

God, oh, it is good to be here in the house of the day. We thank you so much for the opportunity to be here, just as you have prescribed so long ago for your church. Just realize, folks, this is the 175th anniversary of this building this year, 2025. Think of the continual worship week after week after week of faithful people through the generations that have lifted their eyes to the Lord and sung, prayed, delved into His Word, supported one another. Just thank you, Lord, for that. Thank you for all that you give. We ask you now, sweet Jesus, that you would take your place as the pastor and the teacher of this church as we are obedient in the ordinances that you command of us. In Jesus' name, amen. This service has been several weeks in the making and a lot has gone on. And during that time, when we were heading into our first service of the ordinances and then all of these, the things happened over the course of time, a lot of what we're going to be talking about today is about order, about structure, about obedience. It's one of the reasons why I chose the scripture from Corinthians in order to read it, because Paul is talking about the order and the structure and the obedience to the Lord's Supper in an environment in which there is no order, structure, and very little obedience. One of the things that we're going to read through today, and you did this, but I love the fact that we are engulfed in this scripture. And last week I know that the read through of the letter, I hope that it hit you in such a way that it was, you realized what it may have sounded like at least a little bit when it was read to the church. When the gathering of the church, not in a building like this, but the gathering of believers, they would get it, they would read the letters and spend all day, if not days on end, talking about them, comparing it to the other scriptures that they had, comparing it to the oral traditions and the word of the gospel. And that is how people learn. And that's how people grew. And when we talk about church, we talk nearly about everything except all of the churchy stuff. All of the churchy stuff will be added to us if we are faithful in this, in the reading of the word, in the teaching of the word, in the understanding of the word. Now what ministries does he want us to have? What kind of outreaches does he want us to have? Where does he want us to go? Then we worry about those things, or concern ourselves, shall we? We spoke last evening about the motivations out of James 4. The motivations, it's not so much the bluntness with which James speaks, it's the motivation. You do not receive what you prayed for because you ask out of the wrong motivations. Seek ye first the kingdom, right? Seek God's will first. So if we want to be faithful, even from the very, very beginning, then we are seeking first the will of the Lord, individually, family-wise, collectively, as a church, praying for the Church Universal, which is a complete disaster today it seems, but praying for the Church Universal to see the will of God first. And this is really where Paul goes with it. I'm sorry, you guys, I should have told you that I was going to preach a little bit, not preach, but I'm going to read it. But that'll be good for your legs. Well-oiled machine. But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. Paul's rebuking them because they are not doing what I just spoke of. They're there and they're doing it for their own reasons, their own motivations, sometimes so they can just look like the super-Christians that they want them to be, sometimes so they can display their own wealth. I'm going to bring my own wine and my own bread and I'm going to show everybody how wealthy I am and you can just watch me. And all of it is wrong. Because the whole motivation for why they're trying, they're following what Jesus commanded, but their motivation is way off base and therefore there's nothing about what they're doing that is right or good or valid. It is not Holy Spirit inspired. For it sounds as if you can do more harm than good, then more harm than good is done when you meet together. First, I hear there are divisions among you when you meet as a church and to some extent I believe it, but of course there must be divisions among you so that you have God's approval will be recognized. That's an interesting statement. We talk about judgment and we talk about our neighbors and we talk about what church looks like. Look around you. I'm very proud to say that I don't see and I can't think of, and I'm being completely honest, individuals who would very much like to stand out on the road and say, "Look at me." But that's what Paul is saying here. You will never find those types of individuals if you actually do not know the godly individual who is seeking the Lord first. So he says everything serves a purpose in the body of Christ. You want to find that those individuals who are there in it for their own reasons, they're

going to be pretty obvious if you are in it for the right reasons. I like that. When you meet together, you're not really interested in the Lord's supper. For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing it with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. What don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? You want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this. That's a good thing. Those are good words. We need to hear when we need to be put on the correct path, and Paul is saying, "I will not." And this is part of the accommodation, shall I say, of the church today. He said, "Okay, you do you, whatever you, whatever your truth is, whatever you believe is right, however you want to do it, no. There's a way to do it. There's a way to do it." And Paul says, "I won't commend you, and I won't commend you who accommodate those very good things." I have often said that I'm an individual who wants accountability. I know how bad I get when I don't have accountability in every aspect of my life. I want accountability from my godly friends, from my wife, from my congregation, from the council. I want accountability. Don't leave me on my own. It will not go well. For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself." So he says, "There is a way to do it, and this is the way we're going to do it. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" In the same way he took the cup of wine after supper saying, "This is the cup of the new covenant between God and his people." In agreement confirmed with my blood, "Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it. For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again." That is very, very interesting and this is one of the last things I want to say for you to contemplate today before we share the Lord's Supper. When we share the Lord's Supper, we are taught to look back. We're taught to look back at what Jesus did and what he taught us to do in remembrance. We are taught here to look forward because every time that we do this, we are thinking not only of the first advent, if you will, but the second advent is coming again. We're taught to look back. We're taught to look forward and we learn from the whole teaching in Corinthians that we're taught to look around. So there's more to it than just ritual. There's more to it than just because. We are taught to look inside. We are taught to look outside. We are taught to look back at the cross. We are taught to look forward to the new creation. Every time we do this, what we do next here together as a body is very significant. It is very important. It is not, as we teach each and every single time we do it, it is not just something to do. It is not. I just probably shouldn't because the thing is long, but I just had to do the yearly ministry review. And of course, you know me. Is your congregation hurling? My answer is I think so, but you would have to ask them. So that's how I answer things. Do you observe communion? How many times? Blah, blah, blah. I'm like, okay. I mean, I get it, but it was really not reflective of your heart just to put a number down and say, "Well, we do it every time." We've got to do it every time. So here we're taught to look inside. Anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sin against the body and the blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you eat the bread and drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you're eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. I would say that that's pretty significant. And that is one reason, as I said, we did start it again to be very, very intentional last year by doing this. We do not want to ignore the commands of God. And when we are obedient to the commands of God, we don't want to simply do it because He said so. We want to understand the depth and the breadth of what we are doing, the history of looking back, looking forward, looking inside, looking around, examining ourselves, examining the body of Christ, examining our motivations for even doing this. It's important. Amen. So we will move through the elements of the Lord's Supper, first with the bread and then with the cup. And I would invite the ushers to please come forward. Two things that I'd like to say. The first is that I admire the men, not only for submitting themselves to the ordinance, but because the pipes are first and the fellowship is all cold water. It was very refreshing. The second thing I would like to say is Josh spilled the entire pan of water on the floor. Fresh things to his re-watcher. We had a good time. The other thing I would like to say is it is so honouring to God that on an 18

degree day you all come out for a service of the ordinances and fill up this church. It is. I hope that you view it that way. That your simple obedience in coming and worshipping and giving of yourself to death, whether you gave of yourself in your heart or whether you participated, it is very honouring to God. I know that for a knowing. On the one hand, I think there really isn't much more to say as we go forward in 1 Peter. We've read most of the scripture and then last week you read the letter. But I think that we're here, like I said a couple of weeks ago when I realised the historicity, the time frame of 1 Peter, that opened up a whole new avenue of understanding and power from the Word. And now as we watch events unfold in America, this is not going to be one of those sermons, but 1 Peter is all about the church in Babylon. 1 Peter is all about the church being prepared, laying the foundation for the persecution to come. Laying the spiritual foundation so that the church can resist the temptation of everything that is out there. And I'm not just talking about sex and drugs and those sorts of things. I'm talking about our addiction to idol worship and all of the idols that are presented, people, systems, politics, money, everything that is thrown at us and as I mentioned before, it's not our natural inclination to say, "Oh Lord, none of those things interest me. I am completely obedient to you." That is not our natural inclination. It is only by the very power of God's Holy Spirit that we are able to walk in the will of the Lord. You can't do it on your own. You must be submitted unto Him and then you must be intentional in seeking the will of the Lord in your life. So it's not something when we see all of this and we hear all of this and we look at all of how humanity is behaving. That's disappointing enough but then you hear the church chime in and start moralizing about people and start moralizing about this. What are we doing? This is exactly what Peter is speaking against. Don't forget the big point. Don't forget the sole purpose of the church and that is to share the good news that Christ lived, Christ died, Christ rose again. We can cut across all lines of discernment from gender to race to political affiliation if the church stays committed to the message she was given. And this is where I was this week because I'm as tempted as anybody to engage, you know. Want to say things or whatever. And I need to be as intentional as anybody to understand that none of that matters. Have you read Revelation? And Peter is laying the foundation for so many people that are going to experience this to one degree or to an extreme degree in the next generations to come. And I just wonder what can we hear today? We hear in these words, "Dear friends," this is the end of 1 Peter 2, "I warn you as temporary residents and foreigners to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls." Because there's one message that I've been bringing forward every time that we go into this text is that it is not a matter of physical persecution. Everything is a matter of spiritual warfare. The persecution, the denial of rights, the marginalization, everything from making fun of the early Christians to hanging them on pipes and lighting them on fire and everything in between is not designed to break them physically. It's going to break them physically. Nobody can handle that. It's to break them spiritually. It's for Satan to infiltrate the hearts of those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ and break them spiritually, get them off the message, prevent them from sharing the word of God and growing the kingdom of God. Everything is about that. Satan, the opposer of God's will, hates God. He will use every means that he is allowed to use to convert and change the souls of men and women against God or at the very least be indifferent to him. Everything. "Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior and they will give honor to God when he judges the world." How many of us want to chime in to this secular conversation and distract ourselves from the message of the church? When we look and we see sinful humankind and now we want to moralize on that sin and which sin is up here and which sin is down here and which person is more sinful. That person maybe is more sinful and I'm going to advocate for this person because they're less sinful. I'm going to argue against this person because they're the most sinful ever. What are we doing? All have fallen short. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And the church in her behavior will either submit to the secular disaster that is out there or the church by her behavior will set the tone for how people should behave. And it's up to each and every one of us to think about that. For the Lord's sake, submit to all human authority whether the king, as head of state or the officials he has appointed for the king, has sent them to punish

those who do wrong and to honor those who do right. It is God's will that your honorable lies should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations. For you are free, yet you are God's slaves. Don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Respect everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God or respect the king. Newsflash. All human authority that is set over you is wicked by its very definition. Corrupt people who have created corrupt systems and they operate within those corrupt systems to exploit people. But lest Jesus Christ himself is sitting on the throne, which he will be in the age to come, then this is what we are subject to. And scripture calls us as much as is practicable to submit to the authority that is placed over us, given that that authority is not seeking to usurp the authority of Christ. I'll give you an example. One of the great points of discernment when I think of these things is what Jesus said when he said, "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, give unto God that which is God's." And I wrote, "When Caesar, however, begins to ask or demand or order that which is God's, we have a problem." There's the point of discernment. He's not saying this for the sake of some sort of political expediency or, as we talked about with the ordinance, to just go along to get along or just to demonstrate. He's saying this because he, by the very secular authority, is ordering society, as wicked as it may be, structuring our being. And although it's not the obedience to the commands of the Lord, it is obedience to those who are above us in authority, who have been placed there in authority. Order, structure, obedience. On the spiritual level, we experienced that this morning as we practiced the ordinances. On a very practical level, as Peter is preaching into the church, we need to come to terms with who we are, what our behavior looks like to a wicked, unbelieving world, and we must not forget the important part of why we're here. And that is to learn and to grow and to become the disciples of Christ and Christ alone that we are called to be. There's a little quirky sign out there that says, I think, I don't want to spoil the ending, but it's going to be alright. It's going to be alright. And I've said this a thousand times if I've said it once. If we do as a church and as disciples what we are commanded to do, and we actually let go and trust that God will do what He promises to do, it works out a lot better on a daily level. It works out a lot better for our lives, for our relationships, for our purposes. God does not need my help to bring history to its conclusion. He's doing it the way He sees fit. And if you're not okay with that, that's not a God problem, that's a you problem. And believe me, I'm speaking into the mirror. God will bring history to its conclusion as He sees fit. And if I'm not okay with that, that's a me problem. Because I think I'm smarter, more just than God is. And that's wrong. It's sinful. God called you to do good even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example and you must follow in His steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when He was insulted, nor threaten revenge. When He suffered, He left His case in the hands of God who always judges fairly, unlike your pastor, Brian Warner. I had that. But you can very easily add your name there. He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and listen to me, live for what is right. You are subjects of a different kingdom. And you are the light and the salt of the earth to demonstrate a different way of being. Your purpose as a disciple is different. By His wounds you are healed. Once you were like sheep who wandered away, but now you have turned to your shepherd, the guardian of your souls. Now let's talk about some order, structure, and obedience. I don't often speak about what scripture doesn't say. But when we read through this as you did last week, we've got to talk a little bit about what scripture doesn't say. In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands, that even if some refuse to obey the good news, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lies. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourself instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. Scripture speaks of order and structure and obedience. What scripture is not saying is that women are property and women should be ruled and governed and are in some way unequal spiritually to men. Like I said, I don't often speak about what scripture doesn't say, but you need to bring that out and say, what is being said here? Order, structure, obedience, example, behavior, godly life is being discussed here. Nothing else. And that is why these are placed so prominently in so many of the letters that go

into the churches, not so that there can be a stratification of some sort of power structure, but so that there can be order and structure and ultimate obedience to the will of God. We'll go into verse 7, "Husbands, in the same way you husbands must give honor to your wives, treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered." Scripture is saying that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, male or female. Scripture is saying that men submit yourselves to your wives as Christ submits himself to the church. Scripture is not saying anything else. Scripture is speaking of order and structure and ultimate obedience to the will of God. Let me ask you, would you rather have utter chaos? Would you rather have every individual in it for themselves? Would you rather have every individual speaking their truth, deciding what is moral, deciding what is just, deciding what is right on their own, deciding how church should be structured? The words of Scripture teach us to love one another, not randomly, not just you because I like the way you think, not you because I don't like the way you think. But there is a model that we follow, that we are structured and ordered by, the will of God that we follow and ultimately it leads to a unification as we are submitted all to the Lord and all to one another. I am submitted to you because you are my brother in Christ. I am submitted to you because you are my sister in Christ. I give myself to you and there are 50, 60, 80, 100 of you giving yourselves to me and it works that way for every person here. How is that bad when you have 100 folks that have your spiritual back? Because we are unified, we are structured, and we choose to be obedient. I want you to understand that this is the word that Olivia was talking about, the meta-narrative of what is being spoken here. There are specific examples about male and female, husbands, wives, specific examples about slaves coming up, but the meta-narrative is one that we are unified by the structure that our sovereign God has ordered for us and we are unified in spirit and in purpose by submitting ourselves to His will. Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted. Keep a humble attitude. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do and He will grant you His blessing. For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace. Work to maintain it." May I just bring out a few of those words because they are verbs. Please do not sit here and just wait for God to, I don't know, do something. Keep your tongue from speaking evil, verbs. Keep your lips from telling lies. That's a verb that you can do. You are in charge of what comes out of your mouth next. Nobody else. I'm not lecturing you, I'm lecturing me, by the way. Just so you know. Turn away from evil, verb. Do good, verb. Search for peace, verb. Work to maintain it, verb. The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right and His ears are open to their prayers, but the Lord turns His face against those who do evil. The final passage is something that I separated because I just want to teach it as a biblical principle and then we'll finish with that. I've given you a lot to think about. But I also want you to be able to read scripture with an open mind and an open heart without hearing all of the triggering, if you will, 21st century words. I want you to understand the meta-narrative of what's being taught to you in your marriages and your families. Order, structure, obedience. Not domination. Not abuse. Order, structure, obedience. Beginning with obedience to the Lord and then submission to the other, one to the other. And that goes for your intimate relationships, it goes for your families, it's carried in here to the family of God. I want you to understand. And one of the ways that we can understand this is by not avoiding the next scripture, which is so often avoided, because there is absolutely no reason to avoid it. It is 1 Peter 2 beginning with verse 18, and I'll just read it here. "You who are slaves must accept the authority of your masters with all respect. Do what they tell you, not only if they are kind and reasonable, but even if they are cruel. For God is pleased with you when you do what you know is right and patiently endure unfair treatment. Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example and you must follow in His steps." That is

not a suggestion. That is a command to slaves. Why in the world would we bring that up today? Because one, when you look at your Bible, you must understand that there are certain aspects of it that are descriptive of the age. The way society was ordered and structured at that time involved a wide variety of different types of slavery. It was there, unavoidable, to not write about it. But that's not the point of the scripture, is it? We just talked about this. The point of the scripture is that there is order and there is structure and there is obedience. Whether you are free and wealthy and living on top of the world or whether you are a slave, God is above all of that. He is beyond all of that. And your faith in Him assures you something so much greater than anything you can attain or achieve here on earth. Your point and your purpose, whether you are at the top of the mountain or a slave, is to be obedient to Yahweh, to Sovereign God. And when you put that in perspective, those are powerful words, really powerful words, to be speaking into the life of a slave, saying, "You are so much more." Don't forget that. Be obedient. Because in a sense, right, if we're going to be disciples, we are all slaves to righteousness. We submit ourselves to that will and will. Understand that there are, and this is when you have no reason to gloss over things like that or not read them, that is descriptive of that age. And it's undeniable and it's a part. The part that we take away from that is prescriptive, descriptive. There was slavery. Prescriptive. You are so much more than that. That's how the Bible works. That's why it is as relevant 2,000 plus years later as it was when the churches in the Roman Empire were hearing this letter for the first time. Go deeply into the Word. Do not fear the Word. Do not fear what it might say or not say. Understand that it is the infallible, divinely inspired Word of God and every aspect of it will never fail in its purpose. Ever. Ever. It's always awkward when I don't have an official ending for a sermon. When the Lord says, "You know what? Brian, land that plane." And so I move forward and I land that plane and then I say, "Amen." But I do want to encourage you, because it's been an initiative for a couple of years, this church will not be cheerleading training for the human race. It's disciple training for people who will leave this place on a Sunday morning and behave differently than all of those monkeys throwing feces at each other throughout the course of the week. You will be different. You are different. God made you different. Submission to His will makes you walk, live, speak, behave differently. Show the world the Word of God. You may be the only Bible that any of those ever read. So know the Word. That's why we're here. We'll always, always be dedicated to that. It's all good to preach again. I'm not going to lie. It's what I do. And I miss that.