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We Hid as it Were Our Faces From Him

Isaiah 53:3

**Prayer:** *Father God, we do praise you and thank you for the gift of your Messiah, we praise you and thank you for Jesus Christ. And Lord, we just again, I thank you for this series that we have been looking into, into Isaiah's stories, Isaiah's poems, Isaiah's servant songs. And Father, I pray that this morning as we open up your book and as we again look into this particular servant song, Isaiah 53, that you would give us the grace, the strength and the wisdom and the insight to be able to understand anew and even deeper what it is you've given to us in your Son. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Our text this morning is Isaiah 53:1-3. *Isaiah 53:1-3: Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was*

*despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

Last week we looked at Jesus as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and we focused on the fact that much of the sorrow, much of the grief that Jesus experienced in his life was a sorrow and a grief that he borrowed and that he owned that came from us. Isaiah takes on our collective identity next, and speaking of every one of us, he begins to detail where Jesus' sorrow and his grief comes from *and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.*

Just to bring this back to reality a little bit, has this ever -- has this ever happened to you? You're at a store and you're just kind of walking around the store and you're about to walk down an aisle and you see someone that you just don't want to get into a conversation with. Maybe you just don't have the time at the moment, you know, this is -- I call this the Wal-Mart walkabout or the Home Depot hideout. Maybe you just don't have enough time at the moment, maybe there's some kind of awkwardness at the moment between you and that person, or maybe like in my case you know that you're supposed to remember that person's name and you know that you don't remember it and you're pretty sure they haven't seen you, so you just kind of suddenly decide to go down another aisle. Well, you hid, as it were, your face from that person. You see, Jesus had that happen to him all the time and it still happens

today both within and without the church. Let me explain how this works both for those who are outside of the church and for those who are inside as well. We hide our faces from him. We hide physically, we hide mentally, and we hide spiritually. Thank God that Jesus didn't leave us in our hiding places. Thank God that he pursues us and goes after us in spite of those hiding places. He pursues us because we belong to him. You see, what Jesus said to his disciples applies just as well to each of us. This is what he said in *John 15:16*, he said: *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.* Each of us who have been chosen by Christ have been chosen to go forth and to bear fruit. We've been given his spirit, and that spirit now lives within each of us. *Romans 8:9*: *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* So every one of us, every one of us who has the spirit of Christ within him or her can expect that men and women are going to want to hide their faces from us as well. I mean, we too should expect that folks would treat the Spirit of Christ within us the very same way that they treated Christ himself, and that is folks would also hide their faces from us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Physically Jesus described how that happened in Luke 14:16. This is what he said: *But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and the crippled and the blind and lame,' and the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"*

Okay. So the gospel, the gospel goes out, and it's compared to an invitation to a great banquet. And note that it's not just an invitation, it is really a double invitation, these guests are all invited and all of them agree and then great preparations are

made. And when the preparations are completed, the invitees are told, okay, "*Come, for everything is now ready*" and it's at this point that the excuses begin to flow. "I bought a field and I have to see it." "I bought some oxen and I have to try them." "I'm a newlywed." You cannot come up with lamer excuses than these. I mean, who buys a field without ever seeing it? Who buys oxen without ever trying them, and since when does being a newlywed preclude you from going to a party? You see, not only were these excuses lame, but in view of all of the work of preparation that had gone into the banquet, they were thoughtless. They were insulting. So Jesus says if the respectable people are not interested in the banquet, well then go bring in the outsiders. Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame. God doesn't just invite them, he brings them personally because these are not the kind of people who would ever expect to be invited to a banquet in the first place. And when the banquet hall is still not filled, he winds up compelling his guests to come. Verse 23: "*And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'*" Every one of us who is here, every one of us who is here who believes in Jesus is here because God in some way went out into the highways and compelled us to come, and now we've been given the task of

inviting folks to a banquet that they too will make every excuse to avoid attending. By now we should be used to it. By now we should understand it comes with the territory.

It's very helpful to me to remember all of the excuses that I used to use to hide my face from Christ. You know, "There's no God in the first place." "All religions are basically the same," and "We all know that religious people are all hypocrites." You know, if those excuses didn't stop Christ from pursuing me, how can I let it stop me from pursuing others? You see, we have been entrusted with the secret of eternal life. *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)*

So outside of the church, we pursue those who are physically hiding their faces from Christ, and we do it all the while remembering the grace that God showed to us when we were the outsiders. But inside the church, inside the church we have a problem with hiding as well. You see, it's not so much that we hide from Jesus but that we hide from his bride. You see, we have a spiritual banquet that takes place every single week right here at 25 Sullivan Avenue in Port Jervis, and it starts at 9:30. Believers have a habit of physically hiding their faces from Christ by finding the same kind of reasons not to attend that Christ found 2,000 years ago. I just

bought a brand new fill-in-the-blanks. I have to try it out. The weather's too nasty, the weather's too nice, I've got sports, I've got meetings, I just got married. You know, it's 2,000 years since the original story but the excuses are basically still the same. And mind you, there's nothing sacred about Sunday morning. You know, Sunday morning was just the time that the first church decided to meet on and for many years in this culture it's the time that most churches agree that they're going to get together. Believe me, the struggle would be exactly the same if we met on Tuesday nights or Saturday afternoons. And it's a struggle because the world has its way of constantly inserting itself between the kingdom of God and God's people. And believe me, I get it. Believe me, I am sympathetic. But here's what I think. I'm just going to say it. The most important meeting you have each week is right here, right now where God's people gather for corporate worship. Now, there may be some folks who need really to be somewhere else but they are by far the exception rather than the rule. You know, some say well, Sunday's my family day. Isn't family the most important thing? I'm not saying that family isn't important and I actually know some people who I believe sinfully neglected their family by showing up at church virtually every time the doors were open even when it was clearly obvious that they needed to be tending to their family, and they wound up having children who walked away from the church deeply resenting their

parents' abandonment, but these examples are literally one in a thousand. And here's the key part, you see, if you think that church participation is simply a matter of showing up on Sunday mornings, singing some songs, and listening to a 40-minute talk about God, then you really don't get what church is all about. See, I can assure you that you can listen to far better sermons than I can produce just by accessing the Internet. And there you can listen to professionally produced Christian music as well, but you see, God expects much more from us than just that. He expects us to be a community made up of people convinced that the kingdom of God is the most important goal to living life itself, a community that is determined to help themselves and their brothers and sisters grow in their ability to flesh out that vision by entering into each other's lives with the intention of helping them conform to the image of Christ. That's about as cross cultural as you can get. You see, we live in a time of increasing social isolation. We live farther and farther away from the communities the original church consisted of, so we're isolated geographically. And yet with all the advances in communication, we still have this profound social isolation where texting and Facebook becomes the primary substitute for the fellowship that God wants to use to grow us into his image.

*Hebrews 10:24 says: And let us consider how to stir up one another*



to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. It's very hard to encourage one another if we remain virtual strangers to each other. And that's just what happens unless you make community a priority. See, God expects us to be a community made up of every tribe, tongue, and nation brought together with one common bond, and that bond is Jesus Christ. And God puts all of us together in a community and then in the presence of the heavenly host and in the presence of our Sullivan Avenue neighbors, for his sake, he says: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Folks, you can't do that without community. You know, you can fake it, you can fake it by having a church that consists primarily of virtual strangers who get together and nod and mumble some kind of reading, then bolt out of here without ever having to experience the good, the bad, and the ugly of true fellowship. But when you do that, you are hiding your face from Christ's presence. You know, it's very easy to be casually friendly with faces alone. Very easy to do that when there's a tacit understanding that nothing is supposed to go beyond, "Hey, how's it going?" And we all know that every face in this building has a story, and learning those stories is what takes us out of hiding. You see, it's only

as you get behind the faces to the stories themselves that you're able to find the grace of God working itself out in the lives of each of us and often times that gets messy, and nobody likes messy.

Now, I've said it many times before, some of the most meaningful and important demonstrations of what the love is that Christ is taking about is when people start to genuinely start to rub shoulders with one another in true fellowship and then find out oh, my goodness, we've got some real conflicts here, conflicts that they then have to work out for Christ's sake. I could rattle off a half dozen or so genuine triumphs of folks determining to love their brothers and sisters when that kind of love doesn't come easy. I've told them at that time, this is when church becomes real. You see, many people in those circumstances, they just head for the door. You know, there's always another church right down the block. But that is not what God intended for us all. I mean, if you remember our study of Colossians, in Colossians, Paul says this in Colossians 3:12, he says: *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* Well, see, the fact is today there are many, many churches where those verses simply don't

apply all for the wrong reasons. No one's got a complaint. No one's got a complaint against anybody else because no one knows anybody else. And that's the way everyone likes it. I'm just convinced that's not the way God likes it. You see, he who men hid from still sought out those who were hiding, and so should we. God intends us to be a community where the people in that community have got each other's back. You can't do that if you're virtual strangers to one another. Our neighborhoods have been an attempt to break down those barriers to begin the process of no longer physically hiding our faces from one another. Just a couple of weeks ago, we were over at the Cassells. Our little neighborhood met there. And we shared our testimonies, got to know a little bit more about each other, prayed for each other. That's the idea. We have to start doing that. We have to start cross-connecting. See, the world physically hides from Christ but we as his bride cannot continually hide from one another.

And secondly, the world hides its face from Christ mentally, and again so does the church. Just thank God that Christ pursues us both. Perhaps the best example of hiding the way the world does is the example of the woman at the well. You know, there's the story of her confrontation with Jesus. It occurs in the fourth chapter of the gospel of John. There we learn about this woman who's obviously led a checkered life and she has this conversation with

Jesus and we see her using multiple mental tricks to hide her true face from him. The conversation starts out with Jesus asking her for a drink, something that just wasn't done in that culture. Jesus was not supposed to be talking first of all to a woman, second of all to a woman with the kind of reputation that she had, and thirdly to a Samaritan woman. So on this one conversation Jesus is shattering the boundaries of sin and gender and nationality. And this conversation that she has, well it centers around the water that she has to draw every day and this living water that Jesus is offering to her. *The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."* Jesus said to her, *"Go, call your husband, and come here."* The woman answered him, *"I have no husband."* You see, technically she was telling the truth. Technically she was being accurate. She was hiding her face in half-truths. Jesus said to her, *"You are right in saying 'I have no husband' for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true."* The woman said to him, *"sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."* The woman now knows she's dealing with someone who can see right through her attempts to hide her face from him. But she doesn't give up. Without missing a beat, she adopts a very different approach. She says: *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."* You see,

she tries to take the spotlight off herself and off her own sin and relocate it somewhere else, somewhere safe. Instead of her five husbands, she's now much more interested in what mountain is the right mountain to worship on. We say this one, and you say that one. Jesus says in verse 21: *"Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* The woman said to him, *"I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."* Jesus said to her, *"I who speak to you am he."*

You know what is stunning about this exchange? What is truly stunning is how intent she is to hide her face from Christ and how much Christ wouldn't let her. He pursued her like he pursued each of us and he would not be distracted by her many attempts to evade him.

And that brings up a question for us. I mean, do we single mindedly pursue those who are outside the kingdom or are we too

easily distracted, too concerned about the awkwardness that often attends getting spiritually real? You see, the world outside the church hides from Christ by engaging in all kinds of mental gymnastics. But you see, we inside the church, we hide our faces by engaging in spiritual gymnastics. We practice the same type of evasion the woman at the well used towards the Spirit of Christ but we do it when he is convicting us. We use denial, we use blame shifting, or selecting spiritual deafness to push away the still small voice of the Holy Spirit when he is actively trying to conform us into the image of Christ. I know we do it. And there's a reason why I know we do it because I do it and I'm one of you, so I'm just assuming you do it as well. You see, once God has opened our ears, once he has ushered us into his kingdom, once he has justified us by declaring us righteous not on the basis of our good works but solely on the basis of what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, once that act of justification takes place, then the process of sanctification begins. That process lasts our entire lives. You know, sanctification simply means to sanctify. To sanctify means to make holy. To make holy means to set apart. And the question we all have to answer is set apart for what? Out of every individual on this planet, God has set apart individuals from every tribe, every tongue, and every nation for one purpose, and that purpose is to bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. *Ephesians 1:4* says: *He chose us in him before the foundation of*

*the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. See, God is saying that he's chosen us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ so that our lives can be to the praise of his glorious grace. God's intent is to shape his chosen ones into unique images of his own son, and that ultimately is what our purpose is. You know, God goes on to say in Romans 8:28 that every single event that takes place in our lives, every one of those events is designed to shape us and mold us uniquely into the image of his son. We've all heard the verses over and over again, we know God sovereignly superintends the lives of his own. We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. That's the front end of the verse. It's the back end of the verse that tells us why, why he uniquely programs all these events of our lives. He says: For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. You see, each of us uniquely represents some particular aspect of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God is shaping and molding each of our lives so that we can represent the son of God's image in a way that nobody else can.*

If you take a few steps backward and look at the purpose of life from God's perspective, it is breathtakingly obvious that we are here for something much bigger than ourselves. And understanding that purpose is the key to whether you're going to live a life of meaning or one full of sound and fury but signifying absolutely nothing. Here's the key. The key for believers, the difference is up to us. You see, as believers, we can choose to grow into the very image of Christ or we can choose to hide from that process simply by refusing to listen to the Holy Spirit. You know, each of us comes to Christ as God gives us this supernatural ability to hear what others cannot hear. Christ made that clear in *Matthew 13*, he said this, he said: *"This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophesy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'* But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears, for they hear."

So we hear for one reason and one reason alone, God's given us a supernatural ability to hear. He gives us our ability to hear



because we are all born spiritually deaf, cursed by Adam's sin. But here's the key. Once we receive the ability to hear, it's up to us to nurture it and grow it. You see, God gives us the freedom to choose how we will develop our spiritual ears. *James 1:19* says: *Know this, my beloved brothers: Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.* James is giving us this warning because we now find we have this incredible role to play in our own sanctification. To put it bluntly, our free will choice to be quick to hear or not, that's going to determine the extent of our sanctification, and to the extent that we learn how to listen well to God will be the extent that we grow in our sanctification. Spiritual sight and spiritual hearing function much like our physical muscles do. The more you exercise them, the stronger they grow. Listen to what Jesus said in *Mark 4:23*. He said this: *"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you."* We grow by using it.

Now the opposite is also true. You see, the more we ignore or suppress what God is saying to us through scripture, through prayer and through every one of us here in the body, then the weaker our hearing becomes, the more adept we become at hiding our faces from Christ until eventually we get to the worst possible state, the

state that the Pharisees were in. See, not only were they spiritually deaf and blind but they also had no idea that they were in such a state. *John 9:39* says this: *And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."* Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains." Make no mistake about it, there are great blessings in learning how to develop sanctified hearing and sight, and there are great perils in refusing to learn.

You see the third way that we hide our faces is the deadliest way, and that is, spiritually. The world hides its face physically by using every excuse to avoid coming face to face with the gospel. The world hides its face mentally by using denial, blame shifting, and every other evasion that will effectively keep the gospel at arm's length, and finally the world hides its face from the gospel spiritually by hiding behind multiple faces, by creating and living in different faces for different circumstances, different faces for different people. The word "hypocrisy" comes from the Greek word for an actor whose operating under an assumed character. I'm sure you've all seen it, the actors would come out on stage, and they'd have these little hand-held faces. They'd come on stage with

different faces that they would hide behind, so being two-faced was where hypocrisy actually came from. And we know the Pharisees had honed hypocrisy into a fine art. And so with one fawning face they would say to Jesus, *"Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"*

Well, obviously that's the fawning face. Now the other face, the face they thought they were hiding from Jesus was the vicious face. It was the face looking to entrap him through those very words. Verse 18: *But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." See, Jesus is describing this beautiful face that they give to the public versus the real face that he sees. And then he goes on to say in the next chapter in Matthew 23, he says: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."*

You know, I wish I could say that hiding our faces spiritually through hypocrisy only happens outside the church. But you know, the only way to truly conquer it is to recognize how easily it happens inside the church as well. You know, perhaps one of the most used phrases to describe the church is, "It's full of hypocrites." I said the only appropriate answer to that is, "Yes, you're absolutely right, the church is filled with hypocrites, but there's always room for one more, so why don't you join us." You see, the church is a community made up of redeemed sinners who worship a savior who was *despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him*. Because Jesus would not allow us to keep hiding our faces, we've been redeemed solely by his grace and then we've been given the task to tell the world about a Jesus who pursues the very ones who are hiding their faces from him and he doesn't stop once he catches us. When we hide from him physically, he points out the beauty of prioritizing our life around what really matters eternally, and that is him. And what matters to him is his bride. And his bride is the church. And in this case, it's this group of called out ones that assemble each week at 25 Sullivan Avenue in Port Jervis, New York. And it's not that we are so special, it's that He is, and he's called us to this community.

I've told the story about Rosie before, but this bears repeating.

Rosie Zaorski -- most of you remember Rosie -- she was a dear saint who attended Grace until her death a few years ago. She died of Huntington's chorea which is an awful and debilitating disease. Rosie was a simple single woman, she worked in a factory, then she worked as a janitor. She lived by herself, and in spite of this disease, she was probably one of the most upbeat and cheery people I've ever met. You remember Rosie, she would -- every time you asked her how she was doing, she would inevitably reply, "If I was doing any better, I'd be twins." You know, that's just the way she was. One Sunday we had some typical winter weather, we wound up canceling church, and for some reason, Rosie never got the message. So the next time I saw her, she was giving me a hard time about the fact that she showed up at the church and she found it closed. I asked her, "Well, what did you do?" She said, "I just wandered around from church to church until I found one that was open." I said to her, "Why did you do that?" She said, "I had to find someplace to worship him." I thought to myself, wow, she gets it. She gets it a lot better than I get it. Now, I know that Rosie could have worshiped in her car, I know that she could have worshiped in the woods, I know she could have worshiped at her home or any other place that she could have chosen to, but she understood the beauty and the value of corporate worship even if it was a body of believers she was a stranger to. They were not the most important part. Christ was the most important part. And I

have no doubt in my mind that eternity will demonstrate that Rosie was right, that by and large the assembly of souls gathering right here and right now is the most important meeting you and I have the opportunity to attend every single week. And if I can't get you to agree with me on that, I figure it's not my job to brow beat you, it's not my job to pound you over the head with guilt, but it's also not your job to blame shift, excuse, and evade the truth as well. You see, somewhere in the middle of that is a decision to make the bride of Christ one of the most important parts of your life not because you have to but because you want to. See, that's what our prayer is for all of us. And for most of us it's simply a matter of asking, am I hiding my face physically from Christ and his bride? You know, it's deciding what matters most to me for now and for eternity. And God is working those priorities out in each of our lives. And when we hide from Christ mentally, he points out our sinful proclivities when it comes to the painful part of hearing the Spirit of God as he shapes and molds us into the image of his Son. We've learned over and over again the crucial art, the crucial skill of being quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry, that that means hearing things about myself that I might not want to hear. If you're not really part of a community dedicated to stirring each other up to good works, then you diminish the chances of that community ever speaking into your life. And when they do speak, it means paying attention. When

instead of listening we want to respond, when instead of hearing, we just want to get angry. See, those are the times that we need to be listening very carefully to the still small voice of God.

And finally, when it comes to hiding from them spiritually, it all becomes a matter of practice. You see, it's a healthy community that does not give the seeds of hypocrisy the room to blossom, to sprout, and to grow. It's a community where people know each other well enough and love each other deeply enough to be willing to call a spade a spade. Mark Dever says: It is the church which has the ability to verify or falsify your claims to be one of Christ's. That's how crucial the church is. And it's really only a matter of priorities, proclivities, and practices. And they develop for better or for worse only in communities where people stop hiding their faces from Christ and from one another.

Listen to what God says in *2 Corinthians 3:18*: *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* That's the community we are praying for for Grace. It's a place where we hide no more. *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.* Let's pray.

*Father God, we don't want to hide from you. And Father, that's in us, that's in every one of us. When we were outside of the kingdom, we ran from you. Now that we're inside the kingdom, we have a tendency to do the same thing. Father, stop us from hiding, stop us from hiding from you, stop us from hiding from one another. Give us the ability to be vulnerable. Give us the ability to come out from behind the faces and be real. Give us the ability to nurture a community of saints that are determined to build one another up, that are determined to move each other forward. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*