

PTL Honest to God
Psalm 44
Peter Hiatt
June 26, 2016

Worship

I did my best it wasn't much.
I couldn't feel so I tried to touch.
I told truth I didn't come to fool you.
And even though it all went wrong I'll stand before the Lord of song
With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah.
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Halle- lu-u- jah

- Sung by Vince and Alison Colbert

Message

"And even though it all went wrong I'll stand before the Lord of song with nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah." Hallelujah is Hebrew for praise the Lord. Last week, Kathleen preached a marvelous message about spiritual dryness. The week before we preached from Psalm 150: " Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

We said God commands praise, not because He is insecure but because He loves us.

When we praise, we lose ourselves, and then we find ourselves . . . happy.

When you stand on the rim of the Grand Canyon you don't think, "Gosh, I'm really grand!" You say, "Wow! Look at that!" You lose yourself, find yourself, and then you're happy.

"Praise the Lord... Praise the Lord.... Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

Last time, we preached from Psalm 150. This time we'll preached from Psalm 44. Before we do, let's pray.

Prayer

Lord, we have heard of the great deeds that you performed in the days of old; you set the captives free. And it was not by their own strength, but yours, for you delighted in them. You have saved us oh Lord. And we will give thanks to your name forever.

But now, it feels like you've rejected us and humiliated us. Millions are exiled in the Middle East. Forty-nine were slaughtered in Orlando. We're all like sheep led to slaughter.

Even as a church, Lord, we've been ridiculed and rejected even scorned by fellow Christians—a byword and a laughingstock. For eight years I've worn shame, like a veil, all over my face. And all of this has happened because we have not forgotten your name *Yehoshua*—"God is salvation."

But still, you treat us like dogs. If we'd forgotten your name, you'd know, but we haven't. "The Lord is our shepherd," we pray. And you lead us like sheep, sheep led to slaughter.

Wake up God!

Why do you hide from us? Why do you forget us in our sufferings?

Our soul has been left broken in the dust!

Get up and make things right! Or is your name not Love?

Amen

Message Continued

I sense a bit of anxiety in the room.

Be honest, did my prayer make you uncomfortable? It made me uncomfortable.

It's interesting that my prayer would make us feel uncomfortable because my prayer was a paraphrase of Psalm 44. It is number 44 in the ancient Hebrew hymnal we call the Psalms, which ends with number 150: " Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!" PTL

Psalm 44 Let's read it.

PSALM 44: TITLE

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A MASKIL OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

[CONGREGATION]

1 O God, we have heard with our ears,
our fathers have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days,
in the days of old:

"A *maskil* if the sons of Korah"

A *maskil* appears to be some sort of liturgical form. And the sons of Korah were singers in the temple. It appears that this song was sung responsively in the temple during worship. The king would sing part, and the congregation would sing part. We don't know the tune but we have the words.

You are the congregation, and I've always wanted to be the king.

So, stand up and let's read Psalm 44 responsively.

Psalm 44

Come to Our Help

To the choirmaster. A Maskil^a of the Sons of Korah.

[CONGREGATION]

O God, we have heard with our ears,
our fathers have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days,
in the days of old:
you with your own hand drove out the nations,
but them you planted;
you afflicted the peoples,
but them you set free;
for not by their own sword did they win the land,
nor did their own arm save them,
but your right hand and your arm,
and the light of your face,
for you delighted in them.

You are my King, O God;
ordain salvation for Jacob!
Through you we push down our foes;
through your name we tread down those who rise up against us.

[KING]

For not in my bow do I trust,
nor can my sword save me.

[CONGREGATION]

But you have saved us from our foes
and have put to shame those who hate us.

[KING]

In God we have boasted continually,
and we will give thanks to your name forever. *Selah* [pause]

[CONGREGATION]

But you have rejected us and disgraced us
and have not gone out with our armies.

You have made us turn back from the foe,
and those who hate us have gotten spoil.

You have made us like sheep for slaughter
and have scattered us among the nations.

You have sold your people for a trifle,
demanding no high price for them.

You have made us the taunt of our neighbors,
the derision and scorn of those around us.

You have made us a byword among the nations,
a laughingstock among the peoples.

[KING]

All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face
at the sound of the taunter and reviler,
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

[CONGREGATION]

All this has come upon us,
though we have not forgotten you,
and we have not been false to your covenant.

Our heart has not turned back,
nor have our steps departed from your way;
yet you have broken us in the place of jackals
and covered us with the shadow of death.

If we had forgotten the name of our God
or spread out our hands to a foreign god,
would not God discover this?

For he knows the secrets of the heart.

Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

[CONGREGATION & KING]

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?

Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!

Why do you hide your face?

Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?

For our soul is bowed down to the dust;
our belly clings to the ground.

Rise up; come to our help!

Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

(You may be seated)

Isn't that amazing? That's in the Bible, and not only the Bible, it's in the Bible hymnal. And it's only one of about fifty-four songs that scholars call Psalms of lament. They're a bit shocking because they seem to be the opposite of praise. You'd think they'd be

offensive to God, and they certainly seem to be terrible PR, for winning the world to our side.

You know, if you were making up a religion, you sure wouldn't include stuff like Psalm 44 in your songbook. As a young pastor, and even sometimes now, I thought that my job is to be God's PR man, to be the sanctified spin doctor for God. And that can be kind of stressful, not only because God is the Truth, and so hates spin, but because He doesn't seem to care about His reputation all that much. He even includes stuff like Psalm 44—in the song book, in the Bible, which we are expected to recite publicly together: "We were faithful to you oh Lord and like sheep you led us to slaughter. Wake up God! This isn't working."

"YOU are not working!"

A few years ago, it seemed that everyone kept repeating this phrase: "And how's that working for you?" A religion is supposed to "work for you" correct?

Ten years ago, I published a book that was sold at places like Barnes & Noble, and Walmart. It was a commentary on The Sermon on the Mount titled *Dance Lessons for Zombies*. I published it through a major Christian publishing company. I wrote the book, and I still really like the book, but they wrote the description on the back of the book.

They wrote, "How is your religion working for you?" As if I know how to make religion work for you, which is pretty much the opposite of the meaning of the book.

I hated the back of that book, and in two years I super duper hated the back of that book because just when I was being most faithful, just when I was preaching Scripture with the most courage, giving my tithes and offerings with the greatest consistency, and praying prayers that seemed to have the greatest power, my religion did not work for me, but it got me crucified.

Jesus said, "If you want to be my disciple you must pick up a cross and follow me." So, how's that working for you? . . . The cross? What a strange question! And yet that's the question we always seem to ask in the depths of our hearts: "Is this Jesus thing working for me? Is my religion working?"

Well, God just doesn't seem to be too concerned about religion or public relations and His image, but He does seem to be concerned about you and your relationship with Him. He wants you to be honest.

My wife Susan and I have been married for thirty-three years now and, especially at first, that was really a problem...honesty.

Neither of us intentionally lied, but I'm more left-brained and verbal, and I like to argue. Susan is more right-brained and intuitive and hates to argue, and because of some things in her past, she will sometimes just shut down and hide her heart.

I can basically win any argument with Susan even if I'm wrong, and I'm often wrong. Have you ever had that experience when you're arguing with someone and you suddenly realize: Wow! I could argue her side better?

So, if you love that person, you'll help them argue. Well, I'm often wrong, but sometimes I'm wrong even if I'm right because she shuts down, she hides her heart, even from herself. Then it doesn't matter who's right or who's wrong. Our whole relationship is wrong because we're not relating.

I'll say, "Are you okay?" She'll say, "I'm fine." But I know she's not fine with me. She'll say, "I'll do whatever you want me to do. I'll be whatever you want me to be. You are right. I am wrong." But at that point nothing is right and everything is wrong. And so, even if her argument is wrong, I'll give her the words to express her heart because I'd rather lose an argument than lose her heart. I'll say things like, "I'm kind of an ass aren't I? I bet you feel forsaken."

See? A good husband helps his bride express her heart, even if he gets crucified in the process. Do you know who made the iron that made the nails that we used to impale Jesus upon the cross? He did. A good husband helps his bride express her heart because he wants her heart no matter how much it hurts. Well, I'm often not a good husband, but Jesus is a good husband and very verbal. He is the Word, but He's willing to get crucified to win your heart.

Isaiah wrote, "The Lord is your husband." And the Lord says to Isaiah, "These people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me" (Isaiah 29:13). The Psalmist called that flattery and lies (Psalm 78:36). Do you ever flatter God? Do you ever say, "I praise you Lord," and yet your heart is far from him? If so, what does God do about that?

Well, He does some absolutely spectacular things. But one thing He did, long ago, was give us a Word, that we are to speak, It's as if He said, "I know you are angry, I know you are hurt, I know you're sad, you shut down your heart, so I'm giving you my Word. Next time you're all together and you sacrifice the lamb, I want you to say these words out loud together to me. You can call it number 44; you give me the old number 44 Psalm 44.

Last week, I had coffee with a dear friend whom I hadn't seen in a long time period years ago, she attended our church but then felt called by God to attend a large Evangelical Christian University on the East Coast and get a counseling degree. She'd been back for quite some time but had not been back to church. At Coffee, we talked a while and then she said, now I need to tell you the really hard thing, and you're the first person I've told. She took a deep breath and said something like this, I believe in God, and I believe He sent His Son, but for many years I've been really dry, spiritually dry.

I would smile at school and put on a face at church but inside I don't feel happy, but dead, and that's why I haven't been back to church. I sat there a minute (*selah*) and then I said, "That's it?" She said, "Well yeah." I said, "I thought you were going to tell me you were some sort of secret crack w****, drug lord or something." She said, "Well no." And I said, "Well, I feel dry, like, almost all the time.

The devil wants you to hide your heart in fig leaves and trees so you're all alone.

God wants you to speak your heart out loud in church. In fact, He's even given you the words to do it and the Psalms of lament.

Have you ever considered the fact that God expects you to be disappointed in Him? He expects you at some point to feel forsaken by Him. Why else would He put Psalm 44 or 22 in the Bible? He expects you to be disappointed, but He commands you to be honest.

If you hide your heart and bear your disappointment in fig leaves and flattering words, you end up lying to God in His sanctuary. And if you murmur your disappointments to your neighbor, you not only lie to God as you sing praises in church, you gossip about God and slander Him to your neighbor in your own tent.

In Psalm 106: 25 the psalmist reveals that this was the sin of the Israelites, and I quote, "They murmured in their tents" *Ohel* is the Hebrew word. It's a religious word often translated tabernacle. The tabernacle became the temple and was where Israel was to worship and meet with God. The Lord is saying, you murmured about me in your tent, but I commanded you to come over to me in my tent before the altar, on which the lamb is slaughtered. Look! I'm even giving you the words to murmur. I already know that you feel forsaken, but I want you to tell me that you feel forsaken.

I don't think I understand this entirely, but I feel convicted by God that I complain way too much, but maybe I don't lament enough. When I complain, I think, this isn't working for me. When I lament, I think, this is hard, this hurts, and I feel sad, but I don't concern myself with whether or not it's working, as if I could judge what is working.

Religion makes me judge, complain, and compete with my neighbor. Lament makes me cling to my neighbor. That's why I love having Karl Wheeler around. He's my neighbor. I mean, we're both the same age, both male, we've both been Golden Boy pastors, and we both became broken pastors. We were both pretty good at the religion game, and I think we have both learned to lament.

The other day, I said to Carl, "I love it when you share about being unhappy because I feel unhappy. But when you share that you *don't* feel happy, I *do* feel happy. And it's not evil happy, like you lost, and I won. It's wonderful happy, like we both lost and both won. We both lost the argument and gained each other's hearts. We both know it's hard, it hurts, and it's often sad. We both know, and now neither is alone and that makes me happy.

"Blessed are those who mourn." It means happy are those who are unhappy together.

You know, I hate church picnics or luaus because they often give people an opportunity to complain, to say, "Pastor it's not working, and I need you to fix it," as if I know how to fix it. But I also love church picnics because they often give people an opportunity to lament. They'll say, well, life is hard, it hurts, and I feel sad. I know you can't fix it. I'm just saying... And I'll say, "Yeah, it is hard, it hurts, and I'm sad too." And then it's like we've both lost the argument and won each other's hearts, and I feel happy.

Well, in Psalm 44, God gives us words of public lament. He helps us be honest, honest to God and to each other.

We just read this together:

[CONGREGATION & KING]

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?

Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!

Why do you hide your face?

Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?

For our soul is bowed down to the dust;

our belly clings to the ground.

Rise up; come to our help!

Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

In verse 23 we read, "*Awake, why are you sleeping?*" Is God sleeping? Well no. Jesus said, "*My father has been working until now.*" God is not sleeping, but we feel like He's sleeping. So even if what we feel is untrue, we must be truthful about the untruths that we feel . . . that is *honest*.

So, something can be objectively untrue, and yet your statement can be truthful. On the other hand you can speak something objectively true and have no truth in you. Satan quoted scripture to Jesus. The scripture was true but Satan is untrue. He's never honest and so always alone. Truth in love binds all things together.

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. When you're lost and alone, the Way is the Truth in you. I mean, simply be honest and that leads to life, and Life is never alone, the Way is the Truth, is the Life.

In verse 17 we read, "We have not been false to your Covenant." Is that true? Well, the Hebrews thought it was true, and yet 2500 years later we know it's not true for us, and yet it is true for *Someone*... in us.

In his book *Life Together*, Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "A song, which we cannot utter as prayer, indicates that someone else is praying, protesting his innocence, inviting God's judgment, and has come to the depth of suffering." Bonhoeffer wrote, "It's Jesus praying here and not only here but in the whole Psalter. The church has always recognized this."

Jesus is not false to the Covenant and there came a moment, even for Jesus, when God seemed to not be working.

In verse 11 we read, "You have made us like sheep for slaughter." Is that true? Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." Sheep for slaughter—we are all walking toward death. Is it true for us and is it true for Jesus?

In verse one, we all said together, "We heard of your great deeds in days of old." But, we said in verse 9, "Now we're like sheep led to slaughter."

But just think of the days of old:

God makes a huge promise to Abraham, but talk about disappointment. At 100 years old he still doesn't have a son. Then when he gets the miracle son, and God says sacrifice him to me, and something does get slaughtered.

God makes huge promises to Jacob and then after years of struggle and disappointment, just as Jacob is about to enter the land, God shows up and literally beats the hell out of Jacob and renames him Israel, "the one who wrestles with God."

And what about the people of Israel? Great promises...and God does part the sea, that's a mighty deed, but only after 400 years of slavery. . . . and before forty years of wandering in the desert . . . 'til dead!

And what about eighty-year-old Moses? Such promises, then he dies in the desert looking at the land in the distance. He doesn't see the promise fulfilled until he stands on a mountain with Jesus 1500 years later.

And what about David? He's chosen by God to be king and spent years hiding in caves from Saul, in which he wrote songs like Psalm 22, which begins, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Seriously, it's like God makes these amazing promises and then arranges for us to be disappointed, and then talk to Him about the disappointment. Think about Jesus. God thunders from Heaven, for everyone to hear: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, and three years later, He's hanging on a cross crying, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

My friend at coffee last week said, I thought God told me to go to that school and then speak His Word to people, but it's not working. I said, "You think it's not working, but if God said the Word, the Word is working you and it will happen, but probably not the way you planned it to happen. Just ask Abraham or Moses.

Well anyway, God not only gives us words of lament, He arranges for the disappointments that would cause us to speak those words of lament. Like I told you, Susan used to have a hard time expressing herself. She'd shut down, and I just hated it for it left us both alone. And so, I pick fights. I'm not saying I was right, but that our situation was wrong, and I was desperate to crack that hard shell with which she had her heart.

I remember this one day she just spun around and yelled you! And then she called me a name, I mean I've never heard her say. It describes something I had not done, and yet I made her feel as if I'd done it. We stared at each other for a minute and then started laughing. She expressed herself and we found each other's hearts. Several years ago, my friend Mark shared his testimony in church. Mark grew up in church, always said the right things, but felt like a failure, despised by God. Once driving in his car, he lost it and just started screaming: "Can't you just leave me the... alone? He used a word very similar to the one Susan used with me. He screamed: "I know I'm going to Hell when I die... but just let me live for a while . . . for Christ's sake. Then, you can burn me forever like you always wanted. And then, in the silence, Mark heard God speak. "I felt the spirit speak tenderly to my heart," Mark shared. He said something like this, "Now we have arrived Mark. Now you have come to the table with *you*. This is the part of you I want to

redeem. I'm glad you can talk about how much you hate me. Let's talk more about that. Now you have come to the table... with *you*."

The table is an altar. At the table we die with Christ and receive a new nature.

Once In Worship, another friend heard the Lord say, "It is my nature for you to be angry with me. God is absolute Grace, free, relentless love, and His nature infuriates our old nature, our flesh. Our old nature believes "I am salvation" and our new nature *knows* God is salvation.

Well, it's like He arranges for disappointments in which we can't make Him work for us, and there He causes us to confess the Truth. He makes us honest to God. He makes us admit that we've lost the argument. We are all arguing with God that we can make life work, but Life, Love, and Truth *are* God, and *He* makes us work. And so, our journey through this world is always something like this:

Clip from *Forest Gump*

Lieutenant Dan: (With great enthusiasm) *That's where we're gonna find those shrimp, my boy! Ha ha! That's where we'll find them.*

[The scene changes to Forest Gump emptying a net and only finding a toilet seat. No shrimp!]

Forest: *Still no shrimp Lieutenant Dan.*

Lieutenant Dan: *OK. So I was wrong.*

Forest: *How we gonna find them?*

Lieutenant Dan: *Well maybe you should just pray for shrimp!*

[The scene changes to Forest in a church praying.]

Forest: *SO, I went to church every Sunday. Sometimes Lieutenant Dan came Too. Though I think he left the praying up to me.*

[The scene changes to Lieutenant Dan and Forest on the boat shrimping again.]

Forest Gump: *No shrimp.*

Lieutenant Dan: *Where the hell is this God of yours.*

Forest Gump: *It's funny Lieutenant Dan said that because right then God showed up.*

[Scenes of a ranging storm are shown.]

Forest Gump: *Now me, I was scared, but Lieutenant Dan, he was mad!*

Lieutenant Dan: (Speaking to God while standing on a boat in the midst of a crazy storm.)

You call this a storm!

It's time for a showdown.

You and me, I'm right here. Come and get me. You'll never sink this boat!

You know shrimp is not a problem for God.

But making you honest to God . . . maybe, in a way, that is.

Getting you to actually trust God maybe, in a way, that is.

Getting you to praise God—for God—maybe that is.

You know if you praise God for some shrimp cocktail or a cheeseburger, you praise God because the cheeseburger or shrimp works for you, you consume it and assimilate it into your flesh. You're serving your flesh. But if you praise God—for God, it's not simply because He works for you.

If someone stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon, pointed to the view and asked, how's that working for you? You might wonder, "Do they even see the Grand Canyon? Do you know what that is?"

If we even ask the question, "How is your religion working for you?" Maybe we should Wonder, have we ever seen God? Do we know God?

Several years ago, I had an experience that I don't think I will ever forget. I've told you about it before. Susan and I were praying for a friend that had experienced horrible abuse in a demonic cult for the first time in her life, before she came to Christ and began to live a new life, or religious life, but it was no longer working, and it seemed God was no longer working for her.

It was about three in the morning, and the Lord had just revealed to her a forgotten year of her life; I guess she did not want to remember. She was so horrified that at one point she fell to our living room floor and cried out in agony, "What do I do now?" I didn't know what to tell her. God didn't seem to be working for her or for me. Then, all at once, some words entered my mind. I dropped to the floor, held her, and she prayed these words after me: "*My God, my God why have you forsaken me?*" She didn't just pray the words. She screamed the words. Then she gasped for air. I felt her whole body go rigid as if transfixed by something horrid and painful, but then, after a few moments, she just seemed to melt into absolute peace.

She told us that when she prayed those words, she suddenly had a vision.

She saw her old harlot self nailed to a cross. Then she saw her religious self nailed to the same cross. They were both flesh and both false . . . and maybe the religious self was most false, most dishonest to God.

She watched them nailed to the cross.

Then she watched Jesus nailed to the same cross.

She watched as they all died and then saw herself, her true self, standing at the foot of the cross in a beautiful white wedding gown.

She knew God because God had come to know her, there, where they both lost their lives and gained each other's hearts, where they were humiliated unto death, and exalted into life . . . at the cross.

"How's that working for you?" seems like the wrong question. And yet, when she couldn't get God to work for her, He was most working all things, including Himself for her. He was destroying the body of lies, in which she was imprisoned, and revealing the glory that is Himself—His nature—Himself.

She lost the argument and gained God's heart. She lost the lie that she is salvation and gained the Truth—"God is salvation"—*Yehoshua*—Jesus. Then she could not, and we could not, help but praise the Lord Jesus. And just think: He had even been the Word that popped into my head. He was the Word that entered her mouth and then rode out on her tongue: "*My God, my God why have you forsaken me?*" That's Psalm 22, a Psalm of lament. It ends like this:

*All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the Lord,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.
For kingship belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.*

*All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.
Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
they shall come and Proclaim his righteousness to the people yet unborn
that he has done it.*

- Psalm 22:27-31

Next verse: "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*"
We are sheep, and we all must lose our lives.

Psalm 44: We are "*like sheep being led to slaughter,*" but the Lord goes first—"firstborn of all creation." He came to help us lose our lives that we might find them. That's not bad news; it's the gospel.

We are like sheep being led to slaughter, but look: there's a slaughtered lamb, and He's standing on the throne of God. He came that we might lose ourselves and find ourselves praising the Lord along with everything that breathes.

In Romans 8:31-37 Saint Paul writes,

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect it is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (praying for us and even in us). Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

And now he quotes Psalm 44

As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than

conquerors through him who loved us. He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not, with him, freely give us all things?

- Romans 8:31-37

You know we all pray for shrimp, but God is bound and determined to give us Himself. After we get Him: Jesus; He freely gives us all things with Him.

Clip from *Forest Gump*

Lieutenant Dan: (Yelling at God and gesturing towards Heaven) *YOU'LL NEVER SINK THIS BOAT!*
AH- HA! HA-ha!

News Reporter: *Hurricane Carmen came through here yesterday destroying nearly everything in its path, and is in other towns up and down the coast. The entire shrimping industry has fallen victim to Carmen and is left in utter ruin. Speaking with local officials, this reporter has learned, in fact, only one shrimping boat survived the storm.*

[Two women converse and comfort each others saying, "That's Forest!]

Forest: *After that, shrimping was easy. He never actually said so, but I think he made his peace with God.*

Communion

And so, Jesus—the Lamb that was slain—took the bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you; take and eat.” We call it communion. And in the same way He took the cup and He said, “This cup is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins; drink of it all of you, and do it in remembrance of me.”

This morning, why don't you bring *you*(rself) to the table. Tell the Lord about your sorrows, and let Him tell you about His. Let Him turn our sorrow into our joy.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

[Worship songs are sung]

Benediction

I don't know how long you've been following Jesus, but maybe you started following Jesus because you thought it means no more crosses. Isn't it funny? That's what religion tells us: “You do this thing and you won't have any more crosses.” And maybe, at a certain point, you thought to yourself: “This isn't working; it's hard; it hurts; I feel sad.” At

that point there's a voice that might speak to you out of the darkness. It will say, "Oh man, something's wrong. You better run deeper into the darkness and hide your heart." You see: I think that's what we loosely call hell.

But there's also Someone that descends into the darkness saying, "Tell me your hell." That's our Lord Jesus. There may be others in the darkness as well. You might begin to tell them your sorrows, and they might begin to tell you their sorrows. Not complaining to each other—but lamenting to each other.

Years ago, there was a survey they took of old people in London. In the survey they asked them: "What was the happiest time in your life?" I guess to a great extent, almost all of them answered, "The blitz." That was that time in WW2 when the Nazis bombed London mercilessly. Every night, Londoners would go down into the basements, huddle together in groups around maybe one small candle—one light burning in the darkness. I imagine they would lament: "This is hard; I'm unhappy." And lo-and-behold: that was the happiest time of their lives!

I think maybe that's how God makes a Church—how He brings His Body together. That's how the great party begins.

In Jesus' name, may you believe the Gospel and share your heart.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.