

We good this morning?

You guys glad to be here?

All right.

Well, if you have your Bibles, fire them up.

Fire them up.

Get to the book of Exodus in chapter 5.

Exodus chapter 5.

If you don't have a Bible this morning, but you want to use...

A physical copy of the Bible.

We've got you covered.

We've got copies.

Our ushers have those throughout the room.

Just raise your hand and we'll get you one of those.

And we say this every week.

We mean it.

If you need a copy, you don't own a copy of God's Word, feel free to take that home with you this morning and consider that a gift.

We'd love for you to leave with God's Word in your hand.

All right.

While you're getting situated in Exodus chapter 5, I want to ask a question of you and me that I think will help us flesh out a conversation that we started last weekend that's really important.

Here's the question.

Have you ever taken a step of faith or

or a step of obedience to God and the immediate result was hardship and difficulty.

Ever had that happen?

Like you felt God clearly leading you in something and with a heart of obedience you followed and it's like you got smacked right in the face.

with more difficulty, and you're left thinking like, did I mishear God?

Was that feeling I had like bad Mexican food?

Have I done something wrong or gotten something wrong?

Anybody ever been there?

I sure have.

And I was thinking about, I think the reason that I have the feeling in those times, like something's gone wrong when that happens.

And I'm just going to confess my sin here and my unbelief.

You don't have to join me in this.

But this is what happens, I think, when I get into that way of thinking.

It's because I'm wrongly, I'm thinking wrongly about what it means to be blessed by God.

You know what I mean?

Like, if things are going well circumstantially in my life, well, then God's blessed me.

But if things are going poorly as I see them, that means that God's blessing has been removed from me because I must be doing something wrong.

I don't know if you've ever thought that way before, but I slip into that sometimes in subtle ways.

And that kind of theology, by the way, theology is just what you believe about God, okay?

That kind of theology can lead us to some pretty dangerous places because the truth is, is that blessing and provision, the blessing and provision of God take all kinds of different forms, okay?

Right?

And some of his greatest blessing in our lives looks like some of our greatest times of hardship and struggle and suffering.

Like, just think back over the course of your life.

That thing that you absolutely hated that you had to walk through.

That thing that you would have given anything if you didn't have to deal with that.

Where you looked at the circumstance and in the midst of it, you're like, I don't even know if I'm going to make it through this thing.

And listen, maybe you don't have to look back.

Maybe you're in that thing right now.

But it's those type of things that God has actually ordained and designed for our greatest good so that we can learn how to cling to him in desperation and independence.

I think that's a lot of the tension that we're dealing with right here in Exodus.

As we saw last weekend...

Israel heard God's word and they believed God.

Their hearts were moved towards worship and obedience and then wham, they got immediately hit with greater adversity and more suffering than they were experiencing before.

Things got worse.

So that's what we see fleshed out in greater detail in our passage this morning, which is Exodus 5, verses 10 through 21.

I'm going to read this for us so that we can see the whole picture of what's happening.

And then we're going to pray, ask God for his help, and then we're just going to move through and sort of unpack it together.

Sound good?

So let's read this, Exodus chapter 5.

And actually, I'm going to back up and start reading this in verse 9 because I think this is a good springboard into what we're talking about.

This is what it says.

Let heavier work...

So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, Thus says Pharaoh...

I will not give you straw.

Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.

So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw.

The taskmasters were urgent, saying, complete your work.

Your daily task each day is when there was straw.

And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday as in the past?

Then the foreman of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh.

Pay particular attention to that.

The leaders of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, why do you treat your servants like this?

No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, make bricks.

And behold, your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people.

But Pharaoh said, you are idle.

You are idle.

That's why you say, let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.

Go now and work.

No straw will be given to you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks.

The foreman of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, you shall by no means reduce the number of bricks, your daily task each day.

So they met Moses and Aaron who were waiting for them as they came out from Pharaoh and they said to them, the Lord look on you and judge because you have made us stink and

In the sight of Pharaoh and his servants.

And have put a sword in their hand to kill us.

That's where we're going to stop this morning.

I'll pick up in verse 22 next weekend.

This is the word of the Lord for us today.

Let me pray and let's ask God for his help.

Father would you show us what only you can show us.

That's your work God to both open the eyes of the heart and illuminate.

the truth in Your Word.

And we ask, God, that by Your Spirit You would do that, that You would lead us in righteousness, that You would show us something of Your character and Your nature and how You are moving and what this says about our lives.

God, I pray that You would lead us in righteousness and conform us to the image of Your Son.

We pray in Christ's name.

Amen.

All right, I want to start by digging on verse 9.

Because I think verse 9 gives us a lot of good insight into the whole section as Pharaoh responds to God from a hardened heart.

But before I get into verse 9, both last weekend and this weekend, there's a whole lot of talk about making bricks.

So let me talk about that for just a second because I think we tend to go, oh, things get more difficult for them, whatever straw.

You need to understand how bad this really is.

And so I did some brick study this week for us all because I know you probably haven't done that.

You're welcome.

And so just so you know,

When you make sun-dried bricks, and that's what these were, they were sun-dried bricks, it required good, high-quality straw.

Now, the reason straw was required wasn't like so they're more fibrous or to give them any sort of strength.

strength from the straw, but it's really to allow the water at the center of the bricks to properly seep out so that the entire brick cured evenly.

Because if that didn't happen, like there's an art to this apparently, to making good strong bricks that last.

And if that didn't happen, if you didn't have straw, most of the bricks that you would make would break and be unusable.

So

Understand what Pharaoh's doing here.

He knows that not only do the people have to now take time away from their brick making to go find their own straw, but that it's going to be not good straw, but substandard straw.

You'll notice the passage calls it stubble for straw, which means that they're going to have less time to make bricks and a bunch of them are still going to break because they don't have the proper straw.

So it's really like Pharaoh, get this,

is doubling, if not tripling, the workload on the people, which was already oppressively heavy.

Remember, this is an enslaved people.

So that's what Pharaoh's doing here.

So just you don't think, oh, that's inconvenient.

No, it's impossible.

It's impossible.

Pharaoh's saying, you get back to work under these parameters, and it's impossible for you.

It's going to absolutely kill you.

So that's what Pharaoh was doing.

Now the question is, why is he doing it?

Look at verse 9.

Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it.

And if you're taking notes, underline this part.

Pay no regard to lying words.

Remember what was just announced to Pharaoh before this in his throne room, right?

Moses and Aaron roll up.

Moses has got the staff of God, which I said would be a very clear sign that he comes in power and authority of God.

And here's what's proclaimed.

"Thus says the Lord."

Which means that Pharaoh knew precisely that they were delivering the very words of God.

Now notice what's happening here.

Here, Pharaoh responds to God's words by calling them.

You want to talk about audacity?

Lying words.

These are lying words.

And this is so fascinating to me because there's nothing new under the sun in how the enemy works.

Make no mistake that Pharaoh's a tool right here in the hands of the enemy.

And this is the exact same tactic that the enemy used in the garden with Adam and Eve, is it not?

Think about it.

The temptation for Adam and Eve was to doubt God's goodness, to distrust God's word, to believe a lie that God was not for them in how he provided.

You can think about it like this.

Before Adam and Eve

Disobeyed God, they distrusted the word of God and his goodness towards them.

And that is so often how the enemy comes against us, is it not?

Listen, connect the dots here with me.

We sometimes doubt the goodness of God because we're basing how we think about God's goodness on how we think and feel about our circumstances, which can quickly lead us to drift away from God.

And that's Pharaoh's exact plan.

In this response.

It's to discredit Moses.

To demoralize Israel by getting them to doubt the goodness of God.

By bringing adversity and difficulty into their lives.

Do you see that here?

We have to understand this dynamic because...

This will be a consistent temptation that you and I will face in our lives.

I promise you we'll face it over and over and over again.

The enemy wants us to tie our view of God's blessing and God's goodness to how we judge the quality of our circumstances and how we feel about them.

Because he knows that when we're living with that kind of mentality and posture, we will begin to distrust God, which will then lead us to walk away from God in disobedience.

Here's how we ought to be thinking about this.

God appoints every single thing in our lives for our greatest good.

Would you agree?

Yeah, I mean, this is exactly what Romans 8, 28 says, is it not?

For God works together for good all things.

All things work together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to his purposes.

So all things in the Greek means all things, just so you're aware.

It's not a trick.

It means everything.

So when God drops that...

provision on you that feels amazing, that you welcome, that you're so thankful for and so excited about, you're like, yes, Lord, that's for your good.

And when God walks you into his refining fire so that you can be purified and so that idolatry and unbelief can be exposed in your heart so that it can be sifted off, that's for your good.

It's both.

If we don't have a theology for this, the enemy's going to have a field day.

He's going to steal your lunch money every day and twice on Sunday if you think that God's goodness is just tied to how you feel about your circumstances.

We have to have a more robust theology of this where we understand that God appoints the summer and the winter.

God gives us the morning where it's 67 out and he gives us tonight when there's gonna be a 30 degree drop in temperature.

It's both from him.

I saw y'all doing this when I said 67.

It's literally 67 right now, I think.

Knock it off.

Anyway, not what I was trying to do.

Okay.

Now imagine, listen.

Imagine what it does to the heart and to the level of our intimacy with God when we just tie the goodness and provision of God to the stuff that we like.

But we think that God's not really good and not really for us when he brings about the really hard stuff.

Can you see how this creates a problem for us?

Honestly, I think that that's where a lot of people live.

And honestly, I think it's what drives a lot of the nominalistic, easy beliefism, cheap grace-driven, feel-good Christianity in today's culture that, by the way, is not biblical Christianity at all.

Please hear me on this.

When God speaks and God beckons and God draws you

And you step out and follow him in obedience.

And then things get more difficult.

It doesn't always happen.

I'm just saying it does sometimes.

When that happens, you and I must be reminded over and over again in our hearts that God is simply bringing us into our greatest good and into a joy that

that can only be realized in his presence.

Because that's what all of this is about.

It's about God inviting you to experience his presence in deeper ways.

It's like a small child.

There are things that a child learns about the joy of being present with their parents when they're doing something that they love.

You know, vacation, those unforgettable experiences and moments that a child has with their parents.

And it teaches them something about the joy of being present with their parents.

But there are different things, maybe even deeper things, that that child learns about the joy of being with their parents as they depend upon them in situations that are incredibly frightening and really hard.

The child learns something in that moment where they have no choice but to cling to the leg of mom or dad and just hold on tight.

God invites us to walk with him both on the mountain passes and through the deep valleys.

And it's all purpose to teach us that being with him and depending upon him and delighting in his presence is actually the entire point of this life.

If you're like, man, what's the point of life?

It's all about God's glory and your ability to enjoy him.

That's it.

It's not any more complicated than that.

And God's working to get you to understand that.

I'm going to suggest that that's the main idea that we see woven throughout the story of the Exodus.

And it's one of the main things that God's driving in our hearts, that he is always working.

Listen, God is always working to bring us to an end of ourselves so that we will cry out to him in desperation.

And learn to depend only on him because that's the only posture that brings life.

You guys understand that equation?

That's God's goodness towards us.

That he's orchestrating all the things.

The things that we would call good things and the things we would call bad things or hard things.

It's all purposed to bring us to an end of ourselves so that we can be desperate for him and cry out to him.

Yearn for intimacy with him and then learn to depend upon him moment by moment.

I want to show you that in Exodus.

This dynamic of God causing us to cry out so that we can be dependents.

And so he can show us that he's the only one worthy of our dependence.

I have three exhibits, three examples.

from the first 14 chapters.

So we're going to do a bit of a survey here.

First, let's travel back to Exodus chapter 2.

Go back to Exodus chapter 2.

It's hot.

Is it hot in here?

Oh, yeah.

Somebody, please, Lord.

Somebody who's familiar with our deal, go kick on the AC.

So, all right.

Thank you, Jim.

Praise the Lord.

All right.

Go to Exodus 2 while Jim goes to the thermostat.

And before I melt, I'm going to start preaching on hell in a second.

I preached on heaven from Revelation 5, but I'm going straight to preaching on hell if it doesn't cool down in here by about 10 degrees.

Okay.

Exodus 2.

Now, if you weren't with us in Exodus 2 for the first part of this conversation, basically you've got, you know, God leads the people through Joseph to Exodus.

There's like 70 of them in the family.

And then they just exploded.

And Joseph was a big deal in Egypt.

He was number two.

Pharaoh loved them, the whole deal.

But what happened is hundreds of years went by.

God's people multiplied the number.

Hebrews became a problem for the Egyptians and they began to put a burden on them and enslave them and oppress them and it was awful so we read about that through chapters 1 and 2 you see this oppression you see slavery you see infanticide they're killing their baby boy it's crazy this this this context so deep oppression deep persecution and suffering and

And then we read this in Exodus 2, 23 and 24 and 25.

Look at this.

During those, oh, I can feel it, Jim.

You are blessed among men.

Thank you, my friend.

Praise the Lord.

During those many days, the king of Egypt died and the people of Israel, I want you to listen to the language and feel it.

The people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and what's the phrase?

Cried out for help.

Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

And God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

God saw the people of Israel and God knew.

So we have very similar verbiage to what we just read in Exodus 5.

There's a crying out of the people.

There's a groaning because of the oppression.

that they were under.

And in chapter 2, you'll notice they turn their cries to God.

And we see that God remembered his covenant with Israel, and he purposed to work to bring rescue to his people.

Got it?

That's Exodus 2.

Now, fast forward to Exodus chapter 14.

Okay, Exodus 14.

This is after the people, we're going to get there.

This is after the people have been freed from captivity and they're traveling in the wilderness and they come upon the Red Sea.

You know what happens.

You've seen the movies.

Pharaoh's heart is hardened.

Once again, he pursues Israel with the Egyptian army, with his full cavalry.

And so here, you want to talk about a scary situation.

You have the people stuck on the shores of the Red Sea with the most powerful cavalry on earth bearing down on them.

They are about to get smoked.

Like smoked.

No hope.

Look at what happens.

This is Exodus 14 starting in verse 10.

When Pharaoh drew near...

The people of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them and they feared greatly.

And the people of Israel, what does it say?

Cried out to the Lord.

Now they didn't do it perfectly, by the way.

Look at what they say to Moses.

It didn't cry out well, but boy, they cried out to God.

Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you've taken us out to the wilderness to die?

What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?

Is not this what we said to you in Egypt?

Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians.

For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than die in the wilderness.

So there's this unsettled, nonsensical, childlike, interesting, whining, complaining that happens, but they're crying out to God.

Look at what Moses says, because this is good.

Fear not...

Stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord, which he, you might underline this part, which he will work for you today.

For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.

The Lord will fight for you and you have only to be silent.

It's Exodus 14, 14, by the way, you can remember it because it's 14, 14.

One of my favorite verses.

God's going to work salvation for you.

He's going to fight for you.

You just have to be silent.

Are you getting the picture here?

Once again, Israel has been brought into a desperate situation where they have no hope.

They stand no chance.

They've been brought to an end of themselves.

There's nothing they can do.

And so they cry out to God.

Now, I'll grant you, they did it out of fear, out of unbelief.

They're grumbling against Moses.

They're grumbling against God, but they still cried out to God.

By the way, sidebar, that's a good word for us, what I just said.

That is a really good word for us because some of us think that we can only run to God and cry out to him when we think we're clean and polished and believing in him and we've got our stuff together.

Like you and I don't wanna go to, you know the ugly cry?

Nobody?

Yeah, the ugly cry.

Yeah, Jay, you know, the ugly cry, the one where it's just you need like paper towels, not even tissues won't even do.

Stuff's coming out of everything and you're just ugly crying and you're a mess.

You don't like to be seen by people when you're ugly crying because you're like, this is horrific.

God wants you to ugly cry with him.

That's what I'm saying.

God wants you to come in your mess and

You got snot running down your face and you can't control it and everything's happening and you're not polished.

It's not the posture of desperation when we come to God and we think we have our stuff together.

But if I don't have my stuff together, God, you sit over there for a minute.

Let me gather myself and then I'll come to you.

This is not how it works.

I said...

Last week that God has made provision for our unbelief.

Your mess doesn't scare God.

Your mess doesn't turn God off.

In fact, dealing with our mess is kind of God's specialty.

He's really good at it.

And he's ordained it.

The key, the key is that we're turning to God and crying out to Him in the midst of our messiness, our unbelief, our idolatry.

That's precisely when we should be crying out to God.

And look at the message that Israel finds as they cry out to the Lord in Exodus 14.

The Lord will work for you today.

You don't need to do anything.

You just need to rest in him and watch him work.

Does that sound familiar?

This is on the shores of the Red Sea when they thought death is imminent.

So just watch and marvel and rest in the Lord and watch what he does.

Now head back to Exodus chapter 5.

Look at verses 15 through 18 again.

Then the foreman of the people of Israel came and, what does it say?

Cried to Pharaoh, why do you treat your servants like this?

No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, make bricks.

Behold, your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people.

But he said, your idol is

You are idle, and that's why you say, let us go and let us sacrifice to the Lord.

Go now and work.

No straw will be given to you, but you must deliver the same number of bricks.

Now to my knowledge, correct me if I'm wrong afterwards, but to my knowledge, these are the only three times

In the entire book of Exodus that we see Israel crying out like this.

In a posture where they're crying out.

But you notice the difference in Exodus chapter 5.

We highlighted it, right?

Israel did not cry out to God.

They cried out to Pharaoh.

They turned not to God in hardship.

But into the very source of the hardship.

And what's the answer that they got back from Pharaoh?

Back to work.

Back to work.

Are you guys smelling what I'm stepping in here?

Are you connecting these dots?

This is important.

The work that God is doing through the circumstances that he's bringing into the lives of his people is purposed to move them to a place where they have to choose.

Who do you believe?

Who do you trust?

To whom will you turn?

Who do you serve?

You may have noticed that the foreman of Israel in verses 15 and 16 repeatedly referred to themselves as Pharaoh's servants.

See, the people of God I think are conflicted here.

I think they're conflicted.

And I think we are often conflicted in this same way where they have one foot in God's kingdom and one foot in Pharaoh's kingdom.

Isn't that much like us?

I know it's like me sometimes.

I want to put one foot in God's kingdom and I want to keep one foot in the world.

And boy, it doesn't work very well because those things are moving in opposite directions.

I don't know a lot about physics.

But I think that if your foot was in a boat and your other foot was on the dock and the boat was moving away from the dock, you've got a choice to make or you're gonna get very wet.

That's what's happening here.

I do this, I believe God and then I don't believe God sometimes.

I trust God with some things and I don't trust God with other things.

Or sometimes I feel like I'm obeying God in these areas, but other times I'm just flat out chasing after the things of this world.

Anybody like me in this?

Listen.

So let's put the pieces together.

What if all the work that God is doing in our lives is moving to bring us to an end of our pursuit of lesser kingdoms?

Hmm.

What if that's what God's doing?

To bring us to an end of pursuing other things.

What if that's what God is doing through our circumstances?

Especially the hard ones.

He's showing us that there is contentment and satisfaction and life found in nothing but Him.

That when we pursue any idol, meaning we put anything over and above him in our trust and worship, it will only lead us to experience a greater burden, more futility and work and less joy.

What if that's what God's doing?

Not just here, but here, here.

I think that's exactly what he's doing.

He's showing us that the pursuit of

of the things of this world over and above him will always lead to greater burdens and more empty work and will actually sap us of joy and of life.

Listen, every single idol in our lives will demand that we work for them.

Do you understand?

Every idol, and if you're like, I don't worship idols, that's weird.

Like I'm not bowing down to like something that I'm, listen, here's how we think about idolatry.

Idolatry can literally be, an idol can be anything.

We tend to think of it as a bad thing or as an obvious thing.

I'll tell you, Tim Keller talks about the fact that idols are most often good things that are good gifts from the Lord and we take them and we make them God things.

And what that means is that God gives us something, any number of good things, name it, right?

Your kids, your spouse, a career, resources, all kinds of stuff.

And he'll put these things as gifts into our hand.

And he calls us to live open-handed with these things where we're actually increasing our worship and our trust in him as we enjoy the thing as his kids.

But what we do over time

Is we start to close our hand around that thing and we say mine.

And then we put that above God in our worship, our trust, our affection.

That's what idolatry.

Oh, and by the way, we don't stop there.

Then we play hide and go seek with God and we put it behind our back.

And we were like, look, God, look at all these ways that I trust you.

See, this is one foot in God's kingdom, one foot in the kingdom of this world.

Look at God all these ways that I trust you.

And God's like, perfect.

What's behind your back?

And he ain't asking because he needs to know.

Right?

That's what idolatry is.

But we need to understand that every one of those idols, those things that we chase after over and above God, it all communicates work.

Work for me.

And listen, when things get hard and we cry out to these false gods and we turn to them to give us what only God can give, the answer we get back is back to work every time.

Because the pursuit of anything outside of God, as though that thing is God, will always create a greater burden for us.

Only God looks at us and says, rest, when we cry out to him.

Only God says rest.

Enter my rest when we cry out to him.

This is what we need to understand this morning.

Pharaoh says back to work.

Idolatry says perform work for me.

Jesus, what does he say?

It is finished.

Jesus says the work has been done.

I'm inviting you to find rest in me.

Do you know that the reason that Jesus can beckon us to rest and to offload our burdens on him, like we looked at in Matthew chapter 11 last week, come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden, you will find rest for your souls.

My yoke is easy, my burden is light.

That passage where Jesus is calling us in, the reason he can do that is because he carried the burden that we could never carry.

At the cross, Jesus took the full weight of our sin, our rebellion, our idolatry, and made the way for us to receive his righteousness as a gift.

And as we come to him, we are simply called to

into a posture of joyful dependence that's abiding as he does the work in and through us.

We are freed up to simply walk in what he has prepared for us to walk in as we enjoy his presence.

That's what God's doing.

He's doing it through the things that we would gladly choose for our own lives.

Yes, he's also doing it through the things that we would never choose for our own lives to walk in.

Those hard things.

God's causing us to open our hands, cast down our idols, and move both feet into his kingdom.

I want you to look at how Paul described all of this.

I think there's a great encapsulation of this in his letter to the Ephesians in chapter 2.

I want to read this for us, and then I just want to invite us into a time of thinking about how we might respond to God by running into his arms this morning.

Look at what Paul said.

This is Ephesians 2.

You've probably heard Ephesians 2, 8, and 9.

But Ephesians 2.10 has to be in there as well because it leads us into a posture where we actually understand what it looks like to walk in what God has for us.

Because the natural question you might have as you're sitting there is, okay, so the world is work and God says no work?

No, work from our identity in Christ where we're walking and what God's laid out beforehand for us is beautiful.

It's beautiful.

It's a part of our worship.

But we're, you know what's interesting?

How many of y'all work really hard to get to rest?

Okay?

No, no, seriously.

How many do that?

I do that.

I'll put both hands up.

We tend to get in these cycles, right?

Where I work, work, work, work, work so that I can rest.

And you pull into rest and you're on fumes.

What if the whole thing is meant to drive us into intimacy with the Lord, into his abiding presence, so that we enter the rest, the shalom, the peace of God's presence, so that I don't work for rest, I'm able to work from rest.

What if that's what God actually has intended for us?

So that work isn't like, we have a theology of work where we understand that it's actually aimed at God's glory as I work unto him, but it's not a burden because he's carrying the burden for me.

Anyway, that's an aside, but look at what Paul says in Ephesians 2.

For by grace, you have been saved through faith.

This, this is not your own doing.

Paul's very clear.

We can't save ourselves.

What is it?

It's a gift of God.

This faith that God gives us, it's a gift.

And it's not a result of works so that we don't get to boast.

I figured it out.

No, no, we're a mess.

God intervened and has done this to us.

Now look at verse 10.

For we are his workmanship.

You know what that word workmanship is in the Greek?

It's the word poema.

It's where we get our English word for poem.

Isn't that cool?

It's like we're God's poetry walking around.

So we're these little poems walking around created in Christ Jesus for what?

Good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So it's not that God says, no, don't work.

It's that God says, find rest in my presence.

delight in me, depend on me and watch as I drive rest in the work that I've laid out for you to do before the foundation of the world.

Any lesser God, any idol that you and I set up in our lives will be a burden and it'll say work and it'll be futility and frustration and emptiness.

God calls us to a posture of

of laying all our burden, casting all our burdens on Jesus.

And as we find rest in his presence, we get to walk joyfully and dependently in the things that he laid out before us, before the foundation of the world.

What a gift that is.

So all the work that God's doing through all the circumstances of our lives,

The highs, the lows, everything in between is to get us to come to an end of this nonsensical thing that I do all the time where I try to find in created lesser things what can only be found in God.

And oh, how God loves us.

Oh, how good He is to do the hard thing to get us to open our hands.

to get us to move that other foot into his kingdom.

I'm going to pray for us and we're going to enter a time where I just want you to think about what God is doing and stirring in you.

Let me tell you, the Holy Spirit is so good at his job.

So good at his job.

Like we don't

A lot of times you won't hear in our preaching at Heartland be like, now here's four practical ways that you can apply this principle that we're talking about, this gospel principle.

You don't hear it a lot.

And the reason is, is because I can't do that as well as the Holy Spirit.

And I believe that when our hearts are stirred...

to see who God is and what God's done and who Jesus is, how we're called into him like this to find rest, that when he like raptures our heart in fresh ways and I'm walking towards him in that in worship and trust, I believe that the spirit is going to lead us in righteousness.

This is the space where he tends to communicate those things to your heart.

So here's what I want to invite you into.

Darren's going to come up in just a minute.

He's going to lead us in a time of prayer and response.

I want you to be so bold as I pray for us to ask the Spirit to direct these next few minutes in your heart.

Just ask the Spirit, would you show me what you want me to see?

Would you show me where are there ways where I'm living to pursue this lesser kingdom?

I'm a house divided in my heart, Lord.

Show me.

Ask the Lord to show you where you've set up idols in your heart.

You've wrapped your hands around things that are meant to be open-handed.

Ask the Spirit to do those things.

But listen, if you do that, he's going to call you to obedience.

He's going to call you to actually step out in those things as you run into him.

And boy, there's joy in life to be found there.

So let me pray for us and then

And then we're just going to ask the Spirit to move.

Father, please orchestrate this time.

Would you give us ears to hear you, eyes to see, God?

Would you beckon us into your presence, God, as we think about responding, God?

Spirit, just do your work for your glory and lead us in this time.

We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.