

1Tim 24-04-07b

We're ready to move forward in our survey of the Gospel of the Mystery as entrusted to and imparted by the Apostle Paul. He is the one who reveals this set of previously unheralded and uncommunicated truths. There are allusions to the incarnation of Jesus Christ in John.

Remember, John writes after Paul. Both his epistles, Revelation, and possibly even his Gospel are written after Paul. John, I think, by church tradition and by implication and inference was probably one of the youngest of the disciples, if not the youngest, and lived the longest and did much of his writing in a mature stage in the latter half of the first century.

And so when he says, that which our hands have handled, which our eyes have seen, we impart to you in 1 John, he is affirming things that were already revealed by the Apostle Paul with regard to the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. So for point one, the primary passages for this, Jesus Christ, seed of David, raised from the dead, that's 2 Timothy 2.8. Our passage, 1 Timothy 3.16, the great mystery of spiritual truth, godliness, manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of messengers, it says angels, but these are those who are witnesses. You shall be witnesses unto me, Jesus said to the eleven, in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, until the end of the age, not unto the uttermost parts of the world.

We've been over that many times. Heos is an adverb of time. It means until, not unto.

And when you look at Acts 1.8, the Greek preposition there is heos, every other place it is used. It is an adverb of time. Until the end of the world, not unto the ends of the earth.

It's just a grotesque mistranslation there. So, seen of messengers, of angeloi. Sometimes these are heavenly messengers, but what would be the point of Jesus being seen by heavenly angels? You say, well, things on which angels long to look.

But there's no context for this in 1 Timothy, that Paul would suddenly, out of nowhere, introduce angels. He does talk about communication, and about the importance, writing a pastoral epistle to a pastor, communicating truth, that Jesus Christ was seen of messengers. And you remember the parallel idea of this use of angolos, when Peter is released from prison in Acts, and goes, and Rhoda, I think her name is, goes to the door, and hears the voice coming through, and she runs back in and says, Peter is standing outside, and they say, he's in prison, that must be his angel, that must be his angolos, his messenger, he has sent someone with a message, it can't be him.

So, this great mystery, mystery number one, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was manifest in the flesh, giving us an example of how to live in the flesh, to have discernment and discretion. Even when there were crowds flocking to see

Jesus, remember how many times in the Gospels we saw Jesus tell his disciples, we must leave and go somewhere else, I have other places to go, and they said, but the crowds are still here, why not stay as long as the crowds come, I've got to go elsewhere. Jesus had discernment of the audience, why are they coming, are they coming to see the miracles, are they coming to, because it's an event.

You see things that happen by attraction, an event builds momentum. You hear that everybody else is going to drive three hours to try to get in the middle of totality of the eclipse, and so people say, well, I should do that as well. I pity the people who are going to be in the traffic to try to get into the path of totality, to try to get there and back, and what would be doubly disappointing is if it's overcast.

One of my favorite country songs I found in the jukebox when I was a kid by Hank Williams Jr., it's obscure, nobody's heard it, but those of us who played pool in the barn, but he used to sing a song called, I went to all that trouble for nothing, and it often comes to my mind. But this sort of bandwagon effect that takes place, people that came out to see John the Baptist from Jerusalem, if all Jerusalem and Judea came out to see John, why wasn't all Jerusalem and Judea converted? A lot of them even got baptized because it was a thing, it was a trend, it was a fad. Oh, have you been out to see John, he's so unusual.

It has created a stir, it's trending, and so people would go out, but their heart wasn't in it, it was superficial, and it was transient, it was ephemeral, it didn't last, it didn't make a difference. And there weren't enough of those people who responded when the Lord Jesus Christ was identified as the Lamb of God, and we began his ministry. Huge crowds came out to hear him, but huge crowds were not converted.

It was a relative minority, not enough for Jesus to bring in the kingdom. The Electoral College didn't accept him as king, much less the popular vote. So, the third primary passage for this is 1 Corinthians 15, 1-4.

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried, raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Well, that brings us to our second element of the mystery, and that is the mystery of the indwelling Christ.

What is the definition of a mystery? It is something previously unrevealed. God's prophets, the Old Testament Scriptures, are in harmony with it. Once it is revealed, you can see that there may be anticipations and adumbrations and shadows, but you could never project forward from the shadow or from the allusion to the reality.

The reality is revealed in the New Testament, and specifically revealed through Paul. So, turn with me to Colossians 1. Colossians is such a wonderful book. It is the companion to what we call Ephesians, which I think is actually Laodiceans, but for convenience, we'll call it Ephesians.

They traveled in the same pouch. They were written at the same time, Ephesians and Colossians. In Colossians 1, verse 25, we have our central verse.

Paul says, I rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to his saints. Now revealed to his saints. Notice the context.

I am a minister according to the stewardship from God given to me for you to fulfill the word of God. He doesn't say us. He doesn't say to the disciples or to the other apostles.

He says to me, the mystery, hidden from ages and generations, now revealed to his saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. Mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. The kinship between these two books is very profound. Keep your finger in Colossians 1 and turn back to Ephesians 1. What are the riches of the glory of this mystery is our phrase.

And when you look at Ephesians 1, verse 15, After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of the truth. of him, this is a spirit, not the spirit, lowercase s. Paul cannot pray for other people to receive the Holy Spirit, but he can pray that the father can grant a spirit characterized by wisdom and revelation in epinosis of him, full knowledge. The eyes of your understanding having been enlightened, the eyes have to be opened first.

This is an aorist participle that precedes the action of the main verb in verse 18. So in order for God to grant to you a spirit that is characterized by wisdom and revelation in full epinosis knowledge, your eyes having been opened, having been enlightened in order that so that you may know what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. See that phrase, the riches of the glory? Same thing we saw in Colossians 1. The glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, Christ in you the hope of glory.

The eyes of your understanding having been enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who express faith, those of us who are believing. Present tense, those of us who continue in faith according to the working of his mighty power which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him in his right hand in the heavenlies. What is the power by which God raised Christ from the dead? It is the Holy Spirit explicitly stated to be so.

So the working of his mighty power, and remember in this section of Ephesians chapter one, we have all five Greek words for power. You have kreteo, dunamis and all of them, they're all here, energeo. According to the working of his mighty power which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion, far above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body. The fullness of him who fills all in all. What is the all that is filled by Jesus Christ? We talk about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

We're talking about the indwelling of Christ and here Paul refers to the filling of Jesus Christ, his body, he is the head of the body and he fills in the ideal. This is the goal, this is the destination, this is the ideal. Does the Lord Jesus Christ indwell every believer? No, there are conditions.

Does Jesus Christ indiscriminately love everyone with the love that he loved his disciples with? Remember in John it says, having loved them, he loved them until the end and it's talking about his disciples. That is a unique and special love, it has conditions. The indwelling of Christ has conditions to have his word and guard it, to genuinely love him.

Jesus said, I and my father will come and make our home, we will indwell. So he put all things under his feet. Notice there's a difference in something being under your feet.

Are you connected and involved and filling your footstool? There are things that are under your feet that aren't the body. Jesus is head to the church, to the active living body. There are other things that have been put under his feet and it's a distinction.

So important to recognize biblical distinctions. Goats are not sheep, sheep are not goats. Dogs are not people, swine are not people.

They're not treated the same. There's a different set of rules. Do not throw what is holy to the dogs, you should not cast your pearls before swine.

Touch not the unclean thing, separate from ungodliness, separate from disobedience. There are things that are distinct and separate and are governed by different policies and different priorities. And he goes on in Ephesians chapter two, it's hard to stop there, but you come back to Colossians and it says, verse 27 of chapter one, to them God will, to them, to whom? It was unknown to ages and generations past, the mystery hidden from the ages and from generations.

Times past, people past, but has now been revealed to whom? To the world, to those outside, to the apathetic, to the indifferent, to those outside, everything is parables, they see and don't perceive, they hear and don't understand, their heart is calloused over to the sanctified ones, to the saints. Look at verse two of this chapter, to whom is Paul

writing? Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ. The saints are faithful brethren in Christ, not just somebody who, when they were seven years old at vacation Bible school or good news club or under some kind of pressure said, yes, I asked Jesus into my heart, that is not a saint.

Someone who may have genuinely accepted Christ at some earlier point in life, but has departed from the faith, has gone to a different set of priorities, is walking in darkness rather than light, whose deeds are evil, that's not a saint. You can't make the image of God ubiquitous and you can't make active life of faith as a believer ubiquitous for everybody who has ever claimed to accept Christ as their savior. This is a branch that bears fruit.

This is a branch that puts out leaves and is growing that respects and appreciates its connection to the vine. Branches in the vine that are pruned by the father. Remember Jesus saying, abide in me, let my words abide in you, you will bear much fruit.

Those who abide in me, my father prunes so that they can bear more fruit. And there are believers who are pruned out of the active life of God because they wither and don't bear fruit. They don't make use of that connection to Jesus Christ.

This is not loss of salvation, this is a picture of fruitfulness and life function, value in the present. It's not talking about eternal destination. But if God is going to chop some believers out of the vine, it's a picture not only of what needs to be pruned out of our lives so that we can bear more fruit, but remember Jesus' description of this picture.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in me and you, the branch, will bear much fruit. So if the father is pruning branches off of the vine, is he pruning bad things out of our lives or is he pruning believers and exiting them from the planning and purposing and providing and usefulness for the mission, which is to represent Jesus Christ.

If a plant is fruitful enough, you can't really see the center stalk, you see the leaves and the branches that are on the outside. And when people look toward Christ, the first thing they should see and will see is us. And from us, they will track the light and get to Christ and through Christ get to the father, who is the ultimate destination.

To them God willed, to them, to whom? To the saints, the saints and faithful brethren, brothers, active family members. Every family, it's a truism that there are black sheep in some families who sort of depart and don't connect and don't interact and don't maintain fellowship and closeness and are just outside the fold, so to speak. They're a sheep and they belong in the fold and they belong with the flock, but they've gone their own way and they're out far away.

And this is a family notion. If you're an active, functional, interacting family member, you

give and receive family love, that's a saint. Faithful brethren, brothers, sisters, faithful, faith makes a difference.

Faith is a part of the function and the practice of life. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, among the Gentiles, among the nations, which is what? Christ in you, Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ, Jesus.

How important is context in understanding verse 28? If I just clipped this out and pasted it on a piece of cardboard and stuck it on a refrigerator somewhere, is Paul able to warn every man and teach every man in all wisdom? Every man? Is Paul gonna be able to present every man perfect in Jesus Christ? Of course not. Every man of what group? Saints, faithful brethren. Saints and faithful brethren, every one of us can be presented complete, mature, grown up, able to function as an adult, self-motivated, self-sustaining, independent as well as dependent, to be a blessing as well as being blessed.

The exercise of maturity. So Paul says, him we preach, does he say so that the lost will be saved? We preach Christ so that untold millions who are still untold and outside the fold, I will tell them of Jesus' love. This is, I'm quoting loosely a song that we learned at camp.

Untold millions are still untold. Untold millions are outside the fold. Who will tell them of Jesus' love and the heavenly mansions waiting above? That is the evangelistic mission.

And it's an important one. None of us would be believers if someone had not spoken the truth to us. And shared the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's a wonderful truth, but that's not what is spoken of here. Paul, the apostle is preaching Christ warning as well as teaching in all wisdom. Why is the word warning in there? Why isn't he just teaching and sharing love and it's all positive and upbeat? There is a warning because there is a judgment and everything is not acceptable.

All things may be lawful, but not all things are edifying. All things are lawful, but I will not be overcome or mastered by anything. It's not going to define me and take me over.

I'm not going to be drunk with wine where in is excess. I'm going to be filled with the spirit. I'm not going to cause a fellow believer to stumble.

Even if something that I approve is not sinful, it becomes sinful and it becomes not approved if it causes fellow believers in the one another realm to stumble, if it disrupts and disrespects a neighbor and isn't sensitive and considerate to a neighbor and what the effect might be on the neighbor. If it causes good to be spoken of as evil in the outside ring, the outermost realm of humanity observing us, all things are lawful, not all things are upbuilding. Some things are lawful, but they can overpower me and over

master me, Paul says.

So we preach warning every man and teaching every man in the saint and faithful brethren category where these warnings can be accepted and heeded, where this wisdom can be understood and applied. Warning and teaching every man in all wisdom in order that we may present every man perfect, complete, mature, telios in Christ Jesus. Notice every man in Christ Jesus.

This immediately excludes most of the people in the world and a lot of believers. To this end, I work, I labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily. How does God work in us to will and to do for his good pleasure? How does the power of God come into our lives? It is the spirit and the word.

Any believer who is not cultivating the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, not listening to his guidance, any believer who is not listening to and incorporating into thought and into memory the word of God so that the Holy Spirit has something with which to speak and to guide, doesn't enter into this sphere, is not going to be presented complete, mature, fully developed, fully functional in Christ Jesus. Every man is not in Christ Jesus to begin with. And so many believers are not going to ever reach a point of maturity.

Witness the end of Hebrews chapter five and the beginning of Hebrews chapter six. At such time as you ought to be a teacher, you have need that somebody teach you again the first principles. You have need of milk and not solid food because you're not mature.

You're not telios. You're not complete. Paul's goal is to push for maturity.

And he works and teaches. Look at chapter two, verse two. You and those in Laodicea, I think in chapter two, verse one, this is a reference to our book of Ephesians.

Those in Laodicea, as many as not see my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged. Think about this mystery doctrine we're looking at. These things that are exclusively imparted to Paul and transmitted to us.

We haven't seen his face in the flesh either, have we? So what should we get from the Pauline epistles? That our hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, attaining to all the riches of full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of what? The mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ. There are aspects of this mystery gospel that pertain to God as well as Christ. We're looking at these seven elements.

It's not hard. They are unique. They are straightforward.

What is Paul imparting here? He states it explicitly. These who have not seen my face in the flesh, as many as, that their hearts may be encouraged. When we come to these passages, we should be encouraged, not discouraged.

Here is wisdom. Here is guidance. Here is light on our path.

Here is enablement. The word of God in our soul that the Holy Spirit can use to lead us and to guide us and to invite the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ himself because we have these words and we treasure them. They are the words of Christ given to Paul.

These are not just Paul's made up gospel words. Jesus Christ gave them to Paul and Paul is giving them to us. So being encouraged in our hearts, being knit together in love.

Notice, this is one another category here. These truths of Paul, when we study them together, when we converse and spend time with other believers who are similarly invested and faithful and prioritize these truths, what does it do? It unites us. It knits us together in family love.

This isn't ubiquitous. It is not with everyone or for everyone. So who are the one and others? Well, is my heart knit together in love by these truths in and through the Spirit and the word? The power of God within us, the love of God within us knits us together with others who have those same attributes, those same qualities, those same soul presences.

The word, the Spirit and the love that comes from them knits us together with one another. Be cautious and think about the principles that apply to neighbors and to those who are outside because God cannot knit our heart together with darkness using His Spirit and His word. What fellowship has light with darkness? What concord has Christ with Belial and so on? So our hearts are knit together in love, attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding.

All of us have had wonderful conversations and fellowship with believers who share an enthusiasm. And when we learn something new and talk about it, it's an encouragement, it's an uplift, it puts wind in our sails. It gives us the joy of our salvation and peace and power and the mutuality of family love that is a blessing.

And the whole becomes more than the sum of the parts in that kind of fellowship. And everyone comes away blessed by God, appreciating God the Father, appreciating the Lord Jesus Christ, appreciating the Holy Spirit, and appreciating the wonderful blessings and privileges and opportunities bestowed on us in fellowship with like-minded believers, our hearts are knit together in love. And we have assurance, we have confidence.

We're on the right track. We are connected to God through Christ and connected to one another. Full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Remember earlier when Paul said, I am warning in verse 28, warning and teaching. Here comes some more of that warning in verse four of chapter two. I say this lest anyone

should deceive you with persuasive words.

So many persuasive words in the mainstream, modern, postmodern, progressive, visible church today. Persuasive. Many will come in my name saying, I am he.

Jesus says, watch out. Just because they recognize that there is a Jesus Christ, watch out. Many will come and they'll get their foot in the door coming in my name and saying, I am he.

And they will deceive many. Paul says, I'm absent in the flesh, but I'm with you in spirit. That's us, that's now.

The ministry of the apostle Paul goes on. I rejoice to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. The fact that you are here this morning appreciating the word of God, the steadfastness of your faith, your valuing of fellowship with other believers, your investment of time and energy, setting aside other things that you could be doing or that pull, the pull of responsibilities and tasks and sometimes just the need for rest.

But the steadfastness of faith is recognizing the priorities. It is essential that we refresh our understanding of the word of God on a regular basis, that we refresh ourselves at the oasis, cultivate the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and share that experience, forsaking not the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is. So Paul says, my spirit rejoices.

The spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, God the Father himself rejoices to see good order and the steadfastness of our faith in Christ. As you therefore receive Jesus Christ, the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith. As you have been taught, it's the word of God that energizes and makes these things happen.

As you have been taught, abounding in it with thankfulness. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ. To the extent that Christianity begins to resemble the priorities of the world with its ideas of goodness, with its indiscriminate application of vague moralities and changing values, well, somebody shouldn't feel bad about themselves.

And so morality and goodness is to try to prevent anyone from feeling bad about themselves, whatever their choices, whatever their misunderstandings, whatever their cast of mind may be, I don't want them to feel bad about themselves because that's just wrong. That's a tradition of men, that's a value of the world. And not according to Christ.

Did Jesus Christ never make anyone feel bad about themselves? Did John the Baptist endeavor to never make anyone feel, remember after John the Baptist got finished

preaching, men were pounding their chest and saying, what should we then do? How should we change? In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In him dwells the fullness. When Christ is formed in us, the fullness of God comes to us.

We are not image of God by default. There's not a divine spark and presence and echo in us. We're all as an unclean thing.

Our righteousnesses are filthy rags. We fade as a leaf. Our iniquities carry us away with the wind.

How is that anything like God? Look at the litany of characteristics that Paul gives in Romans chapter one and elsewhere, unthankful, unholy, ungodly, self-indulgent, self-gratifying, perverse, harmful to others. There's no image of God there. This is a fantasy.

It's a principle of the world and not according to Christ. Jesus Christ never once addressed the crowd and said, you all have the image of God. Not once, never appeals to it.

So, and you can go on as in Ephesians, you can go on in Colossians endlessly. It's such a wonderful book. It bears reading over and over again.

But this is the mystery. Verse two, again, knit together in love, attaining to the riches of full assurance of understanding. And that understanding is the knowledge of the mystery of God, both the father and of Christ.

That defines us, that fills us, that gives our lives meaning and purpose and definition. So this is the value of the indwelling of Jesus Christ. It is previously unrevealed, previously undisclosed, previously unavailable.

Not until the ascension of Christ into heaven was the indwelling of Jesus Christ available. Second Thessalonians 2.13. And with this, we will close, flip over just a few pages to Second Thessalonians chapter two, verse 13. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord.

God loves the world, but there are those brethren who are beloved. This is a different level, a different quality, a different kind of love that has a different level of expression. We're bound to give thanks for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth.

If you need a verse for the power of God coming into the life of the believer, how do you get sanctification? S-A-I-N-T, sanctification. Sanctification makes us a saint. They're from the same Greek root.

Sanctified ones are saints. How are we sanctified? How do we become saints? Not by

simple affirmation of Jesus Christ as Savior, but we are delivered not just from death and from destruction in the lake of fire, but we are delivered in this present evil age. We are made saints through the spirit and faith in the truth, ongoing faith, practicing faith, to which he called you by our gospel, not the gospel, our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the obtaining. Don't already have it. You obtain it through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the teachings which you were taught. Traditions here is just teachings. The teachings which you were taught.

How close is this to what we just saw in Colossians? And with that, what we saw in Ephesians? Paul says, I teach, I warn, I preach. It is the wisdom that brings these things about because the wisdom becomes the object of faith and the merit of faith is in the object. What do we trust? What's our go-to for guidance, our go-to for stability and strength, our go-to when things are hard, when it is difficult to exercise self-control, when it is difficult to rein in our emotions and do what is right and not what feels good.

Stand fast, hold the teachings which you were taught, whether by word or epistle. Paul says in Colossians, those who haven't even seen my face, I write them an epistle. That's the Laodiceans, that's Ephesians.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and our God and Father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. Backwards, turn backward to Galatians chapter four and verse 19. All of this work, all of this effort, all of this communication, what is it for? 419 of Galatians, my little children for whom I labor in birth, birth pangs, until Christ is formed in you.

Paul says, I work and I labor to this end. Christ formed in you, right in the middle of addressing those who think that there is spirituality by works, by satisfying the external requirements of the law. It is Christ formed in you.

That is the hope of glory. Well, plenty to chew on here on the second aspect of the mystery gospel of Jesus Christ revealed to us by the apostle Paul, not face to face, but through his letters, warning and teaching us so that he can present every man mature, complete, fruitful, abiding in the vine and bearing much fruit. What an opportunity we have.

What a great age to live in, to have the unrestricted access to God's word and God's Holy Spirit and to be those who are presented by Paul. I have a feeling Jesus said that if you confess me before men, I will confess you before my father. What is it to confess Christ? It is to live as he lived, to love as he loved, to discern as he discerned, to weep tears over

those who are unrepentant and uninterested, but Jesus did not compromise the father's will or the father's command.

He wept over Jerusalem, but he didn't go take them by force. He didn't try to drag them against their will into a kingdom that they weren't ready for and weren't interested in. It caused him to weep, but he wasn't ruled by his emotions.

He was ruled by doing the will of the father. And that is our example. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the example of the Lord Jesus. Thank you for the commission that he extended to the apostle Paul, who through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and through the revelation of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, imparts to us the mysteries concerning yourself and concerning the Lord Jesus, our place in him, his role as head of all things to us as the church, his body. We pray that as we reflect on these truths, the Holy Spirit will illuminate our path and our attitudes and decisions when it comes to our interactions with other people, that we can endeavor to be at peace with everyone, that we will have the power to be respectful even when others are disrespectful to us, and that we can love one another with the love of Christ, the transcendent love and the powerful love that is imparted to us through your word and through your spirit.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.