

25 Years of God's Grace

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[0:00] Let's pray and ask God's blessing on this time together. Our Father in heaven, what do we have that we have not received?! And if we have received it, why should we boast as if we had not?

And so whether it's health and strength to be here this morning, or whether it's grace in our hearts to pray, Your kingdom come, Your will be done.

We recognize that it is all of grace. That if we're the children of God, it is because of the grace You extended to us by giving us Your own Son.

And so we thank You for Your grace. We want to remember You and Your kindness to us as a congregation for these many years. And so we pray You would tune our hearts to the reality that's spoken everywhere in Scripture, that You and to You alone, not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name alone be glory.

We ask that that would be the cry of our heart from morning till evening on this, the Lord's day. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. In England, it seems that it's a tradition in many churches to have an annual anniversary celebration.

[1:19] And every year, it's the church's 7th and 8th and 9th anniversary, and they have special preaching services. We've not done that here, but we did feel once we hit 25 that it's worthy of remembering together what the Lord has done and giving Him praise.

1 Corinthians chapter 1. And Paul's writing this letter. Paul called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and our brother Sosthenes to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

I love those words. To the church of God in Corinth. That there was a church of God in Corinth was an amazing miracle.

Corinth, the place that was sin city of the world in their day, known for its sexual perversion and immorality. And yet Paul is able to write to the church of God in Corinth that was only possible because God the Father had chosen them and had sent His Son for them because God the Son had shed His blood and died for them and the Spirit of God had given new life to these people. In other words, it took the triune God, every member of the Godhead, working together for the salvation of a people in Corinth for Paul to be able to write to the church of God in Corinth.

[3:03] And the same is true at Bremen, that there is this church of God in Bremen is a standing miracle to His grace. It's not because we've done a few things right. It's not that at all.

It's that God has been at work. You come upon a road sign along the highway, Men at Work. Well, there should be a sign, if not outwardly, at least in your mind, outside of every true church of God. God at work. God is here, working, building His church. And so He is to receive all the glory. That there's a church of God in Bremen then is to His praise.

That we've not self-destructed in 25 years is a miracle, is a wonder of grace. And if we'll exist another 25 years or another 25 days, it will be by the grace of God alone.

It's Christ who says, I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not be able to withstand it. So what we're doing today then is recognizing the work of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit in building His church.

[4:15] And namely this church. So He alone gets all the glory. For the record, we just want to state categorically that we as a church have not arrived.

If you're visiting us today, we want you to know that we have a long way to go. We need to reform. We need to be revived.

We don't love God and man as we ought. We don't have the passion for the lost as we ought. And zeal and evangelism. We don't have the holiness that we ought to be having at Grace Fellowship

Church.

And if you stick around, you would see those imperfections, imbalances. It's our sin and that to confess. But there's more to Grace Fellowship Church than our sin.

There is the grace of God in Christ through His Spirit. And for that, we want to rejoice and praise Him today. And so, let that be the Spirit in which we do everything.

[5:16] Soli Deo Gloria. To God be alone. Is the motto upon all we say today. And we say that not because it's the politically correct thing to do in a Reformed Baptist church.

To God be the glory. But because that's just the reality of the case. God alone deserves glory for the building of His church. Look at chapter 3 and verse 5 and following.

What after all is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants through whom you came to believe. As the Lord is assigned to each his task. I planted the seed.

Apollos watered it. But God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. But only God who makes things grow.

No man is anything with regard to the growth of God's church. God is everything. He's the one who makes the church grow. Verse 26 of chapter 1.

[6:23] So brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world.

And the despised things. And the things that are not. To nullify the things that are. So if. How are we to think of ourselves as the foolish?

As the weak? The lowly? The nothings? The nobodies? That's us. And why did he choose such? So that.

Verse 29. So that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus. Who has become for us wisdom from God.

[7:21] That is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written. Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.

So let that be the one rule of today. We will boast in the Lord. Now we all have our own journeys in grace. And by that I don't mean so much our own testimony of how we were saved.

But our testimonies, as that book by Richard Belcher speaks, of how we came to understand the doctrines of grace. That God is sovereign in the salvation of his people from first to last.

So we all have those stories. I'll just give a brief thumb sketch of my own journey in grace. My brother Stan and I were roommates at 523 West South Street.

And so we remained roommates when we went away to college at Grace College, Winona Lake. And there we were in contact with some Calvinistic brothers that believed that God chose those whom he would save.

[8:32] And I can still remember the strong reaction that I had against such a view of God. And it took another two years just to humble me to be able to receive the teaching of God's word on that matter.

To where I would actually eventually come to delight in that reality. I had to first see how lost I was. That I wasn't just a little sick. But I was dead in transgressions and sin.

And that nothing that I could do could ever fix the problem between me and God. And that if I was to ever repent and believe on him that he would have to do the first work.

And so some of the first influences upon us. I remember the tape by Al Martin, What's Wrong With Preaching Today? And a book by Walt Chantry, Today's Gospel, Authentic or Synthetic.

Easy believism. It filled the churches of the day with people who profess to be Christians. I'm a believer. I've been baptized. I'm a church member. But their lives were unchanged.

[9:38] They went on living like they had before their profession. There was no difference between their life and the life of someone in the world that didn't make a profession of faith.

There was no change of desires. No love for holiness. No love for his word. No evidence then of being born again. And so we came to see that conversion is more than a human decision.

It's more than a human act. It's not just someone saying, well, I see that I must believe in Jesus to go to heaven. So I'll make that decision as if that's all it is. It's just the will deciding for Jesus.

But we came to see that the scriptures teach that almighty God must do something to the sinner. And that conversion is such a radical change of the insides of a man that it's called a new birth.

They must be supernaturally born from above. And when God himself acts, the very mind and will and affections are changed.

[10:41] And so we began to see that salvation is a work of God. And that from beginning to end. So we would come home on the weekends to work in the church, Community Gospel Church, where Pastor Bob was ministering.

And after one of Mom's good dinners, we would sit around the table with our Bibles open and discuss these things and the questions that we had. And we're coming to understand more of the sovereignty of God's grace together with our wives.

And I can't thank God enough that together we came to see the wonder of God's grace. There were Banner of Truth conferences, ministers conferences in those days right up here, just two hours away in Grand Rapids.

And we would attend those. We heard Al Martin and Walt Chantry speak. We heard others, Ernie Riesinger and John DeWitt and J.I. Packer. And we were fed the word of God richly there.

And then had fellowship with other believers and other ministers and elders. And we found most helpful the council, the warm fellowship of Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in those days.

[11:52] And there were the many Banner of Truth books that we were devouring. Then 26 years ago, Stan taught a Wednesday night Bible study in his home.

He taught on the book of Romans. He had been teaching an adult class at Community Gospel when that class was asked to be brought to an end by the elders there.

He had got as far as chapter 5. And so we just started all over from Romans chapter 1 and went right through to the end of chapter 16. It took about a year to do so, some 30 to 40, I think, Deb, crowded into your home each Wednesday night.

And as we came to the end of that year of studying the book of Romans, we sensed that we had a common love for these truths of God's sovereignty and salvation that were so unfolded in the book of Romans.

We also had a common desire to have a church in this area that proclaimed these truths unabashedly. And so we held an organizational meeting on March the 17th, 1983.

[13:03] We voted on a hymnal. We're still using the Trinity hymnal that we selected in that day. We voted on a meeting place, the music room of the high school.

Well, we're not still meeting there today. But also the name Grace Fellowship Church. And I thought it would be interesting for you to hear some of the other suggestions and thoughts of the names that we might be today.

Had not this one won. There was the Word of Life Church. The Bremen Grace Chapel. Grace Bible Church. Grace Community Church.

Grace Haven. Grace View. Bremen Grace Church. Sovereign Grace Church. And in the end, Grace Fellowship Church One. On March the 27th, then, in '83, we had our first worship service, Palm Sunday, 64 in attendance.

We paid \$60 a week for rent and for a custodian to have that music room in the high school. We were there for almost four years. And that enabled us to save a lot of money so that when we had an opportunity to build a building, we could do so.

[14:20] Now, it's from this first worship service that we arrived at the 25th anniversary that we're celebrating this spring. Technically speaking, we were not formally constituted as a church until June the 24th, 1984, when we constituted with 23 founding members.

Months later, Pastor Bob and myself were installed as pastors, elders, and our first deacons were Lou Center and Max Rerick, with Max as the treasure, I believe.

In those days, church picnics were held at Pastor Bob's house. There was food and fellowship. Here's our deacon Lou Center and his wife Peggy.

Here's some of our youth group. And here's open-air preaching with a makeshift pulpit. In 1986, a building committee was formed.

Dick Meckling, Stan Heaney, Bob Heaney, Lou Center, and myself met with the architect, David Fields, to come up with a simple building plan. We bought five acres from Cal Shoemaker for \$40,000.

[15:36] This is a picture of that five acres from the south, as it was then. And here it is from the west. That row of trees has been thin, but it's still the row of trees out front of our building.

In August of 86, we held a groundbreaking ceremony on Sunday afternoon after our morning worship service. There was some turning of the sod. We heard a brief challenge from Pastor Bob. And notice again, the makeshift microphone stand. We stood there and sang, Great is thy faithfulness, and cast ourselves upon the trustworthiness of our Lord.

And we proceeded. These are some that were gathered that day. In the middle here, toward the left, you'll notice Jason Webb. Does he look like a future ministerial candidate?

He was a lost sinner on his way to hell here. But he's in Christ today, to the glory of our Savior. A month later, we had our next church picnic, September 86.

[16:47] And at this picnic, we set out bricks and shingles so that the folks could help us by telling us what they liked.

Here, John Lydig is pointing out to Dick Biltz his choice, while Alyssa has her own mind on the matter. These are some more shots of some of the folks who were with us then.

Some have since gone to heaven. Wouldn't you just love to know what LaVanche and Audrey Lydig are talking about? I've never seen Audrey so animated as when she was talking with LaVanche.

Even Jerry came, the dog in the background there, you see. There's a shot of Earl. Eventually, the decisions were made and Strang Construction of Plymouth was hired to build the building.

There's the foundation going up, and then the walls. And then the finished building.

[17:57] And it cost somewhere around \$250,000. We were able to move into it debt-free.

Thankfully, the Lord had provided for us that we were able to pay it off as we moved into it.

We were able to save a lot of money because of all the help of some of the work we did ourselves here. LaVanche and Earl were helping lay down the wire mesh for the concrete.

And then there was the cleanup of Gladys Wolfgang on the inside. On February 1st, 1987, we had our first worship service in the new building.

The following week, February 8th, was our dedication service. Pastor Ted Christman came, and he brought a lot of snow that day, if you'll remember. We were able to have our morning service and had to cancel the evening service.

Some of us met that could get to Stan's house for a time of worship together there. When we were at East Moline, and let me just say thank you, folks, for praying for us as we were at the association meeting, the General Assembly this week in East Moline, the Lord met with us and blessed us.

[19:09] But when we were there, we heard that there was a chance of snow today. And I thought, well, sure, Pastor Ted's coming. So snow and more snow.

May the 31st, 1987, we had our first baptism. It was a Notre Dame student studying there named Carl Bonesire. An annual Mid-America Reformed Baptist Conference gave us fellowship with many other churches of like mind.

We came to see that we weren't the first to have come to understand these truths, that there were many churches. And through them, we learned that, yes, it was a very historical understanding of God's truth, that there were people clear back in 1689 who wrote these things down to clarify that this is the truth taught in God's word.

And so it was a wonderful thing to have fellowship with other churches and believers from those churches. It was there at those family conferences that we got to know about a church in Owensboro, Kentucky, the Heritage Baptist Church.

And when they built their Christian school, I went down to help in pouring that foundation. Here in the middle in the red is Pastor Ted Christman, putting his hand to the plow and helping with that.

[20:33] And then he showed us that he could also keep the slaves working from up on top. And so when we thought about who to come and speak at our 25th anniversary, I couldn't help but think that our brother has had such an influence upon my own mind and heart, especially in those early years as we were just coming to understand the meaning of Reformation theology and ecclesiology, of what church life should be.

And I so appreciated to see a congregation holding to the same truths that we held to, but with such warmth and fellowship and esteem between pastor and flock.

And so I thank you, Brother Ted, for your influence upon us. Little did we realize at the time that it would be that church that would produce a future pastor for Grace Fellowship Church.

Pastor Aaron was ordained and installed on December the 14th, 2003. And Pastor Ted Christman and Dr. Jim Renahan were with us for that service.

From the beginning, we had a strong interest in foreign missions, and we were glad to learn about a group of Reformed Baptists that had come together to work together to take the gospel to other lands.

[21:56] Reformed Baptist Mission Services, RBMS. In 86, we joined RBMS. We learned about other Reformed Baptist missionaries and began supporting some of them. The first coordinator of RBMS was Leon Blosser.

Here he is with his wife, Margaret. They later went to Bahrain, where our brother was a chaplain in a hospital there, and we supported him and their ministry there.

This is one of the early administrative councils of RBMS. You can see David Straub there between Bob Self and Steve Martin in the back row, as he was the next coordinator after Leon got things started.

In 1988, we hosted the RBMS convention, and one of the speakers that year was a man named Stuart Elliott, and none of us really knew him, if at all, very well at all, and we came to appreciate his fellowship and his ministry of the Word to us.

And he was then a missionary in Lausanne, Switzerland, and told us about a young Swiss man in theological training that showed great promise of being a future leader in the church and said that he has some needs to be supported through his seminary training.

[23:16] So here was Olivier Favre and his wife Denise and the three boys back then. I looked back through the minutes, and we voted 23 to 4 to support him for his last two years in seminary at \$1,000 a month.

After 14 years pastoring in Lausanne, he set out to plant two further churches in Neuchatel and Payerne.

It was a joy to have them with us last week. They're ministering in Rockford today at the church there. Well, when ARBC, the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches, was formed in 1997, we were one of the original member churches.

In 2002, we held the General Assembly here in Bremen, and our fellowship with this association has continued to bear good fruit for us as a congregation.

It was a joy to be together just this past week and to see that God is not only maintaining a spirit of unity among us, but also a sense of zeal to do more and more for his namesake.

[24:21] We have just come to sponsor our first chaplain in the U.S. military, and he'll be preaching on Parris Island to 1,000 recruits each Lord's Day.

Tremendous opportunities that are before us and other things. We'll give a full report at our next fellowship luncheon on the week, but we are thankful what God has done in joining us together with other brethren of like mind.

Well, year by year, God continued to add to our number. The elders and deacons had agreed that once the attendance had reached 180 for a consistent number of weeks in a row that we would begin planning for expansion.

We worked on a plan with the architect, Chet Gamble, and then Ace Construction was hired to build the building. It took about five to six months.

And then on September 7, 2007, we had the dedication of our new facility. Now, these are just some pictures along the way.

[25:32] Here's some younger ladies of the church and some older ladies. Let me just mention, you remember Audrey Leading on the right and Helen Mercer on the left.

Helen was the daughter of deaf-mute parents and remained single all of her life to care for her parents, worked as a nurse up at Dodge in Mishawaka, and saved her money and gave a lot away. And at the end of her life, she started a trust to be given to missionaries of Reformed Baptist Mission Services. And so I say this not to her praise, but to challenge you to be thinking, what legacy will I leave behind, even financially?

It's because of that trust that we're able to send Olivier Favre monies each month from that trust fund and to send monies down to Omar Ramos in Santiago, Chile, that our sister had thought ahead and is now, her funds are still able to extend the gospel.

Be thinking about that. These were the days when we required married couples to dress in coordinating outfits. And to have coordinating hairdos as well.

[27:05] Here's Finger Food Fellowship with Jim Renahan before he was a doctor and before he was the professor at IRBS back in 1992. Some more shots of folks then that were with us and

enjoying that Finger Fellowship after church.

If your picture wasn't in this, I apologize. These were largely the shots that Ed and Judy Withrow took, and they're not here this morning. But I was thankful to get our hands on these photos that they provided and Peggy Center and perhaps some else of you.

I wanted to end with this shot. As far as I know, Ron, this is Natalie, right? And Natalie, we spoke of our first baptism here, being Carl Bonesire.

This was our most recent baptism just last year of Natalie Reynolds. Not as a baby, if you're visiting, she's a lot older now. And the Lord Jesus had converted her.

So many of these folks that we've had glimpses of in the pictures are in heaven today. We're still here. We're on the way, traveling together, leaning on our faithful God to bring us safely to his heavenly kingdom and to God alone be the glory.

[28:30] Now, we can have the lights again. And I've asked several to give testimony of God's grace to them through the ministry of the church here.

I thought I'd start, though, just by asking, how many of you were with us from the very beginning? Would you hold your hand up? All right, you can look around and see there's a few of us, dinosaurs, still left.

And we thank God for all that he's added to us along the way. Jim Webb. Jim, if you'd come and just share with us. We have the time marked, in a way, when we first started attending.

Naomi, our youngest, was two and a half months old. That was 1984 in late August or early September.

Can't really mark the date. We had had a picnic. We were attending a church down in Culver, and there was a church picnic that we got together, and the church from Warsaw and the church from here all got together.

[29:46] And we had met that there was other churches that were similar to us. At that, that's, with my memory, I can remember Stan being there and Pastor John.

Forgive me if I don't remember everybody. After that, our church down in Culver dissolved, and the pastor said he was going to Warsaw.

So, by the grace of God, we decided we were going to Bremen just for a different view on things. We started attending. And the first Sunday we attended, we had lunch with Stan and Deb. That's back when they lived next door to Pastor John. And I brought a friend from work that Sunday.

He claims to be a Christian. The guy that came, he ended up, I worked with him at Lobdell at the time. Anyways, when we first started attending, it was at the school in the music room, and I think the nursery was the band room next door.

[31:09] And one of the classes was out in the hallway over by the foyer where the windows were at. We met Ed and Judy.

Ed and Judy were always, as they are now, real, I don't know, they come forward and introduce themselves to you, and we became very good friends.

We spent many new years and everything else with Ed and Judy through the years. Some of those pictures that you saw up there, Ed was trying to convince me that I took pictures at that, well, it wasn't the groundbreaking, but out there at the property.

And I was standing next to a guy by the name of Brian Lock? Locker. Okay. And I had a camera I was looking through, and Ed said, see, you took pictures at that.

And I said, no, Ed, I didn't take any pictures. And he showed me that picture, and I convinced Ed that that was a camera that I never owned, and it must have been Brian's, and that that person on that picture was so skinny that it was probably an alien clone that my wife brought.

[32:25] We started when the original The Greeter started out.

Pastor Bob got together, I think, Brother Ed and myself, and trying to remember some of the original people that were in that group.

It evolved through the years. We, trying to think what else. Through the years, we traveled quite a ways up here, and so we had the pleasure of going over to people's houses occasionally to have dinner, and we went over.

I remember one time going over to John and Audrey's house. It was marvelous to see a couple that were older and still held on to the faith, and we're still Christians.

The church we attended before, we had an older couple, but I don't know that they could tell you what they believed. They went to church because it was the right thing to do.

[33:41] One evening, our second year here, we had built a house down in Argus and invited Pastor John and Jost to come over.

Jost was sharing some of her skills of interior decorating, and they were over, and we didn't have, I don't think we had much of anything in the house at that time.

And all of a sudden, there was a knock at the door, and I don't know how many people came. It was a surprise housewarming party, and that was marvelous.

We didn't have a whole lot back then, and we really appreciated all the love that we found here. We had never heard of a church that the people would support you when things, and the money always, there was money given at different times, and that money always came when we had already spent the kids' birthday money for milk, and, you know.

Sorry, Jason. But the church has grown, and it's just marvelous to be here.

[35:07] Well, maybe some of you know, maybe some of you don't know, but because of sin, I was put in a county jail back in 1987, and the Lord met me there and changed my life there, and I thank you for it.

He gave me good people there to come and visit. Pastor John would come and visit. At the time, we'd have Bibles set together. Phil Manley was a very good influence on me. I thank that brother very much for the influence he had on me while I was there.

And in the course of talking with Phil, I said, well, where would I go to church at when I get out? And Phil recommended coming here. And I thank Phil for that recommendation.

I thank everybody for coming to visit me there and praying for me, stuff like that over the years. I found a home. I've come here, and the first few times I've come here, I just felt so welcome and so loved.

And it's continued to grow. I remember some very fond memories at Pastor John's house with Bible studies and different parts of the Bible. I remember when Karen and Julie was quite small.

Wonderful time there.

[36:06] And just before we broke, or not broke up, but before we moved on, as far as with Pastor John's Bible study, he made the statement about before, I can't even think of his name now.

He's the oldest son. Yeah, Jonathan. You may not remember you making the statement about that he was going to be a boy, and sure enough he was. It's been just wonderful times there. Pastor Bob's house and others.

And folks, I just want to take this time to tell you, I really appreciate your love and prayers for me. We've had some pretty rough roads here lately with my dad's health and my pastor, and my great niece in Southlake.

But I want to give glory to God because I know I'm loved and I'm prayed for here, and I can't thank you folks enough for that. I've come a little bit unprepared this morning, but I'll try and keep it short, John. I came to the Lord back in 1982.

Maybe I should go back just a couple years. I have a very Catholic background. I was raised strict Catholic all my life. I was even in a seminary, studying to be a Catholic priest for 10 years.

[37:14] I was within three years of ordination. This was back in 1972. But when I had my first year of theology in Washington, D.C., I soon discovered that, like Luther, that the Catholic Church was full of corruption and that the one truth I did learn was that salvation was not to be found in the Catholic Church.

And so I left the church and moved out to Indiana. Spent about 10 years in limbo, not knowing where the truth was to be found, and got befriended by a pastor in our neighborhood who ministered the Word to me.

The Word of God, for the first time, became alive to me. I came to the Lord and went to a small church in Granger called Faith Bible Church. Yeah, it was Faith Bible Church.

About six years attending that church, there were some families there who introduced me to the doctrines of grace. And I knew nothing about the doctrines of grace, but I was searching for the truth.

And we started a Bible study up in some little restaurant in Dawashak we would meet on Saturday mornings. There was about four families. And we were seeking to find a Reformed church that we could attend.

[38:33] And the closest we knew at the time was up in Grand Rapids, which was a little bit too far for us. And then one of the members of that group found this church here, Judy Personette.

You remember that, John? And she told me about it, and I took my family down here, and I've been here ever since. This was back in 1989. And when I came here, I was struggling with a lot of really spiritual problems.

I hadn't really come to the full assurance of my faith. I was nagged by this Catholic works mentality that there must be something that I can contribute to my own salvation.

And it was a real hang-up. I mean, it was a nightmare alone just leaving the Catholic church with having been indoctrinated for all my life. And I was having nightmares about it. I had turned my back on God.

Satan was attacking me for years about this. But I came to this church with that struggle. I got myself into the Word. I've never lost the excitement for the Word of God that was there originally back in 82.

[39 : 42] I've had pastors tell me, oh, you'll calm down. You'll get over it, you know. It's just new to you now. It's new and it's fresh every day. And in the past, how many years has it been?

It'll be 20 years next year that I have attended here. John and many families here know the different crises I've been through, that the Lord has carried me through. And he's so proven himself faithful. I could write a book. I have no reason not to trust him anymore. He's my best friend. He's there for me. He's carried me through all these crises. And all I can do is as I go through them, I mean, I don't even look to try and avoid the crises anymore.

So long as the Lord is present with me in them, that's the most important thing in my life. And he's been so faithful. And I just keep coming back and sharing how the Lord has answered my prayers. I'm thankful for all the families here. You truly are my family. You are my family. And you're the people I'm going to spend eternity with. And I'm just looking forward to it.

[40 : 41] I can't tell you how much. So that's my testimony. And thank God for this church. It has been my salvation. Thank you. Well, thank you, brothers, for sharing those testimonies.

Our time is gone. We want to pray together and give God thanks, shall we? Lord, how kind and how good you've been to us.

That we should know you. That we should be covered by the blood of Christ. That we should have the Holy Spirit living in us to be our teacher and helper.

This is all grace. That you should have, by your providence, gathered us together as a church, as a family, to love one another, to bear witness to this world.

So there's been a kindness. And we thank you for it. And we pray that you would take us forward.

Up to this point, you have helped us. Will you not then go on helping us?

[41 : 39] Would you take the word of God that we are to hear today and sear it into our hearts that we might be marked, even by this day, of pausing along the way to remember and to look to you, our God, who's brought us here and who will lead us safely to your heavenly kingdom.

So bless the day. Bless our thoughts that we've had together here. And then bless your word to our hearts. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.