

Luke 18: 1-17 (Part 1) • Persistence in Prayer

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Luke chapter 18 is where we are. We're going to take about the first 17 verses of the chapter. But I want to start here this morning by reading through the first 8 verses before we open in prayer because that's the first section. We're going to take it in sections according to the content of what is going on here. Follow along with me as we read through the first 8 verses.

It says,

"¹ And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" ⁶ And the LORD said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on (the) earth?" (ESV)

Let's stop there and pray,

Father, as we delve into Your Word this morning, our hearts long to be open to hear Your voice. We recognize however, that it is a work that is needful on Your part, to open our spiritual understanding, to help us to hear with spiritual ears, and then to be doers also of the Word. Guide us and direct us, Lord, in the things that we hear today. For we open our hearts to You in Jesus name, amen.

I really love when we start off a passage like this, where there's like no question about what we're talking about. Sometimes the parables can be a little bit challenging. But we have this statement in verse one that just tells us right off the get go, that Jesus told this parable so that His followers would always pray and not lose heart.

Now, I'm sure there are people who attend other churches who get discouraged from time to time and feel tempted to give up praying. But I know that's never happened to any of you. Not once. No, that's actually wrong. We've all come to that place of being tempted to be discouraged because of prayer. So, this is an important passage to look at.

Jesus begins by saying that there was this judge, in this particular town, who had these interesting qualities that you would not expect or desire to find in a judge. And that is he neither feared God nor cared about people. It's not the guy you want to go stand up against, or in front of if you've got a court case going on.

And Jesus goes on to say that there was a woman in this town. And it's interesting that as Jesus is painting this picture for us, He doesn't just tell us there's a woman. Because women alone in that culture were at a disadvantage. But this is not only a woman, this is a widow. And culturally speaking, this is one of the weakest people in that society, or in that culture from the standpoint of rights and the ability to stand up for herself and get justice. And you can see the picture that Jesus is painting.

And we're told that as time went on, this woman relentlessly came before this judge crying out to him, that he might give her justice against her adversary. We don't know what the specifics were. And that the judge for the longest time completely ignored the woman. And we know why. We were told at the very beginning, he didn't care. He didn't care about people. It just wasn't a concern of his. This woman coming did not arouse any compassion in his heart. He didn't care.

However, as Jesus tells the story, the woman who was relentless in her appeals to the judge, finally got to the place where she bugged him so much that he finally said, "Good grief, I'm going to give this woman what she wants, so she'll just be quiet and stop coming into my courtroom." It's a great little picture.

And then we read this interesting statement that Jesus makes in verse 6. Look with me again in your Bible, "*6 And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says,'*" And what He's saying is, I want you to listen. He's saying, I want you to listen carefully to how this man responds to the woman. His response to her is, "I'm just going to give her what she wants to shut her up."

Why is Jesus saying, that you and I should pay attention? Obviously He's not telling us God is like that. This is one of those interesting parables where Jesus is drawing a contrast between what we're seeing here in this judge and the heart

of God the Father. In other words, He wants you to know that God is the exact opposite of what you're seeing conveyed by this particular surly old judge. And what Jesus wants you and I to know is, it relates to prayer. And the need on our part to stick with it and to persevere in prayer, is that God is never going to respond to you, or fail to respond to you, simply because He's tired of hearing you. Or, He's tired of seeing you come before the Throne of Grace.

I've had people actually say that to me before. I think God's tired of me coming to Him again. Let me just tell you something. God is not tired of you coming to Him. He invites you to come to Him. He wants you to come to Him. And here's the reason why. He is the opposite of this old judge. He cares. Simple. He cares.

And I say that, and I know that you hear what I'm saying. But there are Christians all the time who doubt that very thing. And we doubt it for different reasons. We doubt it because of the difficulty of our lives. The pain that we're maybe going through.

We sang this song this morning. And I love that line that repeats over and over, You are good. You are good. And it's great for it to just come out of our mouths. Because it's many times not coming out of our hearts. Sometimes it's only coming out of our mouths when we're made to sing it. It's like, well, the lyric says, You are good. So we're going to sing, You are good.

But right now I just really don't feel like God is good. Because I'm going through this circumstance, or this situation, or this has happened in my life, or in my family, or whatever the case might be. And right now I just... I don't feel... (Pastor Paul mimics quotation fingers around the word feel) Remember? I don't feel like God is good. Well, pastor Paul, I just don't feel like God is good right now!

Well, guess what? That doesn't change whether He's good. It changes... Sure. I understand it's how you feel. And God cares about how you feel. But your feelings do not create reality. In other words, your feelings do not change an essential attribute of God, which is His goodness. He is good. And we can sing that song regardless of what's going on in your life right now.

Maybe you're going through a very painful, very difficult circumstance. And God's still good. He's still good. And you can still sing that. And He still cares about your life. And He cares when you come and pray. And He sees when you cry. I believe that the Lord sees every tear. I think He knows and is very intimately acquainted with your pain, your challenges, your difficulties.

The Bible tells us that He is able to sympathize with us in our weakness. Because Jesus, God in human flesh, came to live our life to experience many of those weaknesses. He understands them from an experiential standpoint. And He is able to sympathize and then to strengthen us. He cares. He cares.

And I love what Jesus said here in verse 7, it says, *"And will not God give justice to his elect,..."* Let me just tell you. Don't get weirded out by that title. The elect simply means believers. But elect in a very literal way just means chosen. He's calling you His chosen.

By the way, that's a good thing. If you're married, I would encourage you once in a while to say that to your spouse. You're my chosen. I chose you. And I would still choose you. I used to say to Sue years ago, if all the women in the whole world were lined up end to end, I'd have a hard time... No, I wouldn't say that. I'd say, I'd pick you.

And that's what God is saying to you through the words of Jesus. Will He not do this for His chosen? He chose you. He loves you. It's a beautiful thing.

Here's the contrast. He says, *"...will not God,"* again I'm looking at verse 7. *"...will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice (and he says, He'll give it) to them speedily."*

And again that contrasting picture which says, listen, if this surly old mean judge who didn't care about people will respond simply because he got fed up. Will not the God who loves you and adores you respond to your prayers and be moved to action for His chosen? His chosen. The promise is that God will respond with concern and compassion.

And then Jesus tacks this statement on to the end of that when he says, *"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on (the) earth?"* And that may sound like a disconnected statement to what we're looking at here as it relates to prayer. But it is not disconnected at all. In fact, I find that this statement is perfectly placed in a conversation about prayer and persevering in prayer. Which is what this parable is also about.

It's about this woman coming to the judge. And continuing to come. And being relentless in her coming. And He's now talking about that as it relates to faith. Because you see, it takes faith to persevere in prayer. Right? It takes faith to persevere in prayer. In fact, we'll make a statement here that we'll even put on the screen.

PRAYER TAKES FAITH

Prayer takes faith. Okay?

And that's why Jesus asked the question, when the Son of Man returns, and by the way, He's coming back. He says, ...will He find faith on the earth? Will He find people who like that woman who comes relentlessly before the Throne of Grace. And don't give up until they get an answer? Will He find faith?

Prayer... I believe prayer is an expression of faith. I think that the way we approach prayer really tells a great deal about our faith. It tells a lot about how much faith we have. If you have faith, you're going to keep up your prayer to God. You're going to keep going forward. If you don't have much faith, you're going to quit at a predetermined point. And you're going to say, well, what's the deal? And I'm sure people have come to you, maybe you've felt this way before.

But I've had people say to me, well, pastor Paul, I prayed and nothing happened. And what they're communicating to me is, I put an expiration date on my expectations for God's answer to my prayer. And He didn't meet them,... you see. And now I'm disappointed. So now what am I going to do?

And they asked me that like, it's like, now what am I going to believe in? Now that God didn't come through for me. Now, what am I going to do? And it seems to not even dawn on them that maybe you need to persevere in prayer. Maybe you need to keep relentlessly going before the Throne of Grace until you get the answer that you're looking for. Or at least an answer that is specific to your need.

Isn't that funny that we do that? We have these expectations that say, I'm going to pray, here's how long is reasonable to wait. Right? I mean, any reasonable person wouldn't wait any longer than that. And then after that point, I'm going to get upset. And I'm going to probably tell God, I don't think You even care about me." It happens. It happens actually quite frequently.

And it's interesting that Jesus puts this thing in the form of a question: Will the Son of Man find faith when He returns? It suggests to us that perhaps when He does return, that this is going to be somewhat rare. That people are going to have the kind of faith that perseveres and presses through in prayer, even when you don't readily get an answer.

I've related to you guys, how many times, about the very first time I ever read that book by George Mueller, his autobiography. And it absolutely... A bomb

went off in my head about prayer. Because largely, once George Mueller got saved, the book really becomes largely like a prayer journal in a sense. And he talks about the things he was praying for. And he makes a note in there about how long he's been praying for something.

If you don't know who George Mueller was, he was a man who grew up in what was Prussia back in the early 1800s. And went to England; was very concerned about children who were basically living on the streets. And he started orphanages in England. And he made a determination early on that he was never going to ask for money. Never. He wouldn't even answer the question if someone asked if he needed money. How do you like that? Because he made his mind up, he was going to hound God and not people. I like that.

Anyway, I'm reading this book and you turn to the page and start reading this next entry and it's like, day number 352 of praying for such and such. And I'm like, you're joking. Almost a year praying and asking for this, whatever thing is. Just blew me away.

And I had to confront my own expectations. My own expiration date that I put on my prayer requests. And it was very convicting, I have to tell you. And very encouraging at the same time. Very inspiring to do what we're seeing here, And that is taking... That's not the right word. Exercising faith in prayer so that it perseveres, so that it continues on.

Let me show you a passage from Colossians that's very important in this discussion. Colossians 4:2. Paul writes,

Colossians 4:2 (ESV)

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

And that word steadfastly is very, very important. Because to be steadfast means to be unwavering. I want in my life to be unwavering. Unfortunately, I do a lot of wavering. But I don't want to be that way. And particularly as it comes to prayer, I want to be a man who stands in perseverance and so forth.

And there are so many important things that we could probably talk about related to this. And I can't get into all of them. But it certainly reminds us that prayer is not just a quick encounter with God. Where we meet in the elevator and say, hi, (a few niceties) and here's what I'd like. And okay, this is my floor. I'll see you later. And that's sometimes the way we approach prayer.

I think what we're seeing here in this parable is that prayer is an ongoing conversation. Prayer is something that must be approached with patience. Which I think we probably all struggle with from time to time. And obviously, the persistence that is motivated by faith.

And speaking of prayer, let's look at the next parable. Verse 9 goes on. It says, *"He also told (them) this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. (In other words, they were trusting in their own righteousness) and treated others with contempt: (He says,) 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector."*

Now stop there please. I'll get to the whole story, I promise. But I want to prime your heart in the sense of understanding, culturally, when Jesus begins to tell a parable that involves a Pharisee and a tax collector, the people would have naturally assumed or expected, that the Pharisee is going to be the hero in this story. And the tax collector is going to be the goat. Okay.

Because Pharisees were the religious elite. They looked up to these people. Tax collectors were despised. Because they were essentially turncoats. They were collecting taxes for Rome. They were gouging their fellow citizens. And they were hated by everybody. You got to understand going into this story, people have an expectation, who's going to be the hero in this story. I love it when Jesus turns the norm on its ear.

It goes on here. It says, verse 11, *"The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get."*

By the way, back when I was a kid we called this bragging. Today, it is called having a positive self-image. Right?

But it goes on. Verse 13. *"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast,"* which was a gesture of intense grief.

And he said, *"God, be merciful to me a sinner!"* You can tell by his words... Here's this tax collector, that he's under great conviction related to his sin. He can't even look up. He hangs his head. And he's crying out to God, confessing his sin, and so forth.

And then Jesus gives this commentary in verse 14. Very interesting. He says, "*I tell you, this man* (He's speaking of course of the tax collector.) *went down to his house,* (Or you and I would say, went home) *justified.*" Or if you will, forgiven. Because remember justified means just as if you have never sinned. It means acquitted. Okay? He went down to his house forgiven "...*rather than the other.*"

Now, it's at this point that the crowd would have gone, that's... I wasn't seeing, I didn't see that coming. Because again, they would have thought the Pharisee is going to be the hero. And Jesus makes it out to be the exact opposite.

And He says that only one of these two men went home forgiven that day. And the reason the tax collector went home forgiven, and we know he's the one, is because he very simply acknowledged his sin before God. He confessed it. And he sought forgiveness. God, forgive me, have mercy on me, he said. And we'll talk here in a moment why that's so important.

But the Pharisee, he never says those things. Because he's too busy comparing himself to others. Did you notice what he said in verse 11? Look with me there again. "God, I thank You that I'm not like other people." And then he starts picking out all these unsavory characters from society. "I'm glad I'm not an extortioner. Never done any of that. I'm glad that I'm not unjust. I'm a fair man. I'm glad I'm not an adulterer. I'm especially glad I'm not like that scumbag over there. That tax collector. Thank You God, for making me who I am, appreciate it. Thank You! Amen."

What's wrong with that prayer? Well, if you really want to feel good about yourself, all you got to do is look around and find somebody who's living on a lower moral level than you. And it's not that hard, frankly. You can find people. You can find people who are bottom feeders from the standpoint of moral goodness. And there's always somebody out there doing something worse than you. And that can hopefully make you feel better about yourself. Isn't that just nice?

Here's the problem: God doesn't judge you and I based on how we compare with other people. He judges us based on how we compare to Him. And His level, His standard of righteousness, holiness, and purity. Which by the way we don't do very well on. And some people frankly don't like that sort of a deal. I mean, how in the world are you ever going to measure up to God? Right?

God sets this standard, this bar, that is so big, so tall, that you and I couldn't possibly achieve it in a million lifetimes. And then He says, that's the standard.

Okay? And that's the standard by which you will be judged. And some people are like, what's up with that? That's not fair. Well, it's not about fairness. It's about who God is.

You see, you and I can compromise our morality. God cannot compromise who He is. He can't be less than He is. I can have a particular moral standard. Okay. But then I can see somebody that I love or care about who doesn't meet that moral standard. And I can say, oh, that's okay. Do you understand that God can't do that? Do you understand that if He were... Well, it's even ridiculous to say, if He could do it because He can't.

It is impossible. Because to compromise, He would be less than who He is. And He would not be God. God cannot be less than who He is. He doesn't possess a moral standard like we do. His moral standard is who He is. It's not how He thinks or what He does. It's who He is. It's what He is. Are you with me?

He cannot deny what He is. He can't do it. There's no way to lower the standard, you see. To lower the standard would be to compromise. To compromise would be to let it be less than who He is. To be less than who He is would be not God. That's the point.

Here's the real cool thing though, in case you're feeling a little bit miffed about the fact that God set a standard so high. He knew all along that you couldn't reach that standard. And He's always provided a means of forgiveness. Even in the Old Testament. He gave them a sacrificial system that pointed toward a final sacrifice that would happen in the future, when He sent His Own Son to bear our penalty on the cross, dying in our place.

God always knew that He was going to do that. God always had planned for you and I to be forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He always knew that there was going to be a way that He would provide for you and I to understand His moral standard. And at the same time be forgiven for our lack of ability to attain to it, you see. And that's the beauty of this whole thing.

But what we see in this parable is one man, the Pharisee, who just isn't seeing reality. Because you got to understand the Pharisees during the time of Jesus, had come to a place of interpreting the law of Moses where they believed they could actually keep it in order to be acceptable to God. They believed that they could keep the law sufficiently to be accepted into heaven.

Now, God never promised them that. But they believed it anyway. This tax collector, on the other hand, is simply seeing himself as he truly is. He's seeing

the reality of his life. "That I don't measure up. And I need to come to God for mercy."

Look what the Apostle John said. Here's a passage from 1 John chapter 1. It says,

1 John 1:8 (ESV)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say we have no sin, we... (actually are in a state of self-deception) *and* (He says) the truth is not in us.

What truth? Well, the truth that God confesses throughout the course of His Word. Which is that He's God and you're not. That there's a standard of righteousness that there's no possible way that you can match or meet. And that you and I are sinners. That's the truth of the Word.

When you and I come to that realization, we are walking in conjunction with the truth, in keeping with the truth. If we say, well, that's not the way it is. Then the truth isn't in us. That's essentially what John is saying. When we understand that we are sinners and we need God's mercy, we're simply seeing ourselves as we really are.

And then I love this final section that we're going to be looking at this morning. Verses 15, 16, and 17. This is so beautiful because it really... It paints a contrast to the self-righteousness of the Pharisee.

It says, "15 Now they were bringing... infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them (meaning the disciples) to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

Now, that last verse, verse 17, is the one I want to send you home with, really thinking about. Okay? We're going to read it one more time. *"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom like a child shall not enter it."*

I want you to notice Jesus didn't say, whoever doesn't receive the kingdom as a child... That has actually been a very common misinterpretation of that verse. In fact, it's one of the things that has fueled infant baptism, which, by the way, the Bible knows nothing of.

And the idea, or the belief has been, that we got to baptize our kids when they're infants because you have to receive the kingdom of God as a child. That's not what Jesus said. You must receive the kingdom of God like a child. And the issue there, or the real point of this whole thing is, how a child receives things. And it's so refreshing. Because it's so opposite of the Pharisee.

I love the way kids are. We have a little grandchild. Our youngest is one. Rosie. And she is a character. Started walking at 8 months and she hasn't slowed down since. And my daughter calls her, her, one year old tornado.

And Rosie, when we come over to the house, she comes over to me. And she's just knee high to a grasshopper. But she walks up to me and she looks up. She's got to bend her head back like that. And then she sticks her arms up in the air. And she wants me to pick her up. And it's just... She's... There's no guile. There's no pretense. That's the way we come to God.

So often like the Pharisees, we're full of ourselves. Or we're full of our own accomplishments. Or we're full of our own whatever. It's all about me. And that's what the Pharisee was doing. But to come to God like a child is just like, yeah, pick me up. I'll drool on you..., sort of a thing. And it's just, it's just so beautiful coming to the Lord like a child.

We have so many preconceived biases. I know that's redundant. But we come into this whole concept of God with just so much ugly preprogramming that it gets in the way. It just absolutely gets in the way.

Most of the people, I'm almost willing to say that the majority, the vast majority of the people who say today that they're atheists, have never really thought about it. They're only saying they're atheists because there's this preprogrammed junk that is standing between them and God. And they haven't really thought it through.

In fact, I mean, I know that for sure when a 13 year old tells me they're an atheist. It's like, good grief! You don't even have time to decide who you are, let alone who God might be. But that's the way it is with most people. There's just so much stuff we got to get past. It's like, why don't you take all that junk and just jettison it. And just open your heart to God like a child.

You guys, some of you remember here about a year and a half ago, two years ago, something like that. When we had Adam's Road come here to Calvary Chapel. You guys remember? I think they came on a Sunday night. But it was really amazing.

If you've never seen Adam's Road ministry, they're a group of people who travel all over the country talking about how God brought them out of Mormonism, into biblical Christianity.

And one of the young men who got up to give his testimony. It was quite powerful. He was telling about how he was down south. I think it was like in Florida or something like that. And he was on his mission. He was on his... He was doing his Mormon mission. And he targeted this Baptist pastor who he determined in his heart he was going to convert this guy and his entire church.

And he just started meeting with this guy on a regular basis to talk. And they would get together and argue and this and that. The Pastor finally challenged this young man. He was probably in his early 20s at the time. But he challenged him to take the Bible... Take particularly the New Testament. He said, here, I want you to take the New Testament. And I want you to read it with the eyes of a child. That's all he said. That's all he said. Just read it with the eyes of a child.

And this young guy went back to his apartment and he did just that. He opened up the Bible. And he decided, I'm going to forget everything I've been told. All my preconceived ideas, all the pre-programmed stuff that's in the way. And I'm just going to read it like I've never read it before. Like I've never heard anything about this before. Like nobody's ever said boo to me about this before. I'm just going to read it like it's brand new information."

And he talks about how many times he read the New Testament. It was like a couple of dozen times in a very short period of time. And how through just the simple reading of God's Word, through the eyes of a child, brought him to a place of understanding that the Jesus of the Bible, was very different from the one he'd been taught about as a young man. And he ended up coming to the Lord.

But the beauty of that whole picture is just simply approaching the thing with the eyes of a child. Coming with a childlike faith, a childlike acceptance, a childlike open heart.

Ask yourself the question: What's in the way of my ongoing relationship with the Lord? Because even as Christians, we still need to take inventory from time to time and find out: Have I grown past this heart that simply embraces the Word of God at face value? Have I grown skeptical. And have I grown surly. And I'm looking at things like, oh, I don't know.

But just open your heart. Open your heart. Read the Bible with an open heart, a new heart. It's those kinds of hearts... The kingdom of God belongs to those kinds of hearts. Those kinds of people.

Let's stand together. It's 10 days until we celebrate Christmas. Isn't it? Right? Isn't it the 15th today? Yeah. Some of you're going, oh no, I got to get busy.

I don't know if anyone has attacked you about your celebration of Christmas. It's funny I've been attacked this year. Mostly by email, so it's not too bad. Don't worry about it. I mean, don't feel sorry for me. And in fact, one time I didn't handle it very well either. This gal wrote me a really scathing note and I returned the favor. And I shouldn't have, frankly.

Because there are a lot of people who really think that any kind of celebration of Christmas is wrong. Because apparently somewhere in history back in time, pagans celebrated something on December 25th. I've never been a pagan. Not that I can remember anyway. I remember distinctly being a heathen. But never a pagan. (Congregation chuckles) And I've never been involved in any pagan celebrations. Never in my life.

And I've come to the place of understanding, it doesn't matter when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. And that's one of the things they'll say. They'll say, first of all, Jesus wasn't born on December 25th. I'm like, duh. Of course, who cares? Who cares? It doesn't matter if you celebrate the birth of Christ, on June 2nd or, October 4th or, November 20th. I don't care.

The point is what we're doing at Christmas is, we're celebrating a very real event. And that is the fact that God gave the greatest gift that's ever been given to mankind in the person of His Son. Because when that Baby was born, God was giving to you and I, the solution to our problem. And the problem is sin. And the solution is Jesus. Because that Baby grew up and died on a cross for you and for me. That's why we celebrate.

I don't care if pagans once took December 25th and did their thing on it. Because you know what? My God has the right to every single day on the calendar. And there's no pagan that's going to kick Him out of any one of those days and say, you can't celebrate Me on that day. He gets all of them. Right? There's not one we're going to surrender to pagans or anybody else for that matter.

Let's make the celebration real. Let's make it about Jesus. If you're one of those people that finds Christmas challenging because maybe you've lost something

during Christmas. Or maybe you've lost something in this last year. I want to challenge you to make Christmas all about Jesus. Just make up your mind, make it all about Him. It's not about you. And it's not about what you lost. And that's not to say God doesn't care. He does. He loves you. And He cares very much about what you've lost.

But that's not what Christmas is about. That's not what the celebration is about. It's about God giving us the best gift we could have possibly ever received in the person of His Son, amen.

We're going to have people down front here to pray.

Father, thank You so much for giving us Your Word. Your Word is so good. You teach us. And You're so faithful to teach us. And we pray that You'd keep teaching us, Lord. Keep teaching us out of the Scripture. Help us to keep learning, keep growing. And help us, Lord God, to open our hearts to You and Your Word with the mind and the heart of a child.

To receive what You say without all of the preconceived stuff. But just to accept Your Word for what it is. The living Word of God. Be with us we pray Father. Especially through this season. And I do pray Lord for those who struggle at Christmas.

And I pray my Father God, that You would give them the strength to rise up. Even in the midst of their struggles and their loss and to worship You, as King of kings and Lord of lords. We thank You and praise You in the precious and powerful name of Jesus Christ. And all God's people said, amen.

God bless you.

Have a good rest of your Sunday.