

# Program Transcripts

December 2024



IN  
**SEARCH**  
OF THE LORD'S WAY <sup>®</sup>

# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

**December 2024**

*Topics subject to change without notice*

## **DECEMBER 1 – TRUE WORSHIP**

People often want to tell us how they feel about worship these days, but we want to ask the question, “What does God want from our worship?” Worship must take into account the desires of God who is being worshiped.

## **DECEMBER 8 – THE WAY TO PEACE**

In these uncertain and chaotic times, peace is important to us all. Peace with God, with others, and within our souls can be one of the greatest blessings of all. The Scriptures teach us how to find peace.

## **DECEMBER 15 – GRIEVING**

The loss of a loved one can truly be a traumatic event. The Scriptures describe many examples of grieving. Thankfully, God gives us hope when we grieve by reminding us of our resurrection and the second coming.

## **DECEMBER 22 – BECAUSE OF JESUS**

When Jesus came to this world, He brought peace and goodwill to all men. We can hardly number all the blessings Jesus brought to us by becoming flesh, forgiving our sins, and giving us eternal life with Him in heaven.

## **DECEMBER 29 – THE WAY**

The Lord Jesus declared in John 14:6 that He is “the way.” He is indeed the way we live, the way we treat others, and the only way to draw close to our Father in heaven. Living “my way” is not the same as following the one true way.

## True Worship

The Scriptures describe worship and reveal its purposes. Worship glorifies and magnifies God in our hearts. In worship we praise the Lord with our lips and bless His holy name. Worship takes place when we give thanks to God for His blessings. In worship we're bowing before our great God. In worship we're confessing His goodness and righteousness with reverence and awe. We rejoice in singing, teaching and admonishing one another. We hear God's words spoken in Scripture. We remember the grace of God in the offering of the body and blood of Jesus as we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine each Lord's day. We cheerfully give to the Lord to support the work of His church.

We assemble each Lord's Day, the first day of the week, to worship the Lord, to build up one another, and to remain faithful and committed to the Lord. Our gatherings help us to take up our crosses daily to follow Jesus Christ and be God's people. Now God expects His people to gather according to Hebrews 10:25, so they can "stir up one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10 and verse 24).

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 4 verses 20 to 24 and here we have the woman at the well making a statement to Jesus, but also wanting to know an answer. The woman said to him,

Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

That's the words of Jesus. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we pray that You will help us always to worship in spirit and in truth. To do as You would will. To please You and to show You our love and our praise. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

When we worship God, we enter into the presence of God and offer up to Him our lips and our hearts. Have you thought about being in the presence of God? It may frighten you. In Revelation 1:17 John found himself in front of Jesus and fell at His feet like a dead man. It may alarm your conscience as you remember your sins. Or it may comfort you. You know it's certainly a time to say "thank you!" to God. I hope when you come to worship and praise Him, you realize the grandeur and holiness of God. True worship begins by recognizing where we are and who Almighty God is. Exodus 15:11 says, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" Worship is a time of recognizing God's holiness.

God created us, gives us His wisdom in the Bible, hears our prayers, and provides for our needs. David wrote in Psalm 103:1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle." We should prepare to worship God by focusing on the One whom we worship.

Second, we should examine ourselves, and our attitudes. Are we prepared to worship? How does God see us? Isaiah tells us about himself in Isaiah 6. Isaiah entered the temple and stood before the throne, He saw God high and lofty. He saw God as holy, holy, holy! In 6 and verse 5 Isaiah said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.” When we worship we’re people who have sinned seeking to glorify a God, a God, the God, who knows no sin but is completely holy.

Psalm 29 verse 2 says, “Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 89:7 says, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those who are around Him.” We often lose sight of the holiness of God and have become casual in our gatherings, as if God was common. When we treat God as common, aren’t we being profane rather than reverent? I fear many have lost their sense of anything holy.

Paul criticized the church at Corinth for their divisive spirit when they eat the Lord’s Supper. Some were drunk and others went hungry; they were despising and shaming one another. The Lord’s Supper was designed to remember the body of Jesus as they ate the unleavened bread and remembered the blood the Lord Jesus and what offered upon the cross as they drank of the fruit of the vine.

Their minds were elsewhere, so Paul warned them in 1 Corinthians 11:27 to 31, “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.” Well we too today should examine ourselves as we worship God, that our hearts and spirits are focused on what glorifies God and what God desires.

Third, we must ask the One we worship, “How do you wish to be worshiped?” Some think God ought to be satisfied by whatever we have to offer, but the Scriptures present for us many examples of worship that is unacceptable to God. Just because people think they are worshiping God acceptably doesn’t mean that God accepts their worship. Isaiah 55 verses 8 to 9 reminds us, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Genesis 4 reveals the first example of God accepting some worship while rejecting other. Hebrews 11 and verse 4 says, “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.” Genesis 4 and verse 5 says God had no regard for Cain or for his offering. Now in some way Cain lacked the faith that Abel showed. 1 John 3 and verse 12 says that Cain’s deeds were evil and Abel’s were righteous. We must never take God for granted. He knows our hearts and how we live.

In Leviticus chapters 8 and 9, Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons as priests. And ten times it says, as they were in that tabernacle that they did “just as the Lord commanded.” But Leviticus 10:1 and 2 says, “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.” They did what the Lord had not commanded. They presumed that they could dream up their own form of worship. We can’t dream up how we wish to worship God. We must listen to the commandment and instruction of God.

Though Saul was king, he didn’t listen to the prophet Samuel in 1 Samuel 10 and verse 8. Samuel said, “And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do.” Well, Saul disobeyed God! 1 Samuel 13 verses 8 to 10 says, “Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were

scattering from him. So Saul said, 'Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.' And he offered the burnt offering."

Well, Samuel arrived just as Saul offered the burnt offering. Saul tried to justify his offering by saying in 1 Samuel 13:12, "Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering." Samuel said to Saul in verse 13, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you." Samuel later told Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22 to 23, there the bible says, "Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king."

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6 and verse 1, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." Now He applies this to some Jews who sounded trumpets when they gave to the poor, and who made loud and long prayers in public, and who put on a gloomy face when they fasted. Well they did all this to show off to others; they should have done this in secret. And their reward came from the praise of men, but they lost God's reward.

In Luke 18:9 to 14 a Pharisee and a tax collector prayed to God. Oh the Pharisee told the Lord how religious he was, but he didn't impress God. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 18:13 to 14, "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In Matthew 15, some Pharisees confronted and criticized Jesus for not keeping the human traditions of the elders by not washing their hands. Jesus responded in Matthew 15:7 to 8, "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' " When people follow human traditions and teach as doctrines the commandments of men, their hearts are far from God and their worship is in vain. God doesn't accept our worship when our beliefs and practices come from men but not from God. We should ask about our worship and our beliefs, "do they come from God or from men?"

Since we're Christians, we don't go to the Old Testament to learn how we are to worship. We go to the words of Jesus and His apostles found in the New Testament. We don't offer animal sacrifices, we don't offer up incense, we don't keep the Sabbath, or worship with instruments of music. These were for those who were under the Law. And Hebrews 10 verse 1 says, "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near." Folks we are under the new covenant ratified by the blood of Jesus and we should follow the words of Jesus taught by the apostles.

For that reason, we sing praises from our hearts. Hebrews 13 verse 15 says, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Singing words from our lips and hearts is what God desires. We're not in the performing business but in the worshipping business. And we don't need instruments to accompany us. They are a

human addition that came along many centuries after the church was established. The early church never used instruments of music in worship, because they had no authority from Scripture to do so.

The early church met on the first day of the week to worship according to Acts 20 and verse 7 and 1 Corinthians 16 verses 1 and 2. Now when John mentions the Lord's Day in Revelation 1 and verse 10, he's speaking of the first day of the week, when churches broke bread by partaking of the Lord's Supper. That particular word "Lord" found in 1 Corinthians 11:20 is speaking of the Lord's Supper and in Revelation 1:10 speaking of the Lord's Day. It's the same word in both passages. And so we associate taking the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day; this was the way of the early church worshipped by taking the Lord's Supper.

The New Testament church met each first day of the week to sing, to pray, to study God's word, to partake of the Lord's Supper, and to contribute to the needs of the church. We should follow that pattern of worship today in spirit and in truth so that we may please God. We know that these are what God wants, because they have a foundation in the New Testament. Let's stay with what we know comes from God.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're grateful for Your love and we're grateful for the fact that You have given us Your word. Help us to love You so that we will always keep Your word and to do as You would will for us live. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

John 4:23 says, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." Yes God is seeking true worship in spirit and in truth from you. God distinguishes true worship from worship that's not genuine or pleasing to Him. We must worship God acceptably by doing what He instructs us. The Lord Jesus said in John 4 and verse 24 that, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Have you examined your own spirit when you worship. Does praise, thanksgiving, and adoration come from your heart and through your lips? Are you worshiping according to what God desires or according to your own desires? Worship is not a passive thing where we only receive what others do. Worship must come from each of us. No one can sing for me, hear God's word for me, commune in the Lord's Supper for me, or make a financial contribution for me. No one else can substitute for us. God seeks true worshipers.

Beyond that, no one else can get right with God for me—not my parents or my children. Now I have to do it myself. Without faith it's impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6); I can't count on other people's faith. If I don't repent, I'll perish (Luke 13:3). If I don't love the Lord, I'll be accursed (1 Corinthians 16:22). If I don't confess Jesus, He won't confess me before the Father (Matthew 10:32 to 33). If I'm not born of water and the Spirit in baptism, I cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3 and verse 5). In baptism, God washes away my sins (Acts 22:16) He makes me His child (Galatians 3:26 and 7). Have you believed, loved the Lord, repented, confessed Jesus Christ, and have you been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Why not respond today?

## The Way to Peace

Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 16, "Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!" Our Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus grants peace to His people. Not every circumstance will be easy or without pain, but every circumstance can have the reassurance that God is with us and loves us. Romans 8:31 to 2 reminds us, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Because of Jesus, we can have peace! We can have hope! We can have eternal life with God!

The Lord wants us to live with confidence not uncertainty. He wants us to put our trust in Him. When we consider the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have proof of God's love for us and proof of life beyond the grave. Peace isn't freedom from all trouble; peace is confidence in God's abiding love even in the midst of suffering and evil.

Our reading today is from Isaiah chapter 9 verses 6 and 7. Here the prophet is predicting the coming of the messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

And yes the Lord Jesus did found His kingdom on the day of Pentecost. And that's the church. And it's been in place all these years. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the power of Your Son to bring us peace. And help us to live in peace with others and with You and with ourselves. In Jesus name, Amen.

Romans 15:33 simply says, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." How does God's peace dwell in our hearts? How do we find peace? Well, first, we'll explore having peace with God Himself. Romans 5:1 and 2 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

When our hearts are fixed on loving and serving God, we find peace with God. Isaiah 26:3 to 4 says of God that, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock."

One reason God forgives comes from the desire to be free from anger and wrath. God said to Israel in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins." Oh, I'm thankful for a God who understands and offers the way for our sins to be forgiven through the blood of Jesus. Psalm 103 verses 8 to 14 explains the character of God: "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust."

In Christ we have the blessing of the blood of Christ not only when we're baptized but all through life. 1 John 1:7 to 9 says to Christians, "but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all (all) unrighteousness." Now forgiving through the sacrifice of Jesus is God's way to peace. Now God knows that we are flawed and need forgiveness. And He offers continually peace to those who continually love and obey Him.

Second, we'll explore having peace with others. The Lord said in Matthew 5 and verse 9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Hebrews 12:14 says, "Pursue peace with all men, (all people) and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." Remember Jesus said in Matthew 6 verses 14 and 15, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." Living with peace in your heart is not a trivial thing. And this why Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:26 to 27, "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."

Now people can certainly be difficult to live with! Colossians 3:12 to 15 reminds us, "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Now even when others don't respect what's right, as God's people we should follow the Lord. Romans 12:18 to 21 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Proverbs 16 and verse 7 reminds us that, "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

We have an obligation to follow the Lord. 2 Peter 3:14 quotes Psalm 34:14 and says, "Who is the man who desires life And loves length of days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it." When people choose to live for the Lord, they find a life with fewer regrets and greater satisfaction. Life is not always easy for the Christian, but the promise of God's grace and eternal life are priceless gifts. The ability to pray to the Father and be heard gives us peace and assurance. The forgiveness of sins and hope of eternal life because of the sacrifice of Christ gives us peace when we lie down to sleep. Oh, peace with God is a foretaste of heaven.

When Christianity began, there was conflict between Jews and Gentiles. Now some Jews thought the Gentiles had to become Jews in order to become Christians, and they were very mistaken. Christians do not have to keep the Law of Moses to be right with God. Ephesians 2:13 to 18 says, But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off (that is you Gentiles) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and



preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.”

Christianity unites all people into one body, no matter where you live or what language you speak. 1 John 4 and verse 14 says, “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” Hebrews 2 verse 9 says, “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.” And 1 Timothy 2:3 to 4 says, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men (all people) to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” I tell you everyone can be saved and everyone can know the truth and be right with God. They must hear the gospel though, and believe it.

John 3:16 to 18 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Now it does matter whether we believe, it matters whether we repent, it matters whether we love the Lord, and whether we obey what He teaches.

God's ways are full of love, life, and wisdom. Many miss this because they choose to follow their own hearts. God said in Jeremiah 17:9 to 10 that, “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.” Now you're choosing whether you want peace in your life or confusion and chaos.

James 3:13 to 18 demonstrates the difference between the person who lives for Himself and the person who listens to the wisdom of God. James said, “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” I tell you if we want peace, we must listen and follow the wisdom that comes from God. Selfish ambition and jealousy will only lead to conflict and chaos.

Third, we'll explore having peace with ourselves. Forgiveness from God opens the door for a person to find peace within. When people have a guilty conscience, they're ashamed and can't find peace. Guilt is painful and it produces shame. It is hard for an evil person to feel good about himself or his deeds. And even a callous person will hide his shame. Romans 2:9 to 11 says, “There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”

You know even if a person denies the reality of sin, he knows in his heart that he will one day give an account to God. There is a day of judgment for all of us. Isaiah 57:20 to 21 says, “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud. ‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’” I tell you a guilty conscience is a foretaste of the hereafter separated from God. It's filled with sorrow and regret, weeping and gnashing of teeth. But a clean conscience is a foretaste of heaven. It knows that the old man of sin is dead and past. One can become a new creature in Christ, freed from sin, guilt, and shame.

When people worry and are afraid, their minds lack faith in God and cannot find peace. Philippians 4:6 to 7 says, "Be anxious for (that is worry about) nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Oh, God sees and He knows all your struggles. Proverbs 3:5 to 6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."

God wants you to have peace within. Philippians 4 verse 9 says that, "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, (Paul's saying to them) practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." Oh read the word of God, listen to what God says. The word of God has the answers to the confusion and chaos of life. Live for the Lord Jesus!

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Your ways are the ways to peace. Help us to follow them and to find the peace and hope and love that You have in store for us. In all things, help us to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

When we have hard days, let's look to Jesus! Hebrews 12:1 to 3 says, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." We can find peace and courage in the Prince of peace.

Jesus died on the cross so that we could have peace with God. That peace comes when we're lovingly united with Christ by faith, repentance, and baptism. 1 Peter 3:21 says that, "baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." When one is baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins and salvation, by grace he also can enjoy a good conscience. In salvation one realizes God no longer holds his past sins against him. He's no longer separated from God's favor and blessing. A good conscience brings peace of heart and soul.

Now you might have a guilty conscience. Many people are afraid of death, because they don't know what lies ahead and they do know they've sinned against God. If you had to face God today, would you meet Him with confidence or with fear? Do you have any hope of eternal life? Today you're nearer facing God, having salvation or condemnation, than you have ever been before. Are you right with God?

## Grieving

Hebrews 9:27 says that, "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." Yes, we'll all face the day when our lives are over on this earth. We face the loss of grandparents, parents, siblings, and other important relatives, our friends, and sadly even our children. Each loss gives us cause to grieve. Ecclesiastes 12 and verse 7 says that, "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." Death is that time when our spirits return to God who made us. We die to this life under the sun, yes, but our spirits live on.

On the cross, you'll remember, Jesus told the thief, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The Lord clearly says that we'll survive and be conscious beyond this life. The Lord expected to see the thief in Paradise that very day. There is an inner spirit that survives death and is conscious. Now life here and now is not all there is. For the Christian there is the promise of life with God forever, and that gives the faithful comfort.

Our reading today comes from 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 3 to 5 and here the apostle Paul is talking about the comfort that he receive even in times when he was afflicted.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

That's true even to this day. This is God's word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the comfort that we receive from Your hands. And we're thankful Father that Jesus Christ was willing to die for us on the cross that we might have the forgiveness of sins. We're thankful that You raised Him from the dead so that we might have life beyond this life. Father we pray that You will help us always to do Your will and to trust in You. In Jesus name, Amen.

Hebrews 9:27 does says that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." James 2:26 explains, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." Now our fleshly bodies die, but our spirits continue on. 2 Corinthians 5:6 to 8 reminds us, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body (that) we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."

Jesus, as we've said, told the thief on the cross, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." Now the word Paradise is used three times in Scripture, and each time refers to the heavenly realm where the righteous go after death. In 2 Corinthians 12:2 to 4 Paradise is equated to the third heaven, the place where God dwells. When Jesus died Jesus went to that unseen place of righteous spirits where God dwells. In Revelation 2 and verse 7, the Paradise of God is where the tree of life is. And if Jesus' soul was not abandoned to Hades but He went to Paradise, then Hades must contain a place where righteous souls are comforted. When a righteous loved one dies he will go to Paradise. And we have no reason to mourn for them and their situation. It is right for us to mourn for ourselves and our own loss. And that's what we do. We've lost someone precious to us and it's right to mourn.

Paul explained that death for the Christian is not bad. He wrote in Philippians 1:21 to 23, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better." Now there are many things worse than death for the Christian. Being in Paradise is "very much better" than anything that we know in this life. Paul could say in Romans 8 and verse 18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to

be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." We may have a rough time now, but the glory that we will have with Christ will make it all seem as nothing to us.

When we belong to Christ, we're no longer ours. When we belong to Christ, He will care for us not only in this life but also the life to come. Romans 14:7 to 9 informs us, "For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." So whether in this life or in the life to come, our relationship with the Lord Jesus matters. So when a faithful loved one dies, we can have comfort that he or she is in the hands of a loving and just Savior, Jesus Christ.

Now do not think the Lord doesn't know the pain that you're suffering right now if you're grieving the loss of a loved one. Don't imagine that He's far removed from you and doesn't care. If you're a Christian, you're a child of God and a follower of Jesus. And nothing escapes His notice. The Lord Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 10:29 to 31, "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." God knows and God cares for you.

The Lord Jesus knew what it was like to suffer the loss of a loved one. And when Jesus heard Lazarus was ill, He slowly left the place where he was staying across the Jordan for Bethany to the home of Mary and Martha. Jesus was especially close to this family. John 11:33 to 35 says, "When Jesus saw her (that is Mary) weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?'" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." (then he says) Jesus wept." One lexicon says that Jesus "burst into tears." Jesus grieves when the people He loves grieve. He felt Mary and Martha's pain, and I tell you the Lord feels your pain too.

The Scriptures record numerous times that people grieved over the loss of a loved one. In Genesis 37:31 to 35 we read of Jacob's grief over what he thought was the loss of his son, Joseph. The Scripture says, "Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, 'This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not.' And he identified it and said, 'It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.' Then Jacob tore his garments. He puts on sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, 'No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.' Thus his father wept for him." Well the brothers of Joseph lied to their father, but Jacob's mourning was truly a devastating experience.

The Scriptures point to Job as one who suffered but held firmly to his faith in God. In just one day, Job lost all his sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys, and most of his servants. Then he got word of his ten children. Job 1:18 to 21 tells what happened: While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you." Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD."

The pain of losing all ten of your children at once is indescribable. Job later was afflicted with a painful disease. His friends proved to be miserable comforters, saying that his sin is the cause of all his pain. Though Job was a man, he feared the Lord. Satan was the true cause of his pain and suffering. In

the end of the book, God restored Job's losses. And He restored them twofold and he had ten new children. Oh yes, God cared for Job.

Because of David's sin with Bathsheba and his guilt in the death of Uriah, the Lord punished David. 2 Samuel 12:15 to 23 says: So Nathan went to his house. Then the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick. David therefore inquired of God for the child; and David fasted and went and lay all night on the ground.

The elders of his household stood beside him in order to raise him up from the ground, but he was unwilling and would not eat food with them. Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was still alive, we spoke to him and he did not listen to our voice. How then can we tell him that the child is dead, since he might do himself harm!"

But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David perceived that the child was dead; so David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he requested, they set food before him and he ate. Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.' "But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

David was filled with remorse and sorrow over his sins, thinking perhaps God would save his son. The child died, but the death of a child means they go to be with God. David's faith was that he would be able to be with his son once again when he passed from this life. David wrote in Psalm 30 and verse 5, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." Oh we weep in this life for those we lose, but we have confidence as Christians of being with them in the life to come.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:16 to 18, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." Christians have the hope and comfort of the Lord Jesus and a home in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 19 gives Christians hope, promise, and comfort. There is a big difference between the person who follows Christ and the person who doesn't. Paul wrote, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." One day the Lord Jesus will come for His people and will bless them eternally. Ephesians 2 and verse 7 tells us that God has planned for our eternal home in heaven. In the ages to come He will "show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. We can find comfort in Christ alone. Because

Jesus arose from the dead, we too can rise up one day and be with the Lord forever. Do you belong to the Lord?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for the promise that You give to us through Your son Jesus. Since He rose from the dead. And Father we pray that we will serve Him and love Him all the days of our lives. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Some people are what sociologists call "don'ts." Don'ts are people who don't believe in God, don't know whether there is a God, or don't care whether God exists. Now don'ts really have nothing to offer a dying person. They have nothing to offer a grieving family. When God doesn't matter, all hope and meaning are in vain. Because God raised Jesus from the dead, we know there is an afterlife and a Judgment Day. Because Jesus will one day raise the faithful who obey Him, we can have hope of eternal life. But those who have no relationship with the Lord have no such hope.

The Christian who loves, believes in God, and follows Christ can find comfort, even in death. Facing death, Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:6 to 8, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure (that is death) has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Do you love the Lord? Do you believe? You know to get right with the Lord you must love and believe Him. Now believing in Him means you believed He died on the cross for your sins and rose again from the dead. You believe that He is Lord, and so you must repent of your sins. You're willing to confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). When you do, God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16) and He'll give you freedom from sin and newness of life (Romans 6:3 to 7). Oh won't you come to the Lord today and be saved?

## Because of Jesus

Can you imagine how different this world would be if Jesus had not come? Our lives would be much poorer and sadder without Christ. Jesus utterly transformed individual hearts and lives, but He also touched entire nations. Western culture enjoys the fragrance of His purity and kindness. Many advances in society have come from the mindset and heart of Christ. Christians through the ages took a stand against sinful practices, and their Christian love ended the bloody games of the gladiators, stopped much slavery, ended the exposure and death of unwanted babies that was popular in ancient times, lifted women to a higher status, proclaimed respect for the elderly, and proclaimed the sanctity of life. Christian love teaches us to love our enemies, to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, and to care for those who are sick. The New Testament teaches us to work for our keep and not steal from others. Yes, our world has become richer, kinder, purer, and more loving because of Jesus.

Our reading today comes from John chapter 1 verses 14 to 18. And here John the writer by the Holy Spirit, tells about the importance of Jesus coming into the world.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

That's the reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that Jesus Christ came into the world and because of we can know You our Father in heaven. And Father we're thankful that He brought the truth and that He brought grace. Help us to believe the true and to fall into Your grace and to love You with all our heart and soul. In Jesus name, Amen.

No event in all of history compares with the coming of Jesus into this world. He is God's gift of hope and blessing for every person. The birth of Jesus came with a star. Interestingly, in 1991, The Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society noted that Chinese astronomers had observed a long-tailed, slow-moving comet in their skies during March of 5 B.C. This "star," hung in the Capricorn region for more than seventy days. This same comet would have been visible in the skies over Persia, home of the Magi or wise men, in the hours just before dawn. Due to the earth's orbital motion, the comet's light would have been directly in front of the Magi during their journey— hence, they truly followed the star.

When the wise men entered Jerusalem and asked Herod where the child was to be born, the priests knew that it was Bethlehem. They knew the prophecy written in the eighth century B. C. and found in Micah 5 and verse 2, "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem, just as God predicted through His prophet.

An angel told shepherds who were watching their flocks by night in that region in Luke 2 verses 10 to 14, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Indeed the Lord has brought peace and the favor of God to mankind. Now no one in all history has done so much to bring light and life to people. We don't know specifically when Jesus was born. We don't know the specific year or even the month of His coming with certainty. We don't. We don't need

to know those things. We do know that His coming fulfilled God's plan from the beginning and has made all the difference.

Because of Jesus we can know God and His ways. When Jesus came into the world, Matthew 1:22 to 23 says, "Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." Jesus is indeed God with us. He was and is always God. John 1:1 to 3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Jesus has existed from all eternity past as God and was involved in creating everything that has been created.

Because Jesus became flesh, we can relate to Him and He to us. Hebrews 1 verse 3 says, "And He is the radiance of His glory (that is God's glory) and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power." Jesus makes the character of God known to us. The Lord Jesus said in John 14:7 that, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." We know about God's love, His kindness, His goodness, and His grace because of Jesus. When we get to know Jesus, we understand what kind of God we serve and learn what He desires from us.

Because of Jesus we can have salvation from sin. The angel Gabriel told Joseph in Matthew 1:21 that Mary "will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Jesus came into this world, because He knew how terrible and hurtful sin truly is. He knew people needed forgiveness and the opportunity to live righteously rather than wickedly. And so He gave people the opportunity to be born again as children of God, to leave an old way of sin and death. And so we read in 1 Peter 2:24 that He bore our sins in His body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

When John the Baptist introduced Jesus to his disciples, he said in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Sin leaves its stain and ugliness on our souls. And though we may not think sin is any big deal, it's still a very big deal to God. God doesn't think like we do. Time and culture don't change the mind and heart of God. Romans 6:23 says "the wages of sin is death." Now sin is your greatest enemy and will rob you of a life with God for an eternity. Because Jesus loves you and knew the great danger that sin poses to your soul, He was willing to die for you. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 19 and verse 10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus wanted to make a difference in our lives.

And by touching individuals, the Lord Jesus made a difference for everyone. Two thousand years have passed, and Jesus is still changing lives. And everyone who allows the cross of Christ to touch their hearts and is willing to serve the Lord becomes a new person. Paul wrote in Galatians 1 and verse 4 that Jesus "gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." The first century world was filled with pagan wickedness and selfishness. And Paul explained in Ephesians 2:1 to 3, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (and then he said) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

Our world needed saving from sin and needed a higher moral standard than the pagan world offered. Jesus gave us God's moral standard that touches our hearts and changes our behavior. Nothing compares to the standard Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters five through seven.



The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:21 to 22 that, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'you shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you (Jesus says) that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell." The Lord knew we had to control our hearts to overcome hate and to keep from harming others.

Again the Lord said in Matthew 5:27 to 28, "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." The Lord knew man could overcome his lust in his heart when he controlled his eyes. Jesus knew that "out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matthew 15:19). Jesus loved us and He gave us reason to love what is good rather than evil, to love what is right rather than wrong. By changing our hearts, He changed lives; by changing lives, He changed communities; by changing communities, He changed nations; and by changing nations, He delivered us from the present evil age.

Because of Jesus, we know love. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us." He's the reason for all the love we possess. He taught us love and He taught us how to love. The Lord Jesus said in John 13:34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Our love is to be like His love, love that is willing to give everything in order to bless others. Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." Now Jesus didn't merely talk love; He demonstrated it. He gave everything so we could be saved.

Loving others means we must learn to forgive. People often want to take vengeance and get even. Christians forgive, because He has forgiven us. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6 verse 12, "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Because we know the value of being forgiven, we forgive others who sin against us. We put away our sword and leave vengeance to God. Wars and divorces take place when people have ceased to forgive.

Paul explained in Ephesians 4:31 to 32, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." If you know what it means to be forgiven, you can find the strength and the love to forgive those who hurt you.

Beyond all this, Jesus came to this world to teach us the truth. Our culture hasn't given much value to the truth; some even deny there is any absolute truth. But the Lord Jesus provides for us an unchangeable and absolute basis for our faith, so we can distinguish what is true from what is false. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus was indeed full of both grace and truth. His words are trustworthy and contain the standard by which every idea and doctrine is judged. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Because the Lord Jesus delivered the truth to His apostles, we can trust the New Testament as the truth. Jesus promised in John 8 and verse 31 to 2 that, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Ah we need the truth!

And now we can see why the coming of Jesus into this world matters. He's brought life and light; He brought love and forgiveness; and He's brought morality and truth to everyone. He's lifted hearts out of wickedness and selfishness to make them noble and virtuous. He's turned anger and hatred into love and kindness. He died upon a cruel cross so that we may become the kind of people that God desired

from the beginning. And there's one last thing! He gave us hope for life beyond the grave when God raised Him from the dead. Because of Jesus we have the promise of a resurrection at the end time and eternal life with God. Without Jesus, we are nothing and have no promise. We can do nothing greater, in this life, than following in His steps.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help us to love You with all our hearts and soul and mind and spirit. And to follow in Your steps. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

If you want Jesus as your Savior, you must also accept Him as your Lord. You must trust Him and believe everything He says is true. If you cannot trust Jesus but think He's mistaken in what He teaches on morals and doctrine, how can you trust His promises? You can't re-write Jesus' teaching, even on one point, and then trust in Him on another point. When you won't follow Jesus on some point you don't like, you aren't treating Jesus as Lord. Instead, you believe in yourself and in your own wisdom. God wants us to trust in Jesus Christ in every step and decision we make. And when we do, His grace and truth surround us. Jesus is Lord of all, whether we recognize Him or not.

You'll not find, however, a Lord so good as Jesus. You're choosing everyday whom you will follow. Some choose sin and some choose self. These choices prove destructive and empty. They lead to chaos and misery. Why not choose the Lord? No one will ever love you and watch over you like He will. No one can bless you with eternal life but the Lord Jesus.

God loves each of us and wants to be in our lives. To become a Christian love and believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Turn from all sin and start pleasing the Lord. Then, confessing your faith, be baptized into Christ. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. And when you're baptized the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to His church, His family. According to John 3 and verse 5, you must be born again, and that takes place in baptism, to enter the kingdom of God. According to Acts 22:16, the Lord washes away our sins in baptism. So become a Christian today.

## The Way

Now the way of the Lord is good, because God is good. Deuteronomy 32 and verse 4 calls God, "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He." To Israel, a rock was a source of safety and protection. And He is perfect, just, faithful, righteous, and upright! God provides for His people. Psalm 77:13 says, "Your way, O God, is holy; What god is great like our God?" Oh no one will love you the way God loves you or send a sacrifice for your sins the way our Father sent His Son to die on the cross for you. Psalm 25:10 says, "All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies." 2 Samuel 22:31 tells more, "As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tested; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him."

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 14 verses 1 through 6. And here Jesus is talking about how that He has a promise of heaven and how He is the way.

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

That's a great, great understanding that if we want to go to the Father we have to go through Jesus. And only He can take us there. Let's pray. Father we're thankful for Your son Jesus who leads to be able to come and be with You one day. And Father we pray that our love for You will grow more and more. That our love for one another may grow. And help us to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

Moses told the children of Israel as they were preparing to enter the promised land in Deuteronomy 8 verses 1 to 6, he says, "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD."

"Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. "Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him." Moses revealed that God will take care of His people as long as they obey His covenant commandments.

Moses later told Israel in Deuteronomy 10:12 to 13, "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?" God's commandments are always for our good; they will always be a blessing to us. God's commandments are not burdensome or grievous according to 1 John 5 and verse 3.

Christianity is a livable faith that we can bear. Millions have gladly followed the Lord. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28 to 30, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. "Take

My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." God's ways are not so heavy that we can't bear them.

While many want to do everything their own way, Jeremiah 10:23 says, "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps." We can so easily be fooled by temptation and lies. We need the help of the Lord. When a person follows the Lord, he or she blesses everyone who knows them. Proverbs 12:26 says that, "The righteous is a guide to his neighbor, But the way of the wicked leads them astray." I tell you righteousness matters. Proverbs 14:12 says that, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." The phrase "be not deceived" should lead us all to think twice about the difference between God and man.

Proverbs 12:15 explains that, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel." Some people will never listen to what's right. Proverbs 14:16 shows a contrast between wisdom and foolishness, "A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, But a fool is arrogant and careless." The fool thinks he'll never face problems, but he always does, yes. Proverbs 30 and verse 12 says, "There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth." I tell you sin is sin, even if everyone thinks it's okay. God is the One who will be our final judge. And what He says will determine our destiny.

Jeremiah 17:9 to 10 reminds us that, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? (and then Jeremiah quotes and says) I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds." Now since people don't like to think of themselves as sinners, they'll go to great lengths to excuse and justify themselves. They may blame others, blame society, or even blame God rather than admit responsibility for their sins. Our postmodern society has ceased to talk about sin, it never mentions repentance, and willfully ignores the reality of hell. They can imagine there's no Judgment Day, oh yes they can imagine that, but God will indeed give to each person according to his ways.

The prophet Jeremiah asked in Jeremiah 6 and verse 10, "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it." Oh, Jeremiah would warn them, but they had no intention of listening. Later in Jeremiah 6:16 the bible says, "Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.' But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" The Jews wanted to do what they wished rather than follow God's way. They didn't take the warning, and they suffered the fate of the Babylonians enslaving their people and destroying the city, killing many of them and Jerusalem was gone.

Many religious people today deceive themselves in the same way. They follow false doctrines not found in Scripture, justifying themselves by believing lies and myths. Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13 to the Pharisees who held many human traditions and left the commandments of God that are found in Scripture. Jesus said, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" "

Paul predicted some Christians would leave the Scriptures and trust in myths. Yes. And so he urged Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1 to 4, he said, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; (that is the bible the scriptures) be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching

ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

I tell you it's a myth that you can willfully continue in sin and not fall from grace. Hebrews 10:26 to 27 says that those who continue to sin willfully no longer have a sacrifice for sin. It's a myth that baptism is unnecessary to salvation. Acts 22:16 tells us to be baptized and wash away our sins. It is a myth that people should pray to Mary. Jesus taught us to pray to the Father in Matthew 6 and verse 9. It's a myth that human love makes sin all right. Love doesn't excuse sin. 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 10 says, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”

It's a myth that Jesus will set foot on earth and reign for a thousand years. Oh I tell you when Jesus comes again, we'll be caught up to meet Him in the air in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:13 to 19). Folks, Jesus is already reigning as Lord over His kingdom. And that kingdom is the church. Jesus already has all authority (Matthew 28 and verse 18). When Jesus returns, the earth will be burned up (2 Peter 3 and verse 7). Now when you know what God actually says, you'll be able to spot human myths.

Some religious people believe that they're wiser than God and believe they should become editors of God's teaching in order to correct His way rather than listening to the words that God has spoken. Proverbs 16:1 to 3 explains that, “The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the LORD weighs the motives. Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established.” Now you may think that you have a better way, but God's way will rule in the end.

The written word of God is always right. And we must be careful not to be fooled by those who call themselves prophets. 2 Peter 2 verses 1 and 2 warns, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (then he says) Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.” When false prophecy fails today, and it does quite often, people think all Christians are frauds.

2 John 7 to 11 says, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. (then he says) Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.”

When false teachers depart from the Word of God, the written word, they cease to have God. We know the written word is true. It came to the apostles in the first century. John 16:13 promises that they were guided into “all the truth.” Jude 3 reminds us that the faith was once for all time delivered to the saints. False prophets are making up their own prophecies, not believing “all the truth” that was delivered by the Spirit to the apostles in the first century. The answer to lies and myths can be found by studying closely the written Word of God.

Friends, we need to pray what David prayed in Psalm 86:11, “Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.” When we respect God, we listen to Him. When we listen, we learn the truth. The Lord Jesus urged us in Matthew 7:13 to 14, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For

the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Many people are willing to listen to the popular, easy ways that cost them their souls. But few are willing to take the narrow way that leads to life. Which are you?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have revealed the way to us in Your word. Help to walk in Your ways to do Your will and to love You from a free heart, to care for what You care for. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Hosea 14:9 says, "Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, And the righteous will walk in them, But transgressors will stumble in them." Oh, I pray you'll walk in the way of the Lord. We're hearing from people who are hungering for true New Testament Christianity. They're weary of the moral confusion of some religious groups today, allowing sin to prevail. They're also weary of churches that entertain and promise but never ask people to repent. They're looking for something more solid, that finds its roots in God's word.

We need to seek the ancient paths of Christianity and walk in them. Instead of refusing to live for the Lord we need to deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily to follow Him. He is "the way, the truth, and the life"; and "no one can come to the Father" except through Him (John 14 verse 6). True, New Testament Christianity follows the Lord, not some later vision or prophecy. It doesn't buy into worldly myths and human traditions that have no foundation.

To start your walk in the way of the Lord, place your faith in Jesus Christ and trust the gospel of Christ. If you love the Lord, let that love lead you away from sin and to righteousness. That's repentance, an opportunity to change that God grants to us. Acknowledge the Lord and confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God and is your Lord; and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. That's what's taught in Acts 2:38 in the very first gospel sermon; and it's still the way of salvation. And when you're baptized God will wash away your sins (Acts 22:16) and unite you with Christ, free from sin (Romans 6:3 to 7).