

Program Transcripts

February 2025



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY [®]

SEARCH PROGRAMS

February 2025

Topics subject to change without notice

FEBRUARY 2 – SEED IN OUR HEARTS

The seed of the kingdom is the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the seed is sown, it can produce fruit if we receive it with receive it with good and honest hearts. Sadly, not everyone is willing to listen or to hold fast to the gospel message.

FEBRUARY 9 – HEALTHY CHRISTIANITY

What makes a Christian healthy biblically and practically is listening and loving the Lord and His ways. Healthy Christians make healthy churches, but unhealthy Christians cause chaos and lead the lost to reject the church.

FEBRUARY 16 – THE GREATEST LOVE

There can be no greater love than for person to give his life for his friends. This is exactly what Jesus did for us. He sacrificed Himself so that we might be forgiven and live eternally in heaven with Him.

FEBRUARY 23 – OUR WORDS

How we speak matters to those who hear. We must learn to speak in such a way as to be a blessing to all who know us. Christians should speak with grace to others so they may influence them to love the Lord.

Seed in Our Hearts

There is a message you must hear, a seed that must be planted in your heart. 1 Peter 1:22 to 23 says, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." The seed of God which causes us to be born again is the living and enduring word of God. And we're born again by hearing and obeying the gospel.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." Yes we come to know God when we listen to the gospel message preached in the first century. It "is the power of God for salvation" according to Romans 1:16. And if this is the case, then we must pay close attention to the gospel.

Our reading is from Luke chapter 8 verses 4 to 8. And here Jesus is telling one of His parables. The parable of the sower.

When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful for Your love. And we're thankful Father for the parables of old. That help us to see ourselves. And Father help us always to love You and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 13 verses 18 to 19 describing the people in the hardened soil, "Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road." Mark 4 and verse 13 explains that Satan immediately takes away the word that was sown. Luke 8:12 says the devil takes it away from their hearts, so that they will not believe. This seed sown along the path, where people walk and harden the soil, would be easy for birds to come and eat.

Luke 8 and verse 11 simply says that, "the seed is the word of God." Some are not willing to hear what the Bible actually says. Satan has snatched the word away. Millions of people in America have never owned or never read the Bible that they do own. They don't know some of the simplest Bible stories. Others have read the Bible but refused to believe it. The evil one snatches away the truth from their hearts. Some don't believe in God, some don't think that you can know for sure whether there is a God, and some don't care whether God exists.

My friend you need the Bible message, everyone does. The gospel still has God's power to save. And John 6 and verse 68 reminds us the Lord Jesus has the words of eternal life. Jesus said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." No

one but Jesus went to the cross to die for your sins. No one but Jesus prophesied His resurrection and then rose again on the third day. Yes He was truly raised from the dead. No one but Jesus will judge you by His words on the last day. The gospel message is your only hope of living with God in heaven for an eternity.

The Lord described a second group, that is with the rocky soil in Matthew 13 verses 20 to 21 that, "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. Some hear the Word and receive it with great joy, yes. They have an emotional reaction to the good news of Christ but they lack a strong foundation in the word of God. God's word gives us the strong foundation that we need to remain faithful.

The gospel message is truly good news of salvation and eternal life. And anyone who hears and accepts the word of God will rejoice. Being a Christian, however, is not always easy. It can challenge one to his very soul. And Luke adds that the word temptation to the tribulation and persecution that challenges can cause one to fall away. One who has not allowed the word to deeply root in their hearts can easily grow discouraged and fall away from the faith. All Christians face some disadvantages in this world. 2 Timothy 3 and verse 12 says, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Well, many souls are weak to problems and persecution. And when they find that their faith is challenging and demands sacrifice, they sadly are unwilling to remain with the Lord. Even people that we think are strong in the faith can fall to the temptation of keeping silent if their faith is challenged by others. John 12:42 to 43 says, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Many today put relationships with people as more important than their relationship with God. They choose to follow people that they love more than the God who loves them.

I've known new converts who were rejected by their families for coming to the Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:34 to 39: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his (own) household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." The Lord demands first place in our lives, and sadly many people choose others over Jesus Christ.

Many congregations throughout our land were once full and now are smaller, while others have grown. According to Gallup, the number of people who are religiously affiliated and attending church at all, just going at all, is less than fifty percent of the population. According to the Epoch Times, "At least 915 acts of hostility were carried out against U.S. churches between 2018 and 2023." Many in our culture no longer feel it necessary to remain loyal to the church. They don't realize that when they leave the church, they are also leaving God's will for their lives.

Hebrews 10:25 reminds us that we're not to forsake "our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Sadly some people give up on faith in Christ and on the church. This has happened in every generation, but it seems more noticeable these days, since our culture has changed. Hebrews 3 verses 12 to 13 warns that those who abandon their faith need to take care: he says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Third, the Lord described the hearts of people in the thorny soil in Matthew 13:22. He said, "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." Luke 8:14 warns that the pleasures of sin along with the cares of the world and a delight in riches can cause a Christian to choke out faith and devotion to God. Yes sin can harden our hearts and rob us of our faith. You know even things that are not sinful can cause us to drift away from our commitments to the Lord and to His church.

The Lord Jesus spoke clearly about the person who lives faithfully and the person who assumes everything is okay, while living a rebellious life. Luke 12:42 to 46 says: And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers."

The Lord Jesus warned us not to allow the worry of this world to lead us away from our devotion to Him in Luke 21 and verse 34 Jesus said, "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth." Since we will all face the Lord at the end of time, we need to keep our hearts devoted to Him. The cares of the world, riches, and the pleasures of sin can choke out our love for God. Oh you can easily lose your moral restraint if you allow drunkenness to overcome you.

Fourth, the Lord described the hearts of people in the good soil in Matthew 13:23, "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." Luke 8:15 describes the fourth group, "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance." Yes they hear and understand the word. And they're willing to allow the word to work in their hearts and lives. Because they have good and honest hearts, they hold fast, they bear fruit, and they remain steadfast. Just as Christ did not quit on them, they did not quit on the Lord Jesus.

Because their faith is strong and enduring, they bear fruit in their lives. They stand strong with the Lord, they reach out to others with the gospel, they do good works, and they share with those in

need. Jesus describes the His godly disciples in Matthew 5:13 to 16, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

When Christians live faithfully they show the fruit of the Spirit and are a blessing to everyone. Galatians 5:22 to 23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." The world in which we live could do with more of these qualities. The fruit of the Spirit makes the world sit up and take notice of the good that's found in Jesus Christ. They make people want to have those very qualities in their own lives. Paul explained what Christians should do in Romans 12 and verse 2. He said, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Now every person listening to me today can be put into one of these four categories of soil. The sower's seed is the same to all of them, but how they react to the gospel seed in their hearts differs. Some are so hard-hearted they never let the seed enter. Some hear with joy but are unwilling to hold on to the Lord's promise when tough times come. Some are too busy with their own lives to have room for God in them. But others love the Lord, hold fast to His word, and they live for the Lord, and they produce fruit. Which one of these heart soils describes you? Which one of them really describes how you live and how you think? Do you love the Lord? Do you serve Him? Are you, by your light, producing fruit? Because that seed of the kingdom was planted in your heart to do just that.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that You have given us a seed in our hearts. And we pray Father that we may let it grow as it should and produce fruit. And to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen.

When Jesus finished telling His parable of the Sower, He cried out: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13 verse 9). Do you have ears? How well have you listened to Jesus? If you were to pick one of these four types of hearts, which would you be? If you have a good and honest heart, God bless you! But if your heart is hardened, if your heart is heavy, or if your heart has been crowded out by the worldly things, then you need to soften your heart to Jesus, and look at the cross, and remember God's promises.

Some of you may have good and honest hearts, but you have listened to the wrong things. Many follow the wrong teachers who fail to teach Scripture. Some believe they can prophesy, and others follow human traditions and creeds. Examine everything you hear by the Scriptures. Read the New Testament for yourselves and compare what it says with what your leaders are saying. Some pick out the passages that support their views while they ignore the other teaching of the Lord. The whole truth is never found in just one passage. We need to take all that the Bible says on any topic.

Healthy Christianity

3 John verses 2 to 5 says, "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." What if the healthiness of your spiritual life was reflected in your physical health? Would you be healthy or would you be sick? Does your soul prosper? Are you spiritually healthy? Paul reminded the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 1 and verse 3 that we have been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Well do you have the blessings of Christ?

A healthy Christian loves the Lord and loves what is good and right. He's generous to others, caring toward those in need, and seeking opportunities to share the gospel with anyone who's willing to hear. A healthy Christian knows he is forgiven and is gracious to others. A healthy Christian puts God first and doesn't compromise His faith to please people. A healthy Christian walks in the light and fixes his eyes on the Lord.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 1, all six verses. A beautiful idea in contrasting the difference between those who live for the Lord and those don't.

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

That's a reading from God's word. Let's pray. Father we hope that we can always be people who meditate on Your word and do Your will. Help us to stay away from things that are sinful and wicked and help us to love the things that are good and righteous. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

When we go to the doctor, the doctor measures our blood pressure and blood oxygen, takes our temperature, checks our weight, tests our blood and urine, and asks many personal questions. He wants to know every detail about our bodies and our ability to function normally as a human being. When things function as they should, we think of ourselves as healthy. In the same way, when things function spiritually the way God intended, we can regard our spiritual lives as healthy.

David wanted to know about his spiritual health and prayed to God in Psalm 139:23 to 4, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." Now God already knew David's heart and He didn't need to search it. David, however, needed to look at his heart to see what God already saw. David wanted to correct whatever was wrong and make it right. Healthy Christians make healthy churches. Unhealthy Christians hurt the church. And here are some measures of what it means to be a healthy Christian:

First, Christians should be spiritually healthy in their devotion to God. Healthy Christians are people of prayer. They "pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you

in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:17 to 18). They give thanks, they pray for their neighbors and for the nation, and they praise God for all He has done. As Christians, they confess and repent of their sins and ask God's forgiveness. They seek to be right with God.

And when they are troubled, they pray to God for help. Philippians 4:6 to 7 says, "Be anxious for 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."

They worship regularly with the church. Healthy Christians follow the teaching of Hebrews 10:24 to 25: "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." They want to be with their brothers and sisters worshiping God. They want to encourage and be encouraged. They generously give to see the will of God done at church and around the world. And they remember each Lord's day the body and blood of the Jesus in the Lord's Supper.

Because God is with them every day, they also worship in private at home, or in their cars, and wherever they go and whatever they do. They pray and sing and read Scripture. They regularly talk about what they have learned from Scripture. Sweet Jackie and I like to sing hymns on our way to worship. Healthy Christians keep a Bible handy not just on a shelf. Many Christians have Bibles on their smart phones, so they can consult it anytime!

Second, Christians should be spiritually healthy doctrinally. The apostle Paul urged Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." Yes, there is a pattern of righteousness found in Scripture, and Christians need to follow it. Paul warned Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:3 to 5 that, "If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." Healthy Christians contend for the faith, yes, but unhealthy Christians love to fuss over controversial questions. Sincere questions are one thing, but hateful controversy has no place in Christianity.

Healthy Christians don't just read the Bible; they study it! 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15 urges us, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." You see they let God's word settle their beliefs. Healthy Christians meditate on God's word day and night. They don't take a passage out of context and make a law out of it. They look at all the Scriptures and all that they have to say on any topic. And they draw out what the Scripture actually says rather than reading into the Scripture current cultural trends or their own ideas. They're like the Bereans. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these (the Bereans) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." Healthy Christians don't buy into someone's claim to be a modern-day prophet, especially when the things they prophesy contradict Scripture.

Third, Christians should be spiritually healthy in their relationships with others. John 13:34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, (Jesus speaking and) that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." You know it's the mark of a disciple of Christ to love others. Loving others is essential to loving God. 1 John 4:7 to 8 says to Christians, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Now unity in Christ starts with believing the truth of Christ; but it also calls for the right attitudes. Ephesians 4:1 to 3 says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Now tolerating the insignificant weaknesses and flaws of others is one thing, but unity in Christ doesn't mean tolerating willful sin and immorality. Loving others doesn't mean approving sin rather than calling them to repentance. Jesus loved everyone, but He called everyone to repentance. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 5 for tolerating instead of judging a man caught up in incest. And Jesus rebuked the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2 for tolerating Jezebel for teaching people to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit act of immorality. When Christians speak out against sin, they're following Christ, who also spoke out against sin and called for repentance.

Healthy Christians watch their words. They control how they speak to others. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." You see healthy Christians want to be a blessing to others rather than be mean-spirited. An unwholesome word could be gossip, could be slander, could be profanity. Ephesians 5:4 says, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

Healthy Christians control their anger. James 1:19 to 20 says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Oh we get hurt or we see unjust things happen. It's easy to get mad, but watch out. Ephesians 4:26 to 7 says, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Angry people often do foolish things that can cost them dearly. Proverbs 16:32 says that, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city." Rule your spirit.

Ephesians 4:31 to 32 says, "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." Healthy Christians who know God's grace show grace to others. They forgive rather than become bitter and hold a grudge.

Colossians 3:12 to 14 says, "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."

Fourth, Christians should possess spiritually healthy moral lives. When a person becomes a Christian and is forgiven of his past sins, he should abandon evil and live for the Lord. Romans 6:1 and 2 says, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" No we can't. Grace is not a license to sin. We must never presume grace permits us to sin all that we please. Romans 8:12 to 13 says, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Spiritual death or separation from God still takes place when Christians willfully sin against God, and they disregard His laws, or they refuse to repent.

1 Timothy 1:8 to 11 says, "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." And those who disregard God's law and His truths are guilty of sin and do not stand in God's grace or favor.

Fifth, Christians should be spiritually healthy in their walk with God. 1 John 1:5 to 7 says, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 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." You know people are either walking in the light or they're walking in darkness. Sadly, some Christians leave the light and follow the darkness, losing fellowship with God. They don't stand in His grace or favor. If they wish to come back to the light, they must confess their sins and change their ways.

1 John 2 verses 3 to 6 says, "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' (that is 'I love Him') but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." God's judges us by whether we keep His word. And keeping His word is how we perfect our love for God. If we say we abide with God, we must walk like Jesus walked. Are you spiritually healthy?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are thankful that through Your word we can measure our own lives to whether or not we are healthy toward You. Help us to love You and follow Your word, to serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

We all face the struggle of living in this sinful world. And we're pulled in many directions. We have to decide whether or not to love God and Him alone more than anything else. 1 John 2:15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." And if we choose this world, we'll one day see it perish. Only the way of God lasts.

The Greatest Love

John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." Well that's the kind of love that Christ had for us! Jesus knew that we were in a desperate condition and doomed to be lost. Ephesians 2:1 to 3 says, "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, (and) of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (And then he says) 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."

Now if the text had stopped there, we would have no hope. Thankfully, Ephesians 2:4 to 5 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." God was indeed rich in mercy and great in love and He gave us hope and life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah chapter 53 verses 4 to 6. And they include a passage that prophecies the death of Jesus. And we have example of this very passage that date from the second century BC. It is a true prophecy. It came to be true.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

That is a true statement about the sacrifice of Jesus. How He died for us for our sins. Let's pray. Father we're so thankful for Jesus and for what He did for us. That He would give Himself to be crucified so that we might have life eternal and the forgiveness of sins. Father help us to love You with all our heart, and soul and mind and strength and to do Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

John 3:16 and 17 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only (and some version say "only begotten) Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." This passage suggests the greatest love for the greatest number at the greatest cost and for the greatest salvation came in Christ. It indeed opens the way for all people to escape condemnation and to find salvation in Christ Jesus. Oh yes, Jesus died for everyone.

Paul proclaimed in 1 Timothy 1:15 to 16 that, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." Now the love of God was not simply for those of ancient times; it's for all people everywhere. For all time. God knew this sinful world needed a Savior, and Jesus came into the world with patience for a weak, flawed, and sinful world, including you and me.

God's heart and the Lord's heart wanted the best for us. They didn't want to see us lost forever and cursed with the devil and his angels. 1 Timothy 2 verses 3 to 6 says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." Jesus was willing to give Himself, His own

body and blood, as a ransom for our salvation. He gave us His word so that we might know the truth and be set free.

God loved the world. Have you ever thought about the people in this sinful world? Many in this world don't know and don't care about God, but God cares about them. God went so far as to demonstrate His love for them in the most dramatic way. Romans 5:6 to 8 describes the kind of people God and the Lord Jesus loves. It says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Helpless people cannot save themselves by themselves; they need a Savior. Ungodly people don't care and never give God a second thought, but God cared about them. Sinners offend God with their selfish and sinful ways, but God still demonstrated His love for them, the sinners. God took the first step. It was a step of great love toward a weak, ungodly, sinful humanity. He loved them when they couldn't help themselves, when they didn't care about Him, and when they willfully sinned against Him. Oh we didn't beg God to take this step; He planned it to wake us up to the difference between being cursed for an eternity and being saved.

God wasn't merely wanting to save us; He wanted an eternal relationship with us. He wanted us to be His children and to follow His will. He gave us Christ who suffered the cross, the Bible to educate and guide us, the church as a family, the hope of eternal life, and daily grace and favor. Romans 8:32 says that, "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?" We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1 verse 3). And God's love begins with the cross, but it lasts eternally. Count your blessings.

When Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B. C., Jeremiah mourned greatly; but he could still see God's love. Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 3:22 to 24, "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'" Oh God has never given up on us. We may give up on Him and turn from Him; but if we remain faithful to Him, He will remain faithful to us.

Jesus stayed faithful to His disciples, even though He knew they would scatter from Him when He was arrested and then crucified. John 13:1 says, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, (that is the night before Jesus died) Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." The upcoming death of Jesus left him troubled and grieved. Matthew 26:37 and 38 says, "And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.'"

Luke 22:44 says, "And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground." I've had anxiety a few times in my life, but I've never faced such overwhelming grief and distress. The thought of being falsely tried and lied about, the thought of beaten and scourged, the thought of shamefully being nailed to a cross, and the thought being a sacrificial offering for the sins of the whole world must have burdened His soul. Jesus knew that He would die a long, shameful, agonizing death. Because He loved us, He was willing to bear our sins on the cross.

Matthew 26:51 to 54 says, "And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and (he) drew out his sword, and (he) struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. (And) Then Jesus said to

him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"'

The attitude of Jesus while He suffered reveals how very much He loved us. Jesus began His suffering with a prayer to the Father. His prayer revealed His heart for people. While one might expect Him to concentrate on what was happening to Him, He was focused on those who were putting Him to death. Luke 23:33 to 34 says that, "When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'" And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. While the pagan, Roman soldiers were callously putting nails through His hands and feet and gambling over his clothes, Jesus prayed for their forgiveness. He was dying even for the ones who were piercing Him.

Peter recalled the suffering of Jesus on the cross and offering His body as an example for those who suffer unjustly today. 1 Peter 2:21 to 24 shows the noble love of our Savior: "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." We too need to entrust our souls to God.

Jesus could see beyond what was happening to Him; He could see His suffering did show love for God and accomplish God's will; and He could see His blood would show His love and cleanse people from their sins. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, so that He might bring you to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." Love filled everything that Jesus did on the cross. The cross could kill His body, but it could not kill His love!

Even after many hours of horrible agony, Jesus willingly remained on the cross. Jesus didn't avoid the cross and didn't quit while suffering. He didn't call the twelve legions of angels to rescue Him and destroy His enemies. He didn't threaten those who caused His suffering but prayed for their forgiveness. Jesus knew that to the end His suffering prematurely would mean He wouldn't accomplish God's will. That is if He gave up He wouldn't accomplish God's will to redeem us. Jesus came to this earth to be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). And He came to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19 verse 10). "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20 and verse 28).

We too face many problems, just as they did in other times. Paul wrote in Romans 8:35 to 39, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God's love will not leave us as long as we remain in His love. We must never turn our backs and leave God. The Lord Jesus said in John 15:9 to 10, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept

My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Jude 21 says, "keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." The Lord Jesus said in John 14:21 that, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." 1 John 4 and verse 16 says that, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

The Lord expects us to love Him, just as He has loved us. After Peter denied the Lord three times, the Lord asked him about his love. John 21:15 to 17 says: When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." You see love isn't just professed; it always acts and demonstrates itself. Do you love the Lord? Show it.

Let's pray together. Oh Heavenly Father help us to love You with all our hearts. And to love others the way You have loved us. Help us to do Your will and to show that love that we have for You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Lord Jesus didn't sacrifice Himself at such a great cost to leave us where He found us. Jesus didn't bear the cross for us and then forget us. He wanted something better for us. And He loved us first, wanting us to love Him in return. He wanted a relationship with us that would last more than a lifetime. He wanted to be with us eternally. Are you close to the Lord? Can you say that you really know Him? Are you in a right relationship with Him?

1 John 2:3 to 6 says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." When you keep the Lord's commandments, you can say that you are truly in a right relationship with Him.

To begin your walk with Christ, you must obey the gospel of Christ. Obedience means that you do things His way, not your way. Jesus obeyed by doing the will of the Father. And we obey by doing the will of our Lord Jesus. By faith and love for Jesus, we obey by turning away from sin and turning to righteousness. We obey by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, confessing our faith in Him. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water so that our sins will be forgiven (Acts 2 and verse 38). We're buried and raised with Him to walk in newness of life, free from sin (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). Won't you obey today?

Our Words

The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6:45, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil. For his mouth speaks from the abundance of his heart." Paul urged Timothy to be an example of a believer in speech in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 12. Now your words reflect what is in your heart. If your words are harsh and evil, then it shows a negative and evil heart. If your words are kind and good, then it shows a kind and good heart.

How we use our tongues matters to God and to others. No one likes to hear outbursts of anger, habitual complaining, needless worry, ceaseless fault-finding, unfair judging, gossip, or mean-spirited slander. These activities aren't the way of the person who seeks to follow Christ. Harmful and destructive speech can become a frequent habit. David said in Psalm 140 verses 1 to 3, "Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men Who devise evil things in their hearts; They continually stir up wars. They sharpen their tongues as a serpent; Poison of a viper is under their lips." Let's consider how we speak. Because God is listening.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians chapter 4 verses 8 and 9. They discuss how we should think and what we let our minds dwell on. Because that's where our words come from.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful for Your guidance so that we may know how to live and how to think and how to deal with one another. Help us Heavenly Father to set our minds on the things that are good, healthy and wholesome. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

King David said in Psalm 19 verse 14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." I hope you too want to be acceptable to the Lord by how you speak. Words are important to God, and the words we speak may violate the will of God or they may fulfill it. So we should think and judge our attitudes before we speak rather than speak rashly and wish we could take back what we've said.

Words reveal character. Matthew 12:34 to 37 says that "the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word (Jesus says) that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." People who speak evil must give an account for their words to God. Oh, God knows. Proverbs 13:3 says, "The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin."

Well, how can I use my words for good, to bless others? First, we can tell people the truth of the gospel of Christ. We can tell them how Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1 to 3). The gospel of Christ is the best message anyone could ever hear. It gives hope, forgiveness, and eternal life. Nothing else compares. Christianity is indeed a unique faith, unlike any other religion. It's built upon prophecy and rooted in history. It can be tested and verified. Oh yes.

True Christianity is built upon the compassion and love of Christ and how that has blessed humanity for the last two thousand years. Don't be fooled by groups that call themselves Christian but have no real

relationship with Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus himself said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." The Lord knows some who claim to be faithful servants but in reality are lawless. Jesus tells lawless people who claim to be Christians, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7 verse 23).

Instead, the Lord wants His people to lead godly lives and place their hope in heaven. When Christians live as they ought, people will wonder why. 1 Peter 3 and verse 15 encourages us, "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and fear." When people set Christ apart as Lord in their hearts, it's evident to everyone. And people will ask, well, why you follow Jesus, and you can give the reasons for your hope in a gentle, humble, and respectful way.

An elder, I knew, used to encourage the congregation to "speak a good word about Jesus." Oh we can let the people around us hear what the Lord has done for us. We can rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4 and verse 4). In Mark 5, Jesus and His disciples encounter a demon-possessed man who lived a lonely, miserable, and painful life among the tombs. Jesus cast out the demons that were in him. And Mark 5:18 to 20 reveals what Jesus wanted the demon-possessed man to do to bless others: And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was pleading with Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." And he went away and began to preach in the Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was marveling.

Oh, every Christian who loves the Lord can tell others what great things God has done for them. David wrote in Psalm 71 verses 15 to 18, "My mouth shall tell of Your (greatness) righteousness And of Your salvation all day long; For I do not know the sum of them. I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone. O God, You have taught me from my youth, And I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come." Oh we too should want to tell the wonderful works of God.

Second, we should teach our children and grandchildren about God. Moses said in Deuteronomy 6:6 to 9, "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Some parents think they shouldn't influence their children's religious beliefs, but God expects parents to train their children spiritually. Ephesians 6 and verse 3 tells fathers to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Psalm 78:5 to 8 says, "For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children, That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children, That they should put their confidence in God And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments, And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not prepare its heart And whose spirit was not faithful to God."

When the heart is not right, the younger generations are deprived of the truth and a godly way of life. And that is what's happened in our generation with many souls. When faith in God is lacking and children are not spiritually trained, their hearts turn from what's good to what's evil. They turn from faith to doubt, from righteousness to unrighteousness, and from kindness to selfishness. In a culture filled with spin and

partisan identity, love and truth are hard to find. We should encourage others with our words. We must lift up, not tear down. We must give thanks rather than complain. We must praise rather than slander. It's better to ask questions than it is to make rash accusations.

Paul urged Christians to bless others with their speech in Ephesians 4:29. He said, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for building up what is needed, so that it will give grace to those who hear." Unwholesome speech is rotten and corrupt. Isn't it better to hear what will meet the need and give grace? In a similar passage, Paul wrote in Colossians 4 verses 5 and 6, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."

Wise people think before they speak. They lift up the truth rather than tear down what is good. Wise people give hope to the hopeless, they give strength to the weak, they give light to those in darkness, and they speak of God's love to those who are unloved. Wise Christians offer friendship to the lonely and forgotten. They listen to the hurts of others and offer them the true source of healing in the grace of God. James 1:19 to 20 says, "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." Anger builds a barrier between people and can end a relationship. It hurts rather than heals or helps.

Sometimes we have to deal with unpleasant things and we confront serious problems. At such times we've got to control our tongues and our attitudes even more closely. We have to be careful and watch out how we speak to others. 1 Timothy 5 verses 1 and 2 urges us, "Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity." Words said with love and respect are always much better than words spoken in anger. Oh, it's true: people don't care who you are, they don't care what you know, until they know that you care about them.

When our faith is pressed by those who don't understand or approve of Christianity, let's continue to embrace our love for God. Hebrews 10:23 to 25 says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." When people stop worshiping with the church, their faith weakens and their hope fades because they cease to be with those who love the Lord.

The prophet and king David said in Psalm 40 verses 9 and 10, "I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; Behold, I will not restrain my lips, O LORD, You know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation." When we confess our faith in God regularly, we hold on to it. When we stop confessing our faith but turn our hearts to the world, we gradually lose our devotion to God.

The sweetest words we can speak are expressions of love. Family members need to know they're loved, that they're valued, and appreciated. "I love you" and "thank you" should be spoken daily to those we love. I realize it's difficult for some to express their feelings, but withholding statements of love and appreciation can be cruel to those who love us. When people feel unloved, they often do unloving things.

Sadly, saying that we love someone can be useless, if we don't also show that love. After Peter denied the Lord three times, the Lord Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" in John 21:15 to 17. Jesus knew that Peter was weak, and even prayed for Peter. Jesus still wanted to hear Peter confess His love and then to live it out. If Peter really loved Him, Jesus wanted Peter to show it. And so He said,

“Feed My lambs.” “Shepherd My sheep.” “Feed My sheep.” You see, love serves others and love values others. Let your life and your words mean something.

When you have done something wrong, humble yourself and confess it. Saying “I am sorry” and ask forgiveness, “forgive me” to God and to others you’ve offended is only right. When others repent and apologize to you, you should say the words, “I forgive you.” 1 Corinthians 13:5 to 7 says that love “is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” Maintaining our love with others is necessary if we wish to please God. 1 John 4:11 simply says, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” Let’s love God by loving one another.

Let’s pray together. Oh Father help us to bless the people around us with the words that we speak. Help us to encourage, to lift up, to be thankful, to be willing to forgive. And to love others. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

The Lord Jesus left us an example of how to speak and behave when we’re being unfairly treated by others. 1 Peter 2:21 to 24 says, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

When Jesus on the cross was being humiliated, suffering great pain, and being mocked and slandered, He didn’t respond with threats or hateful speech. Jesus entrusted Himself to God, who judges righteously. We may suffer harm too, but let’s entrust our souls to God. 1 Peter 4 and verse 19 says, “Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.” God always wants us to do what is right.

Doing what is right, that is the will of God, is vital to our salvation and relationship with God and with other faithful brothers and sisters. To get right with God, we must accept His gift of salvation according to His terms. Loving the Lord is necessary. Believing the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential. Repenting of our sins and confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God is required. Being baptized, immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, is also necessary according to Acts 2:38. I tell you, you can’t obey the Lord on your terms. Obedience means pleasing Him.