always veer to the left or to the right. And by chastening us, he brings us back to ordered step in life and for our children to see that is only Christ that can point us on the right path. And he instructs us on how to do that. And then we see that on and on with pastors that I am ordering this church through the great shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I am to instruct you by his commands that when you observe all that he has commanded you, what does he say? Lo, I am with you always until the end of the age. There's no greater love than that. That the love never ceases. And he doesn't want that in your relationship with God, nor with the people that are around you. And so if you're a Christian here today, our love will continue on. Our love will continue on beyond these temporal walls or this temporal world and will go as it were into heaven's glory forever and ever.

You see, loving God above all else and then loving your neighbor as yourself as the Lord Jesus shows us and teaches us. We find two other parables, namely on what an ordered love looks like. So we looked at two disordered loves namely the foolish man and then the great banquet. But then there's now two ordered loves, two parables to reflect this. The first one we find is the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. Two wonderful parables that the Lord Jesus gives to his disciples. The first one, the hidden treasure, the Lord Jesus demonstrates that those who rightly order your love, you will gladly surrender all lesser earthly goods. You call it out. What are those earthly goods? You surrender. You gladly surrender it all to secure the kingdom of God. That's the pearl. That's the orderly love. Second parable, the pearl of great price and the hidden treasure. A man looks at the field and he finds a part of the field and says, I want that. And he sells everything. It's representing also the kingdom of God. And so you have both putting and placing God first in both of these parables.

Now, what does it look like then after loving God to loving your neighbor? He gives us the parable of the good Samaritan. And what is in that? In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus uses this to show that true love for God must manifest as practical active love for our suffering neighbors. Do you have an eye when you look at people's suffering? Or are you like the rest of people that just walk away and don't do anything about it? You see, if Christ has settled in your heart his love, you will react a totally different way to those that are suffering. And we know in that passage that he pours out his grace to bring life to this person. And he uses us as instruments of his grace of vessels of mercy to be in the path of people that are suffering. Those are our neighbors, specifically those that are suffering. So you see this wonderful life of a believer that we are active participants in the kingdom of God and not of this world. The Lord Jesus taught that God has woven this hierarchy of love into creation itself. We are originally designed to love God first and ultimately. Just go back to Adam and Eve. What do you see there? It's God, Adam, and Eve before the world was ever created. This perfect relationship with God. And then what was placed? Something material. And that material, that fruit destroyed and separated the relationship with God forever. But it doesn't end there. The restoration is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ to bring us back to him. That's the greatest news that we can ever hear on this side of heaven. And that we can love our neighbors, our families, those that we work with, and our place of existence here in America. These are all then secondary as a gift from God's hand. The gift of God giving you neighbors that you can serve your families if you have a family secondary but a gift from God. Your work that is a gift from God and then a gift that we are here in America to celebrate the 250th anniversary. It is something to celebrate but those are all secondary. Those are gifts. Above all, we must place our love towards God.

And that's what the gospel does. It reorients our loves. So we must talk about sin. Then sin chooses to disobey God and his design, violation of his perfect standard. What are

those standards? They're his commands. They're his precepts, his instructions. Whether doing bad, which is the sin of commission, or failing to do good things that we ought to do but do not do it. That is a sin of omission. And we see those played out in the book of James. Sin of commission, sin of omission. And disordered love takes a good thing like I mentioned like the Lord Jesus mentioned marriage and work and all these things and takes that good things and elevates it to an ultimate thing. Choosing those things above God. That's when it gets dangerous. That's when our lives are disordered. And when you take a good thing and make it an ultimate thing, you turn it into an idol. And I explained Wednesday night what is an idol? It's something you can see with your own eyes, taste, feel, touch, all those senses. And then what you can control, what you want to manipulate. You take the invisible thing and make it into a visible thing. You cannot manipulate God, nor can you see God. He is invisible. And this is what sin does. It creates what God has given to us and makes it into an idol. It can be anything physical, relational or conceptual that takes the place of God as the ultimate source of our affections, our security and our identity. Idolatry is the act of worshiping or putting your ultimate trust in these substitutes rather than the creator. Again, gifts above the giver.

So if you love God as supreme as worthy of your ultimate worship, your love then for all the substitutes in your life will work itself out. It will all work itself out. Because God is a God of order. And if you have him in your life, all the things will work out. Yes, it's going to be difficult. Your sin is going to fight against that. But ultimately, God's will will prevail in your life if you're a true believer. That is why it's so good. That is why the gospel is good news. It reorients our loves into its proper place. The Lord Jesus does that for us. The greatest relationship you can have is having a relationship with Christ.

So today as we look back on 250 years, we do so not to praise human effort, the gifts, but to marvel at God's sustaining grace. It is grace. God has given us much grace in this nation. But I want us to have it in its proper place. Turn with me to Philippians. We're going to look at chapter 3. Philippians chapter 3. We have already gone through a series of the book of Philippians, but I want to bring it from a perspective that I didn't share with you when I preached this text Philippians chapter 3. And we're going to look at beginning in verse 17. Beginning in verse 17 and we're going to go through to verse 21 speaking to the believers at Philippi. He says this, Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk as you have us for an example. For many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame who mind earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven. From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Direct, isn't it? The indicatives throughout this passage are clear. There is a dual citizenship as believers of Christ. And I just want to lift up to you in Philippians 3:20 where we see this. The Apostle Paul is writing by the way to the church of Philippi who was at the time, let me just share with you the historical context of this weighty matter. First, Philippi was a Roman colony. And so to be a citizen of Philippi was a badge of honor, a great superpower, something to say, Look at us. Look at us. A badge of honor. And so the residents would dress just like the Romans would dress. They would also practice the Roman law. And they boasted of having this elite status in the world within the greatest empire the western world has ever seen up to that point. So you can imagine the amount of pride that the people in Philippi and would come in as a result into the church. And Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says these words right in the middle of pride he shares this bombshell. He says, For our conversation is in heaven. Verse 20, From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word that Paul uses for conversation is citizenship which also comes from the word politics which comes from politics because as citizens we are under the politics of this world. And so he understands that there is conversations going on about politics in the church at Philippi. And Paul is telling this prideful Roman colony that has seeped in and now makes it clear. He says, Your alignment, your home, your belonging is not found in the registers of Rome. That is not your ultimate end. That's what he's saying here. Don't let your manner of life just be about this world. Another way of putting it he says anchor yourself in heaven that your conversations should be related to heaven that changes everything doesn't it again that vertical relationship must be above our horizontal relationships and he puts this out plainly by correcting there are people inside the church of Philippi they're discussing horizontal things of importance rather than the vertical relationship which matters the most.

And so this citizenship was not earned through perfect virtue. Meaning that while God by his common grace did place them in this Roman colony at that specific time period of time at one of the apex times of the Roman colony which we know was destroyed eventually. And so it was at the peak that all this is going on that Paul settles it in their hearts. No, watch out, brethren. Be careful. Be mindful with your conversations. We know that's not just words. That's our actions. What are we boasting about? How analogous is it to our period of time? See all of it, the entirety of our lives. How are we even able to have conversations of heaven? You may ask. It's a good question. It all comes down to the entire entirety of this that we've been purchased and established by the blood of Christ. That's the reason why. And it was on a Roman cross. So that epitome of Roman power was destroyed on a Roman cross by the Lord Jesus Christ and he purchased us. Nothing of ourselves. That while we yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly, which is also found in the book of Romans.

So as to Paul's directive to us, speaks directly to our hearts. The danger of idolatry. What happens when we forget to prioritize our loves, ordering our loves? This is another danger. What happens when our loves become disordered and our earthly citizenship slips into the primary slot? That is what Paul is also wanting us to understand. If we look to our nation to provide what only the kingdom of God can give, we destroy our spiritual vitality. Why? Because our focus is just completely on earthly things. Again, the warning from Paul. No, your conversation should be of heaven. The state can pass laws but it cannot regenerate a human heart. The state can enforce external compliance but it cannot produce internal righteousness. The state can protect your earthly life but it cannot save your eternal soul. See, when the vertical reality of our secure standing before God fades from our view, the human heart instinctively tries to fabricate our own justification horizontally. What can all these things do for my good, for my protection? Instead of God, who is our ultimate security and our ultimate provider and giver. If we look to our identity nationally or our political parties or cultural tribes to give us the validation from what? Our security, our righteousness. We basically say no to the cross. We invalidate the cross. Only Christ can provide security, our eternal security. Only Christ can provide our righteousness. Nothing horizontally can do that because it's a vertical problem. We must be reconciled to God above all our reconciliations horizontally. This is the problems we see today. Every situation you see on this horizontal plane is because of this disordered love by not placing God first. That's where Satan attacks, doesn't he? He wants to attack in this area.

So the remedy to this anxiety is never coming up with a better strategy. Again, no human willpower here. It is simply resting in the sovereignty of God. That he has ultimate control over your life and everyone else's life on this planet from past, present, and future. Can any human being do that? Can any human being do that? Let alone just for this moment in time. See, Christ rules over all names. He is above all names. He is the king of kings and lord of lords. He controls the rules of this world. And so when the Holy Spirit captures your gaze with the beauty looking at an empty tomb, thank God there's an empty tomb today. That means he wasn't settled here horizontally. There was a vertical. He was ascended back to heaven. That resurrection means a great deal to us as Christians, doesn't it? We don't just do this as a celebration every April. No, we do this every time to thank God that he is resurrected, that we can be in newness of life. And so the horizontal outrages of this world lose its paralyzing power, the anxiety, the stress, the worry, all those things when the Holy Spirit captures your heart to look simply to Christ, all those things wash away. They do all those worries, all those concerns because you and I do not have the sovereign power. Only he does. And that's what the Holy Spirit does. Points us to his sovereignty found in Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So it no longer paralyzes you what's happening in this world. Christ frees us from demanding that our nation be our savior or our gifts are our savior because he already saved us perfectly.

Nothing else is going to replace the perfection that he has done on the cross. There is no greater finishing work than what Christ did for us, the full payment of our sins on the cross.

And so, how do we practically then keep our heavenly citizenship primary? How do we do that? The first is testing your identity. What is your identity? When you describe who you are, not in this room, but maybe in the quietness, what do you do? What do you put at the top? What do you put at the top? You can do this right now. Who is at the top of your life? Are you a conservative or a liberal first? Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ first? Can have both. Could only prioritize one. If you're dealing with, let's say, for example, you come in from the world's perspective, then you're going to read your Bible from that perspective. Meaning that you're going to try to conform your ideology to this book instead of the word of God conforming you. Do you see that? Whenever you put the horizontal first, you will try to manipulate the word of God to fit your perspective. But when you put as a disciple of Christ, which means a learner, not a learner of the world and its ways, but a learner of Christ, then you let his word conform you. You see the difference why an orderly life is so important even in how you read the word of God and you live according to what God's word tells you how to evaluate your loves are ordered.

So your identity who are you identified as second what do you put into your mind? It is important what you put into your mind. And I mentioned in my last week's message that out of the average churchgoer spends 499 hours being programmed by an algorithm, being disciplined by an algorithm, being fed information by an algorithm, and you're being systematically disciplined by it either through world news or talk radio or other information source. And when you soak your mind in the anger, the fear, the outrage shared amongst those news information and you spend then only 15 minutes possibly a week on your knees in the presence of God in his word, which is the average time a Christian is reading his word and praying. 15 minutes a week. What do you think that does to the ordering of your heart? What are you letting your mind naturally default to? Either this world or the kingdom of God. You see, you are anchoring yourself, your identity with the information that you feed yourself. And here's the thing, here it is. If you set your anchor on the horizontal, it will be everchanging. But the word of God is unchanging. It is unchanging. That makes all the difference, doesn't it? That makes all the difference to your life. And as a believer, we're committed to anchoring ourselves daily in the word of God, not just for 15 minutes a week. That is sad. That was sad news when I read that. But we spend more time in the word not to make us more righteous but to have a relationship with the Lord. Our loves in the proper order and then you can hear his voice clearly above all the noise of this world and you hear his voice first above everyone else as well.

So secondly I want us to look at Mark chapter 12. Mark chapter 12. Here we're going to look at the words of Jesus. He says something very important here as well. Mark

12:13-17. I'll set the context of verses 13 and 14. And then verses 15 and 17 is what the Lord Jesus says about the context. And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch him in his words. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true and carest for no man. For thou regardeth not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not? Shall we give or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Bring me a penny that I may see it. And they brought it. And he said unto him, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

So I'm going to set what is being said here by the Lord Jesus Christ. Going from what Paul has addressed. We're looking back to the Lord Jesus Christ who set the stage for what we are to do as citizens, as believers, living as dual citizens. So the first thing is, well, if our citizenship is in heaven, then the things of this world don't matter. That's not what the Lord Jesus says, does he? We're going to see that. Or we can just withdraw and just live out in a bunker somewhere in the wilderness and just wait for God for the Lord Jesus Christ to return. That's also not what we see here. We're going to see that two extremes, two wrong answers. The scripture never allows us to retreat but demands us to stay where we are. So when we look at this passage, the Lord Jesus is confronted by a trap set by the Pharisees and the Herodians which were the religious rulers of that day. And they asked him a question designed to get him executed or discredited. That was their ultimatum. Destroy him or discredit him. So they asked a question, is it lawful to give tribute or pay taxes to Caesar or not? Shall we give or shall we not give to our taxes? So if the Lord Jesus says yes, then the Jewish populace will view him as a traitor of God. But if he says no, the Roman authorities will arrest him for rebellion. And so the Lord Jesus looks at them and says this, Bring me a penny that I may see it. They bring him a coin. He asks, Whose is this image and superscription? And they say Caesar's. And then the Lord Jesus delivers one of the most profound statements ever in recorded history. He says, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

But look at what the Lord Jesus is doing here. He's telling them to give the coin back to Caesar. He acknowledges that earthly governments have a God-ordained sphere of authority. And they provide order and they're supposed to provide order. They're supposed to provide infrastructure. They're supposed to provide trading of currency and sorts, but and so we have an obligation to be good law-abiding citizens here. That's what he's saying. No, you give your taxes in its proper order. But he doesn't end there. That's the key. He doesn't end there. He adds, And to God the things that are God's. The Lord Jesus sets a boundary line that Caesar's can never cross is in the realm of God. He cannot be God, which they were treating him as God. And so the Lord Jesus bears Caesar's coin's image and shows them who is it? Who is it? Give back what he deserves. But he then

shifts the tone to the things of God that belong to God. And that is God's image. God's image. Your soul, your conscience, your worship, your ultimate devotion belongs exclusively to the Almighty. And here's the thing, it's not there, but it means basically God is almighty even of Caesar. If he is almighty, then he is almighty of Caesar as well because he also bears the image of God. God was the one that created him, didn't he? And so we see that he ends with God. He ends with God. That's who our ultimate devotion must be exclusively to.

And so when our loves are properly ordered as the Lord Jesus tells us, when we love God first, it actually makes us the best possible citizens on earth. Because Christ has fully secured our vertical standing. He liberates us from using our neighbors for self validation. We no longer get validation from the world. That's a test for all of us, isn't it? You do not serve your community to become righteous. Again, validation. No, Christ has made you righteous. So important. And now his love flows through us as a consequence that we can love our neighbors as he loved the neighbors. And this has been the power behind the brightest moments of American history. By the way, today people are rewriting America's history. But there were times where people would acknowledge Christianity as part of our American history. You see, the vast majority of our historical hospitals, our oldest universities, our rescue missions, orphanages all across this world, even our relief organizations were all started not by government mandates. They were built because the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of believers and to the brokenness around them and compelled them by the love of Christ to pour out their resources for the welfare of their neighbors. They weren't waiting for the government. The Holy Spirit quickened them. During the late 19th and early 20th century when the American churches were being revived, there was unprecedented resources being poured into missionary work. Tens and thousands of their own sons and daughters across the globe built clinics, translated languages, and planted native churches. Church planting all over the world. They understood that the unique economic prosperity and religious freedom of the nation was not an entitlement to be hoarded. It was not to be stewarded for themselves. No, it was a stewardship to be deployed for the glory of God and the kingdom of God. That's what a church is supposed to do. We're to rescue the lost. We're supposed to fulfill the great commission of making disciples of all nations, not to be selective.

How do we fulfill the stewardship today? If that was the 19th and 20th century, what do we do as 21st century Christians? You see, loving your country doesn't mean primarily just looking at your phone and yelling at it all day. Being outraged by what's happening in America. It looks like as a church, we have our academy and you go and mentor a young child, show them the ways of Christ if you're a believer. And we have many of you volunteering to do that because you know what? Satan is attacking the young people at an earlier and earlier age. There are being drugs being given to eight and nine year olds. Sex is introduced before they're 10. They're not designed to fulfill those things. God designed

a specific age and the world is rewriting that. And so you start with the young. Help the young people. Thank God we have a school that looks at Christ. And his instructions and he cares for the young. He said, Let them come to me. We should take care of the young around us. Giving up your time. That's how you steward it. Bring beauty. Bring order and integrity which is God-given to you. God has given you that ability to bring beauty and order and integrity to the community that he has called you into. So when the Holy Spirit creates in you and quickens you into a believer, you have a love for your neighbor that is not expressed by rage or by anger, but is postured in a way that express Christ and how he served. He came to serve. He came to serve the vulnerable. The vulnerable who which the world wants to attack the vulnerable. No, we don't do that. We go and help the vulnerable. And we don't need anyone to tell you. Christ gives us the order already. He showed us the example. It means going to the work in your workplace and spending time at least praying first for them that are lost and maybe inviting them to share the word of God and to share your testimony with them of what Christ has done in your life. And you be a conduit of his grace, that you be a means of grace to them, the visible gospel to the specific people that God has placed in your paths, that you don't take it randomly, but you take it as a serious call.

And then you ask this question. If our church vanished from this community tomorrow morning, let's say, not saying it's going to happen, I'm saying if it would happen, would the city notice? Would our community notice that we're gone? Would our neighbors mourn us or applaud that we're gone? See true service means that our surrounding community experience the tangible beauty and order and love in the community expressed by Christ's love.

So how do we then draw this to a conclusion? There are two postures that I want us to focus on. One is we should be grateful. We should be grateful for God's common grace. We should be grateful for the means of grace in our lives. But we should also lament. That is a biblical word. There is a book called Lamentations. Those two postures helps us to be the light and salt of the world. Jesus was grateful to do ministry, but he also wept, didn't he? He wept at the death of Lazarus. He wept over Jerusalem that they would come to him, but they would not. So, when you have these two postures of lament and gratitude, what happens? You don't blindly celebrate just being grateful for the celebration, but you also don't also isolate yourself in your gratitude. You turn around and go, there are people mourning right now primarily because they're without Christ. Primarily because their lives are disorder and in chaos because their loves are disorderly because they don't put God first. And so lamentation comes in that you don't only thank God in one breath in your prayer of the privileges that God has given to you, but you also in the same breath you go, God, save people from judgment. Save them from their sin. That you would do that in the same breath. Look, there are brothers and sisters right now in North Korea, in China, in Iran that have to secretly live or worship in house churches.

And even though the fear of being sent to prison, let alone death, they are doing this. When we have more privileges to witness yet God is blessing them more because they understand these two ways of postures in our lives.

See, spending our time on our knees is for spiritual awakening and for the healing that only Christ can offer and the only one that can secure our eternal soul for not only this life but for the life to come. That's what Peter means by having this tone. That you may sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that ask you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, meaning in gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse you of your good conversation in Christ. So the condition is that you are actually speaking of Christ. And then verse 17 of 1 Peter chapter 3, for it is better if the will of God be so that he suffer for well doing than for doing evil. You see our engagement in the world looks like what Peter is saying here that we love our lost that we have lost our opportunity to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ when we don't have conversations of Christ. Ask the Lord to give you a holy fear putting him above fear of man and you will be able to converse about Christ. He will. He will give you the strength. But your posture must be I want them to know Christ. I have to actually share it then with my words and with my actions.

So may the Holy Spirit then reset our hearts constantly to this understanding that we are to be a light and salt to the world as believers in Christ. And even in this very room right now, there are those that need to know the Lord Jesus Christ. So the Holy Spirit may work in each and one of our lives in this way to enable us to have proper order of love in our lives. To not make an idol of gifts in our lives to see that our flaws are there to show us where we came from. And it was because of the unfailing mercy and grace of God that he restored us as believers and he calls us to go and help others to know the path found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. To let us bow our knees not only in our private time, but we may bow our knees over and over again beyond just our own time before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, continually tuning our hearts to worshiping him as our ultimate loyalty who sits unshakably upon the throne of God, who sits at the right hand of God right now who rules over all things by his grace. Amen. May he do that in each one of our lives this afternoon. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who came down for a specific purpose. That his mission was to go to the cross and that from that cross there was victory found in his death. Victory over sin. Sin of our disordered love, sin of our rebellion against your word, sin against desiring the gifts over the giver. Father, I pray that you would work in each and one of our hearts, namely amongst the believers to see, Lord, that we live from victory, not for victory, because of what Christ has done and continues to do in our lives by his sustaining grace. We thank you that he says to us that what he has begun in us will

finish it until we see him. We thank you Lord that he's given us these promises. Now help us to fulfill them by your Holy Spirit. Quicken us to the reality that our time is short on this earth and we are primarily called to be the light and salt of this world to be ambassadors for Christ to help plead with people to turn to Christ to be reconciled to you, Father. And I pray, Father, in this room, if there are lost among us that need to be reconciled, Lord, that we would speak truth with love that the love that Christ bore on the cross for them, that we are laying down our lives for our own pleasures, for our own desires, so that we can lay down to serve others in our homes, with our spouses, and with our children, and with our community of work. Lord, help them, God, to come to Christ now when they have the opportunity to do so when they know what is wrong in their lives because they haven't properly placed you above everyone else. Father, so please work in their hearts by your grace and your mercy. We thank you for the salvation you bring to those that are lost in the midst of our church. We thank you for all these blessings in the name of thy son, Jesus. Amen.