

Father God, we come to you right now very, very, very grateful. Grateful for so many things, things even like the weather. That is this amazing day today. We are so grateful that we have this day to worship. We're so grateful that we have the ability to come here. We're so grateful that we have this place and this fellowship and we feel and know your spirit is here, Lord, and you are going to lead us in worship. You are going to lead us in your word. You are going to lead us in prayer because this is your church and you are our pastor. You are our teacher and we turn completely to you for your direction, for your inspiration. Lead us today as we explore what it means to worship the worthy one, the only one, the only name in heaven and earth. And be with us today as we explore what it means to live every day of our lives as an inspired people, as children of the most high God. In Jesus' name I pray, amen. Revelation 5 begins thus, "Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne that was writing on the inside and the outside of the scroll, and it was sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel who shouted with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals on the scroll and open it?' but no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it. Then I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and read it. But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, 'Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw a lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God that is sent out into every part of the earth. He stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne, and when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. There's that worship again. Falling down in worship before the Lamb, each one had a heart, and they held golden bulbs filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song with these words, 'You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seal and opening. For you were slaughtered and your blood has ransomed the people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a kingdom of priests for our God, and they will reign on the earth.' And I looked again and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders, and they sang in a mighty chorus, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.' And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, they sang blessing and honor and glory and power, but long to the one sitting on the throne and the Lamb forever and ever. The four living beings said, 'Amen.' And the 24 elders fell down and worshiped the Lamb. We read in Revelation 5 the exact opposite of a lot of preaching today. You can substitute in Revelation 5, 'He is worthy,' as the preacher from the pulpit, for claims you are worthy. That is the very attractive preaching of today that you hear, that you are worthy. That He did this for you because you are worthy. And that's how one of the points of discernment, we always say one of the greatest points of discernment, is the fact that we know that it is a lie straight from the depths of hell because the exact opposite is true in the Word of God. And you will hear that over and over again in modern preaching, in more progressive preaching. You can see how I'm treating those words. We read directly that only He is worthy. There is no one in heaven, in the heavens, and when you translate that, that is the heavenly realms, that is the spiritual realm. There's nobody in the spiritual realm, there's nobody in this earth where these spiritual beings live in physical bodies, and there's nobody under the earth, implying the demons and the demonic forces of the world. Nothing, nobody is worthy but one. Now that is not to say that you are not a unique and special creation of the Lord. We've been down this road many, many times with each other. That is not a discouragement. You are uniquely, fearfully, wonderfully made. And as you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Lord, you are adopted into the family of God itself, into the kingdom of God. You are made a child of God, and now that uniqueness comes to its fruition, its fullness in who God wants you to be, who God knows you to be, is that who God created you to be when you turn and are filled by the power of His Holy Spirit. But to stand

before God and say, "I am worthy, give me this," is blasphemy. You are not worthy, and He gives you the gift. And that's why you read again, even in Revelation 5, at least two times, the elders and the people who are around God fall on their faces in worship. These are people who are in the Lord's presence that are not standing there saying, "Well, I am extra special because I'm in the Lord's presence. I don't need to worship." They are overcome and they fall on their face in worship. Only the lamb who was slain is worthy. That was the plan from the beginning. He receives the honor and the glory and the blessing. He receives the power and the riches. And again, if you want to twist that from the modern pulpit, that's what's being, "You receive the power and you receive the riches and you receive..." No, no, no. He does, and your lives, because of that worship, because He is the only one worthy, as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus, your life is made complete. We twist that around because we're selfish and that's what we want. Give me the power of God and I can do this and that and I can do this and I can do and I will and I will. No, it's not your will. It's His will. That's where we will be going as we're leading up into Thanksgiving, as we explore, shall we say, the characteristics, the character, the personhood, the Godhood of Jesus Christ. And we will be bouncing in the Gospels and then referencing some of the epistles, the first commentaries on the Gospels, to find that out for ourselves. But this was a great lesson. And I'll just tell you a little bit about how the Lord works because we were talking about this. Where do we go from the Ecclesiastes? This has been a bit of where I have been as a person in Ecclesiastes. And you know that. I'm very honest with you. Most of the time that I'm preaching, I'm preaching to myself. I'm trying to figure out how can the pastorhood, the pastorate even become a grind, you know, that sort of thing. What am I doing? Am I doing any good? All the whining and crying in the corner and doing all of those things. And here comes Ecclesiastes that says, "Yep." I'm like, "That's not helpful." But it is incredibly helpful because it is your calling. It is my calling. And by the power of God, we put one foot in front of the other. Guess what? Even when we don't feel like it. Even when we may be a little annoyed. Even when we don't think we're doing any good. And that's what we're going to get into today. I wrote about our dog this week, if you saw that in the Church Channel Weekly. And that has been a very, very solid reminder. I've been searching. I've been talking to him. I, I'm saying "I" but it's been so good for Kelly and I, that needed a point of focus other than. So the Lord was saying, "You're in this sort of Ecclesiastes mood and you need another point of focus. You need to do something else. You need to give of yourself somewhere." And here comes this dog. And boy howdy, you relearn all of those things. And if you read that, I'm getting weepy. Because you can't. Like this dog like that, you know. And you're working three weeks and she finally comes up and sniffs your can. And then so, after that, then here's the deal, you know. You go and your love isn't reciprocated or she didn't eat or she won't go out or she runs away from you and you get mad and you yell, boom, three weeks gone. Start over. You know that, praise God, has not happened. We have setbacks but we work through them. But boy what a lesson that has been. What an incredible lesson and the Lord has given me those two gifts. The gift of Ecclesiastes and the gift of Grace to work through this summer. At the expense, if you look, I don't think, I mowed yesterday but I don't think the RER has ever looked this bad, right? At the expense of a lot of the other work that I normally do. And somehow I'm okay with that. A few years ago, I would not be okay with that. But you need to renew and refresh. So my testimony to you is that renewal, that refreshment, that redirection, regardless of your work, regardless of your calling or whatever you're doing, that renewal, that redirection, that refreshment, that push into scripture could come from anywhere for any of you. Be open to it. You may not realize that until a few weeks in, you're like, "Oh, this is exactly what I was asking for." But be open to it. Because I believe that the Lord hears our prayers large and small and He will respond in faith when we respond in obedience. So let's finish this. There's not much to preach today. The opening part of the service, and I wanted to say that about Revelation 5, because the language that you hear in the church today, the church, there's so many really good churches when we say that, "the church today." But the language that you might hear in some churches today is the opposite of that. Let's skip that. I don't want to tell people that they're in desperate need of a savior. I want to tell people to come in here and be empowered and how awesome they are. And with God on your side, you are so much

awesomer. Now go get them, Tiger. That's not a sermon and it's not biblical. We all need to paddle it back and pumped up at times. There's no doubt about that. But why don't we turn first to the Lord and to the power of God's Holy Spirit to get a pat on the back and get pumped up. Now how about we turn to our godly friends and say, "Man, I feel like my life is useless." And your godly friends will probably say, "What?" They will talk with you and they will give you your spiritual pat on the back and pump you up a little bit. That's where you should turn. And segue professionally done into Ecclesiastes 12. That is exactly what the teacher says in Ecclesiastes 12. He says, "I know that your life," and they've gone through 11 chapters of this, right? "I know your life might seem," this way, "it might seem mundane. It may not seem like you're living a very powerful life. You can't find joy in all of the things that the world offers. You can't find power in all of the things that the world offers. You can't find any fulfillment or satisfaction." And the teacher says, "Believe me, I've tried. I've done it all. And what I've discovered is that day after day, the sun comes up, I go through my day, the sun goes down, the sun comes up, I go through my day, the sun goes down. What's the point?" And the teacher says, "Here's the point. You are a very uniquely and very special creation of the Lord God Almighty. And regardless of your circumstance, regardless of what you believe your capabilities or abilities are, regardless of your social or economic standing, you, pray God, are a child of God. There's your purpose. So all that you do, do it with vigor. All that you do, do it in the name of the Lord. All that you do," the commentary says from Paul, "do it as if you are working for the Lord. All that you do." So let's read this together. This will put the fish and touches on our journey together through Ecclesiastes. Okay, my journey through Ecclesiastes that you are kind of long for the ride for, but still I hope you get something out of there. And we'll read 12 and then we'll put the seal on it. Because this is the purpose. And we've said this many times. Does God know who you are? Yes, He does. Does God know what you're doing? Yes, He does. Does God know how you're feeling? Yes, He does. Does God know that you just had this horrific fight and you feel betrayed and broken? Yes, He does. Does God know that you have just created a new ministry and a hundred people responded and it was so spirit-filled? Yes, He does. Does He know every aspect of your life and your thought and your feeling? Yes, He does. And that is what the teacher of Ecclesiastes wants to teach you. That is why the book is worth reading. I said before and I've said it to the congregation, I've said it to others. Ecclesiastes itself is like one big preaching point. My purpose in doing that, which is why we didn't go through every word of every chapter, my purpose in bringing it out is to show you that it is worth reading. It's not a throwaway book of the Bible. There are no throwaway books of the Bible. But it is like one big preaching point. You need to sort of know the ending so you can even get to the beginning. It's one big preaching point. It is so worth reading because it is such a reminder that God knows you before He formed you in the secret place. He knows who you are. He knows how you are made. He knows how you think and how you are thinking, how you feel, how you are feeling at that moment. He knows. And by the power of God, you keep on going. You keep on going. And you don't turn to the world for satisfaction or affirmation. You know, we're always joking around at Levi's. I said, "Why do you have a plane up here?" I said, "Because all the best preachers have their own plane." I said, "And the church got me my plane." He's like, "What?" But you can seek for affirmation in things of the world. And you see that as well as I do. You should turn first and seek affirmation if you want to call it that from the power of God, from your calling that He's blessed you with, and the power that is in you every single day to do the mundane. I'm a mom. I've made 27 different lunches this week. It feels like I cannot get another bath. I cannot change another. Yes, you can. Yes, you can. And I don't mean to be sexist only moms. I see dads already. The other day we had we had Brad and Josh in the nursery with their babies breastfeeding. No, I'm just kidding. But no, it's wonderful, wonderful, wonderful to see. And this is exactly why they're changing stations and all of that. But you get the point of what I'm saying. Yes, you can. You can. That's your calling right now? Yes, you can. You can do it. But don't turn to even another person first. Turn to God first. Turn to God first. I need your power, Lord. I need your affirmation that this is my calling and this is what I'm doing. So there's your sermon. Let's do our reading. And you'll see this should put the period at the end of Ecclesiastes and everything that I just sort of said.

Excuse me. Ecclesiastes 12. Remember your creator in the days of your youth. Setting the tone right off the bat. Before the days of adversity come and the years approach of which you will say, I find no pleasure in them. Raise up a child. Train up a child in the ways of word. And when he grows old, he will not depart. I hear that. So expose these children, which we do as families. One of the reasons why we look in the back of the pew, it says families matter. This is how we want to treat them because they should not. They should be exposed to more. That's what I appreciate about Valerie so much and what she brings to the table. Expose so much more than just coloring pictures to get the kids out of the hair of the congregation. No, they're learning Jesus and they're learning the word and they're getting real concrete examples of how that what that looks like. And that's fantastic. And you've seen the children of the church. I point over here to because, well, like, Willa will tell you a whole theological trees. And what do you think of creation? Well, I think in the gut theory. I'm like, no, it's amazing. But they're being raised in the word. That is a foundation. And this is what I love. And you've heard me say and I stole it from Tony Evans. Foundations are awesome because they crack. Foundations are awesome because when they crack, they can be repaired. If you don't have a foundation, you got nothing shifting sand. That is nothing. So foundations are there. Your kids foundation will crack. But they have a foundation and it can be repaired. That's key. That's key. I said, I said, we're just going to read. I'm sorry that I lied to you so much. I should know. I know that I said this is going to put a period of the end of the Ecclesiastes. And there I think. But that's the point of that, right? Fill them with the word now. Get that foundation before they can grow up in their years and say about their years. I find no pleasure in them before the light of the sun, moon and stars is darkened. And the clouds return after the rain on the day the keepers of the house tremble and the strong men stoop. When those grinding cease because they are few and those watching through windows see dimly. When the doors to the street are shut and the sound of the mill fades away. When one rises at the sound of a bird and all the daughters of song grow faint. When men fear the heights and dangers of the road. When the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper loses its spring and the caper berry shrivels. For then man goes to his eternal home and mourners walk the streets. That's the Ecclesiastes in a nutshell. You're born, you grow up, you do your thing, you die. We've read that for 11 chapters. We get that. And that's reality. Remember him before the silver cord is snapped. I'm getting into it. And the golden bowl is crushed before the pitcher is shattered at the spring and the wheel is broken at the well. Before the dust returns to the ground from which it came and the spirit returns to God who gave it. How does that whole passage begin? Two words. Remember him. You're getting the points. Remember him. And we preach that all the time. A couple of weeks ago in the live stream we were talking about the salvation at the last minute. Is that authentic? Is that? Yes. I mean, there is. There's the parable. There's the teaching of Jesus. Remember him before the cord snaps is the message of Ecclesiastes. But I'm just a ditch digger, unskilled man. So what? You're a child of the most high God. Remember him before the cord snaps. You will be spending eternity in glory. Futility of futilities, says the teacher. Everything is futile. Not only was the teacher wise, but he also taught the people knowledge. He pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. The teacher searched to find delightful sayings and to record accurate words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads and the anthologies of the masters are like firmly embedded nails driven by a single shepherd. It's the power of the word of God. Right? And by these, my son, be further warned. There is no end to the making of many books and much studying wearies the body. Well, I shouldn't study. No, that's not what it's saying. It's saying that you want to find God. Right? You want to learn all of it. You want to find wisdom. You want to find purpose in life. There is the book that matters. And then there's all the other stuff that you can turn to. Please be discerning in that you're not going to find salvation and eternity by looking it up in any other book than scripture. You can learn, but don't make that your obsession. Don't make that your idol. I know more about God than any person on earth because I've read every book about. OK, great. You know him. I know you just said you know about him. Do you know him? Because when we read the parables, we understand, right? Even the parable of the bridesmaid, which we read this week. And when the door closes and they say, "But Lord, Lord," he says, "No, the door is closed. I did not know you and I'm not

letting you in." So, yes, you can have a library. I love reading about all that stuff. It's not my idol. I did. That intellect is not my idol. I find things fascinating. Other things I begin to read and I discard because they're garbage and I go over it, whatever. But you're not going to find your eternal salvation in the knowledge about God. You will only find your eternal salvation in knowing God through Jesus Christ. When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this. Here we go. Here's the period that I promised you. The end of Ecclesiastes. Maybe it's an exclamation point. When all, all in all 12 chapters now, all has been wrapped up and all has been announced and all has been taught, the whole of the matter is this. Fear God and keep his commandments because this is the whole duty of man. I'm looking for a microphone that I can drop. I don't have one, but that's it. Boom. Gives us a reason, but there you go. All of the book of Ecclesiastes. And I pray that this is the strongest encouragement in your life. That whether you're on the mountaintop or in the valley or anywhere in between, you experience the power of the living God by the power of his Holy Spirit within you. Fear God and keep his commandments. My mind goes to John. Love one another. Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. There's his commandments. Can you put that before everything else? When you're feeling a certain feeling or a certain way or futility of futilities, what is the point? Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. Can you put that before your feelings? Can you put that before your own little crush ego who thinks they're not making any difference in the world? Because if you're following the commands of God, loving him with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and loving your neighbor as your strength, you're making a difference. You're making a difference. I don't know if you've turned on a television lately, but the vast majority of people are not doing that. You doing that is countercultural. It's making a difference. It's a point of light amidst demonic darkness. And even then, you might see futility of futilities. What's the point of me following Jesus and being this point of light? Have you seen that mess? The point of it is you're commanded to do it. That's the point of it. And God will do with your obedience whatever he wills. That's not good enough for a lot of Christians. You've got to see more. You've got to have more results. You've got to know more. You've got to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself and allow God to take that obedience and use it for his purposes in the world. Set yourself aside. If you're doing that, you're making a difference. Guaranteed. So let's read 13 and 14. And we will conclude. 13 When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this. Fear God and keep his commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, along with every hidden thing, whether good or evil. So you can say, "Yeah, I think I'm doing okay. God will be the judge of that, thank you." Well, I try to do those sorts of things, but God will be the judge of what you're doing. Keep that in mind. That's important. Perfection is unattainable. That's why we have repentance in prayer. Right? That's why we have repentance in prayer. So I'm telling you, just like I compared Ecclesiastes to Proverbs, well, I did to Proverbs as well, but to the Psalms in the beginning, because of how real it is. And I said that Ecclesiastes presents the deeper question, even than Proverbs does, because this is the question upon which so many people's purpose and salvation hangs. You feel you are saved. You want to know the Lord and then you feel useless and you feel as though he's far away or you feel as though he's been silent or you feel you've got the word of God and the promise of God. You don't feel or maybe you feel a certain, but you know, you know, you don't just feel, you know, it's true. You know, it's true in all circumstances. So I get your feelings. I shared some of my feelings with you at the beginning. They get to you, man. I know it. But we know the truth. God will never leave me or forsake me. And my duty, not a request, not a good idea. Hey, if you want to get on God's good side, maybe you want to pay attention to this. No, your duty is to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. Follow his commands and let him do with that what he wills. So on one hand, I hope that he feels strongly encouraged. On the other hand, I hope that I stepped on your feelings today and made you feel how insignificant they actually are, even though the opposer of God's will would like to make you believe that they are all that matters. By the power of God, set them aside and live the life worthy of your calling. Ecclesiastes, it's worth reading. Would you stand

with me, please? We'll sing together a cappella. There's something about that name. One of my favorite choruses. I don't know if I can do. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. There's just something about that name. Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Let all heaven and earth proclaim. Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there's something about that name. [ Silence ]