

The Power of the Hour

Sunday AM

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Today is one of those days you might need to check your calendar. It is the middle of summer but it feels like Easter Sunday and I've got news for you, because the tomb is still empty, it's Easter Sunday every Sunday. Every Sunday.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we gather at this time, Lord, we recognize we wouldn't be in this room if the tomb wasn't empty. We wouldn't sing the songs we have sung if the tomb weren't empty. And God, we wouldn't have any hope, we wouldn't have any joy, we wouldn't have a future, and we wouldn't have a present if the tomb wasn't empty. So Lord, as we celebrate that not only in song but through Scripture, God, I pray, Lord, I pray that as we open your word, I pray as we read that which was inspired by you thousands of years ago, this wouldn't just be a story of way back then but it would become our story today. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

This morning I want to encourage you to either open to or turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John 7. Now, if you're a first-time guest or visitor with us, we are slowly and steadily walking through the Gospel of John with this anticipated goal: chapter 15 of the Gospel of John, verse 5, Jesus makes the statement, he says, "I am the vine and you are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him shall bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." That is where we are headed and as we make our way toward that very famous statement, here in chapter 7 beginning in verse 30 today, we find ourselves at the feast of Tabernacles. We find ourselves at that one celebration every year not only that the Israelites were encouraged to attend but the men in particular had to attend.

Jesus has made his way down so all of the leadership, all of the men, all of the family representatives of his community are there and we find ourselves toward the end of this feast and they begin to question, they begin to doubt, in fact, what we are about to see is a movement to extrapolate or to take Jesus out of the equation. In fact, those who have heard him preach and those who have seen the miracles he has done, they've had enough and we're going to see in just a moment they begin to plot, they begin to plan, how can we remove Jesus from the equation of our life? And there is a statement that is going to happen in verse 30 that we're going to spend our time on today because Jesus is going to speak of the cross event, Jesus is going to speak of that which he was purposed to do. Not

just his life, not just his teachings, not just the miracles, but his death and his resurrection. And what we're about to see today is what I want to entitle "The Power of the Hour." Jesus is going to use a phrase in just a moment, it's going to be used in Scripture, that is a synonym for, it is a representative of what we know as the cross event.

John 7, beginning in verse 30, it says,

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. 31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ comes, will he do more miracles than these which this man has done? 32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests [listen to this] sent officers to take him. 33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. 34 You shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, there you cannot come. 35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Where will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? 36 What manner of saying is this that he said, You shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, you cannot come?

I want to focus today just on verse 30. It says, "Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." As I mentioned that phrase "his hour or the hour or my hour," it's a statement that is utilized all throughout the Gospel of John to represent or to picture for us what we know as the cross event.

To begin with, I want to address what I believe is the personalness of this hour. I want you to notice the pronoun that is used. It says "his hour." By the way, this is not going to be a study in grammar or an English lesson but when you have that personal pronoun, it changes everything. It changes everything because it's his time, his hour, his event, and what we see is this hour that has not yet arrived is distinctly his. It is nobody else's. It belongs to him. In fact, back in the Gospel of John 2, we have the first mention of this phrase. By the way, allow me to give you a little bit of warning today, particularly those of you that are first-time guests or visitors, I'm going to in just a moment hit you with a fire hydrant of Scripture. Those of you that are note takers, let me go ahead and prepare you, your pen or pencil is going to start smoking in about 10 to 15 minutes. Those of you who are electronic tablet, phones, whatever it may be, just send me the bill for the carpal tunnel. We'll do it, we'll take care of that. But there is going to be a lot of Scriptures that I'm going to throw at you today because what I want you to see is the power of this statement, "his hour is not yet come."

It's personal because of its first mention. In John 2:4, Jesus is at the wedding feast of Cana. He's there and his mother comes to him and he says, "Do you not know they have no wine?" And Jesus makes this very profound statement, he says, "Woman, do you not know mine hour is not yet come?" Jesus was speaking of the cross event. Jesus was speaking of what we know of the giving of his life, the shedding of his blood, eventually the resurrection of his body unto the life for us. And when he says "my hour," and here in

chapter 7 when it says "his hour," this is a personal description. This is a personal event to the person of whom we know as Jesus Christ because later in Colossians 1 looking back on the cross event in verse 20, it says that our salvation was given, listen, through his cross. You do understand "his cross" was distinctly different than everybody else's cross. It was different than the two thieves that were beside him. It was different than those that went before him and those that came after because every other man, every other woman, every other person who ever was placed on a cross was put there because of their sin, because of their rebellion, because of their violation of the law, but Jesus was placed on the cross not because of his sin but because of ours. He did and he went to the cross for the atonement of everyone's sins – listen – but his.

So when it says that "his hour had not yet come," understand this is very personal. He declared it from the beginning, "Mine hour will one day arrive." In just a moment, we're going to go to the end of the Gospel of John and he's going to say "the hour," speaking of his own hour that has arrived. It's very personal. But it's not only personal, it is prophetic. In fact, there are prophecies all throughout the Scripture that speak to this statement the hour, or what we know as the cross event. In fact, if you go all the way back in the book of Genesis 3, we find ourselves where humanity decides that we're smarter than God. We decide we know more than God. He has placed us in the garden of Eden and – listen – everything is going well. Man and woman are there and listen to this guys: man and woman, husband and wife and no fighting. No arguing. No disagreement. Nobody is upset with anybody and then sin enters the picture and everything goes south from there, not just in marriage but in all aspects.

So there in chapter 3 of Genesis, humanity decides to rebel. We decide we know better than God and in verse 15 of Genesis 3, the Lord begins to distribute the consequences or for lack of better terms, the punishment to those who have been a part of this equation: the serpent and Adam and Eve. And to the serpent he makes this statement, he says, "The seed of the woman shall come." And he says to the serpent, "You," serpent, "will bruise his heel but the seed of the woman will bruise your head." Many times we call this the very first Gospel. Just moments away from man's rebellion, moments away from where we thought we were smarter than God, God has already begun to provide the means.

Now, why is this personal? Who would it be that would be the answer to that statement? Who would be the fulfillment of that prophecy? It would be Jesus Christ whom it says here in chapter 7, "his hour had not yet come." In fact, later in Isaiah 53:5, it speaks of him giving of himself. It speaks that even a thousand years in advance, that by his stripes we are healed, by his wounds our transgressions are addressed. In fact, a chapter earlier in chapter 52, verse 14, it says that when he would hang on that tree, when he would give his life on Calvary, his appearance or his visage as some scriptures say, would be worse than any man's. In other words, what he would endure, what he would go through would be worse than any other man has ever been through. If that's not personal, I don't know what is.

So thousands of years in advance, it was declared that Jesus Christ whom in chapter 7, verse 30 it says "his hour had not yet come," he would give of himself, he would allow

his body to be mutilated and sacrificed and then in Psalm 110:1 which, by the way, is the most quoted Old Testament statement in your New Testament, King David makes the statement that his descendant, the Lord, the Messiah, will sit on his throne forever.

So when this statement Jesus makes in chapter 2, "mine hour is not yet," in chapter 7 when it says "his hour had not yet come," this is personal. It's different for Jesus than for anybody else in the history of the universe. It's been prophesied for thousands of years but it is also personal because the promises that Jesus made. In fact, we could go back to Luke 4 and we find ourselves in the very first sermon of Jesus. Jesus comes to the synagogue at the beginning of his ministry and they lay out the scroll of Isaiah and as he begins to read in the latter part of Isaiah, he reads this statement, he says that he "shall give freedom to those that are in bondage. He shall break the captives free and preach the Gospel or the good news to the poor." Now, I don't know about you but that's a pretty good message to hear, is it not? Because most people are in bondage and most people don't express or don't have freedom, most people are not living the life that God has designed them to live and so Jesus reads that the Messiah, this is a promise, that the Messiah will deliver us and give us freedom. He closes the scroll and he says, "And today this is fulfilled in your eyes." He was speaking of himself. He was saying, "I'm here. The prophecies have been fulfilled and the promise of your deliverance is seated right in front of you." They were so overwhelmed with what he said that according to Luke 4, they took him to a cliff and they tried to throw him over because it didn't look the way they wanted it to look and it didn't sound the way they wanted it to sound. But he promised them that your chains can be broken, he promised them that their shackles could be released.

Then in John 4, speaking of this statement, his hour or my hour, there was a woman at the well, a woman whose life was less than stellar, and she began to discuss with Jesus, "Where are we supposed to worship? Is it in Jerusalem? Is it in Bethel? Where is it supposed to be?" Remember what Jesus said? This is in chapter 4 John, he says, "The hour is coming," notice that statement, "The hour is coming where you will not worship in Jerusalem, you will not worship in Bethel, but you will worship in spirit and in truth." What was Jesus speaking of? He was speaking of Matthew 27, beginning in verse 51 when it says that when he breathed his last breath, that the veil was torn; that the earth did quake. And no longer would we have to bring the blood of bulls and goats, no longer would we have to come on a certain day at a certain time and hope that it was good enough, that he had paid the price, he had made an atonement, he had offered us the redemption and the reconciliation of our sins.

He promised this to this woman and then in the next chapter, speaking of resurrection and the fact that one day we are going to breathe our last breath, he said the hour is coming where the graves will open and those shall be raised unto life. You know, just this weekend, I went to a movie with my family and it was one of those superhero movies, you know, and we were watching the movie and there was a line in that movie that really caught my attention. There was a group of guys, they were the "good guys" in the movie and they were about to go out on a pilgrimage, which is a nice way of saying they were going to go and kill everybody on the screen but them. That's really how those work. And

the guys got together and they had a little chant they made and it was really interesting. This is what their chant was, "May we get what we want, may we get what we need, may we not get what we deserve." Wow, what a statement because even those characters in that movie realized that as humanity when we look in the spiritual mirror, if we get what we deserve, it's not a pretty picture.

And what did Jesus promise? He promised that redemption, he promised that forgiveness and he promised that resurrection wasn't just in his hands but it's who he was and is, and he said that when we believe on him we shall be raised to newness of life. This is personal. It's his hour. He said, "It is my hour," and he was willing to provide that which we could not provide for ourselves.

But then in chapter 7, verse 30, there is this statement before that says, "and no man laid hands on him because his hour," and what I want you to see today is that this hour, this cross event, what we know as Jesus giving himself for us, was what I want to call a protected hour. What I mean is that it was protected by God no matter what the schemes of man would be. In fact, it was protected by what I want to call the power of God, and I think something that all of us need to understand today is that it doesn't matter what your ability is, it doesn't matter what your skill set is, it doesn't matter what your financial statement looks like, there is nothing you as an individual or we collectively as humanity can do to thwart the power and the ability of God. In fact, some of the best advice I ever got as a young man: there is a God and you're not him.

The power of God. You know, I'll share a story with you. It happened a couple of years ago. You know, there is an old joke the third time is the charm, I'm praying that today is not the third time. There have been two times in my life where I was preaching such as this or teaching a Bible study in a large public forum where I have been heckled. Now, that means somebody dialoguing with you and they're not happy with you.

Let me share with you what happens from my perspective. By the way, just as an aside, one day I would love to write a book called "A View from the Pulpit." You'd be shocked what I can see from up here. Just telling you that. I have a very interesting perspective nonetheless, I've seen all kinds of things, in fact, I've heard a lot of folks that when you make a statement both good or bad, some of you get a little vocal at times. Every now and then I hear an amen, a hallelujah. Where I grew up, every now and then I get a good old, come on, so to speak. Sometimes I know we're Baptists and we struggle with being verbal but it wouldn't kill us every now and then.

Sometimes response happens with nonverbal language. I've made statements from Scripture before and I've seen people give me that look of death, get mad and walk out. I've seen it. But twice, only twice have I had somebody actually heckle me, meaning stand up in the middle of an environment like this and argue verbally and get really upset about it. It's only happened twice and I'm praying that today is not the third time. But it has happened twice and the last time that it occurred, I want to share with you what happened because this man got so upset, he had to be actually physically removed from the room. I made a statement and he could not understand what I was saying and he didn't

allow for me to explain. He stood up and he said, "That's a lie! That's not true!" I mean, he was going off. Here's what I said, I made the statement that at times the Old Testament is incredibly boring to read and he got upset about that.

Now, some of you are laughing because that's a true statement. Have you ever sat down and just tried to read the book of Numbers from beginning to end and not fall asleep? I mean, seriously. Now, those of you that have an allergy to math, you get scared with that book. "Numbers, I don't want to read numbers." So-and-so beget So-and-so that begat So-and-so. Snoozer time and have you even touched Chronicles yet? I mean, you've got stories in the Old Testament, can we just be friends today? Half the places they went to we can't pronounce and most of the names we can't pronounce. And you read the names and you see the places and down deep you start to scratch your head and say, "Does it really matter that 35 people went to this place and 65 went to this and 119 when here?" And you read and you're thinking, "What is this? Why is this so important?" I've got news for you: do you know why the Old Testament, here's that punchline, do you know why it can be so boring at times? It's not about you. It's not about you. In fact, the Old Testament is the story of God's redemptive plan from the garden of Eden unto the cross of Calvary and what we see – listen – what we see is the power of God.

What did chapter 7, verse 30 say? "No man laid hands on him. His hour, the cross event, had not yet come." It was not the right time. And what we see is no plan of man, no scheme of hell could thwart God's plan. Listen to what we try to do. We got so rebellious God wiped us out with a flood. We got so rebellious that he came down and he confounded the languages at Babel. You see kings coming and kings go, kingdoms come and kingdoms go. In fact, there is a guy by the name of Jechoniah, Jeremiah 22, he is so bad that God says, "I am done with you and your family forever." In fact, the Old Testament what we see is the power of God – listen to this – he can surpass, go beyond and go around any plan we have to thwart his plan and purpose. And here in chapter 7, verse 30, here is a group of people, they are the power brokers of the community. They have the money, they have the resources, they have the networking and their plot is to get rid of him. Now, I can only imagine that God is laughing at this. By the way, I think God has a sense of humor. I really do because I look at my life and that's proof he has a sense of humor. I believe God is laughing, "I went through Noah's flood. I went through the Tower of Babel. I went...who do you guys think you really are? You think you can do this?"

It says "no man laid hands on him, his hour had not yet come." It didn't matter what their scheme was or what their plan was, they were not going to thwart the plan of God. This was a protected hour. It's also an hour of Providence. Now, when I use the word "Providence" I think a lot of us know what that word means and very few of us actually do, but the word "Providence" gets thrown around in churchy language a lot and in Christian circles. Let me define for you Providence. Providence is God working behind the scenes in spite of what you've got planned. That's what Providence is. God is moving behind the scenes and he is orchestrating things no matter what your plan may have or may not be.

When it says "his hour had not yet come," let me share with you how this is the Providence of God. All the way back in the book of Exodus 12, the Israelites had come out of Egypt after 400 years of slavery and when they came out, the Lord gave them the directions, gave them the instructions for what we know as the Passover feast. Now, the Passover feast is when they gather every year still to this day and they celebrate God's deliverance. They pray for, and this is in Jewish circles, they pray for the Messiah's coming. Those who we know as messianic Jews today, Jewish by birth, Christians by faith, they celebrate Yeshua's coming in the person of Jesus Christ. But they gather together every year, here's what's interesting: Leviticus 23, did I mention there were portions of the Old Testament that were just a tad bit not exciting? Leviticus 23 are the instructions for the Passover meal. Now, can we just be honest? That's not a part we find exciting, is it, because it says that they are to gather together on a certain day at a certain time and go through a series of certain events, and you go through there and you say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I got that." But in chapter 23 of the book of Leviticus, it says that the Passover lamb was to be acquired and sacrificed on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year.

You say, "Why is that important?" What did chapter 7, verse 30 of John say? "No one laid hands on him. His hour had not yet come." You see, the feast of Tabernacles was in October. The feast of Tabernacles was in the fall. What we know as Passover was in the spring, typically in the March/April season. So God was working behind the scenes because John the Baptist had said in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Nobody laid hands on him because providentially he as the Passover lamb was not going to give his life until it was exactly as Leviticus 23 had proclaimed in advance.

So when we see this protection of his hour, it's not only the power of God in spite of the schemes of men, it's not only the Providence of God in his plan that he has laid out, but it is what I call the provision of God. You see, in John 17, we have the Lord's prayer. I know what some of you are thinking, "Whoa, whoa, the Lord's Prayer, isn't that the Sermon on the Mount?" Well, that's what we attribute the Lord's prayer to but when the disciples gather together in the book of Matthew, they gather together and they say, "Jesus, teach us how to pray." And Jesus says, "When you pray, pray, Our Father, which art in heaven," etc. in John 17, Jesus isn't teaching anybody to pray, Jesus himself is in the garden of Gethsemane. He is lifting up his heart. He is lifting up his eyes. He is lifting up his hands to the Father and in John 17, this high priestly prayer, Jesus prays for everybody but himself except for one instance. Every prayer is either that the Father be glorified, the current disciples be faithful, or you and I as the future disciples be faithful, but in verse 5 of John 17, Jesus makes this one "self-centered" statement. He says, "Father, now glorify me with the glory that I had with you before the world was." In other words, his hour, the cross event, the sacrifice, the spilling of his blood, the eventual resurrection and the empty tomb, again that glory could be restored, that relationship with creation, that opportunity to have humanity once again declaring and exhibiting and speaking and being who we were created to be. You see, his hour, the cross event, it was protected, not just because it was his but hear this: but because it was ours. For if he had

not fulfilled it and if it had not come to fruition and if it had not been as it was prophesied, then you and I would not have the opportunity by which it presents.

I want to encourage you to turn a few pages to the right to the Gospel of John 13 and I want to talk about the purpose of this hour. We've addressed the fact that it was very personal to Jesus. We've addressed the fact that it was protected by God through the power of God, the Providence of God, the provision of God, but I want to talk about the purpose, and John 13, gives us this incredible picture of the hour of Jesus Christ. Verse 1, it says, "Now before the feast of the passover," you see we've gone forward to what Leviticus 23 said, "when Jesus knew that his hour was come." Can I just stop? He knew his hour was come. All this talk about the hour spoken of in John 2, protected in John 7, now in John 13 the night before his crucifixion he says, "The hour is come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended," by the way, that's proof God is a Southerner, "supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God," listen to verse 4, "He rose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself." Now, I'm assuming that most of you know the rest of the story. Jesus is there in the upper room, what we know as the apostles had gathered for that Passover feast, Judas has gone to betray, 11 are left, Jesus bends down and he begins to wash the feet of the disciples, the apostles. He has a very intense conversation with Peter specifically but he washes all their feet.

Fast forward to verse 12, "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know you what I have done to you?" Now, on the surface Jesus has done exactly what we're familiar with. He knelt down and he washed their feet. In that tradition, in that culture, they would have descended upon the house and they would have been walking upon the dusty sands of life, however, if you know anything about this Passover meal, it was in a very wealthy man's house in the upper room. You say, "Well, why is that significant?" Because this man in this home would have had the people in place to wipe the dirt off physically, but Jesus comes and he takes their feet that are already physically clean and he washes them.

Now, allow us to take kind of a step back. Let me give you a little color commentary. Let me give you the picture of what Jesus is showing about his hour because it begins by saying, "knowing his hour was come," knowing that the cross was just hours literally chronologically away, he takes off his garment, he places it upon his waist, he bends down on his knees and he washes feet, stands up, places the government back on and says, "Now tell people what I have done to you." Is this a lesson in humility? Of course it is. Is this a lesson in servant hood? Absolutely. But it's also a bigger picture about the purpose of his hour. In fact, Philippians 2, it says that Jesus humbled himself in the form of a servant. Mark 10:45 says that Jesus came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Let me give you the picture here, let me show you what Jesus is doing. Here he was time before girded with the robes of heaven, according to Philippians 2, he laid aside those heavenly robes, he laid aside that throne room glory and

what did he do? He got down on his knees into the dirt, into the mess, into the sin of our lives and he washed us and he cleansed us of our sin through what we know as Calvary, and after he had gone to Calvary, after the grave had been empty for three days and he rose, what did he do? He stood back up, he placed his garments back on. Do you know what John 13 is? It's the washing of the feet but it's the picture of the Gospel story, that his hour meant that he would lay aside his heavenly garments. He would take on the form of a servant. He would get into the mess of our lives and then he would clean us up and rise again.

What a picture of this hour. You see, the whole purpose of his hour that is protected in chapter 7 is to get us to what we know as the cross event and it's not just a picture, this was the plan of God. In fact, chapter 17 that I alluded to earlier in the Gospel of John where he says, "The only thing I desire is for the glory that I had before the foundation of the earth," back in verse 1 of John 17 it says, "now that his hour had arrived." You see, this was the plan of God according to Ephesians 1 from the foundation of the earth. This was God's plan. He orchestrated it. He was the architect that even in our sin, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would descend, take on the sin of our world and then ascend again. This was his plan.

But what we see in conclusion is it was primary. Now, you're in chapter 13. I want you to turn one page to the left to chapter 12 of the Gospel of John. Chapter 12, there is a group that is trying to talk him out of the cross. Now, these are the friends, so to speak. His enemies are trying to eliminate him. His enemies are trying to marginalize him but his disciples consistently come to him when Jesus speaks of the cross and says, "Oh, you don't really want to do that. That's not something you really want and desire to do, is it?" I want you to notice what Jesus says in verse 23 of John 12, "And Jesus answered them saying, the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." Fast forward to verse 27, "now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." You see, when we talk about the purpose of the hour, when we talk about the purpose of the cross event, a lot of times we look at our lives and a lot of times we look at the dirt on our feet and not just our feet but in our heart and in our lives, and we say, "Do you think Jesus can really clean up this mess? Do you think Jesus could really break me loose of these shackles? Do you think Jesus really has the ability to forgive somebody like me?" And Jesus makes this statement, "I didn't come to avoid this hour, for this is why I even came."

I think one of the greatest lies and one of the greatest pieces of deception of the enemy is he tries to somehow and some way convince us that we are beyond the love of Jesus, that we are beyond the mercy of Jesus, we are beyond the grace of Jesus. And he made this statement three times in these verses. He talked about his hour of the cross and he said, "and this is why I came." Hear me clearly: Jesus came to clean up your mess because you can't. Jesus came to break you free of bondage because you can't. Jesus came to give you liberty because you can't. And in chapter 7, verse 30 it says that nobody touched him because his hour was not yet. Here's the great news: his hour has been fulfilled. It has come. He has gone to the cross. The tomb is empty and yes, you can be forgiven, you can

be saved. "What, for this hour would I escape?" Hear me clearly: Jesus is saying to you "for your life, for your sin, for your mess, that's why I came in the first place."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you are that person today and maybe you look great on the outside but if you were honest with yourself and honest with those around you, you're a mess on the inside and you've tried all the tricks of the trade. You've glossed up the outside, you've perfumed everything and made it all pretty and smell good but you know deep down inside everything is an absolute wreck. I've got great news for you today. It doesn't have to stay that way forever. In fact, it doesn't have to stay that way for another moment. You don't have to go through a bunch of religious classes, you don't have to jump through a bunch of hoops, you can experience forgiveness, you can experience salvation, you can experience freedom not because you do something or stop something but because of that which Jesus has already done in your stead.

If that's the position you find yourself in today, you just need to have a conversation with God. You don't have to have this conversation out loud, you don't even have to say the same words that I might say but maybe the conversation would go a little something like this, "God, you know how hard I've tried. You know the energy that I've put forth. You know the effort that I have made to clean up my own mess. And I'm going to be honest with you God, it hasn't worked and today I believe that Jesus Christ is the only one who can clean up the mess in my life and forgive me of the sin of my life. God, today I believe that Jesus loved me so much he was willing to be born on my behalf. I understand that Jesus loved me so much that he was willing to shed those heavenly garments and live a sinless life on this earth for my behalf. I understand and I believe that Jesus loved me so much he was willing to take the nails of Calvary and to bleed on my behalf. Understand, I believe that Jesus loved me so much he was willing to raise from the dead so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. God, today I don't know all the answers to all the world's problems but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. So in the best way I know how, I'm confessing that I am the problem and that Jesus is the answer. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

If that's the conversation you had with God today, we'd love to hear about it. We'd love to have a conversation with you about what God is doing in your life. Or maybe you need to have a conversation about following in believers' baptism or maybe what it means to plug into a local church. We just want you to know whatever it is that God is dealing upon in your life and in your heart, we want to celebrate and we'd love the opportunity to converse with you about it.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time, Lord, I know I say this to you all the time because it comes as an extension of my life, thank you for being a God of second chances. Thank you for being a God of third chances. For some of us, a God of infinite chances. That there is no amount of rebellion or wrong we can do to keep us away from your love, your mercy and your grace. So God, today as you reach out your hand, may

*he take advantage of it and may we embrace it. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray.
Amen.*

I'm going to ask you to stand with me as our team leads us. Whatever decision, I'll be here at the front.