

97-09-27b

Okay, we're back now from our break and we are in a very wonderful place. We are in the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 2. On this single continent that existed as a result of God's actions during creation week, the cultivated plants are not yet cultivated because there is no man to till the soil. Their growth and being husbanded and cultivated as crops is not taking place.

They don't necessarily get the right amount of water to optimize their growth as crop type vegetation because there is no rain and there's no man to till the ground. But a spring, and really spring is a better translation than mist, went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground and we'll see one of the reasons for that here shortly. But in Genesis chapter 2 verse 7, the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being, a living nephesh, living soul.

Now a lot has been read into this verse and in some cases we should understand these. We have an up close, you know how they do in the movies where you're panning around and you have a broad view of things and then they move in for a close up. But we had a broad view of creation week in Genesis chapter 1. Now we've come back to day 6 and we have a close up and we see the Lord God fashioning man, forming him.

We talked a week before last about this verb being the verb that is used for a potter, shaping a vessel on a wheel. And it has the implication of intimate personal involvement and contact with that which is being made. He is shaping it.

This verb in its participle form is the word for potter. He forms man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Now God makes a lot of things out of the dust of the ground.

To anticipate a little bit, turn to verse 19 of chapter 2. Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air. Scientists, anthropologists and so forth have observed that our physical body is very similar to animal life. What I think was a rather unfortunate production from Disney recently was The Circle of Life.

The Lion King movie stresses man's role as one of the animals and so forth in its parabolic application with the Lion King. And even going way back to the 50s and 60s, Disney had a song that's on one of the girls' videos that says you are a human animal and talks about how your body is similar to the animals and so forth. Well, that's a legitimate observation.

We are not unique. Adam was not unique in being formed out of the dust of the ground. Our biological existence is very similar to the animals.

They were created out of the dust of the ground just like Adam was. But what is not said about animal life, what is unique to us is, first of all, what we saw in chapter 1, that we are created in God's image and after his likeness. And secondly, having the breath of life breathed into the nostrils.

And once again, this is significant. It speaks of a special connection with God, a special relationship with God that is enjoyed by Adam and therefore, ideally, by all of mankind. And man became a living nephesh.

There is nothing unique or special about this. Nephesh is a common word that is used of animal life as well as human life. You can read and the author talked about the breath of lives, that life here is in the plural, and man becoming a little discussion of his man, dichotomous or trichotomous, meaning does he have two parts, a body and a spiritual element or does he have three, a body, a soul and a spirit.

And then when man fell, the spirit died and he became dichotomous and only had a body and a soul. Well, we will address these things as they come up in the Scripture. But right now, is the Bible making a point out of that? Does the Bible say or distinguish between soul and spirit? It doesn't.

Does the Bible distinguish between man's physical life and the animal's physical life? It doesn't. And so this isn't a place that we are encouraged to spend our time in meditation and reflection. What should we be meditating and reflecting on here? Well, just like a good movie does, when there is something of importance, you may start out by panning around and showing the context and then you zoom in for a close-up.

That's what the Biblical account has done here. It has given us the context of creation, culminating in the creation of man and woman and now we have zoomed in for a close-up. And it is God's final and culminating action in creation to make man in his image after his likeness, to shape him by hand out of the dust of the ground and to breathe personally into his nostrils the breath of life.

It reminds us that we as human beings are special to God. Every human being is just as important to God as Adam was. Our method of entering the world physically is different.

We are a result of the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. We were not personally shaped by God out of the dust of the ground, but our great great grandfather was. And we are just as precious in God's sight.

We have a responsibility to take care of ourselves, to be good stewards of our physical body as well as our immaterial self. We need to be sure that our physical body is nourished and well cared for and well maintained. We also need to be sure that our spiritual self is cared for and nourished and well maintained.

And that is implied here in the breath of life. That this is a life that comes from God. This

is life that partakes of the divine, which we have studied in the New Testament under the term eternal life.

We often tend to think of eternal life in terms of its duration. We think, well, I believe in Jesus Christ. I'm saved and now I have eternal life.

I will never die. I will never perish. I won't go to the lake of fire.

But the Bible consistently emphasizes in the idea of life, not its duration, but its quality. And the quality of life that comes from God partakes of God, partakes of His eternity, partakes of His infinity, partakes of the joy and the fullness that are a part of God's character. And that's something that God has imparted to us.

It's part of what it means to be in His image and after His likeness, is to enjoy the fullness and the perfection that characterize God. What is it that is going to be lost? We all know what's going to happen here in the garden when a couple of bites are taken out of fruit. Well, we're going to find that out as we go forward.

But keep in mind the idea of the quality of life that God imparts to man as it is described here. Because it is that life which is going to be lost in the day that thou eatest thereof. Man became a living being.

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden. And there He put the man whom He had formed. Now the English here is a little confused in terms of tenses.

And the Hebrew can be translated either way. These can be translated as perfects. In other words, the Lord God had planted a garden.

We don't have a clear determination, did God plant the garden and then form man? Did God form man and then plant the garden? It is not important or it would be spelled out more clearly. What we are to understand is that not only did God create man, not only did He create a perfect planet with perfect environment and a perfect relationship between plants and animals and an ecological balance, if you will, with water and light and all the necessary elements, but for man God created a unique and special spot on the planet that is different and distinct from all of the other parts of the continent. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden.

And this also speaks of God's personal involvement when it uses the word planted. It doesn't say that He spoke it into existence. It doesn't record God saying, let there be a garden.

This would be a more impersonal idea. But here, signified by the introduction of God's personal name into the account, we have had Elohim all the way up until chapter 2. And now we have Yahweh Elohim, the Lord God. Yahweh is God's personal name.

It is His familiar name, the name by which He is addressed in terms of intimacy and personal knowledge. And the whole emphasis of this section of Genesis is to talk about the person of God, His personality, His immediacy, His involvement with man, His close personal relationship with man. And everything speaks of that.

The verbs here, the name of God that is used here. The term Lord God, Jehovah Elohim, is fairly rare in the Old Testament when you consider the number of times God is referred to. In the Pentateuch, in the five books of Moses, that name for God is only used in Genesis chapter 2 and Genesis chapter 3, and one place in Exodus, when Moses is talking with Pharaoh and making it clear that it is the Lord God who is delivering Israel from His clutches.

But that first section of Exodus is the only place outside of Genesis 2 and 3 in the five books of Moses where God is referred to as Yahweh Elohim. So the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden. He planted it.

We get the picture here that He personally arranged the trees and the flowers. You know how people do when you get these home and garden magazines and people do landscaping. I've seen this on PBS where they have a lady out in California walking around a place that she landscaped and she explains why she planted tall bushes here and short shrubs here and how they draw your eye toward the attractive features of the property.

They make a mound where there didn't used to be a mound and they dig a little creek where there didn't used to be a creek so they can put in a little Japanese footbridge or whatever. But it involves personal taste and personal planning and personal involvement to landscape and to plant and to design something like this. And this is what the Lord God did for man with Adam in mind, actually with Adam and Eve in mind, God designs and personally plants this beautiful garden.

He arranges the flowers with their colors and the trees with their fruit and so forth. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Not all trees are pleasant to the sight.

If you've ever seen scrub oak, especially if it's growing on your property, it's not an attractive tree. I don't think yucca plants are especially attractive. There are certain plants that are not appealing to the eye.

But the trees that are pleasant to the sight and good for food, these are the ones that God picked and maybe picked is a bad term as far as plants go, that he selected and planted in the garden. Pleasant to the sight and good for food. He has man's pleasure and man's capacity for appreciation in mind when he plants this.

The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good

and evil. This is an interesting and sometimes overlooked detail. Where is the tree of life? Physically, where is it with respect to the borders of the garden which is planted in Eden? It's dead center.

It's right in the middle. And right next to it, also in the middle of the garden, is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two trees grow side by side.

It's a terrific picture of choice. The tree of life is in the middle of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What does it mean to have knowledge of good and evil? The account does not explain.

It doesn't go into detail. What exactly is good? What exactly is evil? It's the first time this word has occurred in the Bible, the word evil. What does it mean? Well, it's not important for us to understand that right now.

What is important is to understand God's intimate personal involvement in creating the environment for man, a perfect, nourishing, pleasant environment. Verse 10 gives us an expansion of what we saw in verse 6. Now, a river went out of Eden. Eden and the garden, by the way, are not synonymous.

Look at verse 8 again. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden. It's the only place in the Bible where this particular phrase occurs.

Usually it is called the Garden of Eden or simply Eden, but Eden is the larger region of the continent. It's an area on this land mass and the eastern portion of it is where God plants this special garden. So the garden is in Eden.

It is not all of Eden. Now, a river went out of Eden to water the garden and from there it parted and became four riverheads. Now, how is the earth watered in these days? A spring comes up out of the ground and waters the whole face of the ground.

So this spring has its source in the general area called Eden and the river that springs from this spring flows through the garden and waters it. And from there, after it leaves the garden, it parts and becomes four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon.

It is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah where there is gold and the gold of that land is good. Delium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon.

It is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel. It is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria.

The fourth river is the Euphrates. Now, with this information, we would think that by consulting a map we could locate the original location of the Garden of Eden. Well, as we were talking about during the break, something happened between Adam's day and our

day that has radically altered the earth and that's the flood.

This single land mass is fractured during the flood, as we will see when we reach that portion of Genesis, and the earth is going to be divided and is going to be radically altered. The whole earth is going to be flooded for nearly 14 months. And when Noah emerges from the ark, it is to a foreign and radically different landscape.

Today's modern Euphrates River does not flow where the original Euphrates River flowed. And the Hiddekel, which is the Tigris, is not the original Tigris River. And nobody has any idea what the Pishon and Gihon Rivers originally were.

Now, Gihon in Hebrew means gusher, and Pishon means spouter. So you get the idea that these were like the beer commercials, you know, the rivers up in the mountains with this natural, beautiful water gushing and flowing. They speak of prosperity and abundance.

They're gushing and flowing freshwater rivers that branch out from this one great river that emerges from the spring in Eden. And that great river waters the garden, and after it leaves the garden, it parts into these four great rivers. If you consult a map today, you will see that the Tigris and Euphrates merge a little bit north and west of the Persian Gulf, and there aren't any other two rivers that meet there.

There's been a lot of speculation that, well, the Garden of Eden must have been in the upper regions of Mesopotamia or maybe even up in Armenia, in which case you might have some of the other rivers. Maybe it was in India, maybe the Indus River or the various other rivers, large rivers in the area of the Nile might have been one of them. Well, there's no way of knowing because we don't have a landscape like they had back then.

The Tigris and Euphrates of today were some of the first rivers that were, if you emerge out of the Ararat and start traveling south, one of the first rivers you're going to hit. And they said, well, this must be the Euphrates. That's what they called it, but that's not the original.

Eden is long gone. How do we know that? Well, we'll review this again when we get to the flood, but you might just take a note of Ezekiel 31.18. There's some fascinating references to Eden in the Bible, and this is one of them. Ezekiel 31.18. This is a pronouncement of woe on Pharaoh and the king of Tyre.

You're familiar with Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 as we see in these reference to Satan, Lucifer, in the woe songs that are sung to the king of Tyre. Well, this is another. There's a fascinating study that one can do just on these songs of woe, these pronouncements of judgment on the various kings in Ezekiel, but this is one to Pharaoh.

In Ezekiel 31.2. Son of man, say to Pharaoh, king of Egypt and to his multitude, whom

are you like in your greatness? Indeed, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon with fine branches that shaded the forest and of high stature, and its top was among the thick boughs. The water made it grow. Underground waters gave it height with their rivers running around the place where it was planted and sent out rivulets to all the trees of the field.

Kind of reminds you of the description in Genesis, doesn't it? This underground river that emerges and then breaks into various rivers that part to water the whole ground. Therefore, its height was exalted above all the trees of the field. There's that word field again.

Its boughs were multiplied and its branches became long because of the abundance of water and it sent them out. All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs. This is another fruitful place to return when you see Jesus talking about the parable of the mustard seed, which we'll get to one of these Friday nights.

Why does Jesus say, there's been a lot of debate, that a mustard seed does not produce a tree, it only produces a bush and it's not large enough for birds to build nests in. Why did Jesus say what he said? It's not even scientifically the smallest of all seeds and Jesus says it is. Well, we'll cross that branch when we get to it.

Under its branches, all the beasts of the field brought forth their young and in its shadows, all great nations made their home. Thus it was beautiful in greatness and in the length of its branches because its roots reached to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it.

The fir trees were not like its boughs and the chestnut trees were not like its branches. No tree in the garden of God was like it in its beauty. I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches so that all the trees of Eden envied it, that were in the garden of God.

Therefore thus says the Lord God, because you have increased in height and it set its top among the thick boughs and its heart was lifted up in its height, therefore I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one of the nations and he shall surely deal with it. I have driven it out for its wickedness. And we get a chance to do a detailed study here one of these days.

You'll see that this is another chapter like Isaiah 14 and like Ezekiel 28 from which we can learn things about prehistory and the fall of Satan and the comparisons that are made and the allusions that are made in these passages, not only to these great kings of the earth but to their father and their archetype, Satan himself. But it's an interesting reference to the garden of God planted in Eden, to the rivers that flow there, to the abundance and the proliferation of these trees and this one great tree that lifts its heads above all of the other trees and then will be cut down. In verse 11, I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one of the nations, he shall surely deal with it, I have driven it out for

its wickedness.

And aliens, the most terrible of the nations, have cut it down and left it. Its branches have fallen on the mountains and in all the valleys. Its boughs lie broken by all the rivers of the land and all the peoples of the earth have gone from under its shadow and left it.

On its ruin will remain all the birds of heavens and all the beasts of the field will come to its branches so that no trees by the waters may ever again exalt themselves for their height, nor set their tops among the thick boughs, that no tree which drinks water may ever be high enough to reach up to them. For they have all been delivered to death to the depths of the earth among the children of men who go down to the pit. Thus says the Lord God in the days when it went down to Sheol, I caused mourning, I covered the deep because of it, I restrained its rivers and the great waters were held back.

I caused Lebanon to mourn for it and all the trees of the field wilted because of it. I made the nations shake at the sound of its fall when I cast it down to Sheol together with those who descend into the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water were, it says here, comforted in the depths of the earth.

But it has the idea that they were put to rest, they were, they ceased to exist in the depths of the earth. They also went down to Sheol with it, with those slain by the sword and those who were its strong arm dwelt in its shadows among the nations. To which of the trees in Eden will you then be likened in glory and greatness? Yet you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the depths of the earth.

You shall lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with those slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord God. So we have here a reference to the destruction of Eden, to the pulling down of all of these beautiful trees and their descent into the pit, as it were.

Now, this is a poetic passage, but it does remind us that Eden is gone and the garden that God planted is no more. Now, the word Eden or Aden in Hebrew is also the word that means pleasure. Occasionally, if you do a concordance study, you will find that it is a word that actually should be translated pleasure, like a garden of pleasure or a garden of delight or a place of delight.

When the Greeks got around to translating the Old Testament for the Septuagint, they used the word *paradesos* to translate Eden. This is where our word *paradise* comes from. You have Paul over in 2 Corinthians 12, when Paul talks about being caught up to the third heaven, being caught up to paradise, and hearing things that could not be uttered.

It's an interesting reference because *paradise* is the Greek word used in his copy of Genesis chapter 2, a garden in paradise that God planted. You might also make note here while we're looking at the physical characteristics of the garden of Genesis chapter

22. The existence of man begins in the garden that God plants in Eden.

It has the tree of life. It has a river which flows and waters it and produces abundance. After the heavens and earth are rolled up like a scroll and vanish away and there is a new heavens and a new earth where there is no night and no more sea, what will our environment be like? Well, you have the new Jerusalem described in Revelation chapter 21 with its 12 gates.

Verse 22 of Revelation 21, there's no temple for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it for the glory of God illuminates it, just as you had in the first few days of creation. The Lamb is its light.

The nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor into it. That's why the city has gates. Even in the kingdom of the Father, even in the future kingdom that comes after the millennial kingdom, the city has gates that people enter and exit through.

And there are people who are outside the gates. And the kings of the earth bring their glory through those 12 gates, three on each side, into the city. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day, there shall be no night there, and they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. Chapter 22, He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. I find this interesting because the source of the river of life is the throne of God.

We often hear and talk about going to heaven when we die and so forth. Heaven is the dwelling place of God. And we don't dwell in the dwelling place of God any more than Adam dwelt at the source of the river in Eden.

The spring was not in the garden. The spring produced a river which flowed through the garden, but the spring itself was outside. And God dwelling in the third heaven isn't going to take on borders.

We're not going to room with God in the third heaven. God prepares a place for us. That's what Jesus Christ is engaged in at this very moment, is preparing a place for us so that he can come again and receive us to himself.

So we have to be a little careful in talking about I'm going to heaven when I die. We will live in the millennial kingdom on earth. We will live in the new earth, in the new Jerusalem, hopefully in the city there and have access to the trees and the river and so forth.

But this is not heaven. Heaven is God's dwelling place. And the river of water flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the middle of its street and on either side of the river was the tree of life. Notice down the street from the source of the river, down the street from the throne of God, beside the river you have the tree of life growing, which bears twelve fruits, each yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Isn't it interesting that in the new earth healing is still needed? And there apparently are still things that can cause abomination because they're not allowed to enter the gates of the city if they do so. There shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and his servants shall serve him. They shall see his face and his name shall be on their foreheads.

There shall be no night there. They need no lamp nor light of the sun for the Lord God gives them light and they shall reign forever and ever. But you have many of the same elements that you see in the garden and in Eden.

You have the source of a crystal clear river that flows and provides in abundance. You have the tree of life at its center. There is no tree of knowledge of good and evil there.

And it's even better than the way we began because there's no night. There's not the anticipation of the possibility of failure as you have it in the garden. There was a rather bad song, at least bad to me, that cropped up in the late 60s, early 70s.

Crosby, Stills and Nash wrote a song right after Woodstock or maybe before Woodstock. I think that's the name of the song. The chorus of the song says that we are stardust, we are golden.

And it says something I can never understand about the devil's pardon. And then it says we've got to get ourselves back to the garden. And the whole idea is that the euphoria that surrounded Woodstock where everyone gathered and there's elsewhere in the song it talks about the war planes flying over and as they drop their bombs, the bombs turn into butterflies and reminds you of when they used to stick daisies in the ends of the M-16s and the whole peace movement.

But man often thinks that he's going to get himself back to the garden, back to the place of prosperity and peace and no conflict and no sin. Well, it's never going to happen. You can have all the Woodstocks you want and you're just going to have perversion and degeneracy.

God will bring us back to the garden and to something that transcends the garden in the kingdom that is to come, both the kingdom of the Son and the kingdom of the Father which follows it. And that's the description, a very brief and we see it through a glass darkly even here in Revelation 22. Their mind has not conceived, neither has his ear

heard or has entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for us in that future day.

But there are several references to Eden which you might want to make note of. In Isaiah 51.3 and in Ezekiel 36.35, both of these are similar in that they talk about how desolate Israel has been because of discipline and because of sin and disobedience. For example, Ezekiel 31.35, they will say the land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden.

It is a synonym for everything that is beautiful and abundant and perfect. You might also notice that when it says that the king of Tyre was in the garden of God in Ezekiel 28.13 in that passage similar to the one we just read. It is one of the things that lets us know that that is referring not only to the king of Tyre but in an ultimate sense to Satan himself being in the garden of God and walking among the stones of fire and so forth.

There is also a reference in Ezekiel 31.9 which we just read in the reference to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Also in Joel 2.3, in all of these passages it is presented as the ideal or the ultimate. Joel 2.3, this is talking about the plague of locusts.

If you have ever studied Joel, there is nothing more graphic than the picture of impending judgment that is pictured in this plague of locusts. If you have ever read the Little House on the Prairie books, we recently finished the one where they are living on the banks of Plum Creek and they have moved up to Wisconsin where Plum Creek was. They have all these high hopes.

It is a beautiful land and well watered. They are right there by the creek and so on. Their father, Mr. Ingalls goes out there and plants all these great crops and they have a freakish invasion of locusts.

If you ever want to have a good description of what Joel is talking about in chapter 2, get that book by Laura Ingalls Wilder called On the Banks of Plum Creek and go about in the middle of it and read her eyewitness account of what an invasion of locusts is like. It is mind boggling what they can do and the destruction that they can wreak and what their behavior is. Once you start reading that, you just have to keep reading all those chapters.

You can't put it down. That's what Joel is talking about here. The fire devours before them and behind them a flame burns.

The land is like the garden of Eden before them and behind them a desolate wilderness. It is as abundant as you can imagine in front and it is desolate behind. That's how thorough and complete is the destruction that they wreak.

So Eden is a theme that will recur and be a basis for illustration and comparison throughout the Bible and we have seen it here in all of its original beauty. Well watered,

personally designed by God to be a place of blessing. In verse 15 of Genesis 2, the Lord God, once again, Yahweh Elohim, took the man and put him in the garden to tend and keep it.

It requires husbandry. It requires care to regulate the watering and regulate the planting and to bring crop type plants to their ultimate fruitfulness. There is some form of weeding or cultivation, organizing the plants into different areas so that they don't interfere and choke one another.

This is the man's function. The Lord God commanded the man saying of every tree of the garden you may freely eat. Notice that word every and freely because they are going to be lacking when somebody quotes God a little bit later on.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. And this is the first shadow that we find cast in the perfect creation of God, the first possibility of problems. In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Everything that God has said up to this point is good, is a blessing, is a fruitful command. Everything has been productive and positive but now there is a warning and now there is the possibility of judgment. And what does it depend on? It depends on a choice.

God leaves it up to man to make a choice. It would have been very simple if God just hadn't planted that one particular tree in the middle of the garden. But this is an exceedingly important point and one that we will develop next week in more detail.

But you cannot diminish the role of human choice in the plan of God. It is at the inception of man's existence. God puts a tree that requires choice right in the middle of the garden, right next to the tree of life.

He doesn't put it on the edge and say, well if you get over to the edge of the garden and you're leaving my will, here's the tree. Or maybe it's a tree outside, maybe you have to leave the garden to go eat of the knowledge of good and evil. God puts it in the very center.

God makes an issue of choice. God makes an issue of responsibility for what we choose. And we should not embrace any theology or any philosophy or any system of justice or any other way of thinking that diminishes personal responsibility for one's own choices because God makes an issue of it.

It's the first issue and the most important issue that God makes in the existence of man. There's the possibility of choosing wrong and it carries a penalty. Well, while we have Adam in the undisturbed beauty of the garden, we will pause and leave him there for a week.

And when we return next week, we will see God's final and greatest act of creation in detail and see what that means for us now. Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you for the truth that you have so richly blessed us with in your word.

We thank you for the ministry of the Spirit that enables us, even as fallen and imperfect human beings, to begin to grasp something of your person and something of your plan. We pray that these things will remain with us and will be a fruitful area of reflection and meditation for us in the coming days. We pray that as a result we will have a balanced perspective and see ourselves as you see us from the divine viewpoint, that we will keep our lives and our tasks in perspective and recognize that our first and fundamental responsibility is to fulfill our calling and the purpose that you have for us.

We pray that as a result our lives will reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and that we will become more conformed to his image and thought and deed as each day goes by. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.