

Matthew 22-11-06b

Let's take another look here at 1 Corinthians chapter 10. We have seen that the context here established by the Apostle Paul is the effect of our actions, our words, our conduct on others, our sensitivity to their conscience. And inevitably, if you think about this for a minute, it requires some discernment.

It requires making what we would call a judgment. We are not to judge, judge not lest you be judged. But Paul says, if someone who is a pistos invites you to a meal and this issue arises, so you have to have discerned some general idea of what the status of their faith is.

You have to be able to tell, well, is this a pistos person or an a pistos person? And we can evaluate, we can discern without judging. And you know that judging is when you inflict some sort of personal penalty on someone because you feel that they're in the wrong. You want to make them pay in some way instead of leaving that to God and his justice.

So we left off in verse 29. Why is my liberty judged by another one's conscience? There is an answer to this question because our liberty is dependent on its effect on someone else's conscience. So let's answer that question.

Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? Because of the law of love, because of Philippians chapter two, because this is what we are called to. And he states it very clearly in verse 24. So in verse 30, if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for that over which I gave thanks? I know that everything is good for food if it is sanctified and taken with thanks, sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Didn't God show Peter three times in a row what God has sanctified, let no man call common. And of course that itself is a metaphor talking about God's inclusion of the Gentiles. He is no longer going to distinguish the people of God by whether they are in Israel or whether they are Gentiles who need to come to Israel to be a part of the people of God.

Now, anyone, regardless of nationality is people of God by faith. But God still distinguishes those who are of faith and those who are not. And he can express his love toward people of faith in ways that he cannot express it toward those who are faith less, without faith.

And God's behavior is different depending on what God discerns about our faith. God cannot give us a more advanced test. God cannot give us greater responsibility and opportunity.

God cannot give us more power and authority and effectiveness when we are faith less. God has to discern our level of faith to determine how he is going to treat us and what

he is going to put before us. And God will not put a stumbling block in front of the faithless.

He has other ways of dealing with us when we lack faith. In the same way, we have to be discerning and careful around believers that in our perception, in our understanding are weaker in the faith, lack faith that might be needed to properly navigate a particular situation. And that sensitivity is love and it requires humility.

It requires looking out for their interest ahead of our own and to do it willingly with a contrite spirit. The Lord Jesus humbled himself on my behalf. I can give up something for someone else's good.

So why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? I won't create that occasion where, well, he brought a whiskey sour to eat with his dinner. He's drinking, and not just drinking, and he's drinking hard liquor. Without making a judgment about whether hard liquor ought to be in the home of a believer or not, you can imagine that someone that's got a sensitivity about alcohol in the life of a Christian is going to absolutely get traumatized if you drag out some Jack Daniels or some other bottle of rum or whatever and start imbibing in their presence.

Or if you invite them over to your house and you've got an entire shelf full of various flavors, kinds, and descriptions of hard alcohol in your house. It's one thing, you can make a case for or against wine just depending on how you view things, but it gets tougher when you look at hard liquor. And that can be a stumbling block for a lot of people, for a lot of reasons.

And so if you invite someone over and they walk in and here you've got a fully stocked bar with 27 different kinds of hard alcohol, you could cause someone to stumble. Get some doors for that cabinet. If you think that's okay to do, don't make an issue that is going to cause another believer's conscience to go into judging mode, traumatize them, trip them, cause them to stumble, scandalize them.

I think that's pretty clear. But this cuts a lot of ways beyond actual food and drink. You can have political opinions.

Maybe it's not a good idea to bring up abortion around some of your family members where you know it is going to create division, potentially hostility, bad feeling, and it is going to obscure the opportunity for that a pious person to see the hope that is in you on the positive side. Why create an issue out of politics or culture or even your understanding of morality on a particular question instead of leaving that aside, avoiding bringing that up as a point of contention and let the hope that is in us be the issue. Not the self-righteousness, not the moral questions that we've answered from our understanding of the word, but our hope.

Our hope and our love ought to be the issue. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you get these social and moral questions correct. That's not the verse, is it? People will know we are the Lord's disciples by our love.

Love suffers long. Love is patient. Love is kind.

Paul is going to get to that a couple of chapters hence here, isn't he? In chapter 13. So why? There are answers to these questions. Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? Because I am governed by the law of love and I should not put someone in a position to judge my liberty.

I can avoid making that an issue and a point of contention and a point of conflict. If I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for that over which I gave thanks? I have acknowledged God as the source, the author, the provider. I am thankful for it.

Why am I judged? I'll tell you why you're judged, because you made an issue out of something that should not have made an issue of. It shouldn't. We should never do things, if it's in our power to avoid it, that cause people to speak evil of that which is good.

Do not let your good be spoken of as evil. You have this in a number of cases. The food over which I give thanks.

You think about Romans 14, verse six. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord. He who does not observe the day to the Lord, he does not observe it.

He who eats, eats to the Lord. For he gives God thanks. Notice the thanksgiving element here over and over again.

All things are good for food if they are taken with thanksgiving, because what does thanksgiving do? It is an expression of humility, which is an expression of love for God, the provider. It is an acknowledgement that I wouldn't have this if God had not provided it. God resists the proud.

God gives grace to the humble. And thanksgiving acknowledges God as the source, the creator, the provider, the sustainer. So 14, six of Romans.

He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks. And he who does not eat to the Lord, he does not eat and gives God thanks. The meal is not the issue.

What is on the plate is not the issue. God is the issue. Attitude toward God, respect for God, thanksgiving to God and the conscience of others.

Do you see the echo of love here? Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Love your neighbor as yourself. And when it comes to anything whatsoever you do, in word or in deed, do all to the glory of God.

And that glory is reflected and expressed and is perceived by those around us. I don't want them to be judging me. I don't want them to be speaking evil of me.

I want them to be wondering at the God of grace who has saved me and who loves me and who I love in return. So important to get this context. And this is especially important when you get to chapter 11, because chapter 11 is gonna specifically address the Lord's table.

It has been mentioned up here. Can you partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons in verse 21 of chapter 10? He's gonna return to this more forcefully in chapter 11, but look at what's in between. You feel like we've got a pretty good grip on what Paul is saying here in chapter 10, is it ought to kind of be clear and make sense at this point, right? That we're really talking about the influence and the effect, the witness, if you will, that we have to those who are not at the faith level that we perceive ourselves to be.

So you get to chapter 11 and Paul says, imitate me just as I also Christ. This is a pretty bold thing to say. I'm imitating Christ.

So if you imitate me, you're imitating Christ. This is a very interesting statement. I wish I had time to explore it.

I just want to suggest to you for reflection. When Jesus says, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father, great hay has been made of this. It's in John 14.

Jesus talking to Philip and to Thomas. Why are you asking me, show us the Father? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. What does Paul say here? If you've seen me, you've seen Christ.

Wow. If you've seen me, imitate me. Wouldn't it be great if as a parent, you can say this, as a family member, as a friend with adults in the periphery, when you see me, what I say and what I do, this is the actual WWJD in action.

That's a standard to measure ourselves by. The love that the Lord Jesus had in His interaction with others is the love that we should have in our interaction with others. And wouldn't it be great if the level of our love and sensitivity to the conscience of others, there is a time to call out evil, and Jesus demonstrates this.

But you will notice He never does it to an individual. He does it talking about a class of behavior or a category of individuals, a group of Pharisees. Do you ever see Jesus delivering a rant on Caiaphas? Do you see Him delivering a rant on Herod? He doesn't.

He talks about self-righteousness. He talks about religion. He talks about scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites as a group and as a class, but He doesn't call out individuals.

He doesn't make an issue of the individual. Even Judas in the upper room, Jesus doesn't

make an example of Him before or after the crucifixion. Jesus does not make an issue out of Judas.

The disciples keep pestering Him, "'Lord, is it I?'" "Who is it, Lord?" And He will finally reveal Judas' identity only to Peter and John. But it is at the point where they can do nothing to tackle Him and stop Him. So we answer this question, why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? Because Christ humbled Himself and became obedient.

And He is my example. The apostle Paul was self-sacrificial. This is why he can say, "'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

"'I have endured that long list of insults and hardships.'" Why? Out of care and concern for believers in the churches and His desire to be all things to all men so that He might by all means be the means of their deliverance. So, imitate me as I do Christ. Now, I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

Not all traditions are bad. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ. The head of woman is man and the head of Christ is God.

What? Is he just completely taking a left turn here from what he was talking about? Not at all. This is not a new subject. This isn't a fresh question that is being answered.

There is no chapter division in Paul's original letter. There's not a big chapter 11 and a verse one and a big I on imitate like there is in our Bible. He says, "'I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved.'" Verse 33.

Imitate me as I imitate Christ. Imitate how? Imitate what? Verse 33. Verse 32.

Give no offense to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church. When he says the Jews, these are the synagogue Christian persecuting Jews. Give no offense to those who are hostile.

Give no offense to the Greeks who are idol worshipers. Don't go out of your way to offend. Don't allow situations to occur.

You know, this is why Paul says in another place, to the extent that is up to you, live peaceably with all men. It's not always up to you, but if it's up to you, keep the peace. Don't create issues by your behavior.

Be sensitive to the level of faith that is involved. So whatever you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Verse 31.

Give no offense. Cause no stumbling. As far as it's up to you.

Jews, Greeks, church of God. Just as I also please all in all. Notice men and things are in italics there.

Just as I please all in all, not seeking my own profit, but that of many with a view toward their salvation. And there's all kinds of salvation. Immature believers can be delivered into greater maturity.

Misled believers can be delivered into light and truth and consciousness and growth. There are all kinds of deliverance. People with problems can be delivered.

People with misperceptions can be delivered. People with a lack of understanding. People with a lack of faith can be delivered.

Do not be a stumbling block to that. And sometimes this is kind of hard to figure out, you know, to what extent do you stand on principle? And to what extent do you just try to love, love, love? But then without a break, just pretend there's no break at all between verse 33 and verse one of chapter 11. Paul says, give no offense to anyone just as I please everyone, not for my profit, but for theirs.

Imitate me because I'm imitating Christ. That's what Christ did. That's what I do.

That's what you should do. I praise you that you remember me in these traditions that I delivered to you. But here's something I want you to know.

I'm telling you now, he is not switching horses in midstream. He is continuing the thought about sensitivity to the presence of others. The head of every man is Christ.

The head of woman is man and the head of Christ is God. Now we're talking about idols as symbols. We're talking about food and drink as symbols.

What is the head here? The kephale in Greek, rosh in Hebrew. What is it? Is this the actual head? Is Christ somehow what exists above my collar? Obviously not. This is head in what sense? Authority.

There is a structure. Paul has just got through saying, why should I be judged by another man's conscience? I don't want to create an occasion where someone can judge my liberty and then speak evil of me out of an insufficient conscience and a lack of faith. I will determine ways to avoid that.

I will take control of that situation and make sure that judging that is counterproductive isn't going to happen. He's not going to be my judging authority. I will judge myself.

I will control myself. I will determine my own actions and not put myself under the judgment and the negative verdict of another. Do you see that in verse 30 and 31? I am not going to let someone be an authority and render a verdict on me.

To the extent that I can, I will avoid that situation. Now Paul says, let me tell you about real authority, where the authority resides. That authority for the man is Christ, for the woman is man, and for Christ is God.

Anyone who wants to believe in modal monarchism and that God is really just one person, but he uses three different sock puppets to talk to man, it's kind of silly when you get to a verse like this. So God is the head of God. No, there is a hierarchy.

There is an order of subordination, even in the Trinity. By the way, I've recently seen arguments talking about how everybody in the church ought to just be co-equal. There shouldn't be any elders or any pastors or everybody ought to be equally able to speak, equally able to prophesy, equally able to... There shouldn't be any kind of structure in a local church assembly.

It should all be dictated by love and by mutuality and complete equality in the church. And then they cite the Trinity and they say that there is mutual subordination and there's mutual love and the Trinity is a model of complete universality of this. What Bible are you reading? God the Father is the architect and the planner and the authority over the Lord Jesus Christ who executes the plan.

Without him, nothing was made that was made. I have come to do thy will, not my will, but thine be done. And the Lord Jesus said, I will send you another comforter.

He will take of the things of me and present them to you. I will send him. He doesn't send himself.

There's a whole theological argument about, well, is the Holy Spirit sent by the Father or by the Son? But everybody acknowledges that he didn't send himself. And there is a voluntary subordination, which is a model. And people are absolutely distorting and perverting the truth in the interest of their social construct.

Anyway, you can see it here. The head of Christ is God, God the Father. And the first one to tell you that is Jesus himself.

Look at Hebrews, quoting the Old Testament. I have come to do thy will. A body thou has prepared for me.

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased, Father and Son. It communicates in a patriarchal culture that there is authority and there is subordination. There is an order there.

So verse four, every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. Now, Paul is gonna use a play on words in the same way that he's gonna use the meal and he's gonna use the bread and the cup to play with the symbols to triangulate into deeper truth. He's gonna say, you know what the structural authority is.

Well, now you know that your head being a metaphor for authority, what you do with that head in the physical realm communicates something about the invisible realm. So every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. If he prays with his head covered like a woman does, dishonors his head.

Who is his head? What did Paul just say? It's Christ. If you pray with your head covered, in other words, you have subordinated yourself to someone in the earthly realm in the representation. You know, this is still a patriarchal idea.

It's still a patriarchal culture. And the man in the family is to represent the family before God. If he covers his head, if he's subordinating himself to someone else before he comes to God in prayer, he's dishonoring Christ.

That's what Paul is saying. People shouldn't pressure you into praying. People shouldn't tell you what to pray or how to pray.

If you're the man in the household, you are in charge of prayer for the household. And you decide when and how that is done. If you cover your head, that is symbolically saying somebody other than Christ has authority over me.

Maybe you've been taught that you should pray the Lord's prayer or pray Psalm 23 or pray the prayer of Jabez. And you read a book and it says, well, this is how you ought to pray instead of going to the Lord Jesus. Lord, teach us to pray.

When you pray, pray this way. If somebody tells you pray to Jesus or pray to the Holy Spirit, you, man, have covered your head. You're submitting to the ideas and the authority and the notions of someone other than Jesus Christ.

If you're gonna pray, the only thing between you and God is the Lord Jesus. Don't, it has nothing to do with, are you wearing a ball cap? I think out of, we do things out of respect. It's not what you do, it's why you do it.

And people will invest a particular, I told you a few weeks ago, there's a movement now that you shouldn't dress up for church because it comes from some, the rich people would go to church and oppress the poor and their slaves would drive them there and they were dandies and dressing up like the French. And I don't put on a coat for Sunday morning service because some guy in the 1800s was dressing up to go to some big church in Boston. I don't know anything about that.

I do things for reasons that are meaningful to me. And when I pray, if I'm walking around here and I've got a ball cap on and it's time to pray, I take my cap off because I remember this verse and it reminds me personally, you can pray with any number of hats on your head. You can pray with your football, you can pray with your motorcycle helmet on.

I pray constantly with my motorcycle helmet on. You can't ride a motorcycle as a believer and not be praying from beginning to end. Lord, send your fastest angels.

It is not what you do, it's why you do it. And we can use all kinds of things to remind ourselves. But I never pray with a ball cap on my head.

I just, it just bothers me and it reminds me of this passage. I wanna be focused on the Lord Jesus Christ as my savior and as the rent veil that allows me to enter into the Holy of Holies. And I think it's respectful.

It has traditionally been a mark of respect, whether it's in the military, when you come indoors, you uncover. You go outdoors, you cover, at least if you're a Marine. They're just marks of respect.

People would take their hat off if they were a serf or a servant or somebody that was beholden to a landowner. You take, you're gonna pray, men will take their hats off. The flag comes by, you take your hat off and say the Pledge of Allegiance, whatever.

It is what you invest the symbol with. Nothing wrong with symbols as long as you don't invest the symbol itself with mystical power, which is what the Catholics have done with the host and the wine and the crumbs and the Holy sweeper and the Holy dustpan and the Holy tablecloth and the, oh my gosh. Can you miss the point by any wider margin? Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, praying or prophesying, notice, prophesying.

Which direction does prayer go? Up. Which direction does prophesying go? Horizontally. Either one done with your head covered.

Really? Can't preach with a hat on? Is that what he's saying? Covering the head is a sign of submission to an authority. The head of the man is Christ. If he acknowledges some other head, somebody else tells him what to preach.

Somebody else tells him what or how to pray. You have covered your head and you dishonor Christ. Why? Christ should be the one we acknowledge in our prayer.

Christ should be the one that we acknowledge in our proclamation, in our speaking the truth, in our prophesying, in our holding forth the word of truth. We should be thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Paul did.

Paul said, imitate me. What did Christ do? Did he honor or dishonor his father in all of his preaching? It is always about the father with the Lord Jesus. And it should always be about the Lord Jesus Christ and through him, the father for us.

Not some other message, not some other authority, not some other construct, not some other, well, there's a big thing about house churches. We've been a house church as long

as we have been a church. We've never had a building.

But I don't invest our church with any special spiritual power because we happen to meet in a home. But there are people who say, the way back to first century spirituality and great Christianity is quit going to a building and meet in a house. Once again, it is not where you meet or how you meet.

It is what you do when you get there. And if you decide that, well, I'm going to start meeting in a house because that's the biblical model, you're covering your head and you're prophesying. You are putting symbolism ahead of truth.

You are, it's the phylactery again. It's the transubstantiation again. It is looking for the Shroud of Turin with this cloth actually touched the body of the Lord.

Here's the splinter off of the true cross. Here's the finger bone from the Apostle John. Investing the wrong things with authority and the wrong things with power and putting your faith in a system or in a kind of vocabulary or in a mode of presentation.

Well, lecture is dead. You shouldn't have a lecture format anymore. You need to have discussion and short answers.

Everybody should pitch in and the reason, and I think if you choose to do that as a church, go be warm, be fed. The reason we do what we do, and believe me, there are countless books. I can name, I can give you a list of at least eight or 10 books that say, churches should not be doing what we're doing right now because this invests the pastor and the scriptures with undue significance.

Shouldn't really be a pastor that's any more special than anyone else. I agree that the pastor is no more special, but there is an order. Just as in the family, there is an order for prayer.

And the prayer that a man does is different than the prayer that a woman does, according to the Apostle Paul. And he says, I'm passing on to you what I received from the Lord. So, every man praying or prophesying have his head covered dishonors his head because you are acknowledging an outside authority that is not Christ.

If you start prophesying because somebody wrote about it in a book instead of what you get from the scriptures that come from the mind of Christ, right? I do what I do because I believe this is what the Lord Jesus Christ wants me to do and no one else. And I know that he is the means of my access to the father. So I am praying in his name and in no other name.

And I'm not praying to him, I'm praying to the father because that's what Jesus told me to do. When you pray, say, our father. He didn't say when you pray, say, dear me, dear Jesus.

In your name, I pray. You're dishonoring your head because you're disregarding his instructions on how to pray. And you're disregarding every New Testament example, especially from the Apostle Paul on how to pray.

Look at verse five, but every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. Her head is covered by her husband. Her husband is her head.

And Paul is going to talk about hair and head covering for women, not because women need to wear hats or women need to cover their heads or women need to have long hair per se, but as they represent the truth that he stated at the beginning, the head of the woman is the man, i.e. the authority. So when a woman prays or prophesies, and notice women can teach, women can share truth, but she does it. She prays and she prophesies first and foremost within and under the authority of her husband.

Not without his consent, not without his guidance, not in a way that is going to reflect badly on him or undermine him or shame him or cause him to stumble. Remember the preceding context? What if a woman's got more faith than her husband? If she prays or prophesies in a way that dishonors her head, her husband, she's in the wrong, even if what she says is true and even if what she prays is legitimate, she's dishonoring her head. Her first consideration in talking to God or talking to others ought to be her husband.

In the same way that anytime we speak the truth or pray to God, our first consideration ought to be the Lord Jesus Christ. Does this make sense? Do you see the exact parallel? The man, and this is in a family context, he's married, this is a picture. The married couple that is in view here is itself a picture for people in general.

Well, what if the woman's not married? Can she pray with her head uncovered? You're missing the point. The point is, what is the effect of your praying or your prophesying on the authority and the order that God has put in place? Look out for the interests of others. Don't let others draw wrong conclusions.

Don't lead others astray. Don't cause others to stumble, especially in including your spouse. And don't bring shame to the name of Christ by what you choose to do and how you choose to do it.

Christ and His glory, ultimately the glory of the Father, should be our first consideration. Respect and honor for parents should be the top priority for children. Respect and honor for the husband ought to be the first priority of the wife.

And by the way, respect and honor of the wife ought to be the first priority of the husband. It's just a different direction. Levites were to be the priests in Israel and other tribes weren't.

They're not better. They're not more qualified. It's an order that God arbitrarily

established, if you will, to see if Israel would honor His instruction.

No inferiority, superiority. There's some good notes on this. If you've got the New King James Study Bible, you can read those notes.

They do a good job. In fact, they emphasize over and over again because of the current sensitivity and culture that the woman is not inferior. The woman is not inferior.

Turn the page. The woman is not inferior. It's very true, absolutely true.

And it is a mistake to think otherwise. It doesn't change the fact that there is an order that is to be observed. How does the husband, the father, the man observe that order? He looks to Christ.

And you can also look to the Apostle Paul who is reflecting Christ. And you can look to the Lord Jesus who is reflecting the Father. And you recognize all of those things.

We have to be careful. Well, we're out of time for this morning, but notice the principle because when we work our way, why does he talk about the head and the prayer and the prophesying and the shaving the head and women who are disrespecting and disrupting the order, men who are disrespecting and disrupting the order because he is about to get to when you come together in one place. And he's gonna talk about the bread and the cup.

And it's the same message. When you come together, one gets drunk and another goes hungry because you're disrespecting the order and you're disrespecting the body. It's got nothing to do with the substance of the food.

It has everything to do with your lack of sensitivity to others in the church. Sensitivity to those who are on the outside, the apistas or in the church who are apistas, sensitivity to those in your family and in your marriage. And as that treatment affects the church, and then he's gonna move to the communal meals, but they all drive to the same point.

And this should be our daily concern. Am I living in a way that not only reflects my love for God and his word and his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, but am I looking out in genuine humility and genuine love to not tread on and disrupt and trip those around me? I will deny myself whatever I have to deny. I will avoid in the presence of those who might be weaker in their understanding than me, actions, words, behaviors, habitual conveniences, whatever it may be, I'm just gonna keep that out of the way.

Any number of things, let me give you an abstract quick example. Suppose you know someone and their child died from an overdose of prescription drugs. They got hooked on them, they got them illegally, and they died from it.

So they've got a real sensitivity to the abuse of prescription drugs. You invite them over

and they're gonna stay in your guest room, but your guest room is where you keep your prescription drugs. If you're thinking about that person, you'll take those out of the medicine cabinet and not make an issue out of prescription drugs to that person.

Let's just not have that appear. Just clean that out of the way. There's any number of things that we can do to be considerate, to be thoughtful, to make someone's experience in our periphery as pleasant and as non-confrontational as possible so that it is as conducive and helpful and edifying as possible for the building up of their faith.

There's a lack in their faith. I don't wanna do anything to further weaken it. I want to be someone who can support it and encourage it and strengthen it in love.

Speaking the truth in love, living the truth in love. Sensitivity to others. This is the meaning of the upper room.

As homework for next time, something we're gonna look at next time, read the description of Jesus in the upper room washing the disciples' feet. In the vast overwhelming majority of Christianity, we do not practice ritual foot washing. Yet Jesus said, what I have done for you, you should do for one another.

What is the difference in the bread and the cup becoming a ritual and an ordinance, but Jesus stripping to the waist and kneeling and washing the disciples' feet? Why is one a ritual and an ordinance and the other is not when both are commanded by the Lord Jesus to be remembered? Homework for next time. We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the gift of your word, the presence of your spirit to enable us to enter into these truths that cannot be digested or comprehended by the carnal mind.

We're grateful for the Lord Jesus who gave us these gifts, who represented the spirit-filled and spirit-empowered life on our behalf, who taught us your will and your word and now represents us at your right hand. We pray that as we reflect on what we've seen from your word this morning, that your Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts, answer our questions, guide us and lead us in our interactions with those in our periphery, with each other and those near and far who have the opportunity for deliverance, whether into eternal salvation or into a deeper and stronger relationship with you. May we be a constructive part of that process and fitly and aptly represent the Lord Jesus as his body in the time that remains to us in this life.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.