When Faith Gets Fickle — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 16 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, February 11, 2024 · *Faith in the Waiting*

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Well there are some days where the Lord just works and moves in a special way, and I sense that the Lord is present in our service today in a special way. I want to recognize that and think about why is that? Why does the Lord show up in special ways on certain Sundays and normal ways on other Sundays if we can use the word normal? It's never normal when God shows up in any respect, but if you are a member of our church family, there's a lot of stuff going on in the life of our church family that is really difficult.

There's a lot of heaviness. Just in the last month, well, let's see, since January, we've had seven people from our church family or connected with our church family. I'm sorry, not seven, eight people. who have gone to be with the Lord. Some of those very prematurely, some of those in very tragic ways. There's a lot of sickness and crises, there's a lot of troubles relationally. And Scripture talks about the presence of the Lord being in two places. He lives in the high and lofty place where only God can dwell, but he's also near the brokenhearted, and he binds up their wounds.

And so it's I think no surprise that the Lord visits our church and visits your life in those seasons when you are most prone to need him. When you are walking through difficulty and hardship. And it's such a ministry from the Lord. He truly is a good shepherd who knows what we need and tends to our needs in a way that only He can. Our text this morning is going to be Genesis chapter 16. So if you want to turn there, you can go to Genesis chapter 16. We're starting a new series entitled Faith in the Waiting.

And we've been working through the life of Abraham for several months now. And in Genesis chapter 16, it's on the tail end of one of Abraham's highest moments in his life. And I don't know about you, I've always found it a little bit interesting that the lowest valleys of life often follow. Some of the mountaintop highs. It's like everything's going great. You had the most amazing Sunday you've ever experienced, and then Monday morning comes and you

lose your job. Or something, I mean, just even worse than that, something dramatic, something life-changing smacks you upside the face and you thought to yourself, wow.

Where did that come from why, Lord? Why now? Some of the lowest valleys in life follow after the mountaintop highs, and that's certainly the case with Abraham. In Genesis chapter 16, because Genesis chapter 15, the chapter before 16, for those of us who can count, he had this covenant renewal ceremony with the Lord. The Lord affirmed his promise to Abram. He said, I am going to bless you. And if you don't believe me, here's this promise. He seals it with this very external, physical promise. And Abraham had to leave that time going, man, if God is for me, who can be against me?

There is no stopping me now. And then Genesis chapter 16 opens, and ten years have gone by, and Abraham is receiving the promised land. He's living in the land of Canaan that God promised him, but he doesn't yet have his promised child. And as a result of that he gets fickle in his faith. And so I titled the message. When Faith Gets Fickle. And if you don't know what fickle means, it just means to be shifting in your loyalties, your here one day, there the next. Things are good on Monday but bad on Tuesday.

You're not really sure who you can depend on, and so you're shifting from loyalty to loyalty, affection to affection. And that happens in the Christian life or just in spiritual lives in general where people are feeling good with the Lord and then all of a sudden because of a series of events and a certain kind of environment that they walk through, they find themselves unstable. And this is biblical categories I'm about to use, but I think they're helpful categories. We go from walking by faith and trusting the Lord to really leaning on the flesh.

And when I say the flesh in the Bible, the flesh represents the life divorced from God, the life that's in your own strength, according to your own wisdom, you know, in your own power. And the works of the flesh, the Bible talks about of being things like anger and greed and envy and drunkenness and all these things that we end up materializing in our life when we're separating ourselves from the Lord and doing things our own way instead of doing it God's way. And that's what happened with Abraham in this valley of life.

He began to lean on the flesh. Instead of living by faith. And his story I think is so encouraging. On the one hand, it's encouraging because it's a reminder that even the great men and women of God sometimes fail. And I think we need to be reminded of that. That these people we look up to, certainly spiritual leaders that you look up to, they are just humans. They're merely human. And because they're human, they will err and they will have problems. And Abraham messed up big time in this chapter. It's also encouraging because it reminds us why the Lord has given us the scriptures.

The scriptures were not given to us so that we would have some kind of moral example. After which we could pattern our life, whether that be Abraham or David or certainly the Lord Jesus Christ. People can model themselves after virtuous men and women in the Bible, but that's not the point of the Bible. The point of the Bible was to expose our need for grace. The point of the scripture was to inform our minds that there is a God who created us who is holy. And in his holiness, he has distanced himself from his creation because his creation has used their freedom to sin against him.

And that sin has no place in his holy heaven. But because of God's great love for us, He has made a remedy for our sin problem by sending His Son Jesus into the world to live the life we couldn't live, to die the death we should have died. He died in our place for our sins, and God three days later raised him from the dead so that we could be forgiven of our sin and reconciled with our Creator. And so the Bible isn't just basic instructions before leaving earth, you know, like get your house in order, clean up your act, be a better person.

It's nothing about that, and it's everything about we can't, but God can, and he has through the Lord Jesus Christ. And so turn and believe on him. That's why we have the scripture, and that's what Genesis sixteen is an invitation for us to see. And so if you're new to Bible study, or if you're new to Genesis chapter 16, Abraham has been called by God out of this place called Ur of the Chaldeans. He was an idol worshipper. steeped in idolatry. God calls him out of that paganism and says, go to the land that I'm going to show you.

But for him to be obedient to the Lord, he had to leave his father, he had to leave his father's house and all the security and economic prosperity that that would have afforded him. He does so anyway. He leaves his father's house. He goes to the land that the Lord would show him, not knowing where he was going, and over a series of events makes his way to this place called Canaan, and that's where he's at in Genesis chapter sixteen. And he'd been living there for about ten years. He had the promised land, but he did not yet have the promised child.

And God promised him not only a child, but a child—descendants plural—that were so various and multiple that it would be like the stars in the sky and you couldn't even count them. And so Abraham's dealing with this gap between what God promised and what he's actually experiencing, and that's what we find in Genesis 16, verse 1. Abram's wife Sarai had not borne any children for him. But she owned an Egyptian slave named Hagar. Sarai said to Abram, Since the Lord has prevented me from bearing children, I want you to go to my slave.

Perhaps through her I can build a family. And so Abraham agreed to what Sarai said. So Abraham's wife, note that, emphasizing Abram's wife, Sarai, took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, and she gave her to her husband, Abram, as a wife for him. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan for ten years. He slept with Hagar and she became pregnant. And when she saw that she was pregnant, her mistress became contemptible to her. So Sarai said

to Abram, You are responsible for my suffering. I put my slave in your arms, or literally in your bosom, in your lap, and when she saw that she was pregnant, I became contemptible to her.

So may the Lord judge between me and you. And Abraham replied to Sarai, Here, your slave is in your hands. Do whatever you want with her. And then Sarai mistreated Hagar so much that she ran away from her. I think the Bible is so helpful because it doesn't just show us what happened in the past, it shows us what always happens. It's not timeless. It's not just timeless. It's timely. And one of the things that we're going to see from this passage is Satan's recipe for creating spiritual compromise in our life.

Or the environment that exists right before we begin to get fickle in our faith. And so I want us to look at the recipe for fickle faith, what happens when we compromise spiritually and become fickle in our faith, and then how God responds. To those spiritual failures. Now when I say the recipe for fickle faith, there's a lot of things that are playing out in Abram's life when this tragic decision is being made. But the big thing, if you just bird's eye view, there were two things that Abraham was wrestling with and Sarai were wrestling with, and that is number one, a gap between what they believed God had promised and their current circumstances.

So there was a gap between God's promise and its fulfillment in their day-to-day life. And that's a gap I think many of us are familiar with because we sense God's promising us to do a certain thing to for things to be a certain way, but our lives are not exactly the way we thought they would pan out. It's not exactly God doing what we thought he said he would do. And so what do you do with that gap? That's an environment for fickle faith to form. The second element is a conflict between what you want and what God wants.

There was a conflict between what Sarah wanted, what Abraham wanted, and what God wanted in terms of the timing, in terms of the methods, in terms of the ultimate outcome. And when those two things are present in your life, you need to be aware of the fact that there may be a scheme by the enemy. To get fickle in your faith. And I broke it down into four categories. You might think of these as four ingredients for the recipe of fickle faith that are present in the life of Sarah and Abraham, that oftentimes are present in our lives as well.

Number one, there was a compelling problem. Sarai was barren, and that barrenness in her life was a source of incredible pain. Now those of you who are women who have struggled with infertility, you know the pain of barrenness and you know how. It makes you feel, you know how it plays with your mind, how it can cause anxiety and insecurity and just levels of depression you thought you had never experienced. All of those things that you experienced, Sarah is experiencing on top of the economic disadvantages of barrenness. Because in that culture, if you didn't have children, you didn't have people to work your fields, to work your

farm, to keep your line—not just to keep your line going to the next generation, but to literally put food on your table so that you didn't starve to death.

Now luckily Abraham was a pretty wealthy man, so he had abilities to provide financially outside of that, but it doesn't take away from the burden that Sarai felt of not being able to produce a child. So barrenness was her intractable problem. It was a problem that if this problem isn't solved, then my life can't continue. I can't go on. I can't see God's dream for me. I can't see my husband flourish as I know he needs to flourish. For you it may look different. For you it may be something totally separate from childbearing.

It may have to do with your career. It may have to do with your children. It may have to do with the way your marriage looks or doesn't look. It may have to do with some financial situation. But Satan always creates an intractable problem that you feel like if this isn't solved, I'm not okay. In addition to that, when your faith gets fickle, there's always a convenient solution that solves that compelling problem. A solution that is almost too good to be true. And in the case of Sarai, she has this servant named Hagar.

Now we look at that and say that's really bad. I can't believe that's in the Bible. Not only is there a slave that these so-called godly people have in their house. But she's literally about to like prostitute her slave to her husband. That is sex trafficking, that is sexual abuse, that is horrific, and I don't disagree. It was absolutely is absolutely terrible, but it was pretty commonly accepted. In that day and age. The point is it was a viable solution for them. Not a moral one, but a viable one. And it's a reminder for us that there will be times where the enemy will create an environment where you feel like you are in a functional hell.

You are in hell on earth. It's not the real hell where the devil lives, but it is hell nonetheless. And then he will, having created that problem in your life, come along and say, this is your answer. This is your savior. This will deliver you from the pain that you're in. And many times that thing will be something that God does not approve of, but the culture does. Just like here with Abraham. She had a convenient solution, and that convenient solution was culturally accepted. And I think that's a really important note to pay attention to because we look at that and say, oh the horror, this is this is slavery, this is sexual prostitution.

This is terrible. But surrogacy in that culture was very commonly practiced because if you didn't have a kid, you didn't put food on the table. And so she has this servant. And she has a husband. The problem isn't with the husband in terms of the infertility, the problem was with her. And so she says, hey, let's do this. The final thing that happens is there's a compliant partner. Abraham probably should have shut it down. He should have said, Sarah, you know this isn't a good idea, this is going to be awkward, and you know, I'm she's not my wife and we would have to get married and I don't know if that would be a wise thing to do.

He could have shut it down a thousand different ways, but he didn't. It says that he listened to the voice of his wife. CSB says that he agreed with his wife it's very reminiscent of Genesis chapter 3, when Eve was with Adam when she took the fruit and ate and gave it to her husband who was with her. He, as a leader, should have shut it down. He was spiritually responsible to do so, but he doesn't. And the same is true of Abram. Now there's a lot of sins that you can do solo A lot of ways that you can sin all by yourself.

But a lot of times some of the most destructive sins that you commit in your life are sins that you need an accommodating partner to engage alongside of you. And Abram was that accommodating partner. So she had an intractable, compelling problem, she had a convenient solution. Even though it was an open door, it wasn't an open door from the Lord, but who cares if it wasn't from the Lord? Because the culture doesn't mind. The culture gives me all the justification I need. Nobody else is going to think twice about it.

And I have someone who's willing to go along with me, a so-called man of God. So surely even though it may not be God's best, God hasn't given us any other alternatives. It's his fault that we're barren. So let's go. And anytime there's been spiritual compromise in your life, I promise you those four things have probably been present. A problem you felt like you couldn't solve, a problem that God put on your plate, maybe even just like Sarah said, it's the Lord's prevented me. And you feel like it was if this was God's will, then why is he making it so difficult?

And then you find a solution, kind of like Jonah found a ship. Sailing to Tarshish, the exact opposite way of Nineveh where he was supposed to go. And so you board that boat thinking it's an open door from the Lord, but it's not an open door from the Lord because it's against God's will. And just because something is culturally accepted doesn't mean it's morally right, and just because cultural customs make a certain thing okay doesn't mean it trumps God's commands. But you kind of pushed that down underneath the surface because that's an inconvenient truth for me right now, and I have somebody who's willing to go along with me, and so let's go any moral compromise in your life, that's the recipe.

And it's a recipe Satan uses because it's so effective, and you need to be aware of the recipe so you know what Satan's cooking up in your life. Because he's just waiting for that season to strike so that all those little hooks he's been planting in the water, he can pull the rod and snag you and reel you in. And that's what he does with Abram and Sarah. You can choose your sin, but you can't choose its consequences. And the consequences for Abram and Sarah are disastrous. Abraham engages in the sexual activity, she gets pregnant, and it says as soon as she gets pregnant, she becomes contemptible.

Or Sarai becomes contemptible to Hagar. That word contemptible means to treat the same as or to dishonor. So Sarai was her authority figure. She was the woman of the house and now Hagar's beginning to treat her like she's just a regular old somebody. She's beginning to

demean her. And you can imagine the comments that she could have said, you know, the little quips, the little words, the looks, the I'm so excited, this baby, I wonder what the baby's going to look like. Abraham certainly not you, I mean, because you know the whole ha ha ha and it's like knives in Sarah's chest because she already had a complex.

She was already struggling with insecurity and why is God not doing this for me and now her servant? This person who used to be an inferior is treating her like she's a nobody, even though she already feels like a nobody. Now she really feels like a nobody. And it became so painful that she goes to her husband and says, this is your fault. To which I wonder what Abraham thought to himself, being a man. I'm sure there was a temptation to say, this was your idea, not mine. It says there that she put Hagar in Abraham's arms.

If you do, if you'll look, there's usually a little note next to it, a little letter, and if you go to look at the letter, it says Lit. bosom. And if you look up the Hebrew word for bosom, it's not like up here, it's down there. It was Hagar's choice to put her there, between his legs. And yet she's holding Abraham accountable. This is your fault. And you know why she's holding Abraham accountable? Because Abraham is responsible for leading his family. It's just like the fall in Genesis 3. Adam he should have been there.

He was there. He should have stopped it. And when the curse comes and God begins to hold them accountable, Adam is held accountable for the sin in the Garden of Eden. The serpent is cursed, but Adam is held responsible because he should have led, he should have protected, he should have served his family. Instead, he became passive. He rejected responsibility. He deflected. He said, this isn't my fault, and I don't care about her. Do whatever you want with her. His indifference is absolutely appalling, but it is destroying his family. She comes to Abraham, she says, this woman is insufferable, and Abraham says, notice he doesn't even call her by name.

He says, Your slave is in your possession. Do whatever you want to her. And so Sarah, it says, begins to mistreat her, and that Hebrew word translated mistreat is the same Hebrew word that's used in the Exodus when the Egyptians who were they had Israel in slavery. They would use them as slave labor to create bricks, and anytime they wouldn't make the bricks fast enough, it says that they would mistreat them, and the idea is like physical violence, torture cruel and unusual suffering, think whips, think long hours, think—you know—eighteen-hour days under the most intense of circumstances.

That's how Sarai is now treating her servant Hagar and it became so bad that Hagar has to leave and she runs away to a desert land. She doesn't even know how she's ultimately going to get home. It was a fool's errand to go by yourself. There was no way she would have survived the desert, but she said, I would rather die out here in the wilderness by myself than continue to live underneath this kind of torture. And it's a reminder, men, in particular, of what happens when you fail to lead your families.

When you just kind of go along to get along. When you reject responsibility and you embrace passivity, it doesn't just hurt you, it hurts all the people around you. And it's a reminder, ladies and any of us, what happens when doing something your way instead of God's way, even if your way was culturally accepted and everybody else said it was right, if you knew it was wrong and you knew it violated God's design, you can choose your sin, but you can't choose its consequences, and its consequences may be more insufferable than you initially think.

And such was the case for Sarai. There's a passage in Galatians chapter 6 that says, you reap what you sow. God isn't mocked. The NLT version of that has always stuck with me. You harvest what you plant. They harvested what they planted. They sowed to the flesh. They said, we're not going to walk by faith anymore. We're going to do it in our own strength, in our own power, according to our own plan. And when you sow to the flesh, you reap to the flesh. When you sow to the wind, you're going to reap the whirlwind.

And they sowed to the flesh, and the flesh produced more flesh. Sarai's flesh produced fleshliness in Abraham. Abraham's fleshiness produced fleshiness and Hagar's fleshiness produced fleshiness all around them and flesh multiplied flesh multiplied flesh and it began to destroy God's plan and promise for their life. God is not mocked. He is loving, he is kind, he is full of grace and mercy, but sins have their consequences. You harvest what you plant. And so they harvested it. But how does God respond? When our faith gets fickle and we morally compromise and we take matters into our own hands, what is God's response to us?

Well in this chapter, God's response is one of incredible kindness. It says in verse 7 that the angel of the Lord found her, found Hagar by a spring in the wilderness. The spring on the way to Shur. And he said to Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going? If you'll go back just one verse, I think something that's instructive. When the angel of the Lord finds her, notice what he calls her by name. This is the first time Hagar is referred to by her first name by anyone other than Moses who is the author.

Hagar always referred to Sarai always referred to her as her slave. Abraham always referred to her as Sarai's slave. Nobody called her by name until she meets the Lord. Ultimately an angel of the Lord, but some people argue this angel of the Lord is not an angel of the Lord, it's the angel of the Lord, meaning a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ before he takes on flesh in the book of Matthew. Throughout the Old Testament, Jesus would often show up and encounter people and change their lives utterly and drastically, and that I believe is what's happening here.

You have Jesus tenderly, compassionately, seeing Hagar's pain and saying, I care. You matter. You are not alone. Where are you going? Where have you come from and where are you going? This is an invitation at the bottom of Hagar's rope. For her to turn to the Lord, for her to stop running away from something and to turn and start running towards

someone. And so she says, I'm running away from my mistress Sarai. And this is so instructive, I think, for us in the bottom of our rope when you are feeling like you can't move any further and everything has just gone to pot and maybe it's your fault.

Probably it's your fault, but it's not all your fault, but you feel like God is distant and detached and uninterested and checked out. And it's at those moments when you're at your lowest that the Lord often comes and He calls you by name and He says, I see you matter. Where are you going? What are you doing? And then he tells Hagar something she probably didn't want to hear. The angel of the Lord said to her, go back to your mistress and submit to her authority. The angel of the Lord said to her, I will greatly multiply your offspring, and they will be far too many to count.

So he gives her a command and he gives her a promise. And this is always God's response to our fickle faith. If we will repent, and this is an invitation, no doubt, for Hagar to repent. If we will repent and say, I'm not going to do it my way anymore, I'm going to do it God's way. God says, if you'll do it my way, I will restore you. I will sustain you. I will keep you. I will empower you, and I will deliver on what I said I was going to do.

And so that's exactly what Hagar does. God's response to our fickle faith is always compassion. It's always tenderness. It's always mercy. But he gives us an invitation in those moments to repent. And when the Lord's kindness leads us to a place of repentance, then he will begin to restore what the enemy had taken from us. The enemy had taken her hope, the enemy had taken her future, the enemy had given her a child, but now the child's not going to have any father, and she's about to kill herself in the wilderness.

She needs restoration, and the Lord says, I'll restore you, but you've got to do this my way. And so she turns and she does it his way. It says in verse 11, the angel of the Lord said to her, You have conceived and you will bear a son. You will name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your cry of affliction. The name Ishmael literally means the Lord hears. This man will be like a wild donkey. That's what every mom wants to hear about her baby. This man will be like a wild donkey, and his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him.

And he will settle near all of his relatives. That's a mixed bag of encouragement, is it not? For those of you who are paying attention to sociology, a lot of you will know when you read the rest of the book of Genesis, I believe it's Genesis chapter twenty-five Ishmael is the father of a lot of Arabic nations. And even today, Arabic nations find their original line in Ishmael. Which is, I think, an important reminder. Even though God is gracious and compassionate and will restore you after your sin, it doesn't always remove the consequences of your sin.

And the consequences of Hagar's sin and Sarai's sin and Abraham's sin was an enmity born between those two houses, the house of Isaac and the house of Ishmael. And that

generational curse still exists today between the people of Isaac, which is Israel, you think the nation of Israel, but just Jewish people in general. And Arabic nations, specifically the religion of many Arabic nations, which is Islam. There's an enmity, there's a hostility. In fact if you read the Quran, they tell the story completely differently. Ishmael is the promised child and Isaac is the counterfeit.

So God will restore you, but your sins will have their consequence, they will have their ripple effects, and sometimes you sin so big and so drastically. That the ripple of your ripple effects of your sin will extend beyond your lifetime and the lifetime of your children and the lifetime of your grandchildren, and maybe even the lifetime of many generations—because you harvest what you plant. You will harvest what you plant. But God is able to take even those nasty, bitter pills and restore you and give you back what the enemy has taken.

If you'll listen to him. And that's what she does. She goes home. She goes back to Abram. She goes back to Sarai. She says everything that happened to her. Oh, actually, before that—verse thirteen. She named the Lord who spoke to her. She's the only person in the Bible who ever names the Lord. This is also a cool map. She's leaving from here in Hebron. She goes all the way down here past Kadesh Barnea. This is where they think that that well is where she sees God, she experiences God, and she names that place Beer-lahai-roi.

It's between Kadesh and Bered, and this is the well where she sees the Lord who sees her. She says. Have I actually seen the one who sees me? She has an encounter with God and that one encounter with God changes her life so much so that she takes she leaves her quest into the desert, she goes back home to Abram and Sarai and she tells them what happened. I met the Lord. I think I met that God that you talk about. That God that's supposed to, you know, give you this baby.

I think I met that God. I think he sees me. I think he knows me. He told me to come home, so I'm coming home. And I wonder what Abraham thought when he heard that. Maybe he became a little more tender towards this so-called slave of Sarai. Maybe he began to listen and say, maybe I've made a tremendous mistake, and Abram repented. And I do think Abram repented because Abraham names the child Ishmael, just like the Lord said. Verse 15, Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son whom Hagar bore Ishmael.

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him. So Hagar repents, Sarai repents, and Abram repents, and as a result, the Lord begins to restore everything that he had promised. And 14 years later, Isaac is born. Genesis chapter 21. We'll get there next year. Sometimes I'm just kidding. We'll get there sooner or later. He makes good on his promise. So what is the point? Even though our faith be fickle, our God is always faithful. Always faithful. Even when we are faithless, he remains faithful because that is our God.

He's the God who sees. And he's a God who hears. You are not alone. You matter to him. He can't undo the consequences of your sin, but he will walk with you through that pain and suffering if you'll repent and trust him and go back and do what he says. Now, what does that have to do with us today? Remember, the Bible isn't just about what happens, it's about what always happens. And Genesis ultimately isn't the end of the story. The God who sees and the God who hears is ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the one who sees and hears better than any other. Because Jesus actually took on flesh. Jesus actually grieved like we grieved. He wept at the tomb of his friend Lazarus. He was a man of sorrows. He knows what it's like to have sleepless nights and friends betray you and stab you in the back. He knows what it's like to be poor and financially disadvantaged. He knows what it's like to struggle with the frailty of the human constitution. He is a high priest who's able to sympathize with us in our weakness, Hebrews says, because he's been tempted and tested in every way that we are, and yet without sin He's a God who sees and he's a God who hears.

Even on the cross, when he is crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He's saying to John, to his mother, take care of my mom. I know what she needs. And he knows what you need. But you've got to stop running. You got to stop running away from that problem that you feel like only you could solve, and you've got to start turning to the one who sees and hears. And so for many of us, I think there may be some of us here this morning, you do not have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

For you, maybe you thought the Bible is all about being a good person and this whole thing about grace and forgiveness, that's news to me. And if God will forgive me of my sin and bring me into relationship with him and walk with me through my problem, sign me up. And if you've never made Jesus Lord of your life, we're going to have a time of invitation where you can come down and you can give your life to Jesus. The vast majority of us though are probably people who have made Jesus Lord of our life, but we have forgotten that He is the God who sees and the God who hears.

And for some of us, that is why we got ourselves in the pickle we're in. Because if he doesn't care and he's his plan isn't going to work, I'll do this my way, and you've got yourself in a pickle. And there is collateral damage all around you. And you need to start running away from that and running to the Lord. And He's here this morning to receive you if you'll come. Others of you feel hopeless and helpless. You feel alone. You feel like God is distant and detached and disinterested from what's going on.

And this morning he's reminding you through the Holy Spirit, you are not alone. I see you and I hear. I know what you need, and I will give it to you if you'll just come to me. So we're going to respond a little bit differently this morning. We've been having a pastoral prayer at the middle of our services or the beginning of our services. This morning we're going to have

a pastoral prayer at the end of our service. And I want to encourage you, if you need to respond personally, I'll certainly be here at the front.

I'm actually also going to ask our pastoral team, like Jace and Randy or any of you guys that are in here, if you guys don't mind coming to the sides, coming to the front and being willing to pray with people. If you have a need in your life and maybe it's not your need, maybe it's the need of somebody in your family, the need of somebody that you love, and you want to pray with somebody about that, these guys will be here to pray with you and to pray for you.

It looks like I only got one. Is there any deacons in the house? Deacons. Anybody willing to pray with somebody? There we go. We got Taylor. We got somebody else. The reason I want there to be more than one person up here is because I really feel like there's a lot of burdens in our church family. In fact, I know there are. And you just need somebody to care and to pray. And you have a church family who cares, who loves you. They are the extension of Jesus for your life this morning.

You may want to grab somebody you're sitting with and just come and pray down at the altar. Maybe you want to make an altar here at the front and just pray. You may want to go out in the hallway and say, you know, we're going to be the hands and feet of Jesus to each other. Reminding us that God sees and God hears. So I'm going to invite you to stand and give you an opportunity to respond to the Lord however he leads. These men will be here to pray with you.

I'll be here to pray with you. I want to encourage you to make this altar an altar of your heart. There's nothing special about the altar, but it's a way for you to symbolically say, Lord, I'm giving this to you. I'm dying to myself. I'm not going to control this anymore. I'm releasing it. Would you take it? And would you heal me? And if the Lord leads you to do that, these people will be here to receive you. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you that you are the God who sees and the God who hears.

We thank you that we have a high priest in Jesus who is able to sympathize with us in our weakness. He's been tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin. And so we pray, Jesus, as our good shepherd. You would use this time of response to lead us and to guide us to green pastures and to still waters. That you would restore what the enemy has taken. That you would straighten out a path, a right path for your name's sake. That in the presence of our enemies, whether it's death or poverty or addiction, you would set a table.

And that we would be able to feast with you and on you and be satisfied by what only you can give. Would you use this time to heal us, to meet with us? And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.