

Jacob's Ladder

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Date: 29 June 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, New City. Good morning. I am delighted to be here with you this morning. I stand on the shoulders of this congregation in the whole history of the work I have done in this denomination.

And there are many people in this room who have been a blessing to my own personal life. I want to thank Rev Kev, Sister Sandy, for your hospitality. I want to give recognition to my brother and sister Erwin Entz, Sister Kim Entz, the Ellis's.

God bless you. The plumbers, I'm so thankful to be here. And I want to invite you now to join me as we hear from God's Word. Genesis chapter 28, verses 10 through 22.

This is God's Word. Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night because the sun had set.

Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. To sleep. And he dreamed. And behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to the heaven.

[1 : 1 0] And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, and the God of Isaac.

The land on which you lie. The land on which you lie, I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth. And you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south.

And in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land.

For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.

And he was afraid and said, how awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God. And this is the gate of heaven.

[2 : 2 2] So early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel.

But the name of the city was loose at the first. Then Jacob made a vow saying, if God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go.

And will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear so that I come again to my father's house in peace. Then the Lord shall be my God.

And this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house. And of all that you give me, I will give a full tenth to you.

The grass withers and the flowers fade. But the word of our God stands forever. If you would, please join me for a brief word of prayer. Father, we are so grateful for your goodness to this church.

[3 : 2 6] You love New City more than anyone in this room or in the history of this church. And you have used the witness of this church to extend your kingdom. To bring people out of the darkness and into the light.

To transform marriages and parenting and working and resting. Lord, you have borne so much fruit through this church. And you have encouraged and educated and directed and inspired so many other congregations.

To live more fully into the kingdom. Because of their life together. And I pray, Lord, that this morning you would do that work you love to do. By drawing straight lines with crooked sticks.

By taking the meager five loaves and two fish of preachers. And blessing it and multiplying it to feed many. So we ask that you would feed us this morning, Lord, with the holy bread from heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself. And we ask, Lord, that you would help us to not just be hearers of your word. But to be doers as well. We pray all these things together in Jesus' name.

[4 : 33] And all God's people said, Amen. You may be seated in the presence of the Lord. Early Native Americans had a practice that they used for marking the shift of a boy on his way to manhood.

On the night of that boy's 13th birthday, after he had learned about fishing and hunting and scouting, he was put to one final test.

He was blindfolded. And he was led out into a dense forest to spend the entire night alone. Until then, he had never been away from the safety of his family.

From the security of his tribe. But on this night, he was taken several miles away, blindfolded. And when he took off the blindfold, he was in the middle of a dark and dense forest.

He was terrified. Every snap of a twig he imagined was a wild animal about to strike out on him. He visualized the most scary things in that sense of aloneness.

[5 : 52] But as the night wore on, soon the day would break. And the first rays of light would come through the forest. And pretty soon, that young man could see some flowers.

And he would notice little animals dancing around the forest. And then to his utter surprise, he would see the outline of a man.

And it was his father. Armed with a bow and arrow. You see, all that night, he was under the impression that he was alone. All that night, he was afraid that he would have to defend himself from attacks.

But the reality was that he was not alone. His father was with him the whole time. He simply did not realize it.

Now, on the journey of faith, we sometimes come into seasons of life. Into situations in our life where we feel like we're all alone.

[6 : 56] All security seems to be taken away from us. And the darkness surrounds us. Our imaginations begin to run wild with all of the negative possibilities that could creep into our situations.

We have anxieties overwhelming us. We perceive dangers that may or may not be there. Fear clutters our minds. But the story of God tells us that even in these times, we are not alone.

Our protector is present. We simply have not realized it. In our passage for this morning, we come to a turning point in the story of Jacob.

It's a decisive moment in the life of this father in the faith. And it's all about taking a new direction by making a new connection.

That's what I want you to walk away with this morning. If you came into this place this morning and you're looking for change. If there are things in your life that are not the way you want them to be.

[8 : 08] And you know it could be more beautiful. You know it could be more faithful. You know you need to take a new direction in life. I want you to recognize this morning that it's possible to take that new direction.

But you have to make a new connection. So we're going to get into this passage this morning by looking at those two points. Taking a new direction and making a new connection.

So let's look at our first point. Taking a new direction. Now if you are new to the Bible or it's been a while since you have been around the narrative of Father Jacob.

Let me just give you the high level. Jacob by this point in his life had come into great difficulty. Why? Here's why.

He had swindled his brother for the birthright. So that he could be the true heir of all of his father's gifts and wealth. And in order to do that.

[9 : 10] He not only swindled his brother for the birthright. But he deceived his father to steal the blessing. Then he created hostility with his brother. And then he's estranged from his family.

And he ends up having to flee into a sort of exile as a fugitive. So if you can imagine what that must have been like for Jacob.

It's completely reasonable to appreciate the idea that at this point he is afraid and depressed.

Because last he heard his brother whom he had swindled had put a hit out on him.

And his mama had to figure out a way to protect her favorite boy. And so they sent him away and he's on the run. He's a man on the run.

So he's afraid. And we are told earlier that he was the quiet, home-loving kind of guy. So this is particularly difficult for him. He's feeling lonely, vulnerable, unsure of the future, and probably a little bit guilty.

[10:19] Because he knew that everything he was experiencing at this moment was because of decisions that he himself had made. He knew it was his fault.

And now he has to live with the consequences. Has anyone out there found themselves in a place at some time that was tight on you, but you knew you had nobody else to blame but yourself? That's where Jacob finds himself right now. And this scene here in Genesis 28 is his first night away from home.

He can't find anyone that will extend that common ancient Near Eastern hospitality. Nobody to offer him a bed for the night, so he's forced to sleep under the stars surrounded by the darkness.

And after laying there for a while, his mind racing with regrets, racing with fears, he falls asleep.

[11:21] And it's in his sleep that he has a surprising and completely unexpected encounter with God. God reveals himself to Jacob in a dream.

And it's at this point that we need to hit pause for a minute and realize that this story of Jacob is in God's word for a reason.

And one of the major lessons that we need to pay attention to is the fact that this is a picture of the entire journey of faith. This is the beginning of a new direction for Jacob.

And it all begins with a bold revelation of God. Now, I know that if you go out to Barnes and Nobles and you go over to the DIY section, the do-it-yourself, you can find some ways that you can do certain things in your life by yourself.

You might be able to do some carpentry by yourself. You might be able to do some plumbing by yourself. But there is no DIY plan for raising someone from death to life.

[12:32] There's no DIY plan for transforming the heart of a sinner to make them more resemble a saint. This takes a power that exceeds every human power.

And it begins by encountering the God of all that power. This at the high level is what we see.

Because you've got to recognize, if you read through this story, up to this point in Jacob's life, he has tried to do life his way.

And one of his primary ways of trying to do life was manipulating everyone around him to try and seize control of things. He manipulated people to get what he wanted.

He was taking matters into his own hands. But guess what happens? That always ends badly, y'all. Look, there are a thousand things in this world that show you that you cannot have control of all things.

I can't control what other people say about me. I can't control the weather. I can't control who comes in the doors of the church and who doesn't. There are all kinds of things that reveal how little control I can have.

[13:38] But there are all kinds of things in our lives that reveal how little control we should have. I shouldn't have control of the cockpit on my next flight. Because ain't nobody going to make it to the destination.

It's going to be like snakes on a plane crash, right? I shouldn't have control of anybody's open heart surgery. Because they're never going to make it up off that table. I shouldn't have control of the Atlanta power grid.

Because pretty soon everybody's going to be in the dark. And if I shouldn't have control of any of these things, what makes me think I should have control over my life? Control over other people. Control over institutions. We find ourselves gripping and grasping. Why? Because we often feel like if I'm not controlling it, it's not going to go well. We often feel like, Lord, this whole thing would be much better if you just took your hands off the wheel and let me put my hands on it.

And the Lord said, you sure about that? No, no. The Lord loves you too much to let you crash your own life. He would rather bring you into temporary discomfort rather than to allow you the long-term devastation.

[14:49] It's a fiction of being able to control things. But that is how Jacob lived his life. But you know what? I once had a professor tell me that the dynamic in life is not just about you being a sinner, but about being sinned against.

Thank you, Doc Ellis. Jacob had inherited ways of living from the family system he was a part of. And he had never examined the ways in which he was shaped.

But if you look carefully, it looks very much like his mama in the way that she handled things when life got stressful and uncertain. And so he is a sinner himself who wants to manipulate, but he's also been formed to navigate life in that way.

But this text is showing us that all of our coping mechanisms eventually fail us. When you try to live life on your own terms out of your own strength, eventually that does not work.

And then you turn to coping mechanisms in order to soothe the wounds and the hurt within when it doesn't work out. But we see in this text an invitation to take a new direction.

[16:10] And it all begins with this surprising encounter with God. Because what God does for Jacob in this revelation of himself, for Jacob it was revelation in a dream.

For us it's revelation in the word. And what God does for him is he brings an alternative future into view when he thinks he's facing a dead end. As one commentator put it, this dream is not a morbid review of his shameful past.

It's the presentation of an alternative future with God. I want you to look at this and listen carefully. He is on his way into a type of exile as a result of his relationally damaging decisions.

But it's in this place that Jacob meets the Lord where he least expected him. He meets God in a place that seems ordinary and mundane.

Too ordinary for anything divine to be going on. He meets the Lord in the place of vulnerability. He meets the Lord in the place of loneliness and solitude.

[17:17] He meets the Lord in the empty and desolate place. He meets the Lord in the place of heartache. He meets the Lord in the place of family crisis and dysfunction.

He meets the Lord at a time where he has no spouse and no children. He meets the Lord in a time when he's really corrupt and morally bankrupt. He meets the Lord in a time where he's experiencing the consequences of his own decision.

I know I'm preaching to somebody in here. Because it's in these times that we often do not expect the Lord to be at work. When we're getting beat up by life.

When our enemies seem to be prevailing. When our whole life seems to be chaotic. We conclude that the Lord is not here. And the Lord is not working. But the Lord knows how to work the midnight shift.

He knows how to step into the darkness and shine the light. He knows how to step into the darkest of situations and bring new hope. That is a uniquely Christian gift of a uniquely Christian gospel.

[18:29] But we're going to get there in a little while. I know y'all see what's happening in this text. You and I often think that those times and seasons in our lives are like a no-fly zone for the Lord.

But he puts this in his word. So that we can have confidence that it's precisely at these times that the Lord does some of his best work.

But if you needed any evidence of that. You only have to fast forward to one Friday. That was dark and full of terror.

It was a Friday that was filled with the greatest evil you could imagine in this world. And yet it was on that day that the Lord proved his presence. It was on that day that the Lord proved that even when it looks dark to you.

Even the darkness is light to him. The gospel is the verification. That even in the darkest moments.

[19:33] Even in the darkest times. Those who have the eyes of faith should be able to see that God is working. That God is good. That God is powerful.

Faith expects to encounter God in the unexpected places and in the unexpected times. On the journey of faith you can enter into the mundane and realize with Jacob surely the Lord is in this place.

Now I grew up a preacher's kid and my pops told me, son, there are two words in church that ought to make you shout. Surely and early.

Right? Okay. Surely the Lord is in this place. You can battle with your heartache and your loneliness and say surely the Lord is in this place.

You can have a rough marriage or you can have a difficult time parenting your kids and still say surely the Lord is in this place. You can have conflict in your local church.

[20:39] You can have issues with your co-workers and yet say surely the Lord is in this place. I may not understand what he's doing in these places.

I may not understand this stop on the journey, but I can know with confidence that the destination is glory and joy. The narrator wants us to adapt.

Now those of us, I'm sure, you know, many of you may be aware, there is a tool that helps cross-cultural communities to gain intercultural competence. It's called the IDI. And this tool basically shows a continuum of how much or how little facility you have with adapting in circumstances where you're relating to people across lines of difference. And it begins with a denial of the idea that there is some kind of difference or relational possibility. I think this tool actually maps on to how we understand our relationship to God. Because denial is a denial of the distinctions. And many people like to take God's job instead of taking God's perspective. Right? That's denial of what's going on. [21 : 56] But then there's polarization in us versus them. And some people in their spiritual journey, they have come into a place where they feel like it's them versus God. Like God is just dangling the carrot. Like God is not their loving Heavenly Father.

Like God is out to get them. Like God is disappointed with His arms folded rather than His arms open wide. Like God is not. You go from denial to polarization. But then some people, it's minimization, which is a conflation, a confusion. Right? Everything's all good. We're basically the same. No, we are not the same. God is holy. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. But as you begin to grow, ultimately the goal is to get to adaptation. You have a clear sense of who you are and a respect for who the other person is. And you are able to adapt for the sake of that relationship. I think there's an invitation here for us to adapt our minds. To adapt our practices. To adapt in the way we engage relationships more and more to the Lord. To index every action and impulse of our souls to who God is and what God has done in the gospel. [23 : 04] The narrator wants us to adapt. Because if you don't realize that the Lord is in these places and in these situations with you, you will either turn to your coping mechanisms and your pain or you will grasp for control.

You will wear yourself out. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The best you'll be able to do, y'all. You'll spin your wheels. And if you're trying to clean up your life, you will do what children often do when you tell them to go clean their room. They don't clean the mess. They just shift it around. No shade to the Whitfield children. They've been raised right. They're going to do it right. Uh-huh. They're going to do it right. Amen. Hallelujah. Uh-huh. Yeah. Y'all heard that. Come back in and hear it. You see, that's often what happens. Without the gospel of grace, all you ever do in your life is shift the mess around. You might be able to conceal it in this corner of the room, but it's going to be piled up over here. You need to make a new connection in order to take this new direction. [24 : 15] And we're all invited to embrace this new confession. No matter what you're facing. I don't know what you've got going on right now.

But I want you to just think for a minute with me. What is that thing that is burdening your heart? What is that thing that's keeping you up late at night? What is the thing that is producing the anxiety in you during the day?

I want to invite you from this text to look that thing straight in the eyes and say, surely the Lord is in this place. And then do one more thing for me. For you. For the Lord. Instead of looking at those hard things in life and saying, what are you doing, God? God, like I say to my kids, watch your tone. Instead of saying, what are you doing, God? You say, what are you doing, God? I know you're up to good. I know you're working out redemption in the world. [25 : 19] I know you're extending your kingdom. So, Lord, help me to have grace and a redemptive curiosity about what you're doing in my life. That shifts the way in which you experience your troubles.

Because what we're ultimately invited into in the Christian faith is not just to have a theology of suffering that allows us to intellectually reconcile the fact that God is good and bad things happen. No, you need a missiology of suffering. So that you continue working on the mission of God even while hell is breaking loose in your life. I don't know any other way to explain the apostles' ministry. We're troubled on every side, yet not distressed. I'm perplexed, but never in despair. I'm persecuted, but not forsaken. I'm struck down, but never destroyed. Always carrying in my body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in you. That is a missiology of suffering. That is knowing how to live into your sentness even when your

heart is broken and tears are filling your eyes.

[26 : 30] Because you've got the hope that you know the one who's going to dry those tears. Ultimately. Surely the Lord is in this place. And if you get this, then you begin to make a new connection.

That's our second point. Making a new connection. I had a very simple illustration of the big idea of this point when we were trying to get ourselves packed up and moved to our new location in Atlanta.

I was fooling around trying to figure out what am I going to throw away and what are we going to keep? I don't want to travel, nothing broken down. So I'm fooling around with this lamp in our house. I take the lamp apart. I mess around with the light bulb. I'm looking at the base. I fool with this thing for like 10 minutes. And then I look out and I see the thing is unplugged.

Now listen, I don't mean to insult you with such a simple illustration. But how often in our lives do we find ourselves fooling around with this particular thing in our life?

[27 : 32] You know, I'm fooling around with my mental health. I'm fooling around with my diet and exercise. I'm fooling around with this, that, and the other thing. But I have not attended to my connection with the Lord.

You can fool with it all you want. But until you get connected to the Lord, until you live into that connection, nothing else will work. And in this text, we see Jacob make that connection.

It's a personal connection, y'all. It's a personal connection to God. Listen, Jacob was plenty religious already. And so were all the people of his day.

Jacob knew his parents' faith. And he was surely taught about the things of the Lord from his parents. But I want to tell you something. You cannot really have that kind of relationship delegated. You can't rely upon the faith of your relatives. That's like sending your friend to the restaurant for you and expecting to get full. That's like sending your friend on a date for you and expecting to fall in love.

[28 : 39] That's like sending your friend to the weight room for you and expecting to get healthy. You cannot delegate a relationship with the Lord. The Lord wants you to make it personal.

Though he was close to religion. Though he had observed faith his whole life. He had not yet expressed personal faith. Not until this night.

Not until this dream. And it's kind of mysterious, isn't it? This passage. What's going on here? The narrator tells us that in this dream, Jacob sees a ladder or a stairway.

And what he sees on the ladder are angels ascending and descending on it. Now, we all probably know that in the Bible, angels are servants of God's plans on earth.

They're often dispatched to protect God's people. But even more importantly, we need to observe here that the Lord makes this place a portal between heaven and earth.

[29 : 44] This place where he did not expect to encounter God. The Lord opens up a portal in the most ordinary moment. In the most ordinary place. In the darkness. The Lord opens up a portal between heaven and earth.

And the only reason why Jacob's life is transformed is because he sees the Lord cross the line between heaven and earth to confirm his promise.

In other words, heaven came to him. We should also say that it's clear from this text that the ladder was not there for Jacob to climb. It was there for God's servant to descend.

In this vulnerable place. In this fearful and lonely place. God shows Jacob that he is with him. That he is protecting him. And that he is working out his plan in Jacob's life.

And when God speaks, he confirms the old promise by speaking it over Jacob's life. He promises his presence. His protection. And he commits to bringing Jacob back home once again.

[30 : 53] Do you see the sequence of the passage? Once Jacob sees God connecting heaven and earth to confirm his promise, Jacob makes a personal connection to God.

God was no longer a distant abstraction. God was no longer way up there, far off and away. No, God had come near.

God had crossed the bridge. God had closed the gap. And it's once he sees God closing the gap that he makes it personal. He says, if God makes good on his promises, then the Lord shall be my God.

That personal pronoun is important. Do you see, Jacob's life takes a new direction at this point because he makes a new personal connection with God. He realizes that the Lord has been there

all along and that he's never been alone.

But the rest of redemptive history, the rest of God's story shows us that Jacob's transformation is just a down payment on what God would one day do for all of Israel and through Christ for the whole world.

[32 : 01] Do you see where this text is leading us? Turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 1, and you see this encounter that Jesus had with a man named Nathanael.

Nathanael's friend, Philip, came running to him and he says, quote, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And Nathanael's response, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? And Philip says, Come see. That's the Russ Whitfield International interpretation of the tone.

Just bring yourself, come see. And as Nathanael was approaching Jesus, Jesus says, Quote, Behold, an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.

And Nathanael says, How do you know me? Then Jesus reveals some supernatural insight into Nathanael's life. And the man exclaims, Rabbi, you are the son of God.

[33 : 03] Then Jesus says to him, You will see greater things than these. Watch this. Listen. Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? He's saying, Nathanael, I am Jacob's ladder. I am God's connection between heaven and earth that confirms the promise.

I can make any place and any time in your life a portal for glory to break in. It's in me that God's protection and God's plan and God's promise have come to earth.

I am the God who meets you in the place where you least expect it because I am the God of incarnation. I am the God of all grace.

I show up in your mourning and turn it to dancing. I show up in your weakness and reveal my power. I show up in the desert and turn it to a fruitful garden.

[34 : 09] I show up in your exile and I give you a homecoming. I show up in the storm and I give you my peace. I show up in the valley of dry bones and I pronounce life.

I show up at the tomb and I call out resurrection. You don't have to know what's going on. Just know that he's here. You don't have to have it all figured out. Just know he's here.

You don't have to have it all clear. Just know that he is here. Surely the Lord is in this place.

I wouldn't have planned it this way but he's here. I don't understand it but he's here. I might be at the end of my rope but now I'm at the beginning of true faith.

He's here. He's working. He's in control. He's good. The gospel, friends, is not about you climbing the ladder. It's about the one who bridged the gap to make that unnecessary.

[35 : 13] It's about God's servant Jesus descending and when he descends he draws near to the broken hearted. He draws near to those who are confused. He draws near to those who are uncertain about life.

He loves to impart his peace. He will keep your mind in perfect peace if you keep your mind stayed on him. So, I want to invite you to shift your expectations about what the Lord will do and where the Lord is at work.

Instead of waking up in the morning looking at your schedule and being like, oh man, I got this thing and that thing and oh, it's going to be bad and it's going to be conflict and it's not going to work out. You know what that sounds like? That sounds like the reflection of somebody who don't know anything about resurrection. That sounds like the reflection of somebody who doesn't know that God is everywhere, God is good, God is at work, and he is going to bring all things together for good for those who love him.

But those whose eyes have been shaped by resurrection hope, those whose hearts have been filled with the love of God in Christ Jesus, expect good from your good father.

[36 : 23] You know what? That meeting, it may be hard, but God is going to be at work in that meeting. You know what? God is likely to bring us to reconciliation. You know that ministry out there in that tough part of the neighborhood?

You know what? God, he shifts the heart of the king like water in his hand. He can work with anybody that we're out here trying to serve and love in Jesus name. I expect good from this good God, and he's given me warrant for that expectation.

Shift your expectations about your life. Expect good from your father. He loves you. He clings to you more tightly than the ivy clasps to the elm, one old school cat said.

He thinks on you as if you were the sole occupant of a boundless universe. He is your father. He loves you. He cares for you.

Expect him to be at work and expect that any pains, trials, or sufferings are a kindness that you can't fully grasp by which he is going to form you more into the likeness of Jesus.

[37 : 23] Everybody says they won't be like Jesus until God gets to making them like Jesus, right? Everybody loves everybody until they got somebody to love, right? Uh-huh.

That's good. Don't lose the good intentions. But expect more of your God. The last thing, too, I want to give you this category really blessed me. The old Celtic Christians, they used to have this category that they called the thin places.

The thin places where the veil between heaven and earth seemed to get thinner. Almost like they could peer into eternity, peer into glory. And what they would often remark is that those thin places were often the times of the greatest suffering, the greatest heartache, the greatest felt loss.

He said those are the times of the thin places and I have experienced that personally in my own life and the way that I have made sense of it is that it is a fellowship with Christ and his sufferings.

Everybody wants to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. Thank you. Yes. But then you keep on going in that verse and to fellowship with him and his sufferings.

[38 : 32] You'd be like, wait, hold up, Jesus, what? Nah, but that is one of the ways that you more deeply access the love that he has for you. Because when you suffer like Christ you begin to appreciate more and more how much you're loved by Christ.

Because he willingly embraced that kind of suffering for us and for our salvation. Those are the thin places but I just want this word to be in your ears this week and evermore.

Surely the Lord is in this place. Amen. And if you make that confession you will also find yourself with Jacob when he said this is none other than Bethel.

God is humble. He can make his home in any circumstances with any person. So let's receive that presence, acknowledge that presence, rely upon his presence and live fully as his beloved.

Amen. Let's pray. Father we thank you so much for your word. Lord we thank you so much that you are present in all of the various trials and circumstances of our lives.

[39 : 36] Even when our eyes grow dim and we cannot see you you are still with us. And the gospel is the certainty of guarantee that your promise is true.

That you will never leave us or forsake us. Lo you are with us even to the end of the age. So we ask now Holy Spirit that you would convince our hearts of these truths and that you would animate our lives with the riches of the beauty of your kingdom and your gospel and may our lives bear witness to the fact that Jesus is alive.

Hear our prayers Lord and continue to shape our lives. We ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Let's respond in song and stand.

Amen. Thank you.