

Take Up a Corner

Good morning church. What an incredible joy to gather this morning as the people of Christ to join our hearts together in worship, bringing our praises before our King, bowing before Him in prayer, opening His word and submitting our lives to our faithful Creator. It truly is an honor for me this morning to be called upon to share in God's word with you. And I'm really looking forward to growing together in Christ as we now turn our attention to His infallible, immutable, irrefutable, eternal life giving, life sustaining word. And so may we have ears to hear this morning what Christ would speak to His church.

And may we have eager hearts and minds to submit to and obey His rule and authority over our lives. As Pastor Andre mentioned, it's hard to believe that it's been almost five years since God called me to work with the high school students at Trinity Community Church. And it's been quite a journey, one that my family and I have been tremendously blessed to be on. And as Andre mentioned before, God called me to the youth of Trinity. God had called me to work with gang members on the streets that of downtown Fresno.

Now I suppose that in God's providence, and perhaps with a sense of humor, God knew I would need the training and preparation of 15 years with hardened criminals before taking on the youth of Trinity Community Church.

And in retelling the account of God calling me to Trinity, as you heard Pastor Andre do just moments ago, He does like to point out that God just moved me from working with one gang to another. And usually He adds that the gang members downtown were much more manageable than the ones in North Clovis. And I'd have to agree with Him. So God called my wife and I to full time ministry 20 years ago. And as newlyweds we moved from Southern California to Fresno to start our new life together.

And we came kidless and clueless. And in many ways we are still clueless. But God has blessed us with four amazing sons. Our oldest is entering His final year of high school and our youngest will be turning eight in just a few months. So needless to say, lots has happened in these last 20 years of ministry and God has been good to us.

God is faithful and of course part of God's goodness and faithfulness to me and my family has been bringing me on Trinity staff and to grow together with you and to seek the Lord with such faithful men and women.

After the second service, one of the high school leaders came to me and He asked me, He said, why do they only let you up here when it looks like a preschool room, so I'm going to have to look into that myself.

But when Pastor Andre invited me to the pulpit this morning, I knew almost instinctively which passage of Scripture that I would want to share together. And so I'm going to ask you to take out your Bibles and open them up to the book of Mark. Mark Chapter two, the second gospel account in the New Testament. Mark, Mark Chapter two. Now, if you forgot your Bible at home this morning, or perhaps you don't own a Bible for yourself, we would offer the Bible in the back of the pew in front of you or the seat back in front of you.

You can use that this morning. And maybe you don't own a Bible, you don't have one that you call your own. We would like to change that this morning. So feel free to take one of those Bibles, put your name in that, take it home with you, and enjoy reading God's Word. So why Mark Chapter two this morning?

The opening section of Mark Chapter two has long time been a favorite of mine, partly because the Gospel of Mark is my favorite of the four Gospels. Mark is an action packed narrative of the life of Christ. It's the shortest of the four Gospels. And Mark moves quickly from scene to scene as He's giving to us the account of Jesus. In fact, one of Mark's favorite words to implore throughout His Gospel is the word immediate.

It is Mark's way of sharing His excitement with us, His excitement with His readers. This excitement that He can barely contain about this person known as Jesus of Nazareth. Now, nearly 17 years ago when I became a father, I realized I have a lot to learn. And so I began reading books on parenthood. And one of the first books I read in the opening chapter, it talked about one of the words that children use most often to read towards their fathers.

And it's this word. Look. Look at me. Dad. Dad, watch this.

Look what I drew for you. Dad. Dad, come and see this. This is what Mark is doing with the use of the word immediate, which is used multiple times in today's passage. He wants us to look see Jesus.

He wants us to see and behold Christ's power, His love, His truth, His compassion, His deity, His strength, His humility. But most of all, I believe that Mark wants us to see the grace and the authority of Jesus Christ to forgive sin. Each of these attributes that I mentioned, and especially Christ's grace and authority to forgive sin, are so clearly portrayed in today's passage. And I think you're going to see why this Passage has been a favorite of mine, and perhaps it will become a favorite of yours as well. I'm going to read all of Mark, chapter 21-12, but for the sake of time, I prepared to take us only through verse five this morning.

But would you follow along with me as I read out loud for us?

And when He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. And many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And He was preaching the word to them. And they came bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic son, your sins forgiven. Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit, that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven? Or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk. But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralytic, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.

And He rose and immediately picked up His bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified. God saying, we never saw anything like this. Amen. Let's pray together. Oh Father, once again we humbly bow before you.

And we bow with grateful hearts. We bow with overflowing gratitude and adoration for all that you have given to us in Jesus Christ. For even the apostle Paul said, thanks be to God for His indescribable gift. How can we fully grasp and fathom all that you have given to us? And this morning we also thank you and give you praise for your word.

And we thank you that your word is true, it's reliable, it's trustworthy. Your Word that is living and active, it's rich and vibrant. You've given it to us for our own growth, for our edification, for our sanctification, and to convict us, to give us wisdom and guidance that we may know how to rightly worship you in spirit and in truth. Oh, Father, I ask this morning that you would once again open our hearts and our minds that we would behold wondrous things in your word, that we would behold Christ. We want to see Jesus this morning, and we want to see Him high and lifted up.

May it be so, for your glory, in Christ's name. Amen. Mark, chapter two begins with a series of five controversies. And the same pattern in these controversies and conflicts repeats and persists in each one of them. First, Jesus does something surprising.

Secondly, He is challenged by the religious leaders. And then finally Christ responds in a way that silences them. And these conflicts, they build to a climax in which Christ confronts the scribes and Pharisees in chapter three with a direct question regarding the Sabbath. But they refuse to answer. And Mark tells us that Christ was angered by their silence.

And at this point Mark tells us that the Pharisees go out and immediately hold council how to destroy Jesus. Now, what possibly could work these religious leaders up into such a hate filled, murderous frenzy? Today's passage, the first of these five controversies or these five confrontations answers that question. So let's jump in and let's start at the beginning. Verse 1.

And when He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. Now you may be thinking to yourself, capernaum, home? Aren't we talking about Jesus of Nazareth? Wasn't He born in Bethlehem? Where did Capernaum come from?

Well, by this point in Mark's Gospel, John the Baptist has already been arrested. Jesus has already begun His earthly ministry. And as an itinerant preacher and healer, Jesus has been coming and going throughout Galilee. Already thousands, if not more, have been impacted by this young preacher who seems to have come out of nowhere. And when Christ started His ministry, He set up shop, if you will, in Capernaum, a sort of home base.

And it is here that Christ has returned and word is getting out. Jesus is back. Come and see. And what happens when word gets out? The crowds gather.

Chapter one ends with a declaration that as a result of Christ's unsolicited publicity, He could no longer openly enter a town, but resorted to desolate places. And yet the crowds still flocked to Him. And now it would appear in chapter two that even in His own home He could not escape the throngs of people. Verse 2. Many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even the door.

And He was preaching the Word to them. Word was out and the people came. Christ had returned and the crowds flocked to Him. But this was no ordinary crowd. The place was packed.

This was standing room only. Every nook Every cranny of the home field, right out door. Now, years ago, when my wife and I had just the first two of the four sons that God would give to us, we took a family trip to Disneyland. And our two boys, they were toddlers, they were young. Young enough to walk, old enough to walk, but young enough that they still wanted to be carried.

Some of you parents know what that's like. But at one point, we found ourselves in the wrong place at the wrong ch time. We decided to take the boys on the ride. It's a Small World.

So now, if you are familiar with Disneyland, you may recall that that ride is at the far end of Main street, which also happens to be where all of the activity for the Main street parade begins. And so when we came off of the ride, we entered just a mayhem of

crowds. It was packed, the paths were roped off, and it was kind of chaotic. You couldn't walk without brushing up against somebody, pushing, moving, trying to navigate, looking for an opening. And this was the first that I have seen of my wife having a panic attack, clutching onto the hands of our boys so that they would not be swept away and lost in the crowd.

This is the scene at the humble house in Capernaum. Everyone vying for a spot to get close to Jesus. Pushing, prodding, moving, navigating for position. But the gospel writers tell us that there was no more room. Think about those words for a moment.

No more room or no room left? And I can't help but think how this is a sad commentary on many of our lives. Our lives are full. They are crowded with activity. The hustle and bustle, late nights, early mornings, coming, going, in a word, hectic.

Or perhaps a better word, distracted. And where does Jesus fit into all of this? Where does Jesus fit into our frenzied lives?

If He is truly at the center, as we like to think He is, like we like to say He is, then why too often do our lives seem as if there is standing room only? Our lives are swayed to the rhythm of the crowds, moving, pushing, prodding. And I see this so clearly in the lives of many young people. Athletics, academics, associations, you name it, the list goes on. And when push comes to shove, there is no room left.

No room left for Christ. No room left for His Word, no room left for His church.

Is it any wonder that we are seeing young people walk away from the church at such staggering rates? And these aren't young people who haven't been brought up in the church, but rather young people from Christian households. Recent studies by the Varna group reveal that two out of three high school students brought up in the church will stop church attendance within a year of graduating high school, and only one out of five of these students return to regular church participation. Does that surprise you?

But why should it surprise us when, sad to say, many of us adults are setting the example? No room left. Maybe this isn't a commentary of your life, and I pray that it isn't. That it won't be. I like to think of Trinity as an exception. I like to think that our young people are going to break that mold.

They're going to break that statistic that you and I are modeling for them. What it means to practice and trust the call of Christ that you know so well. Matthew 6:33 but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you as well. I pray that we will be a church, that we will be a people that knows what it is to prioritize Christ above all the frenzied activity the world throws at us. But believe me, I know all too well in a world that never sleeps, putting Matthew 6:33 into practice.

Much easier said than done. One more observation from verse 2 He was preaching the Word to them. Don't miss this. The crowds have flocked to Christ, standing room only, pressing upon Him. And what is He doing?

He is preaching the Word to them. Not performing silly magic tricks, not entertaining them, not telling them stories to make them feel good about themselves and boost His thumbs up on social media.

No, He is preaching the Word to them. Think about that. Of all the things that Christ could have been doing for or doing in front of the crowd, He was preaching the Word to them. Why? We have to ask why?

Well, primarily for two reasons. One, because that is why He was sent. And two, it is the preaching of the Word that changes lives. In chapter four of His gospel account, Dr. Luke records the words of Jesus affirming this very purpose.

And in Luke chapter four, after a full day of healing and casting out demons and performing miracles, Christ departed to a desolate place. And you know the story. The crowds sought Him out and they sought to detain Him for themselves, to keep Him for themselves. And In Luke chapter 4, verse 43, Christ makes this declaration, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose. The teaching ministry of Christ is a repeated emphasis throughout the Gospels.

And it is so easy for you and I to focus on the miracles of Christ, to focus on that part of His ministry that we miss, His preaching ministry. But I want to remind us this morning that Christ was not a miracle worker who occasionally preached. He was a preacher who also performed works of power. You see, the miracles are not the point. The miracles are simply pointers pointing us to Christ as the Son of God who came with a message from God, the message of salvation for all who would put their trust in Him for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

It is this message. It is this word that changes lives. It is this word that brings transformation, which is why the apostle Paul so eloquently put it, faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of God, Christ.

Now, when we think of the Word, when we hear that, we often think of the Bible that we're holding in our hands this morning. We think of the entire canon of Scripture, all 66 books, Genesis to Revelation. But Christ, He did not have this beautifully packaged collection of books bound together with His name inscribed on the front of it.

So what was the word that Christ was preaching? I think that's a good question to ask. What was the word that Christ was preaching? And there is so much that we could learn about that. There's so much bound up in that one thought or that sentence.

He was preaching the Word to them, so much that we could take an entire sermon or perhaps sermon series to mine those treasures. So I'm actually going to let Pastor Sam tackle that one another time, but to scratch the surface and whet our appetites. Simply put, Christ was preaching. Christ, He was preaching the forgiveness of sins as revealed in the word about himself, the Word already given through Moses and the prophets. Again, Dr.

Luke makes this crystal clear for us. So there's no doubt in our mind what Christ was preaching. And what has become another favorite passage of mine in Luke's Gospel account, In fact, a favorite passage, so much so that my wife and I decided to give our firstborn son the middle name after this encounter. Luke 24, the Emmaus Road. So our firstborn son is named after that, His middle name at least.

And on the Emmaus Road, you may remember the scene. Christ held, had been crucified. He's been buried. He's been resurrected. But the word of His resurrection had not been widely spread yet.

And so now, just days after the resurrection, days after the burial, days after the crucifixion, two of Christ's disciples, they're being burdened and sorrowful. They're dejected and they're remembering the agonies of Christ on the cross. They're walking from Jerusalem to a village named Emmaus. And as they're walking and talking with each other, behold, Christ joins them. And yet they were kept from recognizing that this man now on the path with them was the same Christ they saw just days before, hanging on a Roman death instrument hanging on a cross.

And as they walked together, talked together, Christ asked them about their conversation, asked them about why they were so sorrowful. And they began to explain the reason for their sorrow. That they had hoped this man from Galilee was the promised deliverer. But last, He was killed on the cross and He was laid in a tomb. And at this point in the conversation, Christ takes the lead.

And after giving these disciples a gentle rebuke for their sluggish hearts to believe, He goes on to explain the necessities of the Messiah's sufferings. He explains the glory to come. But Luke records for us in verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets. He interpreted to them all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself. You see, the word Christ preached was the word concerning himself that He was that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And I believe this is exactly what Christ was preaching in that crowded Capernaum home in Mark, chapter two. And now the show and tell object lesson of that preaching is about to be provided. Verse 3. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men. Here they come.

And from the clues of the text here, including the other Gospel accounts as well, it would appear that this is more than the arrival of just five men. This is an entourage. This is a parade. This is a crowd all of its own. And at the center of this crowd is four men.

And in the center of these four men is one man suffering from severe prison paralysis. Do you see the picture? Like the bullseye on the target, and right in the center is a man who has incredible need.

Now, as you know, paralysis can come in a variety of forms. It can be caused by a variety of reasons. Some who are paralyzed are born with that ailment. Others become paralyzed because of an accident or because of sickness.

We don't know much about this man's condition as far as how long He's been paralyzed or what may have caused the paralysis. But we do know that this man has now become so dependent on others that His paralysis was severe. And that if it wasn't for the help of others, He would never on His own be brought before Jesus. And so they come, bringing Him to Christ, bringing this man with great need to Christ. But it is not going to be an easy task.

Verse 4. And when they came, and when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him. And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. These men were determined when they arrive on the scene, there is no way for them to get to Jesus. But rather than give up and turn back, they move into action and implement Plan B.

This is what I call demolition. Faith. These men were so confident of what Christ could do for their friend that they weren't going to let anything stand in their way. Let me ask you a question this morning. Do you have those kinds of friends in your life?

Are you that kind of friend to somebody else? These men didn't turn back at the slightest obstacle. They didn't say, well, at least we tried. It's the thought that counts, right? Maybe we can come back tomorrow and Jesus isn't as busy.

No. They were determined because they realized they knew that Christ was the only hope for their friend. It was either Christ or nothing at all. So not even a crowd, or rather especially not a crowd, was going to get in their way of bringing their friend to Jesus. Sad to think that for over 2000 years, in many ways it is still the crowd that is keeping people from coming to Jesus.

Fear of what others might think, fear of being considered an outcast, fear of the cost of following Christ, also known as giving up particular sin habits. Fear of being made fun of or laughed at, but not with these men. They weren't going to allow the crowd to stand in their way. They had a faith that was going to tear through all of that, and not just that, but

they had a faith that was literally going to cause them to tear through the roof. Now, it was not uncommon in first century Israel for a house to have a flat roof that also acted as a balcony or a patio area.

Space was limited, so rooftops became a valuable addition to the home, and as such, many of these homes had staircases that allowed easy access. Typically, these roofs were constructed of timbers laid parallel to each other, about two or three feet apart, and then sticks were laid crosswise over those timbers, forming the basic roof. Then there came reeds, branches, thistles, and then the whole thing was overlaid with about a foot of earth, which was then packed down to resist water. All told, these roofs were about 2ft thick and in the spring grass would even grow on some of these primitive rooftops. This was the roof that these men began to unpack.

Mark's literal Translation is that they unroofed the roof before lowering the paralyzed man down. Now, can you imagine the scene? Picture yourself here on a Sunday morning, just as we are doing here today, hearing and listening to the word of God. And all of a sudden you hear scratching on the rooftop, followed by debris breaking through and falling to the ground. How do you respond?

But that is just the beginning. Soon the outside light of the sun breaks through and before you know it, something or someone is being let down on a stretcher dangling from four ropes. Do you squint through the dust and light to get a better look or do you make for the nearest exit? You have to admire the faith and efforts of these four men. Their goal was to bring their friend to Jesus.

And now that they have succeeded in that goal, they can rest in the confidence that Jesus will take it from here. And take it from here Jesus certainly does. The demolition has stopped, the dust has settled, and all eyes are on Jesus. Now, we're not told how the crowd responded or even the response of the homeowner. I can imagine in today's culture that would be a lawsuit waiting to happen.

But Jesus sees past all of that. He doesn't see damaged property. He sees faith. And the first words out of His mouth send shock waves through the crowd and especially to the religious dignitaries that have a front row seat to all of the action. Verse 5.

And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic son, your sins are forgiven.

Jesus declares that this man's sins are forgiven. Now, a statement like that can send shockwaves through a room like this one as well. Mark chapter two, verse five is one of the most thought provoking verses in the New Testament. Jesus, He sees the faith of the four men and then forgives the paralyzed man's sins. How does that work?

Well, my simple answer is, I don't know. Which is why I'm going to let Pastor Andre tackle that one in a future sermon series.

But what we do know is that God has no grandchildren. What do I mean by that? Only that you are not saved by somebody else's profession of faith in Christ. Somebody else cannot believe on your behalf. Your parents may be Christian, you might have been brought up in a godly home, but that doesn't give you an automatic into the kingdom of heaven.

Maybe you're married to somebody and your spouse serves faithfully in church every week, but that doesn't cover your sins either. No, your sins are cleansed when you exercise your own belief and faith in Christ to wash you and grant you pardon. That is what makes verse five such a thought provoking declaration. And in each of the synoptic gospels that give accounts of what's happening here that we're reading in Mark 2, I.e. matthew, Mark and Luke all include this account.

There isn't one mention of the paralyzed man's faith, this man who just received eternal pardon. But in each instance, it is the faith of the men who brought Him to Jesus that is commended. So regardless how you slice it apart from their faith in action and the efforts of these men, the paralyzed man would have in no way, on His own accord, put himself in close enough proximity to Jesus to hear the words, son, your sins are forgiven.

Take note that those words are the most five important words, the most five beautiful words, the most five eternal words that anybody could ever hear. Son, daughter, your sins are forgiven. I have often wondered what was going on in the minds of the four friends when they heard that declaration of Jesus. Were they disappointed? After all, were they bringing this man to Jesus so that He could be forgiven of His sins?

Or rather, that Jesus would make Him walk. I mean, couldn't Jesus see that this man had a serious physical affliction? I can imagine them on top of the roof looking in and shouting down to Jesus, no, Jesus, that isn't His problem. He can't walk. Do something about that.

We don't want to lift Him back up and carry Him home.

But when you come to Jesus, you always get more than you bargained for. Jesus looks beyond the obvious need to the ultimate need. And Jesus will always, first and foremost do the the better thing. Yes, this man had an extreme physical ailment. But more than His physical problem was His spiritual affliction, the problem of sin.

And it would have been cruel for Christ to only address this man's physical need and to ignore His spiritual condition. So in forgiving this man's sin, Christ did the better, more necessary thing. You see, paralysis will not send you to hell. Unforgiven sin will.

And not only did this man receive forgiveness of sins, but He received a new family. Don't miss how with such love and tenderness, Jesus addressed this man. Not sinner, not lame man, not cripple, not nuisance for interrupting His teaching. But son, a term of endearment, a term of connection, a term of belonging. The same term that God the Father used of His son, Jesus Christ at His baptism and the inauguration of Christ's earthly ministry.

Regardless of what was in this man's past, regardless of whether or not His paralysis was a direct result of His sin, or not. Regardless of the fact that at this point He still suffered such physical affliction, He had a new beginning. I hope you see how clearly this speaks of adoption. This man has become a part of the family of God. He has gone from being a child of wrath to being a child of God.

And in just a few short chapters in Mark's Gospel, we will see again when Jesus makes such a declaration to a woman who has suffered bleeding for many years. And Jesus calls her daughter and says that her faith has saved her.

Forgiveness of sin and adoption into God's family go hand in hand. Forgiveness says you are not guilty, you are free to go. But adoption says you are free to stay here forever. Now, at this point in the narrative, we are introduced to another group of men, men that are not so thrilled at what they are seeing and hearing. They are not so impressed with Christ's declaration of forgiveness.

We know them as the scribes and teachers of the law. These were Israel's religious elite, if you will. And if anyone had authority to make spiritual assessments, it was these guys, not this no name preacher from Nazareth. At least that's how they saw things. And it is Christ's claim.

It's this claim that He has the ability to forgive sin. And not just that He has the ability to forgive sin, but He has the authority to forgive sin. That's what puts these men in such an uproar. And what follows next is one of the greatest demonstrations in the New Testament, a demonstration that validates Christ's authority and His alone to forgive sin.

But I'm going to save that for both Pastor Andre and Pastor Desant to tackle another time.

If we did have time, we could continue and investigate verse 10, that Christ claims to be the Son of man. A phrase directly taken from Daniel 7, another one of Mark's favorite phrases Jesus uses often of himself, used 14 times in the Gospel of Mark. And that highlights and points again to the authority Christ has that He's been given all dominion.

I shared earlier that I chose this passage for us this morning because it has been a favorite passage of mine. But there is another reason that I was drawn to this passage for us today as well, and that is that this story, the story of the paralytic, this is my story. And if you

were in Christ here today, then this is your story as well. You see, it's not simply coincidence and it is more than literary genius that this account parallels that of a funeral procession and of a burial. Did you catch that?

Do you see the parallels? Crowds gathered. A man being brought and carried on a stretcher, four men lowering Him through dirt.

But once Christ is encountered, death is nullified and new life begins. Instead of a tomb, this symbolic grave became a womb. Can you remember those who brought you to Jesus? Who was it that took a corner of your deathbed and laid you at the feet of Christ?

For me, looking back to elementary school, one of the youth leaders took up a corner of my stretcher and became my camp counselor for the weekend.

Another, the custodian from church that drove the shuttle bus. He took a corner and drove us to church camp that weekend.

A third corner was taken up by the camp staff who modeled Christ and made this alone and scared fifth grader feel welcomed and loved. A fourth corner was taken up that weekend by the Bible teacher who so clearly shared the Gospel and invited me to put my faith in Christ. Now, if you were to ask me today, I wouldn't be able to tell you any of their names. And yet without them, without the role they played, without them taking a corner of my stretcher in order to bring me to Christ, I may not have responded in faith at such a young age. Church.

This is the opportunity that lies before us this week with vacation Bible school tomorrow. In the days following, this campus will be alive with the energy and chaos perhaps of 365 children, children that we want to lay at the feet of Jesus. And already over 265 volunteers have taken up a corner and carrying these children. Many of you are participating and giving of your time and resources and energy, carrying them in order that they may hear those beautiful words, those life giving words, those eternal words. Child, your sins are forgiven.

In just a moment, before closing in prayer, I'm going to ask each one of us to pause for silent prayer, for personal prayer and reflection. But first I want to address the two types of people that are in this room right now. Or those who might be watching online, or those that might be joining from our additional worship seating in the Discipleship center. Either you have been brought to Christ, having believed upon Him for the forgiveness of sins, or you are still on a stretcher, suffering from your spiritual affliction, crushed under the penalty of your sin. If that describes you this morning and you have yet to receive the free pardon of sin and the gift of everlasting life, I urge you to pray.

Pray for yourself. Call upon the name of the Lord. Pray that Christ will make himself known to you as the one who bore your sin on the cross of Calvary, casting your sin as far as the east is from the west and for those of you who are in Christ, those who've already made such a confession of faith and have become a part of God's family through the pardoning of your sins, I'm going to ask you to pray as well. And I'm going to ask you to pray for our children this week at Vacation Bible School. I know we did that earlier in the service, but let's pause for that again and pray for our volunteers.

Pray for the teaching of the word. You may not have a physical role this week at Vacation Bible School, but each one of us can take up a corner in prayer. Let's ask and believe God for great things as we bring these children before Christ. So would you bow now and just take a moment or two of silent, prayerful reflection.

Oh Father, our hearts are full this morning with the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the one who you made to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God, He who knew no sin and we who knew and had no righteousness. Lord, thank you for what lies ahead of us this week at Vacation Bible School. Thank you for each of the children that you will bring. Thank you for each of the volunteers. We ask your special blessing upon this week upon this campus for your safety, for the safety and strength and health of the children and of the servants, the volunteers.

And we especially pray that children will not only hear those words, child, your sins are forgiven, but they would believe them. They would receive pardon of sin. They would put their faith and hope in Jesus Christ that they would be born of God, born of your, your spirit. And thank you for what you have in store for each and every one of us that we can know you are a good and faithful God. We love you and worship you and praise you in Jesus name.

Amen.