

A Temple From the Rubble

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 October 2017

Preacher: Terron Tuckett

[0 : 0 0] So as we start today, I have to tell you about a fictional disease that I suffer with. It's called grocery store amnesia.

Here's how grocery store amnesia works. I walk into the grocery store to buy the things that we need, the things that my wife and I might have talked about, and I can't remember a thing that I'm supposed to get.

And so what happens then is I'm standing there in the grocery store, and I'm like, oh, I don't know, what do I need? And I get some few things. And then, you know, a couple of days later, I get home, and I go to make those blueberry muffins, and guess what?

There's no eggs because I forgot to get it. It doesn't work out so well. So one of the things I've discovered to address this issue of grocery store amnesia, right, is to make a list before I leave.

So before I leave to go to the grocery store, I stand in the kitchen, and my wife and I will put together a list, and I tap that list out on my phone. And you know what happens when I go to the grocery store then?

[1 : 0 1] As I'm standing there, I can remember the things I was supposed to get because it's on the list. And then, during the week, it goes so much better because the food that we wanted to have, we actually have in our house now.

So I'm able to enjoy it. As we look at our message today, what we're going to be finding is a pattern similar to that, a pattern of standing in the present where we remember the past, and it provides our hope for the future.

Three main points we're going to look at today are going to deal with the past, the present, and the future. And I'll be explaining those to you as we come up. The first thing we want to look at, number one, is the past.

And it's, remember, you were once far off. Now, the word remember occurs at the beginning of our passage this morning.

So in verse 11 and 12, the verses are started with the idea of remember, the command to remember. Now, the Bible speaks often of this idea of remembering, of remembering what God has done.

[2 : 1 1] And in fact, in the Ten Commandments, the Fourth Commandment, we're told to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. So there on the Sabbath day, that present day when we stand, we're able to look back, and we're told, six days you had to labor.

So we remember back to those six days that we had to labor. And we have that hope that we're able to look forward to the future. And we say, I had six days to labor. I'm taking this day as a break. And these next six days to work, they're going to be sufficient for what I need.

Also, the idea of remembering occurs in the feast that are listed in the law. So the law that was provided to Moses has a number of feasts that are provided in those.

And in fact, in Leviticus 23, there's seven feasts that are listed in there. Each of those has the idea of remembering God's previous intervention, and then looking forward to the hope that is to come.

And in the New Testament, we also have the idea of remembering. In fact, Sunday morning, here in our worship service, we have an act of remembering. It's called the Lord's Supper.

[3 : 22] So our Lord's Supper, we're told, in remembrance of me. It's how our Lord's Supper goes. So here we are in the present. We consume the elements of the juice and the bread.

And we remember, we look back and remember the sacrificial death of Jesus on our behalf. And we look forward. We have that hope that we look forward to, that we recognize that Jesus has initiated a kingdom that has not yet been fulfilled.

So as we think of our own lives, one of the things I want to pause and encourage you is that do you have times when you can remember the work of God in your life?

Because in the moments of the present, there will be challenging times that come. There will be difficult moments that come. And you will want to be able to remember the work of God in your life.

And in remembering, you will look to the future, and you will say, God provided for me in the past. It may be difficult in the present, but I have hope in the future.

[4 : 26] Specifically in this passage, we are told to remember. And this passage is to the Gentiles. So the Gentiles are called to remember, you were once far off from God.

So this message is directed to the Gentiles who were at one time separated from God's chosen people. Let me provide a little information for us regarding this passage.

So as we think and see God working through the Old Testament, we see that God has chosen the nation of Israel to reveal his power through this nation, to reveal his character through this nation.

And as a result, requiring, to understand God, meant coming through the nation of Israel. So people could come through the nation of Israel. It wasn't that God said there was no place for Gentiles.

Not at all the case. And we'll actually see that later. But that God said, as you come, you'll come through the God of Israel. So we see that God was indeed accessible to the Gentiles, but it was only through the nation of Israel.

[5 : 31] So the Gentiles are called to remember, you were once far off. And in fact, here in the passage, we see in verse 11, it's reminding the Gentiles that the Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision.

It's back to the act of circumcision, which was a way of determining Israel from its neighbors. And so the men of Israel would be circumcised, whereas those who were not, were not part of their community.

I think of David, as he was about to slay Goliath. And he sees that enemy of God. And how does he refer to that enemy of God, who he is about to slay?

He says he is that uncircumcised Philistine. So that is how David recognizes this person is not part of God's plan. It's that act of circumcision.

We see also in verse 12, it says that the Gentiles were separated from Christ. The idea of Christ and Messiah are the same idea in two different languages.

[6 : 38] And so when it says they were separated from Christ, the understanding is that they're separated from Jesus, it is that they're separated from the coming Messiah. So while Israel looked forward to a Messiah who would deliver them, the Gentiles did not have a hope in that plan, because they were separated from the hope that came with the Messiah.

The third way that we see in this passage, how Gentiles were told that they were far off from God, they were being reminded they were far off from God, once again comes in verse 12, when they're told that they were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.

Israel, once again, is that place of hope. Continuing there, they're told four times in this passage, they're told that they have been separated from God. We see that they are strangers to the covenants of promise.

And there in verse 12, it continuing, they are having no hope. And finally, we see for the sixth instance of where the Gentiles are told that they are separated from God, without God.

It says, you are without God in the world. Six times, six times, Paul declares to the Gentile believer, you were once alienated from God. With those six times that Paul is saying it here in this passage, it's a reminder to the people, let me be clear, you were once separated from God.

[7 : 58] That remember in verse 11, though, is prefaced with the word. It's prefaced with the word, therefore. So therefore is a transitional word.

And it causes us to link back to the previous section of scripture to see why do these people need to remember their separation from God. We see there in the previous section, Gentiles were called to remember their previous status.

And they were called to look back, reminding that they have been saved by grace. They have salvation, which is a gift of God. They have received salvation entirely by the gracious action of God.

Salvation is not merited, not earned, not deserved. So the question that we have here, is that the Gentiles, after hearing of their unmerited salvation that they received by the virtue of God's graciousness, are reminded, remember, you were once alienated from God.

So the question that we have here, why did the Gentiles need to be reminded of their previous status? Why did they need to be reminded that they were once alienated from God?

[9 : 11] The answer? Probably. Because they forgot. Or they at least were in the act of forgetting. The reason for their forgetting, we don't know for sure.

But we can speculate. One of the things to know is that this writing that's taking place for the Gentile believers is 30 to 35 years after Jesus, after the time of Jesus' death and resurrection.

And so the church has been going on for that length of time. And what we likely have here is that we are now in the second generation of Gentile believers. So that first generation understood their status, whereas that second generation didn't entirely know what their previous history was.

So as a result, they're not understanding their previous alienation from God. Because they can't understand their previous alienation from God, they're not fully able to grasp their current standing with God.

This idea of generational forgetting, it reminds me of immigrants who come to the U.S. And so when an immigrant family comes to the U.S., often that very first family that comes becomes slightly Americanized, but still very much from their home country.

[10 : 30] By that second generation of the immigrant family, the people, the children, become mostly Americanized. and just a little bit of the homeland.

By the third generation, that once immigrant family is almost entirely Americanized. They've forgotten that homeland from which they came. In the same way, the Gentiles are forgetting where they were.

So why do the Gentiles need to remember? What is important about this? The things we see is that a person to recognize their hope-filled future, they need to understand their hope-barren past.

To see the hope that they have coming, they need to know the hopelessness that they were in. Now the people of Israel, they were well aware of their hopeless state as they were waiting for hundreds of years for a prophet to come.

God had gone silent upon them. And they could even look at their own history over the course of the last 500, 600 years of feeling abandoned by God. And while there's been moments of hope, they feel that God has left them.

[11 : 47] And they find themselves looking for that Messiah. They anticipate that Messiah. Messiah. The Gentiles were not part of that plan. The Gentiles didn't have that same angst that was part of their culture.

And so the Gentiles, as they have found themselves in the family of God and with the rival of Jesus, they need to have that same hope for the future that the people of Israel are able to have.

And the way that they're able to do that is by Paul reminding them, remember, you weren't even part of the plan. You weren't even in the family. But now you're in the family and now you're part of God's plan moving forward.

Second thing we want to look at regards to the present. And that's that Jesus brings peace. So the Gentiles were once separated by a dividing wall of hostility.

Let me read verse 14 for us. For he himself, that is being Jesus, for he himself is our peace who has made us both one and broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

[13 : 05] So this dividing wall of hostility, that's what's keeping the Gentiles out. this is likely a remark on the design of the temple.

Now in the temple there was a dividing wall. And there was a dividing wall between the court of the Gentiles and the temple proper.

So the Gentiles were not actually able to enter into the temple. In fact, on that dividing wall there was a sign. And here is what the sign said.

No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.

Now perhaps you might think, oh, they just put up the sign and they didn't really mean it. Well, do know that Paul who is writing the book of Ephesians, he was arrested because it was believed that he brought Gentiles inside of that dividing wall.

[14 : 13] So in Acts 21 you can see the account of Paul being arrested for violating this. And we see, here is the remark of the people there from Acts 21.

He, that being Paul, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place. they were serious about keeping Gentiles out of the temple.

So this literal wall that was in the temple design was not part of God's original design for the temple. Let me provide a little bit of temple background knowledge for you.

So the first temple that was built is called Solomon's Temple. It's built about a thousand years before the time of Jesus. And there, as Solomon, as he has, the temple has been finished.

There is a prayer of dedication that he prays. And it comes from 1 Kings chapter 8 beginning in verse 41. You can turn there if you want but I'm about to read it so don't feel like you need to turn there but you can.

[15 : 17] And one of the things I want you to see in this portion of this prayer that Solomon prays for the temple is I want you to see how the temple was for all people. And I also want you to see how God was using Israel to proclaim himself to all people which is an idea that we talked about a few moments ago.

Let me read for you from 1 Kings chapter 8. And once again this is Solomon praying at the dedication of the temple. Likewise when a foreigner who was not of your people Israel comes from a far country for your namesake for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm when he comes and prays toward this house here in heaven your dwelling place and to do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you as do your people Israel and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

The temple was for all people. That temple eventually gets destroyed and then another temple is rebuilt. And this second temple is then remodeled by Herod who is essentially the governor of Judah.

And this remodeling of the temple takes place really close to the time of Jesus. And during this remodel of the temple it was significantly expanded and this dividing wall was added.

We will find that Jesus figuratively breaks down that literal wall in the temple. we see in verse 14 that He Himself is our peace and has broken down this barrier.

[17 : 16] So within a decade of this writing the Romans would come in and they would literally break down that literal wall and would destroy the temple and the obviously wall with it.

So we see that Jesus brings peace and essentially Jesus rewrites the rules for the Gentiles to access God. No longer is Israel the exclusive conduit to God.

Now Jesus comes and takes that place and now Jesus becomes this new conduit able to bring all people to God. Jews and Gentiles both are able to come to God through Jesus.

And we see in verse 15 that Jesus was abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. And ordinance that word there is dogma.

That's actually what the word is. So it's another way of saying law. So as you hear that it can sound a little awkward but think law when you hear it. So Jesus came to abolish the law of commandments expressed in the ordinances.

[18 : 25] So with Jesus abolishing the law the question has does the law still apply to us? Can I just do what I want? Thanks to Jesus the law is gone.

I'm free. There's no more law on me, right? No. No, of course not. So as you have those thoughts if you have those thoughts if you have those thoughts the idea that you are no longer under the law the rules from the Bible no longer apply to you.

I'm going to pass along some advice that I tell myself. So this is advice to me and maybe it's applicable to your own life. And what I tell myself is never cease to marvel at the powers of self-deception.

So when people come to the law and say hey is that still pertained to me? Does that still pertain to me? They often do that when they are trying to justify actions that they know are against God's plan.

and through some sort of roundabout weird rationalization misapplication of the scripture they come and they say the law doesn't really apply to me. So what we find is that Jesus in abolishing the law he does not why Jesus abolishes the law he does not entitle you he doesn't entitle you to have sex with your boyfriend or girlfriend.

[19 : 49] He doesn't entitle you to do pornography. Jesus abolishing the law does not entitle you to gauge in deceptive business practices. Doesn't entitle you to be greedy.

Jesus abolishing the law doesn't mean it's okay for you to have temper explosions. All those are still against God's plan. These are wrong sinful actions. Do not do not find yourself using the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ the son of God in order to justify your own sinful behaviors.

the passage does say though that Jesus did abolish the law. It is exactly what it says and let us understand how he did that. So Jesus abolished the purpose of the law.

The purpose of the law was to bring people to God so that they could understand who God was and the character of God the law was provided to say here is who I am. Jesus now comes and is able to be that conduit once again that brings people to God.

And in fact Jesus explains this idea of abolishing the law when he says in Matthew 5 this is Jesus talking do you not think that I have come to abolish the law of the prophets?

[21 : 04] I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them because Jesus is moving towards that purpose of the law which is to bring people to God.

He says I will become that way to God. what we find is that Jesus did not abolish the tenets of the law. So we still have laws that we are called expectations that we are called to follow and these expectations that we are called to follow and issues of morality those are the ones that we need to follow.

And there's ways as we look back on the law there's some things we don't follow and there's reasons for that. But when it comes to issues of morality we follow those. One of the things that I also want to see is that Jesus brings reconciliation with God.

We see in verse 16 that Jesus reconciles us both to God in one body through the cross therefore killing the hostility. So we're told again that he reconciles us both.

That us both is Israel and Gentiles both. And we see that Jesus brings peace between God and the person. Jesus reconciles us.

[22 : 15] This idea of reconciliation is a great way of understanding the work of God. We recognize that when people were originally created there was no separation between them and God.

There in the Garden of Eden there was a perfect relationship between God and his created people. But when sin enters the world that splits that relationship and separates people from God.

And sin now keeps us away from God. But Jesus comes to reconcile that relationship. To put it back together. So we find that Jesus is able to reconcile us to God by virtue of his nature and his death upon a cross and his subsequent resurrection.

Jesus is able to offer us reconciliation. reconciliation. So the question I have for you is have you accepted the reconciliation with God?

Have you accepted the peace with God that Jesus offers? To each of us we have a choice to make. Do we choose to follow God?

[23 : 30] Do we choose that reconciliation that Jesus offers us? So if you find yourself today and you say I don't know what that means. I don't know what it means to be reconciled to God.

Don't leave this place this morning without talking to someone and say I need to know more about what it means to be reconciled to God. And perhaps there's some of you today who you are considering that choice and even as you walked in today you found yourself saying I don't know God I feel you working on my life but I'm not ready to submit to you and receive that reconciliation that peace that you have to offer.

Consider today today is the day to fully submit yourself to God so that you can experience that reconciliation that peace with God.

during our service each week we have a time of a passing of the peace. And so during our service we have a time where we are able to take the peace that we have received with God.

So through Jesus we have peace with God and we are able then to extend that peace to those within our community. As we think of that ability to extend peace on a horizontal level as a result of the peace that we have vertically as we look up towards God.

[24 : 59] I am reminded of the world of which we live in which is a world without peace. It doesn't take much information searching to find the results of nationalism, ethnic cleansing, religious wars, political vitriol, racial injustices, mass killings.

Each of these things is a reminder to us of the peace that is lacking in our world. The deficiency of peace that we have. You can't go on social media without being reminded of the lack of peace within our world.

So we find ourselves in a world that desperately needs peace. peace. Even when we think that in our homes, across our land, there's a 50% divorce rate among people who are married.

If we can't manage peace in our own homes, imagine how depraved we are of peace once we step outside of it. And I will tell you that in a world without peace, and we live in a world without peace, we know the answer.

The church knows the answer. peace will come not through any human institution, human idea. And while these institutions and these efforts that are made on the part of people, they have some benefit to the symptoms of the conflict around us.

[26 : 28] They do not address the root cause of the conflict around us. And the root cause of the conflict around us is that people do not have peace with God. And if you do not have peace with God, there is no way that you are able to extend peace to others.

Our world suffers from a case of psychological transference, a collective case of transference. We look at the animosity that we have with God, and we direct that to those around us.

So when we look and we see the depraved nature of our world, a world that so desperately needs peace, the answer comes through Jesus. The answer comes with people first finding peace with God above.

And when they have peace with God above, they are able to extend that peace to those around them. As we think of this idea of peace and being able to extend peace with those next to us, provide a warning.

I want to provide a warning. It's this, that many, many churches, many churches cannot maintain internal peace. And if you have been involved in more than a handful of churches, you have probably experienced churches that do not have peace within their own group.

[27 : 54] And I will tell you this, it is impossible for a church to share the peace that comes through Jesus Christ if they themselves cannot experience the peace within their own community.

So as we think of our church, as we think of Trinity Cambridge, let us protect the peace that we have. As we continue on our past, we come to the third section, which is the future, that which we have to come.

And the future is our ongoing spiritual temple. And in verse 18, what we have is a great example of the Trinity being brought together.

And so before we read verse 18, provide just a bit of background knowledge for us. So the Trinity is a term that is not found in the Bible.

The term itself is not found in the Bible. But the doctrine to which it reflects is clearly taught. And so when we come to the idea of Trinity, it's a very Christian word.

[29 : 07] But when you go to look for your Bible, you wouldn't find it. But once again, the doctrine is clearly there. And the doctrine is this. It is that God is three and one. So there is three persons to God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, the Son being Jesus.

And the Father, Son, and Spirit make one God. They are distinct, yet the same. And when we come to this doctrine, it could be like, well, that's confusing.

Well, you know, it's probably a good thing for us that aspects of God are a bit confusing. Otherwise, God would be a lot like us. And we don't want a God that's a lot like us. We want a God that's a little bit more complicated than we are.

So when we come to the Trinity, we're reminded that there's things about God that we just can't quite understand. And that's a good thing. And I mention the Trinity because in this passage here in verse 18, we are going to find all three persons of the Trinity mentioned.

And so it's nice to find a spot in the scripture where you'll see all three persons mentioned together. Let me read verse 18 for us. For through him, that's through Jesus, for through him, we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

[30 : 21] And so there we have the Son mentioned Jesus. We have access in one spirit to the Father. As we see those together, if you're like me, I prefer kind of images to be able to work with.

And so images will help me better understand this idea of the Trinity. And so the Bible also in another portion provides a great image of the Trinity.

And that comes in the baptism of Jesus. And so we find this is recorded in Matthew chapter 3. So in the baptism of Jesus, Jesus as he's being baptized comes out of the water.

And we're told that the spirit descended on him like a dove. And then there is a voice from heaven, the voice of the Father, that says, this is my Son, whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. So we have that idea of the Trinity being presented here. And once again, it's hard to understand, but that's a good thing.

[31 : 29] Because our God is a big God. As we continue on our passage, we're going to see that the Gentiles are fellow citizens with the saints.

I want to read verse 19 for you. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Gentiles have equal status with Jews. Jews. So as we come, we see that the Gentiles have peace with God through Jesus.

And now they're able to extend that peace with also the Jewish followers on that horizontal level. And as the passage continues on, it comes to this idea of a re-envisioned temple.

And the passage speaks of a figurative temple that will include both Jews and Gentiles. And there in the passage, it describes this temple being built.

[32 : 33] And the language that is used there is very much kind of this construction building language. And so I want you to follow along with me, beginning in verse 20. And I want you to cue in on the construction language, the building language that's taking place there as it describes this temple being put together.

This temple is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you are also being built together in a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. So as we see this temple, we see this temple being put together.

But this temple is not yet complete. It is in the process. It is ongoing. This figurative temple that's described here is an ongoing being built. And today, we call that temple the church.

And as we think of the church, we know the church is not a building. It's a gathering of people who collectively follow Jesus. And when we think of ourselves meeting this morning, we're happy the church is not a building.

[34 : 00] Because as we are meeting here today, we are in a Portuguese social club. But you know what? The church can meet in a Portuguese social club because we are a group of people who have joined together that says we're going to follow God.

This temple, or the church as we think of it, has a blueprint. Here's the blueprint that's described for us here in this passage.

The first thing is the cornerstone is Jesus. That's where it all is. And as we think of that blueprint of the temple, that's the same blueprint that our church wants to have.

That's the same blueprint that the church needs to have. The cornerstone is Jesus. It all starts there. If we don't build on and around Jesus, then it all falls apart.

The foundation is the apostles and prophets. And we can think of that as our Bible, our scriptures, that read those, what we have for them. It is a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

[35 : 08] And in this, you, we, are being built together. The key point for us today is that the church is a group of people who are being built together.

The cornerstone is Jesus. We have the apostles and the prophets, which are the foundation. We have the Spirit that's work among us. But it is the people from all nationalities, from all backgrounds, who are being put together, built together.

As we think of this idea of being built together, something I want to remind you of, and it's this, is that church membership is important.

Church membership is important. Because in church membership, that's our decision to say we're in it together. We are going to be built together. Now, I must be honest with you, in being around people, in being in churches, one of the things that I've discovered that, that's in the Christian community, I wouldn't say the church, but in the Christian community is this, is what I would describe as the churchless Christian.

I don't really think there's such thing as a churchless Christian. Like, it doesn't, that doesn't make any sense. It's a nonsense term. But there are people who try to live the life of the churchless Christian.

[36 : 31] And here, here, here are the things that we hear from the churchless Christian. I can listen to a sermon on a podcast and just get the same thing as I do on a Sunday morning. So, obviously, church is more than listening to a sermon.

And, yeah, this doesn't really make sense, right? As you think, it's about life together. And if you think that listening to a podcast, listening to a sermon online is life together, that's not it, right?

So, that's, that's bad. Here's the other thing that I hear, I hear from the churchless Christian. I just can't find a church that fits me. There are some things I'm looking for in the church.

I've tried lots of them, but they just, they're not a good fit for me. There's just little things about them. And then, then finally, people don't often exactly want to phrase it like this, but they communicate this to you.

Here's what, here's, here's one of the things. You know, I've just got so many weakened commitments. I just can't really, you know, commit to attending church regularly. I've just got so many other things going on. And I will tell you the flaw of the Christian, the flaw of the churchless Christian is that it's all about the individual.

[37 : 48] The churchless Christian wants a church that fits into their schedule, that matches all their tastes and preferences. They want a church that doesn't interfere with their social schedule.

They want a church that's me, me, me, me, me. And if it's all about me, we can't be built together. So in Trinity, Cambridge, we strive to be built together.

And the way that we do that is through church membership. It's not mystical about church membership. It's not weird or awkward. It's like strange.

It's just our way of saying we're in it together. It's our way of saying it's not I, it's we. It's not me, it's us.

There's not some sort of kind of group thing where we leave our differences. Within our church membership, we have people who have an array of political beliefs. We have people who have different backgrounds in regards to nationality, ethnicity.

[38 : 52] If we were to probe people's ideas on social ideas, we would see different things coming up. We are different in so many respects. But we set aside all those things that would divide us.

All those things that the world says should divide us. And we say, you know what? Those are part of me. But I must set those aside for the basis of our church membership. Because my commitment to Jesus Christ is superior to all those things.

my willingness to follow Jesus is greater than whatever ideologies I hold. And so when we come to our church, we say we're joining together as part of this church.

It's that we're saying, you know what? We're in it together. We are going to be built together. And as we know, living in the culture of this area, living in the culture of Cambridge, or perhaps you're in a surrounding community, the culture of New England, being a Christian and living a committed life is challenging.

It is challenging because our culture tries to pull us away. Our culture doesn't respect the idea of church. And that's okay.

[40 : 04] We know that's the case. But as we think of our culture and its eagerness to absorb us in its ungodly ways, I have the image of a predator and a prey.

And we as Christians are the predator. And our culture is the predator that seeks to take us away. And you know what predators do when they come upon the pack?

They look for the ones who aren't in it. They look for the ones who've gotten themselves away from the group. And as we think of our church membership, we're being built together so that we're together.

We're in the group. So when that predator comes to pluck us away, it'll say, oh, they're so tight I can't get in. But if you find yourself veering away from the church, stepping away from the church, that predator will pluck you away.

We come, we say, this church membership, what is that about? It's being built together. It's being built together because we say, you know what?

[41 : 11] Together we can follow Jesus. Together we can set aside our differences because we choose to follow Jesus. And our culture will not pull us away. We will not be pulled away from the faith.

Let me close this in prayer this morning. God, we come to you this morning. God, we do ask that you would build us together.

That you would build this church together. God, that you would take the individuals, those who are so different here, and build us together. And God, we ask. We ask that you would protect the peace that is here.

God, we're thankful for the peace that we have. We're thankful for the love that our church community has. God, we ask that you would protect it and continue to grow it. We ask all of this in your name.

Amen.