

Hillside Fellowship Church

Captions Provided by:
MAW

Dave: Father, we come to celebrate and clap and say thank you. Although our sin was great, you made a way for us to be forgiven and reconciled to you through your Son, Jesus Christ. And so we gather simply for that reason to worship you, to say thank you for your body, the church, the bride of Christ. What a great gift.

Now as we open your word, we believe it's living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. I have nothing to offer your people so as I open your word, I pray that you would take your word through your Spirit and strengthen, comfort, exhort this morning. So I pray you give us humble hearts to hear and eyes to see the truth of history. That you've used the church to change everything through that gospel message. And so I pray you'd use it this morning. Reconcile marriages, reconcile relationships. Give us a humility to follow after Jesus Christ and look more like him. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, welcome. As you're being seated, newcomers, my name is Dave. I've gotten to meet a lot of you. There's nothing special about me and nothing you need to know. I'm a new creature in Christ, recovering alcoholic and addict and I get the gift, the honor each week to just open up the scriptures with you.

If you here for the first time, we want you to know that we simply believe that Jesus changes everything. He's changed me. He changes us. And then as we dwell together, as the

body of Christ, he uses us to draw and attract other people in. So you're a part of that and I'm so glad you're here.

We've been walking through the books of Acts and looking at the earliest Christian church and how Jesus used the bride of Christ, the church, truly to change history.

So we're in Acts chapter 18 this morning. I'll read the first eight verses to you and then we'll enjoy it together. And my prayer this morning is that you really would be encouraged as you look at the greater purpose that God has given to us, the greater patience, the greater perspective and the greater peace. Greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world.

Our world is going crazy and this is our time to shine. And so, let me read it to you. Acts chapter 18 verse 1-8. God says, Luke writes this. 1 "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul came to them, 3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them (Priscilla and aquila) and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. 4 And he (Paul) was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. 5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 6 But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the gentiles.' 7 Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to

the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the leader of the synagoge, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized."

So, chapter 18 is going to be all about Paul in this twisted up, messed up, jacked up city called Corinth. It really did make America look like a bunch of teatotalers. So Corinth, which is totally jacked up -- let me give you a big theological picture that hopefully encourages us as we walk through this. Because every single chapter of Acts, you've gotta ask, why is this here?

Luke's recording 30 years of the earliest church history. So each chapter is important. Luke is seeking to explain something to us. So let me give you a big theological picture here. If you read straight through the Bible you would see this truth, which is actually reflected through all humanity. It's supposed to be reflected.

God is trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit and he exists in perfect unity and harmony is this community called the Trinity. No division, no isolation/separation. Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. The Father and I are one.

So the creator God made us to exist in unity of community and harmony. Now here's the small theological picture. If you read through the Bible from chapter 3 on, sin brings disunity, division and discord. Anybody experience that in our nation? Right? It's human. Because that's all we hear. It's disunity, discord, division and disdain for everybody around us.

So we were created for community of unity, but now we have no community and disunity. With the message of the Bible, we call it the gospel, it's that the God of perfect unity and community of Trinity, entered this disunity and division in this world to purchase reconciliation, where we can be reconciled with God and reconciled with one another. And then he puts us in these groups called the church, ekklesia. The called out ones. So that in a world of disunity, we can actually show them what a community of unity that reflects the Trinity looks like.

In that, I get it. I have heard for 45 years now; the church is a mess, the church is jacked up, the church is altogether broken. Let me explain it to you this way. How many of you ever got a photo in a yearbook in junior high or high school? You got a yearbook photo? What if I took your third grade yearbook photo where you were missing teeth, your hair was jacked up and you had this jackup smile and said, this is you in all perpetuity?

You see, this is what the world does. It will take a snapshot of the church and say, see? The church is jacked up. But if I took a yearbook picture of you from third grade, or eighth grade when you thought you were MacGyver and you had your hair spiked. Or 12th grade when you thought you were Kirt Cobain and you grew your hair out long and it was all greasy. Or when you were in college and you just went off the deepened and you were lucky you showed up for the picture. Amen?

[Laughter]

What if I took that picture and said, this is you in all perpetuity? Here's the point. Yes, the church is a

magnificent mess and it always will be, because we are a people who are constantly moving from isolation to connection in community because of the resurrection.

So hopefully, we've always got brand new believers who are totally jacked up, right? Hopefully, we've always got non-believers and atheists and agnostics and people who don't believe who come and join us. So whenever you look at the church, it's a snapshot. But we are actually a group of people who are moving from isolation to connection because of the resurrection. We're growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

You're going to see today. It's a group. Man, you ask, how did Paul start a church in these jacked up, messed up places? I'm going to show you. Because of what Jesus has done, we have a greater purpose. We've got greater patience than the world could ever imagine, because God's been very patient with us.

We've got a greater perspective, and therefore we've got greater peace. I'll show it to you through Acts 18. It's just beautiful. Watch. We'll jump in. Verses 1 through 8. Don't miss this. This is our greater purpose. Well, I just read it. I'll read it to you again. I want you to be careful to notice. What did Paul do when he went to the city? How did he start this thing?

Here's your greater purpose. Watch the names that come in and I'll just start counting. 1 "After these things, he . . . (that's singular. It's just Paul right now) . . . he left Athens and went to Corinth. (And what did he do?). 2 he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had.

Commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, 3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers."

Now there's three of them. That's a great start to a church, amen? What in the world can God do with three people? That's still not important. That's still not a big deal. Stick with me, bro. When God wants to do something big, he tends to begin very little. Have you ever read about the incarnation? We call it Christmas?

When God did the biggest thing ever, it came in the form of a baby.

[Laughter]

So don't despise three people. Now watch this. Verse 5 "But when Silas and Timothy came down . . ." Uh-oh. Now we got five. It's growing, yo. Nobody's excited yet. Watch.

[Laughter]

But this is how a church starts. It's called momentum. He started to change his city and now we got five. 5 "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the . . ." hero. The anointed, appointed Savior of the world.

6 "But when they resisted and blasphemed (Paul), he shook out his garments and said to them, . . ." Fine. You don't want it? "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the gentiles'." The door was closed

so Paul was like, okay. There's still more people that need Jesus. And if that doors closed, there will be other doors that are opened.

Watch this. 7 "Then he left there and went to a house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue." Now we got six.

8 "Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed . . . (now we got seven) . . . along with his whole household." I don't know how many are there. A typical American family, you got 2.5. So now we got 9.5.

[Laughter]

" . . . and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized." I don't know how many "many" is, but it's many. So now you probably have about 20 people and you've got the beginning of the church. Here is why this matters.

God has given you and I a greater purpose. Matthew 4:19. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Notice he doesn't call it "catchers of men." That's a thing. When you're fishing, you're fishing. And sometimes you don't catch any. I've gone years. You're just fishing, you're fishing for men, you're fishing for men. Some of you have been around people at work and you're just fishing, praying for an open door.

This is the greater purpose. The fact is, people matter. Possessions don't, positions don't, pleasure doesn't. People matter. They bear the image of God and we're called to be fishers of men. And here is why it matters in the context of a

culture or society that's rejected God. They live with disunity and division.

We are together in the body of Christ. Do you know it's impossible to practice the gospel alone? In the Greek, most of the YOUs in the Bible are plural. You're good Texans. It's "y'all." Because you have to have other people to practice the gospel. It's not just a message. It's a message that transforms and changes the messengers.

This is what Michael Jackson taught me about the gospel.

[Laughter]

Let me explain. Sometimes stuff just comes out. The year was 1986. Great year. A lot of neon. A lot of big hair. I got to go to Disneyland. Anybody else get to go to Disneyland? 1986. Okay. Brand new thing came out. It was called Captain EO. Michael Jackson, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, made this movie and it was the first time I've ever gone to a movie and it was 3D. Actually it was 4D because there was smells and wind and all this stuff. It was amazing! I was blown away! Because it made the movie come alive.

I was trying to touch the objects and then water and wind. It made the whole experience of movie going totally different. Do you know that the church of Jesus Christ, we make the gospel 4D to a world that can't comprehend it. I would write it down. We move to me to we. Me singular, to we plural, so that all might see the gospel.

Your service matters. This isn't about you and what you can do for God. It is about us. And as we serve and non-

believers come in -- they're here right now with us. It's the greatest gift I've ever gotten when a non-believer will come join us. And they get to see you serve. Not because we get paid, but because we love the God who served us and now we get to serve others in the context of community. And we get to make the gospel 4D so that people see it and touch it and experience it.

How you serve matters. Please don't say, David, it doesn't matter if I hand out cups or bulletins or teach kids. It matters, because in a world that can't agree on anything, in a world that will riot and burn and there's division and disunity and discard, people come in and they see a community of unity that reflects the Trinity and they say, oh, I get the gospel.

You guys actually like each other. That's wild. That's wild. So one, we have a greater purpose. We're fishers of men. Watch what comes up next. This is the greatest story ever. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, he gives us a greater patience. He is incredibly patient. God is patient with us so that we might be patient with one another.

Watch this one. It's beautiful. This is going to encourage the socks off a lot of ya. I can't believe Luke wrote this down. He wrote this down because Paul told him. So he wrote it down for our instruction, edification, strengthening. Watch this. 9 "And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid any longer, . . . "

You see it? Who was afraid here? You've got to be kidding me. Paul, more than any other man other than Jesus transformed the face of the earth. And Paul was afraid!? I never imagined Paul being somebody who was afraid. Not

only that, watch this. ". . . but go on speaking and do not be silent; . . . "

Who had been silent? Paul. He was afraid and he went silent. Probably for good reason. Every time he opened his mouth, he got the snot beat out of him.

[Laughter]

Didn't he? He's getting his ribs broken. He's being beaten with rods. So you'd probably go silent. Many of us have gone silent and afraid for much less just living in a shame-based, cancel culture. Hey, if you say anything wrong, we'll do away with you.

Isn't this encouraging? Paul was afraid and he went silent. Watch what Jesus did for him. He said this. Verse 10, "I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." 11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. 12 But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, 13 saying, 'This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.'

14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth . . . " And this is where Paul typically gets the fool beat out of him. Because he'll open his mouth and make a reasoned defense and then they get mad and they beat him down. ". . . when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, . . . "

Gallio steps in. Paul didn't even -- he was like, EH! And Gallio jumps in. ". . . 'If it were a matter of wrong or a

vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; 15 but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I'm unwilling to be a judge of these matters.' 16 And he drove them away from the judgment seat."

Well, they had to beat somebody. Because this is what anger does. Anger has to go somewhere, amen? It's going to go out on somebody. And this is what we do when we're mad and don't have a dog to kick or somebody to abuse. We'll criticize our leaders. We'll beat our leaders down. And that's what they do.

16 "They all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and they began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things."

Has God been patient with you personally? Honestly. When you look in the mirror, you see your own faults, flaws, failures, sins. Has God been patient with you? You see, here's Paul, easily one of the greatest apostles. He's changing the world by preaching. But now he's afraid and he's gone silent. He's looking at Corinth and it's just horrific and he just goes silent. But God was very patient with him. And, in fact, in verse 11, comforts Paul. I'm with you. Don't be silent. I'm going to protect you.

And then Luke records when God DID protect him and Gallio stepped in. God is going to comfort you so that you might comfort others. This is part of how the body of Christ works. You see? He's going to comfort you and all of your afflictions. 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 4. He's the God who comforts us in all of our affliction so that we might

comfort all of those who are afflicted by the comfort by which God has comforted us.

You see, if you haven't been comforted, you haven't comforted others. If you haven't received and know the patience of God, you can't give it. You can't give what you don't have. It's what my birthing coach taught me. When Brooke and I were about to have our first baby, John. We didn't know how to do it, because it was our first time. So we thought, what better idea than to hire a birthing coach.

And so she would come over to our house and she would explain to us the finer points of giving birth. Wonderful. But then it took a left-hand turn and it got really weird, really quick. Because it was like, next week we're going to get together and you're going to get to play act like you're the baby.

And I'm like, I'm not sure this is necessary.

[Laughter]

Right? And she gave us a list. Here's what you're gonna say. I'm a baby. I'll do anything to support Brooke, but I had to do something here, right? Because I can just imagine me sitting on the couch doing, I don't know. A lot of things came to mind.

[Laughter]

So I had a sneaking suspicion that this gal had never had a baby, because she was walking us through a book and no personal experience being shared. So I asked here. Because I didn't want to play act like I was the baby. How

many children do you have? And she said, none. And I said, thank you for that. Bye-bye.

[Laughter]

Because if you haven't experienced it, guess how much comfort you have give to somebody else? Very little. You can throw a Bible verse at them. Here's what I want you to understand. God is going to comfort you in your affliction so that you might comfort others. Because of this, because of the patience God has given to you, he's going to allow you to be patient with other people. He's going to allow you, truly, to understand that your story matters, your struggle matters, your suffering matters.

Do we always understand why our suffering and struggle matter? No. But you will begin to see your story, your struggle, and your suffering through the lenses of community care. It brings about community connection instead of division. Paul's there. He's afraid. Jesus comforts him and is very patient with him so that Paul can turn around, to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 4 and say, man, let's comfort one another with the comfort that Jesus Christ has given to us.

Do you see your story, your struggle and your suffering through the lenses of community care and community connection? If not, you're going to continue to be isolated, not living in connection. And you'll be afraid and silent. That's what often happens. It happened to Paul.

Watch what comes next. Another just brilliant passage. 18 through 23. I'll walk through this very quickly. 18 "Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the

brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow."

I have no idea what verse 18 means.

[Laughter]

Honestly. All scripture's inspired by God, profitable for doctrine, reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. All of the Bible is equally true. Not all of the Bible is equally clear. I have no idea what to do with verse 18. He got a hair cut before his trip. Okay.

[Laughter]

Study it. Go home. I think it plays into Numbers chapter 6. Some kind of Nazarite vow. But even the conjunction isn't clear. Is it Paul or is it Aquila? We're not sure. Luke knew what he was writing. I don't. But watch. Here we go.

[Laughter]

I'm not going to act like I know it all. I don't know.

[Laughter]

I prayed this week. Lord, if there is some profound point --

[Laughter]

-- honestly, about haircuts, give it to me.

[Laughter]

I've read through the whole thing. I want to know so I can feed and care for your body. And then I woke up this morning and I was like, I still don't know. I didn't get a dream last night. I got nothing. But watch. Verse 19. "They came to Ephesus, and he left them (Priscilla and Aquila) there. Now he himself entered the synagoge and reasoning with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, . . . "

That's interesting. They're like, please stay and teach us. He's like, no, you got other Bible teachers. 21 ". . . but he took leave of them and saying, 'I will return to you again if God wills,' he set sail from Ephesus. 22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch (where the whole thing started). 23 And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, . . . "

Here's the point that Luke gets to. He went around strengthening all the saints. Like everywhere he went, his presence was a blessing to people and he strengthened them. Like 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 10 and 11. "Comfort one another and strengthen one another in the Lord."

Bottom line is this. You happen to live in a world that's driven by scarcity mentality. Probably more than you realize, which is astounding to me because you live in a nation that has more than any other people who have ever lived, and yet we have this scarcity mentality. You don't believe me? Let me explain how this narrative plays in your and my head.

When I wake up in the morning, one of the first thoughts on

my mind is, I did not get enough sleep. And when I lay my head down on my pillow at night, I think to myself, I did not get enough done today. That's just the bookends of your day, yo. And I guarantee. Most of us are like, I didn't get enough sleep. I didn't get enough done. And then all day long, it's just this litany of scarcity.

My 401k. It's not big enough. What happens if the supply chain goes? I don't have enough. It's this scarcity mentality which always leads to grumbling and worrying. It just does. Scarcity mentality leads to grumbling, complaining and worrying. You happen to know a truth. Not about scarcity, but about sufficiency. God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory.

See? Sufficiency mentality wakes up in the morning and says, Lord, thanks for great sleep. You cared for me even in my sleep. Thanks for that. And then at night, it lays down and says, Lord, thanks. You allowed me to get a lot done today. You see, sufficiency mentality doesn't lead to grumbling and worrying. It leads to gratitude and worship.

Now here's the point. Paul didn't stay in one spot. I've got to go share the good news have the gospel. I've got to go strengthen people. I've got to go love people. This truth compelled him. This is the ectoplasm principle. Anybody ever seen Ghostbusters? There's this little green ghost on there called Slimer. Everywhere Slimer went, he left something. Ectoplasm.

Do you know everywhere you go, you leave something. It's just the laws of physics, the laws of nature. As you go, you leave a wake. You leave something behind you. It's either sufficiency mentality or scarcity mentality. But you plant

seeds. We really are like Slimer. Everywhere we go, we leave something. You leave something in your wake.

Paul went. God gave him a greater perspective on life. I've got to go plant seeds of love and joy and peace and patience and goodness and kindness and gentleness because I know those seeds will grow. You know you leave something in every room you walk into. You leave something in every conversation you engage in. It's either scarcity mentality -- and here's how I know you're functioning in scarcity mentality.

You'll complain. We're complain about anything. Typically not ourselves because we love us some us. Amen? So we district from complaining about us. So we'll complain about leadership, complain about republicans, complain about democrats, complain about the church, complain about traffic. That's just scarcity mentality playing out. What's on the inside comes out. And you are planting seeds.

See what Paul did was he functioned out of sufficiency mindset. And he went. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Philippians chapter 4:11-12, "rejoice always. Again, I'll say rejoice. Let your gentle spirit be made known to all men. Jesus is near. Therefore be anxious for nothing."

He's cared. Hillside, he's cared for your every need. "He did not spare his only son, but freely offered him up for all of us. How will he not also give you all things in Christ Jesus?" He has sufficiently met every need you have had, do have, and every will have for all eternity. The seed you plant matter. That's the Slimer ectoplasm principle. The seed you plant matter, because they will grow.

What do you bring into the room with you? Now I'm out of time and we've got communion. So let me jump through this last part. Watch this. 24-28, just amazing. I'll just take three minutes with it. But you've got to ask why this is here. I'll read it to you.

24 "Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; . . . " Watch what Luke writes. I want you to see the words that Luke uses for Apollos. They're all good. You with me? Watch this. 24 "Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, (what was he?) an eloquent man, (so he spoke super duper well) came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in scriptures."

So he knew his Bible. His Old Testament. 25 "This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in Spirit, . . . " Are all these things good things? Yeah. Like, these are incredible titles. "He was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagoge. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

So he had been teaching inaccurately. But they just got done saying he was learned, he was eloquent, he was mighty in scripture. But Priscilla and Aquila were like, hey, Apollos. Come here. Man, you've missed part of it because you're preaching the baptism of John, which is the baptism of repentance, but you're not preaching the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is, the King has come and sent his Spirit to live inside of us to empower us.

So he was only teaching part of the message. Why did Luke

put this here? Watch. 27 "And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, 28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

You can't understand 24 through 28 without 19:1 through 5. Paul comes to Corinth. Finds a group of people that only understood part of the gospel message. Well, if you didn't receive the Holy Spirit, if you weren't born again, then what were you baptized into? Here's the point that I hope will encourage you, because God gives us a greater peace.

You happen to have been born and raised, most of you, in America. And you may or may not know it, but we live in a highly shame-based culture, where if you're not perfect for any reason, some other tribe, club, clan or group can cancel you. They actually call it cancel culture now. Have you heard of that on the news? Like if you tweet, say something that we perceive to be inappropriate by whatever measure or standard society has measured inappropriateness, they will shame you and cancel you.

They'll do away with you. I got people who watch sermons. If you say something wrong, we'll attack you and seek to do away with you. What a shame-based culture does is it raises this desire for perfection so that most of us live with this felt need inside of us. I have to be perfect. You know what that does to families? You know what that does to marriages?

Forget that. I don't have time. Do you know what that does to moms? You just watch moms who love their kids and are

trying to do the best for their kids. And some moms may breastfeed. Some moms may not. And all of a sudden, it's a war. Because my way has to be right! Perfection always leads to isolation.

Do you know the grace that God gives to us? The grace is this. Paul wasn't perfect, was he? He was afraid and silent. Apollos wasn't perfect. He was preaching a partial message. Does Luke condemn him? No. What the gospel does is gives us greater peace, because it moves us from this perfection mentality to a progression mentality.

We get to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Isn't that a joy? You know how freeing that is for me? You see, why Luke put this here was we need each other. None of us are perfect. None of us have it all together. I don't care how eloquent, learned, wise you are, you're going to miss something and I'm going to miss something.

But you know how good God is? He puts the body of Christ here where we actually get to fill in and cover each other's gaps, because we're no longer in competition for God's approval. We're in collaboration so that people might see the gospel lived out through us. Isn't it marvelous? See it gives me freedom, because I know every single week I mess up. I don't know anybody on the team who messes up more than I do.

Last week, I talked about getting high in a sermon. How horrible is that?

[Laughter]

Yeah, that's nervous laughter. And that happened. It's on video. And I said it and I was like, oh, my goodness. Nobody messes up more than me. And yet, in God's grace, he allows us, in our weakness, not to be in competition and put each other down, but to be in collaboration. 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 8. "Above all else, love one another fervently from the heart." Why? Because love covers a multitude of sins.

You see, when I preach, I'm the greatest sinner at Hillside Fellowship because my words constantly fall short. And yet, God in his grace will put other people around you to cover those gaps and explain what I failed to explain. Isn't he good?

Let me land the plane with this so Jeff can come and give us communion. You see, Hillside, the church is constantly moving from isolation to connection because of the resurrection and we're inviting other people in. It matters how you serve because we make the gospel visible and tangible and palpable to other people.

It matters the seeds you plant, because those seeds will grow. It matters how you shine as a light. It matters how you serve one another, because you may not get it, but other people are watching, and they see Christ Jesus in us. Hillside, I want to praise you for this. I love how you serve one another.

Now we're going to celebrate communion with Jeff and celebrate this communion, this unity we have that reflects trinity because what Jesus Christ did for us. Let me pray and then Jeff's going to come up and lead us in communion.

Father, God, thank you so much that you haven't put us in a place to try and learn salvation. But, in fact, you've put us in a place to receive it because of what Jesus did. And because of that, you've done away with all competition and have called us to collaboration that we might be fishers of men. And so would you help us as we look at the elements today, the bread and the juice, would you help us realize and understand that you, Jesus, laid your life down to reconcile us to the Father and you've called us to lay our lives down to be reconciled one to another.

And as we humble our hearts, would you use this to draw us closer to you, closer to one another, so that a lost and dying world might see the light of the glory of the gospel in and through us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Jeff: Wow, these lights are bright. [Chuckling.] Has everyone received the communion elements? Jen, I think I'm the only one that doesn't have them. [Chuckling.]

[Laughter]

Thank you. Good morning. I'm Jeff. I'm one of the eight elders here at Hillside and it's my privilege to lead us in our communion worship this morning.

I recently passed a milestone in my life. August 30, I turned 80.

[Applause and whoops.]

And I officially became what the Bible calls, a very old man.

[Laughter]

And I'm telling you that so you understand my theme this morning. It's simplicity. I find as I've gotten older that I'm attracted more and more to just the simple concepts of walking by faith with Jesus Christ. I'm going to go out on a limb and tell you something this morning. Don't you dare hold it against me.

More often than not, the last thoughts I have as the day ends are, now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. That's the mentality I have. And if you're listening to that and thinking, that sounds like a child talking to his heavenly Father.

Congregation: Amen.

Jeff: It's exactly the picture I have. He encourages us to call him Abba, to call him Daddy. And I love to end the day just with a simple contact with him just expressing my trust that if I don't wake up in this life the next morning, I'll be with him.

At the same time, I love the Cathedrals of scripture. Last session, I can't even remember when it was now, the men and women's Bible studies, we studied Ephesians. We studied the whole book, but I never got past the first chapter because I was just blown away by what I'm going to share with you now. It's just two verses.

Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3 we'll start with. I want you to ignore verse 4. 3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." I want you to let that rattle around in your mind a minute. Because I have

no idea the magnitude of what's being communicated. Every spiritual blessing is ours in Jesus Christ.

That's what God has done for us. When he did it is even more amazing. He chose us in him when? Before the creation of the world. Now, if he had said, I chose you in Him before you were born, I might be able to handle that. But I can't handle that. Before the creation of the world, to be holy and blameless in his sight. That's not simple and I like simple things.

But can you imagine the being that could communicate that truth? How intelligent he is. How loving he is. How wise he is. How powerful he is. That's the God we serve and it amazes me that he desires to have community, to have fellowship with us. The only proper response when you read something like that, I would love to understand it, but I tell you, I don't. It's just to fall down and worship in awe of the majesty of our God.

We're going to be talking about communion, as if it wasn't bad enough, the Lord's supper. Incidentally, any of you that are here and have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior. In other words you're depending on His righteousness for your eternal salvation, you're welcome to share with us whether it be online or in person here. You're welcome to share with us regardless of whether you're affiliated with Hillside Fellowship.

So we're talking about the Lord's supper, but the Lord's supper has the roots in the Passover of the Old Testament. From Exodus chapter 7 through 12, it's all about the Passover. Let me tell you, there's nothing simple about the Passover. It's complicated. It's mysterious. There are

plagues and death angels and blood of animals being painted with hyssop on the doorposts of Israelites homes. It's just amazing.

But it was a watershed moment in the life of the nation of Israel. So the law required that everyone observe this Passover celebration annually in Jerusalem. And so that's what Jesus was doing with His apostles on the night before he was crucified. He was celebrating the Passover.

What occurs to me as I think about that is, these men of his had been celebrating Passover all their lives. They knew the script backwards and forwards. And something kind of strange happened that night. Jesus left the script and I just wonder if they were confused, if not shocked, when he began to deviate and instead of talking about animals and bitter herbs and unleavened bread, he began to talk about His body and His blood.

And we have to ask the question. What was going on here? What was going on was Jesus was doing what Jesus does and he was changing everything. Before that night, sinful man related with the Holy God through the law. And there was self-effort, there were rules and regulations. There was a provision for failure in the shed blood of animals and it led to feelings of failure, guilt, shame, condemnation, because nobody could keep the law.

But Jesus was coming to set this whole covenant aside. In fact, the rules and regulations that the law had against us were going to be nailed on his cross the next day. And so Jesus comes to set aside the old convenient and introduce a new covenant that's based on love, grace and acceptance and the removal of all condemnation and the removal of us

doing anything. All that's required is for us to trust for what he's already done.

In my quest for simplicity, I turned to probably the simplest verses in the whole Bible. If you've memorized anything, you probably memorized John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes is not condemned."

And I'll stop there, because the rest of that verse is for another time. So we're going to be sharing together from this concept of the new covenant. We're going to be reading from familiar verses in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Paul is going to be sharing some details from that night when Jesus celebrated Passover with His men. But they're not coming from Paul's personal recollection because he wasn't even there. What he is sharing with us came personally from Jesus.

If you've got a Bible and want to, turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 23. "For I received from the Lord what I also passed onto you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. And when he gave thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

I should've warned you about this top layer. I should've warned myself about this top layer.

[Chuckling.]

Let me repeat this. "'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" In the same way, after supper, He took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Lord, Jesus, we have proclaimed your death. We have remembered what you have done for us. And we have remembered that you've changed everything in order to make it possible for us to have an eternal destiny with you in heaven. And so we give you thanks and praise you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Final worship song]

Worship Leader: Amen. Thank you so much for joining us this morning. You all are dismissed.

[End of service]