

Joshua 24

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Date: 21 September 2014

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[0 : 00] We'll turn to Joshua chapter 24, on page 199. So we're going to think over the next few months, on Sunday mornings, what do we do in gathered worship?

! What do we do and why do we do it? And I want to say to you, if you miss a part, I don't normally ask this, but I would ask you to listen to sermons that you miss.

And we're going to try and turn my sermon notes into English and have them available as a booklet. I don't know how successful that would be, it's a big job for someone else. But we're going to try to have them every week.

I really want to ask you to try and invest in this sermon series. The reason I'm preaching it is partly because I think there's so much confusion about public worship.

And I think so much harm is being done in the Christian church by what is often taught about Christian worship. But mainly because it's done me the world of good. And as I've thought and read in the last year on Christian worship and what that is, it's fed my soul.

[1 : 09] And I hope that as we look at this subject, as we kind of take a step back from our normal practice, which is to go through a book of the Bible, but to look at the kind of themes that we're going to see, that it'll be as much of a help to you as it's been to me.

And so next Sunday we're going to start looking at the different aspects of our service. But this morning I want to give a bird's eye view to the overall sheep, or what is the purpose of our coming? So what is the big goal? What is the overall goal in our gathering for worship every week? And here is what I hope we will see. That in gathered worship, God shapes our love as we reenact the gospel in a rhythm of reception and response.

Let me just say that again. What I hope we will see is that in gathered worship, God shapes our love as we reenact the gospel in a rhythm of reception and response.

Now some of you might have alarm bells ringing at that, but I won't ask you to give me the benefit of the doubt. And to do that we're going to look at this passage from Joshua 24. And to think about the definition of gathered worship.

[2 : 24] And then to look at the shape of gathered worship. And then thirdly to look at the ongoing need for gathered worship. So let's think first of all at the definition of worship.

How do you define it? So Joshua 24, just to get our bearings, is the final chapter in the book of Joshua. It's a book that records the entry of God's people into Israel, into the promised land. They've had a difficult journey where their faith and their obedience have been tested to a great extent. And the book covers that. Their entrance into the land. The book tells us of their conquest of the land.

And the distribution of the land amongst the twelve tribes. And then here at the end of Joshua, after his farewell speech in chapter 23, because he knows he's about to die, God calls all the people in Shechem to renew the covenant between God and God's people.

In the 2002 movie *Changing Lanes*, which is by no means a classic, but it's got one good line in it. William Hurt's character in the film says this. Everything decent is held together by a covenant.

[3 : 35] Everything decent is held together by a covenant. And that is right. And that is how we are housed together with God. The God of the Bible relates to his people by covenant.

This binding contract of a loving relationship. Where he promises that he will be our God and that we will be his people.

And so here at Shechem, that covenant is being renewed. It's being reenacted by his people. And God is affirming, I am your God. And he's calling on the Israelites to reaffirm that promise.

That they are his people. Now we'll come back to how this covenant renewal plays out in a moment. But I want, first of all, to look at a word that keeps popping up in this chapter. It pops up like

measles.

It's first there in verses 2 and 3. Look at verse 2 and 3. Joshua said to all the people, That says the Lord, the God of Israel, Long ago your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Tarek the father of Abraham and of Naal.

[4 : 38] And they served other gods. They served. Or they worshipped. You can translate the word in either way. They served.

And as you read together this chapter, You'll see that that word serve or worship comes up all over the place. It comes up 18 times in this chapter.

So look at verse 14. Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt.

And serve the Lord. And the fact that this Hebrew word can be translated in two ways. Either by the word serve or worship. I think is very, very helpful to us.

In thinking how do we define worship. Now I guess most of us have been to churches or events. Where on occasion somebody's been leading at the front. And after the initial welcome.

[5 : 38] The person now says, Well please stand, we're going to have a time of worship. And normally what they're referring to is a time of singing. And the idea is that worship is what we do when we sing songs or hymns or praise songs.

The question is, is that worship? Worship. Well it certainly is. But it is far too a restricted view of what worship is. So preachers get a little bit touchy about it. Because it sort of implies, doesn't it? Well we were worshipping when the praise band or the musicians were up. But now you've got me and well what are we doing now? But eventually with those people, if you push them.

Or you should push them. They will say, yeah, yeah, yeah. The whole time that we're in church. On a Sunday morning or Sunday evening. That is worship. They'll agree to that. The singing, the prayers, the sermon, the offering.

Everything. But there's still a problem with that. And the problem with it is this. That when you read through the New Testament. You will find that the New Testament never uses the word worship.

[6 : 42] To specifically describe what we're doing here this morning. So the New Testament has a far broader remit for this word. So for example, look with me at Romans chapter 12.

Just keep a finger in Joshua 24. But come with me to Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12 verse 1. It's on page 947. And the Apostle Paul says to them this.

He says, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercy of God. To present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Holy and acceptable to God. Which is your spiritual worship.

Paul says that as we offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Holy and pleasing to God. That is our worship. In the language of Joshua. That is our service.

We are serving God. So in other words, God intends all of your life. And my life. To be worshipped to him. And service to him. And if we compartmentalise Sunday morning and evening as worship.

[7 : 47] Well then what are we left with for the rest of my life? How do I categorise that? And Paul says to you, the rest of your life that is worship too. 24-7 worship of God.

It is a continuous outpouring of our lives to honour God. And to glorify God. And so as you go and eat lunch today. And as you chat with your friends.

And as you post on Facebook. And as you look at that computer screen. And as you go to work tomorrow. And as you go to the doctors for that check-up. And as you go to school. And you do your homework.

Everything comes under this. That all of life is to be lived as worshipped to God. As we serve him. And as we pour out our lives for his glory.

Now that leaves us, doesn't it? On a bit of a sticky wicket. What do we call. What we're doing here this morning. Well we need to remember this.

[8 : 44] That worship has two contexts. Alright. There is scattered worship. And there is gathered worship. So scattered worship is that 24-7.

All of life worship of God. Where you and I are scattered to all different places. So some of us will not see each other again. Until next Sunday morning. Will we?

Because our paths won't cross. And I am scattered over there. And you are scattered over here.

And you work in the city. And I work in Ealing. And we won't see each other again.

But then next Sunday we will come together. And we will participate in this gathered worship. And we come together to worship God. With practices that edify us.

That teach us. That shape us. That paint for us the vision of what the good life really looks like. And then having gathered together for worship on a Sunday.

[9 : 44] God again scatters us. To worship him through the week. In our personal lives. Wherever you are. And so when we use the word worship. It is important to define what we are talking about.

There is a distinction between our scattered worship. 24-7 worship. And this gathered corporate worship. That we are doing now. Where we gather to call on the name of the Lord.

But that is not our only issue as we think about worship. Because not only does the New Testament. Not describe what we do here on Sunday specifically as worship.

But it doesn't provide us with any blueprint. For what we are to do together in gathered worship.

There is no passage. In which I could have turned to this morning.

Where God gives us. Jesus' prescription. For a weekly order of service. When people are gathered.

There is no prescription. In the New Testament on that. There is no chapter.

[10 : 43] Where we could have gone to. Where Paul maps out for you and I. What a biblical worship service looks like. And that is in sharp contrast to the Old Testament.

Isn't it? In the Old Testament there is detailed. Unbelievably detailed blueprint. For how God wanted him to be worshipped. Week by week.

So go read the book of Leviticus. And then you read through the epistles of the New Testament.

And you breathe a sigh of relief. Because there is a conspicuous.

There is absence of those details. And that is not stylistic. There is a very good reason for that. The book of Hebrews.

The writer tells us that Jesus has fulfilled. All of those Old Testament worship categories. That we no longer have to provide sacrifices. This at the front here.

[11 : 38] It is not an altar. Where there are sacrifices. It is a table. We don't have to perform sacrifices. Because Jesus is the once and for all sacrifice.

And we don't need a temple anymore. Because Jesus is the ultimate temple. And we don't need any priests anymore. Or any priesthood. Because Jesus came as the ultimate great high priest. And Jesus has fulfilled all of those categories. But that doesn't mean that God doesn't want us. To come together and gather for worship.

On the contrary. The writer to the Hebrews. Tells us all those categories are fulfilled in Christ. But in chapter 10 of Hebrews.

He tells us this. Brothers. Since we have confidence. Enter the most holy place. By the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way. Opened for us. Through the curtain. That is his body.

[12 : 36] And since we have a great high priest. Over the house of God. Let us consider. How we may spur one another on. To love and good deeds. Not giving up.

Meeting together. As some are in the habit of doing. About encouraging one another. All the more. As you see the day of judgment approaching.

So the writer of the Hebrews tells us this. It tells us. Because Jesus has done all these things. For them. They need to come together. And keep coming together.

And keep coming together. To remind themselves of the great gospel. To spur one another on. That just because there isn't a blueprint. For how this gathered worship takes place.

It doesn't mean that we're not somehow to gather to worship. No. These gatherings. What we do this morning and tonight. This Sunday gathering. Is to be a participatory event.

[13 : 38] As somebody has said really helpfully. Gathered worship is meant to be more of a banqueting hall. Than a concert hall. Do you get that? Gathered worship is to be more of a banqueting hall.

Than a concert hall. And that is really helpful. If it was a concert hall. What happens is. You come. As passive observance. And critics. To be entertained.

By what is happening at the front. And you come ready to have your felt needs scratched. You come like you would go to a gig.

To a concert. You come and you're entertained at the front. And did you like that concert? I don't know. I don't know whether I liked it. Did you like it? I didn't get much out of it this evening. I got a lot out of it. I enjoyed it. But in a banqueting hall.

It's a communal thing. I hope we've come hungry this morning. We've come hungry this morning. And in community. Ready to participate.

[14 : 38] Ready to share. In the experience with one another. We come together with the expectation of working. And participating. And giving. And receiving.

We don't come here as an isolated individual. We come in the first hymn. And we leave in the last hymn. And it's about me and God. No. It is about us. Together. So we do not come to church as consumers.

But as participants. In this drama. Of gathered worship of God. So as we read through the New Testament. There is no blueprint for what we should do.

But we too find a variety of actions. That we must participate in. So the New Testament talks about praying together. The New Testament talks about reading the scriptures. Together.

The New Testament talks about listening to sermons. It talks about the Lord's Supper. About offerings. About greeting one another. And about confessing our faith. So does it matter how we put it together?

[15 : 40] Does it? I mean can't we just throw it together in a different way each week? And see how it comes out? You know like people. There are some people. They love to change the furniture around in the room.

And there are churches like that. And they just love changing the furniture around. Is that how we do it? So let me say exactly. Is there a shape to our worship? We see the definition of worship. But is there a shape to our worship? Because every church does it a little differently. Doesn't it? Even amongst Presbyterian churches actually. They do it differently. And I want to suggest to you that there is a basic shape to worship.

There is some latitude. But there is basic shape. And I think we see it in both the Old and the New Testament. While as we saw the particulars of worship in the New Testament.

They are radically different from the patterns in the Old Testament. There is one wonderful point of continuity. And that is the centrality in both Testaments.

[16 : 45] Of the story of God's redemption. That for the people of the Old Testament. And for us today. The bedrock of our identity.

Is the history of salvation. The history of salvation is the bedrock of our identity. As God's people. We are people. Who are defined by a story. And it is that story that shapes us. And shapes what we love.

It is the story that every time together we reenact. We reenact it in some kind of rhythm. Of reception and response.

We see. And we hear. And we taste. God's gracious actions on our behalf. And we respond to that.

[17 : 45] Over and over again. Each week. In different ways. Looking at different truths. There is a dialogue in biblical worship. Where God's grace.

And our gratitude. Meet. And as we do so. God is transforming us. And shaping us. Now as we look at Joshua 24. We see this rhythm of reception and response.

And it comes in largely two parts. If you took a minute. You could see. Exactly how those large blocks play out. But first of all. The people receive the story. Of what God has done for them.

They receive the story. Of their redemption. And the story as it runs. From verses 2. To verse 13. And as it was read. We saw how Joshua starts.

With the story with Abraham. Even before God calls Abraham. When he and his family. Are worshipping. Foreign gods. And let me draw our attention.

[18 : 43] To another part of the story. Look at verses 5 to 7. And I sent Moses. And Aaron. And I plagued Egypt. With what I did. In the midst of them. And afterwards.

I brought you out. And then I brought your fathers. Out of Egypt. And you came to the sea. And the Egyptians. Pursued your fathers. With chariots. And horsemen. To the Red Sea. And when they cried out.

To the Lord. He put darkness. Between you and the Egyptians. And made the sea. Come upon them. And cover them. And your eyes. Saw what I did. In Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness.

A long time. God. Every time. He relates to us. He reminds us. Of what he's done. Before he asks anything of us.

He always reminds you. Of who he is. And what he has done. Before he asks anything of you. And that is such a crucial understanding. To what the Christian life. Is all about.

[19 : 42] Christianity. Is not God saying. Here. This is what you need to do. And when you've done that. Maybe I'll accept you. No. God says. Here is. Who I am. And this is what I've done for you.

Now respond to my grace. And so we see that. In the Ten Commandments. How do the Ten Commandments begin? How do the Ten Commandments begin? Have no other gods before me? No. That is not how the Ten Commandments begin. How do the Ten Commandments begin? They begin by saying. I am the Lord your God. Who brought you up.

Out of Egypt. Out of the land of slavery. God says. Here is who I am. And this is what I've done for you. Now here is how I want you to respond to me. And God is always the initiator.

The beginner. By grace. And so that story. Gives to the Israelites. Before he gives the Ten Commandments. It's exactly what Joshua gives in Joshua 24. It's the Exodus.

[20 : 41] Over and over and over and over again. In the Old Testament. Whether it's in the Old Testament history books. Whether it's in the Psalms or the prophetic books. Here is the core story.

That defines how the Israelites are to define themselves. Understand themselves. The Israelites are Exodus people. It is their rescue of Egypt.

That is the shape. That defines them. And their identity. That they are God's people. Who God rescued out of slavery. To be his own.

And you might say. Well what is that going to do with me today? What is that going to do with us? So long ago. Well here is why it's relevant. If you are with us in Luke's Gospel. You should know this.

That right after Jesus is explained to his disciples. That he is the Messiah. And he is taken up onto the mountain. He takes Peter, James and John. And we are told that Jesus is transfigured.

[21 : 38] And he appears in dazzling brightness. And it's as if the veil is lifted up. To show who Jesus really is. And as the disciples stand there. They are God smacked.

With their eyes wide open. And jaws dropping. And what they are beholding. They see Elijah. And they see Moses. From the Old Testament. And they begin to talk with Jesus.

Elijah, Moses and Jesus have a conversation. And here is what Luke tells us about the conversation. Luke 9.31. They spoke about his departure. They spoke about his departure.

His departure which he was about to bring to fulfilment at Jerusalem. And that's not a great translation is it? Because it almost sounds like they are standing in the airport lounge. And Jesus is about to get on a plane.

And they are speaking about his departure. But the words you should know for departure is literally Exodus. They spoke about his exodus which he was about to fulfil in Jerusalem.

[22 : 37] Moses and Elijah and Jesus were speaking about his exodus. What were they talking about? What does that mean? Didn't the exodus happen in the Old Testament? Well yes.

But Jesus is using that term to help you and I understand. What he is coming to do in his death and his resurrection. And Jesus is coming to lead an exodus.

Which is the ultimate exodus. The one that Moses' exodus. The one that Joshua's exodus was here pointing to. Because Israel's story of redemption and liberation.

Was a story of redemption from social oppression. And economic oppression in Egypt. But that is ultimately not what all of us need. The truth is this.

Jesus came to redeem people. Not ultimately from a physical slavery. But from our ultimate slavery. From a slavery that you and I know everything about.

[23 : 41] Because we experience the reality of it every day. It is the slavery of sin and of death. That in the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

He has liberated us from condemnation. And the penalty we deserve because of him. Because of our sin. Because of him. That he rescued us from the chains and the shackles of our sin.

So that in Christ Jesus we could be free. He is our exodus. And that is the gospel. And that is the good news that we never tire of. That is redemption.

So every week as we gather as the people of God. Do you know what we are going to do? We are going to tell the story again. We are going to rehearse the story again.

We are going to renew our covenant with God again. Because we are reenacting this gospel. As we sing it. And we have sung it. Already the songs that we have sung.

[24 : 42] And as we listen to it. And as we pray it. And as we feast upon it. So that we receive from God again. The good news of what he has marvelously.

Graciously done for us. So that is the shape of our worship. That in some way. Each Sunday. We have this rhythm. First of all.

Our reception. Of the good news. Again. We need to receive it again. But God tells us. What he has done.

And when God tells us. When he always tells us what he has done. God looks for a response. And that is how the contours. That is what a covenant relationship with God looks like. Here is what I have done for you.

And here is what I require from you. And indeed. When you understand. And you grasp the gospel. It makes complete sense that a response is required.

[25 : 42] If you leave here on a Sunday morning. Thinking that you don't need to respond to this great story. Then you haven't grasped the story. So that as we receive the story of the king's grace to us.

We begin to feel as Ralph Davies so wonderfully puts it. The gentle handcuffs of God's goodness. Slipping round the wrists of our hearts. Isn't that brilliant? The gentle handcuffs.

Handcuffs of God's goodness. Slipping round the wrists of our hearts. And God says to you.

Sunday by Sunday. Do you remember how I took you as my own? Do you remember how I adopted you?

Do you remember how I rescued you? When you were in utter helplessness? How you were still at war with me. When I sent my son to die in your place. But while you were enemies.

Christ died for you. And do you remember how my son gave you my spirit. To dwell in you so that you are never alone. Do you remember those things? And we hear those words.

[26 : 45] And we echo in our hearts the hymn writer. Oh to grace how great a debtor. Daily I'm constrained to be. And so in the rhythm of our gathered worship.

We respond. And we do it in different ways. In the light of the gospel. We respond in confession of sin. Because we know don't we. That we've ignored the story.

And we've ignored. And we've failed to respond as we should. And in the light of the gospel. We sing words of commitment. And surrender. And words of dedication.

And in the light of the gospel. We pray for renewed strength. To live for his glory. And live for his honour. And here in Joshua. God packs all those aspects of response.

Into one two part command. Do you see. He says. In the light of what I've done to you. Verse 14. In the light of what I've done. Now therefore.

[27 : 44] It's the connecting word isn't it. With what has gone before. Now therefore fear the Lord. And serve him in sincerity. And in faithfulness. Put away the gods that you serve. Beyond the river in Egypt.

And serve the Lord. Then in response. To the reenactment. Of the story of redemption. Every week. God calls on you.

And he calls on me. To recommit ourselves. To fear him. To serve him. And to worship him. With all faithfulness. So every week.

As we come together. We hear God's words of grace. And truth to us. And we say. Yes Lord. That is the story. By which I'm going to live my life.

This is reality. Yes Lord. This is the vision of the good life. That is the real good life. Okay God. I'm willing to serve you.

[28 : 40] And love you for another week. Because of what you've done for me. Look how Joshua frames it. Our response to the story of redemption.

Isn't just a renewed promise. To love and to serve God. At the same time. It is a renewed promise. Isn't it? Do you see it? Look at verse 14. To turn away from false gods.

To turn away from the false gods. And the idols. And that is what we are to do. Every week. The commitment to fear the Lord.

And to serve him. Means this matching commitment. Doesn't it? I'm going to get rid of the other gods. I'm going to get rid of the other gods. Jesus said didn't he?

You cannot serve God. And mammon. It's a better translation than money. You cannot serve God. And mammon.

[29 : 38] And so Joshua says to you. If you are not going to serve the true God. If you are not going to serve the God who redeems. The God who exists.

The God who reigns. Then go ahead. Choose a non-God. You've got some options out there boys. Go ahead and choose one of them. It's as if Joshua. In 24 verse 14.

Launches into Bob Dylan. Doesn't it? You've got to serve somebody. You've got to serve somebody. It may be the devil. Or it may be the Lord. But you've got to serve somebody. And that's what God says to you today.

And every time we meet. You've got to serve somebody. And the choice for them. Is the choice for you today. Here's the choice every Sunday.

It's presented to you in one way or another. You can serve the living God. Who always keeps his promises. You can serve the living God. Who forgives you when you fail him.

[30 : 38] I mean that. Take that into your heart. You can worship the God. Who always. Who never breaks his promises. And he always forgives you when you fail him. Or you can serve a false God this morning.

A non-God. An idol. And do you know what an idol does? An idol never keeps its promises. And an idol never forgives you when you fail him.

And the idols. What are the idols of our culture? They paint a picture of the good life. Don't they?

The iPhone 6 says to you. This is what you really want. You'll be really cool if you get this.

This is what I can give it to you. I can give you what you really want. And they appeal to our hearts.

But they never come through. And then they let you down.

And then you fail them. And do you know what an idol is? An idol is absolutely ruthless. So let's say you've made your career your idol.

[31 : 40] For you the good life. It means prestige and reputation. And power and influence. And the paycheck that comes with it through your job. And so you diligently. You bring offerings to your idol.

And you work long hours when others have gone home. And you forgo family milestones and celebrations. Because you have to work. And then you back off.

Whether it's because of your conscience. Or a crisis at home. Or an illness. Does your idol say. No that's okay. I understand. There's no chance. The idol says no more offerings.

The deal is off. And you pay for it. And an idol never forgives you. An idol never forgives you. When you fail.

And so Joshua says. Choose this day whom you will serve. Who will you worship? You've got the living God. Or you've got these non-gods.

[32 : 40] And Joshua says. As for me and my house. We will serve the Lord. His covenant language. His covenant family. Get the point. Get the point.

We reenact the rhythm. Of the gospel. Of reception. And response. And we are called. Every time. To commitment. It is all or nothing.

And God says to you this morning. You are either in this. Completely. Or you're not in this at all.

And it's the same dilemma. It's the pig and the hen story.

You know that story. I've told you it to you before. The pig and the hen. They are walking. Past church one day. And they notice the sermon title. On the front of the building. And the sermon this week.

Is what can we do to help the poor. And as pigs and hens are prone to do. They enter into this earnest discussion. Over the question. And they continue on their way. And suddenly the hen.

[33 : 36] A light bulb appears over the chicken's head. And he turns to the pig. And he says. I know how we can help the poor. We can give them a ham and eggs breakfast. A bacon and egg breakfast. Oh no.

You don't. Says the pig. That just means a contribution from you. But for me it's total commitment. And that is Joshua's point here. You have to go hollow hog. I pardon the pun.

And that is what it is. That is what it's put before you. Every Sunday. In different ways. As you gather. To reenact the gospel.

In this rhythm of reception and response. You see. Corporate worship is not an optional extra. And the Christian. You can't wake up on a Sunday. And just think.

I'm too tired. I don't feel like going to church. I just don't want. I'm going to give it a wrap. It's me time. You can't do that. As a Christian. Because this is the place.

[34 : 31] Where you are confronted with our choice. Every Sunday. And where you get to renew our covenant with God. Where you say. Yes Lord. I'm committed to you. And to these people.

For at least another week. And we need to gather for this edification. For this renewal of hope. And for this challenge. That there is a profound sense of purpose. When we gather together.

We come to remember. We come to renew our covenant with God. To reenact the gospel. That shapes us. And shapes our identity.

That purpose. It really stands. Doesn't it? To the opposite of what people think. Goes on in church. So I'll come this Sunday. Maybe I won't come next Sunday. I'll tell you what.

I'll try there next week. I get a bit more. I like their worship. I like their preaching. Let's pick and mix. John Whitley had writes this. He says. The question we face. Is do most people experience worship this way.

[35 : 28] Or whether in contrast. They experience it. As a meeting of a religious social club. Or an educational forum. Or a forum of entertainment. Because the other kinds of events.

Are common in our culture. We are bound to take our expectations. From them. Into worship. In contrast. Christian worshippers. Need to be challenged. To see the worship event.

As deeply participatory. A relational event. In which we are active listeners. Speakers. Promise receivers. And promise givers. And it's when we stop realising.

That that is what gathered worship is about. That is this gospel reenactment. That it is a covenant renewal. Every Sunday. Then we are tempted to introduce things. That are just.

Well. They're a bit lighter. Aren't they? And a bit more entertaining. And we start thinking. That doing the same thing every week. Well it's just so boring. And it's so monotonous. That we've got the basic message.

[36 : 25] Basic message of the gospel. Let's move on. Something more stimulating. Something more practical. But the gospel is not the ABC of the Christian life.

Is it? The gospel of Jesus Christ. That he is our God. And we are his people. And we are bound him by covenant oath. Is the A to Z. Head. Of the Christian faith.

It's the whole thing. And you never get past it. And you never get past the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you never get beyond your need of it. And the human heart.

And the human heart. Too easily forgets the gospel. And forgets the story of redemption. And forgets that I am bound to God and his people. And I too easily doubt its power.

And I get distracted from its purpose. My heart leaks. I don't know about yours. My heart is like a sieve. And that's why week by week.

[37 : 25] We gather to tell one another the story again. And we gather to hear God speak his word of grace to us. To renew our covenant with God again. Knowing that only as our hearts are melted.

And shaped by the gospel. Will I be able to face the challenges. Of the next six days. Until we meet again. And tell the story.

Let's pray.