

## **SCRIPTURE READING**

- OT: Psalm 103:1-5
- NT: 1 John 4:9-11

## **PRELIMINARY REMARKS**

We've reached the end of the ministry year. School is out. Summer is upon us!

If you're new to our church, you may not know that I take a break from preaching over the summer. There are a number of reasons why our church has decided this is healthy for us all.

### **1. It's healthy for our church.**

- We're not a personality-driven church—unless, of course, the personality you're talking about is Jesus.
- So, we believe it's healthy for us to hear from other voices. This summer we'll enjoy hearing from a mix of our other pastors and some of our mission partners.
  - Gives our pastors the chance to grow in their preaching skills.
  - Gives all of us the opportunity to learn from the global church.

### **2. It's healthy for me.**

- Gives me the opportunity to give focused attention to important leadership work as we prepare for the next ministry year.
- Gives me the chance to partner with the broader church—I'll be speaking at a student ministry conference in Colorado, preaching in Nashville, and taking trips to visit our mission partners in Chile and Peru.
- And it also gives me space to rest and reset. This life is a marathon, and healthy rhythms help us stay strong for the long haul. I hope you'll find moments this summer to rest with friends and family as well.

When we're not traveling, we'll be here—and I look forward to worshipping alongside you! I couldn't be more grateful for this church!

**[Transition]:** And gratitude is what today is all about...

## INTRODUCTION

As we reach the end of the ministry year, we want to stop and celebrate God for all that he's doing in the life of our church.

It's important, isn't it—to pause and give glory to God for his work?

Sometimes life gets so busy that we find ourselves running from one thing to the next. Without taking a second to stop, reflect, and thank God for his goodness to us.

That's what we're doing today.

And we'll do so through stories.

- Statistics are important, and there's a time and a place for them.
- But ministry is all about souls—souls with stories.

You'll hear three stories today—each of which connects to our mission as a church:

- To love God—in worship.
- To love one another—in fellowship.
- And to serve the world—in mission.

As you hear how God has met specific people in the details of their lives, I trust it will help you connect him to the details of your own. And that, together, we'll celebrate him—give him glory—for all he's done.

**[Transition]:** Before we dive into them, let's bow and heads and pray...

## LOVING GOD IN WORSHIP

- The first thing we do in response to God's love—is his love him in return!
- And we've had a beautiful year of doing that together here in worship.
  - We've worked through various sermon series:
    - Vision Series: All Things New
    - OT Series: Jonah
    - NT Series: Revelation
    - Shorter Topical Series: Prayer, Anxiety, Money
  - More than that, we've sung together, prayed together, confessed together, been assured of his forgiveness and love together, celebrated the sacraments together, and—God has met us:
    - Changed us, shaped us, and kept us on the path of life.

- I don't like to think about where I'd be without this church!
  - I hope you feel the same way.
- A real highlight for us in worship this year has been the inclusion of our friends with special needs—through the reading of Scripture, leading us in worship, and their much-needed presence with us on Sunday mornings. Our first video gives us a snapshot of that...

**[SHOW LIGHTHOUSE VIDEO]**

**[SING: *In Christ Alone*]**

## LOVING ONE ANOTHER IN FELLOWSHIP

- The second thing we do in response to God's love—is love another as he loves us.
- Let's take a look at how this kind of fellowship has changed one family's life.

**[SHOW LISA VIDEO]**

- I love Lisa's opening line: "Our lives changed when our neighbors invited us to play soccer at Cedar Springs."
- And did you catch the personal names?
  - Mike, Jeremy, Brad, the Lewis family.
  - Ordinary people who reached out with extraordinary love.
- They—and others—became like family:
  - Supporting Lisa and the Tarantino family through the valleys and the peaks.
  - Like the death of a family member and the happier days of life.
- In time, this community helped Lisa grow in her relationship with God.
  - To the point that 20 years later—this newcomer is our new elementary ministry director!
  - Isn't that something: from newcomer to director?!!
    - That's what it's all about...
    - If you've just joined our church—who knows where it will take you!
- Lisa is now taking the love she received and is passing it on to our kids.
  - A new season in our elementary ministry...
  - That also has a beautiful new space:
    - Let's not forget that that's another thing God did.
    - The whole capital campaign and building project.
      - We're now ready to love our kids for another generation.
      - Surely that's another highlight of our year!

- What about you?
  - Who are the people that have made a difference to your faith?
  - Let's take a few minutes to think about them and—for their influence—thank God.

**[SILENT PRAYER]**

## **SERVING THE WORLD IN MISSION**

- The third thing we do in response to God's love—is serve the world as he's served us.
- A big part of how we do that is through global mission:
  - We're partnering with brothers and sisters all over the world...
  - Asking that God would allow us to be a part of 500 new church plants by the year 2030.
- But we're also seeking to be on mission here—our final story gives us an example of how.

**[SHOW GOOD GRIEF VIDEO]**

- The Stewarts have walked through pain that most of us can only imagine.
  - But did you hear Sarah's testimony?
  - "Only through the Lord can good come from twenty-one stories that are just so broken and so sad. It's the kind of thing that doesn't make sense outside of Jesus."
  - The gospel heals us in a way that enables us to offer healing to the world.
- And Blair—thank you for being so honest.
  - There's space for you—and all of us—to figure out what it means to follow Jesus here.
  - There's no rush, and there's no pressure—we think your presence makes our lives better.
- Wherever we find ourselves this morning—let's sing of the goodness of God...

**[SING: Goodness of God]**

## **CONCLUSION [At The Table]**

We love God in worship, we love one another in fellowship, and we serve the world in mission—and we do it all in response to God’s love.

This week, a pipe in our parking lot got blocked. Water pooled up with nowhere to go. It just sat there, stagnant. Then one of our staff members walked over and poked the pipe with a stick—and just like that, the blockage broke loose. Water rushed and gushed and flowed with surprising power.

We’ve been chewing on this as a picture of our hearts for the summer.

Sometimes our hearts get blocked. Clogged with weariness, sin, distraction, disappointment, or simple busyness. But maybe the summer gives us the chance to unblock our hearts? God’s Spirit is already present—ready to move, ready to flow. Could we clear space for him to move in our lives—freely and powerfully?

I invite you to look for him this summer:

- What is God up to in your life?
- Are there any blockages in your heart?
- How is he calling you deeper into relationship with himself?
  - Is he calling you to worship him more fully?
  - Is he inviting you to love others more deeply?
  - Maybe he’s nudging you to serve more boldly?

Whatever it is, do it in response to God’s love...

**[Transition]:** And that’s what we get here at the Table—an experience of God’s love...