

Expanding Promise

Grace Fellowship | Carlton Weathers | Genesis 17:1-8

If you'll take your Bible and turn with me to Genesis chapter 17, as we continue today in our series from the book of Genesis in the Abraham narrative, which began in chapter 12 and will continue through chapter 25. And uh, some of you might wonder like, well, couldn't we have had a Reformation specific sermon? And we could have and we've done that in years uh here, some years. But may I just uh rest you assured, our forefathers from the Reformation would be very glad that we just continue to preach the sermons that come from the book that we are preaching in. Because that's what they did for the most part, just preach the word of God one verse or one story at a time.

Genesis 17, read along with me:

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless, that I may make My covenant between Me and you, and may multiply you greatly." Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, "Behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

How long, o Lord? How long will You not answer me? It's a common refrain in the scriptures. Psalm 13 is probably the famous—most famous Psalm of this refrain. The believer asking the Father in heaven, "How long? How long will You wait? How long will it be until You give Your promises? Deliver me from this oppression; bless me". And it's not just in the Bible. It's in our lives. We cry out to God, "Oh God, change me," and the change feels like it will never happen. We get up off of our knees from our prayers and immediately do the thing we're asking God to deliver us from. "Oh God, help my marriage," and then weeks later in the mail comes divorce notice from the lawyers. "Lord, heal my child," and then we stand over a grave.

How long, o Lord? How long? You see, I think that the questions that we have to answer there is: how do I and how do you respond when it seems God's promises will never become reality? If we're honest, very few things in life challenge us more than waiting for God to act. Patience is something that we aren't good at, that we pray for and then

complain because God puts us in the gauntlet of gaining patience. Faith is the very substance of things unseen, believing in what our eyes cannot perceive. The world thinks it's crazy. God works in His way, in His time, in His people, for His glory. But church, if we'll just be honest before the Lord, it's a long time to wait.

Our father Abraham was no different than us. In Genesis 12, God called him out of Ur of the Chaldeans; that was 24 years ago in our story. He entered into the promised land and he went about his daily living, some good days, some faltering days, but still believing that God would give him this land that He had brought him to. In Genesis 15, God cut a covenant with him. He made promises that are irrevocable to him and said, "I will do the work necessary for these promises to be made true". And then sometime after that, just after that, he has a son by an ill-fated plan of human work to try to accomplish God's work rather than wait on God's time. And Hagar bore to him Ishmael, and he was 86 years old.

And then we pick up in 17 when Abram was 99 years old. Now I want you to look at something with me, it's an amazing thing. Just look down at your Bible, whatever version it is, I'm sure this is true. In verse 16 of chapter 16, it ends with "Abraham was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram". Take your pinky finger and lay it in the gap between 16 and 17. That's 13 years of life. 13 years pass; there's no recorded evidence. We don't know that God spoke to him again; it's certainly not written down for us.

Abram is just living life in the land that God said He would give him 24 years ago; he still owns nothing, waiting on a son that he couldn't even speed the process up so that he could have the son. God rejected Ishmael and said, "No, through Sarah I will give you a son". And then 13 years pass. 13 years of waking up, putting beard oil on his beard, getting dressed, putting his designer sandals on, grabbing his staff, going out of his tent, listening to people bicker all around him—probably 318 trained men, his camp's probably over a thousand people. Can you imagine? And he's the leader and they're looking to him: "You're our father; God speaks with you; have you heard anything lately?" "No, not today." "Well what do we do?" "Just live life".

Just live life. Covenantal living is basic human existence most of the time. There's no bells and whistles. See, I know, I know in our age it's so easy for us to start thinking, well, God's not sending off the fireworks for me, so He must not be here. But it's because we fail to understand this is how God has always led His people: slow, steady, based on His timeline, not ours. How long, o Lord? How long? Until God does it. That's how long. That's how long.

God has given him a covenant, God had given him promises, and he can't accomplish any of them. And he knows that, and so he's just waiting. Just waiting, year after year after year. And in verse 1, what I want us to see is that God appears to him after that 13 years. He appears to him. And here in this appearance is the first time in the Bible we see the name for God, *El Shaddai*. Now this name, meaning—it's translated "God Almighty," and it's—it's

a difficult thing because the *Shaddai* is a word that doesn't have clear evidence for its meaning. It means something like "God above the mountain" or "on top of the mountain".

And so in that way we would think, well, well, this name *El Shaddai* is Moses trying to help the reader see: God, our God, is greater than all of the little 'g' gods. He's the big God, the God of the mountain. But it also can mean "God of power," God of power. So not that they're contradictory, but think about that: this is the God above all gods who can do anything, and yet you're waiting for Him to deliver. He appeared to Abram and the comfort He gives him is, "I am God Almighty, Abram. I'm God Almighty, son".

Then after giving him this—this name is used a total of seven times in Genesis, and five—five other times besides our passage it's used, and every time it's used with God's covenant lineage when God is reassuring them of the covenant in some way. He calls Himself "God Almighty." Why? Because it's hard to wait. And God knows it's hard to wait. And so He's telling him, "Don't doubt Me. I'm the God over all gods. I'm Almighty. I will do what I will do". It's a reassuring name that comes to Abram in this passage specifically for him.

But it's used a total of 48 times in all of the scripture, the Old Testament; 41 of those times is just *Shaddai*, not *El Shaddai*. It's just "Almighty," "Almighty," and you probably know that's in the speeches of Job when Job has questioned God. And God is actually referring to Himself as "Almighty" in those speeches. "I'm the all-powerful One. I'm the One that will do what I do. Who are you to question Me?"

So Abram has this appearance after 13 years and here God is calling Himself the God of all the power above all gods to do everything that I have said I will do. "I am God Almighty, Abram; walk before Me and be blameless." Now he gives him two commands: "walk before Me and be blameless". "Walk before Me and be blameless". This parallels really 12:1-2 when He gives him the original promise. He gives him there two things to do: leave your country, go out from your father's land to a land that I will show you, and be a blessing. And so He's told Abram two commands back there: leave and be a blessing. And what has Abram done? Well, he's done that; he's left with a few and it's grown magnificently. He's providing now for a small town in the tents in the desert of the promised land. He has been a blessing, and not just a blessing to his people, but he's been a blessing to others whom he's rescued from foreign kings during wars. He has been a blessing.

"Go from your father's land and be a blessing," and here two stipulations, two commands: "walk before Me and be blameless". Let's look at these two commands. "Walk before Me"—in the scriptures, as I'm sure you're familiar, this refrain of walking with God, walking before God, walking—uh—walking in the spirit in the New Covenant—these are the ways of talking about life. When the Bible says, "walk before Me," what God's telling him is, "Don't leave Me. Don't get impatient, Abram. I'm God Almighty; now just walk with Me. Walk before Me. Walk in My presence, walk before My face. Have fellowship with Me. I'm God

Almighty; walk before Me that My presence and My countenance might overshadow you, Abram, in this life".

"Walk before Me, but to do that, be blameless". Now that's the one that makes your insides turn, doesn't it? Hold on a minute; I thought you said in Genesis 15 God was going to do all the work, but now He's telling him to be blameless. Who can do it?

Be blameless—this word means something like "integrity." Walk before Me in integrity. I—I say it that way because I'm—I'm stressing to you: you cannot walk—but don't—don't think it's a lesser term. Not lesser. He cannot walk before God with the integrity living a dual life; he cannot live before God in integrity holding on to the world and holding on to *El Shaddai*. He has to have full integrity; he can't have one foot in and one foot out. How many of you are trying to live the Christian life one foot in and one foot out? God says, "Walk before Me and be blameless," filled with integrity. Every part of your life, church, put it all in, push the chips to the center. God is Almighty and He can do it, and live that way before Me with confidence, with full assurance.

Man, when you get your cane, Abram, and you put your beard oil in and you put your nicest duds on and you walk out in the camp and someone mocks you and says, "There he goes, the great exalted one of the—going to be the father of so many; he doesn't even have a true son," look them square nine and say, "*El Shaddai* will do it". Have integrity; believe.

He's not saying "never fail". God is not saying, "Hey, Abram, from here on out the only way we've got a relationship is if you're perfect". That's not what He's saying to him. He's saying, "Stand on My promises in faith and believe Me when I tell you I will do what I will do". No matter what comes, no matter how big the gap is, no matter how difficult the path is, walk before Me in integrity, Abram.

And listen, Abram—he didn't have integrity in 12, right? He was kind of holding on to both sides of the horn: "Tell them you're my sister," one of the most romantic pickup lines ever. He didn't seem to have integrity in himself in 16; he listened to the plan of Sarai and took Hagar as a wife and had a son; that didn't seem to be filled with integrity. Just so you'll know, after this in a couple of chapters, he's going to do the same thing again and tell Sarah to act like his sister with Abimelech.

Oh, what are we to make with this then if Abram is called to be a man of integrity and yet he struggles to be filled with integrity, what do we make of it? Well, I think I know what Abram made of it. Abram believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. He believed that God would give him an offspring greater than him; he believed that God would do what God would do through One who—he would stand on the shoulders of a man of full integrity, his offspring, the Christ who was to come. Abram stood in faith on the ground that Christ would in the future prepare for him, and he believed God. Your problems are not that you fail and God is disappointed in you; our problem is that we doubt God when we fail.

We doubt God when we fail. "Oh, I know He's *El Shaddai*, but I failed. He's probably going to let me down at this—He's probably going to turn His back." Live with integrity in that moment. What does it look like? Go to *El Shaddai* and say, "I failed again. I failed again. I need to be made blameless," and He will apply the blamelessness of the future for Abram and the past for us, Son, Jesus Christ, to our account. He will credit it to us; He will account it to us. Isn't that wonderful?

"I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless that I may make My covenant between Me and you, and may multiply you greatly". And Abram worshipped God.

Third, in our passage we see that God repeats and expands the promise of the covenant. He repeats the promise of Genesis 12 and makes it larger. And this is going to be a pattern that's going to happen throughout the Old Testament into the New Testament, into Revelation. God is always telling us what we can handle in the moment and then making it where we can handle more in the future and understand it.

God expands the promise to include not just this one nation Israel that will come from him through Isaac, but truly to include a multitude of nations. This is beyond the realm of reality, what God's promising him: Abram is 99 years old, which means Sarah's about 89 years old at this time; they don't have a child yet, and he's talking about nations. They have no child; the barrenness of Sarai grows day by day more painful as a sign of God not doing what God has said He would do. Some of you are right here, right now, and can I just tell you that God is not just making it where He's going to do something difficult, God is setting up to do the impossible.

He was 75 years old when he left Ur of the Chaldeans; even in that time, 75-year-old man, you think, uh, it's getting kind of late to start that family. He's 86 years old, God still hasn't given him child through Sarai; He's rejected his plan of Hagar and Ishmael because that would have been too easy. God's setting up the stage that He might do the impossible. Our God doesn't just do things that are difficult; our God does what everyone else says can't be done. Every other religion in the world says that's not possible, and our God says, "Watch Me".

He's setting it up; Abram's 99 and he still doesn't even have a baby through Sarai, and yet God hasn't forgotten him in his waiting, God hasn't turned away from him; more than that, God has overshadowed him as *El Shaddai* Almighty before him, and as Abram worships Him, his faith grows and grows and grows step by step. He's going to do the impossible.

And the text continues, verse 5, God tells him: "My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations" in verse 4, but then in 5, "No longer shall your name be called Abram, father, but your name shall be Abraham," a play on words really, the meaning of it being a multitude of nations—that's what we gather. A multitude of nations will come for you; you're not just an exalted father, you're a father of many nations, Abram. I mean, if they laughed at him in the camp when his name was Abram, how much more

they laughing at him then? Now he says, "Oh don't—don't call me that anymore, my name's now Abraham". "You don't have a son! What are you talking about, nations?" It's a—it's a play on words in the Hebrew so that we understand how ridiculous it is that God's promising all this to him.

And yet by faith, he's walking with integrity before God. Every time he calls his name to someone else or someone calls his name to him, it's a reminder that God's going to do what everyone else thinks is impossible. Every time. Abraham, the—the father of a multitude of nations.

But notice what He says there, He continues; now it's still broad, right? It's still broad. I mean, changing the name is significant because you name your son, right? You name your son. God is naming Abraham. "Hey, your dad called you Abram, your heavenly Dad's calling you Abraham". But even in the Near East, it's more than that: a great king who was ruling through and with a lesser king would change the name of the lesser king. And so the great God Almighty is changing the name of Abraham. Why? Because this vassal servant king serves a great King above all kings, and His name is Abraham, and he doesn't just change Abraham's name, does He? He changes—uh—names throughout, He names and changes names throughout the covenant lineage. This is a significant thing that's happening here.

Verse 5: "For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful." Not just fruitful, exceedingly fruitful, "and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you". Notice, it's expanding and it's becoming more specific: He's going to give him nations, He's going to give him kings of nations from his lineage. A royal lineage. Now that's going to be very important as we keep moving forward in this—uh—chapter and the chapters to come. I don't want to steal any thunder from Corey's circumcision message; I know all of you are waiting with bated breath for that one, it's next week. I don't want to steal it.

But the significance of that reality is this: God marked Abraham and his descendants, the males in his lineage, with circumcision because they are a royal priesthood. Circumcision is the sign of priesthood. In other words, God is signaling here: "You're going to walk before Me with integrity and I'm going to put this mark in you." That's coming. Before I do that, "Your name is now Abraham, the father of a multitude of nations. Kings, royalty will come from you, Abraham, royalty. Not just servants or middle class, but the kings of the earth will come from you".

Notice in this chapter the change in verb tense, verse 5, right there in the middle of the verse after He changes his name, what does He say? "For I *have* made". "I have made". Not "I'm going to make," "I will do it one day," "I have done it". This is what's known as the prophetic perfect. It's the prophetic perfect. In other words, God is speaking that it is done before He does it. But let me tell you something, it's already done. You know what I'm saying? God's saying, "I'm going to—I have made you a multitude of nations". "Abram, I can

see them in the dust there. Lord, I believe You, I don't see it". My word—My word is active and it has already done it; it's completed. This is said—this can only be said of a sovereign God who's working out His perfect plan that He laid down before the beginning of the earth. "You're not just going to bump along there and have a kid one day, Abraham; you're going to have multitudes of nations because I have already made you that". I have done it, even before the birth of the first child through him and Sarah. Look at what God is doing. It's already done.

Not only is Abram—in verse 5 is it becoming more clear the kind of God, the Almighty God speaking these promises in the covenant to Abram about multitudes of nations that already exist in God's world. They already exist to God because His word has said it, so therefore they are, even when you can't see them.

But then skip down to verse 7: "And I will establish My covenant..." Now follow this closely; some people glob this together, and I've been guilty of it in the past; they just—we just want to grab it up and go, yeah, He's just saying He's going to be their God, they'll be His people, and He's got a covenant. Look at what it says: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you..." You see that? "And your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant". "Me and you, Abraham, Me and you; My covenant is between us, *and* it's between your offspring and Me forever". Notice also in same language, just keep looking through it with me: "to be God to you and to your offspring after you".

So let me just tell the whole thing here: if you think that this is just a glob text—in other words, God's just viewing Abraham and his descendants and putting them together and saying, "I'm your God"—that doesn't seem to fit the second half of that verse, "to be *your* God". So would you say Abraham's God relationship is just about the future, that's all it is? No, you would say, "This looks like a very personal relationship that He has with Abraham. He's Abraham's God, right? And Abraham's offspring's God". Now if you do that in that place, there's no reason why you don't do that in the place above, because there's no change in the language: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you". He's made a covenant with Abraham, and He's made a covenant with his offspring, and He is the God of Abraham, and He is the God of the offspring of Abraham. Okay, you following me? He's not just lumping them together; He's keeping them separate: Abraham, and then Abraham's descendants. "I've made a covenant with you that's everlasting, Abraham, and I've made a covenant with your descendants that's everlasting, Abraham. I've made a covenant with you to be your God, Abraham, and I'm going to be the God of your offspring, Abraham".

And then look at verse 8: "And I will give to you..." No change in the language, same setup. "I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings". Now He's already told Abraham in chapter 15 that he won't ever own the land that he's in. He won't ever be able to own it or possess it as his own; his offspring will possess it after they serve 400 years of forced slavery in Egypt, the suffering that He prophesied would happen before

they got there. So what is God doing with this language? "I'm going to give *you*, Abraham, the land of your sojournings, *and* I'm going to give it to your offspring for an everlasting thing, for a forever thing".

What? How can this be? God promises to give Abraham the covenant as an everlasting covenant, and it's not only the intangible reality of the covenant that is everlasting, but it's also the promise of the land that is going to be given to Abraham and to his offspring forever. He's very specific: "I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be your offspring's God".

So listen, all I'm saying is—is if you just glob all this together and say, "Well it's Abraham and his children and they're all together and God's blessing them and doing a covenant with them," you miss this: God's making a promise to Abraham that cannot have a fulfillment in his lifetime. Because in Genesis 15 He's already told him, "You're not going to get the land in your lifetime; matter of fact, your descendants are going to get it after they serve 400 years plus of slavery in Egypt. Then they'll come back to this land".

So what is going on here? Maybe it's just not that important. I mean, only the whole of the Bible hinges on it. It's not that big of a deal. It's a big deal, because if God is lying in this passage we can't trust God for anything. But He's not lying; He's telling the truth. He's laying out for Abraham the reality that "I am your God, and I'm the God of your offspring. I have made a covenant with you and I've made a covenant with your offspring. I will give *you* the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be your offspring's God".

Thank the Lord for progressive revelation, because this would be what would appear to be an insurmountable problem to me, except God has already explained it for Himself. He wrote it down in the holy scriptures. What could it ever mean that God is going to give to Abraham this land? Hold your place in Genesis 17 and turn to Hebrews chapter 11. God is doing something very important here. The title of the sermon is not incidental: "Expanding Promise". This promise made in seed form in Genesis 3:15, in Genesis 12, now in Genesis 17, just keeps expanding bigger and bigger and bigger. But it's what we should expect because the Bible tells us this, and Abraham expected it to expand. Abraham expected it to expand. Look at Hebrews 11, verse 8; notice the key words here: "By faith". Genesis 15:6, "and Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness," correct?

All of Abraham's life now is being lived under that moniker of believing in God's promise. "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to—uh—to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, and knowing—not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise". There's "you and your offspring." What are they doing? Living by faith. For Abraham was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose Designer and Builder is God.

Look at verse 13. After talking about Sarah and her faith, it then says in 13, "These— Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah—these all died in faith, not having received the things promised". God just says it plain as day in the Word: he didn't ever own it in his lifetime. But having seen them—notice—and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth, for people who see—speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return, but as it is they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city. Listen, what the writer of Hebrews under the inspiration of the Spirit is saying is when Jesus—when God said to Abraham, "Son, this land will be your land," He meant every word of it.

Abraham looked through that promise into the far-off future and grabbed hold by faith of an ever-expanding reality that the heavenly land would be his. I'm not saying anything about receiving land physically. I'm not denying that; that's very allowable, okay? I'm not making a premil or amil talk here. But I don't care if you're premil, postmil, or amil, Abraham was promised by God land, Canaan, forever, not even a thousand years. Forever he would have this land, and that's only possible if Abraham is looking through the window of the promise of this dirt right here to the heavenly dirt he will get in the new heavens and the new earth by the One he had grabbed hold of by faith.

He held on to Jesus Christ in the future. It was a shadow, it was dark, it wasn't easy to see, but he saw it by eyes of faith and he held on to it. And God said, "I'm going to deliver My promise." How long? Thousands of years have passed, and I'm telling you Abraham today believes that promise before the Lord as sure as the day he heard it from His mouth in Sinai. He believes it. He's just looking and saying, "How much longer? How much longer? I want it," and listen, *El Shaddai* will do it.

So what I'm challenging you to, covenant people of God, is that we have to look through the prism of this life at the eternal land that is coming and know that our God will do it. "I'm suffering right now." It's okay. They suffered too, and yet they never wavered in their faith, but they held on to the promise of God by faith and God will deliver that promise. There's a day coming when Abraham will stand with Isaac and Jacob and look over the posterity of a multitude of nations. And they will turn and look at the offspring, Jesus Christ, and they will say, "Worthy is the Lamb who purchased men from every tribe and nation and tongue". "He promised me a nation, a multitude of nations, and He didn't lie one time. Look at this, they're all here".

And—and Jesus, the Lamb, will say to him, "I told you I would do it. Hey, I told you I would do it". Can't you imagine the celebration? I mean, look, when your team wins the big game and the raucous crowd is cheering because they've waited three and a half hours for the result and they're losing their minds, can you imagine the roar of heaven when God delivers on this one? Thousands of years have passed and yet God will do it, and it's as sure today as it will be then; it cannot be broken because the Almighty God has said it. And by faith we

hold on to that promise of a heavenly land. That's our home; this is a land we pass through; that's our home.

And as we pass through, we look at the beauty around us, we look at the people around us, and we say, "Come with us! We're headed to a land; we're headed to a great land". We look through the physical and we see the spiritual realities of eternity. And that's no different than looking through the bread and the juice and seeing the body and the blood of Jesus. Church, you're about to be called to exercise the same faith Abraham exercised. Abraham looked at a sandbox in the Middle East of Canaan and said, "This all belongs to me, and more than that, I see a day coming way out there in the future". It's fuzzy, but I believe it; I can see it, and I'm celebrating it now because it's already done: a land that's a heavenly homeland for me and my descendants from every nation, every tribe, every tongue. He looked through Canaan.

And so what are you doing, church, when you stand and sing and walk the aisle and come here and you take the bread and the juice and then you take it in? You're saying to God, "I believe that Jesus Christ's body was given for me, and I believe His blood shall shed to cover all my sins". I believe it, but you're saying more than that, church. That's the remembrance piece, that's the covenantal language of, "Hey, that's happened; you're remembering that". But don't stop short, and by doing this, by remembering that offering and looking through those elements, you're proclaiming to the world that He's coming again. When you take the supper this morning, you eat the bread and drink the juice, in your soul you need to shout out to God, "I know You're coming again!" "I believe it! It's more real than the pews I'm in and the building I'm in and the people I'm around, Jesus, You are coming again!" So as I suffer and as I wait and as I journey and walk, I do it by faith in the Son of God. That's what we will celebrate together, church, a meal that points us beyond itself to the sure reality that is coming in His return.

Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, as we close this time in Your word and we prepare our hearts for this amazing meal, the promise that has been made sure in Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the promise that is just as sure as the first coming, Lord, the promise of the second coming. For You will come, and when You come, all things will be made new. We, Lord, want to take the bread and juice and we want to take it together because we love You and we are loved by You and we love one another and we're bonded together. Help us now to prepare our hearts and our minds for this supper. Help us to be like our father Abraham, believing You so that we're counted righteous. It's in Your name we pray, amen.

I'm going to open the table. I've already fenced it; maybe you missed it so I'll be plain: this supper is for everyone who by faith has believed in the Son of God as their Lord and Savior. It is not for anyone else. If you see this as merely bread and merely juice that you'll get a little snack before we go to equipping hour or you head off to go home, don't take this supper. If you cannot by faith look through this supper and see eternity, don't take this

supper, because it has no meaning if you do that. Worse than that, it is a curse to you; you can be sick and you can even die by blaspheming this supper. It's a holy supper.

But if you believe in Him, no matter what your week has looked like, your month has looked like, your years have looked like, if you believe in Him and you've made a public profession of faith in Him and been baptized into His body, this supper is for you. We open it and we say, "Come". Say, "well I'm a sinner." Everyone who's ever eaten this supper besides Christ is a sinner. That's not the issue: are you walking in integrity before Him? Are you standing on the promises of God in Jesus Christ by faith and straining for the homeland that is to come? If so, this supper's for you. We're going to sing, would you stand with us as we prepare to sing, JM and the team are going to lead us. I'm going to open the table and you can come when you're prepared; just come to the center aisle, if it's full at the center, go to the sides. If you're in the balcony, your supper's in the vestibule, it's prepared for you; come and take and once we all have it, we'll eat together. Let's sing, church.

What gift of grace is Jesus my Redeemer There is no more for heaven now to give He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus For my life is wholly bound to His Oh how strange and divine, I can see all is mine Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark, but I am not forsaken For by my side the Savior He will stay I labor on in weakness and rejoicing For in my need His power is displayed

To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me Through the deepest valley He will lead Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven The future sure, the price it has been paid For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon And He was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated Jesus now and ever is my plea Oh the chains are released, I can sing I am free Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus For He has said that He will bring me home And day by day I know He will renew me Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus All the glory evermore to Him When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat Yet not I, but through Christ in me

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus All the glory evermore to Him When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat Yet not I, but through Christ in me

When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat Yet not I, but through Christ in me Yet not I, but through Christ in me Yet not I, but through Christ in me

And this is a little odd, but did anybody not get juice? We had a gap of time there; I just want to make sure. Don't be bashful; if you didn't get juice, it doesn't count. You need juice; it's not just His body, it's also His blood. You got it? Okay.

Church, I want you to look at this bread that you hold in your hands. And I want you to look through this bread like a window and see that Jesus Christ's body was given for you. If you believe this, take and eat.

Church, I want you to look at this cup. I want you to look through this cup and see the blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you. Every one who drinks the blood of the New Covenant shall live forever. Take and drink.

Church, if you'll grab hands across the aisle and through the pews, we'll close with a benediction and then a singing of the Doxology together.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.

Amen. Let's sing together.