

My God and Your God

The Gospel of John

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Bible Text: John 20:11-18
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John's Gospel, chapter 20. If you're using the pew Bible this morning, you can find John 20 on page 1077. This morning we will be looking at verses 11 through 18. Please give careful attention to the reading of God's word as it is read in your hearing. The one who walks among the lampstands and looks with eyes of fire says to his church by the pen of the apostle this morning,

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"--and that he had said these things to her.

The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of our God will endure forever.

Let us pray.

Our God, as we draw near to you, as we seek your presence, as we seek your truth, as we sit beneath your word this morning, we ask and pray, O God, that you would empower your truth going forth; that your Holy Spirit would be at work among us; that he would illumine and enlighten and empower and implant your word deeply into our hearts; that your word would have a transforming work in our lives. Farther, our greatest fear

should be that we could hear your word and walk away unchanged. Our greatest fear should be that hearing we would not hear, and seeing we would not see. Lord, may that not be. Please help us, we pray in your name. Amen.

The text before us this morning beautifully illustrates a very simple but a profound truth, that truth is this: what you believe about Jesus Christ will determine how you live. What you believe about Jesus Christ will determine how you live your life. What do I mean by that? I mean that having right views and correct thoughts and really coming to a truth of the Lord Jesus Christ that is driven down deep into our hearts, will find its way out in our living; and the reverse is sadly also true, that wrongful views of Jesus Christ will work their way out in our life. Theology is extremely practical. Theology really does impact the way that we live and falsehood, friends, also works in that same direction. It is one of the reasons why we are called to be extremely vigilant to what we believe because it actually literally impacts the way that we live our lives.

Our view of Christ will dictate how we live and as Christians our very identity is to be founded on the person and the work and upon the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is where Christians get their identity. It's found even in the name we take upon ourselves, Christian, little Christs. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says of this identity that is found only in Jesus Christ, he says that this is what you and I need to take hold of more than anything else. If we but realize exactly what we are and who we are and who we are as Christians, most of the problems in our daily life and living would automatically be solved. It's because we do not realize this and the privilege of our position, that the problems arise.

Now, maybe you're a bit like me and when I first read that, I said to myself, "Well, Martyn," I call him by his first name, "Martyn, maybe you're overstating it a little bit. Really, most of the problems in our life solved by simply understanding our identity in Christ? Is that too simplistic? Is that too boiled down? Does it lack some of the necessary complexities that we need to have?" Let me ask you: if you were tomorrow stricken with a severe case of chronic and repeated bouts of amnesia, how good of a husband or a wife do you think you'd be? If you forgot who you were and in forgetting who you were, you forgot who you were in relation to your spouse, how good of a husband or wife do you think you'd be? You'd be terrible. How good of a parent do you think you would be if you forgot who you were and in forgetting who you are, you forgot who these children were in your home running around and terrorizing your house? You wouldn't be that good of a parent. You wouldn't be a good spouse, you wouldn't be a good parent. If tomorrow you forgot how to do the most simple deeds of your trade, your craft, how long would you stay employed? Well, not very long.

You see, friends, our identity drives everything. It's at the basis of every relationship, every duty, every function of our life. I don't know if you could get any more central topic this morning. And if we could be honest upfront, I think we would rightly say that we are plagued with this type of ignorance of who we are in Christ, or maybe plagued with bouts of spiritual amnesia; that this runs rampant among us. When you don't remember, friends, when you don't remember the hope and the strength and the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you know what kind of life you live? You will live a hopeless

life, forgetting his hope. You will live a weak life, forgetting his strength. You will live a defeated life, forgetting his victory. Your view of Jesus Christ, I couldn't emphasize it more, means everything in your life.

So what do we need? We need a clear sight of him. We need a clear sight of him, a renewed sense of our identity with him if we have any chance of living rightly and living Christianly, and this is exactly where Mary finds herself in our story in this text of Scripture this morning. Mary has lost a proper and appropriate view of Jesus Christ and it has directly impacted the way that she lives, the way that she feels, and our Savior, ever gentle, ever the Shepherd of his sheep, comes and draws her out of her hopelessness, calls her into his presence in communion with him, and ultimately reestablishes her Gospel identity or who she is in him, and that's the same thing that he seeks to do with you this morning. Our Savior through this text of Scripture, speaks to you this morning, not simply to Mary. He speaks to you this morning and says, "Will you come out of hopeless living? Will you come into my presence and will you reestablish who and what you are in me and then live that life out of it?"

That's what our Savior seeks to do this morning, so I want to note firstly: Christ seeks to call you out of hopeless living. Christ seeks to call you out of hopeless living. I want us to look at this passage and see how Mary's Christology or how Mary's view of Jesus Christ directly impacts and drives the way that she lives in this text. If I could summarize Mary from verse 11 really through the end of verse 15, if I could pick one word to summarize who and what she is and what her life is like, I would pick the word "hopeless." There is no hope in Mary's life at all. Three times in this short text she is said to be marked with what action? Weeping. Uncontrollable sorrow fills Mary's life. I would describe that as hopeless. She is filled with the sobs of sorrow and hopelessness and you might ask, "Well, why is she filled with sorrow?" It's very evident from the text: she weeps because what she believes to be true about Jesus Christ isn't actually true. She believes him to be dead when, in fact, he is alive forevermore. She believes that her Savior is still in the grave or in the throes of death. There is no hope in a dead Savior, friends. A dead Savior really can't help you in any of your needs in this life. He can't comfort you in the midst of life's sorrows. He can't strengthen you in the midst of life's difficulties. He can't lead you out of the midst of life's confusion if he is, as Mary thinks he is, still dead.

So she weeps and, friends, I would argue rightly so. If her theology is right, her life makes perfect sense to me. If the grave has really claimed him, what other response would you or I have but weeping? If he really has not raised in newness of life, the proper beginning of the response of those who love him would be weeping. But praise God, her theology is desperately wrong. Aren't we similar to Mary? Isn't it true as Martin Lloyd-Jones said that most of the problems of our daily lives flow from a distorted understanding of who Jesus Christ is and who we are in him? If we can see that principle at play in Mary's life, friends, can we see it in our lives too? Why do we struggle and live as we live? Because we believe what we believe.

And her response in weeping and in a wrong Christology really blinds her. It would probably be the second term I would use to describe Mary, she's not only marked with

hopelessness but there is a sense in which John presents her as blind. A distorted view of Jesus Christ always impairs our vision of reality. Always, friends. Always.

Mary is presented as blind and you might say, "Well, how is she presented as blind?" She, verse 12, saw the angels. She sees the Lord standing behind her, verse 14. Mary may see but she doesn't really see, does she? Or does she perceive the two individuals are in the tomb, in verse 12? Yeah, she sees them but she doesn't recognize them as angelic messengers at all. John says that, "two angels," verse 12, "in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet." They were there and they presented themselves to Mary and this is really an incredible picture, isn't it? You remember that cherubim stood at the head and at the foot of the ark of the covenant, that piece of furniture that traveled throughout Israel's history. And on the ark and on the lid, two angels looked inward, one at the head, one at the foot, and they looked at the mercy seat and in awe and wonder and amazement, gazed at this place where blood was sprinkled as an unfolding of the Gospel in the Old Testament. Well, here in our text, we find two angels, one at the head, one at the foot, staring in wonder and amazement at the arcosolium, the slab upon which he was buried, or lain; and they stare in wonder and amazement as, again, the full blossom of the Gospel is unfolded in resurrection life; and they stand there, as it were, astounded at what God has and is doing. Mary doesn't see any of that.

She doesn't even seem to know that they are angels and we find that in her response to them. They ask her a question that makes perfect sense to them, "Woman, why are you weeping?" and there's a sense of astonishment as well as rebuke in that question. Astonishment because if there were ever a day from the beginning of creation and the dawn of the first day, and every day in between to this day, if there was ever a day where weeping was less appropriate, it would be this day. They are astonished at this. They are astonished that Mary's life is in such discord with truth. Of all days for weeping, this is not the one.

There is also rebuke that she is living outside of the bounds of truth. "You live as though hope were dead and yet he walks around in resurrected life." There is a sense in which you could understand their question almost as a statement, "Woman, stop weeping. Stop living in hopelessness. Stop living as if you were enveloped in the darkness." That question really serves as a call to draw her out of her hopelessness, out of her sorrow, out of her despondency and into the light that Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ only gives.

My friends, you and I receive that same call in this text this morning. You and I are called to come out of hopeless living that is driven and influenced by our wrong Christology. That might take you aback a little bit. "That Christology? We are Reformed Baptists. We have great theology. We've got the 1689. We've got creeds and confessions and catechisms. Most don't even know how to spell catechism, let alone have one." Well, let me tell you what I mean. What do I mean by hopeless? Have you given up on a healthy Christ-exalting marriage because you've lost sight or you've forgotten his grace and the power of his grace to change you and to change your spouse and the abundant forgiveness that flows to you from him? Have we settled into the hopelessness of some

marital situations because we have lost sight of who he is? Have you made peace with your anger, with sinful anger, because you've forgotten the kindness of God? Have you made peace with sinful lust, forgetting the holiness of God? Have you made peace with frequent and often use of harsh, cutting, critical language because you have forgotten your Savior has only and ever been gentle with you? Are we found prayerless as a people? Or maybe not prayerless but the prayers that we do offer being cold? Are we found prayerless or cold in our prayers because we've lost, we've forgotten the zealotness with which our Savior loves us, the zeal for which he shows for his bride? Do we parent out of frustration because we forget how patient our God is with us?

Oh friends, I think we're desperately guilty of this. I think our view of Christ drives all of these areas in our life and I think you can quickly see where we have distorted or forgetful views of him. They are lived out before us every day and what we need to come out of this distorted and forgetful view of Jesus Christ and to come into a proper view of him and therefore proper living, is we need a view, a sight of the Savior as he really is. Not as man has made him out to be, not as we have maybe distorted him into being, but we need a true, a clear, a biblical view of Christ to permeate our life. That is what we desperately need.

So we see, secondly, that Christ draws us into his presence in communion with him. Christ draws you into his presence in communion with him. That's the cure. We need a sight of Christ. We need his presence. We need to commune with him. The Savior in our text, friends, draws near to the hurting. If you're here this morning and you say, "My life is broken. Yes, you've described those areas where I live out of accord with what the Scripture says. I'm broken. I'm hopeless. Things are dark. Things are difficult." Listen to how Christ interacts with Mary. He sweetly fulfills the words of Psalm 34:18, "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." That's your Savior. That's who he is. Your brokenness does not bring difficulty or barriers to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your brokenness, you could think of it as that which brings him and draws him. He draws near to the broken. The physician comes to heal not the healthy but the sick. That's our Savior overflowing with grace and gentleness and draws near to the brokenhearted Mary, to the crushed in spirit Mary.

Do you realize she is the first to see the resurrected Lord? And I don't think it's a coincidence that if you look throughout the accounts of this section of redemption history where he is raised and they don't know it yet, and you look through all of the Gospels, I think Mary is the most broken and she's the first that he draws near to. What a Savior you have. What a Savior I have, that our brokenness does not negate his ministry, it's the very foundation of it. It's the need of it.

In verse 14, he draws near. This is Christ initiated, Christ driven. The Shepherd draws near to his little lamb, Mary, and he brings with his presence blessing. And Mary sees him, it says in verse 14, but she doesn't really see him, does she? Her eyes see the figure standing behind her. She turns and looks at him but for whatever reason, maybe the tears have so clogged up her eyes, maybe she is so blinded by her distorted view of Christ that the idea of a resurrected Savior never enters into the realm of possibility, and so whoever

that is behind her, it can't be him, it must be someone else. Seeing, she doesn't see. And look at the Savior's solution to our wrong or forgetful view of him: he draws near. He brings that one thing you need, his presence, his personal, caring, gentle presence into your brokenness; into your hurting; into where you are undone and hopeless. That's where the Savior comes.

You see, friends, Mary's greatest need was the presence of Jesus Christ and she thought it was something else. She thought she needed people to help her find him. She thought she needed to find a dead corpse and to find another hole in the ground to put that dead corpse. She thought that the solution to her problems, they were all wrong, weren't they?

Aren't we like Mary? Don't we diagnose for ourselves that, "The problem in this relationship is," and you fill in the blank. "The problem in this area of my life is," you fill in the blank. Friend, your greatest need in your life is the presence and communion of Jesus Christ in every area of your life. The greatest need in your marriage isn't a perfect spouse, it's more of the presence and communion with Jesus Christ. That is what we desperately direly need in our marriages. Your greatest need with regard to personal holiness, it's not that you don't have the right books on your shelf or the right blogs in your newsfeed, it's not that you don't have the right disciplinary pieces built into your day, though all of those are helpful and great tools, those are not your primary need with personal holiness. Your primary greatest need with personal holiness is the presence and communion of the Savior. Your greatest need in parenting is not kids that jump every time we say jump and never make messes or spill their milk or accost the quiet of the house. Your greatest need as a parent this morning is more of the presence of Jesus Christ to come into your life. Your greatest need in whatever difficult relationships you have right now, maybe it's with a spouse, maybe it's with one of your own children, maybe it's with a sibling, maybe it's with someone at work, we all have difficult relationships and we all have ideas as to what would fix that, but the greatest need in any difficult relationship is that we need more of the presence of Jesus Christ there. More communion with him. A clearer sight of the Savior.

And I would go so far as to say this, friends, to say that you have a greater need other than the presence and communion of the Lord Jesus Christ, is idolatry. To say that in any area of my life, I need this thing more than I need Christ, is to say there is another Savior and that Savior is this: more peace, more comfort, ease, more money, more time off, less of this person in my life. No, that's idolatry. What you and I need is more of one person in our life, more of his presence. We need the one whose presence brings the sweet aroma of myrrh and aloes with him. We need heaven's husband in our life as our greatest good. That's what we need. That's what Mary needed. And he draws near with that greatest of needs. He comes near with his presence. What a gracious Savior. As a physician brings with him to the bedside of a person languishing in a sickness and he brings the one thing that will bring them up from the bed of sickness, so Christ in this text draws near as Great Physician with that one thing that Mary needed, himself.

She needs his presence and he asks her a familiar question in verse 15. He says word for word what the angels say to her, "Why do you weep?" as though he were saying, "Why

will you continue to live in hopeless sorrow when you don't have to live there any longer?" He asks her, secondly, the same question that he asked in John 18:7 to the violent mob that wanted to arrest him, "Who do you seek?" And as it was a penetrating heart question to the soldiers that came against him, it is a heart piercing question to Mary and to you and I this morning. Who are we looking for as the answer to our problems? What do we think will solve our greatest needs? And the answer other than Christ is idolatry.

She looks at him but as we've said, sees but doesn't see, and she says in verse 15, she thinks that he is a gardener, and maybe that strikes us as a very strange thing to see. He is buried in a garden tomb and maybe she thought this guy must be here to tend the lilies this morning. I don't know why she thought that but it's true, he is the gardener. Maybe not in the sense that Mary meant it but he is a garden, make no mistake whatsoever. This is none other than the second Adam and you remember with the first Adam, he was commissioned with the care and the expansion of the garden of God; that he was given this duty above all duties to expand God's garden to the edges and extent of the world, and that's what Christ is. He also comes near to her as a servant described in Isaiah 42. How gentle is this gardener? "A bruised reed he will not break. A faintly burning wick he will not quench." This is the careful hand of a gardener and he draws near to the bruised reed and the faintly burning wick in Mary and he will not break her but he will build her up.

And as he comes to her and she doesn't know who he is, she asks him the same question that she's been asking others, "Let me know where you have laid him." He cuts through all of that with one single word, "Mary." Now, I don't think it's because there's anything specifically powerful about the name Mary except this, it was her name. It was her name that he said. He calls her by name. As her Shepherd, as one of the most beautiful illustrations of John 10:3 that I've maybe ever seen, "The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name," and he leads them out, and here we find a Shepherd who knows his own sheep: she hears his voice, he knows her name, and he leads her out of hopelessness. To know a name is to indicate a relationship; it's to indicate that she and Christ know one another; that there is communion between the two. Everything changes in Mary's life in verse 16. Everything shifts when her Shepherd speaks her name and he calls her back to that relationship that she has with him and eyes are opened and Christ is seen as he draws near and pulls her, as it were, into his presence, into her greatest of needs.

She responds similarly with one word, "Rabboni," teacher. She knows. She sees him and this is the important part: she sees him as he really is. He's not a corpse like she had thought. He's not dead as she had thought. He's not comfortless and trapped inside the stone. He's alive and she immediately recognizes him.

Friends, like Mary our greatest need is the presence and communion of Jesus Christ; to be drawn into his presence; to be called by name by our Shepherd; to be drawn out of the fields where we have wandered into pastures that we thought could satisfy us more than him. What a foolish thought. And as the Shepherd draws us out of darkness, out of

waywardness, out of straying from him, and by name brings us to him, that's what we need. We need this in every area of our life.

He calls her out of darkness. He draws her to himself. And thirdly, Christ seeks to establish you in Gospel identity. He has called you and he has drawn you, now he seeks to establish you in your Gospel identity.

Look at verse 17 with me. Jesus gives her the most peculiar of commands, "Do not cling to me." Pastor Kelly called me this week and said, "Do you think it strange that we sing 'cling to Christ'? This Sunday you talk about John 20:17." I said, "No, because I'm going to explain it." So here's what he means: he's not telling Mary, "Mary, don't cling to me. I'm not the source of life. Find life elsewhere. Don't be clingy little Mary. Go and pull yourself up by your bootstraps and live life. My goodness, leave me alone!" No. Look at his reason. He gives you his reason. "Don't cling to me, for," that should mark purpose, reason, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father." The sense is, "Don't cling to me here and now, cling to me then and there." He's not saying, "Mary, don't cling to me ever," he's saying, "I am in motion." And as Mary likely as one Gospel account says, clinging to his feet as though a child doesn't want their parent to go out the door to work for the day, clings to the feet and thinks, "If I just stay here, he won't ever go." He tells her, "Sweet Mary, you don't understand where I'm going and what that means for you. I am ascending," and he puts it in a present tense, an action that is in the middle of; it's as though the ascension where that first step or the resurrection were that first step upward and he is not done moving upward but days from this point in history, he will rise with the clouds of heaven and will ascend to the Father's right hand. "Mary, my goal isn't to be out of the grave and just walking around earth, my goal, my calling, my purpose is to ascend and rule from heaven."

Now, you know the scene in the Gospels where Christ is taken up from the apostles in their sight and goes up into heaven. You're familiar with that. Well, Daniel 7 picks up that story. Daniel 7 says, "behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

Friends, I told you that your life flows out of your understanding of who Jesus Christ is, so ask the question of the text: who is Jesus Christ? The resurrected, ascended Lord of all peoples, nations and tongues. Who is Jesus Christ? Well, he's the one who is seated next to the Ancient of Days and is given dominion and glory in kingdoms over all things. He is the Ruler and Regent of all peoples, nations, places, languages, and that kingdom is not one that will ever be eclipsed or weakened. It will always endure. That is who Jesus Christ is today and our lives are lived out of that reality.

You don't serve a weak Savior, Christian. You don't serve a Savior where parts of your life lie outside the borders of his jurisdiction. You don't serve a Savior who has saved many but just not your nation or your language or your time. You serve the ascended

Lord Jesus Christ. We do not make enough of the ascension in our theology. The resurrection, the first step toward the ascension. He is seated in power and glory and grandeur, reinstated as Regent in heaven and receiving all the praises of all the angels and of all the saints of all time. That's who he is. That's who Jesus Christ is.

So who are you in him? If our identity is found in him and we live out of that identity, who are we in relationship to him? Well, look at verse 17. I stagger at the words of Christ, "Go and tell," who? "My brothers." The ascended Lord of the universe calls the most lowly of saints, "My brother. My sister." It doesn't matter how weak or lowly or insignificant you think you are this morning, Christ calls you brother or sister. There is nearness. There is relationship. There is shared blood, you could say. Listen to what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 2, "Christ is not ashamed to call us brothers." If this doesn't astound you this morning, we've got to be sleeping. We've got to be distracted if the resurrected Lord says in his holy and inspired word, "I am not ashamed to call you brother or sister," and we are already thinking about lunch. This is the greatest of relationships, the closest of relationships.

He doesn't end there either, verse 17 in the middle he says, "I go to my Father," and he extends it, "and your Father." Not only is Christ our brother but the Ancient of Days, as Daniel says it, the Father, the one who has ruled and reigned as Almighty eternal God for all time, is your Father in the Gospel. You are adopted into his family. This is the greatest expression of hospitality ever shown; that enemies are brought into this Father's house and not treated as enemies but legally adopted as children is the greatest expression of hospitality ever. This should shape us. Just like family traits can be easily seen from parents into their children, so we ought to be bearing the marks of what family we are in.

Not just brothers, not just family but look what he says at the end of verse 17, "I go to my God and your God." Paul says in Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." You and I, who are we, what is our identity in the Gospel and in Christ? We are reconciled to God. There is no hostility left. In fact, some of the final words as the Bible closes in the book of Revelation, the last words we get of the revelation of God to man this side of heaven, what does he say? "I will be their God. I will dwell among them as their God. I will be their God. They will be my people. I will wipe away their tears. I will be the light of that place and they will spend forever with me there." And the Bible closes with us eating from the tree of life in the new heavens and the new earth with God as our God. Who are you in Jesus Christ? That's exactly who you are in Jesus Christ: a brother of Christ; a sister to the Lord; a son or a daughter in the Father's house; and ultimately one who can say, "God is my God and I am among his people."

What is Mary's response to this? Look at verse 18, she went and you can see though he doesn't use the word for "run," maybe with a little sanctified imagination I can see it. Bursting with the announcement, she goes to the disciples and says, no longer weeping, no longer in sorrow, no longer with a distorted view she says, "I have seen the Lord." Blind Mary sees finally. "Mary, what changed your life?" "I saw him as he is, not as I imagined he was, not as I feared he was, not as others have made him out to be. I saw

him as he is and he drew me into his presence and he spoke my name and he called me close and I was reminded again of who he is and, therefore, who I am in him, in union with him by faith."

And it changed her life, friends. Do you think it could change yours? You say, "Well, Mary had an advantage. She actually saw him, like he showed up in front of her eyes." We don't have anything like that, do we? Before our eyes the very mind of Christ laid open for us on the pages of holy Scripture, inspired by God that we would draw near to him and know him. I wish I had a clever profound set of applications that you vigorously wrote down on your paper and said, "I've never heard this before." Maybe you're asking, I hope you're asking yourself, "How do I, if you're telling me I need to know him, I need to see him and his presence is what I need, and communion with him is what I need, how?" Do you seek him in his word? I wish I had something more profound than that. I don't. Do you go to him as Mary did in the dark hours of the morning and seek him and say, "Lord, I want one thing, you. Lord, I want to know you. I want to know you. I want to commune with you as by your Spirit and truth you speak to me in your word. I want to know you." We're not talking coldhearted duties, friends, we're talking communion and presence with Christ. Do you go to him? Do you go to him in prayer and if the word is in us, hearing from him in his presence, then prayer is us speaking back to him in response of his word. "Lord, I need you in prayer. Every day I need you. I need to come and imbosom myself in your presence and tell you all of my concerns knowing that you care for me, laying out where I am brokenhearted and crushed in spirit and ask you, Lord, draw near as you did with Mary."

Do we take this approach in every area of our life, friends? Do we seek him in his word? Do we seek him in prayer? And thirdly, do we seek him among the community of saints? Do we go with others and say, "Let us seek God together. Let us seek the Lord in the house of the Lord. Let us seek the Lord in our own homes together, encouraging one another to love and good deeds and getting into each other's lives and stirring one another up to take hold of him."

That's how we come into the presence of the Lord. That's how we commune with him. That's how our greatest of all needs is met. That's how we see him and, friends, we need to adopt the tenacity, can I say, of Bartimaeus. Do you remember blind Bartimaeus? He reminds me of Mary in this text. Waiting by the road as the Lord goes to Jerusalem to die for the sins of his people, and upon hearing the Lord but not yet seeing the Lord, he calls out, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" and runs to him and sees Christ and follows him the rest of his life. Those are the very words that Jan Hus took on his lips as he died a martyr's death at the stake because even at the end of his life, Hus knew that he was in that same place of blind Bartimaeus. "Jesus, son of David, have mercy. Be near. Be near me in my life."

Let us pray.

Our Father and our God, we need you in our life. We need your presence, O God. Help us to be desperate for you. Help us to long for you, to thirst for you, to see you as you really are. For our greatest good and your glory, we ask this. Amen.