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Series: The Gospel of John
Message: What To Do With Jesus

Transcribed Message
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John 11:45-57

I know most of you are familiar with 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 15 when Peter makes that comment that we are always to be ready to give to anyone who asks of us a reason of the hope that is in us. It's a wonderful verse and it's an encouraging verse and it speaks so practically to how it is that we're to live our life, live our life in such a way that people would actually see us and notice there's something different about us and on occasion ask us, what is it that makes you talk different, makes you act different, that causes you to have a different attitude? Well, the statement that Peter makes when he says, be ready to give an answer for the reason and the hope that is in you, the word reason is the Greek word *apologia*, which you obviously hear the English word apologetics. And apologetics is simply the study and the use of reason and the use of logic and the use of evidence to put forward the trustworthiness of Christianity, the reliability of Christianity. I'm a fan of apologetics and I know that you are too and it's always good to read and to engage in different methods and different means so that when somebody does ask us, we do have an answer to give of the reason of the hope that's in us.

But what we need to understand is the limitation of apologetics. Nobody has ever been argued into the kingdom. Nobody has ever been logically convinced that Christianity is true just based on logic. Nobody has yielded to a mountain of evidence that you might put forward about some issue or question related to Christianity and finally under the weight of that evidence said, okay, I believe. It just doesn't work that way. I think in our passage this morning, we have a wonderful illustration of that very truth and what it is that God needs to do in our lives to bring about that change.

We come again to John 11, our big idea this morning, this matter that we've seen so much in the gospel of John, this matter of the deeply seeded sin of unbelief that can only be overcome by the sovereign grace of God at work in our lives using this word and by

means of the Holy Spirit. So, a quick review, just taking us back to the context of this 11th chapter, we of course remember this is one of the most dramatic miracles in all the Bible, certainly in the gospel of John in which Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

It is the seventh and final sign. Remember there are seven signs in the gospel of John that fulfill His stated purpose at the end of the book when He said, I'm writing these things, I'm giving you these signs, so you'll know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. And so, this is the seventh. It foreshadows obviously what many call the eighth one, which is the resurrection of Jesus Himself.

And then of course there is the focus of this incredible miracle that doesn't fall on Lazarus, and it doesn't fall on Mary, and it doesn't fall on Martha. But the focus of the story and the center of the story is of course none other than the Lord Jesus. Now we want to know a lot more about this story, don't we? I can envision a press conference at the end of this day, of this incredible event, this resurrection. And there, you know, at the podium as they do after a lot of sporting events, you've got various people and of course there's Lazarus and there's Mary and there's Martha and there's a room full of reporters, right? And they're pressing in to ask them questions about what happened. Hey Lazarus, where were you? First of all, where were you for all these days that you were gone? We want to know where you were. What was that like? Did you want to come back? Were you surprised when you got called back? Do you know that you're going to have to go through all of this again? I mean, what is the level of excitement on the part of Lazarus? And then of course we would have questions for Mary and Martha too, wouldn't we? Just in terms of the whole thing that they went through and all that they had experienced, but we get none of that. We don't get any of that. What we get, as we said last week, is not a human-interest story, but it is a God story, it's a Jesus story, and so the focus is on Jesus and Jesus alone.

And then notice thirdly, the power for healing is in His Word. That's where the power of healing is. It's in the Word. When Jesus spoke, He spoke as one we've seen repeatedly with authority. He more accurately shouted, didn't He? He just simply shouted three words: Lazarus, out here! And Lazarus had no choice but to come out. It's just the incredible power of the Word of God. It's that Word and that power that has changed your

life. It has taken you out of death into life, taken you out of darkness into light. It's the same power. When you think of this incredible miracle, it takes you right back to John 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. Without Him was not anything made that was made. He made it all. And how did He make it? So, you go from John 1, you go back to Genesis 1, and there, and God said, let there be. And there it was. What is that? It's the fiat. It's the spoken Word of God. It's the power of God's Word. So, you certainly see that here as well.

Well, what then are the repercussions of a dead man rising? Well, in this passage, we get to see three. We get to see three different groups that interact with this event and so let's do that together. We begin in verses 45 and 46, and it's the response and the interaction among the people. What does John say? Verse 45, many of the Jews therefore who had come with Mary and had seen what He did believed in Him. Notice that. Many believed.

Now, it's true that John was an evangelist. John was often called John the Evangelist. And evangelists sometimes are known to speak what we call evangelistically, right? They sometimes on occasion will increase the number of respondents. When John says, many believed, he's not doing that. He's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Many people believed. It took me back when I read this.

It took me back to when I was in Moldova years ago, and we went into a little village. There had never been Americans in this village before. We came in, and there was a little park in the center of town, and we set up an evening evangelistic meeting. Quite a few people came, and I preached that night, and at the end shared the gospel. No response. Well, my interpreter then took over, and I have no idea what he said exactly, but everybody in this outdoor venue, everybody, man, woman, and child, came down to the front. And so we're getting in the van at the end of the evening, and he says to me, see at first nobody came, but then they all did. And I said, well, what did you say to them? And he said, I told them if they'll come down, they'll get a free gift. I mean, I had offered them a free gift of the gospel and eternal life, but he gave them something that they could take home, and everybody, I kid you not, the whole place came down. And I imagine in his report, he

probably said something like the Americans spoke, nobody came down. When I gave the invitation, they all came. So anyway, that's not what's going on here.

But notice, first of all, the influence of a godly life, because it's interesting to me that when you read that 45th verse, John talks about Mary, and he says, many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary. Now we talked, you know, weeks ago about Mary's influence and all those people that initially came out of Jerusalem that she had connections with, but Mary is lifted up. And I don't think it's to in any way throw shade on Martha. I think it's simply pointing out the differences between these two sisters. Mary must have been the more outgoing. She must have been the more engaging. She must have been the one who had maybe the social events that took place and the Bible studies or whatever that looked like. And so here she is. But in this sentence structure, what I see is that it almost would indicate to us that when we read that they came with Mary and then they saw Jesus, there's only one article there, so it almost would seem to say to us that these two are connected, as if to say, if you see Mary, you get to see Jesus. And that really is the way it should be, isn't it?

It takes me back to John 4 when Jesus is talking to the woman at the well, and what happens when she realizes who Jesus is and she trusts in Him as her Savior? She goes back to the village, right? And the joy and the excitement and the change of her life is so invigorating, so passionate, so inviting that the whole town wants to come out then and see Jesus. And I think something similar is happening here, and this should be who we are. There should be the fragrance, as Paul says, and the aroma of Christ in our life. We're not ever going to be perfect, but we should be different because we're being transformed, right? We're not being conformed to the world, so we fit in and look like everybody else and we sound like everybody else. We're being transformed so that we are, in fact, different.

Now look at John's favorite expression, because many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what He did believed in Him. And I would offer you that that is one of John's favorite expressions: they believed in Him. Now, if you just read that, it'd be interesting to hear observations that you would make about that phrase: they believed in Him. Because here's what's surprising to me. It's interesting to me that a

number of commentators say something like this. We don't know how real this faith is because it's kind of hard to say. Another says, and I quote, "there is a kind of believing that doesn't save". I didn't know that. I didn't know that there was a kind of belief that didn't save. I thought when you believed and put your trust in Jesus alone as your Savior, that the Bible consistently says that your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life. But they're interjecting a question here. Another one says this: "They put their faith in Him. The caliber of their faith is not discussed." Well, why would we have to discuss the caliber of their faith? They believe.

Now, I know at some point somebody always says, yeah, but Carlton, what about James when he says that even the demons believe and tremble? Well, yeah, they believe, but they don't believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and they're not believing and putting their faith in Him alone for forgiveness of sins and salvation. But when the Bible speaks of it, especially when John says that people believe, he means they believe. We've talked about this often enough, haven't we?

So let me just move on here and say this is John again saying to us that to believe speaks of something that occurs at a point in time. It occurs at a point in time. Believe is in what we call the aorist tense, which looks not at the past or the present or the future, it just simply looks at a point in time. It looks at a point in time. Something happened, John says, at a point in time. He's stressing a moment of belief. So, I would say to you that believing is both a process and it is punctiliar. It's something that happens at a decisive, definitive moment. And that's why when we give our testimony, and I fully understand because that's my story, I don't know when I trusted Christ as my Savior. I don't have anything written down, you know, when I was eight, when I was nine, when I was ten, I have no recollection of when that happened. But it had to happen in that way. You don't become a Christian by osmosis, and you don't become a Christian in terms of a process until there is a point at which you do believe. Now there is a process because we hear the gospel many times. But at some point, when you hear the gospel, it may be, as studies show, the 15th time. Different studies seem to indicate that people hear the gospel as many as 15 times before

they believe. Obviously, that varies widely, but John's point is you trust in Jesus as your Savior. There's a point at which the Holy Spirit says, yes, this is it, and you believe.

Now look at the other thing. This is so important. Believe must have an object. The word "believe" must have an object. That's the key to the whole thing, isn't it? Believe must have an object. Here's my question, true or false? Don't shout out the answer because I don't want to embarrass anybody, okay? True or false? Just answer in your own heart, in your own mind. We are saved by our faith. We are saved by our faith. True or false? The answer is false. We're not saved by our faith. The object is not our faith. The object is Jesus. We are saved by faith, but we're not saved by our faith. Our faith is not in our faith. You see, I think that's what's illustrated in those previous comments.

When people are evaluating, what kind of faith, what kind of belief is this? Is this what they call saving faith? I think it misses the point. The point is who's the object of your faith? What is the object of your faith? Saved by faith in, see that little preposition? It's the little preposition *eis*. This is a study in prepositions this morning. Our faith is in Him, right? Jesus is the object of our faith. Again, you get to the end of the day, there's only two options. You're sitting here this morning, and either at some point in time, you have believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you have life in His name. That's the gospel, John 20. Or you haven't. Or you haven't. And I hope that you're open to, in fact, believing today, this morning, before we're done.

But those are the only two options. There's no neutrality. There's no middle ground. There is either you have believed or you have not yet believed. And you either have believed in Him, Jesus, as the object of your faith, not yourself, not your faith, not your church, not your baptism, not your membership, not your grandparents, not your Christian home, whatever that looks like. No, it is your faith in Him.

Now, some reported about Him. So that group, many believed. That's encouraging, isn't it? They see this incredible seventh miracle, and many believed. Wow. Many believed. Now, some reported about Him, verse 46, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Now, again, you read that, and it could be nefarious. It could be, right? It could be evil. There could be a bad intent here on their part. But again, if you

just look at the text, there isn't anything here that says that it requires that that be their intent. It could very well be that some of these people who have witnessed this amazing miracle are just simply perplexed. I mean, don't you think being perplexed at seeing a man walk out of a grave wrapped in grave clothes, don't you think that would cause you to be wondering, how did this happen? Don't you think it would cause you to be a little bit perplexed? Yeah. So it could be that they have evil intention, and maybe some of them did. It could also be that they're like, we need to go talk to the religious guys. We need to go talk to the people who have answers to questions like this, and let's see what they say about it.

So, here's what we know. It is a contrast between belief and unbelief. That's clearly what John wants us to see. He's not telling us their attitude per se, but it does underscore that there is a contrast here between the many who believed and the people who went back to report who didn't believe, which again underscores what we say all the time, which is what? The gospel never does...you finish it. The gospel never does... You're supposed to finish it real loud. The gospel never does nothing. Right. The gospel never does nothing. And the gospel, in this case, once again, never does nothing.

Hebrews chapter 3 verse 15 says, if you hear His voice, don't harden your heart. If you hear His voice this morning, don't harden your heart because you don't know if you're going to hear His voice again. And you don't know when that hard heart is going to become impenetrable. So, if you hear His voice, respond.

Look at, among the leaders then. So that's the people. Now among the leaders. Verses 47 to 53, and they start off with the wrong question. Verse 47, so the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, what are we to do? For this man performs many signs. First notice who is involved. It is this wrong question that is being asked by the Sanhedrin. In the Greek, it just simply says the word, *sunidrion*. So you can just, again, just like apologia, you hear the word apologetic, right? Well, the word council there in verse 47 is the Greek word *sunidrion*, and we've anglicized it, we've transliterated it, and just we call it the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin is a religious body with a lot of political overtones. A religious body that becomes infected with the expediency of politics is in trouble. And I would say to you

that the church in America is oftentimes finding itself in trouble because we're mixing things that I don't think God intended for us to mix. And you begin to ask the question, how can we be on the right side of history? Just like these guys, you're asking the wrong question. The question isn't, are we on the right side of history or not. About a whole number of issues, right? The question isn't, are we on the right side of history? The question is, are we on the right side of Scripture? Are we on the right side of the Word of God? Are we handling the Word right? These guys aren't going to be.

But notice that this is a religious body. The chief priests are largely Sadducees. I won't tell the joke again this week about the Sadducees being sad, you see, because they didn't believe in the resurrection. I won't even repeat that one. But that was these guys. They didn't believe in the resurrection. When you hear the word Sadducees in the Gospels, you think theological liberals. These guys are theological liberals. They don't believe most of the Old Testament, and they don't believe in a resurrection. And the other group, of course, are Pharisees. The Pharisees were a minority group, but they were the conservatives. They would fit in with us. We would be like the Pharisees in that they wanted to keep God's Word. They, of course, corrupted it in many ways, but they still had a desire to keep the Word of God. They come together to do something, which we see in the Gospels at this point in the life of our Lord.

But here, as you look at that 47th verse, the word "so", is this word "therefore". This group comes and reports to them, therefore, the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin comes together, and they are going to respond. And what did they see? They see Jesus is clearly a threat. That's what they see. They see Jesus is clearly seen as a threat. The wrong question they ask is, what are we to do? That's the question. Literally, it says, the literal rendering of the question is, what are we doing? And the answer is nothing. That's the answer to their question. What are we doing? The answer is nothing. The question they should be asking, what is the right thing to be doing? What are we supposed to be doing? We're the religious leaders of our time. What is it that we're supposed to be doing? What a good question to be asking, right? We all should be asking that. What am I supposed to be doing?

Well, one of the things we're supposed to be doing is we're supposed to be understanding and reading and following God's Word, right? That's what we're supposed to be doing. So here it is. What are we doing? Well, we're doing nothing. Nothing. So they're asking the wrong question.

Look at verse 47 again, for this man performs many signs. Now, isn't that interesting? They acknowledge, what? That Jesus is performing many signs. Just back two chapters in the ninth chapter, they were trying to deny that a man who had been blind for 30 years really wasn't blind. This whole story about Jesus giving him his sight back was all made up. Remember, they called his parents. Was he really blind? Was he born blind? Are you sure he was blind? We don't think he was blind. And now here they are just a little bit later, the seventh sign in John's gospel. The religious leaders say, this man is doing a lot of miracles. We're not doing anything. Jesus is doing everything.

Verse 48, their hard hearts. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. So, their hard hearts are revealed. The calculus moves away from simply a religious issue to now it is a politically vested problem. And again, I just say, when the church begins to be more concerned about the politics of issues, whether that's LBGTQ, whether that's feminism, whether that is transgenderism. Pick any modern cultural issue that our culture is grappling with. And when the church begins to say, we want to be on the right side of history here, we don't want to get it wrong. But the only way you don't get it wrong is you stay here in the Word, right? And so here they are showing us the hardness of heart.

And when there's a hard heart, my friends, you can give as many signs as you want and abundant of evidence, but it's never going to be enough. It's never enough. It's never enough. Lazarus is living proof that Jesus is God. There is an empty tomb. There's a man who walked out of it dressed in grave clothes. A family has been reunited. A dead man is walking around among us, and they refuse to believe. That's where we started. The hardness of heart, the intransigent unbelief of the human heart requires the sovereign grace of God to be at work.

So here is the principle. You cannot give an unbelieving heart enough evidence. You just can't. You can't logically reason somebody into the kingdom. I think when people come with questions, we should always welcome questions, but when people are asking questions, I think they're asking them for one of three reasons. Maybe there's more. Sometimes people ask questions of us because they basically want to refute and defeat Christianity. That's a mocker. That's a skeptic. And you could probably argue Jesus says, don't throw your pearls before swine, right? If all they want to do is mock you for your faith, if all they want to do is reveal the level of their skepticism, then there's not a lot of conversation that's going to help in that matter. Sometimes people who are asking questions just want to show us how smart they are. There's probably a fine line between those two, but sometimes people just want to show you just how smart they are, and maybe you're not quite at their level. But here's the thing. When people are asking questions because they want to know, and they want to learn, and they want to understand truth, now that's when it gets to be fun. That's when you love to sit down and engage in conversation with people who are truly seekers, right? They may not be there, but they want to know. They want to know, who is this Jesus? They want to know, did He really rise from the dead? Is that even possible? What about this Lazarus guy? What do you say about him? All these questions are fun to engage in. And those are joyful times, but that's certainly not the case here. There's hardness of heart.

Now, they reveal their greatest fear, don't they, in that statement when they say, we're going to lose our place and our power. Look at that. Jesus' popularity goes up. Our popularity goes down, right? That's kind of the equation that they have. When Rome hears about the fact that there has been a king, because this is their great fear, that Jesus is going to be lifted up to a place of being recognized as king, Rome is going to hear about it, and Rome is going to come, and he's going to crush us. And that, of course, has been their history in this land for centuries.

But notice what they say, that Rome is going to come, and they're going to take away our place, and they're going to take away our nation. Now, the nation is easy. They're going to take away our nation. We're not going to have a country anymore. What do they mean

when they say they're going to take away our place? Well, the easiest answer would be to say, we're going to get knocked out of our position of power, and that certainly is true. But here's what I think they mean when they say our place. I think they're talking about the temple, because the temple is literally the place. The temple is the center of everything within the Jewish life and custom. It's the center of activity, and for them, of course, it's the center of power.

Now, here's the thing. If, in fact, they're right, and Jesus is, in fact, who he is claiming to be, right? If he's the son of God, as he's laying claim to, then the temple will not be needed anymore, because he is the temple, right? Takes us back to the second chapter in the 19th verse, when Jesus said, you destroy this temple, and in three days, I'll build it back again. And they thought he blasphemed. It had taken over 40 years to build the temple, and Jesus has the audacity to say, I can do it in three. You tear it down, and I'll build it back in three. He was talking, of course, about his death and resurrection. What happened at the point of his death? What happened in the temple? The curtain is torn. The curtain is torn from where to where? From the top to the bottom. Signifying what? Access to God. You and I go freely into God's presence, because Jesus is our great high priest. You don't come through your pastor. You don't need to come through a priest. You don't need to come through some secondary person. There is one man, there is one that stands between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, right? That's why we're all believer priests. That's why we all have equal access into the presence of God. My prayers have no more efficacy than your prayers. I have no greater access than you do. Nobody can lay claim to that. That's what he is saying here, and their great fear is, in fact, if Jesus is who he claims to be, then they won't even need the temple anymore, and these guys will not be needed either.

So, look at the sheer cynicism now in verses 49 to 53. But one of them, Caiaphas, who was a high priest at that year, said to them, you know nothing at all. Who is he? This is Caiaphas. He's the high priest. He was the high priest from 1880 to 36 AD. He took over for his father-in-law, who had also been the high priest for a long time, a very powerful family. Now, look at what he said. Verse 49, but one of them, Caiaphas, who was the high priest at

that year, said to them, you know nothing at all, nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish. He did not say this of his own accord, but by being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not only for the nation, not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad, so that the day, so from that day on, they made plans to put him to death.

He begins with an insult. Children, cover your ears, because what he says literally is, you guys are all idiots. That's what he says. That's the literal translation. You guys are all idiots. He says that to the smartest people, supposedly, in Jerusalem. He says, you know nothing at all. You're all idiots.

And then he proclaims a prophecy. He gives a prophecy that he doesn't even understand what he's saying. That prophecy in verses 50 to 53 that we just read, I want to just lift two things. First of all, he inadvertently explains the cross. Here is Caiaphas, the high priest, and he basically says in verse 50, it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish. To die for the nation. It's that little preposition again, isn't it? That little preposition - for. He is basically lifting the central truth of the Christian faith, which is penal substitutionary atonement.

Remember, we've heard this repeatedly. There's a penalty that must be paid because of sin. There's a substitution that must be made because the only one who could possibly qualify is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And then it's an atonement, it's a covering for our sin. And here is Caiaphas, the high priest. He intends for Jesus to become the scapegoat, but in the plan of God, Jesus is the lamb of God takes us right back to the first chapter in verse 29.

You remember in Luke chapter 16, we commented on this a couple of weeks ago as well. The story of Lazarus, not this Lazarus of John 11, but another Lazarus in the story that Jesus told that was in Hades, and he was concerned about his brothers who were still living on the earth. And what did he say? Father Abraham, would you send somebody back from here and have them go to my family. Go to my brothers and tell my brothers how terrible this place is and you need to believe and you need to get your life in order because you

don't want to come here where I am. Remember that story? And in that story, the response to that is if they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they're not going to believe somebody who comes back from Hades. And that's exactly what's going on right here. Lazarus came back from the dead.

Next week's lesson? They want to kill him. They don't want to just kill Jesus; they want to kill Lazarus too. So it isn't, if you bring somebody back from the dead, everybody's going to fall on their face and repent and believe in Jesus. That's not the nature of the unbelieving heart apart from the sovereign grace of God.

Then notice as well, he inadvertently explains the plan of God for the ages. Verse 52, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. We don't have time to go into all of this. This is an amazing verse, but it basically says this. There is going to be a calling back from all over the earth, all the Jews that God is going to bring to himself. I think this is both in terms of history now and in terms of what's to come, but it's more than that because it's a promise that God's going to add to the Jews, Gentiles like us. And so here is this amazing promise that God's work of salvation isn't just for the Jews, it's for the Jews and the Gentiles.

Jesus' response, verse 54. Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but went from there to the region near the wilderness to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with his disciples. Now how do you think, and you just see those two points, he withdrew from public ministry, right? And he just began to spend this last bit of time with his disciples.

Now let me ask you this, how did he know to get out of there? This is a secret meeting of the Sanhedrin. How does Jesus know to get out of town? Well, you could say, well, he knows everything. Yeah, he does, and that would be one answer. But in his humanity, there would be no way for him to know what happened in that secret meeting unless somebody from that meeting who was sympathetic to Jesus, whose name starts with an N, huh? Nick, yeah, Nick at night. Nick finds Jesus, maybe, and tells him, Jesus, you need to get out of town.

The last Passover, verse 55. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. Thousands of people came to Jerusalem during the Passover. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, what do you think, that he will not come to the feast at all? No, they knew he would come. The law required that he come. They know he's going to come. He's coming. They know he's going to come. This marks, literally, the end of the first half of the Gospel of John, right here.

So, what do we take away? I want you to be encouraged by this passage. I want you to be encouraged because God is at work even when we can't see it. And his purpose and his will are always going to be realized. Even speaking through the mouth of a high priest who has no idea what he's saying, so are the workings of God. His purposes will always be realized.

My friends, this morning, you can ignore him. I wouldn't advise that. You can oppose him. I would strongly recommend against it. You can blaspheme him. Caiaphas will. Or, of course, you can believe, but you cannot frustrate God. You cannot frustrate God. Proverbs 19: 21. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. What are you going to do with Jesus this morning? See, that was the whole lesson. What will you do with Jesus? Many believed, some didn't. What are you going to do with Jesus this morning?

Have you believed and put your faith and trust in him as your personal Savior? Is there a point in time, maybe right now, where you acknowledge that you've sinned, you've fallen short of God's glory, and getting there on your own is impossible. It can't be done. But God gives you a free gift, and he invites you to respond right now by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you have life in his name.

Let's pray. Father God, we are encouraged by your word. We are encouraged by your work. Father, thank you for your great grace. Move in the hearts of your people. Encourage us with your amazing plan for not only our lives, not only this church, but Father, so far beyond the great plan of God for all the ages to bring glory and honor to your name. Father,

draw to yourself those who you are at work in their lives even now. We pray in Jesus' name,
amen.