

All right. If you guys want to get out your Bibles, our destination is going to be Zechariah chapter 10. This morning, as we study through the Old Testament. If you don't know how to get to Zechariah as he is classified as a minor prophet, then make your way to Matthew. First gospel in the New Testament and backtrack two books and you'll land in Zechariah. Well, thinking about prophets, do you know who the most high tech prophet was? It's Moses. He's the first guy to use a tablet. Which prophet was a financial genius? If you've been with us on Wednesday nights, you might know the answer. It's actually Noah. He floated his stock while everyone else went into liquidation. Yeah, it's only funny if you're Noah. okay, well, Zechariah, he may not be as well known as Moses and Noah, but here's the setup in 536 BC, after a full generation in captivity, as we've mentioned to you in previous studies, 42,000 Jews are just a remnant of the million or so that were deported a generation before they returned from Babylon to Israel. And so Cyrus the Great allowed them to return to their homeland after the captivity. And they had one mission, really, and that's to rebuild the temple. And so they got started in the same year that they arrived. But then the work stalled as soon as the opposition sprang up. In that same year. And as we've mentioned, it stalled not just for one year or two years, but for 16 full years. And so in 520 BC, God raised up two who we call minor prophets in tandem together at the same time, to tell these people to get back to work on the Lord's house. First guys. Haggai. He's got a very short little book as we know it, and he prophesies for about four total months, and he tells them very pragmatically, look, you need to get your priorities right, get back to work on the house of God. You need to stop being concerned with your stuff and set your priorities straight, and then God will bless you. So then at the same time, God raises up Zechariah and Zechariah is much more long winded. 14 chapters and much more mystical. Yet he is also much more encouraging. And so he's going to blow the wind of the spirit through his words on the people to help them accomplish the monumental task that God has called them to. So here's how it lays out the book, chapters one through six. You have the prophet's vision or visions, the prophecies are either 8 or 10 of them, or one with 8 or 10 parts over six chapters. We looked at these, and the reason that he has these prophecies is the task is too big for him to, you know, for him, for him to actually accomplish. So God pulls back the curtain and lets him see into the spiritual, into the heavenlies to remind him that everything that he's been called to do is only going to happen by the supernatural power of God. In chapters seven and eight. These people come from Bethel to ask him a question about some practices that they had, and how he ended up responding was letting them know that, yeah, these questions okay, they're valid. And yet what he wants them to understand is it's not about what you're doing right now, necessarily. What you're doing right now. And being faithful is not just about now. But if we're faithful now, it's part of something much

bigger. The part that we play in our little corner of the world, in our little spot on the map, in our little time in history. And he begins to then shift their focus towards all that God is going to do if they'll just stay the course. And that's chapters nine through 14. The prince is predicted. The king is coming if they do their part. Now, Jesus will come through them and their people and restore all things. So that's kind of the setup. That said, then they are not at the pinnacle of their national success. You might say they are struggling. They are in the middle of this huge work and they don't have enough resources, and they're alienated from any supply chain, and they're overwhelmed with enemies. And so then in chapter 10, God says verse 1 through Zechariah ask the Lord for rain in the time of latter rain, and the Lord will make flashing clouds, and he will give them showers of rain grass in the field for everyone. Ask the Lord for rain specifically latter rain. In ancient cultures. Of course, this is the case in third world communities all over the world to this day, wheat and barley are staple items in people's diet. So for wheat and barley, the early rain is in the fall. At the planting time. But then what you really need to pray for is latter rain. About the time of the harvest, so everything doesn't burn up and rain, as it were, for agrarian peoples, was a symbol of God's blessing in that world. And yet, conversely, as I have here for you, the absence of rain indicated divine displeasure. And so they had been going through a rough patch, and because of the way they thought about God, he blesses those who are doing good. He dries up the lives of those who are doing bad. They wouldn't have been quick to ask for blessing. Not so unlike you and I often. James chapter 4, verse 2 says, sometimes we have not because we ask not. Other times we have not, because we ask amiss, but often, even as New Testament believers or people who may have some kind of concept about God, we think, well, I can ask God for blessing when I'm doing good, whatever that is. And if I'm not doing good, there's no way I would ask God for blessing, because why would he bless me if I'm not doing what I'm supposed to do? But the Bible upends all that because God is always telling people to ask God for blessing, not based upon who we are, but based upon who he is. And his character is that he blesses not because of what we do, but often in spite of what we do. That's the grace of God. And so we can ask for showers of blessing even when we don't deserve them, because the reality is, on our worst day, we don't deserve God's blessings. And on our best day, we don't deserve God's blessings. And so he says, look, ask for rain. The latter rain. Now in verse 2, for the idols speak delusion. The diviners envision lies until false dreams, and they comfort in vain. Well, the people had been disillusioned by idols, specifically after they had been a nation for some 400 years. It's the reason they were carried off into captivity. God took them to Babylon because it was the epicenter of idolatry. And he said, if you want to trade me in for idols, and I'll take you to the the, the epicenter of idolatry, ground zero, and I'll remove the idolatry

from you in the capital of idolatry. And so true, when they came back, they didn't have as big a problem with idolatry. Now the Bible says idolatry is a problem for all of us. While we might not put little gods up on our mantle, you may know that an idol is whatever you put ahead of God. They're all kinds of things competing for the lordship of our life. If we don't watch it. The problem with idols is that we always become like what we worship. My favorite passage pertaining to this I have here for you in Psalm 115, I'll read verses 1 through eight reads like this. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to your name give glory because of your mercy, because of your truth. Why would the Gentiles or the nonbelievers say so? Where is their God? But our God, he says, is in heaven. He's not sitting on our shelf or on a mantle. Our God is in heaven, and he does whatever he pleases. Their idols are silver and gold. The work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak. They have eyes, but they do not see. They have ears, but they do not hear noses. They have, but they do not smell. They have hands, but they do not handle. They have feet, but they don't walk, nor do they mutter through their throat. And here's the capstone verse, verse 8. Those who make them are like them. So is everyone who trusts in them. We always become like that which we worship. In this case, these people had been disillusioned by idols, but they had been deceived by diviners or people that were of the occult who had snuck in to the congregation of Israel and had drawn them away with false dreams and vain comfort. Now deceivers are found in every group of godly people throughout the generation. That's what Satan does. He takes a group of people who are seeking after God, and then he just sprinkles himself some deceivers in there. And in fact, deceivers are described in Romans chapter 16. I'm going to read verses 17 and 18 to you. Now Paul says at the end of this letter, I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions of offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and notice. Avoid them. For those who are such, do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. And in reality, wherever God is doing a work, Satan will sprinkle deceivers in there. And what happens is, on one hand, there is always stirring it up behind the scenes, while on the other hand they flatter and lots of times churches give those people a pass because they don't seem to be overtly destroying anything. But I should mention to you that of all the things God hates, it's someone causing division and stirring up strife and deceiving his people. For in Corinthians that Corinthian church had all kinds of problems, including a guy sleeping with his stepmom. And Paul waited to address that until after he addressed Division. And that's why Titus says, for divisive person in The Fellowship of God, you reject that person after the first and the second admonition, because the body can't hold up to deception, and all deception is of the devil, whether it's actually diviners, soothsayers or not. Now, as deceivers are described. And look what Romans says

about them, deceivers are to be avoided. But then we only can avoid deceivers if they're exposed. Paul had something to say about that in acts chapter 20, when he was making his last trip towards Rome, he stopped on his way in a place called Miletus, on the coast of what is now modern day Turkey, and he visited with the Ephesian elders, who had spent a lot of time with in the past, and he gave them, like his last principles, for being strong after he's gone. And starting in verse 28 through verse 30, Paul said to that group, therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among you which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves. And so he says, you guys are going to have to feed the flock, guard the flock, and you're going to have to take care of the flock, because people are going to spring up to deceive the flock. And deceivers are to be avoided. And yet again, as I said, they can only be avoided as they are exposed. And so they are exposed through examining the truth. I have been told I've never been a cashier. Actually, that cashiers are to recognize a false bill or false currency by first studying real or true currency. And so there's a method I've read that they use the the feel, look and tilt method. You feel the currency to see if it's got the raised ink of of true bills issued from our mint. You, you look by tilting in the light the currency and see if they those bills have the the security threads that are embedded in them or the watermarks. And so you don't have to know every form of false currency in order to recognize a fake. You just have to know the truth. And the problem for these people was that they didn't know the truth. And so they were deceived by a fake. And the problem is found here in verse 2. Therefore the people when their way like sheep, they're lost. And why, verse 2, they are in trouble because there is no shepherd. And my anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds the sheep had been deceived because the shepherds had not done their job. They'd slacked on feeding the sheep. That's the main job of a shepherd. Instead, I heard it said this weekend at a conference. The shepherds were doing instead of feeding the sheep. Clownish Acts, you know, and feeding goats. They were acting like clowns, feeding goats instead of shepherds, feeding sheep. And so Bible teaching is the way that we go about feeding the sheep here. One of the reasons we don't preach and we teach is because those two things have much different outcomes. And teaching the Bible is actually sheep feeding, and it does a few things that I have here for you. First, it causes us to be able to rightly divide the word of truth, and I'll refer you to Second Timothy, chapter 2, and I'm going to read from verses 14 down to 17. Paul tells Timothy, remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about the words, to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who

does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, but shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness, and notice their message will spread like cancer. So we teach the Bible. What happens is we're able to rightly divide the word of truth, and we can smell a fake. The Bible also tells us in Ephesians chapter 4, Paul told those Ephesian Christians in verse 12 that God gave people gifts to the church, of which some of those people gifts are teachers and pastors. And as they do their job, they equip the saints for the work of the ministry. That's the second result of Bible teaching or sheep feeding. And then thirdly, it keeps us Bible teaching from being blown about. Paul says in that same fourth chapter of Ephesians, by every wind of doctrine, if you know the Word of God, you're not tossed about by everything that you hear, every new thing that comes down the pike or on your internet feed. And so I guess I would just ask you this morning, as you think about these things, what or who am I feeding my soul? Who's truly feeding my soul? And maybe that's a hard question to answer. It could be that you have a steady diet of good things. It could be that you have a steady diet of false things, and it could be you stirred them all in there together. But who is feeding my soul? In this case, the shepherds weren't doing their job. So? So other people were feeding them well. The Lord was. His anger was kindled against those shepherds, and he says in verse 3, for the Lord of hosts will visit his flock. And the house of Judah, and and will make them as a royal horse in battle. From him comes the cornerstone. From him the tent peg. From him the battle bow, and from every ruler together. And they shall be like mighty men who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in battle. And they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be put to shame. Well, when Jesus comes a second time, we've mentioned, it will be much different from his first coming. At his first coming. We talked about this in Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, where the prophecy is of Jesus riding in lowly on a donkey, that he entered at his first coming as a sheep, riding a donkey. Or maybe you'd say as a shepherd riding a donkey, which was a beast of peace. And he did so because his first coming as a shepherd was all about being a good shepherd. And John chapter 10, verse 11 sums up what he was about as a good shepherd. He says, there Jesus, I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. That's exactly what he came to do. And really only what he came to do at his first coming to give his life for the sheep. Now when he comes back, as we have read, and we will read again, it is a much different scenario. He will be a conquering king, and he will ride in on a white warhorse. Now at that time, when he rides in on this white warhorse, we are told here that his followers, specifically the people of Israel, as he writes to here, will be transformed from a flock of sheep into war horses. And I like that. I think probably many of us are, actually, if we were honest looking to be in this life, as my Bible puts it in verse 3, royal horses are war horses for Jesus. There are lots of

folks right now that would love for Christianity to be a stable full of war horses for Jesus. Man, I love the idea of a war horse. Have you ever seen the movie Secretariat? My favorite scene in all of Secretariat, which is about the great racehorse, probably the greatest racehorse that ever lived, is at the end of the Triple Crown when he's about to take the Triple Crown. He's turning around the back stretch, and as he turns down the back straight away, he's leaving his closest opponent. He ends up winning by over 30 links. He runs away from the field, and as he does so, the rider. The movie has this crazy score behind it. The music is building, and Secretariat's running away from the field. And then the rider chose to quote from the prophet job in job chapter 39, verse 25, and it reads like this. Actually, I'll start down in verse 21 through 25. He says. He paused in the valley and rejoices in his strength. He gallops into the clash of arms. He mocks at fear and is not frightened, nor does he turn back from the sword. The quiver rattles against him, the glittering spear and the javelin. He devours the distance with fierceness and rage. Nor does he come to a halt, because the trumpet is sounded at the blast of the trumpet. He says, and he smells the battle from afar. The thunder of captains, as it were, here, and shouting.

Man.

We'd love to be a war horse, wouldn't we? And yet war horses, biblically, are for later. The way that we get to be a war horse is to faithfully be now a sheep sheep's much different than a war horse. You may know that I've told you this before. Sheep. It's a sad thing that God identifies sheep with us. Sheep have no defensive qualities. They don't have any fangs. Sheep don't have any claws. Sheep aren't strong. They're not necessarily all that agile. In fact, the sheep's one really awesome thing they do is grow wool. And if they get fat and grow wool, they get top heavy and they actually fall over on their back, which is called being cast down. And then like a turtle, they can't get back up. And if the sun is right in the midday, it bakes down on their exposed belly, their gastric juices, and they'll actually explode. It's great to be a sheep. Sheep have no courage. Sheep don't play well with others and God calls us sheep. In fact, in Romans chapter 8. He says this in verse 31, what shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? And if we're sheep, what are we going to do about this? Well, the answer is, if God be for us, who can be against us? And then down in verse 35, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, as it is written, for your sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for his slaughter. And as a sheep before his shears Jesus opened not his mouth like servant, like master. And yet verse 37 says, and all these things we are more than conquerors through him who

loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ Jesus. Listen, the way to become a warhorse in our eternal life is to be a sheep in this life. We lay down our life, and he is the one who sustains us. And so the good Shepherd does such. Now he will come back as the chief Shepherd. Notice in this same passage, Jesus is the cornerstone. It says, if the Israelites will be good sheep, then they'll be warhorses. And through him that is, Israel will come. Jesus, who when he comes the second time he will be not just a good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep, but the chief shepherd and all that they hoped for him to be, for they missed him at his first coming, as they were looking for a warhorse instead of a sheep. They were looking for a king instead of a shepherd. But if they'll embrace him as their shepherd and they their role as a sheep, they will become warhorses. As he rides in on one. And so then he is the cornerstone. When he comes back, he's the foundation and standard for their lives. In Isaiah chapter 28, verse 16, it says, behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. And whoever believes will not act hastily. If we build our life on Jesus Christ, he'll settle us. We won't be hasty because he's the cornerstone. He's the bedrock. Jesus is also, as I have here for you. And it says in our Bibles, he's the tent peg. He's the one we can stake our lives to. And Isaiah chapter 22, it says in verse 23 that I will fasten him Jesus as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house. And they will hang on him all of the glory of his father's house. You can hang your hat on Jesus. You can stake your tent to Jesus. He is the anchor of our souls. Jesus is the battlebowl. We're told here. He, as we've looked at in revelation chapter 19, is the strong fighter for good, and Jesus is the leader over every ruler of his people. In revelation chapter 19, verse 16 says that when he comes back on his white horse, his title will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There are kings and there are so-called lords, but they all are in subjection to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And so the chief Shepherd, someday he will appear. And I want to encourage you, because what we are told in first Peter chapter 5 is that when our chief Shepherd appears, there's going to be rewards. Verse one of first Peter five, the elders who are among you, Peter said, I exhort I, who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed. Shepherd the flock of God, which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion, but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly. Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you. But be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. And while you might not be an elder or a shepherd as a church, at a church, we all Shepherd somebody be faithful, be a faithful shepherd. And though be a reward in the end, well, verse 6, he says, I

will strengthen the house of Judah. I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside. For I am the Lord their God, and I will hear them. Those of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as if with wine. Yes, their children shall be glad, and their hearts shall rejoice in the Lord. I will whistle for them, to gather them, for I will redeem them, and they shall increase as they once increased. And so Judah, which is the southern kingdom of Israel, and Jacob, or Ephraim, which is the northern kingdom of Israel, they'll be strengthened and regathered. And of course, this was happening in Zechariah's day. It would continue to happen over the next hundred years. They would come back from captivity. And this has also happened in the last 120 years. In our time. He's brought the people back and the return is, again not based upon their goodness or their faithfulness, their return into the land and their fruitfulness is based upon the Lord's mercy. It says here in verse 6, mercy is compassion in action. Mercy is not getting the punishment I deserve. The Lord always acts out of his mercy. And so that's why he blesses them. Verse nine I will sow them among the peoples, and they shall remember me in far countries, and they shall live together with their children, and they shall return. I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead in Lebanon, until no more room is found for them. And he, that's God, will pass through the sea of affliction, hearkening back to the Red Sea, and strike the waves of the sea and all the depths of the river that is, the Nile river shall dry up. And then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down. And the scepter of Egypt shall depart. So to ancient foes of the Israelites will be defeated, and God will strengthen those people. And then he will. So those people among the peoples, before he brings them back now to be gathered, to be brought back, they must first be scattered, to be fruitful. They've got to first be sown. So God will sow them out into the peoples across the world, and then bring them back fruitful in nature. There are seeds, particularly those seeds that grow in cones, and they need fire to actually crack the the hard kernels of the cone. So that water can leak in and start the growth process. These are called fire germinated species. And they are common everywhere. Forest fires are actually occurring regularly. I learned this when I moved out to the West coast in October, my first year there. I expected to get ready for flannel season. What happens on the West coast is that the Santa Anas blow in off the desert, and it heats up, and these superheated winds of 60 or 70 or 80 miles an hour blow off the desert and up over the mountains and to the coast where I lived between the desert and the coast. In the mountains are beautiful pine forests. And what happens with just a spark? They light on fire, burns everything to the ground. There was a little mountain town called Julian that I loved. We used to drive from my house out to the country, up into the mountains.

And there Julian was known for its apple pies. Walt Disney once had a place up there. You could go up there and you could be 30 minutes from the city. And it was a whole different world. Cool breezes of the mountains. Everyone loved to be there. If you could afford to live in Julian, it was fantastic. All the homes tucked into the cedars, up on the cliffs and whatnot. But in 2004, it was a massive fire. I got deployed there as an emergency chaplain, so I was up in Julian and it was devastating. Burned nearly the whole town to the ground. People lost their houses, of course, once a fire like that happens, you can't get insurance to build a new home. Often insurance companies default all kinds of issues and challenges. People arguing about whether they should have been more fire breaks, and it turned into a political battle as well. But I remember thinking to myself as I researched it, that that place was inhabited by people where God embedded in the DNA of the trees. There, that they have to burn to reproduce. Nobody was talking about the real issue. We moved to a place that has to burn to continue to be what we enjoy. If it doesn't burn, all the trees I love are going to die. The thing that makes the thing the thing is going to die. So it had to burn. But we lost.

The pie shop.

In our lives we are fire germinated as Christians. And what God does is just about the time we think things are just how we like it. He sets a fire to that deal because our hard kernel has to be broken and can be broken only by fire in order to scatter us and actually seed us, so that we can then be fruitful. We get lit on fire by God. We dance around like Rumpelstiltskin and we cry out. We fight fire and we dig fire lines and we drop stuff from helicopters. It's all in vain because it's a work that God has to do and must do for us to be fruitful. And he's reseeding things. What's he doing? Well, here, he told them, if I scatter you, you will remember my name. Man. When God sets fire to our lives, it's a good chance to remember his name. And when you think about Israel, it's an amazing concept to me that Israel was scattered. And then it Zechariah was time regathered and that prepared for the first coming of Christ. The greatest event to date in history at that time. And then Israel was scattered a second time in 70 A.D. then they were brought back. In the times that we live in, they were scattered and regathered. And that's leading to Christ's second coming. The greatest event that still awaits us. And so the sower will sow us, scatter us, set us on fire in order to make us fruitful. Now verse 12, so I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, says the Lord. God wants them to know that he alone will strengthen his people. Zechariah chapter 4, verse 6. This is the key verse to the whole book. It's not by might, it's not by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord in Isaiah chapter 40, verse 31. Many of you know this, but those who. What? Wait on who the Lord shall renew their

strength. They shall mount up with eagles wings. They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not be faint. Where does the strength come from? From the Lord. It's probably a fair question to ask ourselves. Who do I really look for? My strength in, and to who do I really look for my strength in? What do I really look for? My strength in? It's only the Lord waiting on the Lord and walking up and down in the name of the Lord or in God's name implies living according to his will. And here's the key under his authority and Micah, chapter 4, verse 5, another little minor prophet, Micah, writes this for all people. Walk each in the name of his God. But we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. You're not just our Savior. He's got to be our Lord. If he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all. As you might have heard it said, in authority requires submission, and submission is the same word as surrender. Hands up. Don't shoot. I'm yours. Lord. And so here's some questions I have before we conclude and get ready to go out. Celebrate a baptism at the end of our service. Thinking about this section, I'll ask you the questions I ask myself. If I have dry patches in my life. Have I asked in faith for rain? Am I studying the truth in order to avoid deception? Maybe along with that, what am I feeding my soul? What am I really feeding my soul? Lots of times it's my Facebook feed or depending on your age, your Instagram feed or whatever happens on the Snapchats. With the book of Faith cannot feed the soul. Do I think and act more like a sheep or a war horse? This will say a lot about who I know Christ to be in my life as Jesus. Truly the cornerstone and tent peg of my life have I built my life upon him. As I just mentioned, from where am I looking for strength? And finally, is God's Word and His ways truly the authority for my life? I didn't like all the answers. I got to those questions. But the beauty of it is by faith, his spirit is calling us to submit, and he can write any of those things that are wrong in our lives because he loves to send showers of blessings on thirsty people. Heavenly father, we thank you so very much. For your Word and we ask Lord that you would help us to submit to you, to experience you as Savior and Lord. Lord, help us. Let you light on fire the things that must burn to be reseeded and have growth. And Lord Jesus, would you please help us to be like our master, to be sheepish in Jesus name we pray. Amen. Would you guys stand?