

The God of 2nd Chances

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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This morning as we celebrate in a very different way, this day that we commonly refer to as Mother's Day, I hope wherever you find yourself this morning that you have a copy of God's word. I know sometimes as a family you like to share one copy, or maybe each and every individual has their own but this morning we find ourselves in the book of Ezra 7.

Now as you're looking for Ezra 7, you must be honest with yourself that when it comes to Mother's Day, at least on the surface, this might appear as a most unusual passage. Now for those of you that are first time guests with us or maybe the very first time you've been a part of one our worship services, we as a family of faith are walking through the Scriptures typically a chapter at a time over a period that is about three years in length, and over the past week, week and a half, we've been walking through the book of Ezra and today we're gonna look at Ezra 7. As I mentioned, it doesn't seem to be or appear to be a very Mother's Day-ish passage but I think you're gonna see much to the contrary in just a moment. In fact, it may be a very apropos Mother's Day passage because it deals with second chances.

You know, today when we celebrate the mothers, the moms, the grandmothers, the significant women in our lives who have helped shape our lives, one thing that can be said about them is oftentimes they were the ones who gave us a second chance, they were the ones that when the world had given up on us were willing to sit down and entertain a conversation, they were the ones who allowed us to cry on their shoulder, whatever it may be, in fact, today when we talk about all the attributes of what moms mean to us and throughout the years how they've impacted and influenced our lives, one of the things that is most influential is that when others had given up on us or when others cared not for us, it was that mother figure in our life that gave us a second chance.

Well, in Ezra 7 we see the Lord giving his people a second chance. In fact, as you're still searching for Ezra 7, let me give you a little background here. The Israelites had spent hundreds of years in rebellion. They had lived the life of a prodigal, for lack of better terms, and God kept reaching out to them, warning them saying, "If you continue in this behavior, something very contrary to what you want is going to take place." And it did. In 586 BC, the Israelites found themselves taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and what we know as the Babylonians. For 70 years as prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah, they spent

life isolated in Babylon, a carnal, worldly place where they were educated in the way of the world, they were influenced by the way of the world, yet they longed to be back home. We know that Nehemiah who we'll study next week, went to Cyrus and had the opportunity to return to the homeland to build the city again, to build the wall but more importantly as we'll discuss this morning, to rebuild the temple. It's a story of second chances.

I know that we've been walking through the Scriptures typically a chapter at a time, but if you read through the book of Ezra in one total or one single setting, one of the things that you'll notice is it's really two stories wrapped in one. The first six chapters tell us the story of Zerubbabel and others as they come back from Babylon. Ezra comes on the scene for the purpose of establishing the temple worship. He is a priest, as we'll see in just a moment, after the lineage of Aaron back with Moses in the Exodus experience. So when we get to chapter 7, one of the things that we discover is that the Israelites have already returned back to their homeland or they're in the process thereof, and they're establishing the connection, they're establishing the relationship with their God and this is where it gets really important for you and I today. None of us have desired or, shall we say, even enjoyed this global pandemic, but is it possible that much like the Israelites, today God's giving us a second chance? Aren't you grateful we haven't had to spend 70 years in captivity, it's just been several months, but maybe much like the Israelites, maybe the Lord can allow this passage to be an illustration, an analogy in our lives not just as individuals but maybe corporately as the body of Christ God is giving us a second chance. You know, the Israelites did not waste their second chance and hopefully we will not as well.

Let me encourage you to turn to Ezra 7 as we have the story of this priest of God returning to the people of God, in the place of God, for a very strategic plan and purpose. It says in verse 1,

1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra

Now for the sake of time and for my own lack of ability, I'm gonna skip reading these 16 names that are mentioned in the next verses. We'll get to this in just a moment, the heritage or the lineage that he possessed. It says this Ezra in verse 6,

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

7 And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to

seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Now upon first or a casual reading, this doesn't appear much like a second chance message, much less like a Mother's Day message, but trust me when we wrap this up at the end, there could not be a more appropriate message not just for this day as being Mother's Day but for our entire community, culture and our church body as we walk through and maybe are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel of this global pandemic.

So what is it about this passage that indicates a second chance? Well, I want you to notice that very first statement in chapter 7. Remember I told you it's almost two books in one, the first six chapters and then chapter 7 through 10. It says, "Now after these things." Now that's not just the events of chapters 1 through 6, that's the entire captivity, that's the entire rebellion and being taken into Babylon and being horribly mistreated and having their faith put to the test and put to the trial. That includes coming back with the edict of Cyrus and beginning to establish the city of Jerusalem. What I want you to notice and I think this is critical for our day and time today is that it was history without revision.

Now many of you may be familiar with the term revisionist history, essentially that means that you rewrite history the way you wish it was written; you write history where it allows the ones that you favor to succeed and those that you don't to somehow be relegated to, shall we say, the footnotes of the text. We've talked a lot about it in recent days of revisionist history, oftentimes we don't tell the stories of God in our history and we accentuate the stories of rebellion. But one of the things among many that I love about the Scriptures, what I love about the Bible is it just tells the story as it happened with all of our flaws, all of our failures. I mean, think about the Apostle Paul. He talks about his rebellion. He talks about how he walked in a way contrary to God for many years. He doesn't hide it. You see the disciples get in arguments and not understanding what Jesus was trying to communicate to them. And particularly in the Old Testament, all of the failures and the flaws of the Israelites are put on display for us. Why is that so important? It's because the Lord knew their history, he knows your history, my history, he knows all of our history, and he understands that we are a lot like the Israelites, that many of us are beginning the process of coming out of this experience where we've been in a different place and at a different time and under different rules much like they were in Babylon.

Now for the sake of time, I'm not gonna turn back to chapters 3 and 4 but if you would like to later, allow me to give you just a brief, shall we say, capsule of what they were dealing with coming out of Babylon and reestablishing Jerusalem. Now remember, Nebuchadnezzar had taken the city to the ground, the walls to the ground, the temple to the ground. It was nothing but a big open desolated field that they had to rebuild and Ezra comes on the scene and what they've done is they've marked the border of the temple walls and they've established the altar. Now that's important in just a moment that the first thing they built was the altar, but when you get to the end of chapter 3, you would think the people of God would be excited, you would think they would be thrilled but do

you know what it says? They began to weep, particularly the older ones, the elders. They began to weep and be sorrowful for what they were experiencing.

You say, "Why would they be so upset? They should be happy. They're in their homeland. They're building the temple." Well, what we discover is that second temple, who later would be referred to as Herod's temple because he remodeled it some time later, it wasn't like the first one. Remember Solomon's temple where even the door hinges were coated in gold, this one not so much. In fact, what we see in Ezra 3 is they began to set the borders of the temple walls. They didn't have the abundance of materials that they had in days past and so rather than putting the blocks on the outside of the line, they put it on the inside. In other words, the building wasn't going to be as big as they remembered. It wasn't going to be as ornate as they remembered. It wasn't going to be as fancy. It wasn't going to be as spectacular and they began to weep because this time when they gathered on that mount it wouldn't look like it did last time.

Can I transition to today, please? Is that not what a lot of us are feeling today? We're discouraged not just the fact that I'm in an empty room but we're beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, we're beginning to see how in the days future we're gonna begin to gather together but that's a harsh reality that it may not look the way it used to look, it may feel a little bit different, it may size-wise may change a little bit and it's discouraging. You see, when Ezra came on the scene, and this is important when we get to the end of the message, the people were discouraged because, can I put it in our language, church was not gonna look like what it used to look like. Folks, we have got to take that proverbial pill. Even as we roll out of what this global pandemic looks like, it's not gonna be what it was three months ago and the blocks have kind of been moved to the inside versus the outside, and maybe the material is not what we would prefer or the style of our choice.

They were discouraged, but we also discover in their recent history that they struggled with discernment. In fact, at the very last part of chapter 3 rolling into the first part of chapter 4, it was particularly the young men but it was all of them who started hearing the verbiage of the outside world, the secular world started to seep in and tempt them to compromise; that if you'll just do it the world's way, if you'll just adapt to this or utilize this new program or walk down this new path. You see, even though the building was going to be smaller and even though the building was going to have less ornate objects for materials, it was still to be built in the same way, in the same manner as Solomon's original temple and what was the secular world tempting them to do? To use different methodology, different means, different tools and I think we would all agree, particularly as a body of believers, we are fed a lot of information that tempts us to compromise. As we begin to analyze what does our faith look like in a post-global pandemic world, one of the things I want you to see is that they were tempted as you and I are tempted. Their history has not been revised. They were discouraged. They had to utilize discernment.

But as you get into chapter 4, one of the things they were subject to is something that you and I think is brand new to humanity but it is as old as the hills: disinformation. That's right, call it what it is, fake news. By the time you get to chapter 4, this secular society

who doesn't like that the Israelites are doing it God's way and not their way, decides to write a letter to the governor accusing them of something they didn't do and presuming they'll behave differently than they've promised. In other words, what they found out is they were being accused of stuff they hadn't even done yet, they never even had the opportunity to do it right.

Boy, does that resonate at least with me, and as we see the news stories, how many times have we heard as churches think about gathering together how surely we will do it wrong, how surely there's no way we'll actually behave and be cordial and such? You know, one of the things I love not just about the Bible but the Old Testament is we discover that humanity hasn't changed much, have we? When things don't go the way we hoped, we get discouraged. When people feed us information tempting us to do it the world's way, we have to utilize discernment and, boy, do we or are we subject to disinformation in our lives. Why is this so important? Because what we're about to see in Ezra's life comes out of this historical situation that is not much different from your life and my life today. They were coming out of Babylon, we're coming out of a global pandemic. They were tempted to be discouraged with all this misinformation, and so are we.

But the second thing I want you to notice is he also had a heritage that was not perfect. Now earlier I did not subject you to me trying to read all these Hebrew names beginning at the end of verse 1 all the way through verse 5, but one of the things that you see is that Ezra is a priest and it's impressive that at the end of verse 5 it goes all the way back to Aaron. Now that would be impressive to us, right? I mean, he was the brother of Moses, he was the one that helped lead the Israelites out of Egypt, yes, and he was also the one that took the gold of the Egyptians and he shaped the idol of Baal. He was the one who when Moses said, "How did this happen?" Said, "I don't know. I just threw it in the fire and it popped out." You see, we look at this lineage of names and we say, "Wow, what an incredible history of priests." I think we automatically assume that just because there are over 15 generations of priests going all the way back to the exodus, that Ezra somehow had a leg up. Well, not only do you see individuals like Aaron and others who were far from perfect but strategically there are two names that are missing. Is it possible that their stories were, shall we say, less than admirable?

Why is that important today? Because how many times have you had a conversation or maybe you've seen a social media post, as people look back on this life of being socially distanced and sheltered in place, oftentimes what we're seeing is the same thing we saw coming out of the Spanish flu in the year 1918 through 1920, is there are a lot of people particularly believers in Jesus Christ who wrote in their journal how discouraged they were or how disappointed they were that they didn't live their lives better in that time of being sheltered. And I think sometimes when we look at our heritage whether it's our parents, grandparents or maybe 15 generations down the line, we get caught in this trap of saying, "Well, you know, I don't have the heritage of an Ezra." Yes, you do because Ezra's heritage looks great on paper but it wasn't perfect.

Now think about the heritage of Timothy. That's one we see in the book of 1 Timothy and particularly on Mother's Day where the Apostle Paul focuses on his mom and his

grandmother and the fact that they centered him in the faith, and they focused him on the Scriptures. That's a wonderful passage that celebrates the incredible godly heritage that oftentimes the moms and the grandmothers in our life bring to us, and we often elevate that rightfully so on days like today, but do you find it interesting that we don't hear about his dad or granddad? Do you find it interesting that it only goes back two generations? In other words, Timothy's heritage wasn't perfect. Ezra's heritage wasn't perfect. Our heritage is not perfect. You cannot go and look back on your life of faith and say that everybody who preceded you did it the way they should have or could have. In fact, you look back at the last eight or nine weeks, it's easy to look back and say, "I didn't focus on the things I should have. Or maybe I misaligned here or there." Here's the great news: their history looked like ours, their heritage looked like ours, but what do we see happen in the days following? God brings forth and this is focused more when we get to the book of Nehemiah, an incredible revival of his people. God gave them a second chance in spite of their history and in spite of their heritage.

So what was it that Ezra did? What was it that the people of God did that brought this incredible movement of God in their lives? Well, if you get down to verse 6, it's actually the third point of the message today but it's the really the first proactive thing that we see Ezra do, he had a hunger for holiness. Notice what it says in verse 6, "This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem." I want to focus on the locations that Ezra found himself. He went from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Now looking back on thousands of years of history, that makes perfect sense to us, right? I mean, Jerusalem was the place that David had established as the place of worship, it was the place where Solomon built the temple, it was the place where our Messiah Jesus Christ shed his blood for our sins. It's the place where the tomb was discovered to be empty and, yes, it's the place where one day in the future he will return to reign over all the earth and over all of creation. So looking back and even looking forward we think, "Well, of course Jerusalem is the better choice." But not in the 5th century BC. Remember what it looked like. It was an abandoned field with a bunch of rocks. They weren't placed exactly as they had been in the past because they didn't have enough. It wasn't as accentuated as it was in the past and we discover that the altar when it was built looked sad as far as the content of the rocks.

What did he leave behind in Babylon? You do a history of Babylon, we discover that even though the Medes and the Persians had come in, historically at this point Babylon was a place of opulence, it was a place where you didn't have to worry about your next meal, it was a place where you didn't have to worry about the finances or the security. The walls were so thick they could have run numerous horses upon the top thereof so the enemies couldn't get in.

You know, I don't know if you've done this in your life, I know I have in mine at times of great decisions. Maybe it was a job change or maybe it involved a relationship or maybe it just involved a decision that needed to be made. Have you ever made what we call a pro/con list? Typically it goes a little something like this. I've done this several times in my life. You take a piece of paper and on one side you put the con or the negatives. What are the negatives of this decision? And on the other side you put the pro or the positives. Typically, at least in my experience, I've drawn a line down the middle and if I make this decision, what are the negative things that will occur versus what are the positive things that will occur.

I want you to think about how Ezra would have made his pro/con list. If he leaves Babylon, what are the negatives? He'll no longer have financial security. He'll no longer have physical security. He'll no longer be guaranteed the food and drink to sustain his life. He'll no longer have access to the finest clothes, the finest housing, the finest transportation, the finest everything. Understand, Babylon was the everything of the ancient world in these days. What did Jerusalem have? A bunch of rocks in an empty field on a hill. If you were to look at the pro/con list of Ezra in chapter 7 when it says he went from Babylon to Jerusalem, he was willing to leave all of the attractions, all of the trappings of this world and the only thing, the only thing that he could put on the pro list would be the dynamic presence of God.

Now when we talk about God giving us a second chance, I know what that means for us as individuals, I know what that means for us as a collective body, but I want to put it in today's real time analogy. As we begin the steps of moving forward out of a global pandemic, if the times of the service don't look the way you're used to or the styles thereof, the size thereof, the ministries don't operate in the way they used to, how will you respond to that? Or is the dynamic presence of God in your life worth everything else looking a little bit different?

You see, that's the second chance that the Israelites got. It's much like the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3. They had the ornate buildings. They had the flowing bank accounts. They had a culture that was prominent. But you notice in Revelation 3:20 Jesus is standing at the door and knocking, he's not a part of it. Now I'm not accusing you, I'm not accusing us of falling strictly into a Laodicean mentality but I think we'd have to admit at least here in the South, oftentimes church can become cultural, oftentimes church can be more about a presentation of ourselves than an experience with the Lord. And what does Ezra do in this passage? He has a hunger for holiness. He would rather leave the physical trappings of Babylon, the things that would feel good and look good, taste good and sound good for a field with a bunch of rocks that was the Holy of Holies and the place of the presence of God. You know, maybe just maybe God's given us a second chance to focus on him rather than the trappings of our oftentimes religious culture.

The next thing you see, the fourth point in the message but the second proactive thing is you see that they had a heart for the word. Notice what it says in verse 10, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel

statutes and judgments." Now I want you to notice it says he sought out the Scriptures. You and I live in a culture, at least the United States of America, where the average home has at least three Bibles in it, and can I go ahead and just call it what it is? Oftentimes those Bibles become paperweights or they become eye candy on the shelves, so to speak. Rarely have we been people who truly seek after the word of God. We've been given a second chance. It's not just walking through a Bible reading plan but we've been given a second chance that the Scriptures don't become just that which we pick up on Sunday morning to take with us to church, the Scriptures don't become that which we just run to when things get difficult, but we seek them out every day of our life. We're gonna see in the book of Nehemiah in the weeks to come that in chapter 9 they gather for a worship service among the rubble of the rocks in an open field and he gets up, "he' being Ezra, and he reads the Scriptures for three hours and nobody complains. Now I know what you're thinking, the same thing I am, "There is no way that's happening in a church here in America, much less a Baptist church in the South anytime in the days ahead." It will be if we experience revival. We'll care more about hearing the word of God than the game or the event or the opportunity that's placed on our calendar.

You see, God gave them a second chance, he's given us a second chance not just to seek the word of God, but notice the next statement, to do it. To be what the book of James says not just hearers only but doers of the word of God. What's one of the biggest complaints about American Christianity? Hypocrisy. We celebrate the Lord on Sunday and we live a life of debauchery Monday through Saturday. Or we say and preach and sing one thing on Sunday and do much the contrary on Monday.

Not only did Ezra say, "I'm gonna seek the word of God, I'm going to do it," and then he says, "I'm going to teach it." In other words I'm gonna do what 2 Timothy 2:2 says, I'm going to give it to faithful individuals, faithful men who will pass it on to others; that the word of God is not just gonna be that which resides beautifully upon one of the ornate tables of our home, it's not just something that's carried with us to church, it's opened on a daily basis, it's lived on a daily basis, and we do what Psalm 78 says, we teach it to our children and to our grandchildren to make sure that they understand what the tenants and the principles of God are not just for our lives but should be for theirs as well.

It looks a little different than the "cultural Christianity" that has become so famous in recent days and decades. Imagine us, a people of God desiring Jerusalem more than Babylon, desiring the word of God than whatever social media post has gained the most attention. But last but not least and this kind of wraps up all of it, that when we talk about the God of second chances is the fact of his hand that is upon us. Now you'll notice that twice in the passage that we've already read it talked about the hand of God being upon Ezra as he went into Jerusalem, but I want to fast-forward to verse 28 of this chapter for just a moment. I want you to see how it concludes. It says,

28 ...And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God [this is the last part of verse 28] was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

Notice what Ezra says, he was strengthened by the hand of God that was upon him. Now as we draw this message to a close, it's easy to talk about Babylon versus Jerusalem and seeking the word of God, but it is this last point that I hope resonates with you. I would rather have the hand of God upon me than for it to depart from me.

Allow me to illustrate with two very significant characters that hopefully are familiar to you in the Old Testament. The first is King David. We look back at King David, obviously the one who wanted to establish and build the temple. It was rightfully given to his son Solomon. This one who we love to champion, that he was a man after God's own heart. Here was the one who Samuel the prophet and the priest declared the youngest of all of his brethren, he would be the one to lead Israel. But much like the Israelites and much like you and I, he had a history and heritage that had some flaws. In fact, one of the biggest, shall we say, hiccups that we often discuss is that experience with Bathsheba where he took a woman to be his that was not rightfully his wife, he ended up killing her husband so that he could somehow, some way legally "get away with it." When he is confronted by Nathan the prophet regarding his sin, he doesn't make excuses. What does he do? He pens what you and I know as Psalm 51 where over 30 times the only person he blames is himself. He talks about being shapen in iniquity, making decisions of iniquity, and he begs and he cries out to God – listen to this – that his hand will not leave him. Now what's the hand he was experiencing in that moment? It was the hand of chastisement. That's what Hebrews 12 says, that to be chastised by the Lord is to know that we are a child of God, for whom he chastises he loveth. So David said, "Please, O God, even though I've rebelled, please O God, even though I've gone a path I shouldn't have gone, don't remove your hand from me even if it's the hand of chastisement."

On the other side of the proverbial table is Esau, the one whose twin was Jacob who we know as the father of the 12 tribes of Israel, the one who was a ruddy man, a man's man. Can I say he was kind of the Duck Dynasty of his day. He was big and boisterous. He was a hunter. He was loud and he was proud. One day he comes in from the hunt and I'll shorten the story, he sells his birthright to his twin brother Jacob. Now I know there was a lot of manipulation that took place. I know there was a lot behind the scenes but he still sold his birthright. When he discovered what had happened, he went into Isaac, his dad, and he begged him, "Is there any way you can reverse it?" Isaac said, "I'm sorry, son, what's been done has been done." That same chapter, Hebrews 12 that talks about that whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, when you get to the very end it says that Esau sought repentance, he sought the birthright to be returned with tears but it was not given to him.

You see, right now one of the most important decisions that we've got to make is would we rather have the hand of God's correction upon us or his hand off of us? You know, as we walk through very unprecedented days, as here you sit in the living room and I'm in an empty room, we know that in the near future we're gonna begin to gather again, we know we're gonna begin to do the ministries that we're so fond of, the activities, the worship services that are so familiar to us. I believe it's possible God's given us a second chance not to necessarily "do things differently," but listen, to do it with the right heart and maybe just maybe as we haven't been in this room for now over two months, maybe

it's that hand of God that we say, "Please, O God, don't remove it from me." It's a difficult question to ask but would you rather have the hand of God upon you even if it means chastisement than the hand of God off of you? The worst thing that can happen to us in the days ahead is that he removes his hand.

Today we talk about moms giving second chances, I think Israel received a second chance and maybe you and I collectively have been given a second chance but let me make it personal for just a moment. Maybe you're that individual today who says, "You know what? My whole life has been a life of rebellion. My whole life has been all about myself, what I wanted to do, when, where and how, and I've never sought God in any of it." Maybe you're that person today that the book of Romans 10 speaks of, it says whomever calls out to the Lord will be saved. You know, we talk about salvation, we talk about that second chance of being redeemed, why the Lord Jesus shed his blood and rose from the dead, why is that so important? Because he wants to give you a second chance too.

I know you've tried. I know you've tried to be better. I know you've tried to be less bad. I know there's been times in your life that you've even tried to get religious. In fact, there may be some of you today, you haven't been to church in 10+ years but all of a sudden with a global pandemic you're online with us. Maybe today's the day you take advantage of that "second chance." It's as easy as just admitting you're the problem and believing that Jesus Christ is the answer. You say, "How do I do that?" It doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter if you say it out loud or if you use different words, it's the cry of your heart. Maybe your heart's cry today would be something like this, "God, I just want you to know today I'm ready to confess I've got a sin problem. I'm the one who has messed up. I believe that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. And God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he took the punishment for my sins upon his cross. And God, I believe when he rose from the grave he made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have the answers to the problems of the world, but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. The best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

If you had that conversation with the Lord today, we'd love to have a conversation with you as well whether you notify us by email or text or Facebook, whatever it may be. We even have a phone number. You can call us 334-364-2761. We have people standing by. We would love to have a conversation with you. Maybe you had that conversation with the Lord years ago or decades ago and maybe you realize that your faith has become more cultural than it's been Christ-centered. We encourage those phone calls as well. We just want to help you take that next step in your faith.

Today as we celebrate the God of second chances and the ones who often gave those to us, the mothers of our life, we celebrate them, we celebrate him, and we celebrate the fact that you allowed us, First Baptist, Opelika, to be a part of your lives this morning. Thank

you so much for being a part of our service. Let me remind you that tonight we have a special musical presentation with the family known as the Hopper's. It is music that is encouraging, it is uplifting, it is a time where you can just sit back and enjoy the fruit and the goodness of your faith.

Once again, enjoy your family on what we know as Mother's Day if not in person, at least through the marvels of technology. Thank you for being a part of our service.