

Father God, we do come to you this morning, a grateful and humble people, as so much spins around us in our culture and in our world, as so much comes against the Christian Church. We forget the words of Jesus that the gates of hell itself will not prevail against His Church. It means that they will not hold. It means that your Church is going forward, that your Church is engaged, that your Church is battering the gates of hell. Empower us now as we worship you, Lord, to know more of you. Let us know what you would have us know. Lead us in worship. Lead us in song. Lead us in prayer. Lead us in your wisdom and your word. For you are the Creator, the Pastor, the Teacher of this Church and of your Church University. We pray it all in Jesus' name. Psalm 84 How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of heaven's armies! I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow builds her nest and raises her young at a place near your altar. O Lord of heaven's armies, my King and my God, what joy for those who can live in your house, always singing your praises! What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the valley of weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings. They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem. O Lord God of heaven's armies, hear my prayer. Listen, O God of Jacob. O God, look with favor upon the King. Our shield, show favor to the one you have anointed. A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else. I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked. For the Lord God is our Son and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. The Lord will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right. O Lord of heaven's armies, what joy for those who trust in you. Amen. Staying faithful is where we are. We see that in your bulletin. We see that in the life of the church, in the life of the individuals. There's been a lot going on. A lot of families and a lot of different people and a lot of things that are going on. Really really good things. Like the busyness of new babies and the craziness that's inside these households and all of that. And then some things that are not so great going on with individuals and with families. I just thought, man, I've seen examples of faithfulness and I just want to preach on that and encourage that today. Knowing who Jesus is and staying faithful. I think above all is a fantastic title to a fantastic song. And you can talk about all the things that are happening here. And you can talk about the political season and all of that back and forth garbage that you have to listen to all the time. And we've got to remember that above all is our sovereign Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His church is meant to be different than any of that stuff. You are meant to be different than any of that stuff. It is taught over and over and over again in scripture to rise above it. If you can imagine the resurrection and the ascension, we as Christians are called as followers of Christ are called to follow that metaphorical example. Someday we will follow the literal example, but we are called to rise above it all as his followers and as his church. You might have individual circumstances that are right here in your face that are absolutely, seemingly overwhelming to you. You may be involved in family circumstances. You may be involved out there doing whatever. You may just look at the world and say, "It's not even worth it anymore. What will my children inherit? What will my grandchildren inherit?" And just throw in the towel. Let me tell you that we are not meant not only to not throw in the towel, the Christian church, the church who will follow the word of God is meant to thrive in such conditions. All throughout the New Testament, we see the church thriving. When the world presses down, it purifies the word. You can look and say, "Well, so many churches are calling themselves Christian churches, and they have nothing to do with the word of God." So be it. I did not have to go to the state and get a professional certificate to be a pastor. You can open up your own church, the church of Bob on the corner, and boom, there you go. The Christian church, the church that will follow and adhere to God's word, the disciples who will follow Jesus are meant to thrive in these conditions. We pray and we pray for other conditions. So be it. But as a nation that is founded on Christian principles and a Christian nation at the heart of its constitution, did you ever consider that maybe we are experiencing as a nation the wrath of God? I know we pray otherwise, but when human beings are left to their own devices, when

human beings and his church, a large portion of his church, turn their backs on God and the word of God, we end up in Romans 1 and 2 experiencing the wrath of God, which is leading human beings to their own evil natures. What is the church supposed to do in that situation? Throw in the towel. There's obviously nothing that we can do. Wrong. We are meant to be light. Every Christmas Eve we talk about the light that has come into the world. Every Christmas Eve we darken the sanctuary pitch black and we light a single candle and we see how that one single candle illuminates the darkness. And then I say, "If Christ is not present, then let this darkness snuff out this light." And it can't. So regardless of your circumstance, large or small, you as an individual follower of Jesus Christ are meant to thrive. When you look at the madness that is out there, don't look at Satan. Look at the hardness that is so right. Look at all of the individuals who are so lost. No identity in Christ, so they find identity in whatever is being sold to them. Tell them about Christ. Tell them about Jesus. Tell them about what it means to be that special creation. Physical, spiritual, able to connect to your creator, to be saved, to be redeemed, and to grow into the human being that you were meant to be. Tell them about that instead of telling them nothing or condemning them for what they say or what they believe. So we're going to move from Psalm 84, and again I encourage you, 84, 85, 86, read those Psalms of praise when you need that spiritual shot in the arm. Hebrews now is going to get into the theology of what I just preached. Following the word of God. Hebrews 2, I'll be reading this from the New Living Translation, and I believe we put it in. Here we go. So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. That is the whole sermon right there. We, quite literally, if I wanted to be succinct, if I had a chicken in the oven that needed to come out right now, I could drop the mic there and go over. Because this is what we need to hear. Listen how? How should we listen? Carefully. Listen carefully. Because people who manipulate the word of God, remember this, the best lies are 99% of true. You must listen carefully to the word of God. Listen carefully to the message that you have received from Him. Do not take it lightly. Do not be led astray, and do not allow yourself to drift away from it. Listen carefully. Today, as we have our canon, our Bible, our Holy Scriptures, we can read very carefully. And we can listen very carefully to good teachers of Scripture. And we can stay focused on the message, on the truth. This is the message for today. We must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. Folks, you have an obligation to be intentional. A sheep that will be led astray from Christ is one who just sits there listening and saying, "Well, that must be true, because this guy says he's a pastor, and it must be true." You are obligated to know the word of God, so that you're thumbing through your socials, and you see this pastor, and he's saying something, and you're like, "Well, he's a pastor, it must be true." You will know if it is true or not. Because you know the word of God, and you listen very carefully when it is taught. You know truth from falseness, and out and out lies. This is how the Christian church thrives in these situations. When the Antichrist is pressing in, and the pressure is on the Church of Jesus Christ, the purification occurs. People begin to say, "What is true? What is not true? Let's find out." And the word is purified, and the truth is purified, and his bride is purified, and the bride glorifies God, and is a light shining in a dark, dark world. It is the candle in the middle of this sanctuary on Christmas Eve. For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law, every act of disobedience was punished. So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself, and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak? What makes us think that we can not experience the wrath of God if we ignore the good news of salvation? You want to see the wrath of God? You can look outside. You can look on your television channels, and you will see the wrath of God for so many people who ignore the message of salvation, ignore the power of God's Holy Spirit, ignore redemption, ignore their identity in Christ. Look where they are. Do you think that you can escape that if you ignore the reality of the risen Lord? You can't. You will be left to your own devices and you will stray because you will no longer be attached spiritually to your Creator through his living Word. God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts to the Holy Spirit whenever he chose, because he is sovereign. And he did that in the early church a lot to demonstrate the power of God and to unify those who heard the Word and who originally

followed Jesus and then who originally followed spiritual conversion through hearing the Word. Lots of signs and wonders. The power of God. If he chooses today to do that, he can. I believe that I have experienced that in the past couple of weeks. Miraculous healing that every scientist said could not happen. And it happened. Furthermore, it is not angels who will control the future world for we are talking about "For in one place the Scriptures say, 'What are mere mortals that you should think about them?' or 'A son of man that you should care for him.' Yet for a little while you made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them authority over all things." Now when it says "all things" it means nothing is left out, but we have not yet seen all things put under their authority. What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position a little lower than angels, and because he suffered death for us, he is now crowned with glory and honor. Yes, by God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. We can't get that twisted. This is the theology. Okay, get your notebooks out, here's your 50 cent theological word for the day. This is the theology of the hypostatic union. God, Jesus, being fully man and fully divine. When it says that he was placed a little lower than the angels, it means he was here on earth fully human. Yes, he was fully divine. You will hear, for example, a Muslim apologist will say, "Well do you believe in the sovereign God, right?" Yes. "Do you believe that God can be killed?" Well, no, he's eternal. "Then what happened? Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross?" Yes, I do. "Then you believe that God was killed?" And it seems to be a logical argument except for the fact it's ignoring one of the fundamental principles of Christian belief. Jesus Christ is fully human and fully divine. The human died, tasted death for all humanity, and he was risen from the grave by the divine. Bodily resurrected by the divine. He was both. We are not. You will die and you will be risen again with the Lord at a time of his choosing by his power. We understand when we celebrate long day Thursday, for example, and we get on our knees and we've done doing this with the services of the ordinances and we wash feet and we talk about how God himself knelt before his creation and served them as a human, serves another human. That's what the scripture is talking about. By God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory and it was only right that he should make Jesus, through his suffering, a perfect leader, fit to bring them into their salvation. The only human being that ever walked the face of the planet that did not deserve to die, that did not deserve God's wrath, willingly sacrificed his human life for you. The only one that didn't have to, the only one that didn't deserve to, did it so that his blood would be shed to cover your sin as you repent and come into relationship with your holy creator. So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same father. That's you and me. He makes us righteous, not even us righteous. He covers us with his righteousness and makes us brother and sister. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters, for he said to God, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters. I will praise you among your assembled people." He also said, "I will put my trust in him, that is, I and the children God has given me." If you remember the first song, "As the deer, you are my friend, you are my brother, yet you are a king." All of those things are true at the same time. King Jesus, the one who knelt before his creation in his human state and served his creation, the one who willingly went to the cross to sacrifice so you don't have to. King Jesus is also present now. He's with you in your quiet moments. He's with you in your moments of terror. He's with you in your moments of grief. He's with you in your moments of sickness and he's with you in your moments of joy, in your moments of happiness, when you feel great unity. He is with you. If you have given your life to him and you have said, "Subjugate my will to yours, O Lord. Let you work through me. I am yours. I am your slave." Then 24/7/365, regardless of circumstance, eating that hot dog at lunch or praying over a sick child in the hospital, Jesus is there. We can't forget that. We cannot take that for granted and we cannot underestimate that power. That's what it means to be staying faithful. Well, I'm only faithful when there's a crisis. Now I'm going to turn to God and I'm going to beg him to help me. Okay? And I can't speak for God and I don't know how he handles all of that, those who may ignore him, and then I can't speak for that. What I do know is what scripture says about staying faithful, continually being immersed. Thy word is on light and a path. Thy word which you have access to 24 hours a day, learning, growing,

becoming the human being, the disciple that he knows you can be. Because God's children are human beings made of flesh and blood, the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die. There it is! What we just spoke about. And only by dying could he break the power of the devil who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. We talk about that all the time. Only in this way, becoming human and tasting death for all of us, and then we see the resurrected body of Christ, can he break the fear of the power of death. We no longer walk around slaves to fearfulness. We walk around slaves to righteousness, knowing that whether this thing lasts another five days or another 50 years, we are with him. Paul says, "To live is to serve, and to die is to be with. Either way, I'm good." I paraphrased. But that's what he says. It's win-win. It's not lose and then win. It's not win and then lose because you're dead. It's win-win. You're with him now. You're with him when you pass. That's good news. That's good news that people who are dying in their sin, dying in their condemnation need to hear what they do with it. You may not have, you don't have any control over. God's Holy Spirit will be with you, and we pray that their hearts will be softened and necks will be turned and repentance will happen and the power of the Lord will come upon them and they will know good from evil, right from wrong. They will find their identity in Christ like you have, and they will grow to become the person that Jesus knew when he formed them in their mother's womb. This is powerful theology. This is knowing the Word of God deeply. We also know that the Son did not come to help angels. He came to help the descendants of Abraham and us. Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God, the final sacrifice and the only priest. There is no intermediary other than Jesus Christ. You pray to the Father in the name of the Son by the power of his Holy Spirit. You don't pray to a dead person. You don't pray to the supposed spirit of a dead person. You don't pray to any other characters that appear in Scripture. There is one sacrifice final, one High Priest, one intermediary, Jesus Christ. Without him as our intermediary, we are not covered by his righteousness and we are worthy of his condemnation and wrath. It is but by the grace of God. When you turn this TV on, I keep mentioning and you see all of that. It is but by the grace of God that that is not me. And I'm not saying, "Ho, ho, ho." I'm saying, "Good Lord, thank you." I'm on my knees saying, "But by the grace of God, there go I." And other individuals need to hear that that is why this great mystery of the Church has been created. This is why the great mystery of the Church was withheld even from the angels. The information of how was God going to spread this was withheld from all of creation until Christ brought his bride to life on earth and the great mystery of how was revealed. It's you and it's me. It's his Church local. It's his Church universal. We know the truth and we live in the good news by the power of God. When you walk in the darkness, you are that little candle in the middle of the sanctuary. And I can guarantee you that you may feel pressed upon by every side. Again, our brother Paul talks about this. You may feel pressed upon by every side, but the darkness will never, ever, ever extinguish your light. Ever. It can't do it. Hold the candle up and say, "Lord, if you're not real, if you're more powerful, let this darkness snuff out this candle. Let the darkness pour out this light." It can't. It can't. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness will never overcome it. Scripture teaches us. He can be our merciful and faithful high priest before God. That he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people would be himself. Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested. Fully human and fully divine means so many different things and this last piece that I'll preach on is the truth. Lots of times we like to cling to this, that whole sappy "he gets us cling to the thing," right? There's a nugget of truth there because God has known suffering in human form. He has known the anguish of emotional suffering through betrayal, being lied to, being betrayed unto death. He has known physical suffering. Think of the 40 days in the wilderness. Think of the time on the cross. Think of the crucifixion. Think of the nails and the arms and the legs. Think of the crown of thorns. He knows suffering. Think of his ministry as he walked through. And sick person after sick person and broken person after broken person and disease after disease and they all came to him. And he experienced their suffering as he healed them of their suffering. He knows that. He knows that in our human self, although

we are a reflection of Jesus because we are of course fully human but indwelled by God's Holy Spirit, not fully divine, indwelled by God's Holy Spirit, we are a reflection of the hypostatic union. There will be suffering. Physical, spiritual, emotional. There will be suffering but that divine light, that divine power of God's Holy Spirit indwelling you goes nowhere during that suffering. Even though Satan is saying what about your God now? What about your God now? Who gave this child this disease? Who did this to you? Who took this away from you? What about your God now? Satan is pounding in on you to deny the Lord, to walk away. Stay faithful. I have seen things I never thought I would ever see as a pastor. Amazing things. Horrible things. Amazing joy which for example we'll celebrate on the 17th. Amazing suffering. That there's nothing I can do except be there and hold things. I have seen people stay faithful through the worst circumstances you can imagine and I've watched people turn away from the cross and walk away. The intentionality of you as a believer comes into play every day of your life. In the big things and in the little things. And if you are, as Scripture teaches, faithful in the little things, He will continue to add. That's an amazing thing but part of me wants to say be careful what you pray for. As He adds that responsibility to you, you will be called to do things that you maybe never ever thought that you would do. See things that you never thought you would see. But that's the church. If we don't do that, if we don't do that, who will? By the power of God we can do that. And if we don't do that, who will? If we don't hold the hands of the dying and the suffering, if we don't share the good news with those who are spiritually dead, who will? Nobody will! And that we are left to rot in their sin and die in their condemnation. The church was meant to go out and share this good news. Now we see the church infiltrated, the church corrupted, the word of God being played with and toyed with and manipulated. And we must not view that as any form of attack. We must view that as opportunity to be purified by His Spirit as we go deeply into His Word and know Him, know us, and do the things that He would have you do as His disciple. Amen? Amen.